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The Breton Saddlery

Adrian   Hello, I am here to today with Bev and Malcolm, who live just outside Silfiac at Petit Roz where they run a business selling and providing saddles. Tell me a bit, Malcolm, about the saddlery business. Was it something you did in England before you came.

Malcolm   We ended up with a horse over here that we found very difficult to get a saddle to fit. So we ended up buying, probably fifteen saddles before we found one that would fit this horse and we had a barn full of saddles and we thought well we need to move these on, so I could see in France there was very little in the way of a service. You can buy a saddle, but you buy it and if it doesn't work out you can't take it back.

Adrian   So there was no one specialising really.

Malcolm   That's right. We thought that if we offered a service where we could go to customer's with a selection of saddles and see if we can get one that is a very good fit for the horse. Otherwise people deal with us by email and, er, internet. Er, we have a little internet store and people can buy direct off that and we try and describe the saddles with the measurements so that they're more or less going to fit. But we do offer an unusual service for France in so much as you can come take a saddle, take it away, see if it fits your horse and if it doesn't, bring it back.

Adrian   Which is it more important for the saddle to fit, the horse or the rider?

Malcolm   The horse is probably the most important aspect of it but the rider is also part of the equation and the discipline that the rider wants to take part in is also part of the equation. We supply mainly good quality, English saddles.

Bev   They are mainly general purpose aren't they? General purpose for the average rider that does all disciplines, jumping, dressage, cross country. Randonnees are very, very popular here, so people want a comfortable saddle that they can use for lots of things. Also we've got a range of dressage saddles, which aren't as popular, only at certain times of the

	year we get very busy with them, then others times you may not have an enquiry for some time.
Adrian	So, having started with your own stock of saddles which you came by almost by accident, um, where do you now get your saddles supplied from?
Bev	Well my daughter lives in England, so she buys them for me and, obviously, as people come and buy saddles they quite often got a saddle that doesn't, is for their old horse or whatever.
Adrian	So you can do an exchange as well?
Bev	So we do a part exchange as well …… but we've got a website which has got all the saddles on it with lots of pictures, all the information.
Adrian	So if people wanted to acquire a saddle, what's the best way they go about it?
Malcolm	If they Google us 'cos we're just called Sellerie Bretagne, which is Breton Saddlery. Most of our customers are French, they can contact us by phone or email for a rendez-vous, either with them at their house.
Bev	Like they may have several horses that they need saddles for, then we would go to them.
Malcolm	Yes, take a selection of saddles that most people have got a reasonable idea of whether they want a dressage saddle or a jumping saddle or a general purpose saddle. Whether their horse is a fine horse, a wide horse or a medium horse. What we do find bizarre over here is people will come and buy a saddle and they haven't even got a horse because they go to a lot of different riding centres, riding the riding school horse and they don't want to use the old saddle that the riding school might have. They want a nice saddle for themselves and its very difficult, because not every saddle is going to fit every horse. So they can come and fall in love with a saddle and buy it and we have to send them away, if you like, with a government health warning that really it should only be used on a horse that it fits.
Adrian	Well we would like to thank you very much for giving up your time, and we wish you every success for the saddlery business and your life out here in France.
Both	Thank you, thank you very much indeed, thank you.