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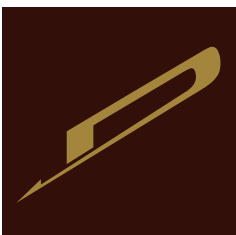


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## In this issue ...

### The Insider

WE have a few new columns to introduce. First, for those interested in personal home design, you'll find Home Style, featuring kitchens this time, on page 24. Caren Trafford will enlighten readers on the antique market in the South of France, starting with a door (see page 22) and Jamie Ivey gives an insider's look at Provence on page 36.

IN a tongue and cheeky way, Jamie's tale deals with health issues but on page 18 Anya Schiffrin gives a gripping comparison of American versus French healthcare. On the following pages, James Minter tries to raise awareness with his latest book about Haemochromatosis, a disease that affects not only him but 25 others in his village of 2000.

IAN Callen of Go Provence Supported Holidays for people with learning disabilities is looking for corporate sponsors or individuals to support his 4-day, 140-kilometre trek around the Gorges du Verdon over Easter weekend (see page 9).

All proceeds will go to low income, special needs families so they can take a holiday.

SENATOR Tribble of Virginia made a visit to the Rock recently (page 12) launching an initiative he hopes will lead to establishing an International Study Abroad Center in the Principality.

OF course, it's that time of year: tax. On page 13, George Donnelly updates American expats on the latest filing figures.

IT'S also wedding season. At 102, Roger Tricheux has lived through two world wars; Rénée Maury, 93, saw women earn the right to vote in 1944 and experienced firsthand the women's lib movement in 1968. The couple tied the knot at Nice City Hall early March after knowing each other for 80 years. Going against the current prosecco trend (see page 4), the couple said, "We will celebrate with a glass of champagne." We wish them a lifetime of happiness.

*Nancy Heslin, Editor*

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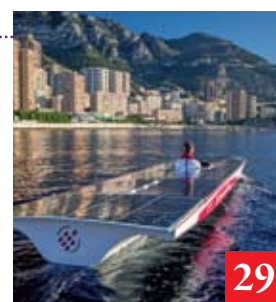
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Cover: Monaco © Solar1



**WELCOME TO A GOLF GEM 26**



## THE WAR OF WORDS HEATS UP

FRENCH may be the world's sexiest language but it's only the eighth most spoken, having suffered a decline when 10 countries joined the EU in 2010. Even in Brussels, English is the EU's working language.

And still, like a jealous lover, the French refuse to acknowledge the presence of English in the room.

This certainly came to light mid-March when the Minister for Higher Education, Geneviève Fioraso, announced plans to increase the number of foreign students at French universities by – *quelle horreur* – offering courses in English. This is already policy at the Grandes Écoles and elite business schools in the country.



In typical French fashion, education unions are calling for strikes while critics, like journalist Bernard Pivot, claim: “If we allow English to be introduced into our universities and for teaching science and the modern world, French will be vandalised and become poorer ... It will turn into a commonplace language, or worse, a dead language.”

But one show of support came from the Left-wing newspaper, *Libération*, which on March 10th ran its entire cover in English, with the headline “Teaching in English. LET’S DO IT” followed by a header: “Sex and condoms: the best is yet to come”. Surely even the French would say *oui* to that.

23%

of French men under 35 fear having a disease even if they have no symptoms.  
48% claim this starts after seeing a report about an illness in the media or reading about it online (43%).

Source: Ifop/Capital Image survey

## BURSTING CHAMPAGNE'S BUBBLE

IT'S official. Prosecco, Italy's low-cost alternative to a bottle of bubbly outsold French champagne in 2013.

According to CIVC, the champagne trade association, sales of champers dipped 1.5% last year (and 4.4% in 2012!) while the Glera grape-based prosecco saw an 11.5% jump to sell 307 million bottles worldwide.

Champagne exports to the US and UK (where one British wine retailer reported a 39% rise in prosecco sales over just six months) are definitely fizzling out.

But hang on to your cork prosecco, your Spanish rival Cava may leave you high and dry.

## le FLASH



Photo: woodley wonderworks

### A REAL “CHICK FLICK”

THE village of Loué is well-known for its free-range poultry but chicken breeders were in a flap when they learned about a “farmer’s daughter” movie being shot in their central France town.

Realising that is was a porn film, residents quickly ruffled the camera crew’s feathers and chased them away.

The adult video – which opens with: “The producers went to meet 33-year-old Sophie,

a chicken breeder, who wanted to make a video for her husband as a Valentine’s Day gift ...” – got more than 2 million hits after its online debut on February 12th.

“No, she’s not a Loué chicken breeder ...” the director of Fermiers de Loué cooperative told a French paper.

Although it’s illegal to shoot porn in broad daylight in the streets of France, no charges have been, er, laid.

## A SELFIE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS

ON March 2nd, Oscar presenter Ellen DeGeneres took “the selfie that broke Twitter” – which included 10 A-list celebs such as Var residents Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie – and set a new record with 2 million retweets. But *TIME* magazine had already published its “Top 100 selfiest cities in the world” list and, amazingly, Los Angeles was not on it.

Compiled over 10 days using 400,000 Instagram images, *TIME* based its finding on users per 100,000 residents (for more see [time.com/selfies-cities-world-rankings](http://time.com/selfies-cities-world-rankings)).

Two French cities shot into the ranks: Paris placed 17th (80 selfie-takers per 100,000 people) and just before the cut-off at number 100, Nice (30 selfie-takers per 100,000 people). If you’re wondering who snapped up first place, it was Makati City and Pasig, Philippines, followed by Manhattan and Miami.





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## FRANCE IN THE NEWS



*dans le dos* (Broché), where he quotes a key local businessman saying to him: “*Vous dérangez beaucoup à Nice.*” (You upset many people in Nice.)

That was in 1994 but it seems likely to become even more true today.

### The ski's the limit

A FUNDAMENTAL principle of the European Union is the right of any citizen to do business in any other EU country. With this right comes an important limitation: tax, working legislation, insurance requirements and qualifications must be those of the nation where work is carried out, not those of one's original country.

British ski instructor Simon Butler set up his company Simon Butler Skiing (no points for originality) in Megève, in the Rhône-Alpes region, over 30 years ago. He thought that he was complying with the law by offering tours to teach his British clients to ski in France. British doctors and dentists can practice in France by virtue of their British qualifications, so why should skiing be any different?

Not everyone sees it that way. While Butler's personal fiscal situation is not under scrutiny, there is a question of whether he and his staff of British instructors are breaking employment laws by not having French qualifications.

Butler, 51, and six others were arrested at the end of February, in what they feel was a “carefully orchestrated operation” carried out over a

CONT PG 7 ➤

### A news story

NICE-MATIN has been in financial agony for years (see *Reporter* 160) and bets for salvation were on a miraculous takeover by a mysterious buyer, probably from Italy or the Middle East.

As the only local daily, its possible demise worried not only the staff and dwindling readership, but also local political figures who depend on it for spreading the word about their wonderful achievements and promises for the future. The pols certainly wanted the title saved but few expected the latest twist.

At last word, *Nice-Matin* has been taken over by local municipal councillor and businessman Jean Icart. Refinancing of some €20 million will come from GXP Capital – a private Swiss investment fund which will place its own Gilles Périn on the Board of Directors under Icart.

Jean Icart, 66, is a long-standing member

of Nice's political establishment. Currently a sitting councillor and originally a member of the centre-right UMP party, he broke off to become a right-wing independent candidate previously allied to the National Front and former Nice mayor Jacques Peyrat. Both Icart and Peyrat are fierce political opponents of the incumbent mayor Christian Estrosi.

Icart promises that under his management *Nice-Matin* and its sister titles, *Var-Matin* and *Corse-Matin*, will be politically independent (we'll see about that) and that he will not stand for political office while he is managing *Nice-Matin*.

This clears the way for the continuing local dominance of Estrosi who, at this writing, has yet to comment on the unexpected takeover. In fact, in Nice's political fishbowl no one else is saying much either. Perhaps they read Icart's autobiography, *La croix*





# FRENCH POLITICS GOES LOCAL

FORMER US House Speaker Tip O'Neill first coined the phrase "All politics is local". In France this is particularly true as mayors have more power than their counterparts in countries where the office is largely honorific.

## The power and the glory

A FRENCH mayor is the official representative of the State in his commune, even if the national government of the moment is not to his liking. His administrative powers are wide and overseen by the Prefect; the Public Prosecutor oversees his considerable judicial powers. A mayor and his elected council members administer the municipality's property and assets, manage the communal budget, fix local tax rates and determine how these taxes are to be spent on roads, transport, schools, the environment and many other public services.

As the ultimate guardian of the public register, the mayor is responsible for endorsing all official acts that take place on his turf. He can – and sometimes does – refuse a marriage if he thinks it is illegitimate or veto registering a baby's name if he considers it contrary to legal doctrine. His or her word is rule.

A mayor and his deputies are officers

of the *police judiciaire*, which is roughly equivalent to, say, the Criminal Investigation Service. A mayor can order arrests and even (rarely) make them himself. Essential to his function is assisting the public prosecutor in investigations and guaranteeing that citizens' civil and criminal complaints are duly registered and transmitted to the appropriate judicial authorities. He has complete control over the municipal police force and is responsible for ensuring public order, security, safety and hygiene in his commune.

## With power comes responsibility

ONCE in office, a mayor can't just walk away from his position if he blunders. He is personally and legally answerable to the civil courts, the penal courts and the Ministry of Finance. Mayors are sometimes prosecuted and could even finish behind bars for taking their obligations rather too lightly. Between 1995 and 2014, 130 mayors were condemned for faults deemed to have contributed to injury or death in their commune.

Accusations of financial impropriety are even more common. Former Nice Mayor Jacques Médecin, convicted for fraud, only escaped a long prison term by

fleeing to Uruguay where he eventually died far from his beloved Nizza. More recently, Fréjus mayor Elie Brun was condemned for abusing his position concerning the granting of a licence to a local private beach. And at the moment, the mayor of Cannes faces allegations of impropriety brought by his political foes.

Such is the weight of responsibility that in this year's municipal election, 64 communes couldn't come up with a single candidate who was willing to stand.

## So what's the payoff?

MONSIEUR *le Maire* is seen as an obligatory right of passage to a higher national office (very few ministers have not followed this path) and there are usually associated perks, often an official vehicle and local privileges, along with a pay packet. France has 36,681 mayors but 34,672 of them govern communes with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. With eight pay grades, each mayor is paid according to the number of inhabitants in his commune. The 19,757 communes with fewer than 500 inhabitants pay their mayor a meagre €646 a month. Next, the 6,871 mayors of communes of fewer than 3,499 inhabitants receive €1635/month and the pay climbs until the final 41 mayors managing communes with populations over 100,000. They are paid €5,512 per month. Officially, that is.

Most *maires* have found ways to supplement their mayoral pay. In small, rural communes it's often a second job as a farmer, vigneron or the local doctor. Others hold a second political office, usually as members of parliament (*députés*) for which they are also compensated. Like all holders of elected political office in France, the position can be ephemeral, so they are not bound by the necessary 42 years of social security contributions to qualify for the full State Pension.

Could an expat be mayor? Some are, although they were first required to take out French nationality (or to have so by birthright). This does not apply to mayors' municipal councillors, many of whom are EU citizens. Locally, Mougins School headmaster Brian Hickmore stands for councillor on the incumbent mayor's list, as did the school's marketing chief, Susan Dunnachie, before him.

As we go to print, *les municipales* are in full swing. With many British expats able to vote in these elections for the first time, will we see a swing towards a *maire* from Over There? ■



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## CONTINUED FROM PG 5

busy school holiday period.

This isn't Butler's first run-in with the courts. In 2004 he was fined €10,000 for a similar charge and last year he was sentenced to 6 months and another fine, a judgement he is still appealing.

At this writing Butler, whose business was named "TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice" 2014 Winner is awaiting trial in France for illegally teaching British tourists to ski, with a possible yearlong prison sentence. He has been forbidden from instructing and cannot leave France; his passport was taken and he must check in regularly at the gendarmerie. His French lawyer Philippe Planes has filed a complaint for protectionism against France with the European Commission.

## Hollande: a pinball wizard?

THE French may not bat an eyelash over a presidential affair, but when it comes to the subject of taxes, they are anything but passive, as shown last fall by the Bonnets Rouges protest over the *eco-tax*.

Yes, the recent introduction of the 75% fat-cat tax garnered scrutiny both within the country and worldwide, but did you know that the French government introduced 93 taxes between 1998-2012?

Now, as revealed in *Le Figaro's* "The 192 absurd taxes that need to be scrapped", a Ministry of Finance report shines light on some 192 "smaller" business levies that generate less than €150 million each. So let's do a tally: Germany has three such taxes, each

bringing in less than €100 million per year; the UK zero and France ... 179.

The *Inspection Générale des Finances* (IGF) would like to axe at least 90 of these *taxes*, which, says Finance Minister Bernard Cazeneuve who commissioned the report, "in fact some cost more than they bring in".

While a final decision is expected this spring, we highly doubt there'll be much protest over trashing the tax on the number of balls in a pinball machine.

## Size doesn't matter

CARREFOUR remains the biggest supermarket chain with 4779 French stores ranging from giant "hypermarkets" to local "City" stores. But according to independent consumer protection associations, biggest doesn't mean best value for money. That title goes to Leclerc and its 594 outlets, 18 of them in Alpes-Maritimes (see page 11) and Var.

The company continues to grow and CEO Michel-Edouard Leclerc expects the group to add another 2500 jobs in 2014 to its existing 100,000 staff roster.

With a French market share approaching 20%, Michel-Edouard expects Leclerc to outdo Carrefour by the end of the year thanks partly to new "Drive" pickup points, which he estimates will eventually account for as much as 10% of turnover.

## If it's broke, fix it

THESE days French consumers aren't just looking for the best value, they're looking

to keep their euros in their wallets. And so Fransiska Greenland and Jaime Arredondo have imported a simple idea from the Netherlands: to link DIY enthusiasts to individuals who are fed up with having to replace something that's broken because it's more expensive to repair it.



The Repair Café movement – trying to fix something instead of throwing it out – was launched in Amsterdam five years ago by Martine Postma. It was so successful that she set up The Repair Café Foundation (<http://repaircafe.org>), a Dutch non-profit organization, in 2011 to "provide professional support to local groups in the Netherlands and other countries wishing to start their own Repair Café".

Fransiska and Jaime now have *un repair café* at 4 rue Vernier in Nice, open for the moment every second Saturday from 15h-18h. With all the tools in-house so you can mend your pants, fix your bike or even your coffee maker yourself – there are also volunteer *bricoleurs* on hand to help with your repairs (for a small agreed fee). If you've nothing to repair, stop by for a free coffee and maybe lend a hand. ■



# Is life really greener on the other side?



TAX is a complex subject, especially for British expats trying to decide whether it's better to be tax resident in France or in the UK.

The opinion is that France is invariably a high-tax country while Britain is not, but is this really the case? Well, that depends entirely on personal circumstances, and also whether you consider social charges a tax or an insurance policy. For average earners in France, income tax is low but obligatory social insurance charges are high. In Britain, it's the other way round.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers have tried

to make some sense of all this in a recent study of 20 countries which looked at how much a high earner takes home once tax and social contributions are paid. PWC found that a married British resident with two children, earning the equivalent of 400,000USD a year has 57.28% of his salary left after taxes and National Insurance contributions. The average Frenchman has 58.10% but the lucky Saudis are left with 96.86%; New Yorkers take home 60.45%.

