

Elaine interviews: Sarah about her new role with the AIKB

- Elaine: So Sarah, er Sarah, welcome to Spotlight HQ, it's the centre of Gouarec, the centre of the universe we like to think. So, before talking about your new role in AIKB can we just backtrack?
- Sarah: Yeah.
- Elaine: To tell us perhaps like where you were born, or educated?
- Sarah: Okay, well I was born in a town called Villefrance-sur-Saône which is near Lyon and I was there for twenty two years and then I decided to go to England. I studied foreign languages in France, in Lyon, and after passing my degrees there I left to go to England, got jobs there in education, in the artistic world as well. Artistic world first, and then education and spent twelve years in the U.K. and then moved to the south of England. So, in education I was working for the council, Cornwall County Council, and working for literacy, working as a teacher for French and German and also dealing with I.T. projects for education. I was in charge of three hundred primary schools.
- Elaine: Good grief. Wow.
- Sarah: Dealing with I.T. projects. So that was that. Then I went to the south of France for a renovation project so er I had what they call down there a bergerie, which is a shepherd's house, and with my ex-partner we decided to renovate it. It was a huge project. I didn't see the end of it personally, I left before it got finished.
- Elaine: Before it got finished.
- Sarah: And down there I was working for a wine company and then I set up my own business, property management, because there were quite a lot of English-speaking people. And I spent ten years in the south of France in the Corbières, so that's between Narbonne, Carcassone, Perpignan.
- Elaine: Fantastic.
- Sarah: So, I was down there, and then came to Brittany.
- Elaine: So, what actually attracted you to Brittany?
- Sarah: A Breton man.
- Elaine: Ah. I see. A romance.
- Sarah: Who I met in the south of France.



- Elaine: Oh, right. Right. Interesting because I, you know, I didn't know whether you were originally from Brittany.
- Sarah: I'm not, not Breton, not a Breton. No, no.
- Elaine: Right.
- Sarah: I came to Gouarec, er I had never heard of Gouarec, ten years ago. But my partner had his house near Gouarec, in Plélauff and we decided to live together. He said to me, do you know Gouarec? No, I just went on Google map, street view and ended up in front of AIKB actually. Perhaps that was a sign, and I thought, I looked around, virtually, and I thought that looks like a nice little village. I call it a village, and er, that was that. I thought, okay, let's go for it.
- Elaine: Because that's, it's very different Brittany is, its own little unique place.
- Sara That's right.
- Elaine: Compared to other parts of France.
- Sarah: Yes.
- Elaine: Which is why it's almost quite special.
- Sarah: Yes, it is. Definitely. So, that was how it started ten years ago. I came to Brittany, didn't know anybody apart from my ...
- Elaine: Your partner.
- Sarah: My Breton partner.
- Elaine: Right. And so then you went to AIPG.
- Sarah: AIPG, the estate agency.
- Elaine: Yes.
- Sarah: Yeah, I was lucky that I just saw an advert that they were looking for someone who was local. Well I was then because I was living in Gouarec, and who could speak English. So, I applied and I got the job.
- Elaine: I see. Oh, I mean with AIKB there and er it's almost like the first stop that people make when they come here.
- Sarah: That's right. Yeah.



- Elaine: And also I know the English people if they are coming over from England they are looking for a house and they need help with it.
- Sarah: Yes. Right.
- Elaine: They are sort of desperate to.
- Sarah: Well, that's why, when I was working at the agency, the estate agency, with Maggie we used to swap clients, sort of thing. I used to, the clients, used to buy the property and I used to refer them to Maggie afterwards and Maggie sometimes had people looking for houses and so she used to refer them to me.
- Elaine: She would send them over...
- Sarah: Yes.
- Elaine: So you were cross exchanging.
- Sarah: That's right.
- Elaine: That's fantastic.
- Sarah: So we were already collaborating at the time.
- Elaine: Nice. So it's funny though how things work out.
- Sarah: Yeah.
- Elaine: I mean you started near Lyon.
- Sarah: Yes.
- Elaine: Then you go to England.
- Sarah: Yes. Then the south of France.
- Elaine: Then the south of France.
- Sarah: And now Brittany.
- Elaine: And now Brittany. So, what actually made you, why did you apply for the position of office manager at AIKB?
- Sarah: Well, because some of the work I used to do it when I had my own business in the south of France because I was doing property management but it was also, it was a job divided in three, sort of. I was dealing with holiday rentals, so from A-Z basically. Dealing with the adverts, dealing with the preparation of the properties, dealing with the finances, dealing with everything. The owners didn't have to do anything. So, I had about twenty properties to look after, so that was

one job. And next to that I was doing a lot of translations for a company in Béziers, and the third part was dealing with all the administrative problems people could have. All my clients could have – insurance companies, renewing things like EDF or the water company or, this type of thing. So it was very similar to what Maggie does, and when I came to Gouarec, my, idea to start with, was to carry on what I was doing down there, and do it here. Dealing with problems. So I was told to get in touch with Marilyn. So I left a note in her letter box and she got in touch, we met, and she explained what AIKB was all about. And I thought, well, I can't create my own business, I can't carry on my own business because it already exists in Gouarec. There is no point, and at the same time the job at the estate agency turned up so I thought I am just going to apply, and that's how it happened. So, basically Maggie's job, each time I was seeing Maggie I kept thinking, she's lucky because I would like to have her job. But I never thought that one day that could happen so it just happened that she is going to retire.

