



The Little Train, Bon repos

- Jeff I am here with Christian Labetoulle at the railway station at Bon Repos, and I'm talking to him about the railway and also about his interest in railways generally. Christian, firstly, where are you from originally?
- Christian I'm born in Paris and I grew up in Paris and I discovered Brittany when I was doing my, what we call national service. I was assigned to Lorient and it was my first time in Brittany and I fall in love with Brittany.
- Jeff Why did you decide to come back to Brittany?
- Christian The idea was to find a place to rebuild, to recreate a museum dedicated to what we call "le réseau breton" which was a railway network dedicated to central Brittany.
- Jeff Have you always been interested in railways?
- Christian Yes, since I can remember, I have been always interested, but in full-scale railway, not a model railway, but a big-scale railway.
- Jeff So you came to Brittany and, and then what happened?
- Christian And we search a place to build this museum for five years and we finally find the Bon Repos station, and it was very interesting because we were able also to buy the track bed for the former railway line and now we own the track bed for the four next kilometers until Gouarec station. We can't use it right now for the full length because part of it is on the road four lanes, the old four lanes between Bon Repos and Gouarec. But in a few years it will be possible to use the track bed and to lay tracks on it.
- Jeff For how long have you been operating a service for tourists?
- Christian It's the first year. We opened last, uh, last May. So we are using the 60-centimeters line in order to propose a ride for people and also we make a presentation of the project and some of the rolling stock we already have in the station. We had a lot of work, a lot of work had been done by the teams that start in 2011 by digging and also cutting, cutting trees, so most of the team was British-speaking so at this time we used to say that we were the most, the most British of the French heritage railway.

Jeff And, presumably that needed a lot of help, a lot of volunteers.

Christian Yes, it's ... we still need a lot of volunteers as we... the goal for the next winter is to lay a half a mile of tracks in direction of Gouarec in order to increase the length of the heritage railway.

Jeff Are there any restrictions on you? Are there any permissions that you still need to get?

Christian The permissions, in fact, were for riding the train and so we make controls this year and we will do it each two year. We are like a touristic park and we are controlled by a company called TUV, which is a controller famous in all over the world.

Jeff So at the moment, you've got a single train on a two-foot gauge. When that's expanded, to the full-meter gauge, what are you going to use?

Christian We ... in fact, in the future, we will use both gauges, as long as we have rolling stock in both gauges we use them, because all of them are now historical railways and the line will be built with two gauges: one meter and two feet -- 60 centimeters -- it's already the same.

Jeff Have you got the engines and rolling stock?

Christian Yes. We have rolling stock in 60-centimeters and we have everything, from locomotive and also carriage, but for one-meter gauge we have a railcar and only diesel locomotive and only one coach. So we don't have any... we don't have enough equipment to ride the train with one-meter gauge yet. We are still searching for equipment.

Jeff Are you hopeful of finding equipment in good enough condition so that you have it to restore?

Christian Yes, we are working with a Swiss company and a different Swiss company will withdraw their equipment within the next five years so it will give us time to save money to buy them and to organize transport. For next year we have a special, special plan, because it will be the centenary of two battles during World War I, of course, that have been..... where trains have been involved. The first is the Battle of Verdun, but the second one is the Battle of Somme. And, both times, trains have ver.. have been very important for ammunition, for example, transport. So, we would like to do a, to do something in order to, to the memory of the soldiers, French or English, because I think that England gave a lot of his son for France so it's very important also to have memory of that. So, we don't know what we will do but a kind of commemoration for the both battle.

- Jeff And, I understand that one of the wagons you have here was actually used.
- Christian Yes, one of the wagons we have was,uh, was used during the Battle of Verdun. And, on the 60-centimeter gauge we are using some German-built railways that also participated to World War I.
- Jeff When is the railway open?
- Christian The railway open this year at the beginning of May. We run for the whole summer, we run every day and now we are running on Sunday.
- Jeff Presumably you could use more volunteers?
- Christian Yes, because we have a goal is to lay for this winter, to lay half a mile until the first stop point which we have which is a road that we must cross, but we can lay half a mile of tracks and this is a goal for the next summer.
- Jeff And if people are interested in helping you, how can they contact you?
- Christian We have an internet site, which is www.reseaubreton.com, there is a contact... contact address, but mostly on Saturday we will be on site also, so if people are coming on Saturday, we'll be able to show what we are doing and to talk with them and maybe that they can became members, if they want.
- Jeff That's lovely. So, the railway is situated near to Bon Repos, just off the old N164 and you can look up their website which is www.reseaubreton.com. Christian, thank you very much for your time.

