

# Farm Schools in Nineteenth-Century France and the Case of La Charmoise, 1847-1865

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## *Abstract*

After reviewing briefly the development of agricultural education in France as a whole during the nineteenth century, this paper examines in detail the history of one farm school (La Charmoise) which operated in the Sologne, near the Loire valley town of Blois, in the mid-nineteenth century. The creation of the school is shown to have owed much both to the general context of government encouragement of agricultural education and to the specific enthusiasm of its founder, Edouard Malingié, who was strongly committed both to a scientifically and economically rational agriculture and to an active, benevolent Christianity. Examination of the functioning of the school is followed by an assessment of its impact. While the school was widely perceived by contemporaries as being both very useful and successful, consideration of the recruitment and retention of pupils, of staffing, and of the school's financial position indicates that the school had both weaknesses of which contemporaries appear to have been unaware and problems which they were reluctant to acknowledge. The farm school functioned for only eighteen years and its impact was probably not as great as contemporaries thought. It was, nonetheless, one noteworthy component of Malingié's wide-ranging activities as an agricultural improver, which became famous internationally because of his production of a new, fixed breed of sheep, the Charmoise, based in part upon imported pure New Kent rams.

IT is a paradox of French agricultural history that by 1850 France was ahead of any country in Europe in agricultural instruction but still very backward in its farming methods.<sup>1</sup> The idea of agricultural education had originated and was much-debated in France during the second half of the eighteenth century. Theory was well ahead of practice and the few schools which were established were short-lived. The first agricultural school in France to have any significance was that established in 1822 by Mathieu de Dombasle at Roville in Lorraine, in association with his experimental farm there. A second, opened in 1832 at Grignon, some 40 km from Paris, was to become one of the best agricultural schools in Europe, visited by farmers, land-owners and agronomists from throughout the Continent. A third school of significance was set up in 1833 by a private

company which had established a model farm at Grand-Jouan in Brittany in 1830. The school at Roville closed in 1842 for lack of funds and the other two were taken over by the government, that at Grand-Jouan in 1842 and that at Grignon in 1848.<sup>2</sup>

During the nineteenth century, French governments took an increasing interest in, and control of, agricultural education, both as an integral part of general education in primary and secondary schools and in teacher training colleges, and also as a form of specialist instruction provided by new institutions created for the purpose. By 1914 there was on offer a wide range of agricultural education within an officially-established framework which included local, regional and national schools of general agriculture, and specialist schools in, for example, veterinary medicine, dairying, horticulture, sheep rearing, fruit farming and forestry. It also embraced a network

<sup>1</sup> F B Artz, *The Development of Technical Education in France 1500-1850*, Cambridge, Mass, 1966, p 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp 220-26.

of agricultural *professeurs* in each department (*département*): although some departments made such appointments from the 1830s onwards, in 1879 they were all required by law to establish such a post within six years (if one were not already in existence), to diffuse information about the best farming practices. In 1912 these *chaires départementales* were transformed into *directeurs des services agricoles* with a wide-ranging role in the diffusion of agricultural information in the state's schools and colleges, as well as more generally within the farming community through lectures, publications and demonstrations.<sup>3</sup> This elaborate structure of agricultural education both extended and replaced the farm schools which were, nonetheless, its experimental foundation.

Until the mid-1830s, French governments merely provided encouragement for the creation of farm schools but gradually they came also to provide financial assistance. As the scale of state funding increased, so did the level of state control over such activities. From 1841 there were appointed state *inspecteurs de l'agriculture* to monitor the expenditure of such subventions and then on 23 July 1847 a government circular stated official policy on the creation and functioning of farm schools. Their aim was to diffuse within farming communities knowledge of scientific agriculture and the best farming practices. Teaching in the schools was to be essentially practical, with pupils gaining experience of all work on the farm. Pupils were to be selected and admitted from the age of sixteen, for three or four years. Tuition would be free and the director of a school would receive 250 fr annually for each pupil (although part of that sum was to be paid to the pupil on leaving school). The staff was to include a director, a *chef de pratique* responsible for managing work on the farm, a *surveillant-*

*comptable* who would teach accounting and surveying, and a *vétérinaire* responsible for the farm's livestock and for teaching basic veterinary care. While the state would meet the staffing and tuition costs, the director of a farm school would be liable for the overall financial health of the enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

Creation of new farm schools soon followed publication of the 1847 circular and by the end of August 1848 twenty-one had been established. Then by a decree of 3 October 1848 the new government of the Second Republic intended a wholesale reform of agricultural education (although it must be acknowledged that the decree drew upon a review which had been underway since 1845, well before the Revolution of February 1848). A three-tiered system of agricultural schools was to be established: on the first level there was to be a farm school in each department (and later in each *arrondissement*), providing a practically-based training for farm workers and small farmers; on the second level there were to be regional agricultural schools, serving a number of departments and providing a more theoretical education for farm managers, large farmers and landowners; and on the third level would be the *Institut national agronomique*, for training agricultural teachers and administrators. Circulars of 28 October 1848 and 31 August 1849 from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce made it clear that farm schools were to train good farm workers and practising farmers, with pupils being admitted not because of their attainment at primary school but because of their aptitude for farming.<sup>5</sup> By January 1849 there were twenty-seven farm schools in existence throughout France (Fig 1) and by the end of 1849 seventy.

Only eight had been established before the end of 1847, among them the school set up by Edouard Malingié on his farm,

<sup>3</sup> Th Charmasson, A-M Lelorrain and Y Ripa, *L'Enseignement Agricole et Vétérinaire de la Révolution à la Libération*, Paris, 1992, pp v-cxxi.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp xxxi-xxxiii, xxxix-xli and 51-52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp xlii-xlvii.

