



Richard Griffiths on and off the beaten track.

Elaine So, Richard, to obvious first question, what brought you to Brittany and when?

Richard We discovered Brittany in 1998 and entirely by accident. I have a very odd er career path, I wouldn't even call it a career path, but to cut a long story short I found myself in Paris working for a large consultancy in 1995 and simultaneously a former colleague of mine erm had decided he'd had enough of England. He was a Scotsman and so that might have had something to do with it. and he had left London and bought a house in Brittany because he was a freelance theatre technician, did shows, and so he thought he could work anywhere. And he said do you want to come down and borrow the house? So we went down and borrowed the house. And to say it was a little rustic would probably be understating it a bit. Er it was very nice but it hadn't had very much done to it for about 35 years. Erm there was no fuel erm and there was no electric fire and it was in November and it was about as cold as we've ever been. And in fact we slept in our clothes it was so cold, and my wife said "never ever again am I coming to this house and I don't really want to come back to Brittany." And then the aforementioned friend rang up about 12 months later and said that he was selling the house and were we interested and I said "yes." And my wife said "can you make it warm" and I said "yes," so we bought it. And we were very fortunate because we bought it before the big hike in property prices and we were living in the Parisian region and so we used to come down and escape from the telephone and the computer and very jolly it was too.

Elaine So do you come from a journalistic background?

Richard No. Er my original intention in life was to actually be an actor, but I didn't realise that intention, but I did do technical theatre. I trained as a teacher of speech and drama got a job, probably the only job that my father would have ever recognised as being a real job, urm with the Consultancy and I started doing communications for the Consultancy and at that point I started writing.

Elaine How did come to become involved in contributing regularly too?

Richard Well, that was fairly simple really. I got in touch with Gareth, and went up to see him. My intention had been when we came down - we arrived permanently in Brittany in 2008 - and my intention was to carry on doing copy writing, long copy writing, so brochures and stuff like that. Er but I also wanted to do a bit of journalism on the side and I had this fantasy that I might even make some money out of it - but that was a fantasy. However, I went to see Gareth and thought that we could probably, you know, work together quite happily and he was kind enough also I think to think the same thing, and so I started writing little articles for him and we called it 'On and Off the Beaten Track.' after two or three editions, as far as I



recall, and I've been doing it more or less, ever since. I had a bit of a pause about 5 years ago but basically I've been writing for him since about 2009

Elaine So, for 'Off the Beaten Track' how do you decide where to go and where do you get the background historical information from?

Richard Decisions to where to go - it really does vary. We both like to try and get to different places in Brittany because we like Brittany a great deal, but also sometimes I've covered places which are much further afield. It's really, I suppose, as the mood takes me. If I'm going somewhere specifically I'll look on the map and I'll choose it, but if we're travelling around then I'll look for something that interests me. and we'll, I'll, write something around that. But what I do try to do is buy the local guide or get information from the churches or the castles or whatever it is that I'm visiting. And in fact I have a tendency to take photographs of the information panels and then I can do my, if you like, historical research from the information panels which is, I try to make, that my first source, but it's not always possible.

Elaine Have you ever found yourself landing up somewhere, sort of arriving somewhere maybe by chance or by accident, or by following a deviation that doesn't take you anywhere and then thinking ooh I must, I must come back here or I must do something about this.

Richard Yes, I mean, I think probably quite a lot. There are so many things that are so incredibly surprising. The one that springs to mind is the one that I've just written about for the CBJ which is La Gacilly. that we had decided that we would do a bird walk somewhere on the coast - south coast - and we managed to arrive at the wrong place and there was no way, I think it was a Saturday morning or possibly a Sunday morning at about half past seven, and there was no way we could make the enquiry as to where we should have been so there was a certain frisson about who should have done what and then we drove off back in the direction of - we thought we'd go somewhere - we'd sort of head up to Redon and we arrived at La Gacilly in the middle of the photo festival which we were completely unaware of and we were bowled over by it. and it was fantastic. In fact I think in those days it was even better than it is now because they had a lot of photographs in the middle of town so you really had the impression that the whole place was a huge open air gallery

Elaine Finally, This is a difficult one, I think, maybe. What has been your most memorable and perhaps favourite place to visit so far?

Richard I don't think I can answer that question. One of the things that is very appealing about Brittany is that all of it is very interesting. I mean there are obviously places that you probably wouldn't want to go to but you could spend an awful lot of time in Brittany, you probably could spend your entire life in Brittany, and never leave it, and still not have seen it all

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Elaine Well, thank you very much for your time Richard and do continue writing your great articles because that's something I always read, I do read that, and best of luck with whatever journey you take.

Richard Thank you very much