

Well-known figures from Saint-Jean



TANGUY PRIGENT, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

Tanguy Prigent was born in 1909 in Saint-Jean-du-Doigt. His parents had their own farm, which gave them a certain political freedom.

In 1927, aged 18, François Tanguy Prigent founded the local branch of the Socialist Party, with around twenty members in Saint-Jean-du-Doigt. In 1934, he was elected as local councillor but his election was deemed null and void as he was not yet 25 (the minimum legal age for such a post). The following year, he was re-elected; in May 1935 he became Mayor of Saint-Jean-du-Doigt, then in 1936, he was elected Deputy to the National Assembly for the first district of Morlaix, becoming the youngest Deputy for the coalition party 'Le Front Populaire'.

In 1940, he joined up to fight against the Germans and on 10th July he was one of 80 deputies who had the courage to vote against giving absolute power to Marshal Pétain. Tanguy Prigent was closely linked to the French Resistance.

In 1943, he was dismissed from his roles as Mayor and councillor for being politically opposed to the German-allied Vichy government. He went into hiding, took the name of Jacques le Ru and helped to set up the bases of one of the main Resistance movements, 'Libé-Nord'. He was an active participant in France's liberation and by the 6th June 1944, his Libé-Nord group had more than 7,000 members in Finistère alone.

In September 1944, General de Gaulle named Tanguy Prigent as Minister of Agriculture: he was just 35. He set up a tenant-farming system to improve living and economic conditions for farmers, and encourage people to stay in the countryside. His ministerial post ended in 1947, but he was asked to return to government in 1956 and became Minister of Veterans and War Victims.

Until his death in 1970, he remained Mayor of Saint-Jean-du-Doigt and councillor for Finistère.

ROBERT LE MEUR, A HUMANIST MISSIONARY AMONG THE INUITS

Robert Le Meur was born in 1920 in Saint-Jean-du-Doigt. His mother died when he was just five, so he was brought up with his four siblings by a father who was very much involved in parish life. Educated in the local school in Saint-Jean-du-Doigt he then went to high school in Saint-Pol-de-Léon, where he decided to become a missionary. He attended the Seminary in Seine-et-Marne, became a priest in 1943 and held his first mass in Saint-Jean-du-Doigt later the same year.

In 1946, he took a boat from Le Havre to spend three months in the Far North, starting his missionary work in a small town of 800 residents called Tuktoyaktuk, in northwest Canada.

He noticed that the oil industry of other, industrialised countries was seriously damaging the Inuit identity and he dedicated himself to preserving their culture. He became a town councillor, helped to set up a cooperative workshop for fur, set up a local radio station with himself as a presenter, and he fought for the Inuits to be recognised as Canadian citizens.

He died in 1985 in Edmonton, aged 65. In accordance with his wishes, he was buried in Tuktoyaktuk, a stone's throw from his house, his church and his friends. His Inuit friends nicknamed him Okrayyooaluk, meaning 'he who speaks truly'. You can see his birthplace at the entrance to Saint-Jean-du-Doigt, opposite the square named Place Robert Le Meur.