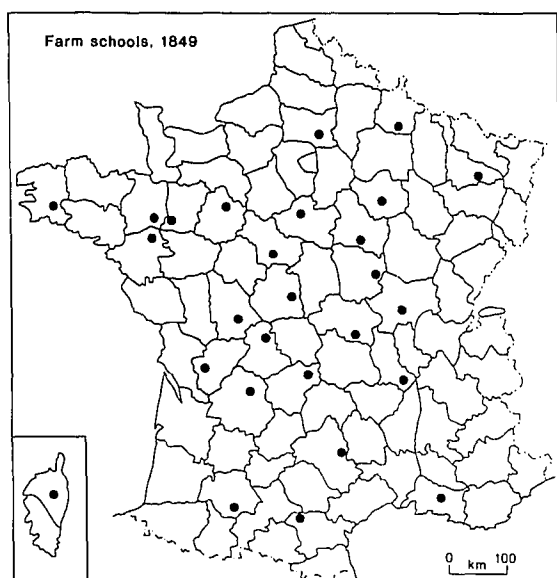


FIGURE 1

Farm schools in France, 1849 (Source: *Note sur les établissements d'instruction agricole créés en France*, 11 janvier 1849, Archives Nationales (Paris) F 10 2512 A, data from which is provided in Th Charmasson, A-M Lelorrain and Y Ripa, *L'Enseignement Agricole et Vétérinaire de la Révolution à la Libération*, Paris, 1992, p xlix).

La Charmoise, in the commune (*commune*) of Pontlevoy, 25 km south of Blois, in Loir-et-Cher, officially approved by an *arrête* of 8 November 1847 (Fig 2). The emergence of farm schools needs to be viewed not only in terms of their general historical context but also in terms of the particular individuals whose charisma provided the necessary link between structure and action.

## I

Edouard Malingié lived at Pontlevoy for only seventeen years, from his purchase of La Charmoise in 1835 until his death in 1852, aged 53: during that time he had a considerable impact upon the thinking and practice of farmers not only locally but also

regionally and nationally.<sup>6</sup> Born at Lille in 1799, Malingié became a pharmacist, like his father and grandfather before him. Soon after qualifying at the University of Paris in 1822 and returning to Lille to his father's practice, he married a farmer's daughter and became so interested in agriculture that he himself took on a small farm in Flanders. Subsequently, during a visit to his brother-in-law at Pontlevoy, Malingié was struck by the sharp contrast between the prosperous, developed farming of Flanders and the poor, backward agriculture of the Sologne. Thus challenged, in 1835 he bought the fifty hectares which then comprised La Charmoise and moved the 440 km south with his wife, children, farming equipment and livestock, there to practise a scientific, experimental and innovatory agriculture upon a hitherto-neglected property with a difficult-to-work soil developed from clay-with-flints.<sup>7</sup> As an improver *par excellence*, Malingié set about bettering the quality of the soil and the quality and quantity of his crop and livestock yields in a range of ways which included marling and liming (he built a lime kiln on the farm), cultivating new (mainly fodder) crops (including rape, sugar beet, lucerne, clover and maize) and manuring heavily (by maintaining a very large flock of sheep, a substantial herd of cattle and a large collection of working horses). He diffused knowledge of his experiments and experiences not only in the *Bulletin* of the *Société d'Agriculture de Loir-et-Cher* (of which he was a member and at times its president) but also at local, regional and national agricultural shows.

The supreme indication of Malingié's

<sup>6</sup> This section of the paper draws upon F Lourdel, *Le Berceau d'une Race Ovine 'La Charmoise': Edouard Malingié et son Oeuvre*, Blois, 1926. So, too, does a recently-published account of Malingié: H Leclert, 'Edouard Malingié (1799-1852): agriculteur et éleveur au domaine de la Charmoise à Pontlevoy', *Bulletin de la Société d'Art, d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de la Sologne*, 109, 1992, pp 1-48.

<sup>7</sup> For a map showing the topographical and geological context within which La Charmoise was situated, see: A R H Baker, 'The infancy of France's first agricultural syndicate: the Syndicat des Agriculteurs de Loir-et-Cher 1881-1914', *Ag Hist Rev*, 34, 1986, pp 45-59 on p 47.

