



M. Le Madec's Automats

Rob I'm here with the owner, M. Le Madec. Could you tell us about your museum, its origins, what motivated you to set it up.

Le Madec I've spent all my life here in the village of Restelouët, and I've brought back to life all the people who lived in the village, to show people all the work they carried out in the past. There are several people represented, and I've put the names on the models. When you enter, there are two women, two sisters, Victorine and Valentine. Victorine collected the milk, mornings and evenings, because that's what we did in the countryside in those days, and her sister Valentine churned the cream to make butter. Next to them are their old parents, and he shredded the gorse to make fodder, from November until the end of March; she helped by feeding the machine.

Rob When did you start collecting for your museum, exactly?

Le Madec I started in 1995, '96.

Rob And was it difficult to get hold of the machines?

Le Madec No, not really, and as I'm a bit of a handyman, I've put together a bit myself.

Rob And now the machines are working, in fact.

Le Madec Oh yes, all of them. And you'd almost think it was the person themselves. It's very close to reality!

Rob OK, well, let's go and take a look... Oh, it's wonderful!

Le Madec When they bought our milk, it was better than making butter. It was less work, and we earned a bit more. There was a lad here in the village who was a driver for Entremont, and he used to come often for a drink, and he said, "Why don't you try selling your milk? Give it a try, and you'll see." So what did I do? I began to sell. They gave me five churns to fill, 100 litres I gave at first. I had to see the result, didn't I? So when I gave them 100 lts a day, at the end of the month, I looked, and I said "That's amazing!" I earned more and worked less! After that all the others started to sell to businesses. That oat porridge that we made, I ate that too, well, we had to, didn't we, until just after the war. We had about three meals of oat porridge per week, if not, we had a porridge made

from wheat. And we had boiled potatoes, with bacon. We didn't eat as everyone does nowadays - we didn't eat steaks in those days, nor roasts either! We sometimes used to eat chicken at the end of the summer, but we also raised chickens for sale, to earn money to buy groceries. That's the cow, there. I made that one to show people how we used to milk in those days. The women used to milk straight into the white pot there, like this... It was the women that did that work, generally. My mother used to milk by hand, there were 10 or 12 in those days, in '62.

Rob Eugenie, over there, is doing something. What's she doing?

Le Madec She's sorting the cereals. We used to sort through the grains in those days

Rob In that big machine?

Le Madec The grain that we used for planting came from the two bottom drawers, those were the larger seeds. It was a kind of selection. From the others came the grain for making flour, and from the top drawer came the grain we gave to the poultry. [.....] She would work away, and she never brushed her hair! This machine won first prize at the Agricultural Fair in Paris in 1900! This model is 112 years old! It's rare to find to find working machines as old as that. When I opened my museum, at the start, by word of mouth, I got a lot of phone calls, from people offering me things. Sometimes I talked with them, sometimes I managed to bargain with them. Sometimes there were blokes who wanted ridiculous prices! Then, I would say no thanks, I didn't need what they were selling. I had some stuff given to me, for free, too. Above all, I've made this museum up from genuine antique machinery, made to work by "people"! That's a potato harvester which came out in 1945, just after the war. And that's a centrifugal separator to extract the honey. The hive is there. We would take the frames out of the hive, like that, then put them in the machine and turned the handle. With the centrifugal force, the honey would come out here, and we could collect it using the tap down here. In those days, the bees were healthy; when they landed on the flowers, they weren't contaminated. This is linen, and hemp. There was a lot of linen around Quintin, and there was hemp grown around here as well. This machine was for crushing the hemp fibres. When they cut down the hemp, they soaked it in pools for three weeks in summer. It was harvested in July, and left to soak until the end of August. Then it was dried in the sun, and when it was dry, everything in the centre would break, leaving only the fibres. Then the person who worked non-stop would pull the remaining fibres through the comb. Then those fibres would be used to make string and rope. The Bolloré Company of Quimperlé took all the rest to make into cigarette paper, JOB paper, for rolling that rough tobacco! There's the plank that hung above the table. There's the pile of crêpes (they were made once, to last the whole week), the bread was there, and there are the spoons. In the old days, long ago (I've

