



Madeleine at VerTuOses

Susan: And I'm with Madeleine who is part of the new shop VerTuOses in Callac. Madeleine, can you tell us what sort of shop it is? What makes it different to other shops around?

Madeleine: OK, basically VerTuOses is an "épicerie", a grocers er, selling not for profit products, wholesale, it's not quite like wholesale as we know it, but how the French do it. Basically you go in with your own bags and your own bottles, you get them weighed and then you get the produce off the shelf, loose, that's that's the word. OK so it's a grocers selling basic products, the essentials, so sometimes er off the market off... they get fresh vegetables and fruit but mostly it's other wholesale loose

Susan: Is it dried fruit?

Madeleine: Dried fruit,

Susan: Seeds and nuts

Madeleine: Seeds and nuts and cereals and coffee, tea, wine and cider and beer, local beer. Most of the produce is either "bio", organic or local, so and / or local. The idea is to be as much economically viable and with sustainable distances for import ...

Susan: ... and packaging.

Madeleine: ... and low packaging. Trying to be as green as possible which is a little bit to do with what how the name of the shop is

Susan: Oh yes, VerTuOses

Madeleine: Well, it's kind of, dare to be green, or going towards green or and also the word "vertuoses" to being ...

Susan: Virtuous ?

Madeleine: Virt.. well, virtuous in English maybe but in French it would be as in the as in the musical, someone who is "vertuose" is someone who is very good at something

Susan: Oh, that's interesting

Madeleine: A virtuoso. The association is, is a sort of 2 tiered association; there's a main group of about 18 people and then a broader group of other individuals some of whom help out in the shop voluntarily. So all positions are voluntary, there's no paid - although we have just got a paid accountant



but that's the only paid position, everything else is to keep the cost down, to keep everything accessible to everybody.

Susan: And it's run really for the benefit of the community as well as the memb..... well more than the members, members are part of the community?

Madeleine: It's to run with the... for the community and with the idea of introducing different way of thinking about your shopping needs, more sustainable, more ecological.

Susan: Buying things that are local, buying things that you need and want ...

Madeleine: Yes

Susan: ... rather than going to put in the cupboard or throw away when the life span?

Madeleine: Yeah, exactly, you got it.

Susan: That's great. And, um, so it's food and drink and a few other essentials?

Madeleine: Well, very, very few essentials like soap and washing-up liquid and toilet paper and female hygiene products which are recyclable, well not recyclable, re-washable products, and similar sort of things. We did start off with other items of peoples' jewellery and things but that's all been

Susan: That's for a later time maybe?

Madeleine: Yes

Susan: Your involvement, Madeleine, in the in the shop? You're not actually selling in the shop or anything, but I understand you were involved in actually setting up the physical side of the shop?

Madeleine: Yeah. Myself and my partner Steve and a friend and also an associate in the association, the 3 of us were mostly responsible, other people helped as well occasionally but mostly responsible for the actual fitting out of the shop, i.e. the making of the shelves and the beg, borrowing and stealing of the materials for it. In fact we managed to do it all on a budget of about €20.

Susan: That's incredible

Madeleine: That was buying glue and some screws, the rest of it was dragged out of skips or people gave equipment or and currently Caroline and I are still doing being part of the association as we do the window-dressing and we also have a slight area, a small area which is more a sort of community hub, i.e. people come and have a cup of tea or coffee when they want and in that area we have rolling exhibition of peoples' work, mostly people who are in the association because there an awful lot of artists amongst the group.



Susan: So you've been up and running for about a month, just over a month. How's it going?

Madeleine: Apparently very well. I think it started off the first Wednesday, we opened on the Wednesday which is the market day in Callac. It was oh it was impossible to get through the door, well almost. There was a steady flow of people and it was very very well. It seems that it's still doing well but possibly that initial burst of energy is people are now just coming along when they need to rather than wanting to see what was what what er there was to ...

Susan: Well at least you're keeping the clients.

Madeleine: Yeah, yeah. At the moment that's still going, I mean obviously it's very early doors but we're hoping that's going to keep people will buy in their their loose stuff in bulk and not necessarily have to come back straight away but er they will come back to get their next lot of toilet paper ...

Susan: That's great. Is there a website?

Madeleine: There isn't a website as such. There a Facebook page. If you look up "Vertuoses Callac" you'll get, it'll come to you, the Facebook page.

Susan: Right, so good luck for the future.

Madeleine: Thank you.

Susan: It sounds like it's going really well, and er you know, no doubt Callac needs something like this ...

Madeleine: Well, yes

Susan: ... so it's all good, it's all good for the town.

Madeleine: Yeah.

Susan: Thank you very much

Madeleine: Thank you.