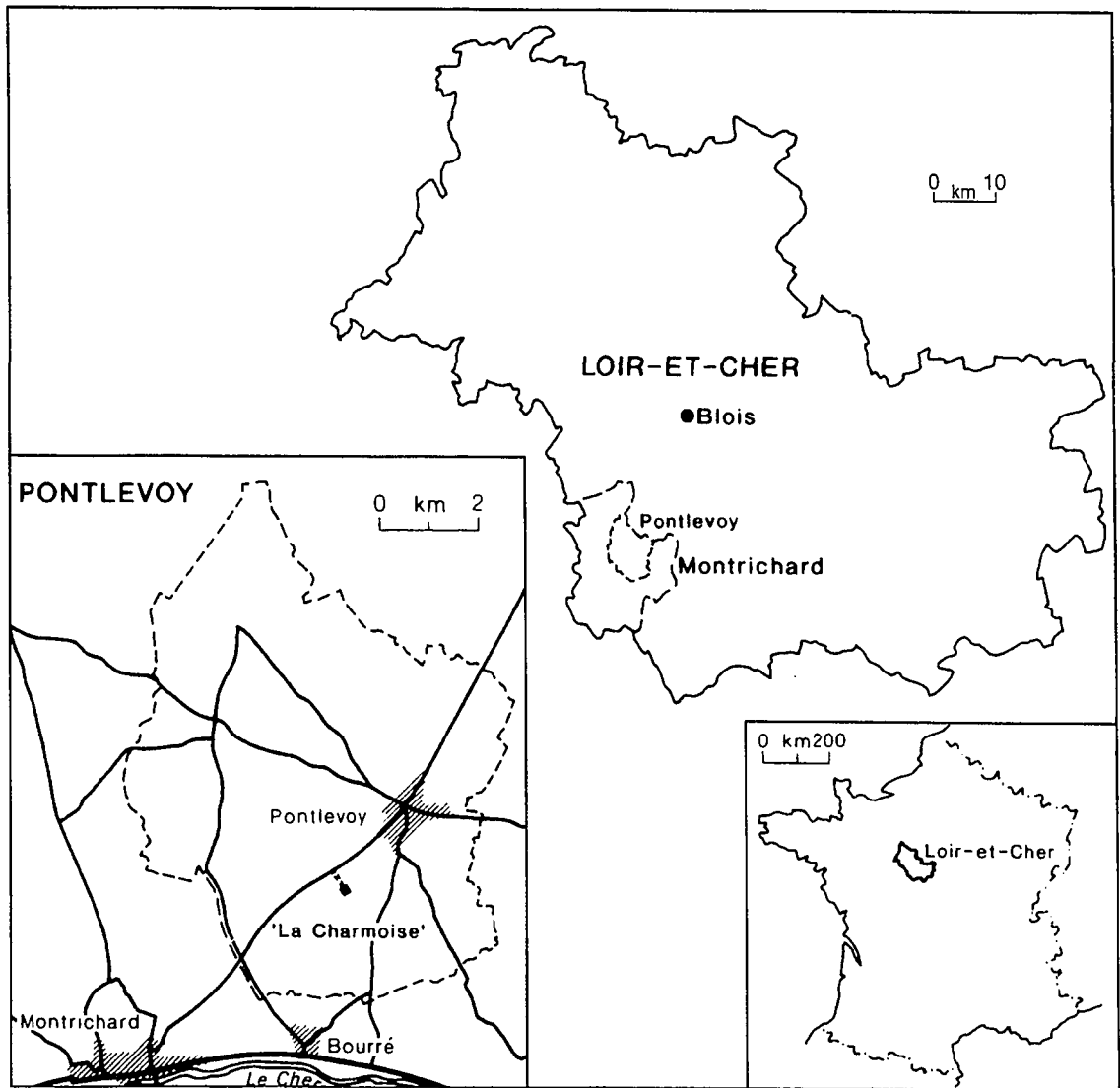


FIGURE 2  
The location of the La Charmoise farm school.

scientifically-informed approach to agriculture is evidenced in his development of a new breed of sheep, to which he gave the name 'Charmoise'. Wishing to develop a breed which would be suited to the environmental conditions of the Sologne while having good fattening characteristics and also producing fine quality wool, he sought advice at first hand both from the national veterinary school at Alfort, near Paris, where he learned of the director's

preference for Leicester sheep, and from textile manufacturers in northern France, from whom he learned of their preference for wool from Kent sheep. In 1837, 1838 and 1841 Malingié made a number of visits to Kent and purchased from Sir Richard Goord at Faversham and a Mr Cook at Ashford rams, ewes and lambs of the New Kent (Romney Marsh) breed, then drove them with the assistance of a shepherd and his dog from Calais some 600 km to

Pontlevoy. Experimenting with selective breeding, Malingié had by 1844 produced a new breed, the Charmoise, the result of cross-breeding pure New Kent rams with cross-bred ewes (themselves a balanced cross of local ewes from the Sologne, Berry and Touraine, and of Merinos). By then in-breeding the new, cross-bred rams and ewes Malingié established what he claimed was a new, fixed breed and by 1851 he had a flock of 500 such Charmoise ewes.<sup>8</sup>

During his seventeen years at Pontlevoy, Malingié became a significant personality, widely known and respected as an indefatigable improver and as an energetic municipal councillor, lieutenant of the commune's fire brigade, member (and sometimes president) of the *Comice agricole* of the *canton* of Montrichard and also a member (and sometimes president) of the *Société d'Agriculture de Loir-et-Cher*. His writings and public, reported speeches reveal his strong commitment both to a scientifically and economically rational agriculture and to an active, benevolent Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Both rationality and religion found expression in his creation of a farm school at La Charmoise in 1845.

## II

This paper will now provide an account of the foundation, functioning and finale of the school at La Charmoise and then an assessment of its role. Previous accounts have relied upon published reports of the school's activities (such as those of the *Conseil Générale* of Loir-et-Cher) but this paper is additionally and substantially based on unpublished records (notably including correspondence between directors of the school and the Prefect of Loir-et-Cher at

Blois and between the Prefect and the Ministry of Agriculture in Paris, and annual reports on the school submitted to the Prefect by an independent Jury or Board of Assessors).<sup>10</sup>

A Ministerial circular of 23 July 1847 stated the government's belief that agricultural education was one of the country's greatest needs and its intention accordingly to promote them, with an immediate plan to establish during 1848 throughout France ten to twelve farm schools in which would be taught sound, theoretically-informed agricultural practices well-adapted to local circumstances. The Minister invited the Prefect of each department to submit proposals for such schools, explaining that for a school even to be considered for approval it would have to be part of a working farm with sufficient capital for its exploitation and appropriate buildings both for the farm itself and for the school's pupils. The government was not offering to meet any capital costs, merely the recurrent costs of the wages of the school's staff.<sup>11</sup>

Malingié responded promptly to the government's invitation: on 16 August he wrote to the President of the *Société d'Agriculture de Loir-et-Cher* that he had proposed to the Prefect and to the Deputy of the *arrondissement* of Blois the creation of a farm school at La Charmoise. His letter set out clearly the aims of the proposed school: 'Well-behaved youths who know how to read, write and calculate will be admitted free of charge: accommodation, food, heating and clothing will all be provided free. The pupils will be

<sup>8</sup> A Leroy, *Le Mouton Charmoise*, Paris, nd, c 1896.

<sup>9</sup> E Malingié, *Considérations sur les Bêtes à Laine au Milieu du XIXe Siècle et Notice sur la Race de la Charmoise*, Paris, 1851. Also Malingié's presidential addresses to the *Société d'Agriculture du Département de Loir-et-Cher*, published in its *Bulletin*, 13, 1849, pp 311-23; 14, 1850, pp 346-55; 15, 1851, pp 393-406; t 3 no 1, 1852, pp 1-11.

<sup>10</sup> Lourdel, *Le Berceau d'une Race Ovine* and Leclert, 'Edouard Malingié'. The principal unpublished records consulted at the Archives Départementales de Loir-et-Cher in Blois (hereafter AD) in preparing this paper were the following: 7M 227 *Projet de création d'une ferme école 1868-1931*; 7M 228 *Fermes écoles de la Charmoise (Pontlevoy) et de Maray 1847-1865*; and an uncatalogued file titled *Agriculture: enseignement agricole; phylloxéra; rapports sur les services personnel 1893-1900*. All of the sources cited in this paper are located in these files unless it is indicated otherwise.

