



Contribution from Mellionnec



While the European Union is being built up around a common economy and currency, Cultural Villages of Europe seeks to establish the place of rural life in the Europe of tomorrow. Through analysing the common problems that different villages have, we will be able to add another building block to the European construct and answer some of the questions of our various citizens. What we really want is to build a Europe where its men and women share their destiny. Our villages are rich; they possess their own economies, social organisations, natural heritage and buildings and will become, we believe, this century's special places to live in. It is important to keep before us the legacy that we have in common as we defined it three years ago. The Charter we signed has its objectives concerning culture, rural development, agriculture, tourism, trade and crafts. In its preamble it reminds us of the decision we made to start working towards positive and concrete actions. For Mellionnec and Plouguernével, the fact of becoming 'host village' changed our outlook on the operation. Eleven villages from West Central Brittany shared the 'culture shock' of seeing different levels and ways of life, of political, cultural and religious differences. Our Central West Breton villages expanded, opened themselves up and came face to face with different lifestyles and then looked towards the future. The villagers discovered the richness of their daily life. You were able to look at Mellionnec, Plouguernével, Glomel, Tremargat, Lescouet-Gouarec, Paule and the other villages and put us all under close scrutiny. We learned a lot about others, of course, but first of all about ourselves. For this we are truly grateful. Our European network should distance itself from an identity that is too self-conscious, of establishing a rural 'museum' setting the countryside in stone, or of sentimental nostalgia. Our European network should assert itself so that those who question what we are doing fall into step with us and give us the means to become a permanent and strong element in Europe. For that to happen it would seem to be necessary to reiterate some important points:

- 1 Our joint seminars on particular topics: recording the decisions we took during these enables us, humbly, to theorise even if these decisions cannot be acted upon immediately.
- 2 Inter-village meetings: this is so obvious that further discussion on the topic is unnecessary.
- 3 Youth camps. These allow our younger people to meet and discuss the issues which are relevant to their age group and to look at their common European citizenship.

For these young people it is a chance to make international exchanges without breaking links with their village roots. What culture is going to develop outside the dominant urban models in the various countries of Europe? Our greatest success would be to see our teenagers proud of growing up in our villages.

Just like 'Cultural Cities of Europe' we would like the label 'Cultural Villages of Europe' to become known. This label would be available to all those who are signatories to the Charter. Several symbols would enable us to identify it.

We propose that we should maintain the initiative and dynamism of Wijk aan Zee and, if we are all in agreement, to retain the eleven-coloured flag and to adopt the hortensia (hydrangea) as our common flower symbol.