

Elaine interviews: Paul Bonnel of Thalie Nantes Brest Association

Elaine: Well, I'm here today to catch up with Nathalie and Paul of the Thalie Nantes Brest Association. And it's been some time since I last spoke to you. In fact, I think it was about the time you were ready to launch the canal boat. So we're now going to find out what these two very innovative people have been up to. First of all, I'm going over to Paul – I know it should be ladies first - but we thought we'd have a look at the Association because Nathalie's got some rather different news for us. So Paul, tell me what's been going on?

Paul: Oh, so Gwareg is well born. You know, er after the launching er we had a really nice season. And er just now we are more than 100 members on the association, you know. And um after the launching, we noticed that people are not really good er marin, it's not sailor it's er marin. They don't know how sculling and er rowing. So we first thing we had to do is er to teach people how to be together on a boat, and er how to use it. With a a new boat you have to learn it. You know, how it goes when it's windy. Er, or, in in the er

Elaine: Current?

Paul: Les excluses

Elaine: The current? Ah, with the locks. Locks.

Paul: With the locks.

Elaine: The locks. Yes,

Paul: With the locks, when you open the, you know, the gate and the the water is going harder. And um, and it was really really interesting. Because er we noticed that this boat was a a nice place for people you know to meet. We are allowed to have 12 people on board. One captain. Er

Elaine: That was you

Paul: Ah no, I have a a a nice captain in front of me. Is a really good captain you know.

Elaine: Multi-talented.

Paul: Er, I was the first rower you know, giving the er the time to the others, you know. And then we had to teach people how to manage a boat. And we were very, very pleased because we we met really nice people, French people, English people also. And so now we have Tony Pendleton is is our new captain, and is he he's really, really a nice guy. And er very competent, how do you say?

Elaine: Competent, the same competent.

Paul: Competent

Elaine: The same.

Paul: Ahha. And so the the last two seasons were very, very, very great. We do a nice, er Sunday, you know, I'm going er with a lot of people, a lot of fun people laughing er a lot of time. And so er it's just a shame that the canal is not in a good condition, you know. There a lot of mud. And er we try to go further and further and go to Mellionec, but the locks, the new locks they they didn't go well, you know. To open the gates too much er mud and er. So we hope that next year, we'll start at the beginning of May, we hope to go to

Elaine: This year.... Next year

Paul: This year

Elaine: This year. Right. It's hard to adjust that we're into this year.

Paul: Yeah. But er who knows, because we have a lot of trees fall in the canal. So a lot of work to do. And er I don't know if the department will er spend time, you know, to to make it er well. But that's the first thing. Second thing is that we just noticed that this boat was very useful for concert, you know, in front of the er camping of Gouarec. We put the front you know, on the chemin vert on the bank

Elaine: Hmhm



Paul: And er front of us are really good guitarist, Soïg Sibérial. He he gave a concert here you know, and um there were more than 20 people on board. And 40 people on the banks, listening to to him and it was a great, great moment. Really. And also we had a great moment last year with Tony and all his friends. They they came from England, it's an association. I, I don't. And the the purpose of the the association is erm to make sport and have a good time. Two different things but you can do both and more than 40 of them came and the you know, and and they came on board er and we had really, really a good time.

Elaine: Fantastic what a great way of integrating as well. Yeah.

Paul: So you know it it's rather short time to use the canal. We can start er at the first of May but the canal is closed at the 31 of October. So at the beginning of November each time we call the members of the association to take up the boat. Er but er we don't want to use a crane, or things like that. And we do that with a hand pull. And we use wooden roll, you know, and we need er around 12 or 15 people, you know, to to tie on the rope. And it it's also a great, great moment. It's like the launching, you know, and when you take up the boat, it's very, very funny. And also last year, in fact, I'm also er vice president of a wooden school boat, and we ask them to build for us a little one, three meters and 20 centimetres long. It's er 80 kilograms. And she goes only with rowing and sculling, she is called Axe Thalie. It's a grim one. And she's er ready for all the members who want to use her on the canal. So er they just have to call us and say: Is she free? And we tell them, where is the key. And they have a nice travel on the canal.

Elaine: Excellent.