<sup>11</sup> Archives Nationales (Paris) AD XIX D 256; also Archives Départementales de Loir-et-Cher 7M 228. The circular is reprinted in Charmasson et al, *L'Enseignement Agricole*, pp 51-52.

instructed both theoretically and manually about all of the practices of improved farming, and including those relating to livestock rearing and fattening, dairying, viticulture, and forestry. Their stay at the school will last three or four years, at the end of which those pupils whose conduct and work have been satisfactory will receive a certain sum of money provided by the state.<sup>12</sup> Malingié's proposal was warmly welcomed by the Prefect (who had for some years been receiving favourable reports from the government's Inspecteur de l'Agriculture, M Royer, on Malingié's farming initiatives at La Charmoise), by M Naudin, Vice-President of the Société d'Agriculture de Loir-et-Cher (who said that nothing could better meet the needs of the locality than such a school) and by M de Souvigny, Vice-Secretary of the Society (who lauded the foundation of the school as the most propitious and most important event of the agricultural year 1846-1847).<sup>13</sup>

The farm school at La Charmoise was approved by a Ministerial *arrête* of 9 November 1847 and established officially from 1 January 1848. The *arrête* set out a clear operational framework for the school. Eight pupils, aged at least sixteen, were to be admitted annually to the four-years' course of study which would involve their working on the farm as though they were being paid wages. The school was to have four staff: a director with overall responsibility for the teaching, both practical and theoretical; a *chef de pratique* to assist the director in demonstrating manual work on the farm and to look after the buildings; a *surveillant-comptable* to teach the basics of accounting, to fill any gaps the pupils might have in their primary education in terms of weights and measures and to supervise the pupils' conduct in the school's dormitory and refectory; and a veterinary prac-

titioner both to care for the livestock and to teach basic animal care to the pupils. The *chef de pratique* and the *surveillant-comptable* were required to live at the school and to work under the director's supervision. Himself appointed by the Minister, the director was to be responsible for appointing the other staff. Each of the four staff were to be paid fees annually by the Ministry of Agriculture, respectively 2400fr, 1000fr, 1000fr and 500fr. The director would also receive from the Ministry 175fr annually for each pupil at the school towards his living expenses and it was envisaged that those payments together with the labour provided by the pupils would cover the running costs of the school.

In addition, for each pupil the Ministry would make a one-off payment of 75fr, part of which was intended to meet the maintenance and replacement costs of each pupil's set of clothing with the remainder being available for allocation at the end of each year by the director as prizes to reward enthusiasm, good conduct and skill (the money was not, however, to be handed over immediately but placed in a savings account in the pupil's name and awarded to him on successful completion of the course: any pupil leaving earlier or being dismissed was to lose all claim to the prize money).

A Jury, comprised of the director and four others appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Prefect, was to select candidates for entry to the school, with admission being based both upon an applicant's level of primary school instruction and upon his experience of and aptitude for farm work. The Jury was also to conduct examinations in the school at the end of each year, and thus to determine which pupils should be allowed to move into the next year's course of study and, ultimately, awarded their school certificates (*certificats d'instruction*).

Through the Jury and by making the

<sup>12</sup> *Bulletin Soc d'Agric Loir-et-Cher*, 12, 1847, pp 301-302.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp 285-86.

director accountable directly to the Minister for the running of the school, the government monitored the quality of the school's educational provision. The first pupils were admitted to the school in 1848. Its printed prospectus emphasized that, apart from initially providing clothing, there would be no cost to the parents of pupils who would be accommodated, fed, maintained and taught free of charge. It also stressed that parents who wished their children to have a Christian education would be pleased with La Charmoise, because the Bishop of Blois had authorized a chapel at the school, served by a dedicated priest with a love of young people and of work in the fields. The school's aim was to provide practical agricultural instruction within a Christian framework for a total of thirty-two pupils, with eight being admitted annually. The prospectus claimed that the staff of the school comprised, in addition to the director, the following: a doctor, a *surveillant* to provide elementary teaching, a *chef de pratique* in charge of the farming work, a *comptable* to teach accounting and mensuration, a vet, a gardener, a shepherd, a cowman, a ploughman and a viticulturalist.

Physically, the school was a large, single-storey building (no longer existing) which served both as class-room and as dormitory (equipped with folding beds). It allegedly stood in the yard of the substantial, sixteenth-century, brick-and-stone farmhouse.<sup>14</sup>

The school was directed by Edouard Malingié for only five years: he died from pneumonia, after a brief illness, in mid-December 1852 while at the height of his agricultural career. His elder son Charles (who had been educated at another agricultural school and who was, apparently, at the time of his father's death the *chef de pratique* at the farm school of La Charmoise) was appointed director of the school from

15 January 1853. Following Edouard's death, his family came to an agreement which involved selling La Charmoise to a woollen textile industrialist who had agreed to let the farm for eighteen years to Charles' brother, Paul. For family reasons, Charles set himself up on a farm elsewhere (near Bourges), resigning as director of the school at La Charmoise on 30 June 1854, to be replaced (by Ministerial appointment on the recommendation of the Prefect) by Paul Malingié, then aged twenty-six. Paul's farming enterprise ran into financial difficulties which forced him to sell, parcel by parcel, some of the lands he himself owned. Paul also followed his father in terms of public service, becoming Mayor of Pontlevoy in 1862; but he died unexpectedly, after only a week's illness, on 8 July 1865, which created a crisis for the farm school.

On the day of Paul Malingié's death, M Menont, the *chef de pratique* at the school, wrote to the Prefect to express his concern for the school's future. The Ministry, appropriately informed by the Prefect, arranged for M Boitel, an Inspecteur Générale d'Agriculture, to visit the farm school, which he did on a number of occasions that summer, in order to consider, together with the Madame Malingié, how best to arrange for the school's future. Paul Malingié's widow, Octavia, was only twenty-nine and their eldest son merely eight years old. On 7 September 1865 the Minister informed the Prefect that Boitel's endeavours to guarantee a future for the school had failed, Madame Malingié having decided to continue farming at La Charmoise but to abandon the farm school: the Minister declared that he had no alternative but to close the school. As for its pupils, the Minister decided that those in the fourth year of studies should have their final examinations brought forward, to be held immediately, and that those in the first three years should be transferred (if they wished) to the three farm schools

<sup>14</sup> Lourdel, *Le Berceau d'une Race Ovine*, p 31.

nearest to La Charmoise, in the neighbouring departments of Indre-et-Loire (at Hubaudières), Loiret (at Montbernaume) and Cher (at Laumoy). As for the staff, the *jardinier*, *chef de pratique* and *surveillant-comptable* were, by way of compensation, given their wages to the end of November. The Minister's decisions were implemented by the Jury when it met at La Charmoise on 19 September: the three fourth-year pupils were examined and awarded their certificates: of the other pupils, ten decided to discontinue their studies, one opted for Hubaudières, two for Montbernaume and six for Laumoy; one requested to go to the farm school in the department of Mayenne and another to that of Grand-Jouan in Brittany.

The farm school of La Charmoise had existed for eighteen years, from early-1848 until late-1865. Its role will now be assessed, first as perceived by contemporaries and secondly with the benefit of historical hindsight.