Tax bands vary from country to country so a very high earner might fall into President Hollande's dreaded 75% category but wouldn't pay nearly as much if he was tax domiciled in the UK where the top rate is 45%. Authorised deductions for children, mortgages, special allowances and accrued wealth also diverge but even Hollande has a way to go before reaching Harold Wilson's 95% supertax that inspired the Beatles hit "Taxman" in 1966.

Not only do tax thresholds differ between countries, but rates also vary enormously. The top rate in Britain of 45% for earnings over £150,000 seems steep but only 1% of British taxpayers pay this. These high earners represent 29.7% of HMRC's income tax takings. Ed Balls says that this rate would be raised to 50% under a Labour government.

The top 16% of British earners pay 67% of all the income tax collected by HMRC. France's top rate of 75% affects fewer

than 1000 people – those who earn more than €1 million annually. Some of those who did qualify have already followed actor Gérard Depardieu to friendlier tax climes, including Britain.

A much more relevant rate for British middle-income earners is 40% which applies to income over £41,450 a year. In 1988, only 1.35 million British taxpayers qualified but by 2010 the number more than doubled and now stands at 4.4 million. Unless the threshold is raised, the number of people paying 40% is expected to rise to 6 million in 2015 as salaries increase. Some teachers, nurses, police officers and even Tube drivers already find themselves in the 40% bracket.

Renewal campaign head Dave Skelton proposes scrapping the 40% tax as it now exists and instead applying 45% to income over £62,000 instead of the current £150,000. This would reduce the tax burden on those earning between £42,000 and £62,000 to 32% of their total income. Parties are divided on whether the threshold should change.

In the meantime 2.7 million more Britons are paying no income tax at all since the non-taxable threshold was raised by Cameron from £6475 to the current £10,000.

So would you be better off in the UK or France and what tax saving options are open to you? That's what our financial service advertisers can tell you. ■

## Should France run Britain's railways?

BRITISH writer Mark Johnson has a second home in France and travels by rail in both countries. He argues that Britain's "dilapidated network" would be better in every way if Britain just let the French run it.

Comparing the fare over the 307 miles from London to Penzance with the same distance in France (Paris to Bordeaux), he found that the return trip in first class came to £264 in the UK but only £78 in France. The standard fares came to £89 and £35 respectively.



The levels of comfort are also very different. British Rail's "grubby seating" and "shabby loos" are no match for the elegant French TGVs – even the lighting is less harsh on French

trains so that passengers can relax or snooze during their voyage.

When it comes to rail travel, other nationalities can indeed do it better, even within Britain. Chiltern Railways is German owned and operated. I often take their service from South Bucks into London and it's a model of cleanliness and efficiency. On a £12 one-day card, I can make the 37-minute trip to London Marylebone, travel in all London zones on the Tube and buses, and return to my leafy bolt-hole the same evening on a timetable you could set your watch by. British operators need to get back on track. **M.M.**

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## TAKE A HIKE!

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Ian Callen with Alex in the Gulf of St Tropez, a trip organised by Lindsay Phillips (page 38) of Domaine St-Marc des Omèdes in Lorgues.

BRISTOLIAN Ian Callen, along with his wife Anna and Neal Masner, runs Go Provence Supported Holidays ([goprovence.co.uk](http://goprovence.co.uk)) in the Gorges du Verdon. They have been providing supported holidays for people with learning disabilities since 2010, and additionally set up a charity called Blue Sky to help special needs families with a low income afford a holiday with Go Provence.

Ian is very passionate about his work. "It's stressful enough raising my three young children, none of whom has special needs. When my kids are in bed, I sit down and sometimes breathe a sigh of relief, and then, if I still have the energy, I spend a few

hours doing something for myself. It made me realise how challenging it must be for parents who have children with learning disabilities, who never get a break after putting in more than ten hours of care a day."

One day while out walking, Ian had the idea to bring these families down here on holiday. His home in Esparron de Verdon already had carer accommodation where a family could stay while the disabled enjoyed a supported holiday with Ian's family.

"That way," Ian explains, "both the carer and the cared for have an independent holiday, but they are not too far away from each other if they wanted to visit."

Over the Easter weekend, Ian and Neal are organising a 4-day trek around the Gorges du Verdon to raise money for families from the UK who are in desperate need of a holiday.

"We are addressing the issues raised by the recent Breaking Point campaign, which was conducted by Mencap, one of the leading charities for learning disability," Ian tells us. "This study found that 8 out of 10 families in the UK, who care for a family member with a learning disability, have reached breaking point due to lack of different types of support – so essentially they have no access to short breaks or respite. And yet, according to Carers UK, care by these families saves the state £119 billion a year by eliminating the cost of paying for staff to provide full-time residential care. With the money we raise from this, we plan to help as many of these families as possible."

"The 140-kilometre trek will take place in the Gorges du Verdon, the biggest canyon in Europe, about an hour and a half north of the Mediterranean and the three nights will be spent at *gîtes* in Moustiers, Rougon and Aiguines. We are asking people to join us – even just for one of the days – and to get sponsored, all for a good cause. We are also looking for corporate sponsorship, so if there is anyone out there who would like to sponsor us then please get in touch. We have a dedicated website with full details of the trek, where the money will go and how people can help." ■

Contact [ian@goprovence.co.uk](mailto:ian@goprovence.co.uk) or to help sponsor or participate in the trek see: <http://callenanna.wix.com/goprovincetrek2014>



# RUBY SOAMES: “I’M NOT A HEART SURGEON”

BY PJ HESLIN



*Provenance*, the second novel from Nice-based author Ruby Soames, comes out this summer.

EVEN though I have now lived here for four years, I know that I am still an American visiting France, and not a fully integrated expat. I feel like my French should be better and although I love living here, I can become frustrated with the “Frenchness” of France from time to time. Interviewing Ruby Soames for “American Notes”, it struck me how at home she and her family are in this country.

Ruby and her husband, Jon, both work locally while their two children attend a neighborhood French school and speak French and English fluently.

Ruby grew up with a foot in two different countries, which perhaps contributes to her ease in living in another culture. The road to France began when she was a student at the Lycée Français in South Kensington, London.

“Having started at the Lycée at an

early age and devouring 19th-century French literature since the time I could read, I felt an affinity with France. For the French, nothing is too trivial to be turned into an art form – from walking into a shop to setting a table to designing a mini roundabout.”

Her mother was a model from Portland, Oregon, while her London-born father worked in film. For Ruby, the school year was spent in England but each summer she crossed the pond to her mom’s hometown. During those visits, she found American technology impressive. Gadgets like the Walkman would hit the market before they came to Britain and so she would return to school feeling ahead of the trend. She grew up loving – and defending – both countries equally.

In October of 2002, Ruby, Jon and their infant daughter moved from the UK to the Var and were off to an inauspicious start. They rented a house that was cheap but it ended up being a disaster. Among the more pressing problems: the window wells were a breeding ground for houseflies and there was no heating or air conditioning. The latter made more difficult due to the fact that it was one of the country’s coldest winters followed, of course, by one of its hottest summers – nearly 15,000 people died in France due to heat-related causes that year. They decided to put the rental behind them and head to Aix-en-Provence.

They took to Aix immediately, but not without some drawbacks. “It was beautiful but our whole life was spent in the car. I just didn’t get the point,” Ruby explains, still perplexed.

Aix marked significant changes for Ruby, including the birth of her son and a teaching job at the Institute of American Universities. (Ruby still commutes from Nice to teach a weekly course in comparative education). After living in Aix for eight years they came to Nice in 2010.

With different nationalities and cultures swirling around, I ask Ruby where she considers home. “Home is where I have my coffee in the mornings and where my family is ... so Nice.

“For me, London is for shopping and girlfriends, the US for travel and family –

my father lives in Malibu – but in Nice I always feel like I'm on holiday."

Even though she admires London – "I feel that right now, London is the place culturally" – she prefers Nice because people can still be original. "Plus here I can do exactly what I want, when I want. I can walk outside of my door and don't need to depend on a car to get around."

"We came here to escape commercialism and big city life. We love living near the sea, the mountains and being connected to Europe – especially Italy where we shop for food regularly. Jon and I had both chosen transportable jobs – Jon's a travel writer and I'm a teacher – because we always love to discover new things and have adventures."

Having children is another reason why she and her husband favor France over England or America. "I wouldn't want our kids growing up in London because I find it's very uniform and there's this culture of going out just to buy things."

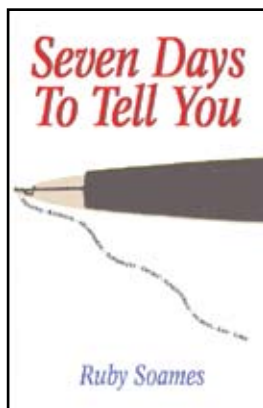
She also prefers the French educational system to the American or British. It is a tough system but free, and the couple both believe that the French schools make a better-finished product.

Ruby also advises anybody who is thinking of having a child to do so in France, if they have the option. "Having a baby in France is a much better experience. The hospital was like a hotel."

Ruby wrote her first book at the age of seven but it wasn't until 2010 that she had her first novel in print, thus fulfilling a lifelong ambition to be both

a teacher and published author. The opportunity presented itself when Ruby won the Hookline and Thinker Novel contest, which she had heard about while studying for her MA in Creative Writing at the University of Manchester.

"The stories are judged by reading groups from all over the UK. I submitted my synopsis and three chapters in January 2010. After three months I was in the top five and invited to submit the rest of the book. After nearly a year, readers voted my novel as their favorite."



*Seven Days to Tell You* (UK: Hookline Books) with its "McEwanish sophistication of style and structure (lots of flashbacks, skillfully handled)" was reviewed in *Reporter* 146.

"My characters in my books get to do all the fun stuff, and I'm stuck at home tapping away! Because my book was written in the first-person narrative, readers often assume it was my story – a heart surgeon marries a wild, sexy Frenchman who disappears for three years ... people often ask me about surgical procedures or why I didn't change the locks when my husband left!" ■

Look for Ruby's latest novel, *Provenance* (UK: Hookline Books), due out this summer. For more see [rubysoames.com](http://rubysoames.com)

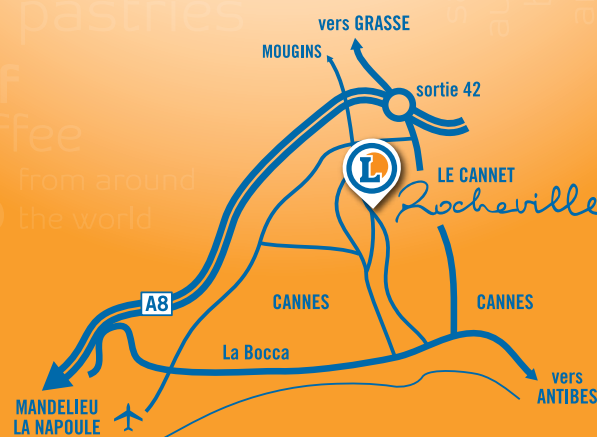
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# US stars of tomorrow will earn their stripes in Monaco

BY NICK KENT



Susan Feaster, Co-Founder and President Monaco US Business Roundtable and Senator Paul Tribble, President Christopher Newport University.



Mike Powers, Co-Founder and Honorary Chairman Monaco US Business Roundtable.



Outside Monaco's Palace (L to R): Thomas Fouilleron, Palais de Monaco Director of Archives and Library; Susan Feaster; Senator Paul Tribble; Philippe Laik; Secretary of US Army, Les Brownlee (ret); Mrs Rosemary Tribble and Irina Alekseeva.

THE entente between Monaco and the US has undergone a step-change since the launch of a dynamic initiative – the Monaco US Business Roundtable.

There's no doubt that the key movers in the new organization mean business. The co-founders are Mike Powers, a prominent American figure on the Monaco map, and Susan Feaster, the powerhouse CEO of Ryder Cup France, US Partners Club, who splits her time between Washington DC, Paris and Monaco.

Their aim is to build solid relations between Monaco and the US in the realms of education, government, business, culture and sport. Proof that we are not dealing with a talking shop here came when the *Reporter* met with former US Senator Paul Tribble, who was staying at the splendid Château Tardieu as the guest of Philippe Laik and his wife Irina.

Senator Tribble is President of Christopher Newport University (CNU), which has its main campus in Virginia.

"I've come here with my dream

of establishing in Monaco a CNU International Study Abroad Center," said the Senator, whose confidence and friendliness make him an excellent educational ambassador.

"Students from CNU will benefit greatly from the broader view of the world they will get from mixing and working with students at the International University of Monaco. They will be meeting students from France, Italy, Brazil – from around the world. It's a two-way street of course – students from IUM will gain a lot from studying at CNU."

The cultural life of Monaco, alongside its finance and business disciplines, is a big pull for the CNU students. And IUM students headed in the opposite direction will learn a little about sense of scale, as the main CNU campus is the size of the Principality.

After positive discussions with Dr Jean-Philippe Muller, General Director of IUM, and Dr Marika Taishoff, Director

of the MBA programme IUM, Senator Tribble was hopeful that the first batch of exchanges, in the shape of high-achieving students in the business studies field, would take place in June. Professors from both establishments will also be swapping roles in the near future.

And next up on the Powers/Feaster recipe for a successful cultural cocktail mix? This June the duo will bring the US delegation travelling to France for the 70th anniversary of D-Day to meet the Parliament of Monaco for a Friendship Exchange. For the sports enthusiasts, the Roundtable is working with Ryder Cup France 2018 Chairman Pascal Grizot (see *Reporter* 160) and the Fédération Française de Golf towards the re-birth of a famous championship, the Monte Carlo Open, as the Prince Rainier Cup, with a strong US contingent anxious to secure the first glory. ■

For more information, contact Monaco US Business Roundtable at [MonacoUS.BRT@gmail.com](mailto:MonacoUS.BRT@gmail.com)

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## TAXES

# US TAX UPDATE

BY GEORGE DONNELLY

NOW is the time for all Americans to perform their annual civic duty and file their tax returns. The United States, unfortunately, remains the sole Western nation to impose its taxes on worldwide income, regardless of where you live.

Thanks to the government shutdown, the start of the filing season was delayed until January 31st this year. For those of us who live outside the US, there remains

an automatic 2-month extension until June 15th to file your tax return. Be warned, however, this is not an extension of time to pay: to avoid penalties the deadline remains April 15th. Those who feel they need more time can apply for an extension, until October 15th.

The personal exemption, standard deduction and tax rate tables have been adjusted for inflation, as has the maximum contribution to retirement accounts. The average exchange rate used for converting euros into US dollars, as published by the IRS, is 0.783 for 2013.

Filing thresholds have also gone up. A single taxpayer can now make up to \$10,000 and not file a tax return. There are different amounts if you're married or over 65; see the table for filing thresholds.

The foreign earned income exclusion inched up to \$97,500 for 2013.

Remember, though, you need to file a return in order to claim the exclusion.

New taxes were added to the "rich." A new tax rate of 39.6% was added for those at higher incomes – \$400,000 for single filers, \$450,000 for married couples filing jointly and \$425,000 for heads of household. Itemized deductions and personal exemptions are also phased out at high-income levels, and capital gains taxes increase to 20% for some taxpayers. There's also been a 0.9% Medicare tax and a 3.8% tax on investment income added for high-wage earners.

Another item new for 2013: same-sex couples who are married will have to choose married filing jointly or married filing separately when doing their tax returns. The marriage must be legal in the state or country in which it was performed. This includes France, which in 2013 recognized same-sex marriages.

