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In this issue ...

The Insider

LISTENING to internet radio this morning, I decided to switch from heavy-hearted France Inter analysis in favour of a little nostalgia on Canada's CBC. Well, you could have knocked the maple syrup off my pancakes. The most scandalous news was coming at me through the airwaves: there's a toboggan ban. That's right, a \$5,000 fine has been imposed against those who dare to slide down certain public snow-covered hills in cities in the province of Ontario, including some parks in my hometown, Toronto.

Has the world gone mad? Tobogganing is as defining to our Canadian culture as ice hockey, Mounties and the catchphrase, "Sorry, eh".

Generations of rosy-cheeked small (and big) children have braved the cold of winter, enduring the lengthy bundling-up tradition of putting on snowsuits, mitts and scarves, to seek the thrill of the hill, to descend on a sled, cafeteria tray, or whatever else one can find, for a 100-metre ride.

This is the stuff that builds character, unites a nation, and

more significantly, is followed up with post-toboggan discussions over hot chocolate (with marshmallows, if you're lucky), a verbal replay of your most epic toboggan – or tumble – to date.

Canadian singer Laura Cole, 25, who lives in toboggan-banned Hamilton, 70km southwest of Toronto, started a petition against the bylaw with the outlandish suggestion that signs be changed from "No Tobogganing" to read "Toboggan at own risk".

Cole is, naturally, protesting via social media. "*Tweetin' and by bloggin'/To tell the world about our point of view*" she croons in her song "You Can't Toboggan in the Hammer Any More", which has become a YouTube sensation and the anthem for Canada's endangered pastime. (Google the clip for a taste of a Canadian winter.)

*"Let us toboggan! Our choices are free will
Cause this is Canada! Let us toboggan!
We chose to slide downhill!"*

I guess these days risking our lives simply means standing up for what we believe in. I'm off to Decathlon to buy a *luge*. *Nancy Heslin, Editor*

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See jillybennett.com



THE LIVES OF OTHERS P. 33

riviera reportage



IN our Valentine's edition a few years back, the *Reporter* published *Sexless in the City*, a piece about being single in the South of France. The letter below was a reply from a reader, and seems much more eloquent than revealing this year's statistics about what gifts wives and mistresses expect on Valentine's Day.

THE song *Some Enchanted Evening*, which appeared in the film "South Pacific" could have been written for me. Although it wasn't across a crowded room but rather across a large round table on the veranda outside the Red Sea Hotel in Port Sudan in 1943. I didn't know who the man was sitting across the table opposite me, but someone at the table made an incongruous remark – I can't remember what it was –

but it struck the two of us simultaneously and our eyes met reflecting the same thought. And that was it. Since then I have never been in any doubt of what love was. So hang on and don't despair. If it's going to happen and if it's the real thing, one day it will hit you right between the eyes and believe me, it's worth the waiting.

Years later I was in a bedroom helping a friend put on her wedding dress when her mother, who was in the room, left with the final remark, "Well you can always get a divorce." And so she did only six months, after her husband left her. I often wonder how many brides go to the altar not really knowing what love is?

Me, I was unlucky because he died on the way home from the Middle East on a hospital ship. But I have never been lonely. I like my own company; I have travelled to many countries – never on a cruise ship, I assure you – but on everything from banana boats to container ships and lastly on a 5-masted schooner.

Now because of my age I have to keep my feet on *terra firma*, but I have my diaries to read and re-read to remind me – and thankfully I have always had the music of Frank Sinatra. *L.A*

TEN MOVIES FOR SINGLES ON VALENTINE'S

Films to remind you that being *célibataire* has its advantages.

1. **Starbuck**
(Ken Scott, 2011)
2. **Dangerous Liaisons**
(Stephen Frears, 1988)
3. **Kramer vs. Kramer**
(Robert Benton, 1979)
4. **Thelma & Louise**
(Ridley Scott, 1991)
5. **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf**
(Mike Nichols, 1966)
6. **Un heureux événement**
(Rémi Bezancon, 2011)
7. **Another Happy Day**
(Sam Levinson, 2011)
8. **Nymphomaniac Volume 1 and 2**
(Lars Von Trier, 2014)
9. **Valentine**
(Jamie Blanks, 2001)
10. **The War of the Roses**
(Danny DeVito 1990)

le FLASH



GWYNETH Paltrow and Scarlett Johansson swear by it and even Simon Cowell is said to have dabbed on the "best kept secret among models and make-up artists". We're talking about the 24-hour miracle lotion, Lait-Crème Concentré from Laboratory Embryolisse, a French pharmacy staple since 1950. Now Boots is stocking the 75ml bottle of creamy lotion for under £20.

Made from a "unique" blend of natural ingredients, fatty acids and

vitamins, the affordable Lait-Crème Concentré helps skin stay "smooth and silky all day". One tube of the wonder cream sells every minute worldwide.

Julia Carta, make-up artist to the stars, including Keira Knightley and Matthew McConaughey, swears that the moisturiser – which can also be used as a make-up remover, primer, repair mask or even hair texturizer – gives the skin an "immediate plump and glow".

Even people who suffer from sensitive skin have raved about this paraben-free moisturizer (also note, it's not tested on animals).

Joe Mitchell, a buying manager at Boots, said: "It's already an international best seller, and we know customers are searching for it on *boots.com*, so we're delighted to bring it to the UK high street as part of our exclusive range of beauty finds from around the world."