### III

From the admission of its first pupils in 1848, the farm school at La Charmoise made an immediate and favourable impact both locally within the Petite Sologne and regionally within Loir-et-Cher (while, of course, the farm itself was making an impact nationally with its new breed of Charmoise sheep). In 1852 the Prefect reported to the *Conseil Générale* of Loir-et-Cher that since its foundation four years earlier the school had gone from strength to strength. From at least the mid-1850s the government's *Inspecteur Générale de l'Agriculture*, M Boitel, reported favourably upon the school to the Ministry. Each year a four-man Jury spent a day – from the mid-1850s two days – at the school to assess applicants and to examine pupils, and the general tenor of the Juries' reports was commendatory. In 1856, for example, the Jury reported: 'The admirable order which

rules at the farm school, the good behaviour and sound practical instruction of its pupils, the verdant appearance of its fields, despite the poor season, and finally the magnificence and above all the uniformity of its precious flock of Charmoise sheep, everything here recalls the good traditions left like a rich legacy by much lamented founder of this work'.<sup>15</sup> The Jury concluded that the founder's son, Paul, was managing the school well and that while they were conducting the examinations the *Inspecteur Impérial des Bergeries* had arrived at the school by chance and had expressed admiration for all that he saw at La Charmoise. The following year the Jury, again praising Paul Malingié's enthusiasm, concluded: 'The theoretical teaching, the practical instruction, the condition of the crops, the management of the livestock, the maintenance of the fine race of sheep, the Charmoise, in a word everything that the Jury has examined has made a most favourable impression'.<sup>16</sup> In 1865, forced by circumstances beyond his control to consider the future of the school, the Minister fully recognized that it had been rendering very great service to agriculture in Loir-et-Cher under successive directors.

It was, then, widely-believed by contemporaries that the farm school was both useful and successful. Such views appear to have been held both by those who had vested interests and clearly wished the school to be seen as a successful enterprise, and by those who had few such interests (such as the members of the Juries) or none (such as the *Inspecteur Impérial des Bergeries*, with whom indeed Edouard Malingié had been in dispute about the fixity of his 'pure' breed and who might have been assumed not to be kindly disposed to his school enterprise, even when run by one of his sons). There are, how-

<sup>15</sup> AD 7M 228 Procès-Verbal des Opérations du Jury d'Examen de la Ferme-École de la Charmoise, 22 décembre 1856.

<sup>16</sup> AD 7M 228 Procès-Verbal des Opérations du Jury d'Examen de la Ferme-École de la Charmoise, 21 décembre 1857.

ever, grounds for viewing this perception of the school with some scepticism, for it had weaknesses of which contemporaries appear to have been unaware, as well as problems which they were reluctant to acknowledge.

#### IV

When the school at La Charmoise was closed in 1865, the pupil who asked to be transferred to the agricultural school at Grand-Jouan in Brittany was Jules Tanviray, from Villiers (near Vendôme), who was to become very influential in the development of agriculture in Loir-et-Cher, being appointed from 1 April 1879 as its first *professeur d'agriculture*.<sup>17</sup> The talents of the young Tanviray were both developed and recognized at La Charmoise, where in the spring of 1865 he had been awarded four prizes for his outstanding performances during his first year. Another of the school's famous *alumni* was Alphonse Riverain, who in 1886 succeeded Tanviray as President of the Syndicat des Agriculteurs de Loir-et-Cher, which the latter had established in 1883, the first such regional association of farmers in France.<sup>18</sup> That the school produced some outstanding pupils is beyond doubt. What is questionable is the ease with which it did so.

Intended to have thirty-two pupils (eight in each of the four year groups), the school rarely (if ever) had a full complement, its number usually fluctuating between the low and high twenties.<sup>19</sup> Although each year arrangements were made for a notice advertising free places, and inviting applications for them, to be posted at the council offices (*mairies*) of the department's more than three hundred communes, very few

applications for admission to the school were received: the number was rarely in excess of a dozen and in many years it was less than the eight places available. The problem of pupil numbers was exacerbated by the fact that inevitably some pupils left the school before completing their studies, for example because of their own ill-health or because the deaths of their fathers necessitated their returning to their own farms. Precisely for that reason, the school's directors did from time to time seek to admit more pupils into the first year of the course but met with great resistance from an inflexible Ministry which insisted that farm schools could only admit eight pupils annually. On occasions, Edouard Malingié admitted more than eight, meeting the costs of the extra pupils himself.

The school was, it seems, admired by the administration and by the agricultural elite of Loir-et-Cher but it was not popular with the farming community generally. Although attendance was advertised as being 'free' and was so in terms of the absence of both tuition fees and maintenance charges, there was none the less a real and prolonged opportunity cost to parents in terms of the withdrawal from their farm of their son's labour for four years just at the time when he was beginning to contribute substantially to work on the farm. Two further difficulties were noted by the Jury in its report of 29 December 1850, leading it to suggest (in the event, fruitlessly) that the minimum age of entry to the school should be raised from sixteen to twenty: first, pupils leaving the school after four years, at the age of twenty, were encountering reluctance, even refusal, by farmers to put their confidence in such young men, despite their schooling; secondly, if a school-leaver were then selected at the age of twenty for military service his farming career was brutally interrupted and the benefits of his schooling seriously eroded (the Jury took the view that it would be better for pupils to have met

<sup>17</sup> Baker, 'France's first agricultural syndicate', p 48.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 48-49.

<sup>19</sup> Pupils at the school were not recorded individually in the *listes nominatives* of any census because they were not considered for that purpose to be residing in Pontlevoy, even though they were living there for four years (AD 202 M293); pupil numbers are therefore taken from the reports of Juries.

their obligations for military service before entering the farm school). Military conscription also implied the possibility of an even longer absence from the parental farm. Boitel, the Inspecteur Générale de l'Agriculture who visited many farm schools, including La Charmoise, was aware of their recruitment problems: in a letter to the Ministry dated 12 July 1876 he emphasized that in districts where such schools existed children aged sixteen or seventeen going into farming did not value either the advantages of a good professional training or the possibility of being awarded medals at the end of it; instead, they preferred to find work on a farm immediately and to earn money (about 200-300fr per annum) for doing so.