The IRS processed more than 147 million tax returns in 2013, down slightly from the previous year, and more than 109 million taxpayers received refunds that averaged \$2,744, also slightly less than in 2012. As of February 21st 2014, the IRS has received over 46 million tax returns, up 1% from the same period last year. ■

*American Tax Consultant George Donnelly (donnelly-cpa.com – 06 79 27 92 60) is a Member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Licensed by the State of California.*

## MINIMUM FILING THRESHOLDS

STATUS	AGE	GROSS INCOME
Single	under 65	\$ 10,000
Single	65 or older	\$ 11,500
Married filing joint	both spouses under 65	\$ 20,000
Married filing joint	one spouse 65 or older	\$ 21,200
Married filing joint	both spouses 65 or older	\$ 22,400
Married filing separately	any	\$ 3,900
Head of household	under 65	\$ 12,850
Head of household	65 or older	\$ 14,350
Qualifying Widow(er)	under 65	\$ 16,100
Qualifying Widow(er)	65 or older	\$ 17,300



# A COURT WITH A VIEW

BY MOLLY BROWN

**EYE ON THE BALL:** At the Monte-Carlo Country Club, it's hard for tennis fans not to be distracted by the views. Image: Monaco Press Centre Photos

MONACO'S economy improved last year with revenues 5% higher than the previous year, so things are certainly looking up. The mimosa trees were in bloom at the end of January, Menton brightened a rainy February with a festival of oranges and lemons and in March, the Printemps des Arts filled the air with an eclectic feast of music. In April, the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, brilliant choreographer Jiri Kylian and Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo will dance a welcome to spring ... but it is really at Easter that spring fever turns heads with flowers, chocolate eggs and frivolous hats. Away go the fur coats, boots and little black dresses; and flowery frocks, straw hats and summer sandals bring a splash of colour to brighten our lives. The Casino gardens are usually ablaze with multi-coloured tulips at Easter, but old buildings and green spaces in the centre of town are fast becoming endangered species. This year the gardens are fenced off during construction of a new, pop-up shopping centre, which will hopefully delight the eagerly anticipated wave of Chinese tourists. Meanwhile, hundreds of Italians flock into the Principality each year to celebrate Easter in style and *fare una passeggiata* in Monte-Carlo.

## Grand slams and Grand Prix

GIANT cruise ships tower over Port Hercule and busloads of tennis fans crowd into town for the 108th edition

of the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters tennis tournament (Apr 12-20). Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic opened the tournament last year with a gentle game in the Place du Casino and 128,000 spectators and 61 million TV viewers in over 5 continents watched a wonderful week of tennis, with Djokovic beating 8-time Monaco champion Rafael Nadal to win the Men's Single title and €501,700 prize money. This year's tournament promises to be just as exciting, with these two exceptional players and other tennis stars opening the clay court season at the spectacular Monte-Carlo Country Club.

At the Grimaldi Forum, car lovers admire some of the world's most beautiful luxury supercars (super boats with matching helicopters, too) at the top-quality Top Marques show (Apr 17-20).

After the Easter weekend, an army of workers erect barriers, fences, walls of giant tyres and sky-high grandstands around the Grand Prix circuit. Huge lorries bring in the F1 racing cars, blocking traffic on the narrow roads; then the racing drivers, car designers, mechanics and attendant crowd of fans arrive and the noise goes up by decibels daily. Many residents leave, but the excitement is infectious and the adrenalin rush inescapable. If you are mad about cars, Monaco is the place to be, especially in May when the town is taken over by the greatest road race of all, the Monaco Grand Prix (May 22-25).

## Grand old days

THIS year there is an extra treat ... two weeks before the Grand Prix is the biennial 9th Grand Prix de Monaco Historique (May 9-11), where you can see motor racing as it used to be, with courageous, daredevil drivers hurtling round hairpin beds at dangerous speeds in small, cramped racing cars, leather helmets and skill their only protection. Fifty years of motor racing will be commemorated with seven exceptional series of cars racing around the circuit. I do not know whether the Bugatti 3B in which Williams won the first race in 1929 will be taking part, but a special prize is to be given this year to the owner of the best Bugatti in the Series A race of "Pre-war *voiturettes*" and "Pre-1939 Grand Prix cars"; this race was won last time by British driver Julian Bronson in a 1938 ERA D Type. For car racing fans, worldwide collectors and classic motor sport fanatics this event is unmissable. Unlike the F1 streamlined speed machines, these small, sleek cars can overtake on the circuit, making the race more interesting to watch; grandstands are not crowded and you can view the cars on the port near Stars n Bars before the race. It is a great place to introduce young, future drivers to handmade cars, solidly built, stylish and very fast ... even though they are OLD! ■

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## DOWN FOR THE COUNT

BUSINESS

BY PETER JOHNSON



IF you're in business in France, last year was pretty bleak and the forecast for 2014 looked no better, if anything worse. When paying 45% National Insurance/social security contributions, Corporation Tax at 33%, higher VAT rates ... it's hard to just survive let alone actually *make* money.

Imagine the surprise, then, in early 2014 to hear President Hollande making overtures to the business sector. Was this the "Gayet effect"? A new love softening the edges of the fiercely anti-business socialist government? The *Pacte de responsabilité* (PDR) announced in January offered a 5% drop in social security contributions against the rather woolly notion that this decrease would necessarily feed through to create jobs. When your business is "on the ropes" you probably first want to get to the middle of the ring,

clear your head, catch your breath, and only then, possibly, think about creating new jobs, or – to extend the boxing analogy – fly across the ring and knock your opponent down for the count!

The PDR actually gave us a little hope. Five percent? But was this the existing 3% on the table for medium-sized businesses (via the *Contrat de compétitivité*) plus 2%, or was it a totally new, stand alone 5% applicable to all businesses, large and small?

As usual with the current government, we enter the Fudge Zone. No one really knows the answer, and – as it was quickly pointed out – this still leaves businesses in France some 70% less competitive than their German counterparts. There's still a long way to go.

And then, *bien sûr*, the unions step in, complaining that Hollande has betrayed his socialist heritage and turned overnight into a rampant capitalist (a Social Democrat, some commentators said, *à la Tony Blair*). On the other side, the employers' union, MEDEF, added that they wouldn't sign up for a "contract" binding them to create new jobs.

And in late February the European Commission's forecast for France predicted

a 4% level of national debt to GDP in 2015, whereas the French government had staked their reputation on bringing it down to 3%; indeed, the European Commission had already given them a 2-year extension in 2013 to resolve the issue.

Unemployment keeps rising (meaning more benefits going out), fiscal revenue has dropped off (*trop d'impôt tue l'impôt*), and where will the government make savings in the public sector amounting to €50 billion? Making *fonctionnaires* redundant or putting a cap on their final salary pension schemes? Unlikely. You need growth to fuel the economy, more than the 1% forecasted this year by the European Commission or the 1.7% for 2015. And to achieve growth you need to be competitive.

*Le Figaro's* February 26th editorial referred to the "*immobilisme maladif*" of the French government. No literal translation needed, while on January 18th, the headlines of the *Economist* read "*le nouveau Hollande*" shortly after the announcement of the PDR. But – like his love life – those first amorous excursions on the back of a scooter have been replaced by the sedate and obscure "stop/start" movements of a giant ocean liner, obstinately difficult to stop and turnaround. ■



# THE FAST TRACK TO FORMULA ONE

BY MIKE MEADE

MOST young boys have a wistful notion of where they want life to take them. A pilot, surgeon, explorer or sportsman are dreamy ambitions that usually fade in early adulthood when reality and the need to make a living kick in. Canadian Jakeson Caouette is an exception.

Twelve-year-old “Jakes”, as his mother Lorrienne calls him, has no such vague dream. He’s going to be a world champion Formula One driver.

Jakeson fully intends to follow in the footsteps of compatriots Gilles Villeneuve and son Jacques who in 1997 became the only Canadian to win a Formula One World Championship.

I asked Jakeson if he’d seen the film “Rush” (he had of course) and whether he thought he was a James Hunt or a Niki Lauda type driver. Lauda, he replied without hesitation – cool and committed. About to become a teen later this year, many in his age group would have gone with Hunt, the notorious womanising driver whose every

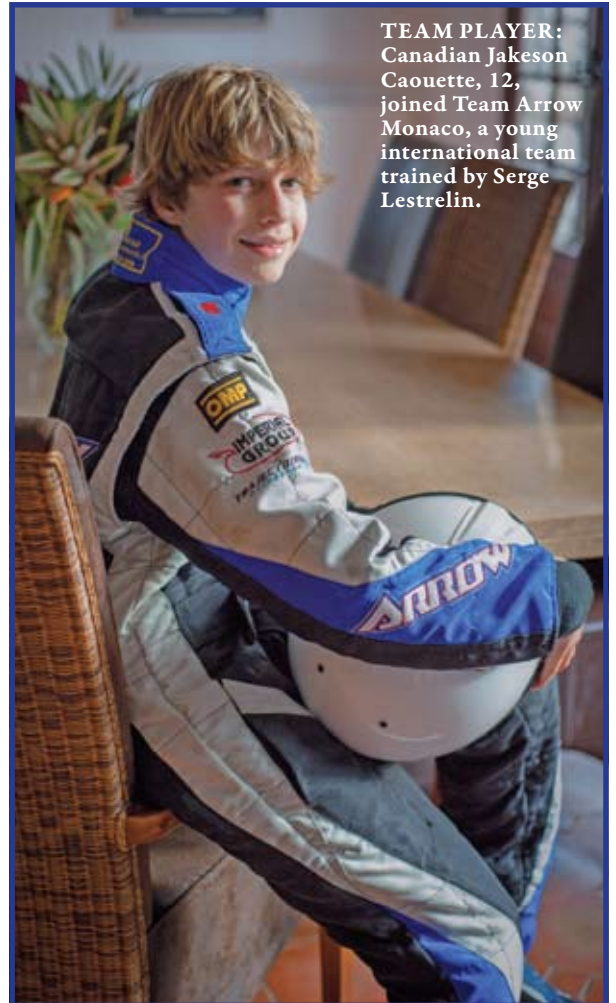
race was followed by a string of beautiful and adoring girls.

Speaking from his home in Mougins, I got the impression that I was dealing with two different Jakesons. One committed to a demanding sport, who is obviously no wuss. On the other hand, with a soft-spoken manner that is understated – almost shy – he seems quite indifferent to anything that isn’t taking him closer to his goal. A Lauda-like person he certainly is.

He reminded me of another determined 12-year-old I interviewed many years ago, intent on becoming a successful movie actress and nothing could deter her. Her name was Jodie Foster.

Like Foster in her early career years, Jakeson has a supportive family, with five siblings, behind him. His father Jeff is a professional pilot, so like many expat families they moved around quite a bit. Jakeson speaks both French and English fluently and does

**TEAM PLAYER:** Canadian Jakeson Caouette, 12, joined Team Arrow Monaco, a young international team trained by Serge Lestrelin.



**ALL REVVED UP:** In May 2013, Jakeson Caouette set a record time of 56 seconds on the 1.184km track in Bar-sur-Loup.





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well in school – so well that his parents opted for homeschooling so that he can devote as many as 30 hours a week to training in karts, the first step in many a successful driver's career.

Motorsport superstars like Lewis Hamilton, Jenson Button, Nico Rosberg, Michael Schumacher, Sean Edwards, Stephane Richelmi and Mark Webber all started behind the wheel of a kart, which prepares a driver for high-speed wheel-to-wheel racing in all weather conditions.

Jakeson started training with the Australia-based Cadet Arrow Kart in May of 2013 and within four months he had set a record time of 56 seconds on the 1.184km track in Bar-sur-Loup.

The discipline demands quick reflexes, focus, precision control, careful attention to set-up, mechanical awareness and decision-making abilities. These skills are further

honed by fencing – a sport that helps Jakeson improve his balance, speed and concentration.

Early training is all important and Jakeson's world-class trainer, Serge Lestrelin, has coached several future motorsport champions in karting, including Nico Rosberg who opened this year's Formula One season with a decisive win for Mercedes in Melbourne on March 16th.

F1 drivers make up an exclusive club that includes no more than 25 active members at a time. Qualifying for membership is a tough road to travel and while commitment and training are vital, luck can also come into play. Of average size for his age it would be better if Jakeson doesn't grow too tall. Many F1 champions are on the short and slim side although there have been notable exceptions.

Jenson Button is among the tallest of the current crop at 1m82. Lewis Hamilton measures 1m75 and Felipe Massa is a diminutive 1m66.

There's no timescale attached to Jakeson's goal. Sebastian Vettel won his fourth world championship last year at 26 and Kevin Magnussen – this year's third place winner in Melbourne – is only 22. At the other end of the age scale, Mark Webber retired from F1 last year at 37, and before his recent skiing accident Michael Schumacher was still racing at 45.

Will Jakeson Caouette ever make it to an F1 podium? Only time will tell but his dedication and focus put him well on track for a shot at motorsport's greatest distinction – a place behind the wheel of one of the most high-performance cars ever made. ■

For more see [racewithjakes.com](http://racewithjakes.com)





# The French way of cancer treatment

BY ANYA SCHIFFRIN



WHEN my father, the editor and writer Andre Schiffrin, was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer last spring, my family assumed we would care for him in New York. But my parents always spent part of each year in Paris, where my father was born, and soon after he began palliative chemotherapy at Memorial Sloan Kettering my father announced he wanted to stick to his normal schedule – and spend the summer in France.

I humored him – though my sister and I didn't want him to go. We felt he should stay in New York City, in the apartment where we grew up. I could visit him daily there, bringing takeout from his favorite Chinese restaurant and helping my mother.

I also didn't know what the French healthcare system would be like. I'd read it was excellent, but assumed that meant there was better access for the poor and strong primary care. Not better cancer specialists. How could a public hospital in Paris possibly improve on Sloan Kettering's cancer treatment?

After all, people come from the all over the world for treatment at Sloan Kettering. My mother and I don't even speak French. How could we speak to nurses or doctors and help my father? How would we call a taxi or communicate with a pharmacy?

But my dad got what he wanted, as usual. After just one cycle of chemo in New York, my parents flew to Paris, to stay in their apartment there. The first healthcare steps were reassuring: my parents found an English-speaking pancreatic cancer specialist and my dad resumed his weekly gemcitabine infusions.

My parents were pleasantly surprised by his new routine. In New York, my father, my mother and I would go to Sloan Kettering every Tuesday around 9:30 a.m. and wind up spending the entire day. They'd take my dad's blood and we'd wait for the results. The doctor always ran late. We never knew how long it would take before my dad's name would be called, so we'd sit in the waiting room and, well, wait. Around 1 p.m. or 2 p.m. my dad would usually tell me and my mom to go get lunch. (He never seemed to be hungry.) But we were always afraid of having his name called while we were out. So we'd rush across the street, get takeout and come back to the waiting room.

We'd bring books to read. I'd use the Wi-Fi and eat the graham crackers that MSK thoughtfully left out near the coffee maker. We'd talk to each other and to the other patients and families waiting there. Eventually, we'd see the doctor for a few

minutes and my dad would get his chemo. Then, after fighting New York crowds for a cab at rush hour, as my dad stood on the corner of Lexington Avenue feeling woozy, we'd get home by about 5:30 p.m.

So imagine my surprise when my parents reported from Paris that their chemo visits couldn't be more different. A nurse would come to the house two days before my dad's treatment day to take his blood. When my dad appeared at the hospital, they were ready for him. The room was a little worn and there was often someone else in the next bed but, most important, there was no waiting. Total time at the Paris hospital each week: 90 minutes.