STUDENTS at the École du Journalisme in Nice have launched *Je l'ouvre, donc je suis*, a movement to have January 11th – the day when a million people and 40 world leaders marched in Paris in a show of solidarity against the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks – recognized at the official **International Day of Freedom of Speech**. Support their cause on facebook.com/jelouvreidncjesuis or Twitter: @JILE1101



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**FRANCE IN THE NEWS***...in partnership with The Local***Europe in stats: from Spain to Sweden**

FROM women in the workplace to income inequality, the differences between European countries are getting greater in lots of areas.

The Nordic countries do well when it comes to income inequality, with Sweden and Denmark among the most equal places in Europe. But while inequality is slowly rising in the north, Italy is slowly becoming more equal – and is already more equal than Spain and the UK. You might be surprised to learn that well-functioning,

prosperous Switzerland is one of the most unequal countries in the rich-country OECD.

There are also some surprising differences in countries that should be quite similar: Denmark has one of the world's highest cancer rates; next-door Sweden one of the lowest. The Danes' fondness for booze and cigarettes gets the blame.

When it comes to sex and marriage,

the Catholic countries of the south are less traditionalist than you might expect. Only 3.3 Italians per 1,000 got married in 2013 – a record low. The figure was the same in crisis-hit Spain. Compare that to 4.8 in Germany, 5.1 in Denmark or 5.3 in Sweden.

And women in the north are far more likely to work – 70% of Danish women and 77% of their Swedish counterparts are in the workforce. Compare this to 54% of Germans and 39% of Italians.

Italy is also doing badly at having babies. It's worth noting that no country

in Europe reaches the 2.1 births per woman needed to keep the population steady (once immigration is taken out of the equation). The French (2.01) beat the European average of 1.58, as do the Swedes (1.91) and the Danes (1.71). Spaniards, however, had only 1.32 babies per woman; Italians 1.43. But it's not all about money – the prosperous Swiss only manage 1.54 babies per women.

Different ways of collecting and measuring data means that not all the figures are directly comparable, but it still makes for interesting reading.

Le Pen: "Muslims must help fight Islamist terror"

MARINE Le Pen, president of France's far-right National Front party, says Muslims themselves must help France fight Islamist terrorism and has called for more immigration restrictions and for jihadists to be stripped of their French citizenship.

On January 20th, the controversial party head Le Pen urged the government to denounce as "Islamists" the perpetrators of deadly Paris attacks that left the country reeling.

The three-day killing spree that left 17 dead in and around Paris – starting when gunmen stormed the offices of satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* on January 7th – have raised questions about how the perpetrators slipped through the cracks.

"Let us call things by their rightful names, since the French **CONT PG 8 ►**

A portrait of modern France in ten stats

BY SIMONE FLÜCKIGER, THE LOCAL



FRANCE'S National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) has released its 2014 social portrait of the country, which highlights how French society has evolved over the years – from an explosion in the number of homeless to the number of French people descended from migrants.

Record-high population

THERE are more French people than ever before. France's population, which includes metropolitan France and the overseas departments, has broken the 66 million barrier thanks to 280,000 births in 2013, corresponding to an increase of 0.42 percent. For comparison, the population of the UK is at 64,308,000 and that of Germany at 80,780,000. Despite the new population record, fertility rate in France fell below two children per woman in 2013 (see "Europe in stats", page 5).

Two million on benefits

THE economic crisis and France's rising unemployment rate have had a major impact on the number of people receiving welfare benefits. Between 2008 and 2012, the amount of people benefitting from RSA (Active Solidarity Income) has increased by 26%, meaning 1.7 million people currently depend on it, and 400,000 people receive ASS (Special Solidarity Allowance), a rise of 27 percent.

Homeless rate explodes

HOMELESS people in France's major cities are a common sight now due to an alarming 44% increase in the homelessness rate between 2001 and 2012. INSEE says that 81,000 adults and 31,000 children are currently living without a permanent roof over their heads, though the actual number may be much higher. Some 55% of those counted were born abroad, and half of homeless people are of African descent; the number of women and children on the streets is increasing.

INSEE also found that a quarter of homeless people work, however, mostly part-time or short contracts, and do low-quality jobs.

Increase in Sunday work

OVER a four-week period, 20% of employed people worked at least once on a Sunday. People employed in sectors such as agriculture, gastronomy, business or transport are most likely to be called in on a Sunday, with at least one in three employees working on weekends.

Higher average annual wages

THE report has some good news on average annual wages in France, which stand at €20,100 in 2012, having increased by 0.2% between 2007 and 2012. However, compared to a 0.6% rise between 2002 and 2007, it progressed at a much lower rate than prior to the economic crisis.

Lower inequality

THE report also shows inequality has gone down albeit slightly. The standard of living of the poorest 10% of the population has increased by 0.1% in 2013, while the richest 10% have seen a decrease of 1.7 percent. However, they still earn 6.6 times more than the ones at the bottom of the scale with an average monthly income of €4,963 compared to €754.

Ten percent of French descended from migrants

ABOUT 10%, 6.7 million, of France's population are descendant from immigrants, meaning they were born in France and have at least one parent that was born abroad. According to INSEE, people descendant from immigrants will be less active in the labour market than people without a migrant background, but still more active than their mothers.

68% in good health

DESPITE French people's well-known worry about health matters, 68% actually consider their state of health to be good or even very good, according to the report. However, medical expenses are still high. Last year, the French spent €186.7 billion on medical care such as treatments at hospitals, medical bills and medicine.

