



Jean Brook, Malestroit guide and greeter

Rob: And I'm with Jean Brook, who is a resident of Malestroit. You've been here for quite some time now, Jean haven't you.

Jean: Yes, yes we moved over in 2005.

Rob: And what is it about the town that interests you, why did you come here?

Jean: We found the town quite by accident, but once we'd arrived we thought how beautiful it was. The actual setting of the town is beautiful, the beautiful architecture is glorious but I think the main thing that we really really love here is the fact that the people are so lovely, they are so welcoming, they are so warm and we have had a fantastic reception from, from the people here.

Rob: You've been involved with public life here for some time now but before you had a chambre d'hôte.

Jean: Yes, yes we did. We moved in December of 2005 and then in May 2006 we opened the chambre d'hôte. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet people and we had something like 2000 people in eight years, from 43 different countries, would you believe. I always found it amazing that 43 different nationalities had actually found our little town.

Rob: Well, it's a very scenic place you've got here, right by the canal.

Jean: Uh-uh. It's the junction of the River Oust and, and the Canal Nantes à Brest.

Rob: Your house is called La Maison Blanche, tell us about that.

Jean: It's called La Maison Blanche even though when we arrived here it was painted grey, it is because there was a legend if you like La Dame Blanche, and she is supposed to rise out of the mists that rise in the morning from the River Oust, so that the house is named after her.

Rob: And have you ever seen her?

Jean: Personally, no I've never seen her but I'm, that's a question that's very often asked. Yes, I've never seen her, no. Never even sensed her.

Rob: I understand that you're, uh, you've been elected on the council.



Jean: Yes, in 2014 at the last local elections, yes, I was invited to be part of a list for the mayor. Well, he wasn't the mayor at the time but he is the mayor now because we won the election. It's an incredibly enriching experience. It's not always easy but I feel very, very flattered to have been asked, and it has certainly enriched my life.

Rob: The fact that you speak French and English must be very useful for the council.

Jean: I think I am useful for the council. Yes, I know that the mayor always calls me his interprète. There are occasions when English is really, really necessary. For example, just recently, last week, we had a visit for a week of Polish artists who didn't speak any French, and so I was able to talk to them in English. Their English was very good so I think they were quite grateful that there was an English speaker in the town.

Rob: Is Malestroit twinned with a British town?

Jean: It's actually twinned at the moment with Jedburgh, in Scotland, and we have an exchange with Eyam in Derbyshire and we are going to make that official next, next June, hopefully.

Rob: And is that part of your remit, as a councillor?

Jean: Yes, because one of my commissions is tourism then the mayor did ask me if I could develop the twinning, so Jedburgh was already well advanced, but Eyam wasn't, so Eyam if you like was my baby. So I am very, very pleased that that is been so successful.

Rob: You're involved with the tourism, and you welcome people, and you take people around to visit the town in English, I understand.

Jean: Yes, I do two things. So part of, part of my remit then is to be part of the greeter scheme and that is part of the tourist office. But I'm also president of Malestroit Initiative, and as part of, as part of that then we have a team of about five English speakers who do guided tours of the town as well, in English. In the season, every, every Friday afternoon.

Rob: So, if an English person wanted to come and visit the town, they could have come to the Office of Tourism and they could ask for you?

Jean: Yes, that's right. That's how the greeters scheme works. It could be anything that they are interested in at all, it doesn't necessarily have to be the architecture of the town, it could be for example that they want to see flowers, or something like that. It could be whatever their interest is whereas what we do on a



Friday afternoon is, is to visit the town and point out the particular historical buildings, architectural buildings. Its, its two different things really.

Rob: Do people come here also for the Museum of Resistance?

Jean: Yes, of course that's very, very close. Malestroit was, was very important during the Second World War and Saint-Marcel where the Resistance Museum is was the headquarters of the Breton Resistance, so yes, people do come here to go and visit Saint-Marcel and the Resistance Museum and we also have the clinique here. During the last World War then we had Mère Yvonne-Aimee who was the Mother Superior at that time and she helped to get to freedom many allied airmen and she disguised them as nuns and they escaped. And that is why the clinique is also very very important to Malestroit.

Rob: Well, maybe we can go and have a look around the town a little bit, Jean. Thanks for the comfort of your sitting room, with a view over the canal, we'll go and have a look in town now.

Jean: Yes, fine.