



## **Visit to the Ile de Groix – Elaine & Astrid**

Back in sunny September, 28 'early birds' met at the ferry port in Lorient for what would prove to be a memorable day out on the Ile de Groix!

Just 8kms by 3 and approximately 45 minutes by ferry from Lorient, it's truly a delightfully unspoilt and picturesque place.

Until 1940 it was a major tuna fishing port, where boats called 'Dundees' were rigorously employed. Yes, the design for these boats *did* come from Dundee in Scotland! Sadly, only one remains, moored in Port Tudy. Today, the island relies very much on tourism, together with some agriculture and small businesses, but has more facilities to offer than some towns on the mainland - doctors, nurses and even an emergency helicopter!

For the energetic, there's a 25km coastal path a, excellent sandy beaches for swimming and other water sports and plenty of bikes for hire. For those 'guzzling gourmets' who are more interested in exercising their taste buds, there are plenty of eating places! And for 'culture vultures' there's a museum , the Ecomusée, which has artefacts recounting the history of the island and its inhabitants.

On our arrival, having had an early breakfast, we fell into the Auberge du Pecheur, where fortunately tables had been reserved, as it proved popular! Replenished after a delicious three course lunch, and served so efficiently, "Siesta' was the word that came to mind - but, no such luck - we piled aboard a little bus for a tour of the island.

With enviable dexterity our driver/guide weaved his way through the narrow winding streets of the villages. At times, we were so close to the houses that we could have knocked on the windows - but we behaved ourselves! At the same time, he regaled us with amusing anecdotes about the island and its inhabitants - too many to mention, but perhaps the most extraordinary was when all the men had left and gone to war and the priest, women and children were left to fight off invaders! When the enemy were sighted approaching the island, the Priest told the women to dress in their husband's clothes and to pad their shoulders with seaweed - children as well! Thus clad, this formidable 'army' marched to the beach brandishing farming tools! The invaders took one look at the opposition and beat a hasty retreat and the island was safe once again! 'Seaweed' - a potential war weapon - unbelievable!

We made several stops at places of interest, one being Le Trou de L'Enfer, the Devil's hole or hole of hell, where the priests were able to bathe 'au naturel', no doubt to discourage the devil from making an appearance! We were stunned by a beautiful Caribbean look-a-like beach, white sand, clear blue sea, which had apparently 'moved' some kilometres away from the Village Vacances - I wonder why? Obviously a very choosy beach! And as to La Pointe des Chats - cat lovers in the group were rather concerned, but were relieved to hear that it was nothing to do with cats being swung by their tails into the choppy sea - just a play on words about that particular headland!

After six hours on this truly delightful island, we boarded the ferry for our return to Lorient,

via the submarine base - more about that in another programme! Exhausted in the best possible way, it was a visit that we'll all remember and I'll certainly go back! Brittany's numerous islands express such individuality - each has something different to offer. So do go and explore the Ile de Groix - you won't be disappointed.