

## ***History of Guingamp***

Many people today associate Guingamp with its giant killing feat in the 2009 French Cup Final or the famous Folk Dancing Festival the Saint-Loup. This agreeable small town also has an interesting history. The first settlement grew up around the river crossing of the Trieux, with protection from a wooden fort on the hill built by the Avaugourd family in the time of the Viking invasions. Through marriage alliance this later brought in the Cordievre, one of Brittany's most famous families who controlled most of what is now the Eastern Cotes d'Armor. They built the first round stone chateaux of the 11th Century. The name Guingamp comes from the Breton "gwen" meaning "white" or sometimes "sacred" and "gamp" from the Latin "camp" or "campus" meaning field. Other place names with Champ or camp often indicate Roman origins.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, in the Wars of Succession, the town naturally supported Charles de Blois, husband of Jeanne de Pontievre. In his wife's name he opposed the de Montfort claim to the Duchy of Brittany. This terrible war raged for over 20 years and in 1345 Guingamp was besieged by the Count of Northampton and his English troops supporting the Montforts. After the final victory of the de Montforts, Guingamp remained in the hands of the Pontievre. Their continuing bitter opposition to the reigning Dukes led them into extreme folly. They kidnapped Jean the 5th in 1421 and held him for 4 months. In punishment, Guingamp was taken into the hands of the Duchy and its chateau was destroyed. Jean's second son, Pierre was given the town and he rebuilt the chateau in square form with four towers. The stout ramparts around the Ville-Clos were also constructed then. During the Wars of the League, a hundred years later, it was again on the wrong side, in supporting the ultra-Catholic Duke de Mercœur and it didn't end there. In 1626 the chateau was destroyed on Cardinal Richelieu's orders after hints of a conspiracy by the Governor. The remains still stand, one tower gone and the three symbolically truncated.

Guingamp was a flourishing centre of manufacture and trade in the medieval period with Guingamp well positioned as a regional commercial centre. Evidence of mills and tanning workshops remain along the river, especially the handsome Moulin des Salles. Some fine half-timbered houses from the time still stand in the Place du Centre. There are equally impressive examples of Renaissance buildings with a wonderful doorway through the archway at number 42. La Plomé, the exuberant Renaissance fountain was originally part of the town's 15<sup>th</sup> Century water supply in a different location. Remains of an aqueduct serving it in its present location

can be seen in the street of that name. At the top of the central square is the magnificent Basilique Notre Dame De Bon Secours, once the chateau chapel, with the black Madonna shrine in the entrance porch and a whole gamut of architectural styles within and without.

The town was home to many religious institutions with the Augustines arriving as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and founding the Abbaye Sainte-Croix in what became the Weavers' Quarter. Their later establishment from the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century now contains the Town Hall which today has paintings by Pont Aven group artist Paul Sérusier hanging in the former cloister. The town continued to expand in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries with the suburbs incorporating more factories and housing estates, schools and a hospital to serve its 10,000 inhabitants. In 1836 a striking new type of prison was built, the first of its kind with individual cells on two levels, opening onto a central Courtyard. It has recently been restored but for public visits rather than prisoners. It's just one surviving example of the many aspects of Guingamp's striking heritage.