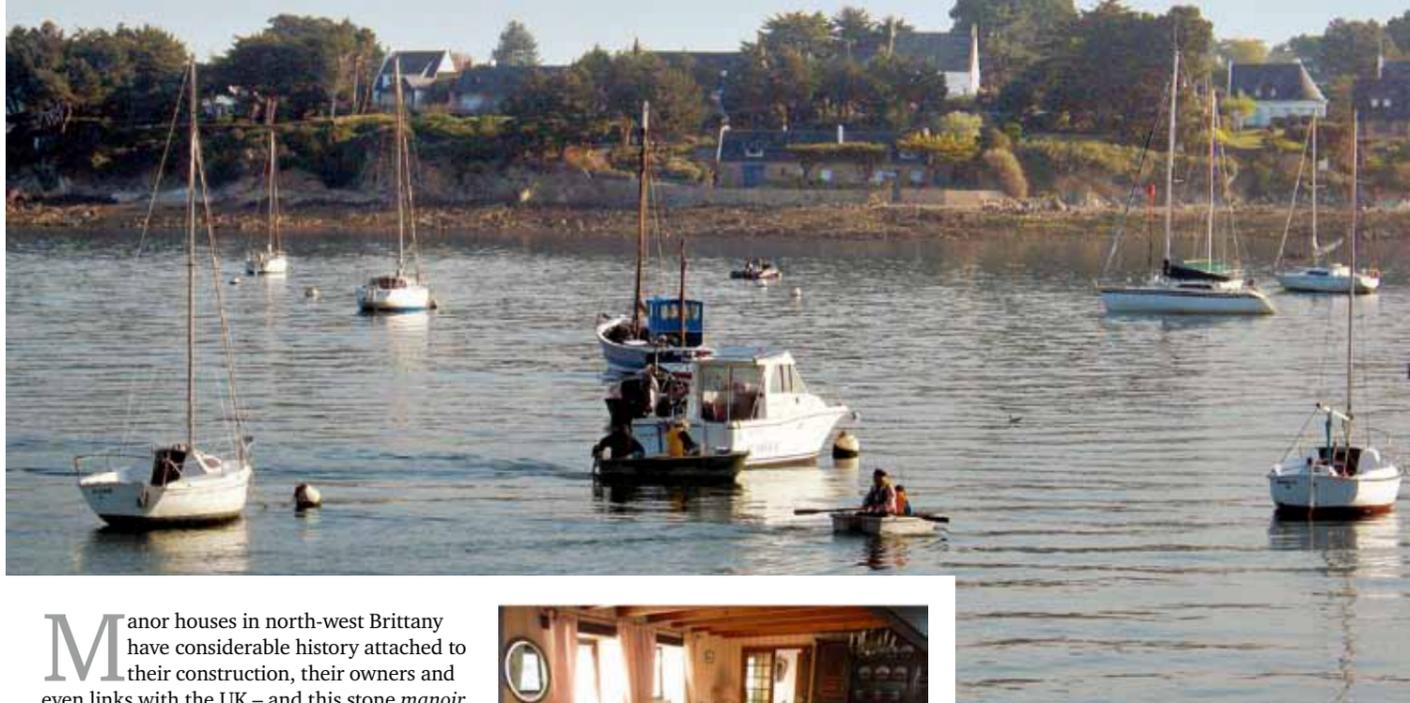


ANGELS of the NORTH

Making the most of Brittany's miles of coastline, peaceful countryside and wealth of history and local traditions, **Glynis Shaw** explores three distinctly Breton properties



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The coastline is beautiful with coastal paths linking sandy beaches and ports of varying sizes where you'll find plenty of white-washed houses and sailing yachts



Manor houses in north-west Brittany have considerable history attached to their construction, their owners and even links with the UK – and this stone *manoir* is no exception. It is located in a village close to many rocky coves and beaches and to Roscoff, a coastal town whose activities and traditions revolve around the sea.



This traditional 'manoir' was built in 1800 and boasts plenty of original features, while its convenient location means it is close to a small village and just a 15-minute drive from several beaches

The coastline in this area can feel wild, untouched and magically remote and Roscoff is interesting to explore while not being too touristy. In the old harbour, you'll find seaweed boats and there are many fish farms at nearby Ste-Barbe. There's an aquarium where you can see the flora and fauna typical of the Breton coast and a thalassotherapy centre at Roc'h Kroum.

The port at Roscoff has a ferry link with Plymouth in Devon. Nowadays it carries tourists and goods conveniently between the two countries, but in the past the people of Roscoff and Britain have staged naval raids on each other and fought stormy battles – although both sides did manage to collaborate when it came to smuggling. During the 18th century huge quantities of contraband tea,

brandy and other spirits found their way to the UK through this area.

Legal trade links started in earnest in the early 19th century when Henri Olivier sailed from Roscoff to Plymouth with a cargo of onions produced in the area and sold them in Britain, and the stereotypical image of the French onion seller on a bicycle was born.

Hundreds of young agricultural workers would travel around ports in England and as far away as Scotland and Wales selling their onions to housewives who nicknamed them 'Johnnies'. The tradition continued until the 1930s and some Bretons even started to take on British traditions such as playing darts and drinking tea.

Coastal manor

Owners of land and ships enjoyed prosperity through the trade in both onions and local linens and this manor house would have been

built on the strength of that prosperity. It is constructed from local stone and while Breton farmhouses are usually on one floor, *manoirs* have two storeys as a demonstration of the owners' wealth and status.

