

A-Z of the Communes of the Deux-Sèvres.

by Sue Burgess

Some definitions:

- Un lieu-dit is a place with a very small number of houses (if any). The name of the lieu-dit is often connected with its geography or with the name of the people who lived there.
- Un hameau (hamlet) is a group of houses in a rural area. The number of houses is too small for the hamlet to be considered as a village. A hamlet always has people living in it whereas a «lieu-dit» does not.
- Un village (village) is a group of houses and other buildings with different and varied usages, in the countryside.
- Un bourg is a large village often with a market. It is also found in country areas.
- Une ville (town) is an urban area regrouping housing, places to work, commerces, businesses and places for social activities.
- Une agglomération (built up area) is the large built up area surrounding the town and including the suburbs and even small neighbouring towns and villages that are now connected to the town.
L'agglomération de Niort – Greater Niort
- Une Cité : this word has two very different meanings. It can be the old centre of a town (Parthenay has its « cité historique »). Or it can be a housing estate, often one with council housing and families with problems.

Les Alleuds is a commune belonging to the canton of Sauzé-Vaussais. There were 297 inhabitants in Les Alleuds at the time of the last census in the village. The commune is surrounded by Maisonnay, Melleran and Clussais-la-Pommeraië. It is at 164 metres above sea level and 40km south west of Niort.

Allonne is a commune situated between Le Retail, La-Boissière-en-Gatine and Secondigny. In 2006 the population was 645. 1.4% lower than in 1999. The river Thouet crosses Allonne. Allonne is about 205 metres above sea level.

A VOIR / MUST SEE:

The sculpture of the Emmaüs meal on the altar in the church.



Amailloux stretching over 3,725 hectares is the largest commune in the canton of Parthenay.

The origins of Amailloux go back to the Roman occupation when Amailloux was known as Animalya (Animals) and then as Amallo in 1095. The people of the commune are called Amaliens. The first church in Amailloux in the 11th Century was a priory church which was given to the Abbey of Airvault by the Bishop of Poitiers in 1095.

The castle, of which only part of the tower and some foundations remain, was at that time made up of a courtyard surrounded by a moat and protected by a high wall. The keep was in the middle. There were towers at the three corner angles and the two storey dwelling was at the side of a tower with a stone staircase. There were 950 inhabitants in Amailloux in 1750.

Amailloux was the first market town to be burnt during the Vendée wars. Only the church, the presbytery, part of the castle and an old house with its timbered facade survived the fire. The old house is today the Town Hall.

For many years wolves were a huge problem in the village and the cause of poverty and destruction. In 1800 a huge wolf hunt was organised. Of all the castles which surrounded the commune only Tennesus and Fougerit are still visible.

A VOIR / MUST SEE:

The Town Hall, Tennesus castle (private), Fougerit castle (private).



Amuré had 450 inhabitants in 2005, an increase of 40.2% in relation to 1999. Surrounded by the communes of Saint-Georges-de-Rex, Le Bourdet and Sansais, Amuré is at about 10 metres above sea level. The rivers Courance and La Rivière cross the commune. The inhabitants of Amuré are Amuréens and Amuréennes.



The large port of **Arçais** has been completely restored. This is the place where the magical boat festival, the Féerie Batelière, takes place in August. It was the main place for commercial exchange between the plains and the Sèvre Niortaise river valley. A wooden crane reminds us that years ago the trunks of poplar trees, transported by waterways, were hoisted out of the water onto the banks.

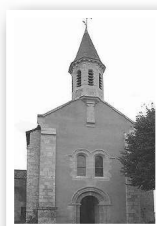
At the edge of the river port stands an 1829 dwelling (a private property visible from the street). The eleven warehouses at road level were used for stocking merchandise in transit between Niort and Marans. Continuing along the Chemin de la Garenne there are old farms which overlook both the street and the Minet mill race. Arçais is a village which has typical marsh housing and is an ideal place from where to set off to discover the wet marshes on foot, by bicycle or by flat boat.

A VOIR / MUST SEE:

The Féerie Batelière boat festival in August. This is a son and lumière show performed by the locals.



Ardilleux is situated 41 km southeast of Niort, between the communes of Bouin, Chef Boutonne and Loubigné. The commune is crossed by the river Aume. There has been a church here since the end of the 10th Century. During the 11th Century the church was dedicated to Saint Saviour (St Sauveur). The church was finally dedicated to St Junien in 1118 when it was attached to Nouaillé Abbey. Nouaillé Abbey is also dedicated to St Junien.



A VOIR / MUST SEE:

St Junien Church.

Please return to this section next month to see the continuation of 'A-Z of the Communes of the Deux-Sèvres.'