

A-Z of the Communes in the Deux-Sèvres

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by Sue Burgess

COULONGES THOUARSAIS

Coulonges Thouarsais is a small village which stretches over 17,3km and has 443 inhabitants. The population has been rising since 1999. Surrounded by the communes of Luché Thouarsais, La Chapelle Gaudin and Sainte Gemme, Coulonges Thouarsais is situated 16km North East of Bressuire. The inhabitants are known as the Coulongeois and the Coulongeises.

The stream running from the pond of De Juigny is the main waterway which crosses the commune.

If you are ever driving through Coulonges Thouarsais, it is important to note that vehicles coming out of roads on the right have priority in this village. So even though you would seem to be on the main road through the village BE CAREFUL!



The origin of the name Coulonges comes from the words 'colonia' and 'colonica', which indicate former Roman colonies. In 1080, the commune was called Colongia according to a parchment in the Abbey of Saint Jouin de Marnes.

The market town of Coulonges was built on the two sides of an old Gallic Roman road which was used until the Middle Ages.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

• Les Pierres Levées du Bois Migou

Some standing stones can still be seen today - the Pierres Levées du Bois Migou – and even if most Coulongeois know that they were erected and aligned using cattle and yokes in order to plant vines, no-one knows where the stones came from or why there are so many in such a small space. La Pierre aux Lièvres (the hares' stone) is another place of local legends.

COURLAY

Courlay is situated in the North West of the Deux-Sèvres, about 10km from Bressuire. There are about 2500 Courlitaïs according to the last census.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

• La Tour Nivelles – school museum

Ernest Perochon, one of the most famous writers of the Deux Sèvres, was born on the 24 February 1885 at Tyran. He was born into a family of protestant farmers and, as luck would have it, in that same year, a public school was built in the hamlet of La Tour Nivelles. Jules Ferry had made schooling free, non-denominational and compulsory in 1881. Ernest loved school and the teachers soon realised that this boy was particularly gifted. He went on to study in Bressuire and then in the teacher training college in Parthenay. After three years of study, at the age of 18, he became a primary school teacher. His first post was at Courlay and from there he went on to teach in several different schools in the Deux Sèvres. Ernest Perochon began to write poems in 1908 whilst teaching at St Paul en Gâtine. In 1920 he was awarded the Prix Goncourt for one of his novels. He stopped teaching at the age of 35 to devote himself entirely to writing.

The school at La Tour Nivelles is now a museum and shows you what school was like - with blackboard, desks, inkwells, pen holders and well kept exercise books. You can even put on one of the old school overalls and take part in a dictation class.



• La Chapelle du quartier de la Plainelière

La Chapelle du quartier de la Plainelière is part of La Petite Eglise. This church was formed by a group of dissidents after the revolution during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1801 when Napoleon signed a Concordat to try to put an end to the anarchy in the church. Pope Pius VII authorised Napoleon to nominate the bishops and archbishops himself. La Petite Eglise was therefore formed by groups of people who did not agree with the changes in the church. Today there are three Petites Eglises in Deux-Sèvres; at the Chapel in Courlay, Cirières and Montigny. The masses are held in latin in chapels and last about 2 hours. The Petite Eglise celebrates all the religious festivals that were omitted from the Concordat and are particularly conscientious about following strict eating rules during Lent.

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Terves Christmas Market: Sun 8th Dec, 11am - 6pm

Contact Paul Meads *Hope to see you there!*
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