Paul: It's for three people. And this one is a a really nice boat. And er we can take her you know, for other meeting, and er we have a trailer a little one. So it's pretty easy to to go to the meeting and say the association is here. We have the smallest boat but we are here.

Elaine: Brilliant. So when do you meet, the association? Does it have a meet a particular day of the week?



Paul: We, Nathalie and I, we are the first Sunday of each month, we are here to please people who wants to go with us on the canal. Otherwise, the others Captain, you know, they can only reserve, reserver.

Elaine: Oh, can reserve, yeah

Paul: The boat? And er.

Nathalie: Yes, um that that's for the Association for it. But when we meet with the other you know associations is um er for events you know, they organise like la Route de L'Ardoise, la Route du Sable, it it's so we can go, we can take the little boat and go to their manifestation.

Paul: In fact our Association is in Côtes-d'Amor. And we are very close to others er Association in Finistere, in Morbihan. And we have the same purpose, you know, to make er the canal er great again.

Elaine: That's wonderful. Bring back the canal!

Paul: Yeah. It, It's such a nice place, you know, and er we have in Côtes-d'Amor a really, really nice, a really nice canal, you know, with rocks with woods, fantastic.

Elaine: Okay, so er what's coming up in the future with the Association?

Paul: We need more and more Captain, you know, able to use the boat.

Elaine: Right

Paul: The the purpose is to make it go on the canal the most of time. Other things, we we want to to welcome.

Elaine: To welcome yes.

Paul: To welcome association of people, you know, there is um, last year it was fantastic. We we met the Foyer de Vie of Gouarec where and we we spent so much good time with them, you know, and they just discover how to row together and and they didn't know if they were able to. And it was really, really a great, great moment, you know, in fact, the purpose of the association is to partager



Elaine: Share

Paul: To share

Elaine: Yeah

Paul: With people.

Elaine: To share with other people.

Paul: Yeah, yeah, it's er, that's why when people want to join the association, it's only er 10 euros a year. And and you can use the boat, the little one as you want. And you can go on the big one, when it's free. So um

Elaine: Excellent. Well, I'm going to look into that.

Paul: Next next thing we we would like to do is to welcome people you know, in a rowing chair, but we need you know, to have er not a bridge, but a

Elaine: Disabled, a ramp.

Paul: A ramp

Elaine: To get on board.

Paul: But in in France, the law are so crazy. So it it it has to be built that way and we're waiting, you know, for that. And also, we would like to try to go on the canal as before. Er the boats er will be pulled by a horse. Er, we have the offers and people er ready to come with us. But the canal is not yet ready because there there's a lot of little trees, you know, and er it's er really a problem with the ropes, need a long rope you know to pull the boat. But I hope in a few years we will do that.

Elaine: Well thank you very much Paul. Thank you for your update on that.

Paul: I, I want to talk about the the project of the association

Elaine: Okay. Alright.



Paul: So this year, we noticed that people were really er pleased to have small boat. So we intend to build this winter two small boat and they are rowing boat but also also sailing boat. It's called a single sail gavi of a boat 1906.

Elaine: Wow

Paul: And it it's um 70 feet and two inches length.

Elaine: Okay.

Paul: And it's all made of wood. And we will build two of them. And we can also bring them on the other part of the canal, you know,

Elaine: So will they have a a a sail? They are sailing boats? They have one, single sail?

Paul: Yeah. So ah some members er of the association are really interested in building wooden boat, but not really row wor rowing. So I'm sure er it will er be a great time because I was a marine carpenter and I've done that all my life. So it's so easy this one is really easy to build. So

Elaine: Fantastic. Yes, no, well, I'm with you all the way on that I think. I love sailing. And I think I love wooden boats and sailing. And bring back sailing.

Paul: Yes, yes

Elaine: That sounds brilliant. We'll do it for you. Leave me with details of obviously how to get in touch then I can contact.

Nathalie: Yes. We we we got also a website if people are interesting in in seeing you know what activities to pictures and and they can go on our site, which is <https://www.thaliedenantesabrest.com>

Elaine: I'll I'll mention that

Nathalie: Yeah.

Elaine: I'll put you it up on the website.