There were other nice surprises. When my dad needed to see specialists, for example, instead of trekking around the city for appointments, he would stay in one room at Cochin Hospital, a public hospital in the 14th arrondissement where he received his weekly chemo. The specialists would all come to him. The team approach meant the nutritionist, oncologist, general practitioner and pharmacist spoke to each other and coordinated his care. As my dad said, "It turns out there are solutions for the all the things we put up with in New York and accept as normal."

One day he had to spend a few hours at Cochin. They gave him, free of charge, breakfast and then a hot lunch that included salad and chicken. They also paid for his taxi to and from the hospital each week.

"Can't you think of anything bad about the French healthcare system?" I asked during one of our daily phone calls. My mom told me about a recent uproar in the hospital: It seems a brusque nurse rushed into the room and forgot to say good morning. "Did you see that?" another nurse said to my mom. "She forgot to say bonjour!"

When the gemcitabine stopped working, the French oncologist said he would put my dad on another drug – one my dad's US insurance plan had refused to approve in New York.

By this time, I had become a French healthcare bore. Regaling my New York

friends with stories of my dad's superb care in Paris, I found people assumed he was getting VIP treatment or had a fancy private plan. Not at all. He had the plain vanilla French government healthcare.

I had read many articles about the French healthcare system during the long public debate over Obamacare. But I still I hadn't understood fully, until I read this interview in the *New York Times*, that the French system is basically like an expanded Medicaid. Pretty much everyone has insurance, it explained, and the French get better primary care and more choice of doctors than we do. It also turns out, as has been much commented on, that despite all this great treatment, the French spend far less on healthcare than Americans.

In 2011, France's expenditure on health per capita was \$4,086, compared to \$8,608 in the United States, according to the World Health Organization. Spending as a percentage of gross domestic product was 11.6 percent in France while in the United States it was a far higher 17.9 percent.

Last fall, my mother asked me to come and see their general practitioner in Paris so we could plan ahead for my father. My mom got an appointment for the next morning and we walked to the office, five minutes from my parents' apartment. We waited for a half-hour on a comfortable couch, chuckling over the very French selection of magazines on the coffee table (*Elle* and *Vogue*) and admiring the lush garden view. The waiting room was quiet. I realized what was missing: There was no billing department.

We spoke with the doctor for about 45 minutes. My mom wanted to know what would happen when my dad was no longer able to walk. "Oh," said the doctor, speaking in English. "I prescribe a wheelchair and it's delivered to

your house. Shall I do it now?"

When I asked the price, she looked surprised. No charge. She asked if we wanted someone to come to the house every day and it was my turn to look surprised. What would they do? For example, someone could come and give my dad a massage to alleviate his neck pain. Again, no charge.

At the end of the appointment, my mom pulled out her French insurance card. Total cost of the visit? 18 euros.

When my dad began to get worse, the home visits started. Nurses came three times a day to give him insulin and check his blood. The doctor made house calls several times a week until my father died on December 1.

The final days were harrowing. The grief was overwhelming. Not speaking French did make everything more difficult. But one good thing was that French healthcare was not just first rate – it was humane. We didn't have to worry about navigating a complicated maze of insurance and co-payments and doing battle with billing departments.

Every time I sit on hold now with the billing department of my New York doctors and insurance company, I think back to all the things French healthcare got right. The simplicity of that system meant that all our energy could be spent on one thing: caring for my father.

That time was priceless. ■

*With kind permission from Anya Schiffrin  
©ThomsonReuters. Anya Schiffrin is Director of the International Media, Advocacy and Communications specialization at Columbia University's School of International Affairs. Her next book Global Muckraking: 100 Years of Investigative Reporting from Around the World (New Press) will be available August 2014.*

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# THE ORIGINAL IRON MAN

Having a magnetic personality can be a deadly diagnosis, as James Minter learned

BY NANCY HESLIN



**ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE:** James Minter, with wife Maggie at their home in the Herault, agrees that laughter is the best medicine.



**WALK THIS WAY:** Saint-Chinian's shaded cloister with its fountain was restored a few years ago.

JAMES Minter and his Belgian wife Maggie left Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, for France in April 2013. The plan was to rent in various locations around the country and then decide where exactly they wanted to live. Seven months later, however, the couple bought a winegrower's house in the middle of Saint-Chinian, in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of southern France.

Maggie is fluently bilingual but James – who was born in Oxfordshire and had a career in IT spanning 35 years before he took up writing in 2009 – speaks schoolboy French.

"Maggie is very active in the community. She's involved with the International Club and teaches English to French professionals," James tells me. "For the most part villagers are very welcoming. There's a slight resentment towards outsiders but we bring in money – although we also push home prices up."

Writing is not new for James, but producing works of fiction is. "Prior to fiction, I wrote books and articles but all of a technical nature. I was the computer guy – selling, repairing, teaching, writing about, using and abusing them. I grew up with Bill Gates, the PC and Windows. PCs still occupy a good

deal of my time but now they are secondary to writing."

James' latest book *The Unexpected Consequence of Iron Overload* (UK: CreateSpace; see box for review) serves two purposes: it allows him to follow his narrative passion from which, like his other books, he draws on personal experience and second, it's a fund raiser as all sales go to The Haemochromatosis Society UK ([haemochromatosis.org.uk](http://haemochromatosis.org.uk)).

In 2004, James was diagnosed with Genetic Haemochromatosis (GH). "A person's iron level should be around 50 but mine was 1014," he explains. "The disease is a defective gene that doesn't turn off absorption of iron by the body from your diet. So while iron is essential to allow red blood cells to carry oxygen to the body, too much stored iron in the body can be deadly. Iron is usually stored in the liver but the overload can be in the pancreas, heart muscles, bone marrow – and in serious cases, it could end up in the brain and kill you."

Essentially, the problem is that we eat far more regularly and often food that has iron supplements. Add to this the fact that we are living 30 years longer ... well, that's huge for iron accumulation. Treatment is free – you generate new blood by giving blood – so drug companies have no real motivation to do research. There are an estimated 4 million people in northern Europe, and a similar number in North America, unknowingly walking around with this disease. And so James is trying to raise awareness and funds.

He points out that reading a book appeals to older generations and, as this demographic is more susceptible to GH, he wanted to encourage them through his novel to ask for a ferritin test the next time they go for blood work.

"I just want to get people talking. With GH, initially you get tired, have mood swings and even depression. You can develop liver problems, diabetes or arrhythmia. But these are symptoms that could be associated with many other ailments

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so unless a doctor knows to look for GH, he or she treats the presenting condition, not the underlying ones.

“Being tired was normal for me. For decades, I have been a regular blood donor twice a year, and each time I felt better. But I didn’t know why. I was prone to nose bleeds, I mean I’d drink Guinness and I’d have one. I didn’t realise that my body

was trying to offload blood.

“After one of these incidents, Maggie encouraged me to go a doctor and have a genetic test. Being told I had haemochromatosis made sense. Even though it was not diagnosed as such, I had lost three family members from the condition, in the Seventies – my sister and my mom, both suicides, and my father to colon cancer. My treatment was to

give 26 pints of blood in 26 weeks, using stores of iron. Maintenance now is a pint every three to four months.”

When I approach the subject of French healthcare, I am shocked to learn from James that not only is the village doctor in Saint-Chinian aware of haemochromatosis, but 25 out of the 2000 residents have the disease. He sums it up in two words: The Celts.

“If you trace Celtic roots from Turkey through Italy, along the South of France up to the west coast – Brittany and Normandy – over the Channel to Devon, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and across to Norway and finishing in St Petersburg, Russia, you’ll see this enormous arc and this is where the main incidents of haemochromatosis conditions are found.

“There is an upside to carrying this disease in that all living organisms, including bacteria, require

iron to survive. The red blood cells transport oxygen but the white blood cells are antibodies for the immune system. In general white blood cells carry less iron but for haemochromatosis patients, the amount is even lower.

“During the Black Death, the plague that hit Europe in 1347, a bacteria killed millions and millions across the world but those who survived had the defective haemochromatosis gene. These people had less iron in their white blood cells and as a result the disease could not thrive within them. It therefore produced a huge pool of the population with this gene, who went on to procreate. It was a case of ‘survival of the unfittest.” ■

*James Minter is available for group talks. The Unexpected Consequences of Iron Overload can be purchased in English at Amazon.fr (€7.88). For more see Jamesminter.com*

**THE UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES OF IRON OVERLOAD**  
A paranormal, spoof thriller by James Minter

**HAEMOCHROMATOSIS FUND RAISER**  
Foreword by Janet Fergus MBE

*“Good old British humour without bad language ...”*

Thirtysomething techie Jimmy Kavanagh is unaware that he has Haemochromatosis. One night at a Microsoft software launch in London, Jimmy is involved in a life-saving event that, when it hits the headlines, draws the curious attention from the KGB and CIA. Throw in a love interest or two, some bizarre childhood tales and an ability to open doors without a key and you have a plot that is both comical and informative ... and, more importantly, supporting a cause.



# IT STARTED WITH A DOOR

## Taking home a piece of Provence

BY CAREN TRAFFORD

THE short email appeared unexpectedly one afternoon. It was marked **URGENT**. *Wanted*, it said.

The typeface was bold. I clicked it open and read on.

*Wanted: matching pair of Louis XIVth doors, original condition.*

*Walnut wood preferred but oak a possibility, patina unworked, curved.*

*Looking to ship as soon as possible, transportation needed to USA.*

I pondered the query with a sense of excitement. I was in the perfect place to accept the challenge. A treasure hunt was about to begin.

As the lucky residents of Provence will tell you, Provence is known for many things: its location in southeastern France offers an attractive climate, a sumptuous choice of cuisine and enough history to fill at least ten encyclopedias.

What you can't learn from the travel, cooking and history books is that in

Provence, the sunniest part of France, can be found some of the finest antique doors in the world: many hundreds of years old, crafted by the Masters from another era. Today, these doors may be locked away in some antique dealer's cellar, or stacked carelessly and half-forgotten at the back of disused warehouses. It's just a question of knowing where to look.

Created from antique timbers that once adorned a château or gated a bastide, these antique doors were beautifully crafted and are now sought after by those who can well appreciate them. In their heyday these doors were the focal point – a starting place – with a sense of anticipation for what lay beyond. French timber doors and shutters have a character that new woods will never have. They reflect the craftsmanship of ages past: a statement, a promise, a mystery. Where have they been? What secrets were whispered behind them by those who lived there? But I digress....

My goal? To match the client with the perfect door.

I sent out a flurry of emails. That was the easy part. Antique dealers, formerly inaccessible without an appointment or a letter of introduction, are familiar with the concept of emails. However, whether they can be bothered to respond to them is another matter.

A few hours later, replies flashed across my screen and my planning session began. Living in Provence has provided me the opportunity to meet many interesting characters, but the sellers of all things ancient are a breed apart. Young and old antique dealers love their antiques with a passion. They protect their treasure troves fiercely. You have to be *bien connu* (well-known) before they will let you into their confidence and sanctum. (Here's a hint of how it's done: share a few glasses of the local wine and let them beat you at *boules*.)

But even getting to know the antique dealers won't always help you secure the item you desire. Often, when finally a



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selling price is agreed, it will be as a favour. Many *antiquaires* admit quietly that they will sell a piece only if they like you. Peter, an antique dealer of repute, is a fine example. He is a thick-set *antiquaire* who enjoys his wine and his lunches as much as his antiques. He could pass as the brother of Friar Tuck. Peter will rub his thumbs together, look you up and down, sniff a few times before he delivers his verdict. If he is not liking what he sees, he will simply say, “*Non, c’est fermé aujourd’hui. Désolé.*” (Sorry, I’m closed today.)

The timing of a visit to the antique dealer’s lair is crucial. It took a while for me to realise that the vague gestures and the distracted looks that entered the conversation when discussing the age or origin of a particular interesting piece were not personal.

At first I thought my accent was beyond them. But no, the French find the foreign accent rather exotic. Nor was it a question of price. It was far more probable that the seller just had lunch on his mind and was contemplating which bottle, or two, of wine would accompany it.

I tried arriving after lunch. But if it wasn’t the fine wines of Provence calling, it was likely to be a game of *boules*, underway outside the shop, on the sandy public footpath. “I’ll be with you in a minute!” is the normal greeting, and so you watch as the dealer flings his final *boule* to win against his antique-selling friends.

I was introduced to Antiquing in France by a friend who was leaving her business, to set off on a world adventure. She took me around and introduced me to her contacts. I learnt quickly

that these were not just contacts, they were also friends, many of whom have been in the trade for generations.

The *antiquaires* welcomed me into the fold. The language spoken was French, but not the French that I had learnt at school and was familiar with. Here in the south, the patois or accent is delivered at the speed of the French motor bikers racing between cars on the motorway. The exchange is loud and excited. There is little pause for breath. I came away shaking my head and begging for a translation. After a few visits though, the ear acclimatises and you realise you understand the guts of the conversation. By the time you are offered an aperitif you know that you have been given the thumbs up, even though the dealers will continue to consider it your severe misfortune that you come from another land.

The range of antiques available in Provence is vast, thanks to the successive waves of settlers that have made this area home since the days of the Romans. Romans gave this area its name, which comes from the Latin word *Provincia*. The architecture and form of Provence may have their roots in antiquity but the style of decoration is from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The area is covered with châteaux, manor houses (*bastides*) formerly occupied by wealthy farmers and smaller dwellings called *mas*. In the 19th and 20th centuries many of these homes were converted into summer dwellings by Parisians, seeking the sun, or by the well-to-do *Marseillais* who wanted to escape the heat of the city. The architecture and

furnishings of these buildings, although based on antiquities, re-invented itself into a relaxed elegance that is now known as the Provençal style, which today is copied and sought out internationally.

Through Antiquing, my love for the environment and passion to recycle has found a fresh route to run. I could immediately see the potential of finding new homes for those pre-loved pieces of provincial art and architecture, crafted in the atelier workshops of past eras that are lying discarded and forgotten.

And so, back to the doors. The ones I found were real beauties.

The dealer loves his doors. And the whole family is in the business: uncles, aunts, sons and daughters. Three days of searching and then, they unearthed the treasure. Hidden behind a stack of other doors, covered with grime and cobwebs the perfect match had stood there quietly, waiting ... quite forgotten, since grandfather had first opened for business. They were a rarity from the 17th century, double doors, with a beautiful curved arch.

A few drinks, a game of *boules* and emails sent and *voilà*, they were sold.

Arriving home, I sent the final details to the shippers.

Just as I finished, another email arrived in the In-box. It read: “Great work. Just on the off chance, can you locate a Napoleon III chimney-place?” ■

*Caren Trafford writes environmental books for kids (planetkids.biz) and works with Antiques Diva. She is happy to find architectural pieces of interest for you, in Provence.*



# KITCHEN HEAVEN: OUR RECIPE FOR SUCCESS



## Häcker classicArt series kitchen

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THESE days a kitchen has a bigger task on its hands than just producing food for the family. When starting from scratch, those in search of a new kitchen want to create a space at the heart of the home that will look beautiful and work like a dream.

There's plenty of choice, with bright new designs abounding, and special deals on prices that can be hard to resist. But if you don't want to run the risk of the headaches and hassle that often come as part of the package with a low-cost kitchen-plus-installation deal – delivery delays, wrong-sized units and bodged workmanship – it's best to go with a brand with a cast-iron reputation.

