

The Lettre Jèrriaise Saturday 13th February, 2021

Good day everyone,

It is Jean Le Maistre who has the pleasure to present to you the Lettre Jèrriaise today the 13th February 2021.

It is always an interesting task to find a suitable subject for this "lettre".

Well, this time to begin, I thought that the thing which has been exceptional recently is the amount of rain that we have had this winter up until now. It is incredible to see the water in the fields and particularly in Les Mielles around La Crabiéthe. Coming from Les Laveurs it is on the right, the other side of the road when you get to La Mielle de Morville. The water is exactly like a small Mathe au Seigneur (also known as St Ouën's Pond) with a small islet in the middle. The water is almost at road level, certainly much higher than I have ever seen it.

That makes me think of our poor farmers who are trying to plant their potatoes. It is the beginning of a new season and it is a continuation of the work which they started last year. Last year they had planted their seed potatoes, harvested and brought them into the lofts or nowadays into the huge sheds. Eventually they 'stand' the potatoes and now with beautiful 'shoots' they are ready to plant. But because of the weather they cannot plant and as a result the workers have very little (work) to do.

Am I pleased that I am no longer farming when I see all the work that they have to do and now, because of the rain, they can't do anything. What a headache!

That makes me think about how hard and how difficult it was for my parent's generation. In their case they had not inherited a farm. Goodness no! They had to start at the very bottom of the ladder. They had started with a small cõttil of approx. thirty perch just above the little hill called Le Mont des Routeurs, but also known as "Crusoe" at Ville Bagot in St Ouën.

All the work was done by hand and the cõttil was steep. You must not have rheumatism or be short of breath (for this type of work).

Eventually they were fortunate to become tenants of a small farm which belonged to my mother's aunt. With a number of fields it offered them the opportunity to buy a horse with a number of tools and a horse-cart.

Nearly all the work was undertaken by hand except for the ploughing, scarifying, harrowing and the planting plough which were all horse drawn.

For the planting, for example, how things have changed. In those days we were often five planters who were able to plant around the field and we could plant between four and five vergées in a day.

Now, they are like ants when you see the workers in the fields! Often you will see them arrive around seven o'clock in the morning and whether a field is small or large all the work is finished by mid-day.

Of course, it is the big machines which have changed everything. Sometimes I ask myself if, in the future we will regret having used tools which were so heavy and knowing the damage that can be done under the ground (surface). The evidence, in part, is maybe already there as recently we have seen the rain water running out of the fields and into the roads. That was exceptionally rare years ago because it was considered poor practice to drive on the

land after ploughing to maintain healthy soil in excellent condition. That is why the farmer loves to see the small, and sometime large, worms in the soil.

That is another very interesting subject which I don't have sufficient time to 'open up' today. Well, good people, that's enough for this week and thank you for having listened to me this morning.

Keep safe and 'til next time.