

Twenty eight RFS members boarded the ferry at Plymouth for Roscoff at the start of a four-day visit which took us to Quimper, Morlaix and Treguier, all in the western tip of Brittany.

Our focus was furniture museums, chapels and cathedrals. In planning the route (on the basis of regular holidays in Brittany) I was aware that we could not see everything of interest even in the small area we covered, so much remains for future visits. We were very fortunate that Sophie Duhem, an art historian whose doctoral research was on carved beams in Breton churches, agreed to accompany us and provide expert comments. On occasion, such as the misericords at Treguier cathedral, her persuasive powers gained us access to areas normally closed to public view.

The trip started with visits to two churches which were part of 'parish closes' or 'enclosures'. These closes are confined to a very limited area and were built in the 16th century by a class of merchants who had become wealthy from the linen and sailcloth trade. We were also to encounter this group at Morlaix where the Maison à Pondalez was built by one of them.

At Quimper we had an introduction to Breton furniture by the enthusiastic museum director, Phillippe le Stum. He explained that 19th century romanticism had led to a fascination with Brittany and its customs which attracted numerous painters, including Gauguin and the Pont-Aven School. After 1918 this current fed into the French interest in regional furniture and to the subsequent publication of numerous series of books on this subject.

High points for many were the late 15th and early 16th century rood screens and the canopied buffet at Plougrescant. Strangely the latter does not appear in any book on Breton furniture. Also of great interest were the carved beams in most of the churches and also in the chapel at the chateau de Kerjean. The ordinary furniture was mostly of oak or chestnut and decorated with spindles, or studs in the south-west part of Finistère. The mixture of gothic and renaissance carving on 17th century pieces was striking.

The practical organisation of the trip went smoothly. The ferry proved comfortable. Our driver guided the bulky yellow coach carefully round country lanes it was not designed for, only occasionally being forced to reverse and try another route. We just fitted into the excellent family restaurants and on the last night we found that, appropriately, the reception desk of the restaurant was faced with a 17th century coffer front.



We are grateful to Jeremy Bate, John Boram, Ian Phillips and John Thornton for supplying their photos, and as always to Polly Legg for her enormous and mostly unseen role in organising the trip.

*Chris Pickvance*