1,300 priority neighbourhoods

CURRENTLY, there are 1,300 so-called priority neighbourhoods in 700 different communities with 5 million people affected in total. These areas are typically home to large and single-parent families, where the unemployment rate is higher than in the rest of France.

Cultural budget at a new low

IT appears the French currently don't have much money to spare as the amount of cash spent on cultural activities and hobbies hit its lowest point in 2013 since 1985. In 2013 people only used 8.3% of their income for these types of activities compared to 9.5% in 2007.

What does 2015 hold for France?



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France's news in English

THE LOCAL



La Philharmonie, Paris's new, bigger home for orchestral events is an ambitious bid to retain the city's standing in a world where emerging nations are increasingly building their own massive temples to culture. Photo: Intérieur Grande salle 2 ©Philharmonie de Paris-Arte Factory



ULTRA-MODERN CONCERT HALL TO OPEN IN PARIS

PARIS is known for its many Belle Époque cultural landmarks – ornate museums, gilded theatres, the stately Eiffel Tower. But its brand-new concert hall, La Philharmonie, which opened on January 14th, undoubtedly comes from a different era.

The ultra-modern, multi-layered, crested structure, designed by leading French architect Jean Nouvel and planted in the northeast of the French capital, would not look amiss in a glittering, modern desert city like Doha or Dubai.

The stage of its main 2,400-seat concert hall is enveloped by the audience, with sweeping, curved balconies surrounding it on all sides, designed to give concertgoers both better views and acoustics. Like in Berlin's Philharmonie, the farthest spectator is just 32 metres (105 feet) from the orchestra conductor instead of 47 metres in Paris's Salle Pleyel, located on the other side of the city near the Champs-Élysées and, until now, the premier concert hall in Paris.

"To be honest, Paris had some grand, historic concert halls. But the Philharmonie promises a peerless live experience in terms of acoustics," said Douglas Boyd, the British conductor who in July will take up the baton over Paris's Chamber Orchestra at the Philharmonie.

The project took eight years and €386 million to build – a budget blown out to three times its initial estimate by inflation, its inherent complexity and a desire to make it a lasting monument like the capital's 37-year-old Pompidou Centre or France's National Library (Bibliothèque Nationale), opened in 1996.

The decision to put the new Philharmonie in Paris's northeast 19th arrondissement, a still largely working-class area rapidly becoming a trendy neighbourhood, was for various reasons. Space, a rare commodity in the capital, was available in the Villette park there, and perhaps more importantly, the geographical outreach to younger French people who feel excluded from concerts by the elite, much older crowd that usually attend.

To that end, Philharmonie tickets are to be sold much cheaper than had been the case when orchestras played at the previous halls in central Paris.

Nouvel said "several months" would be needed for the final touches to be complete. But once they were, "it will be one of the most remarkable symphonic buildings existing".

"You must not judge the acoustics from the first concert," warned Paris Orchestra director Bruno Hamard. "Even a Stradivarius must be tamed."

He added: "Most probably, the result will be very good. But it will become exceptional with time."

government seems reluctant to do so," Le Pen wrote in a superb *New York Times* Op-Ed piece, "To Call This Threat by Its Name", which can be read in both French and English.

"France, land of human rights and freedoms, was attacked on its own soil by a totalitarian ideology: Islamic fundamentalism," the National Front leader continued.

"Muslims themselves need to hear this message. They need the distinction between Islamist terrorism and their faith to be made clearly."

Le Pen called for national border checks, more immigration restrictions, as well as "zero tolerance for any behaviour that undermines *laïcité* [secularism] and French law."

She also condemned the foreign policy "mistakes that have plunged France into serious geopolitical incoherence from which it is struggling to extricate itself".

"Islamist terrorism is a cancer on Islam, and Muslims themselves must fight it at our side," Le Pen added.

Her statements stand in contrast to those made by Prime Minister Manuel Valls, who has stated that France is at war with radical Islam, not with the Muslim faith or any religion.

Cheese diet helps oldest Frenchman live to 110

ON January 18th, the oldest man in France died at his home in Saint-Etienne, in central France, at the ripe old age of 110.

In an interview long before his death the oldest man in France, known in French as "Le doyen des Français", revealed the secret of his longevity.

He never smoked, he drank very little alcohol, but had a particular penchant for cheese and chocolate.

The Frenchman was born on October 20th, 1904 – the same week that New York opened its first subway line. He worked as a shoemaker, a farmer, and was a soldier during the Second World War, during which time he was captured and held as a prisoner of war by the Germans in northern France.

He had two children with his wife, who died 30 years ago, and also had six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

The oldest woman in France is Marie Liguinen, who is 113-years old, and lives in l'Essonne, to the south of Paris.

The new title-holder of the oldest Frenchman is now Roger Gouzy, who is 109 years old. The oldest ever

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FRANCE IN THE NEWS

Frenchman was Jeanne Calment, who died in 1997 at the age of ... 122.

France hands out first fines for anti-gay tweets

THREE French Twitter users were fined on January 20th for sending tweets that included homophobic hashtags. It's the first time a French court has handed out convictions for homophobic abuse on Twitter.

The convictions date back to offences committed in 2013 when several homophobic hashtags appeared on Twitter in France, including “Gays must die because ...” (#Lesgaysdoiventdisparaître).

The three who were convicted in the Paris court this week posted tweets

using the hashtag “let’s burn the gays on...” (#brûlonslesgayssurdu).

French charity Comité Idaho, which organizes the International Day Against Homophobia in France, had filed a complaint against the users for inciting hatred and violence on the basis of sexual orientation.

