



Greg Newman's integration

- Elaine People move to Brittany for a number of reasons, for the stunning scenery, the slower way of life and sometimes the opportunity to rekindle an interest that they've had before they moved here. I'm talking to one such person, Greg Newman, who moved to Brittany some years ago?
- Greg Nearly nine years ago.
- Elaine Nearly nine years ago and has been able to take much more time out to enjoy and play his music. So Greg, tell us about the instruments you play.
- Greg Yes, I play piano and keyboards and I've played with a band for several years in the UK before coming here and because I can read music as well I suppose I've been able to play for pantomimes and things like that. It was, it was my hobby, my real job was uh, was teaching maths, but music has always been my passion, I've played the piano since I was eight years old, um, and then coming over here to Brittany to retire it wasn't long before the locals asked me to play the organ in church, I'd never ever done that before, but they said the usual "ce n'est pas grave", I wasn't even a Catholic, wasn't even a church-goer but they didn't really mind at all, um, and I went along and had a go, and that was eight years ago, and now I'm involved with goodness knows how many Masses, how many funerals I've done I don't know, weddings, baptisms and I'm now on my tenth Pardon out of sixteen for this year, yes, yes. So that's, that's been a great way of integrating...ooh and also I have learnt some Breton dance tunes and I can play those, and I play those for local clubs and for the 'corps de danse' I play Breton dance tunes as well.
- Elaine So, would you say that with all this involvement in the Pardons and the funerals and weddings perhaps and then you're with a band, that you have expanded your playing..., music playing skills?
- Greg Yes, I suppose I have, yes, yes, it's certainly helped me to sight-read because quite often the priest doesn't get round to telling me what the music is. Like last Sunday's Pardon, uh, I learnt what the music was fifteen minutes before the Mass was due to start, so I had to very quickly scabble round, find the music and then play it. Yes I suppose it's certainly improved my sight-reading skills and I suppose my knowledge, I enjoy playing French tunes as well as I do

British ones. Plus some of the clubs where I play, the old folks clubs, they like a bit of Breton dance, I've learnt about forty Breton dance tunes now, but they like a bit of what they call Danse de Salon as well, things like Passe Doble, Tango, things I never ever dreamt I'd see myself playing, but I do it because it's music and if it gives people enjoyment then I'm happy.

Elaine So much of your time now is taken up with rehearsing for all these different events.

Greg Yes, yes that's true. Yes, yes. It means that my house which did need some renovation is still in the same state it was eight years ago, but yes a lot of time is taken up rehearsing for things, but then you get to a state where if you are playing regularly you just need like a little top up, you don't need to sit and play for hours and hours.

Elaine Just a little rehearsal.

Greg Just a little rehearsal.

Elaine Well you're covering a huge range with the sort of more serious church music perhaps to playing with the band.

Greg Playing with the band yes, which is my real passion. I love playing and singing with our band called Indigo, can I give them a quick plug.

Elaine Yes

Greg And we are all British, but we do play at some French bars sometimes as well, so sometimes you just have to announce things in French as well English.

Elaine But you must have found that with spending so much time in French company and playing for French events that that's helped you with your French.

Greg It has an awful lot with the language, yes, I've not had to go to any lessons and that's been great, I do think that if you can learn a little bit of the language and just have a go, do some integrating, actually mix with French people, do French things, you'll learn more language from them, and one feeds the other, that's it. The more you integrate the more French you learn, and the more French you learn the more you are able to integrate.

Elaine The more you integrate.

Greg Yes, it's like a cycle. I can now spend all day with French people and it really doesn't worry me. I sit up in bed and think, ooh I've haven't spoken a word of English all day, you know, and that's, that's, that's great, but I just don't think about that now.

Elaine So it seems that you are very settled here, obviously enjoying sort of all the aspects of life that music brings to you.

Greg Oh yes, yes very much. Yes, yes I think the keyboard goes in the back of the car every day which is nice.

Elaine So, what's your next event?

Greg Ah. Good question. Er, I don't think I've got anything today.

Elaine Today's a day off.

Greg Today's a day off, I think, yes. But I've got a rehearsal for the next Pardon which is, the next Pardon this Saturday is the big one at Guemené, the Fête de l'Andouille, the Notre Dame de la Fosse. That's a big one because the church gets filled up with all the Conferees (?) coming along in their costumes and lots of Breton costumes and so on. So that's quite an important Pardon that one. And we have to eat a lot of Andouille as well, which isn't everyone's cup of tea.

Elaine No, personally not.

Greg I've got a flavour for it now, and we're going to have a little rehearsal for that as well on Friday, but then there's a Chorale, I forgot about my Chorales as well, I'm involved with two Chorales, one of them in Guemené - I've ended up as Chef de Choeur as directing it - that I have to do in French, that's been a great way of learning the language too. So I've got a Chorale rehearsal, another Pardon, about six more Pardons on the go. A gig with the band, we had one a couple of weeks ago, we're looking for another one fairly soon I hope, although we have got a definite one on New Year's Eve, if I can plug that one, at Saint-Mayeux, which will be an Anglo-French night, and that's always quite interesting. Oh yes, then I've been asked to play just up the road here, play piano for a little party that they're having - ooh I've got two weddings coming up as well. Yes, they're next week. They'll be totally French occasions. Weddings are always happy occasions anyway, and I always get invited to the Vin d'Honneur afterwards, which is great.

Elaine Well, thank you very much Greg, it certainly sounds like music is keeping you busy here.

Greg Rather.

Elaine And bringing you very good quality of life.

Greg Yes, certainly. Thank you.

Elaine Thank you and the best of luck.

Greg Thank you very much.