For all of these reasons, the school at La Charmoise was not overwhelmed with applicants. In 1850 there were only three, in 1861 only two, and at times the directors openly admitted they were encountering difficulties in recruiting pupils. For example, Paul Malingié reported to the Prefect on 5 August 1860 that recruitment was very difficult because of the high wages paid to farm workers. Since 1858 he had been using an annual 1000fr grant from the *Conseil Générale* to award to the more able and older pupils cash prizes which were equivalent to the wages which a pupil could have earned as a farm labourer in the district during the time they were attending school. But the grant was only sufficient to enable three or four of the best pupils to be thus rewarded, consequently some good pupils became discouraged and left school before completing their course. His request for the annual grant to be increased to 2400fr, restoring it to the level which he emphasized had formerly been recognized by the *Conseil Générale* as being necessary, was not accepted. During the early 1860s Malingié repeatedly stated that recruitment to the school was difficult, a fact which he attributed in 1861 to 'the ever increasing wage-

levels in our countryside. Parents prefer to keep their children at home and to get some profit from them rather than send them to the farm school for four years... Ask the father of a family, a small farmer or a farm worker, why he does not send his sixteen years' old son to the farm school where he would receive free schooling... and he will reply that his son has just come to the age when he can pay back a little for the sacrifices that he, his father, had made in bringing-up his son, and he likes best to keep his son near him so that he can bring in a little money. Ask the son why he doesn't demand of his father to let him go to the farm school. He will reply that he will not earn any money there, that he will be kept in there for four years, and that on balance he prefers to put up with a little more of the disadvantages of staying at home to work at his father's, to enjoy his freedom and to have more money in his pocket than his father will send him each month if he goes to school. With one of them it is the love of profit, with the other love of liberty and pocket-money, with both of them there is scant appreciation of schooling (even of free schooling), those are the real reasons why so few young men are seeking to come to the farm school'.<sup>20</sup>

Malingié sought constantly, but unsuccessfully, to persuade the *Conseil Générale* to increase its grant to the school to enable him to enhance the value of prizes so that the school might compete more readily with the attractions of paid employment. The view of its *Commission des Finances* was that, rather than trying to improve recruitment by offering financial inducements of the kind Malingié proposed, it would be better if the school established for itself a public reputation as providing useful training for those going into farming. Recruitment remained a problem in the

<sup>20</sup> AD 7M 228 Rapport sur la Ferme-École de la Charmoise, 22 juillet 1861 [a letter from the Director, Paul Malingié, to the Prefect].

years prior to the school's closure: for admission in 1860 there four applicants, for 1861 two, for 1862 eleven, for 1863 seven, for 1864 eleven and for 1865 eleven. The problems of recruitment which so concerned Paul Malingié in the years immediately before his death might well have influenced his widow's decision to continue running the farm at La Charmoise but to close the school.

### V

The Ministry of Agriculture had initially agreed to make an annual payment to four members of the school's staff, although within a year it agreed additionally to a similar payment to a *jardinier-pépinieriste*, in accordance with its general policy towards farm schools, to provide horticultural instruction. In addition to the school's 'teaching' staff, there were also on the farm itself normally two or three labourers. The veterinary doctor was usually M Goubaix, who practised at the horse stud in Blois, travelling to La Charmoise by horse-drawn *voiture*. The other staff members lived at La Charmoise. The Juries on their annual visits to the school almost invariably commented favourably upon the its sound teaching and administration and upon the very satisfactory performances of its pupils in their examinations on both agricultural practice and theory. The prize-giving which concluded each visitation was held in the class-room and was attended not only by pupils, staff and the Jury but also by many parents of the pupils and by farmers from around Pontlevoy: it was an occasion when members of the Jury and the school's director could praise agricultural improvements generally and the school's contribution to agricultural progress specifically.

Undoubtedly the school was generally well-run but in 1857 there was a serious disciplinary problem: seven pupils were expelled and the affair damaged the repu-

tation of the school for some time afterwards. Some pupils had been taunting M Hubilier, the *surveillant-comptable*, with many drawings and one model of him hanging from a gallows, coupled with the words '*à bas le pion*' ('down with the assistant master').<sup>21</sup> In reporting the incident to the Prefect, the director (Paul Malingié) admitted that there had been a problem of persistent misconduct but asserted that he had complete confidence in M Hubilier (an opinion well-attested by the fact that M Hubilier continued to be employed at the school, certainly until 1861 and possibly until the school's closure in 1865). Possibly the pupils' lack of respect for authority stemmed in part from the fact that the school's staff was relatively young: in 1851, the average age was thirty-eight and the director, Edouard Malingié, was fifty-one but in 1856 the average age was only thirty-two, the director, Paul Malingié, was only twenty-eight and his *chef de pratique*, at merely nineteen, was no older than some of the pupils.

The report of the Jury at the end of 1857, making no reference to these disciplinary problems, stated that the school was 'a perfectly administered establishment and of considerable utility to the country because it produces not only good agriculturalists but also creates a good moral climate and good citizens'.<sup>22</sup> Malingié had reported the incident to the Prefect on 21 March and on 3 April the Prefect replied that the action Malingié had taken to maintain order had the full support of the Ministry. But the matter was not closed. In the summer of 1858 the Ministry wrote to Malingié to say that when M Boitel, as Inspecteur Générale de l'Agriculture, had visited the school he was very impressed with its agricultural standards and manage-

<sup>21</sup> AD 7M 228 Letter from the Director, Paul Malingié, to the Prefect, 21 March 1857. The word *pion*, which also means 'pawn', has a pejorative connotation when used to describe a school master.

<sup>22</sup> AD 7M 228 Procès-Verbal des Opérations d'Examen de la Ferme-École de la Charmoise, 22 décembre 1856.

ment but he was concerned that Malingié showed a too-generous attitude towards the pupils who should be required to show more respect and more attention to all aspects of their work. On 1 August 1858 Malingié sent a copy of the Ministry's letter to the Prefect, pointing out that the director of a farm school had no way of punishing pupils and that the only means of encouraging them was the 35fr awarded annually to each pupil to be set aside as a payment to be made when he completed his course at the school and the prize of 400fr awarded to the best fourth-year pupil. The only form of punishment available was a reprimand in front of the whole school and expulsion after three such reprimands. Malingié stressed that many of the pupils were at the school only because their parents wished them to be and that many of them neither understood nor appreciated their agricultural education; many pupils objected to any school discipline, preferring instead either to return to their homes where there would be greater freedom or to work elsewhere for wages. Malingié argued that the only way to counter such thinking was to provide more financial incentives to the pupils. He pointed out that for 1858 the *Conseil Générale* had allocated 1000fr to the school and that he had distributed it as prizes to pupils: he saw such cash prizes as the best way of attracting and retaining good pupils. He therefore asked if the *Conseil Générale* could restore to its former level of 2500fr its annual allocation to the school at La Charmoise.