The punishments handed down, however, were fairly light – one was fined €300 while the other two were forced to pay €500 – given the maximum punishment is up to a year in prison and a €45,000 fine.

“It’s a significant victory,” Alexandre Marcel, president of the Comité Idaho, said. “But it’s a small amount to pay for calling for the death of homosexuals.”

Gay rights groups in France regularly report homophobic hashtags, which

Twitter then removes from trending topics to make them less visible.

But in August 2013, the hashtag #lesgaysdoiventdisparaître (Gays must die because), was displayed at the top of the list, and wasn’t immediately taken down. France’s then government spokeswoman Najat Vallaud-Belkacem was forced to step in and took to Twitter herself to denounce the trend.

“I condemn homophobic tweets. Our work with Twitter and groups against homophobia is essential,” she said at the time.

The late January court ruling was also welcomed by SOS Homophobie, which reports on homophobic tweets.

“We’re positive that this will send out the message that the internet is not a place with no rules where you can do whatever you want,” Yohann Roszewitch, president of the association told us.

Last year the anti-homophobia association released a report revealing that the number of homophobic acts in France had increased by 78% in 2013, the year in which gay marriage was legalized.

According to the association the huge surge in the number of homophobic incidents was without doubt linked to the bitter row over the legalization of gay marriage, which divided France and led to mass demonstrations that frequently ended in violent clashes between police and extremists. ■

*FRANCE IN THE NEWS in
partnership with TheLocal.fr*





The day France didn't stand still



BY ELODIE PEYRANO

IT was supposed to be a nice morning. Indeed it started off well enough, sunny, not too cold. In fact, looking back, Wednesday January 7th was a beautiful day ... until noon. Many of us were just heading out for lunch when phones started to ring, app notifications popped up on our screens, and Twitter and Facebook news feeds were hyperactive.

For me, it was a simple message that came from a friend in Paris. Six words, and a list of names.

Suddenly France stood still.

In France, we've always heard that Americans remember where they were and what they were doing when they learned about JFK's assassination. January 7th was the same for the us. Marie, Camille, Jean-Pierre, Samia, Sarah ... students, waitresses, postmen ... Muslims, Catholics, Jews ... we all remember.

The same can be said for 9/11. My best friend and I recall what we were doing on that fateful day: she was on the bus going home; I was turning on my TV expecting my favourite sitcom to start.

But the reason why January the 7th is in a sense even more shocking to us than

9/11, was we never thought for a second that a cartoonist or policeman would be killed ... simply for doing their job.

Charlie Hebdo under attack isn't anything new. Over recent years, the magazine had been accused of being offensive, toward religion in particular. We were all aware of the threats, but today those calling themselves "Charlie" are the same who condemned the publication not so long ago.

And sadly, police officers getting killed in the line of duty also isn't new, nor is terrorism. France has already witnessed these types of sorrows. In March 2012, Mohamed Merah, a 23-year-old French citizen of Algerian descent, shot and killed seven people in Toulouse, including three unarmed French soldiers and small children at a Jewish school. More recently, we have seen fanatics abroad act in Boston, Australia and Canada. Deep down, we knew that it could happen in France on a large scale, but we chose not to admit it.

For the French, the January 7th attack was also completely new in terms of journalism. Having a passion for the US, I sometimes watch American news channels. And I was in the US when Michael Jackson died and saw some of

the most serious news channels airing live images of the singer's ambulance driving to the hospital, filmed from a helicopter. And it all appeared so normal. The same cannot be said for French news reporting ... that is, until January the 7th.

Of course, we remember 9/11 and how TV shows were interrupted by live news coverage, images of the Twin Towers aired over and over, all day long. But this was a time when social media and rolling news channels didn't exist in France. The French weren't in need of constant information, constant updates. We even criticized the Americans for their lack of decency.

Fast-forward ten-plus years, we have French citizens filming a policeman being shot by terrorists and uploading the video on YouTube; we have French reporters filming special forces while they're preparing for a secret operation; we even have French journalists calling a suspected gunman and asking about hostages – hostages that he didn't know he had, thus putting their lives in danger.

Speaking about the siege at the Paris kosher grocery store, a policeman friend in Paris told me: "In Vincennes, Amedy Coulibaly didn't know people were hiding

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in the cold room of the shop where he was holding hostages, but one of the news channels actually reported this detail. The problem was ... Coulibaly was watching the same channel. Just to have the best images, just to attract viewers, journalists actually put lives in danger ... while my colleagues were trying to save them.”

Seven million ... that's more than 10% of the French population. It's also the number of issues printed of *Charlie Hebdo*'s "survival issue". This is a record for a French magazine, previously held by *France-Soir* after the death of the President Charles de Gaulle. (Ironically, it was de Gaulle's government in 1970 that banned *Charlie Hebdo* – then published under the its original title *Hari-Kari* – and *France-Soir* ceased publication in 2012; it's now available only online.) Seven million ... normal under the circumstances and yet so surprising when you consider the crisis of the written press. Bookstores are closing, major publications are disappearing. I cried when *Newsweek* stopped its print version because nothing is more satisfying than turning paper pages.

