

Jon interviews: Janet Coopey who has recently moved to Gouarec

Jon: Here we are with Janet. Hello there.

Janet: Hello.

Jon: And welcome to central Brittany.

Janet: Thank you.

Jon: Whereabouts have you come from?

Janet: Er. Well, I come from Oakhampton in Devon. Er.

Jon: Didn't someone famous come from there? Walter Raleigh or something?

Janet: Oh, no, you're thinking of Sir Francis Drake from Tavistock.

Jon: Ah. Wrong person. Wrong place, never mind.

Janet: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jon: Not very good for a supposed quizzer. Anyway. So Oakhampton. Yes?

Janet: Yeah.

Jon: And what made you decide to come here?

Janet: Um. Well, in retirement, I wanted something a bit different to do. A bit of an adventure, bit of a challenge. Um er I had been thinking about it for a long time, because my I have some good, very good friends here, and um I've been visiting them for a few years. Visiting them, I got to know the area and Gouarec felt like a a nice, a nice place to be. I like the feel of it. Um, ideally I would have liked to have been um closer to the coast. I I love the sea, but and I had looked around Paimpol area, stayed there a few times, but it was just more expensive there, so.

Jon: It is always expensive, isn't it, by the coast.

Janet: Yes, yes. Same as in the UK.

Jon: And I think it's far better to actually live in the middle and visit the coast.

Janet: Um.



Jon: Because there's nothing quite so desolate as a resort during winter when there's no one, and nothing.

Janet: That's true.

Jon: So I think you've made a good decision. Um. Are there too many English? Too many British, sorry, for your liking in Gouarec?

Janet: Um. There there are more than. I did know there were a few Brits here, but there there are more than than I realised. I was quite surprised to find there are so many. Um.

Jon: I actually heard from a friend, I'm not sure if it's true or not, but apparently the population of Gouarec is now 50% British.

Janet: Wow really?

Jon: Can it possibly be that high? Doesn't feel like it.

Janet: I heard, I did ask, and someone did say around 30, 30, 35%.

Jon: That sounds more likely.

Janet: Um. Yeah. I mean, it. I s'pose the idea was to immerse myself in in French culture, French life. But at the same time, I do need to be able to converse easily with people. Therefore having some English people around is is good for me, because my French is is a bit basic still. So if I was fluent in the language, it wouldn't be an issue. Particularly when you're on your own. You need a social, you need to build a social circle. And I have managed to do that. As soon as I arrived, I just went out and joined the various clubs with AIKB.

Jon: So you go to the French language lessons.

Janet: I go to French language lessons with Marilyn Crago. I go to the conversation group with Janet King.

Jon: In the in the upper? Or?

Janet: Oh no. Lower. I'm in the lower one.

Jon: OK. Yes. Well, you have to start somewhere.

Janet: And I go to the art and textile group. Um, I've been out once with the walking group. I'm hoping to go out with them regularly, if I can.

Jon: OK, that sounds fine. There are lots of very good walks around here.



Janet: Yeah. Yeah, well.

Jon: As you know.

Janet: Well, again, I just want to know. I just want to get to get to know where the places are that I can walk easily and not get shot at by hunters.

Jon: Yes, watch out for the yellow jacket. The orange jacket.

Janet: The orange jacket. Yes.

Jon: Yeah. It it's a difficult one isn't it? Because we want to integrate quite well - as well as we can

Janet: Yes

Jon: In order to enjoy life

Janet: Absolutely.

Jon: And to understand what's going on.

Janet: Yes:

Jon: But um I don't think. It it's going to be very difficult to get to the level where we're discussing philosophy with anyone. Mind you, the same is true in English, so that doesn't really matter. Okay, so have you got any regrets about having left?

Janet: No no, not at all.

Jon: You don't miss anything about England?

Janet: Oh, yes, I do miss things, but I knew it was the right, because it wasn't a sudden decision, something I've been planning for years. Er I'd finally got to the point where I thought, yes, this is the right point now, this is the right time to go. One um. My parents are both dead now. Once, my father died in 2020, and after that, I felt I was free to just do something a bit different, because I felt, um, well, a responsibility, I suppose, you know, for my parents. I didn't want to leave him on his own because Mum had already died. So um there was nothing else to keep me there, other than friends, obviously.

Jon: Yes. But tell me one thing that you do miss about England, other than friends.



Janet: Dartmoor, because I'm I'm from Devon originally, and I do miss Dartmoor. Um, one of the other places I had thought about living was the Monts d'Arrée area, because that's quite like Dartmoor.

Jon: It is. It's a bit bleak, isn't it?

Janet: Well, when I, I drove around lots of the villages and they just seemed, they did seem quite bleak and dead. Er.

Jon: Having said that, bleak areas can also be quite attractive.