The Prefect supported Malingié's request at the meeting of the *Conseil Générale* in late-August 1858 but its *Commission des Finances* argued against making any allocation at all for the following year, on the grounds that instead of establishing a more rigorous disciplinary regime at the school, as the Ministry had demanded, Malingié preferred instead to reform pupils by offering them more prizes.

In the event, the *Conseil* agreed to an allocation for 1859 of 1000fr. Malingié was annoyed when he learned, in July 1859, that the report of the *Commission des Finances* had been published and that it misrepresented the Minister's view, because it claimed that he said that pupils at the school lacked respect for their betters and attention to their work, whereas the Minister's letter actually said that they should be required to show more respect and attention. He regretted that his farm school had been represented in the published report as a centre of indiscipline and he invited the *Conseil* to send a deputation to the school to observe it at first hand and then produce a favourable report, to erase the poor public impression of the school created by the previous year's report. The Prefect, in his report to the *Conseil*, supported Malingié strongly and argued that the unfortunate events of 1857 had specific causes, involving a few individuals, and that there had not been a general disciplinary problem; he also stressed that rigorous measures had been taken against those pupils involved. In the light of the Prefect's report, the *Commission des Finances* expressed the view that the disciplinary measures taken by the director had produced good results that year and accordingly recommended an allocation of 1000fr for 1860, which was agreed by the *Conseil Générale*.

## VI

The farm school was a mixed, public and private, enterprise but the burden fell more heavily upon the Malingié family than upon the state. For its part, the government paid the wages of some of the staff and the maintenance costs of up to eight pupils admitted each year, and it provided funds for some prizes to be awarded annually. In short, it contributed towards the running costs of the school and its expectation was that, taking into account the labour on the

farm being provided by the pupils without any payment being made to them, the school would at least break even financially on a year-to-year basis. Unfortunately, in the absence of detailed accounts for the school, its financial health cannot be determined precisely but it is clear that it was far from perfect and that the Malingiés' financial commitment to the farm school was considerable.

The Jury of 1850 pointed out that the one-off sum of 75fr provided by the Ministry for the maintenance and replacement of each pupil's set of clothing, with any balance being used at the discretion of the director for prizes, was inadequate even for its primary purpose and that by a pupil's third year the director was having to meet such expenditure from his own resources. The same Jury also argued that the annual payment made by the Ministry for each pupil of 175fr should be raised to equate with the local annual wage of a young farm worker, which it reported Edouard Malingié stated to be 1000fr. Realizing that such an increase was unlikely and was in any event not in the power of the *Conseil Générale* to approve, the Jury merely used the argument in support of its suggestion to the *Conseil* that its annual grant to the school should be increased, but it does at least give some indication of the financial problems involved in running the school.

The Prefect's undoubted enthusiasm for the school was only partially reflected in the level of financial support provided for it by the *Conseil Générale*. During each of its first four years (1848-1851) the school was awarded 1500fr and then for each of the next two years 2500fr. But with a deterioration in the financial position of the department, the *Conseil*, using the strictly-correct argument that school was not one of its own institutions, withdrew all financial support: no grant was awarded in the period 1854-1857 and when the grant was reinstated in 1858 it was for only 1000fr and it remained at that level for

each of the following years until the closure of the school at the end of 1865. Throughout the school's existence, its directors sought enhanced funding from the department, either towards its general expenses or specifically to enable more prizes to be awarded and the wages of staff to be increased.

Not only was Edouard Malingié required to provide all of the capital expenditure for the project's initiation - which amounted to 13,000fr - but he and his sons also, of their own volition, contributed significantly towards its recurrent costs. Sometimes there were admitted more than the eight pupils funded by the state, their costs being met by the then director himself, and the directors regularly provided funds for prizes which were additional to those paid for by the Ministry and by the department.

From the outset, Edouard Malingié sought additional financial assistance from the *Conseil Générale*. In principle, the *Conseil* was well-disposed towards supporting farm schools in the department. At its meeting on 1 December 1848 discussion of a proposal to establish a number of such schools concluded that with one school already being established in the *arrondissement* of Blois, where farming was not very different from that in the *arrondissement* of Vendôme, the next priority must be for a school in the *arrondissement* of Romorantin, where farming was both much poorer and very different from that in the *arrondissement* of Blois. It accordingly made a recommendation to the Ministry of Agriculture for the creation of a second school at Lamotte-Louan in the commune of Vernou, a farm selected in part because its central location within the *arrondissement* of Romorantin would facilitate its role in diffusing knowledge about best agricultural practice. No doubt overwhelmed by such proposals and taking into account the fact that it had already approved the establishment of one farm school in Loir-et-Cher,

the Ministry declined to approve this plan for Lamotte-Louan.

#### VII

The farm school at La Charmoise was Edouard Malingié's project and he committed substantial knowledge and money to it in the five years before his death: it was a practical expression of his firm and explicitly-stated belief that improvement in agriculture depended upon an alliance of knowledge and capital. Charles Malingié was director only from January 1852 until June 1854, when he was succeeded by his brother, Paul. Whereas Charles, the elder of the two, had been to an agricultural school, Paul had not: when recommending him to the Minister for appointment as director, the Prefect pointed out that Paul had nonetheless been active in farming for seven years, learning under his brother's guidance. Paul sought appointment as director when his brother decided to resign. If Charles appears to have lacked the commitment of his father to the farm school at La Charmoise, Paul appears to have had the commitment but to have lacked the formal education and the experience which both his father and his brother brought to the school. Despite that handicap Paul ran the school for eleven years, until his death, but the frustration which he exhibited from time to time and the managerial problems which he encountered might have flowed from that particular disadvantage. It is certainly the case that, on his death, Paul's widow lacked commitment to the project initiated by her father-in-law and the school was in consequence closed. As the school was the private property of the Malingié family and not public property of the Ministry (whose involvement was essentially restricted to overseeing the proper functioning of the school), there was no alternative to closure of the school when Octavia Malingié decided against 'ownership' of the project.