The German company Häcker tick all the boxes. They have beautiful kitchen design concepts, a great reputation for quality and durability, and they deliver a specialised installation service that is smooth, reliable and, because meticulously planned, surprisingly quick.

The kitchen we've shown here, in the classicArt series, has clean, handle-less lines in lacquer for a sleek look. A deft design

touch is to add the softness of wood to steer the kitchen away from the overly-clinical.

The base unit height is 72cm, but there are numerous unit sizes and plinth heights to choose from, giving a fascinating array of cabinet configurations, and a wide choice of fittings and accessories. All the materials used are high quality, hard wearing and easy care, resulting in a kitchen that is built to work perfectly and look good for many a long year.

An ingenious extra provided by Häcker Kitchens are light-up drawers. These are equipped with LEDs, usually side-mounted, that illuminate the contents when you pull the drawer open.

FALMEC are an Italian company that make cooker hoods and nothing but cooker hoods. Their dedication to this usually unglamorous piece of kitchen

hardware has lead them

to make a number of breakthroughs, including the NRS system that reduces the noise of the *botte* considerably.

Now they have come up with a "hood" that cleans and purifies the air in the kitchen as well as getting rid of cooking smells. The Falmec E.ion™ system uses ionisation to do the air cleaning. This

## Häcker light-up drawers

- No external electrical supply needed.
- Automatic time-out if drawer is left open too long.
- Many options and finishes.





#### **Falmec Zephira cooker hood**

- No externally-evacuating flue needed.
- The bonus of increased air purity in the kitchen.
- Automatic "pollution" sensors.

makes for a very green piece of kit, as there is no need for an external flue and the powerful, energy-eating motor to pump the air out through it.

Freeing the hood from large-scale piping means that it can "float" above the cooking area suspended on steel wires, with a simple electrical connection fed in via the ceiling.

As you can see from the model here, the Zephira, Falmec have also succeeded in transforming the mundane but necessary into something more akin to a work of art. The Zephira is clad in either white or black

matt glass, LED lighting, and easy touch controls. In common with the other models in the series, it has four speeds as well as an automatic mode, which when engaged sets about its air-purifying business independent of any cooking activity. The grease filter can be cleaned in a washing machine.

The benefits of the electrical induction method of cooking

are clear. Heat is generated directly into the base of the pan, meaning a greatly increased speed of cooking. Induction cooking uses less electricity than the traditional radiant kind. Also, of

course, ceramic hobs are easy to keep clean.

THE kitchen equipment magicians at Gaggenau have come up with a remarkable invention: a ceramic hob the whole surface of which can be used for cooking. You can place your pan anywhere on the surface and the hob instantly and automatically recognises the position, size and type of the vessel. A whacking 4.4kW of power is available for the largest pots. The hob is equipped with a touch control and is finished off with a stainless steel trim. ■

#### **Gaggenau automatic hob**

- One "cook-anywhere" surface.
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- Touch-screen controls with intuitive functions.



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# HIGH AND MIGHTY GOOD



THERE are not many golf courses of which you can say one of the best things about them is the drive that gets you there.

I think back to my days as a North London-dwelling golfer, struggling round the M25 to get to a 9:00 a.m. start time at The Berkshire, Wentworth or – seemingly on the other side of the world – lovely Walton Heath. The build-up of tension caused by the journey, with its inevitable delays and frustrations, put one in the perfect frame of mind to shank one's first tee-shot.

How different then the stunning car ride up the Route Napoleon to Château de Taulane. Past Grasse and St Vallier then over the Pas de la Faye at nearly 1,000 metres, the road clings to the cliff below the mighty Audoubert, crosses the Col de Valferrière then descends

onto an idyllic and fertile plateau – you could be entering Narnia.

In the heart of this paradise, at le Logis-du-Pin, lies one of France's most stunning golf courses, built on 340 hectares, much of it ancient pine forest, with a gorgeous 18th-century château as its centrepiece.

The Château de Taulane course was the first in France to be designed by Gary Player, and the genius and sensitivity of the South African golfing legend were working a full throttle as he plotted the 18 magnificent holes through the forest. There is plenty of water at Taulane in the shape of streams and lakes with special ball-attracting properties, and these features blend perfectly into the stunning natural surroundings, which include soaring mountain peaks that protect the fairways from wind.

The course opened in 1992, and has been drawing praise from golfers ever since, gaining a place in France's Top Ten courses in *Fairways Magazine*.

The man with the enviable job of looking after this golfing gem and its lovely hotel is Michel Cipolla, the Franco-Brit who is general manager, Château and Golf. He came to Taulane in 2007, after studying management in Nice then working for some years in and around Monaco before being invited by Paul Bocusse to the France Pavilion in Florida. On his return to France he joined the Fairmont Monte-Carlo before taking up the reins at Taulane.

What really turns Michel on is seeing the smiles on his guests' faces as they realise they have stepped in to an earthly paradise. "I 'collect' those smiles," says the 48-year-old. "They are priceless thank-yous."





At the Essential Golf Academy you can take individual lessons both off and on the course. Time for a *pause café* between the outward and inward nines.



“The thing that pleases the players and guests most, along with the sheer quality of the course, is the sense of endless natural space, which seems to generate an overpowering feeling of relaxation and peace.

“The course is never overcrowded, and players can enjoy the game at their own pace.”

Because of its 1,000-metre altitude, the cloak of winter snow stops play from mid-November to spring – this year the course opens on April 12th. From then through May and June the course bursts with brilliant wild colour as the alpine flowers come to life.

Château de Taulane is an expensive course to maintain, and this is reflected in the green fees, €80 in the low season months of April, May and October

rising to €100 in the June-September period. A reasonably priced lunch can be taken on the terrace, with its splendid views over the massive shared green of the 9th and 18th holes.

Practice facilities are superb. An excellent driving range is combined with practice greens for putting and chipping. Teaching is done through the Essential Golf Academy, which also has a base at the Claux Amic golf club above Grasse – the two clubs are now under the same ownership.

For now, the sensation of privilege that comes from playing a course where no villas line the fairways – and the absence of the roads, cars and people that come as part of that development package – is complete. Plans are afoot to expand accommodation, and the *Reporter* will be bringing you



news of this as soon as we have it.

But for now I urge all those golfers who appreciate what The Master referred to as “Nature’s Cathedral” to take that glorious ride up into the clean, cool air of the Pre-Alpes, always refreshing but never more so than when the heat and the clamour of the coast make seaside golf less than a pleasure. **N.K.** ■

For more details see [chateau-taulane.com](http://chateau-taulane.com) or phone 04 93 60 31 30.





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*Taulane, one of the courses we play regularly*

# The Sunshine Boats

YACHTING



Photo: Solar1

BY MICHAEL HEALY

THE beneficial rays of the sun are what bring many of us to the warmth of the Riviera – and soon we may find a better use for surplus rays than roasting our backs on the beach, for which I hope most of us have more sense.

Solar-heated houses are becoming fashionable as the price of panels is driven down, and attention is turning to solar vehicles. Waterborne vessels offer great promise: they can be extremely wide like catamarans and decked with panels to soak up energy. Bikini-space was what I had on my three cruising catamarans, all berthed in Monaco. But volts beat bikinis in the boating business; the solar-powered boat has arrived!

Electric boats have been around since 1838, and the end of the century saw many on Europe's waterways, cleaner and quieter than the smoky steamboats of the time. But the invention of the diesel and petrol engines killed them off until the 1970s with the arrival of solar photovoltaic cells, combined with concerns about fossil fuels.

Monaco gave a lead with the round-the-world trip of the big catamaran *Turanor PlanetSolar* 2011-12. And Monaco's solar-powered "Bateau Bus" has ferried up to 50 people across the harbour for many years (at €1.50 per trip) though the 48-volt batteries are charged from

the mains every night. Monaco is also the home of Venturi, global pioneers in electric cars, some with solar power added – the fastest is capable of 495km/h; in Germany the solar aircraft *Solar Impulse 2* is preparing a non-stop round-the-world flight for 2015.

Boats need far more power than air or land vehicles because of water resistance. My own largest command (a Fleet Destroyer) had 40,000 horsepower to give 32 knots, but creating so much sun energy would require several acres of solar panels. Solar boats should be small and light, preferably hydrofoils, with the biggest possible array of solar cells. Such a design though is not optimal for either sea keeping or utility, as mega-yacht owners demand comfort as well as speed, and even the tenders often have to carry heavy loads of guests or provisions.

The Yacht Club de Monaco is organising the Solar1 Monte-Carlo Cup July 10th-12th. These races recall the *canots automobiles* regattas inaugurated just 100 years ago by Prince Albert I in 1904, and have attracted entries from the world over. The *PlanetSolar* (the world's largest solar-powered vessel) will again be present in Monaco. Critics scoffed at Mr Rudolph Diesel in 1893 for his new motor for "horseless carriages" but diesel engines drive my boat, and now maybe solar power will too. ■



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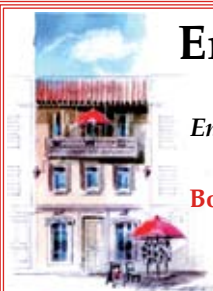
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# THE TOWER AND THE GLORY



THE sweet sound of the church bells of La Mortola drift up to the sun-kissed terrace where Carlo Maria Maggia is sipping his espresso. The view is breathtaking, taking in the coast from Capo Nero on the far side of Bordighera to Cap Martin past Menton and beyond. Earlier that morning, the snows of Monte Cinto glinted as the first of the sun's rays struck Corsica, 100 miles away.

Behind Carlo rises the 500-year-old La Mortola Tower, 10 years ago a crumbling ruin, now transformed by its owner

into one of the most imaginative and beautiful homes on the two Rivas, Italian and French. Below the time-locked pastel hamlet of La Mortola, the Hanbury Gardens, one of the greatest English legacies on the coast (see *Reporter* 160), run down the cape to the sea.

In the days of coastal piracy, the tower was a vital lookout. Danger would be signalled by smoke from the roof terrace, alerting the Ligurians in the hills behind. Today the Mortola Tower is a beacon of another sort. Step

inside past the metre-thick walls and you enter a realm where the art of living has been turned into living with art.

Carlo is a sculptor of international renown. Describing what he has done to his home as interior design is rather like slapping the home decor label on the Sistine Chapel. Much of the furniture was made especially for the Tower, and it will be sold with the property.

Exquisite 18th-century tiles from Naples cover the floor. A 16th-century safe of great beauty stands proudly in the





entrée. We move upstairs via a spiral staircase with every step a flower petal, through a shell-encrusted shower and Jacuzzi room, on to the master bedroom where Carlo has taken the concept of the *bateau-lit* a stage further, using an old Ligurian gozzo – a small fishing boat – in the design.

Carlo has a phrase for his creation, a French one.

"You could call it *un cabinet de curiosité*," says the 49-year-old. Being Italian, Carlo has made sure that his "cabinet" features the most mod of designer cons, to make this home as comfortable as it is spectacular.

Carlo is as skilled at moulding living things as he is at working with stone, glass or metal. The Tower sits atop two hectares of terraces hewn from the plunging hillside. Trees and shrubs, many of them exotic, create a natural haven. Boundaries and neighbours have simply vanished. Plenty of effort and technology went into this "wilderness".

"I worked out that in the restoration of the building and land I used 25 kilometres of pipes and ducts of various kinds, including the watering system, but also there are 200 lights in the grounds. Ten thousand new plants have gone in." The new owner will become a custodian of one of the most noted private gardens in Italy.

Sharing Carlo's paradise, hidden a little way down the hillside, are goats and chickens. With the help of a gardener and a housekeeper, who live in a separate ancient building on the property, which Carlo modestly refers to as "rustico", Carlo and his family grow a lot of what they eat.

But now the adventurous Carlo has decided that for him mid-life means a change. "My sculpture commissions

are coming more and more from the Caribbean, I really need to have a base there and it will be too expensive to run two properties. My wife Patricia's work as a lawyer keeps her in Milan a lot. Our daughter Maddalena is now at university in Spain.

"I have a clear idea of the right sort of family to take over the Tower. People who want to live in a very rich way, but also very poor – by that I mean living with nature, simply, eating what they grow, appreciating the calm beauty of the place. People who are not interested in showing off their wealth, and are delighted that they are not surrounded by flashy villas, knowing that the property sits on the preserved coast between Menton and Ventimiglia which can never be developed in the way that Cap Ferrat, for instance, has.

"Even though there is the space to build a swimming pool, even a helipad, I wouldn't want to sell to jet-set types who would want to cover everything in gold," says Carlo, who, when he and his dogs fancy a dip, takes a path down the hill to a secret beach on the headland.

"There is a great Anglo-Saxon tradition here, started by Sir Thomas Hanbury. La Mortola was home for the many staff in the gardens. The British seem to appreciate rare places such as this where the mild microclimate means that all sorts of exotic plants can thrive.

"I have an Egyptian papyrus that is very happy – they cannot survive even in San Remo."

Carlo says in parting, "Of course I will miss this wonderful place, but I will be happy if I can find a buyer who will cherish it in the same way I have." ■

*La Mortola Tower is for sale at €8m. See <http://goo.gl/rYpjBB> or contact Tim Clark at Leggett Immobilier 06 76 59 25 88.*

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# SELLING THE FRENCH DREAM

BY TIM CLARK, LEGGETT IMMOBILIER

WE'VE all seen those TV programmes where an irritating American woman or a chirpy Cockney tells us how to style a house in order to sell it. The problem is that while a lot of us watch these shows, most of us ignore everything we're told.

There's an increase in buying enquiries on most price levels at the moment. Personally, I've noticed that the houses that move fastest and for closest to their asking price are the ones that are well presented. With so much on the market you would think that this seems obvious ... but in case it's not, here are a few helpful tips:

## CLUTTER

Get rid of it. All of it including family photos, "interesting" artwork and collections of anything. Paint the walls a cream or neutral shade. In the kitchen put everything away you possibly can – toasters, kettles, knife blocks – in drawers and cupboards and work towards a house of simple, clean spaces.

## BEDS

Make them. Seriously, this is not a joke. If you have a teenage son make sure he is not still lying in his pit in a darkened room when the agent comes round with a client (this has happened to a colleague). All

general tidying up is a bonus; a lovely view out of the kitchen window is usually spoilt by a huge pile of unwashed dishes.

## DOGS

I love dogs, however a lot of potential buyers do not and by and large, your house smells of dog. If you can, keep your canine and his doggy smell away from the house when people are visiting. In an ideal world, dogs that bark incessantly, deposit hair on people's trousers or make amorous moves towards your house hunter's left leg should be not seen or heard.

## GARDEN

Mow the lawn, obviously, (and remove traces of aforementioned dogs) and if you can, make sure boundaries are clearly delineated. The majority of clients, until they get into the French swing of things, want to know exactly where their land stops so they can put up a fence (a job they never get round to).

## HEATING SYSTEMS

We know it gets cold here in the winter and while I'm not encouraging sellers to lie, it's better to emphasise the beautiful spring and stunning summer rather than harp on about the severity of the wintry weather (and how "This house is freezing in

the winter" – a genuine client quote). Also while your intricate system of gas tanks and wood burners linked to boilers with switches to wind turbines and geothermal pipe work may be of immense interest to you, it probably won't be to a buyer.

## KERB APPEAL

A dreadful but crucial expression. Most property-seeking clients have made up their mind about a house before they have even walked through the front door. So the front of your house should, if possible, be a representation of the "French dream". Flower boxes and hanging baskets are good; large piles of sand and gravel less so. Numerous cars blocking the drive when a client arrives can be a huge turn off, too. If you're near a road at least put up a fence (or ideally a large hedge) because if a buyer really likes your house, flaws will be forgiven, so if the road can't be seen he or she can at least pretend it doesn't exist.