Janet: Well that, well that's what I mean. I like Dartmoor for its the actual, the actual countryside of Dartmoor for, its bleakness. Er, and one of my favourite villages is Princetown. And everyone says, why do you like that that's so bleak, but I I have a great affinity with with Princetown.

Jon: I must admit

Janet: That's where the prison is.

Jon: Oh. So I was going to say. There is a big prison.

Janet: Which is closed now at the moment.

Jon: Ah.

Janet: Er. Because of the radon levels. Um.

Jon: Nice to know they're looking after the prisoners.

Janet: The prisoners. Yeah, yeah. Not the pensioners or the. Yeah, yeah,

Jon: Anyway.

Janet: But. Yes, I do like bleak areas, but it's just the villages just didn't feel right to me. I I have to get that that that that feeling, you know, you know the je ne sais quoi sort of feeling in er. Just through a bit of French in there, you know.

Jon: Very good. I'm impressed.

Janet: English French. Um but um it's yeah. Places have to have that right feel, like a house does when you, soon as you walk into it, you know whether it's the right one for you or not. Um.



Jon: But also, another important factor is, of course, money and the villages anywhere in the south of England are incredibly expensive.

Janet: Yeah.

Jon: Houses everywhere in England, except for maybe the extreme north east perhaps. And property prices in Gouarec and around Gouarec are very much cheaper.

Janet: They are. I mean, um I'd be lying if I didn't say that was a contributory factor. But it wasn't the main, it wasn't the main reason for coming. I definitely wanted, I de, definitely felt I needed to do something different. I've made several changes over the years in in my life. I'm someone who embraces change. You you need change, I think, to develop as as a person. And er this was just a time when I needed a change. And um I was, like you say, I was priced out of the market in Devon. I wanted to move from where I was, but couldn't afford what I wanted, where I wanted.

Jon: That that's a shame isn't it.

Janet: Yes.

Jon: And even worse for younger people, of course. In their twenties, starting out

Janet: Impossible to get onto the market.

Jon: Exactly. How on earth do you manage in England?

Janet: Well, unless you've got the Bank of mum and dad, you know.

Jon: Yes.

Janet: It's virtually impossible.

Jon: I imagine a lot of people don't. Anyway. So Janet, what is your background in England? What did you do?

Janet: Um, quite a varied one. My very first job was in the civil service, but then I quite quickly joined the Air Force and trained as a dental hygienist. And I served four years.

Jon: Did you get your wings?

Janet: Um I had my dental dogs, collar dogs, they they were called, which had DB on it. And some of the, where where I, where we trained as as dental hygienists, they also trained dental technicians. And the, and they used to tell everyone that DB



was actually BD, bomb disposal to get a bit of kudos, especially when they met a girl, you know, they say, oh, we're in bomb disposal. It was DB, not BD. Um, I got married when I was in the Air Force. We went to Germany, and that's where I met my very good friends, Jill and Stu, your neighbours. Um. And then I separated and stayed out in Germany for a while. Then I remarried. Went to Holland, lived there for a while.

Jon: Whereabouts in Holland?

Janet: Um, right on the border with Aachen, so it's right, southern Holland. Originally I trained in dance, so I did used to teach dance as as a pupil teacher in my dancing school in Plymouth, and then when I was in Holland, I I ran a dancing school there. Um, when I was in Germany, I taught ballet for a a a German ballet school there. And then came back to the UK, um separated again and decided I needed a a career for myself. So I went to uni as a mature student my early 30s, trained as a primary teacher and taught for 25 years then. Um also was a head teacher of a tiny village school as well. So I was a teaching head, um.

Jon: Your main subjects specialism?

Janet: Well, my dance and English.

Jon: English as well.

Janet. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: Right. OK. Good.

Janet: Er, and um, then so when I retired, I just felt it was time for a change again. So, um.

Jon: You've had plenty of changes already by the sound of it.

Janet: I have, yeah yeah. As I said, I do think change is necessary. I think, I think we need to challenge ourselves as as human beings and find out how we react to situations.

Jon: Very true.

Janet: And you learn so much about yourself. Um we have to be adaptable in order to survive in various situations, you have to, you have to be able to adapt.

Jon: Well, the world is changing anyway.

Janet: Yes.



Jon: Whether you like it or not. So, best to avoid becoming a total fossil.

Janet: Yeah.

Jon: And change direction occasionally.

Janet: Yeah. And it builds emotional resilience as well, which is so important. You know, there there there are so many mental health issues in the world today, particularly with young people, and it's often due to a lack of emotional resilience. You know, we need to build that. We need to teach children how to be emotionally resilient.

Jon: Exactly. Anyway. Janet, we wish you all the best here. Hope you have a wonderful future, and I hope you maintain contact with your lovely friends, my neighbours,

Janet: I will indeed. There's no no no doubt of that.

Jon: Thank you very much.

Janet: Well thank you.

Jon: Bye