



HANC

Hanc is part of the Coeur de Poitou area. The commune is situated in the canton of Chef Boutonne. The 253 inhabitants of Hanc are known as the Hancois and the Hancoises. The Parish Church is dedicated to Saint Hilaire. The church was first mentioned in the maps of the monastery of Saint Jean d'Angély in 1039. Between 1100 and 1199 the church was attached to Notre Dame church in Bouin. Part of the church was demolished in 1789 but the building has since been restored.

HÉRISSON

Hérisson is part of the commune of Pougne Hérisson and so you will find information about Hérisson later on in our alphabetical tour of the Deux Sèvres communes.

IRAIS

Irais is a small commune of about 200 inhabitants. It is picturesque because of its landscapes - dominated by huge plains like those at Marnes and situated in the countryside around Thouars.



Saint Paul's church was founded in 971 by Aldéarde d'Aulnay, the Viscountess of Thouars. The church was rebuilt in the XIIth century and belonged to the Abbey of Airvault. Unfortunately the church was partly destroyed during the wars of religion when the protestants destroyed the spire on the bell tower. (Photo Wikipedia, Père Igor).

There is a grotto at Irais; the grotto of Vouix. There used to be an underground river which is now dry.

JUILLÉ

Juillé is a commune of 96 inhabitants in the Val de la Boutonne. The stream the Bellesébonne has its source on the commune at La Fonsée. The Bellesébonne flows into the Boutonne near Breuil-sur-Chizé.

This area is part of a Natura 2000 site because of the 6 different types of habitat that can be found there. 16 species of particular interest can be found here including the European otter.

JUSCORPS

Juscorps is in the canton of Prahecq. Situated at 15km from Niort, the commune is crossed by the stream 'The Courance' which runs from East to West. Juscorps is a rural commune but the agricultural activity is on the decline. There are however still five cereal growers on the commune. There are about 350 inhabitants on the commune and they are known as Juscorpriens or Juscorpriennes.

LAGEON

Lageon is situated on the Parthenay - Thouars road about 10km North of Parthenay and 29km South of Thouars. There are 378 inhabitants who are known as the Lageonais and the Lageonaises. The Cébron river flows through the commune which is situated at a height of 150m above sea level.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- The Lageon memorial erected in memory of resistants in the Bressuire and Parthenay area, was inaugurated in 1948. It is situated in the centre of the Parthenay - Bressuire area. A ceremony is held at the memorial every year on the first Sunday in October.

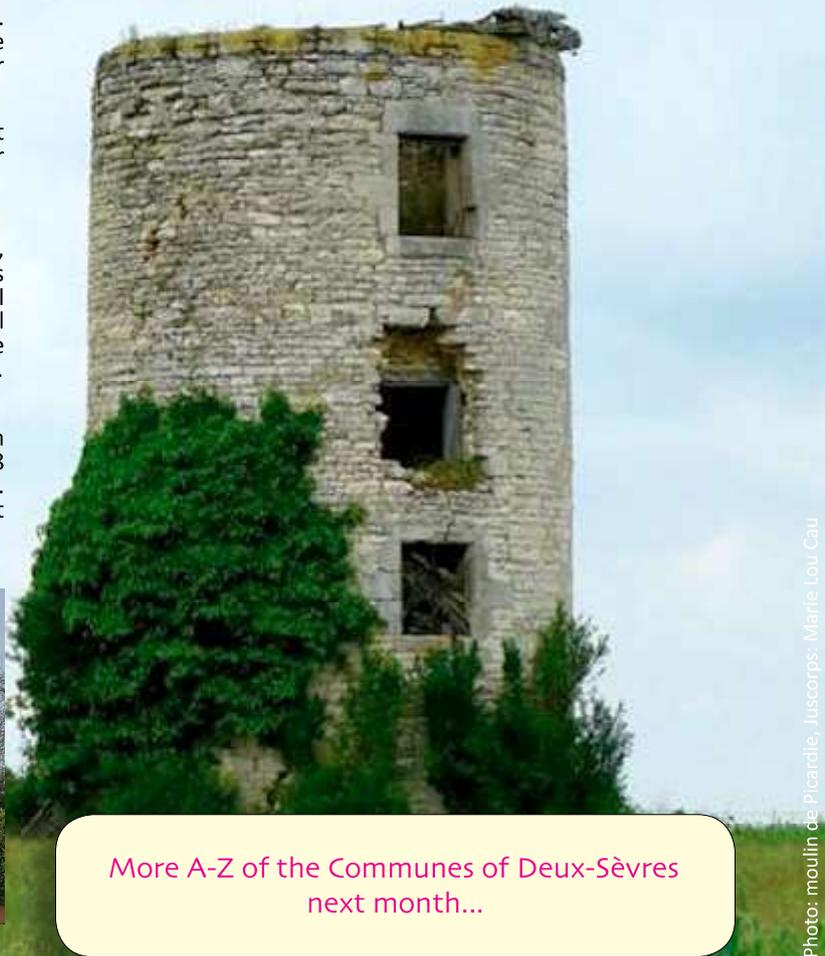


- Lageon was also the site of an important parachute drop 'Le Mélier'. During the nights of the 19th and 20th June 1943 resistants received a drop of two tons of arms on the land at Le Mélier near Lageon. Found some time after by the German police, almost all the men involved were arrested and then deported to Nazi concentration camps. The message broadcast by the BBC to announce the mission was "Et s'il n'en reste qu'un, je serai celui-là" ("if only one remains, that one shall be me").

For unknown reasons the first drop was made outside the marked area. The plane flew over the area once and continued towards Parthenay. It did come back but the drop was well to the left of the land where the resistants were waiting. The resistants went looking for the arms that had been dropped and finally found them at 3am after one container exploded and set fire to a tree, at Le Grand Bois. The arms were transported on a cart pulled by oxen and the cases were hidden in the grain store at the station of Gourgé.

The arms from the second drop were also temporarily hidden at Gourgé. Because of the growing worry of the resistants that the Germans might have seen the smoke from the burning tree, the arms were later moved to La Pléssis aux Grolles at Gourgé. The arms were buried to hide the smell of the powder but when the smell started to come through the ground the arms were again moved and hidden in a pile of beetroot which was to be used for animal fodder. Once winter came and the beetroot pile started to get smaller, the arms were transferred to Poitiers in a cart-load of manure. The arms were finally used to arm the French Free Forces and the Guignard Company of the 114th Regiment of the Infantry of Parthenay. The main people involved in the drop were finally arrested and deported to Buschenwald.

Details of this arms drop can be found at the museum, Centre Régional Résistance & Liberté, Thouars and in the booklet about the monument, also available at the museum. (www.crri.fr)



More A-Z of the Communes of Deux-Sèvres next month...