Lastly, when a prospective buyer asks why you're selling don't reply (as one of my clients did), "I hate France and the French ... I am so depressed I want to go back to the UK." This will not seal a deal. ■

Contact local expert Tim Clark of Leggett Immobilier at [tim@leggett.fr](mailto:tim@leggett.fr)





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# BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

BY JAMES BASSON, SCAPE DESIGN MONACO

ONE of my favourite landscapes in the Alpes-Maritimes is an old Roman quarry situated above Monaco in La Turbie. Incredibly inspirational, it represents the contrast of the hand of man cutting straight blocks of stone from the broad sweeping curves of the rock veins, with an abundance of vegetation growing in the harshest of conditions.

Often within our own gardens we get caught between such a rock and a hard

place. Daunted by the mass of mineral materials, we might be fooled into believing that nothing could ever grow there. But here in a similarly mineral mass, life is bursting out of every crack and crevice. In each depression and fault of the stone, slowly decomposed plant material has collected. Absorbing moisture, it has allowed the first sedums to appear. Then once an initial mass of vegetation occurs, more humus and matter accumulates

and the first grasses, perennials and small shrubs can take root. If there is a fault line, deep-rooted shrubs and trees can delve down and take hold.

In that narrow space behind the house (or between the driveway or the front of the house) where nothing seems to grow, this is often where plants and nature shine the most and grow with a different intent: not that of voluptuous bucolic opulence but rather with a sinewy defined will to live.



The quarry is used for walking, picnicking and serious play, from abseiling and climbing to BB gun wars, and the balance of mineral and vegetated areas give plenty of space for all this activity as the large areas of bare rock leave little room for anything but lichens and sedums to grow.

a tall multi-stemmed tree on the north side of the quarry protected from the sun and the steady onslaught of the Mistral winds. This repetition gives unity to the landscape and the continuity within the complexity is reassuring; it feels as though one is in a singular space.



The natural landscape of the La Turbie quarry can be translated into your garden (left).

The *carrière* is essentially a series of bowls hewn out of the mountainside north and south facing, creating protected rooms and environmental conditions. The hard edges are softened by the swirling wind with its drifts of gravel and organic matter. These help soften that sharp line between the vertical and the horizontal plane; they also provide a growing medium and trim the massive stone edifices with delicate touches of colour and texture. This is the sort of balance of space we try to create in our own gardens.

As this is a natural landscape there are hundreds of species of plants cohabiting. There is, however, a hierarchy amongst them – dominant plants that we see again and again throughout the area, which have adapted depending on the conditions. For example, an ash tree is dwarfed and twisted growing out of a rock crevice on the south-facing side of the rock face yet develops into

The water in this landscape is scarce, a circle of small holes punched out of smooth rock, which once served as a measuring device for the masons and now collects small pockets of rainwater, shining like silver dots on the face of an ancient clock. The rock strata lean back towards the south-facing quarry wall creating seasonal pools that in turn produce their own quality of vegetation. The old naturally formed limestone pavement shows vestiges of pre-Roman years. Water seeps out of the base of fault lines marking the rock over time leaving its mark even when there is no water.

Walking out of the La Turbie quarry I reflect on the gardens I have either created recently or visited and am content in knowing there is a great deal of work ahead to achieve anything close to this elegance and beauty. I feel energized with the challenge of trying to create spectacular landscapes in difficult areas within a garden. ■



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# PARALYTIC AND LOVING IT

In a news series, author and Luberon resident Jamie Ivey unravels today's Provence

SOME years ago our local doctor pronounced me "a medical marvel": I was the first man ever to develop gout from drinking too much rosé. At the time I was selling pink wine in the local market and over a long leisurely lunch it was my habit to finish off the tasting bottles. Repeated on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, the doctor emphasised, this type of behaviour was not advisable.

Fortunately the affliction has never recurred, although this month there were some worrying signs, which prompted another trip to the doctor, and more French medical history. My concerns began after a trip to Château Pesquié in the shadow of Mont Ventoux. In the space of a few weeks Robert Parker, the American wine sage, and Jancis Robinson, wine critic at the *Financial Times* had both published immensely favourable reviews of the Château's red. Parker in particular advised that people should buy the wine by

the crate load. And so, never one to ignore the advice of a wine writer as respected as Parker, I purchased four cases. Château Pesquié was a dangerously easy drinking wine and every night for a week I enjoyed a bottle. I found it lubricated my fingers and so I enthusiastically tweeted away about its virtues and all things Provençal.

A few days and an empty crate later, my hands stiffened up. At first I believed it was a repetitive strain injury caused from over tweeting. The website had accused me of behaviour resembling a robot. However, the pain worsened and soon it was alarmingly reminiscent of my previous attack of gout. A quick look on the internet confirmed that although the big toe was the host of choice for gout, hands could also be afflicted.

I reassured myself that the previous incident had not been all bad. Being afflicted with gout in a French village brings a certain kudos. For a few weeks I

was no longer a foreigner but an honorary Frenchman. I sometimes heard my true nationality being debated as I hobbled passed the local café: did I not love blue cheese, red meat, and fine wine? And was my passion for all things French not stronger than some of the more weak-willed locals who had succumbed to government propaganda and become teetotal? People (well, largely the regulars at the bar) had suddenly approved of me; I was slapped on the back and offered medicinal glasses of wine (which of course only prolonged my condition).

And so with these memories fresh in my mind, and with throbbing, supposedly gout-infested hands, I presented myself to the doctor. She was dressed, as always, immaculately and showed me to the raised examination table. I sat in a semi-recumbent position and showed her my fingers, sheepishly advising her that I thought I had gout

**PROVENCE GURUS:** Jamie Ivey and his wife Tanya built a house just outside of Lourmarin. They have three young children aged 1, 3, and 5.





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again. I insisted that the pain levels were just the same, and described the intense tenderness to the touch.

She looked at me with her fierce lecturing eyes. "How's your wife?"

"Very well," I replied.

"And in the bedroom?"

"I'm here for my hands," I stuttered.

"I know," the doctor reassured me. "Do you cuddle?"

I nodded, too bemused by the extraordinary direction of the questioning to protest.

"And you have three small children?"

I nodded again.

Clearly a process of observation and deduction worthy of Sherlock Holmes was going on. She sat down at her desk and wrote out a prescription for painkillers. Her loopy handwriting noted the name of my condition: *Paralysie amoureuse*.

I thought this sounded so wonderfully French I had to know more. Did President Hollande and I perhaps share an affliction? Did this mystery disease strike other parts of my body, working its way inevitably towards the heart? And, most importantly, what could be done to end the paralysis? I feared a prescription to see the sexual therapist who practiced from the office next door and terrifyingly encouraged his patients to openly discuss their conditions in the waiting room.

"We typically see it in couples about your age," the doctor explained, "exhausted by the kids, tired out by work, without even the energy to break the nightly clinch, you fall asleep on top of each other's arms. The blood supply gets cut off and you end up with a temporary

## Au contraire ...

IT'S happened to us all. Friends announce their plans for a February visit and then turn up with luggage overflowing with shorts and sundresses. And while they do enjoy the sun on their faces during their lunches *en plein air*, they are devastated not to be swimming and frolicking on the beach. "But I always thought it was warm here," says a guest forlornly.

It's a common misconception that the skies are always sunny and the South of France enjoys an endless summer. But why?

North Americans likely see Film Festival images of palm trees, blue sky and beaches and come to the conclusion that the Riviera is like the Caribbean. And given Americans' notorious reluctance to obtain a passport, it's perhaps understandable that, with so little experience outside the border, my countrymen know little about other climes. But in our

defense, a comparison of the latitudes in each country puts Paris even further north than Fargo, North Dakota. So shouldn't that make Cannes just like Miami, weather-wise?

Northern Europeans are equally guilty of succumbing to this falsehood. While they may not expect to come back with a tan, on any given Christmas there are countless poor souls shivering around the fireplaces of their relatives' drafty old Provençal farmhouses, cursing the Mistral and thinking about the warm coats they left back in their cozy, well-heated flats in London.

Winter in the South of France is real, people. Latitude is actually not that great an indicator of climate, as evidenced by Oregon winemakers' eye-rolling claim that they are as close to the equator as France's best wine-producing regions, therefore their product is just as good. But the average low temperature in January is just 3°C in Aix-en-Provence and it often dips below freezing at night. The verdict: bundle up.

*Lisa Pepin, lespastras.com*

paralysis. It can last for up to three weeks."

"Is there any cure?"

"Separate beds," the doctor smiled as she ushered me out.

So proud was I with my new affliction that I paraded around the village, dropping into the conversation details of my ailment. In a similar way to the attack of gout, it made me feel part of

the community. Whereas an Englishman suffers from pins and needles in his hands, only a culturally-assimilated expat develops *la paralysie amoureuse*. Once again I was a medical marvel: the only Brit ever to have been paralysed by love. ■

*Jamie Ivey is the author of Ten Trees and a Truffle Dog and runs the website provenceguru.com*



# VINTAGE YEAR FOR A LITTLE MARVEL

BY NICK KENT



**Lindsay Phillips was bitten by the “French bug” when he worked for IBM in La Gaude.**

THIS April sees a special anniversary for one of the smallest vineyards in the region. It’s 20 years since Englishman Lindsay Phillips retired from IBM and set up Domaine St-Marc des Omèdes near Lorgues in the Var.

“I had owned a 40-acre property in Hampshire, and I’d enjoyed keeping sheep,” says Lindsay, now 79. “When my wife and I moved to the Var after I retired, I wanted to keep working with the land in some way. Sheep were not an option – I didn’t fancy spending four months of the year away from home when the sheep move on to the upland pastures!

“I thought that retirement was an opportunity to do something I had not previously had time to do, so I tried growing vines and having my wine made. The vineyard is tiny, just two hectares in an area where 12 is considered on the small side.”

But even with a pint-sized vineyard, Lindsay soon realised that he needed all the time he could spare, and then some, to succeed as a vigneron.

“Every day you have to watch the vines. Pruning, spraying ... it all takes much longer than you would think. There was plenty of bureaucracy to

deal with, and at the time I didn’t speak French as well as I do now.

“I well remember that first spring we were just about to bottle the first wine and someone asked ‘where are the labels?’ A helpful printer in Toulon helped us out on that occasion.”

With a combination of hard work and good advice, it wasn’t long before Domaine St-Marc des Omèdes was producing AOC Côtes de Provence wines that Lindsay could be proud of. The combination of quality and keen pricing came to the attention of the wine-lover’s bible, the *Guide Hachette des Vins*. They taste-tested Lindsay’s Cuvée Amiral red at €7.50 a bottle against a more well-known vineyard’s equivalent at €19.50; the Cuvée Amiral scored 17 out of 20 and its pricey rival 16.

That particular red was made using 90% cabernet sauvignon grapes, and the fact that the strict *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* rules prevented him from putting that on the label is a sore point with Lindsay.

“The rules state that to qualify for AOC Côtes de Provence status, a wine must be an ‘assemblage’ of different grape varieties, the choice of grapes and proportions up

to the vigneron. The ‘varietal’ content of the wine cannot be shown on the label.

“The rules were designed to protect and improve the stock of a whole range of grape varieties, but those rules have outlived their usefulness. It means that you cannot make an AOC Côtes de Provence wine from a single grape variety. In recent years winegrowers in our region have been making excellent wines this way – we had a Chardonnay, for instance – but these have to be sold as simple *vin de pays*, supposedly much inferior to AOC, but in fact excellent wines in their own right.”

Lindsay’s dedication to his wine bore fruit when the posh St James’s firm Berry Bros & Rudd (Simon Berry is the Queen’s winemaker) imported his wines.

As Lindsay himself reached a certain vintage, he decided that the time had come for a change. Now his neighbour at Domaine des Aumèdes harvests the grapes and makes the wine under a rental system known as *en fermage*.

“I have only stopped now because with my prices set in 2001, it has become an expense I can no longer afford, and I prefer to spend more time with my other great love; my old classic 36-ft motorboat *Kyanos* in Ste Maxime.”

Lindsay, who rents out a self-contained apartment in the lovely and large 200-year-old building that was home to Domaine St-Marc des Omèdes, has plenty of stock of recent vintages to sell, and he welcomes visitors who want to drop by for a tasting – although it is wise to phone ahead on 04 94 67 69 17. ■

*Lindsay Phillips first appeared in Reporter 55 in 1996. Domaine St-Marc des Omèdes is 3km southeast of Lorgues. Visit the website [stmarcdesomedes.com](http://stmarcdesomedes.com)*

## One mot time

### Tintaine.

From the Provençal *tintèino*, the noise of flutes and sometimes bells. *Faire tintaine* is to spend a night of rowdy carousing. It also applies to a restless person who tosses and turns in his sleep, or a baby that passes a night of agitation.

## MR PIGGY GOES TO MARKET

IT'S springtime in the market, and time to look out for the ingredients that go to make up *la jardinière*, a mixture of fresh and tasty new veg to be served with roast meat. You can expect to pay €4.90 a kilo for the first of the new peas. A bunch of new carrots shouldn't cost your more than €1.80, and don't forget the sweet small turnips – *navets* (below) – at €1.50 the *bouquet*. You'll have to wait a little longer for the first of the *grelots*, tiny new onions that take their name from the small bells on a horse's bridle. The white ones are usually best, and can cost up to €6 per kilo.



Mrs Piggy thinks that buying a whole *salade* which then has to be washed and drained is a waste of good troughing time, so I always spend a euro or two assembling a bespoke bag of delicious, grit-free leaves from Dominique's stall at the Marché Forville. Try the *mesclun* (from the *niçois* word *mesclumo* – a mixture), which has a slightly bitter taste and in its purest state should contain wild and cultivated chicory, lamb's lettuce and dandelion, though it can contain rocket, groundsel, chervil, salsify and oak leaf lettuce.

## Cook d'Azur

*Katie Bills welcomes the arrival of spring and its seasonal produce with this gorgeous dinner party favourite. Pair this dish with either new potatoes or for a carb-free option, try roasted butternut squash. Serves 4.*



### Pistachio & Herb Butter Stuffed Lamb Breast with Minted Peas

#### INGREDIENTS

100g salted butter  
Fresh rosemary  
Fresh mint  
Fresh basil  
50g pistachios  
Lamb breast (trimmed & deboned for 4 servings)  
500g petit pois  
1tbsp olive oil  
1 small onion  
1 garlic clove  
Salt and pepper  
String for tying

For the herb butter: soften 100g butter. Finely chop fresh herbs (I used mint, rosemary and basil). Mix them well into the butter and keep in cling film in the fridge till required.

Preparing the lamb: Place the butter along the end of the loin end and sprinkle 50g of finely chopped pistachio nuts and herbs (the same ones as in the butter). Season the meat on the inside and roll the sides together. Secure by tying string around the meat. Chill until ready to cook.

Cooking the Lamb: Season the outside

of the meat and fry in olive oil until brown on all sides. Place into a pre-heated oven (200°C) on a baking sheet and cook for 20 minutes. Turn the oven off and leave to rest for 5-10 minutes.

For the minted peas: Boil the peas for 2 minutes in salted water with a sprig of mint and crushed garlic clove. Finely chop a small white onion and fry until soft in the oil used for browning the lamb. Add the peas once they are cooked and strained, along with a large handful of finely chopped mint.

Season with salt, pepper and butter.



