



A-Z of the Communes in the Deux-Sèvres

POUFFONDS (POUFFONDS ST GÉNARD)

by Sue Burgess

Pouffonds is situated close to Melle. The commune has about 350 inhabitants and is crossed by the river Béronne.

A secondary Roman road linked Melle to the main Saintes – Poitiers road through Rom and Brioux. Pouffonds was situated close by. The name of the village appears in several documents dating from the last part of the 10th century.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- The Church of Saint Maclou is listed at the end of the 13th century, in the list of parishes drawn up by Gautier, the bishop of Limoges.
- The original parts of the church probably date from the 12th century. Entrance to the church is through the stone **ballet** (porch) which still has its old stone benches. The door probably dates from the end of the 13th century.
- The furnishings date from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Only the octagonal baptismal fonts are older. The six polychromic statues in moulded plaster are of no great artistic value but are a witness to the devotion and generosity of the parishioners of the time.
- The statues are of Saint Antoine of Padoua, Saint Radegonde, Saint Theresa of Lisieux, Saint Bernadette, Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Joseph as a child. The stained glass window by the Guérithault brothers dates from 1870 and shows the Bishop Maclou.

PRIAIRES

Priaires is a small commune with just over 100 inhabitants who are known as the Priairais and Priairaises. Situated close to Mauzé-sur-le-Mignon, Priaires is part of the Niort agglomeration.

PRIN DEYRANÇON

In 1402, Dey-Rançon was the largest commune of the département. At that time the commune was composed of several hamlets, (Prin, le Petit-Breuil, la Grange...) and farms. After the Revolution, the two main villages were joined together to form Deyrançon with over 1000 inhabitants. But throughout the 19th century, there was a strong rivalry between the inhabitants of the peat marshes and the wine growing plains. It was impossible to govern in the town hall and Petit-Breuil became the head of the commune in 1856. In order to put an end to the quarelling, the Prinois demanded the building of a school and townhall at Dey. In 1903, Deyrançon was divided into Prin-Deyrançon and Le Petit Breuil-Deyrançon. The church and the cemetery of Notre-



Notre Dame de Dey © communes.fr

Dame de Dey were shared and made up the border between the two new communes. In 1971, the project to annex Petit-Breuil to Mauzé-sur-le-Mignon became a reality.

Until the first world war, the Quarantaine, a famous wild strawberry cultivated around the peat bogs of Prin, were picked by the women and then sent for 10 centimes the basket, by rail, to the restaurants of Paris.

This peaceful little town situated between Niort and La Rochelle with its 12 km of streams, invites you for long walks over the plains. The visit of the Romanesque church of Notre-Dame de Dey reminds us of the religious fervour of those who cultivated the fields.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- Notre-Dame de Dey church dating from the 17th century (with some Romanesque parts), its cemetery and fortified walls.
- The wash-houses.
- The alkaline peat bogs of Prin.
- The five trees that are classified as remarkable trees of the Deux-Sèvres (thornless honeylocust, common yew, Provençal hackberry at Notre-Dame de Dey and two plane trees at the logis de Grange - private).

Notre-Dame de Dey church

The toponym Deyrançon, from the latin Dei (God) and prelatin Rançon (rock), means the rock of God. Joined to the southern part of the village by a bridge, the church of Notre-Dame de Dey, standing on its own on the plain, at the bottom of a slight dip, surrounded by its cemetery, is fortified with thick walls and towers with arrow slits. This is probably because it used to serve as a stopping place for pilgrims on the road to Santiago de Compostela. It has been renovated by a group of young Europeans. The Romanesque church, destroyed by fire several times, has been reconstructed. The western facade dates from the 17th century.

Inside, three column tops tell stories (Daniel sitting with lions licking his feet, lions' paws on the prophet's head and the woman being bitten by snakes and devils), baptismal fonts (large oval dish completed by a small stoup for holy water), tomb stones of the family of the lords of Prin Deyrançon, a large wooden cross, and a stone memorial for those members of the communes of Prin-Deyrançon and Petit-Breuil, who were killed in the Great War.

Remains of the hamlet, that has now disappeared, can be seen in the park (town hall, school and farm buildings).

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