

## ***Interpretation centres***

In Finistère the canal has interpretation centres every 20 kilometres.

Lock-keepers' lives, construction history, wildlife and flora are presented in lock-keepers' cottages that have been specially renovated for that purpose. Stories about the past, exhibitions of lock-keepers' equipment, local wildlife and plants all offer the opportunity to discover the many faces of the canal.

## ***Factual Information***

- 46 locks
- 84 kms
- fully navigable
- max draught 1.10m-
- dimension of the locks: 26.40m long, 4.70m wide
- locks are handled by boatmen

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SMATAH

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## ***Access***

### **Interpretation centre : Flora (Saint Hernin)**

*Kergoat Lock No.203*

N164 Exit Kerdiwall at Carhaix

Follow direction Gourin-Lorient

At Port de Carhaix turn toward Saint Hernin, and the car-park/rest area is immediately on the left

### **Interpretation Centre : (Cleden Poher)**

*Pont Triffen Lock No. 209*

N164 Exit Pont Triffen

Take Spezet turning, and car-park is on the left

### **Interpretation centre : Life at the Lock (Lennon)**

Rosvéguen Lock No.224

*N164 Exit Lennon*

Take first turning on the right after the church.

Follow the road for 3kms and park at Ty Men

### **Interpretation centre : Wildlife (Châteaulin)**

*L'Aulne Lock No.232*

At the pouillot , take the road before Carhaix exit. Follow Penn ar Pont– L'Aulne lock.

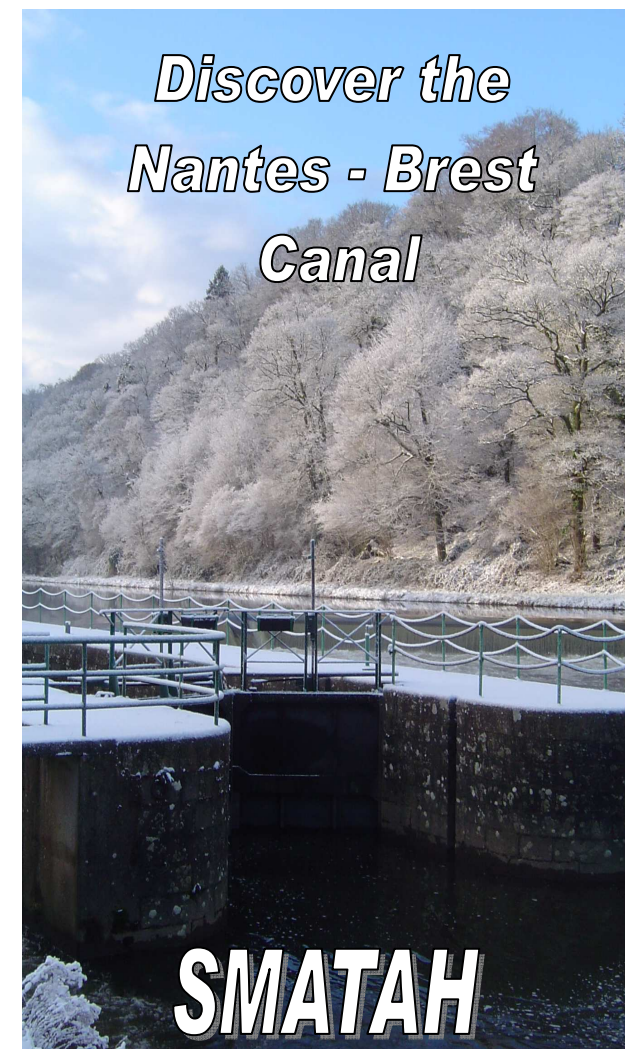
### **Aquatic observatory**

*Châteaulin Lock No.236*

In Châteaulin town centre.

Brittany Heritage Services

([www.brittanyheritageservices.com](http://www.brittanyheritageservices.com))



# History

Early proposals for the canal were made between 1716 and 1756. The 18th century struggle between France and England accelerated the development of this waterway.

In 1803, under Napoleon Bonaparte, the conflict became more marked, and it was thought vital to connect Breton naval shipyards at Nantes and Brest. The creation of an inland navigable route would also bring a much needed boost to the economy of central Brittany.

It took more than twenty years for a committee of inland navigation to achieve this work. The impracticalities of the terrain caused difficulties in planning the route of the canal. The first important works began in 1822. Various types of workers were involved in the construction: free labourers, convicts, prisoners of war and soldiers. The canal was fully operational in 1842.

Trade was brisk on the canal for nearly 45 years, enabling a considerable social and economic boom in central Brittany.

The arrival of the railway, including the Réseau breton in the late 19th century, contributed to its decline. Nevertheless, the canal enjoyed its most prosperous period from 1880-1914, thanks to industrial development of lime from Angers.

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## SMATAH

*(Syndicat Mixte d'Aménagement Touristique de l'Aulne et de l'Hyères)*

Created in 1973, SMATAH includes 22 waterside municipalities and the Departmental Council of Finistère. Its mission is to oversee the exploitation of the waterway, and carry out necessary maintenance and development of the channel.

SMATAH keeps an eye on the drainage of water, and attends to the needs of industry, fishing, tourism and public health, and also those of agriculture, through water purification or irrigation.

The section of waterway under the auspices of SMATAH is more than 100kms long, with 90kms of towpaths. This concession includes the canal with all its dependencies-banks, towpaths, locks, lock-keepers' cottages and equipment.

It participates actively in maintaining and preserving this unique heritage.

Since the beginning of 2001, SMATAH's objectives have been to raise awareness concerning the Nantes-Brest canal, as well as promoting its invaluable historic and natural heritage.