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# TSARCHITECTURAL GOLD

**If you weren't able to make it to Sochi for the Winter Olympics, you can still get a taste of Russia in Nice, where the community has left its mark since the mid-1800s**

BY MARGO LESTZ



Photo: Promeneuse7

The first stone of the Russian Cathedral on Avenue Nicolas II in Nice was laid in 1903 on the anniversary of Tsarevich Nicolas' death.

## The Russian Church

ALEXANDRA Feodorovna, born Charlotte of Prussia, was the wife of Nicholas I. In 1856, Alexandra, 48 and widowed, was the first Russian Tsarina to winter in the French Riviera. She came for her health, but also her son, Tsar Alexander II, sent her to strengthen Russia's relationship with the King of

Sardinia. (At that time this area was in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia.) She was accompanied by her other son, commander of the Russian Navy.

While Alexandra charmed the King, her son negotiated a deal to dock ships in the port of Villefranche, as Russia had lost the rights to the Black Sea in the Crimean War and needed a naval base. For Sardinia, the Russian Fleet was

protection against invasions from Austria. This agreement continued until 1870.

After Alexandra's successful meetings with the King in Genoa, she took a ship to Villefranche where she was welcomed with great fanfare and then headed to Nice. Once settled, she was presented with another project: the Russian Orthodox community in Nice wanted a church but only Roman Catholic churches could be built in Piedmont-Sardinia. However, two years prior, the English had been given special permission to build an Anglican Church, and so the Russians made their request.

The local authorities, fearing the community's reaction, dragged their feet. Finally, the two governments (St Petersburg and Turin) got involved and permission was granted by royal decree, with certain constraints: the church had to be unobtrusive, blend with the surrounding buildings, and no bells would be allowed. This is why the ground floor of the building doesn't resemble a church: it houses a library and the sanctuary is discretely tucked away upstairs. The architect did, however, sneak in a little surprise – a dome that wasn't on the plans. It can only be seen from a distance, but it shocked many locals nevertheless.

Built at 6 Rue Longchamp between 1858-1859, it was named the Church of St Nicholas and St Alexandra to honour the deceased emperor Nicholas I and his wife.

## The Tsarevich Chapel

A SECOND Tsarina, Maria Alexandrovna, wife of Alexander II, continued the tradition of wintering on the French Riviera, but her legacy to Nice is a sad one. In the winter of 1865, Nicolas Alexandrovich, her 21-year-old son who was next in line for the throne, came for a visit but an old injury inflamed and he became gravely ill.

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As he lay dying in Villa Bermond, the people of Nice stood outside, mourning with the Imperial family; his body was sent back to Russia for burial.

Nicolas' parents bought the grounds and villa in which the Tsarevich died. They tore down the villa, and built a memorial chapel in the exact location where his deathbed had been. It's located behind the Russian Orthodox Cathedral on Avenue Nicolas II, just off Boulevard du Tzarewitch.

### The Russian Cathedral

DAGMVAR of Denmark, Maria Feodorovna, wife of Alexander III, was originally engaged to Nicolas

Alexandrovich. After his death from meningitis she married his brother, who became Alexander III. In 1896, the 49-year-old widow learned of plans to build a new Russian Orthodox Church in Nice, as the one on Longchamp had become too small for the growing community. She took the project to heart and set about raising the money. Her son, Tsar Nicholas II, paid for most of the church from his private funds.

As Nice had become a part of France in 1860 and embraced religious freedom, there were no restrictions on building an exuberant, traditional Russian-style cathedral – bells and all.

At first, they planned to raze the church

on Longchamp and replace it with the new one but the site was too small. Next they chose a site at the corner of Rue Verdi and Rue Berlioz but unfortunately the soil wasn't suitable for such a large structure. So Maria asked Nicholas II to donate some of the land next to the Tsarevich chapel and this turned out to be the perfect spot.

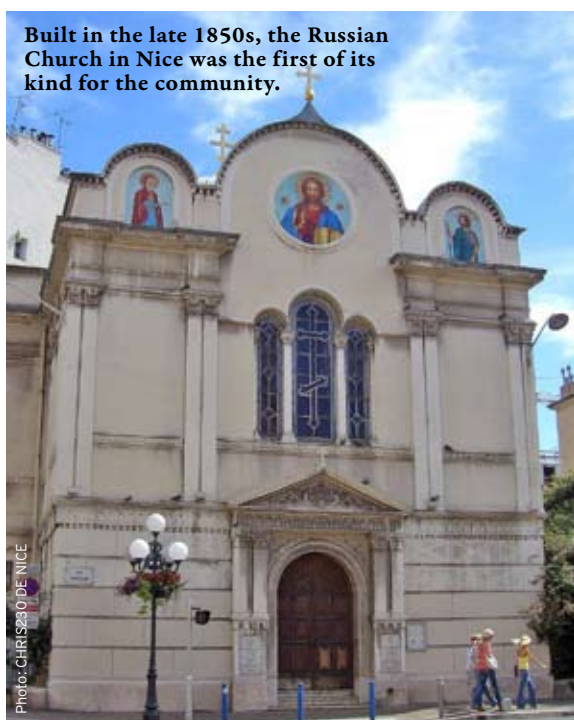
The architect had designed a building for the previous site which had two large identical entrances to take advantage of access from the two streets. Even though the new location was not on a street corner, the blueprint was still used. This is why today you will see two entrances to the Cathedral, only one of which is used.

The first stone was laid in 1903 but it

was not finished until 1912. Today, it sits like a little jewel, in a green park on Avenue Nicolas II, (off Boulevard du Tzarewitch; take bus 27; €1.50) and the Cathedral is still open to the public.

After a six-year dispute over the ownership of the Cathedral between France and Russia, France's highest court, the *Cour de Cassation*, finally ruled in 2013 that the property of the building and its immediately surrounding park belonged to the Russian Federation. ■

**Built in the late 1850s, the Russian Church in Nice was the first of its kind for the community.**



**Princess Dagmar of Denmark in engagement photo with Tsarevich Nicholas. He died in Nice and she went on to marry his brother who became Alexander III.**







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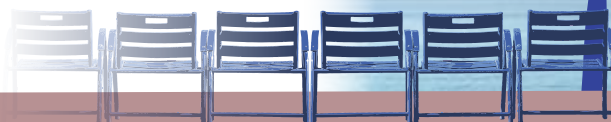
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# we've got mail...

## EASY DOES IT

We give a lot of shtick to low-cost airlines, mainly deserved in the case of Mr O'Leary's outfit. But we've just received the attached apology from easyJet, out of the blue, without having raised the issue once. I think it's great PR and a credit to them and their new CEO, a woman whose salary has just been increased by some £2.7 million. We were flying from Brussels to Nice on a Saturday when a passenger fell ill towards the end of the journey and we diverted to Milan. We were on the ground there for an hour as paramedics came on board, then a cleaning squad (don't know why and thought best not to ask), then this lady's bag had to be extracted from the hold with all that entailed, and finally there was a long wait for refuelling. During this time most people accepted it stoically but some stropky Belgians started harassing the flight attendants who, remarkably, kept their cool. There were at least six PA announcements explaining the delay, including two from the flight deck, to which anyone interested in seeing how the thing works were invited to visit as a means of entertainment during the long wait. I thought they handled it brilliantly, and the two-hour delay was just *force majeure*. They deserve a pat on the back.

*Mira & Tony Rocca, by email*

## SOUND PROPERTY ADVICE

I absolutely agree with the article on page 37 of issue 161 ["Stop a House Sale Falling Down"]. The other advantages of having all the diagnostics done when you put the house on the market is that it saves any delay in drawing up a *compromis*. Usually the company who does the diagnostic will offer a better rate if you have all the diagnostics done together, too. Incidentally, while it is now obligatory to have a control of the septic tank, the *mise aux normes* is at the charge of the buyer. Surprisingly the French don't usually bother with a survey but there is no reason you cannot have one done. What I usually suggest is that you take advantage of the 7-day "cooling off" period to have done any checks you want to do on the property.

*Christine Davis, Chrisma Estate Agent, La Rague*

## GAINING GROUND

Reading Rob Kay's article on page 13 of your last issue it came to me just how financially complicated and confusing being an expat can be if one owns property in several countries. I thought the EU (by way of the EEC) was supposed to harmonise all this?

I have discovered that the capital gains tax of 33.33% on the sale of French property by non-EU citizens who are not French residents is being contested by some property owners. The basis for their argument is that this tax (which is higher than the 19% paid by residents) contravenes the EEC principle of free movement of capital. This position is supported by an October 17th, 2013 decision by the European Court of Justice.

Not all EEC countries are part of the EU. Switzerland and Norway are examples of this and Britain could one day become one also if UKIP has its way.

In the meantime any of your non-resident readers who were taxed at the higher rate upon the sale of their French property should take professional advice as they will probably qualify for a refund of the overtax. They have until December 31st, 2014 to do this.

*Douglas Freeman,  
by email*

**Star  
letter**

## MALADIE ANGLAISE

I am French but I have read your interesting magazine for many years. I am a chef and I love the English people and the language so I moved to England two years ago to work in a restaurant. It is fine and I have many nice English friends but one day I got some bad symptoms and I fainted, waking up a minute later. My boss took me to A&E (*urgences*) and I

waited many hours there before someone examined me. Maybe I could have died? The hospital kept me for one night but in a very big room with many sick old people too. The nurses didn't all speak English (or French) and there was no privacy (much) and only one toilet. It was like the hospitals in old war films. English people are so sociable but why do they allow this? One day soon I think I must return to France. I am young (31) but old age in England does not seem too nice if you get sick. I still love England and English people!

*Jean-François, Berkshire, by email*

## FRENCH SECU VS THE EU

I read "British austerity hits expats where it hurts" with interest (issue 161, pg 8). The granting of the S1 (formerly the E106) to early retirees has always been anomalous. As far as I am aware no other EU country issues the form in these circumstances.

The UK authorities interpreted the issuing of this form in a somewhat convoluted way. It was decided that if an early retiree had an underlying entitlement to Short Term Incapacity Benefit on departure from the UK, health cover for a limited period would continue via this form on moving to another EU state. It was not necessary to suffer from an actual condition to qualify; just having the underlying entitlement was sufficient. This entitlement was based on recent National Insurance contributions paid in the UK before departure. Although it was, in theory, possible to obtain cover for up to two and a half years the reality very often was considerably less. One had to time your arrival in France precisely to even have 2 years cover.

It is not true to say only British state pensioners will be covered. One of the purposes of the S1 form is to facilitate the free movement of labour. For example, with the arrival of budget airlines it is easier to live in one EU state and work in another. I know people who live in the South of France but work in the UK. They pay UK National Insurance contributions and as a result they can obtain a S1



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to obtain healthcare for themselves and their dependents in France. Irrespective of whether you are a pensioner or not, if you are a French resident of British nationality you do not have the right to be treated in the UK just because you may choose to do so. The only qualification for NHS treatment is to be a UK resident. All residents of France, regardless of nationality and who are affiliated to an *assurance maladie*, are entitled to necessary treatment on a TEMPORARY visit to the UK. They are entitled to the same treatment as a UK resident and as healthcare is free at the point of delivery in the UK it is also free to those who have a *carte vitale* and are on a temporary visit. For this reason it will, in my view, be impossible to charge for A&E. For non-EU residents or nationals of other countries, which do not have reciprocal health agreements with the UK, it is possible now to charge for medical treatment. All that is lacking is the political will to enforce it. The 5 years residency rule. Between January 1st 2000 and November 2007 one could affiliate to the *assurance*

*maladie* under purely residence criteria if it was not possible to affiliate by any other means, ie, employment. Where this 5 years residency rule has always been flawed is it only applied to EU and Swiss nationals. For the rest and French nationals, only proof of 3 months stable residence is required. It is this clear discrimination that other EU nationals were being managed differently to French nationals, which drew the particular attention of the European Commission. So since 2013 it has been possible for EU nationals to affiliate to the *assurance maladie* under residence criteria. Applications are submitted to the local CPAM office but are processed centrally in an office in Nîmes. What is not clear at this time is if some of these applications have been rejected for any reason because the 5 years residency rule is extant. What is very certain is that affiliation under residential criteria will not be scrapped altogether as there are approximately 5 million people in France who obtain their healthcare by this means.  
*Name and address supplied*

## LETTERS

### BANKNOTE PROTEST

Are banknotes becoming a new way to protest in France? I have come across notes with "Hollande Démission" [Hollande Resign] written on them.



My bank tells me that the notes remain legal tender but that it is illegal to deface a banknote. How do they know who did it? Four out of five French people would like to show Hollande the door so the list of suspects is long!

*G. F. Harrison, Eze, by email*

### THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

About "All the Presidents' (Wo)men" in your last issue. Hollande was never married ➤



and he cheated on his mistress. So what? Handsome men are usually so full of themselves that “attractive, intelligent, etc” women may choose to stay away from them, but the French president is hardly handsome or interesting in any other way. The members of his revolving harem – Royal, Trierweiler, Gayet – are all lovely and no dummies. What do they see in him?

*Gayle Thornby, Peymeinade*

## WET, WET, WET



In February we drove into Nice to see the fountains shown on the cover of issue 160 and had a bit of a surprise. It was a chilly afternoon and for some reason the fountains were turned off. The kids decided to have a closer look but suddenly the water came back on again and they got drenched. So a warning to parents – take a towel and a change of clothes! On a hot summer day though, getting wet would no doubt be welcome.

*Gisele Jenkins, by email*

## CALLING ALL SWAPPERS

A few years ago I went to a clothes swap that was run by an English lady and I went to two separate events. One took place in Antibes and the second took place in Monaco. Since then I have not heard of any further events. Does anyone know if they still take place? I would love to know. It is something that takes place in England and I do believe in Paris – unfortunately I never took details of the person running the swap. I am including my email address in case anyone has a response.

*Margaret Bertany, margaret.bertany@bbox.fr*

## POST IT?



In reply to your reader's letter (“Postal Woes” Issue 161, pg 45), I'm writing to say that I experienced the same mishap before Christmas, and it was not the first time. To cut a long story short: one can telephone 3631 and a person will take your complaint (in French). One can also send a fax to 03 81 53 64 87. Web: [www.laposte.fr/serviceconsommateurs](http://www.laposte.fr/serviceconsommateurs) I've received 2 letters from La Poste promising to investigate and provide an answer before March 17th 2014! The “lost objects” department is in Libourne. I'm not very optimistic, but hope springs eternal. Another anecdote: about 18 months ago I sent a small parcel to my daughter-in-law in Kent (GB). It was correctly addressed and stamped, but I put the word Angleterre on the bottom line as opposed to England. The parcel didn't arrive, and after various fruitless claims it eventually turned up after six weeks. It had been all the way to ANTIGUA and back, and was stamped “Unknown at this address” (hardly surprising) – all for the price of normal postage. The lesson is not to use any “foreign” words that a British postman might not understand. Since then I either put Great Britain or United Kingdom in order to avoid any more exotic trips. Recently, on the same subject, I heard on France-Inter radio a complaint from a woman who had sent 3 cheques as gifts for Christmas (in France), which never arrived. It would be interesting to know if, and by who, they had been cashed in. Good luck to all future users of La Poste, and Royal Mail too.

