

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

by Sue Burgess

Aubigny

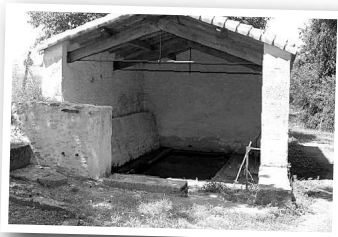
Aubigny has about 176 inhabitants. The commune is spread over an area of 12 km² which gives a population density of 15 inhabitants per km². Aubigny is at an average height of 146m above sea level and is situated near Pressigny, Le Chillou, Lhoumois, Gourgé and Oroux.

Augé

Augé is part of the canton of Saint-Maixent-l'École. The inhabitants of Augé are called Augéens and number about 794. Between the plains of Niort and the hills of the Gatine, the narrow streets of Augé snuggle against the XIth and XIIth century church of Saint Grégoire.

À VOIR / MUST SEE:

- There are several wash-houses on the commune.
- The steep little streets.
- The XIth and XIIth century churches.
- The mulled wine festival in January.
- The Contes en Chemin story festival during the second half of July.



Availles Sur Chizé

Since the 1st January 1973, Availles-sur-Chizé has joined with Chizé.

The village is built around a rocky promontory where you can still see ruins of the medieval castle, a key element in many battles during The Hundred Years War. The inhabitants of Chizé are Chizéens.

Chizé is situated on the banks of the river Boutonne. There is also the 4 800 hectare state owned forest of Chizé. Chizé is well known in the world of science and ecology because of the CEBC – centre of Biological Studies which is based in the forest.

The town of Availles was given to Thomas de Wodestock, the son of King Edward III of England under the treaty of Brétigny signed in 1360 although the town was not handed over until 1363.

Availles Thouarsais

The village of Availles-Thouarsais is mentioned as early as 1179 in the records of Saint Jouin de Marnes under the name of Availia, and in 1300, in the records of the diocese of Poitiers. On Cassini's map representing France between 1756 and 1789, the village is called Availle.

A golden coin with the effigy of the Emperor Tetricus was found under the rocks. Roman tiles have been discovered and aerial photos have revealed the existence of a Gallic-Roman villa with three buildings and a protective surrounding wall. A limestone sarcophagus was discovered near the church and about a hundred prehistoric objects or pieces have been found at Le Déffend.

À VOIR / MUST SEE:

- Piogé castle

Piogé castle stands on a promontory overlooking the Cendronne river. The castle was destroyed for the first time in 1207 by Philippe Auguste. It was later rebuilt. In 1630 the village was hit by the plague. In eight months one out of three inhabitants died.



Avon

Avon is a commune in the canton of la Mothe-Saint-Héray. The inhabitants are known as Avonnais and there were 75 of them the last time the census was held in the village.

À VOIR / MUST SEE:

- Pollarded oak tree on the military camp

Azay le Brûlé

The inhabitants of Azay-le-Brûlé are called Azéens or Azéennes. There are 1753 inhabitants and the commune is made up of 12 villages: Beausoleil, Cerzeau, Chamier, Fonvêrines, Jaunay, Kadoré, La Brousse, Le Bourg, Le Clatreau, Mautré, Mons and Puyblain. Two rivers cross the commune – the Lambon and the Sèvre Niortaise.

À VOIR / MUST SEE:

- The Roman bridge

Azay-sur-Thouet

Azay sur Thouet is in the heart of the Gatine. During the second world war, a Jewish family took refuge in the bar on the main street of Azay-sur-Thouet. The couple who owned the bar at that time hid the family and lied to the police. A monument which names the commune as one of the sites of the Resistance makes particular reference to Charles Gabriel Tellier who was shot on the 13th June 1944 by the inspectors of the SAP (Political Affairs Section).

There is a commemorative plaque on the wall of the old café of la Girardièrre where Valentine Germain used to hide resistants like Charles Gabriel Tellier.

The grave of Robert le Chouan can be seen in the town cemetery. François-Augustin Robert participated in the Royalist uprising in Western France in 1832.

À VOIR / MUST SEE:

- Notre-Dame de l'Agenouillée Church (the Church of the Kneeling Lady)

(2km from Azay/Thouet, towards Secondigny). There once lived a pious noble lady who was going to Mass to celebrate the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. Along the way she met a poor woman. Stopping to help the beggar, the noble lady brought her back to her manor and took care of the woman herself. Upset to hear the Elevation bell-ringing before she got to the church, the lady kneeled, asking God's forgiveness for being late. The Virgin appeared to the lady and showed her the priest raising the consecrated host. The noble lady had a Pietà carved representing herself kneeling to pray.



A chapel was built in 1550 but was replaced in 1892 by the edifice we can see today. Many visitors still gather here for the September 8 pilgrimage, on the feast day of the Nativity of Our Lady. An organ was offered to the chapel in 2000 and a concert is given here every summer.

- La maison des Pêcheurs

This building which is an old mill on the river Thouet has recently been restored.

There is a picnic area.

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