I've been reading *Charlie Hebdo* for

the last 10 years. Readers, like me, of pre-attack *Charlie Hebdo* were connected to the magazine because they enjoyed its insolence, its drawings, its dark humour and its freedom, even if they disagreed with it sometimes. It's the only magazine that publishes cartoons and dedicates a column to animal rights. Cabu (who was "the best journalist in France" according to film-maker Jean-Luc Godard) was a vegetarian (also like me); many of the cartoonists had adopted dogs and cats from shelters. Since the publication was resurrected in 1992, it has been a melting pot of the French population: old, young, left or right, men or women, with or without religion. True, over the past years readership has dwindled but some remained faithful. And on January 14th, the faithful couldn't get a copy. Even worse, they suddenly heard nonreaders, people who used to criticize print journalism, who were getting the news online, explaining how important it is to help support magazines and newspapers. These are the same people who criticized *Charlie Hebdo* just two weeks ago. The same people who are going

to criticize it again in a month's time.

Charlie Hebdo was already in the middle of a chaotic squall. Their office had been purposefully set on fire, they were losing a lot of money, they were asking for help ... no one responded. Until now. But will seven million readers still be there tomorrow?

This shock wave has changed the French in many ways: morally, politically, socially. If France stood still this day, it was for a brief moment.

Despite the fact the French media didn't show itself in its best light, the entire country overcame its differences on January 11th, marching with a message of more than just solidarity for a magazine and freedom of speech.

In the end, we echo the expression of Voltaire biographer Evelyn Beatrice Hall: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." As it's a bit too long for a sign, and because "United We Stand" is already taken, the French captured the moment with a simple "*Je suis Charlie*". ■

Americanophile Elodie Peyrano is a graduate of Nice's École du Journalisme. This is her first series written in English.

The screenshot displays the Côte d'Azur website (www.cote.azur.fr). The header features the site's name and a navigation bar with links like 'Sleep', 'Discover', 'Free time', 'Convenient', 'Share', and 'News'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'A LA UNE' (Featured) with a large image of a coastal town, 'HOTEL COEUR' (Hotel Heart), 'CE WEEK-END' (This Weekend), and 'METRO' (Metro). There are also sections for 'RESTAURANTS', 'BEACHES AND RESORTS', 'TOURISM', and 'NEWS'. A sidebar on the right contains a 'COTE.AZUR.FR COUPS DE COEUR' (Côte d'Azur Favorites) section. At the bottom, there is a 'STAY IN TOUCH!' section with a QR code and a link to 'With Côte d'Azur newsletters'. The footer mentions 'SERVICE PROVIDED BY WEBSTORE'.

ELECTION FEVER? YOU MUST BE JOKING!



Photo: Colin Blackwell

THE British general election is almost upon us and never has an outcome been as unpredictable or of more relevance to British expats.

Labour and Conservatives alternate weekly for first place in the polls with UKIP running third and the Greens recently overtaking the LibDems at fourth. A week may be a long time in politics but not even the weeks leading to polling day on May 5th will not even the overture the fact that no party can realistically hope for a clear majority. The next government will either be another coalition or a hung parliament.

The situation isn't helped by continued disillusionment with mainstream politicians, which haven't changed much since the *Daily Telegraph* blew the lid off the expenses scandal in 2009. Westminster is still good at keeping other lids on though. The findings of the Chilcot Inquiry, launched in 2009 about the invasion in Iraq, inexplicably won't be released until after the election.

Recent revelations that "unnatural sex" took place in Whitehall raises morality issues but leaked reports are yet to name the Conservative politicians alleged to have participated.

Margaret Thatcher is thought to have known about the scandals at the time but her Home Secretary, Leon Brittain, who stood accused of stifling Westminster child sex abuse by high politicians in the 1980s, died on January 21st, thus quelling any hope that he would cast further light on the matter.

As sitting PM, David Cameron has the most to lose from televised debates, and wishes, much like the scandals, they'd just disappear. At first he claimed he "won't attend" unless the Greens were also invited. An obvious manoeuvre that he hoped would endear him to the Green Party or shelve the debates – or both. No such luck. The Greens are now participating, as are Plaid Cymru and the SNP, who are expected to take most of the Scottish seats to the great displeasure of Labour.

One contender who won't be invited to debate is the stereotypical right-wing British "Pub Landlord" Al Murray, who says he'll run as the FUKP (Free United Kingdom Party) candidate against Nigel Farage in the South Thanet constituency, which the comic admits he "doesn't know where it is."

Farage immediately welcomed a fellow beer-swiller to the race with an offhand "at last some serious competition", but perhaps he should be more worried. Like the French comic Coluche long before him (see "Coluche" on *RivieraReporter.com*) this unlikely but popular contender is a lot brighter than he looks (he read Modern History at Oxford) and could collect somewhat of a protest vote. Murray's comedy routines and political lampooning are caustic enough to strike home with many, especially his claim that "the good people of this country have been given the run-around for too long". He can't hope for anything other than a token score but the votes he steals would probably come from unaligned voters and UKIPers.

British expats can register as an overseas voter for up to 15 years after leaving the UK, as long as they are a British citizen and were registered to vote in the UK within the previous 15 years (or were too young to have registered when they left the UK, in which case their parent or guardian must have been registered).

And yet, according to the David Cameron, "Of the five million British people living abroad, virtually none are registered to vote – despite the fact it's now simple to do online. In fact, it only takes 5 minutes to sign up for a postal vote."

To register go to gov.uk/register-to-vote or through the Conservative Party at conservatives.com/overseasvote2015

On a sad note, Graham Richards, the unrelenting Votes-for-expat-brits.com campaigner, died last month at his home in Gers, France. See page 15 for story.