Elaine: It's all happenstance, isn't it?

Sarah: Yeah.

Elaine: It's all coincidence, happenstance, right?

Sarah: Yeah.

Elaine: She's retiring.

Sarah: Or its fate.

Elaine: Yes. Absolutely, it was meant to be. But it was just a matter of timing.

Sarah: That's right.

Elaine: Isn't it. It's down to timing.

Sarah: Ten years.

Elaine: Ten years of timing.

Sarah: When you're patient, it arrives.

Elaine: Things happen. Yes, yes. Slowly, slowly. In December I know and also perhaps before you've been shadowing Maggie for a while, for several weeks.



Sarah: Since last, er, the end of August.

Elaine: The end of August? Right, I didn't realise. Okay. Because I know it's been covering for her when she's gone off to England.

Sarah: Yes. Yeah.

Elaine: What are you looking most forward to dealing with do you think? What is the most interesting?

Sarah: If I say taxes you are not going to believe me.

Elaine: No way.

Sarah: Um, all sorts, actually. Just helping people. Actually, the, the more complicated it is, you know the, when people have problems and we're not talking about just, you know, renewing Titre de Sejour, this type of thing, I am looking forward to that, but if there are real problems with artisans, or, or where a situation is blocked and nothing's doing anything about it, nobody is doing anything about it then this is the kind of situation I like to intervene and, and just sort it, sort it.

Elaine: Yeah.

Sarah: So I am looking forward to that.

Elaine: Fantastic.

Sarah: And then also all the events to organise.

Elaine: Yes, that's a little sort of sideline that tends to creep in in a way, doesn't it because of the preparation.

Sarah: But I've got the experience because when I was in the south of France I used to belong to an association and we used to organise a lot of things like that. So I am, I'm sort of used to it, so er.

Elaine: And I think that over the years, I know, it's evolved so that there are plans in place.

Sarah: Yes, that's right.

Elaine: So it's not just like one big ...

Sarah: Starting fuddle.

Elaine: Which it could be.

- Sarah: Yes. I've got, no I'm going to rely on what Maggie's prepared already and then I can always ...
- Elaine: Well, you can change. Yeah, I think that was something we were talking about like with the raffle business.
- Sarah: Yes.
- Elaine: That needs to be, there's a question mark on that.
- Sarah: Yes.
- Elaine: Because of, the majority of people who seem to have won something ...
- Sarah: But, they have won already, that's a shame so ...
- Elaine: Yes, so that's ... yes
- Sarah: I will have to think of a way of improving that.
- Elaine: We'll put our heads together. Well, apart from looking obviously at that raffle business, um, which does involve a lot of phone calls, obviously and stuff sitting in the library, are there any other changes you think you might, because it's going to be your role now, isn't it.
- Sarah: Yeah, the opening times.
- Elaine: The opening times, right.
- Sarah: Yes. I'm not starting at 10 o'clock. It's half the day gone for me. So it is going to be a bit earlier than that. But, apart from that I think it is just going to happen little by little.
- Elaine: Little by little.
- Sarah: Because although I have been there since the end of August, it's, being there just two days a week isn't like being there everyday so you can't really settle down properly. So, once I'm there in January and it's, with practice I will be able to see what needs to be changed or what can stay the way it is.
- Elaine: And bearing in mind too this actually will be going out in January.
- Sarah: Ahh.



- Elaine: So, but, the beginning of January,
- Sarah: Okay.
- Elaine: But I know then it takes a while when you are in a new role.
- Sarah: Yes.
- Elaine: A new position, or job, that little by little you sort of make, move things around.
- Sarah: That's right. I wait for things to put themselves ...
- Elaine: In place, yes.
- Sarah: Yes, and then, and then things will change naturally.
- Elaine: Well, as I said, it's most important too that you, you do have your lunch hour.
- Sarah: Oh yes, yes, but it won't be the two-hour, the two-hour lunch break.
- Elaine: Not the two-hours, no.
- Sarah: No, no way. But perhaps an hour and a half would be good because that would leave me time to go home and come back.
- Elaine: Well I know...
- Sarah: Because one hour is a bit short.
- Elaine: Well, exactly. And Maggie did say, that I think she warned you on, when I was talking to her, that to bring in your coffee in a thermos.
- Sarah: Yes. Yes. But I don't drink coffee.
- Elaine: Oh, you don't drink coffee.
- Sarah: I drink water.
- Elaine: Oh, okay.
- Sarah: So I've got my bottle of water.
- Elaine: You've got your bottle of water.
- Sarah: I'm alright.
- Elaine: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Sarah.
- Sarah: That's okay.



Elaine: For taking the time out this afternoon and also we'd all like to wish you the very best of luck.

Sarah: Thank you very much.

Elaine: In your new role, and welcome to AIKB and all the little clubs too that come off it.

Sarah: Yes. Thank you very much.

Elaine: Thank you.