*Susan Nicholson, Le Rouret*

## FUN WITH THE LOCALS

I'm organising weekly events “Wednesday in Antibes” [see page 47]. This is not for business, all events are free. The goals are: create a regular after work meeting on Wednesday, to have a break during the week and have a casual networking event; for expats/newcomers to meet locals, to share experiences and practice

languages; to discover the area, events are held in a different place each week. I started a few weeks ago and we are around 30 people each time. Feel free to visit us and contact me for further information: <http://x61.ch/a26621>

*Jean-Baptiste Gady, gibiet@hotmail.com*

## FURTHER AFIELD

I live away from the coast in Haute Provence (04). I have little contact with British expats and unfortunately don't get down to the sea enough! I was pleasantly surprised to find a copy of the *Riviera Reporter* at the Anglican Church in St Raphael. What an enlightening experience! From time to time I find copies of [name of another expat publication redacted] or glance at it online. I've always been put off by its patronising editorial style and the reading age (of about 10/12 years max.) It was giving me a very bad image of the English expat community and I would think to myself “I don't want to meet these people.” The words superficial, immature, materialistic and self-interested come to mind. Finance and property seem to be the only things that count as “newsworthy”. Thanks for using a much wider vocabulary, permitting different writing styles and reporting on a wide variety of topics. There is hope!

*Milly, by email*

## PAPER!



I can't remember the issue but one of your readers was wondering where to get the UK papers now that the big newsagents near Place Massena has closed. In my experience the airport is the most practical place. It's easy to get to, open for long hours 7 days a week and gets the papers fresh off the plane quicker than anywhere else. You can get to Terminal 1 for only €1.50 on the bus and if you go by car and are in and out in less than 30 minutes, parking at P3 is free.

*Harry Olden, by email*

## WRITE TO US

Letters to the Editor can be sent by email to [info@rivierareporter.com](mailto:info@rivierareporter.com) or by post (see page 50). Unless specifically marked “not for publication”, letters may be published and may also be added to our website forum. Names are withheld when requested but please note anonymous letters will not be considered.

## march

### BA VAR AGM

Wed Mar 26, 10h: BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF THE VAR AGM (members only) La Pinede, Les Arcs Sur Argens. See [baofthevar.com](http://baofthevar.com) or contact [chairman@baofthevar.com](mailto:chairman@baofthevar.com)

### FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE NICE

Thurs Mar 27: Spring lunch in a restaurant in Nice – details TBC. Contact: 04 93 81 76 74 - fgb-nice.com

### CHEESE AND WINE EVENING

Thurs Mar 27, 18h30: With the Association France Grande Bretagne Cannes at the Anglican Church Hall, rue Branly behind the Carlton Hotel in Cannes. All are welcome for this fun evening! Telephone 04 93 97 86 32 or 04 93 49 37 01.

### CLOCKS CHANGE

Sun Mar 30.

### "OH BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?"

Mon Mar 31, 17h: France-Etats-Unis & Patricia Paparoditis will be presenting a lecture with film clips from the Coen Brothers' film "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?" comparing these with the Odyssey at the Maison des Associations, Garibaldi, Nice. Entrance is free of charge. Contact: [jacque.berben@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jacque.berben@wanadoo.fr) - 06 08 36 67 58

## april

### ENGLISH CLASSES

Every Tues 16h30: France-Etats-Unis has classes at the Brice Hotel and Mondays Mar 10 & 24, Apr 14, May 5 & 19. Contact: [jacque.berben@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jacque.berben@wanadoo.fr) - 06 08 36 67 58

### TOUR OF ALSACE-LORRAINE GARDEN

Wed Apr 2: Guided tour of the Jardin Alsace-Lorraine in Nice. "A botanical journey to the four corners of the earth". Contact: 04 93 81 76 74 - fgb-nice.com

### JOURNEY TO THE LANDS OF THE BIBLE



Father Walter Raymond at St Paul's Monaco will be escorting a 2-week "Journey to the Lands of the Bible" in late October 2014. Walk the narrow streets of Old Jerusalem, stroll by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and discover the magic of Bethlehem and Nazareth. Participants will visit the rose red city of Petra, the Dead Sea fortress of Masada, and Mt Nebo where Moses first saw the Promised Land. The tour provides first-class accommodation and is organised by a company with nearly 50 years' experience in the region.

An electronic brochure is available on the St Paul's website: [stpaulsmonaco.com](http://stpaulsmonaco.com) For more info or to enroll for the tour, please contact: [walter@monaco.mc](mailto:walter@monaco.mc) or call 06 43 91 69 58.

### VISIT STATE APARTMENTS

Wed Apr 2-Thurs Oct 31, daily 10h-18h: The Prince's Palace in Monaco is the private residence of Prince Albert II but the State Apartments are open for public visits part of the year. Entry €8 adults; €4 children.

### POSH PARAPHERNALIA

Thurs Apr 3, 10h-15h: 2nd hand clothes, books and accessories, bric-a-brac and a light lunch. Thurs May 1, Thurs May 8. Thurs June 5. For more info: [sunny-bank.org](http://sunny-bank.org) or 04 93 47 94 20.

### SWEDISH CHURCH EASTER FUN FAIR

Sat Apr 5, 10h-17h: The Swedish Church on the Côte d'Azur and Monaco traditional Swedish Easter Fun Fair at Villa Ingeborg, 40 ave de Verdun, Cagnes-sur-Mer (see Reporter 161). There will be a Swedish Easter food stand where you can buy salmon, herring, Swedish meatballs, Swedish candy, Jansson's temptation, homemade pastries and much more. Great handcrafted Easter gifts and Swedish Easter decorations, candles and napkins. A bookshop selling books in Swedish, English, and French and a flea market. Oysters and champagne. A big wine lottery with great prizes. Traditional Swedish food will be available with specialties such as the Easter food platter together with coffee, pastries and Swedish waffles. Everyone is welcome and there is no entry fee! Tel: 04 93 20 40 64.

### ANTIBES WEDNESDAYS

Wed Apr 9: We are a regular after-work meet-up on Wednesdays, to have a break during the week with a casual networking event. It's for expats/newcomers to meet locals, to share experiences and practice languages, and to discover the area as events are held in a different place each week. It's free and every Wednesday. For more info contact Jean-Baptiste Gady on [gibiet@hotmail.com](mailto:gibiet@hotmail.com) or see [facebook.com/groups/Wednesdayinantibes](https://facebook.com/groups/Wednesdayinantibes)

### VIAC

Thurs Apr 10: Gourmet lunch. Full details [viac.fr](http://viac.fr)

### CLIMATE CHANGE PRESENTATION

Thurs Apr 10: "Climate Change and its impact on water, food and the environment". Presentation in English by Frank Hartvelt.

Thurs Apr 17: Tea, biscuits, conversation and Scrabble in English or French. Contact: 04 93 81 76 74 - fgb-nice.com

### TEACHING MORNING

Sat Apr 12, 9h30-13h: Teaching Morning on the Eucharist, its meaning and significance. Lunch provided. Holy Trinity Church Cannes (Ave Branly), 04 93 94 54 61. See [holyltrinitycannes.org](http://holyltrinitycannes.org)

### AMERICAN CLUB VILLA VISIT

Sat Apr 12: Guided visit at Villa Regina Margarita in Bordighera, with lunch to follow in a local beachside restaurant. Open to all. See [americanclubriviera.com](http://americanclubriviera.com) or call 06 98 12 89 00.

### MONTE CARLO ROLEX MASTERS TENNIS

Sat Apr 12-Sun Apr 20: See [montecarlotennismasters.com](http://montecarlotennismasters.com)

### EASTER SERVICES ST PAUL'S MONACO

Sun Apr 13, 8h & 10h30: Palm Sunday Services.  
Sun Apr 13, 10h: Place des Moulins: Ecumenical Blessing & Procession of the Palms.  
Wed Apr 16, 18h30: Weekly Healing Prayer & Communion Service.  
Thurs Apr 17, 20h30: Maundy Thursday Liturgy of the Last Supper.  
Fri Apr 18, noon: Good Friday Stations of the Cross.  
Sun Apr 20, 8h & 10h30: Easter Sunday Services. Sun Apr 20, 10h30: Annual Easter Egg Hunt. Father Walter Raymond, OGS, St Paul's Anglican Church, 22 ave de Grande Bretagne, Monte Carlo. See [stpaulsmonaco.com](http://stpaulsmonaco.com)



**BA VAR LUNCH**

Tues Apr 15: Lunch at Couvent Royal, St Maximin. See [baofthevar.com](http://baofthevar.com) or contact [chairman@baofthevar.com](mailto:chairman@baofthevar.com)

**TOP MARQUES MONACO 11TH EDITION**

Thurs Apr 17-Sun Apr 20: The world's most exclusive supercar show at Grimaldi Forum Thurs 10h-18h30; Fri 10h-20h; Sat 10h-18h; Sun 10h-19h30. Tickets €50 per day. See [topmarquesmonaco.com](http://topmarquesmonaco.com)

**EASTER SERVICES HOLY TRINITY CANNES**

Thurs Apr 17, 20h: Maundy Thursday Holy Communion. Fri Apr 18, noon-15h: Good Friday Vigil at the cross. Sun Apr 20, 9h: Easter Sunday Holy Communion. Sun Apr 20, 10h30: Easter Sunday Family Communion. Holy Trinity Church Cannes (Ave Branly), 04 93 94 54 61. See [holyltrinitycannes.org](http://holyltrinitycannes.org)

**GRANGE OPEN HOUSE**

Sat Apr 19, 10h-15h: With lunch, all areas are open to browse, including Posh and not so posh Paraphernalia and books. Weather permitting sit in our lovely garden with a glass of wine and friends. Sat May 17; Sat June 21. For more info: [sunny-bank.org](http://sunny-bank.org) or 04 93 47 94 20.

**OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE SOUTH OF FRANCE SPRING LUNCH**

Sat Apr 19: Spring lunch at a Golf Club. This is a lovely venue with a terrace looking over the flower garden and the hills beyond and weather permitting, we shall be able to lunch outside. There is also ease of access by car, being close to the coast and the A8 (Exit 44). For further information contact: [halfordoxbridge@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:halfordoxbridge@yahoo.co.uk)

**ANTIBES ART FAIR**

Sat Apr 19-Mon May 5: See [salon-antiquaires-antibes.com](http://salon-antiquaires-antibes.com)

**AMIAc LUNCH**

Wed Apr 23: Les Pierre Rouges Valbonne. To reserve please ring Douglas Goldin on 04 92 94 02 47 or email [douglas.goldin@wanadoo.fr](mailto:douglas.goldin@wanadoo.fr)

**ANTIBES YACHT SHOW**

Thurs Apr 24-Sun Apr 27: See [antibesyachtshow.com](http://antibesyachtshow.com)

**PYA SPRING SEA CHANGES SEMINAR**

Fri Apr 25: at the Royal Hotel, Antibes. More information, see website [pya.org](http://pya.org)

**THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER!**

Sat Apr 26: In Mougins with the International Club of the Riviera. Sign up at: [internationalclub.fr](http://internationalclub.fr)

**NICE SEMI-MARATHON**

Sun Apr 27: For info see [nicesemimarathon.com](http://nicesemimarathon.com)

may

**CLUB ROQUEFORTOIS AUTOS MOTOS**

Thurs May 1: Collection on display at Pré de la Vignasse, Valbonne. Contact: Nicolas Ventugol - 06 68 45 01 92.

**AMIAc LUNCH**

Fri May 10: Côte Mougins. To reserve please ring John Bailey on 04 93 65 00 58.

**HISTORY OF THE BRITISH IN PROVENCE**

Sat May 10: BA Var Lunch and talk about History of the British in Provence, Notre Dame, Cotignac. See [baofthevar.com](http://baofthevar.com) or contact [chairman@baofthevar.com](mailto:chairman@baofthevar.com)

**VIAC**

Sun May 11: Visit to Vintage Grande Prix in Monaco. Thurs May 15: The gardens of Rayol Canadel, and lunch. Full details [viac.fr](http://viac.fr)

**CANNES FILM FESTIVAL**

Wed May 14- Sun May 25: See [festival-cannes.com](http://festival-cannes.com)

**CAR BOOT SALE, NICE**

Sat May 10, 10h-16h: Women's clothing, handbags, shoes, men's clothing, linen, children's clothing and toys, CDs, DVDs, white elephant items, books, bric-a-brac, baked goods. At Church Hall and grounds, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 11 rue de la Buffa, Nice. Coffee, tea, on sale throughout the day as well as sandwiches and cake at midday. If you would like to offer an item (or items) for sale in a good cause, we would be happy to receive gifts from 17h on Fri May 9th in the church hall.

**NATIONAL CONGRESS FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE**

Fri May 16-Sun May 18: Organised by the Association France-Grande-Bretagne Toulon Var. The British Embassy in France will be represented by a senior official and a full weekend of events is planned. See [afgb-toulon.net](http://afgb-toulon.net) or call Bernard Sasso, President, on 06 82 11 89 26.

**AMERICAN CLUB BEACH LUNCH**

Sat May 17: Lunch on the beach in Cannes during the Film Festival with Film Festival Industry speakers. Open to all. See [americanclubriviera.com](http://americanclubriviera.com) or call 06 98 12 89 00.

**MONACO FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX:**

Thurs May 22-Sun May 25: See [grand-prix-monaco.com](http://grand-prix-monaco.com)

**ART EXHIBITION FAYENCE**

Thurs May 22-Sun May 25: Six local artists – all members of the International Women's Club of the Var – present paintings and sculptures. The opening on May 22 at 17h30 will be a charity event (€3.50). Please come out to show your support, and do bring your partners and friends. See [iwc-var.org](http://iwc-var.org)

**ASCENSION DAY SERVICE**

Thurs May 29, 10h: Ascension Day Holy Communion Service. Holy Trinity Church Cannes (Ave Branly), 04 93 94 54 61. See [holyltrinitycannes.org](http://holyltrinitycannes.org)

**SUMMER WINE BARBECUE**

Fri May 30: With the International Club of the Riviera at the Riviera Marriott Hotel La Porte de Monaco, Cap-d'Ail. Sign up at: [internationalclub.fr](http://internationalclub.fr)

**13TH PYA GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Fri May 30: Golf de la Grande Bastide, Opio, France. More information at website: [pya.org](http://pya.org)

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### MISC

#### The France-Grande-Bretagne Association in Cannes

holds French and English classes from beginners to advanced including conversation every Saturday from 6th October 2012 from 2pm to 5pm followed by tea and biscuits. We also organise a social event every month. We are on the first floor of the Maison des Association Cannes, 9 rue Louis Maille, in Cannes (behind the train station off rue d'Alsace). Cannes. Parking free and available. More info: Tel. Iris on 04 93 97 86 32 or Odette on 04 93 49 37 01

**The English Book Centre in Valbonne.**  
Thurs 10h45-12: French improvement sessions. Walk-ins welcome. Contact the EBC to confirm and for info 04 93 12 21 42 - [www.englishbookcentre.com](http://www.englishbookcentre.com)

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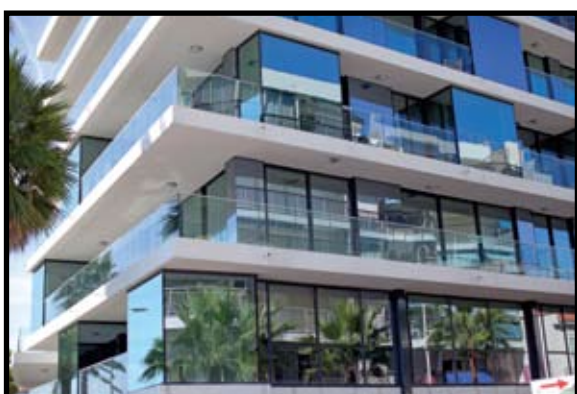
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