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BRIEFS

However, like Coluche, Murray is far more likely to stand down well before the election, although not before exposing a few embarrassing realities about British politics.

Naturally, the particular relevance of this election for British expats stems from David Cameron's promise of a post-election referendum on "Brexit" – Britain's possible exit from the EU that so worries UK business leaders. Britain overtaking France to become the world's fifth largest economy gets praise from IMF president Christine Lagarde but the applause would soon fade if faced with a economically catastrophic "yes" vote. ■



... The Centre of Economic and Business Research (CEBR) reported in January that the average cost of raising a child up to age 21 in Britain is £230,000, £2,000 more than last year and 63% higher than 2003. In France, based on statistics from France Info, raising one child (it's substantially more after the third child because of housing) until the age of 18 costs about €450/month up to 14 years and then about 850/month until the age of majority. In other words €117,000 total or £88,000.

... A *Guardian* poll looking at 23 countries revealed that about 65,000 EU immigrants – almost half from Eastern Europe – are seeking Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) in the UK while only 30,000 Britons are claiming similar benefits in other EU countries. Britain's unemployment benefits are the lowest in Western Europe.

... No men please! On page 8 we report that France's oldest man said cheese was the key to his longevity. Well, Scotland's oldest living woman, Jessie Gallan who is 109, says that one secret to her long life is "avoiding Scottish men". That might be easier in Scotland where an unhealthy diet, heavy drinking and lack of exercise mean that Scottish men die much younger than anywhere else in the UK.

.... Got no milk? Britons have never taken to long-conservation milk the way the French do. And while regular home delivery of fresh milk and other farm products still provides jobs to 9,000 milkmen in rural areas across the country, it is sadly another dying British tradition: in 1980 about 89% of the milk consumed in the UK arrived by home delivery. Price wars on food staples and expanding supermarkets have meant that milkmen deliveries now only account for 3% of consumption.

... Night tube to Heathrow! Getting around London after midnight has always been difficult to impossible. For the first time, from September 12th of this year, the London Underground

will run 24-hour service on five of the main lines. The Victoria and Jubilee lines will serve all stations, while the Central, Piccadilly and Northern lines will have partial service, including to Heathrow Terminal 5 on the Piccadilly line. Boris is delighted but transport union bosses are not. Expect a few strikes (nothing new there.)



... With his tussled hair, calculated eccentricity and constant buffoonery, Boris Johnson (pictured) is the ultimate British stereotype. Except that he was born in New York, which he left at 5 years old. He still has dual UK/US nationality – a fact that came back to bite him where it hurts last November, when he was ordered to pay a six figure US tax bill on the capital gains from the 2009 sale of his London house. All American passport holders are legally required to file a tax return declaring their worldwide income. Boris huffed, puffed and, in January, finally agreed to pay the "absolutely outrageous" demand. In retaliation, the London mayor is thought to be pursuing the American embassy in London for £8 million in unpaid congestion charges. ■

A friend in need

BY MARY HUGHES



Photos: Turn2us



ELIZABETH Anne Finn and her daughter, Constance, founded Elizabeth Finn Care (EFC), previously The Distressed Gentlefolk's Aid Association, in 1897. Since then EFC has been assisting clients worldwide to overcome the effects of poverty by servicing the need, not the want.

The organisation was established to help British and Irish Nationals, professional people from many walks of life who, through no fault of their own, have fallen upon difficult times financially. They are living on a low income or means tested benefits. The range of professional occupations includes artists and the performing arts to the medical and legal profession. We also consider the occupations of the partners, both past and present, of those applying and endeavour to help where possible. The cause for the sudden crisis may be illness, loss of income, marital breakdown and bereavement, to name but a few.

EFC falls under the UK Data Protection Act and all applications are treated with the strictest confidence. We understand that life can be hard and sometimes a little help is required. We endeavour to listen and support when help is really needed.

We are able to help by a one-off award; for some we will review their situation on the anniversary of their initial award. We are also able to consider care home top-up fees, health insurance premiums, retraining courses and rent in advance, white goods and mobility aids to name but a few. Obviously we carefully consider all applications and lend a hand in the best way that we are able. Unfortunately, as with all charities, there are areas where we are unable to offer assistance.

In these cases it's vitally important that we signpost to other charities, both in France and the UK, to endeavour to obtain the best possible support for those in need. However, we have found that many UK charities are now being forced to restrict those that they assist to UK residents only. We will almonise with numerous other charities where we are unable to cover the total need.

EFC also signposts to any French or UK statutory benefits that may be applicable. Sometimes we do find that the local State agencies can be far from helpful when UK expats try to apply for benefits.

We have a website – Turn2us.org.uk – and a helpline service. These offer assistance by signposting other organisations that may assist.

We have noticed that in some French departments a small number of our beneficiaries, who are also in receipt of French State benefits, have had these State benefits reduced due to our award. This is, obviously, of great concern and something that we wish to avoid. It appears that the French attitude to grant giving differs widely from that in the UK.

Here in France, we are now well established and continue to grow and develop. Through different media outlets, and our association with various charities and consulates, we endeavour to reach as many applicants as possible.

A team of fully trained Volunteer Visitors assist me. These volunteers will visit potential and existing beneficiaries to ensure that the aid that is on offer is going to maximise their quality of life. If required our volunteers will also visit clients of other charities where they do not have an available volunteer, likewise we sometimes have to call on members of other charities to visit one of our clients. Again confidentiality is strictly maintained. ■

For further information please visit our website elizabethfinncare.org.uk or contact Mary Hughes on 04 68 23 43 79 or at mary.hughes@elizabethfinn.org.uk

GRAHAM THE CAMPAIGNER DIES AGED 65



VOTES-for-Expats campaigner Graham Richards (pictured) died on Dec 28th, 2014 at his home in Mirande, Gers, the result of a fall. He was 65.