This *manoir* was built in 1800 in the traditional style and features interior stonework, beams and timber. The house is ready to move into but also has potential for sympathetic modernisation. There is a large living room, a dining room and a fully equipped kitchen. Upstairs are four bedrooms, a bathroom and a shower room and a loft for storage or possible conversion.

The garden is quite large, at 1,385m², and there is a double garage. The property is located near a small village with a few shops and it lies close to both Roscoff and St-Pol-de-Leon, and is just 15 minutes' drive from several beaches. It is on the market for €265,000. ID 219811 at frenchconnections.co.uk



Engulfed with light

The Gulf of Morbihan in southern Brittany is a charming combination of inlets, islets, oyster beds and pine-lined beaches. It boasts an almost Mediterranean microclimate and is frequently bathed in a brilliantly clear, bright light and warm sunshine. The Pointe d'Arradon is known as the Riviera of the gulf and has some fabulous houses that take advantage of the climate and stunning views.

This modern architect-designed villa is typical of the style of the area. It is in the village of Arradon and was built in 1988 by a family who were living in the south of France and were seeking a good quality of life and a climate with less extreme temperatures.

The Morbihan gulf certainly offers that quality of life. It is compact at just 20km across, its many small islands can be explored by boat and the area is a haven for sea birds. The coastline is sheltered and beautiful with coastal paths linking sandy beaches and ports of varying sizes where you'll find plenty of white-washed houses, sailing yachts, leisure craft and excellent food and drink outlets. Fresh oysters are a speciality here and the gulf is still one of the world's most important areas of production.

This is a magical ancient land of dolmens, menhirs and standing stones, most spectacularly at nearby Carnac. Just where the houses end and the pine forests begin, you start to see *les alignements*: stone after granite

stone in 12 adjacent, slightly meandering rows that seem to go on for miles.

The regional centre is the medieval city of Vannes. Here you'll find fish and vegetable markets, Roman walls and well-kept gardens, a Gothic cathedral, café-lined squares and superbly conserved timber-framed houses.

This modern villa has been cleverly designed to echo the vernacular architecture of Brittany, with the feel of a traditional *longère*. The



This modern, architect-designed villa has been built in the style of the Breton 'longère' using traditional local materials, and offers spacious living accommodation that makes the most of the natural light

materials too are traditional – local stone and timber – but they are combined with large walls of glass to create a light and open atmosphere. The design also embraces the natural landscape, so that the house has the feel of a secluded garden room set among foliage and water.

The large living room captures the maximum amount of daylight and has a high chimney, along with a view of the covered heated swimming pool and magnificent garden. Facing west is a modern, spacious fitted kitchen. There is one bedroom on the ground floor and six more on the first floor, along with three bath or shower rooms.

Downstairs is a cellar and outside is a lovely guest cottage offering 54m² of living space, so there's somewhere for friends and family to stay or indeed the possibility to generate additional income.

The property is located close to the small, compact village, with food shops and a weekly market where producers sell organic vegetables, meats and seafood, especially lobsters and crabs. The property is on the market for €873,000. ID 204496 at frenchconnections.co.uk

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FPN LOCATION



Rural cottage

Canal Cottage is located in a quiet hamlet in central Brittany, within walking distance along a towpath to the village of Rohan. In the village are restaurants and amenities, and markets are held weekly in Rohan and the nearby towns of Pontivy and Loudeac.

David and Viv Riley (*pictured right*) bought the traditional stone cottage 26 years ago, drawn by its potential for letting and its location on the Nantes-Brest canal.

"We loved the peace and tranquillity of the countryside, the good roads and the easy access to the coast," they say. "The ports of St-Malo and Roscoff can be reached by car in an hour and 20 minutes and an hour and 40 minutes respectively, and our visitors can



explore popular beaches and destinations like Carnac and Josselin, and then return in the evening to stroll by the canal, sit in the garden and relax.

"Major renovations were needed to the house, but we knew we would end up with what we wanted. For many years we offered holiday lets during the summer months when we were not there ourselves, but in 2013 we took early retirement so we could move to Brittany and enjoy the cottage. We definitely feel we are living the dream."

The Rileys have made major improvements including a new covered patio and hot tub outdoors and the creation of a first-floor apartment for letting for up to six guests.

"We particularly aim for motorcycling groups

David and Viv initially bought their cottage for its rental potential and offered holidays lets during the summer months, before later making a permanent move to enjoy the property during their retirement

as we provide assisted rides or routes to many excellent locations within Brittany. But we also welcome guests who want a peaceful break from the normal hustle and bustle of the UK, whether walking, cycling or driving. Fishing is very popular too, as there are plenty of local places, and we provide the facility for dabbling in mosaics, painting and pebble painting.

"We love living here in Brittany and although we aren't fluent in French we always make an effort and find the people around us very helpful. The local economy is based on tourism and agriculture – mainly cereal crops and pig farming. The farmers are vocal in asserting their rights and will occasionally get out and block the roads, but nobody objects.

"We appreciate the excellent network of roads, with a distinct lack of cars. There are no queues, even in high summer, little traffic and no potholes.

"There is also a strong sense of tradition and community throughout the generations. *Fêtes* and festivals are celebrated all the time and we're always welcomed. A highlight is the chestnut festival in late October, before the weather cools down in November. Winters can be wet but they seem short and less cold than in Britain – and the sun seems to shine more in Brittany too." ■

ID 153077 at frenchconnections.co.uk

