



## *Saving the canal - Judith Paris*

- Jon Now the first question I have to ask you is what exactly does the canal need saving from?
- Judith Ah Ah Ah, it needs saving from neglect. It's been neglected for too long, particularly its locks, the mechanisms, particularly its lock houses, they have been left to rack and ruin really and that's one of the main tenets of our association. We want to get the department and its teams to maintain the canal correctly. It's silted up, the lock gates are broken and you can't manoeuvre them because they are silted up. There's a lot of mud and silt building up on the banks, etc. so it's very difficult to navigate, but apart from that it's not great for fishermen, it's not good for the fish, flora, fauna, anything. There's no movement on the canal.
- Jon So if you were in a little canal boat, in Gouarec for example, I mean how much of that canal in region 22 is navigable at the moment?
- Judith None, because the locks are broken.
- Jon OK, so how far could you travel between one lock and another - what's the maximum distance you can actually...
- Judith There are some locks which are only a couple of metres, a hundred metres apart, but you could, you could for example, the most interesting stretch for us with our canal boat is from Bon-Repos through to the lake, and there are two locks you can go through there and they, they are about forty minutes apart so a good two kilometres, two and a half kilometres, we are talking about four to seven kilometres per hour here.
- Jon That's the maximum?
- Judith That's the maximum, yes.
- Jon Your organisation, what do you hope to achieve?
- Judith Three main things: influence, force, cajole, embarrass the Conseil Departementale into maintaining correctly and regularly the canal. That's dredging it, maintaining mechanisms and, specifically, rebuild a particular lock house at Pont Évén, which is in Plouguernevel commune called maison esclusier, the lock house at Pont Évén its a double lock house which is from 1830, it's now almost in ruin, almost in ruin.

Jon So you're looking for official state money if you like, not contributions from the public - or both.

Judith Ah, it's a mixed bag. We've been focusing on trying to save this lock house, Pont Évén since 2012 actually. The association was finally created in late 2014 because we needed to have that platform, that credibility to get a conversation going. But the exterior of the house, yes it would be European monies and some Conseil Departementale money, but the interior that would be to, to our, that would be us raising monies from foundations, from other charitable funds, from activities, from auctions - think of Bon-Repos. 35 years that the association there worked for, I think ten years just to raise money to put the roof on and there were different different methods. So a whole bag of different ways of raising money but initially, and very importantly, we need the roof put on, we need a new roof on it to stop any more water getting in.

Jon There's one thing I don't quite understand in that in this region, 22, the canal is not navigable and yet in Morbihan and Finistere the canal is navigable. Could you tell us something about that?

Judith Yes, my understanding is that in 1968 when the state gave Cotes du Nord, now Cotes d'Armor, the concession of this canal, in this department they, at the same time, gave Cotes du Nord the right to say whether it was navigable or not. It doesn't mean that it is physically not navigable, it just means the state have crossed it off the list of waterways which is navigable, and passed on the responsibility of the maintenance of this stretch of water to another party. It doesn't mean that it's not physically navigable.

Jon Right...

Judith So it's "erradié de la liste de voies d'eaux navigables". It's just administration and bureaucracy.

Jon But the gates still are silted up and they need attention?

Judith Yes and actually, from a practical point of view, we need to mend the handles, literally, the maneval, the sytem, and there are three locks in particular which, just this summer the handles were broken and there were two, we, and the DTTM and the police, suspect it was actually vandalism.

Jon Yes. Julia, thank you very much and good luck in your quest.

Judith Thank you