never seen it), maybe 200, 250 years ago, I've heard the old people say, there was only that oat porridge, and soup! There was no need for forks, so after they had eaten, they did their own "washing up". The men gave a quick wipe with their thumbs, and put their spoons on the rack, back side up. The women put theirs back side down. This way, the women were considered cleaner than the men! The cider was drunk at midday. Everyone made their own. That's the larder, and that's where the crockery went. This here is the lit clos (the enclosed bed). And that's the bale of oats that was in the quilt. There was straw underneath. The mother was seated this side [of the fire], and the father that side. She would rock the cot as she sat there. And there's the bad for adults, a corner bed, we called that. In our house, there was a bed like that there, and another on the others side of the chimney. There was furniture on that side; it was the same on both sides of the fireplace.

The floor was always beaten earth. I never saw a wooden floor, nor a concrete one, when I was growing up. It was hard earth. In winter, they would renew the earth floor, and to make it really well, they would invite all the neighbours round, to dance! To flatten down the earth. They wore clogs with nails, so when it was well beaten down, you could see the marks of the nails in the earth! That's the iron, and the hot coals were put in that. The iron could be warmed by the fire on that plate there, and this one was used for ironing the coiffe (women's headdress). That other iron was too large to get into the corners; this one was used for that special job.

Marion of Faouët was a robber. She went to peoples' farms and robbed them. They say that she took money to give to the poor, I don't know, but I'm sure she kept a bit, a lot, for herself! And she was arrested there [model of farm], and taken away to prison in Carhaix. She escaped six times, and the seventh time, she was hanged at Quimper. She had a gang of four or five, and she was from Faouët, and she would come on market day to Carhaix, on a Saturday. And as she came quite often, she knew all the bars in the town, and she would ask the landlord who was from Motreff, who was from Plevin. And the fellow would tell her that he, over there, was from Plévin, and he had sold four or two pigs, a cow, whatever. And then she would come to that person's house that night, knowing that they had some money. And she'd force them to hand over their money. And she'd do the same in Rostrenen on a Tuesday. And it was as she was coming back from Rostrenen that she was arrested. The gang had got to Castel Laouenan and there, a fight broke out with the locals. She could see that it was going badly, so they left. Someone was sent to the local manor at Kerlouët for help, and they let the constables at Carhaix know that the gang was in Restelouët. So they turned up early, at 5 in the morning, and took them off to Carhaix. That's an illustration of the arrest, at a house in the middle of the village. The house is like that now, a ruin. She was a funny kind of woman! Josef was the one who sharpened the sickles and the scythes. He had to do that because, if the blades weren't sharp, they didn't cut properly.

We had the reputation in the village that it was colder here than anywhere else. They used to say that the devil died of cold in Restelouët. The saying rhymes in Breton [.....] When I stroll around the village, and I meet someone, we never speak French, we always speak Breton.

This is a model of the slate mine in Plévin, which was powered by water until 1936. The big wheel there ran all the other machines. That machine pumped air, for the forge and for the air pump in the mine. The mine was 120 metres deep. Those were water pumps, for draining the mine, where there was always water. The water came up the pipe and emptied into the stream there. There is the beam which beat on the slate to make holes for the explosive. After the explosion, they lifted huge slates out, 500 kgs up to one and a half ton, put them on wagons which took them to the workshops to be processed. The lift took the miners down to work at the bottom of the shaft. There were deaths, sometimes there were accidents, people falling down the shaft, sometimes a landslide. They were sometimes hurt in the explosions, even though they went far away during the explosions.

Rob Your museum is open all the time, or...?

Le Madec In general, it's closed on a Monday. Otherwise its open every day of the week, in the afternoon. I close from November to the beginning of March. Sometimes there are people who don't know the opening times, and I can't tell them to leave, so I show them around anyway. The entry price is whatever people want to give, but for groups it's generally 2€ per person.

Rob I've really enjoyed looking around your museum, thank you very much! Bonne continuation, as they say around here.