Well before 2008 Graham had taken on the voluntary role of European contact for EMAG – *Equitable Life Members Action Group* – a group which still seeks justice for the investors in Equitable Life Assurance Company, where incompetence and oversight by the British government brought a great many pension investors to financial difficulties. It was with knowledge of this that he was approached in 2008 to see if he would take on the role of publicity officer (*votes-for-expat-brits.com*) to support the campaign for the repeal of the 15-year rule, which prevents several million British expats worldwide from voting. He repeatedly urged the several million more expatriates who still retain the right to vote, to register to vote, using the many editorial and expat contacts he had developed over the years.

Graham's formative years were spent in the Clapham district, southwest of London. He was immensely proud of his early life as a Londoner; he went to the local grammar school. Before early retirement from a career in the banking sector (he started "at the bottom" and worked his

way up) he had a stint in the Gulf. He followed the local football teams and was at one time a referee.

From his first marriage he had two sons; the youngest, Gregor, became a Lieutenant in the Navy and was Bridge officer on HMS St Albans. Graham frequently mentioned Gregor's career as a representative of the British Armed Forces. He repeatedly felt that the British government had let down the work of the retired military, who chose to live abroad after retirement.

He married for a second time Josette, a Frenchwoman, who helped him settle near Mirande. She died of cancer two years ago and he greatly mourned her loss.

Expatriates everywhere owe Graham a great debt. It is partly due to his efforts, as well as that of other campaigners, that British MPs are now at last paying serious attention to the needs of expatriates. There is still much to do.

Brian Cave, a fellow activist who blogs under Pensioners Debout! Stand Up! (*pensionersdebout.blogspot.fr*) affirms, "Graham would certainly wish that the fight to achieve democracy for the British citizen resident abroad continues. This fight must continue." ■

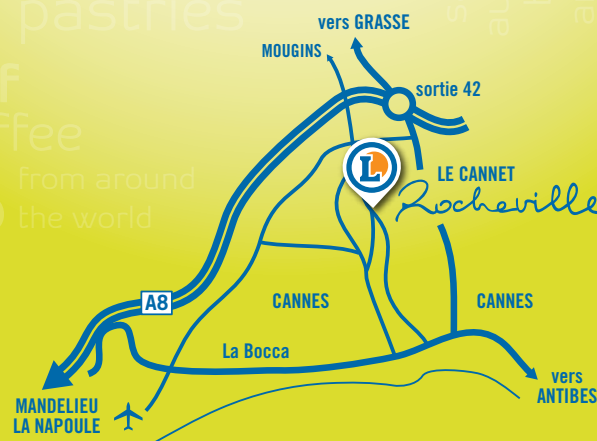
Obituary with kind permission from Brian Cave.

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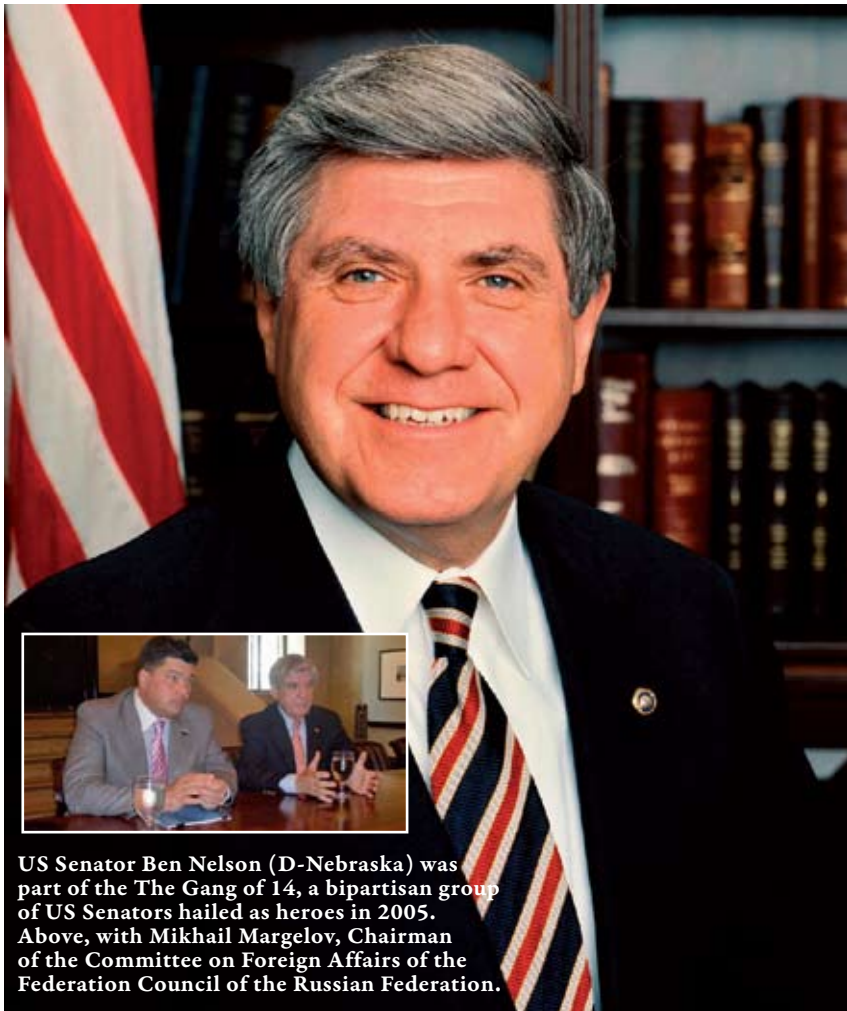
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THE FULL NELSON

Two-time former US Senator Ben Nelson gets behind the Monaco US Business Forum in June

BY PJ HESLIN



US Senator Ben Nelson (D-Nebraska) was part of the The Gang of 14, a bipartisan group of US Senators hailed as heroes in 2005. Above, with Mikhail Margelov, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation.

