Sainte-Blandine

Sainte-Blandine is situated in the *Communauté de communes du Cellois, Coeur du Poitou, Mellois et du Val de Boutonne.* The commune stretches over an area of 16.22km², and has 712 inhabitants.

In 2014, there were 290 lodgings on the commune of Sainte-Blandine, 263 main residences and eight holiday homes. The rest empty. About 70 inhabitants work on the commune itself and 47 enterprises were listed in 2015 of which 13 had between one and nine employees.

There are 455 inhabitants aged between 15 and 64 years old. Of those 361 are working.

Saint-Christophe-sur-Roc

The village of Saint-Christophe-sur-Roc is part of the *Communauté de communes du Val d'Egray*. The inhabitants of the village are the Christophoriens and the Christophoriennes. The population of Saint-Christophe-sur-Roc was 558 people at the last census. The commune stretches over 10.96km.

The Romanesque church dates from the 12th century and was bought by the *Conseil de Fabrique de Saint-Christophe* in the third year of the Republic to stop it being given back to the Catholics. Renovation works carried out in 1875, brought to light a fragment of tombstone with the effigy of a knight in armour, with his dog by his side. Another had an engraving of Rogres de Champignelles and a 14th century coat of arms. It is now in the museum in Niort.

Near the old post office, there is a linden tree called the *arbre de la Liberté* (freedom tree). It was planted on the 5th May 1889, to celebrate the centenary of the Revolution. In 1989 for the bicentenary, another linden tree was planted.

For those who like walking, the downloadable details of a 10km walk which starts outside the church in St- Christophe-sur-Roc and passes several restored wash houses, can be found at: www.randoendeuxsevres.fr/index.php?id_product=1687&controller=product

Saint Coutant

Saint-Coutant is situated 37km from Niort and 47km from Poitiers. The small town is situated on the edge of the Mellois plateau, on a old Roman road and on the Greenwich Meridian.

The Mellois plateau stretches out to the west of the commune. The next village is Saint-Vincent-la-Châtre and it is 3km away. To the east is the valley of the river Dive du Sud which has its source in the commune of Saint Coutant at the Fontaine de Bruneau. It passes close to the Château de Germain, and then through the communes of Sainte-Soline, Lezay and Rom before flowing into the Clain which is a tributary of the Vienne.

There is a weekly market at Lezay.

A signposted 8.5km walk, with observation panels (geology, flora and fauna, history) runs around the northen part of the commune.

The name of Saint-Coutant, in its Latin form of Sanctus Constantius, is found for the first time on a map dated 1092.

Saint-Gilles church and the buildings next to it are what remains of a 13th century Augustin priory which was ruined during the Wars of Religion. Father Clémot had the church and the presbytery rebuilt from the ruins in the 18th century.

A protestant temple used to exist between the church and the cemetery. It was built in the 19th century by the architect Jean-Baptiste Guillaud. It was abandonned and later demolished in 1984.

The Château de Germain, dating in part from the 14th century is mentioned in written documents dating from 1351. It was restored in the 20th century having been left to go to ruins in the 18th century. Next to it, the Moulin de Germain (the water mill) was built in the 16th century. In 1800 there were three wheels for making flour and a fourth one for the fulling and treating of fabrics.

In 1611 the domain of Saint-Coutant depended on the Viscount of Aulnay but the castellany of Germain depended on the marquis of Laval-Lezay. In the 18th century Saint-Coutant came under the sénechaussée of Poitiers. The parish of Saint-Coutant belonged to the archpresbytery at Rom.

The houses of Saint-Coutant are regrouped in a series of about thirty hamlets. The main ones are :
• The Bourg, the old market town, in the centre of which the church can be found along with the old primary school building. The school was closed in 1984, renovated in 1999 and is now a meeting place for clubs and associations. (Maison des Associations).
• Bourchenin, with a 17th century farm-house and Lanebouyère.
• La Chevallerie, with a 17th century farm-house.
• Crolour, on the Roman road from Saintes (Mediolanum Santonum) to Poitiers (Limonum). The Roman road went through Brioux-sur-Boutonne (Brigiosum) and Rom (Rauranum). There used to be an annual fair at Crolour.
• Huric and le Tertre. The old school building now houses the town hall.
• Puy-Richard (Just called *Le Puy* in the 13th century). Close by in the wood at Molland is the site of a medieval fortified farm with remains of a feudal mound.
• Verdroux is the largest of the different hamlets on the commune.

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