#### VIII

With closure of the school at La Charmoise, the farming community of Loir-et-Cher lost an institution which many contemporaries valued and thought should be emulated in the two other *arrondissements* of Vendôme and Romorantin, but which was neither copied nor replaced within the department during the course of the nineteenth century. A few tentative proposals were considered (for example, for a school at Le Plessis-St Amand, near Vendôme) but none came to fruition. Some of the difficulties encountered by the farm school at La Charmoise, threatening its operation and eventually leading to its closure, were specific to that particular school but many of its problems were generally being experienced by farm schools throughout France. By the late-1860s the varied difficulties associated with farm schools had come to be recognized by the Ministry and few additional schools were being established.

Following the decree of 1848 which called for a farm school to be created in each of the almost one hundred departments of France there was a sudden but brief flourish of activity: the number of schools increased from twenty-seven at the end of 1848 to seventy by the end of 1849 but that number was never to be exceeded. Their growing cost to the state came under scrutiny because of severe cut-backs in the national budget of 1850. Furthermore, the financial partnership between the state and individuals in the creation and running of farm schools was not perceived ultimately to be mutually beneficial: the state's willingness to contribute only towards the attendance costs of a few pupils at each school and its requirement that the capital costs of such an enterprise should be met by the school's director acted, contrary to intention, as a brake upon the creation of such schools. In addition, from 1875 onwards the government endeavoured to fill the obvious gap in agricultural edu-

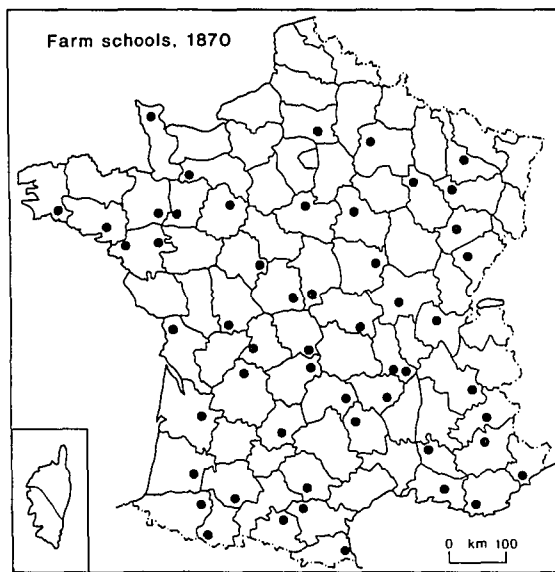


FIGURE 3

Farm schools in France, 1870 (Source: *Annuaire du ministère de l'Agriculture et du commerce*, Paris, 1870, pp 21–24, data from which is provided in Th Charmasson, A-M Lelorrain and Y Ripa, *L'Enseignement Agricole et Vétérinaire de la Révolution à la Libération*, Paris, 1992, p lxii).

cation between the local and the national levels by promoting the establishment of regional agricultural training schools (*écoles pratiques d'agriculture*) on an inter-departmental basis. Forty-five such schools existed throughout France by 1900. The development of agricultural teaching in local primary schools in the communes, in public lectures given by the *professeurs d'agriculture* in the departments, and especially in the regional, inter-departmental agricultural training schools diminished the need for farm schools. Additionally, the generally rising level of agricultural wages contributed to disaffection with farm schools and especially with the small sum offered as a leaving gratuity to each pupil who completed his course. Between 1850 and 1865 only ten new schools were opened but in the same period thirty-three were closed. By 1870 there existed only fifty-three schools (Fig 3). An attempt introduced in 1869 to breathe new life into the move-

ment, by reducing the course of study to two years (because many parents were unwilling to be deprived of the labours of their sons on their own farms for longer), by raising the minimum age of entry to seventeen, and by increasing the grant paid to a school in respect of each pupil failed to achieve its objective and the number of farm schools declined to thirty-three by 1875, to sixteen by 1893 and to fourteen by 1900.<sup>23</sup>

The farm school at La Charmoise only existed for eighteen years and its direct impact was probably not as great as contemporaries thought. Admitting only eight pupils annually, the school could not have had more than one hundred-and-fifty pupils during its life-time and the actual number was almost certainly nearer to one hundred. But the school's impact is perhaps better assessed qualitatively and indirectly. Its most famous pupil, Jules Tanviray, was subsequently to extend very effectively the role of agricultural teaching and agricultural improvement in Loir-et-Cher as its first *professeur d'agriculture*. And there can be no doubt that the school, as part of the wider farming enterprise at La Charmoise, served as a centre excellence in scientific agriculture which was seen or heard about by many practising farmers in Loir-et-Cher and indeed, because of the new race of Charmoise sheep, throughout France.

After Paul Malingié's death in July 1865, the *Conseil Municipal* of Pontlevoy (of which he had been member for ten years and of which he was mayor at time of his death) decided at its meeting on 13 August immediately to honour his memory by conceding to his family freely and in perpetuity the plot in the commune's cemetery which held his mortal remains and on 10 July 1866 it agreed to erect a monument to the joint memories of Edouard and Paul Malingié, contributing 200fr for the purpose and setting-up a committee to

<sup>23</sup> Charmasson et al, *L'Enseignement Agricole*, pp lxi, xi–xcix.

raise further funds by public subscription, to consider where the monument should be placed and what form it should take.<sup>24</sup> Today, traces of Edouard Malingié are to be found in a street in Pontlevoy named 'Avenue Malingié', in a monumental bust of him erected in 1953 at the end of the avenue, and at the family's grave in the commune's cemetery. There is now no

sign of the school at La Charmoise, the school-room having been demolished. As for the Charmoise sheep, a Syndicat des Éleveurs de la Race de la Charmoise was founded in 1896; a flock book of the breed was established in 1927; today there are about forty breeders throughout France, mainly in the Pyrénées, Limousin and Aquitaine.<sup>25</sup> The present farmer at La Charmoise, M Pierre Solon, still breeds sheep on the farm – but Ile-de-France, not Charmoise.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Régistres des Délibérations du Conseil Municipal de Pontlevoy*, consulted at the Hôtel de Ville of Pontlevoy by permission of the Mayor, M Ferandou. There is no firm indication in the council's minutes that any action was taken, at least before 1871. In effect, the erection of a public monument appears to have been delayed until the opportunity was taken to mark the centenary of the death of Edouard Malingié.

<sup>25</sup> Leclert, 'Edouard Malingié', pp 45–47.

<sup>26</sup> I am grateful to M Pierre Solon and to his daughter, Mlle Sylvie Solon, for welcoming me at La Charmoise and for their assistance with this project.