THE Monaco US Business Roundtable was co-founded by Mike Powers and Susan Feaster in 2014, with the aim to build stronger relations between the two countries in the fields of education, government, business, culture and sport. From June 10th to 12th, and under the High Patronage of H.S.H. Prince Albert, the inaugural Monaco US Forum will discuss “The Importance of Sustained Dialogue Between the Western and Eastern Worlds: A Public Peace Process”.

Over the past couple of issues, I have been talking with a number of distinguished self-made individuals, from a generation when hard work meant something, who are going to be involved in June’s forum: Former President of the American League and

Chancellor of the University of Kansas, Gene Budig; Mike Yanney, founder of America First Companies, one of the largest private investment banking firms in the Midwest with total assets in excess of \$3.6 billion; and, for this issue, former United States Senator Ben Nelson (D-Nebraska). Each of them emphasized that this type of open dialogue is not only critical for business, but also for government and international relations.

I have suspected for some time that this is the fundamental problem with American politics today. Both parties, for well over a decade, have become involved in a sort of *battle royale* as soon as the other is elected, without engaging in bipartisan conversations, much less cooperation. It’s as if their job is to

take down the democratically elected opposition, as voted by the voice of the American people, instead of serving their electorates until the next election.

Having lived outside the US for five years, I’ve wondered if political stubbornness has become worse or if it’s just the way the media spins politics because it makes a better story. After speaking with Senator Nelson I’d say, unhappily, that my perception of American politics holds true.

Senator Nelson’s taste for politics first came when he was 17 years old. He ran for governor of his high school’s mock legislature and won. It was at that point, he tells me, that he set his ambitions on becoming Governor of Nebraska. “After that, I never expected not to run for governor. Whether I won or not was up to the voters but I knew I was going to be a candidate.

“I even told my wife when we first started dating that I was eventually going to run for governor. She just gave me that ‘yeah, right’ smile.”

Graduating with a law degree in 1970, Senator Nelson put his political ambitions on the back burner while he pursued a successful career in the insurance field, before entering the race for governor in 1990. “I had two percent name recognition but I managed to win the election.” He served for a second term, a feat not seen in over twenty years, before turning his ambitions toward becoming a US Senator.

Senator Nelson, with two terms as governor of Nebraska and two terms as a US Senator, believes he has something to offer the Monaco US Forum. “My background as governor combined both politics and business. I went on eight trade missions and increased exports from \$800 million to \$2.4 billion by the end of my second term.” On behalf of these official trips, Senator Nelson travelled to Asia, South America, Israel, Egypt, Germany and Cuba.

The senator also hopes that roundtables like the Monaco US Business Forum could lead to greater cooperation and

understanding with Russia.

As far back as 1993, Senator Nelson worked with Senator Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) to co-chair US dialogue with the Russian Federation. More recently, he's developed good relations with Mikhail Margelov, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, who is also taking part in June's forum in Monaco.

He describes those earlier times as being more optimistic but hopes that international forums can help ease tensions with Russia and lead toward a brighter future with the country; 2015 is "Year of Russia in Monaco".

These days, one cannot associate Washington without the word partisanship. Senator Nelson admits that it's worse now than it has ever been. "My frustration with politics came near the end of my career when gridlock stopped legislation.

"Things in Washington are very partisan right now and both parties have moved away from joint political efforts. I think the American people want a system that works."

The US Senator believes that the system in Washington could change if politicians would do what they promised when elected instead of focusing on the next election as soon as they win their seat. "There has to be a change in the people who come to Washington. It can no longer be a profession to be a politician, and those elected must be committed to working and not obstructing. My mantra was that I would support the President, regardless of whether he was Republican or Democrat, when I could, oppose when I must, and try to offer constructive solutions in the process of representing my constituents in Nebraska."

The proof of the senator's bipartisan support lies in

his political record: he was the leader of the Gang of 14 with Senator John McCain (R-Arizona). The Gang of 14 was a group of Republican and Democratic Senators in 2005 that successfully negotiated an agreement to avoid the deployment of the menacingly titled "Nuclear Option" over the use of the filibuster by Senate Republicans at the time.

And while these days Republicans seem to get the majority of the blame for bipartisanship, Senator Nelson says that this wasn't always the case. "When I was there [in Congress], in 2001, we could find compromise in the Bush years." He articulates that the situation has reached a point where it's difficult for politicians to work for their constituents, adding that, "Compromise does not mean giving up on your ideals."

This is why, in his opinion, platforms like the Monaco US Business Forum are necessary. "These events allow international dialogue, which is especially essential for politicians, military and business. It's a way to find mutual recognition."

I ask Senator Nelson whether he still thinks America is a good place to do business. Unlike politics, the senator sees a reason to be optimistic about the economy. "America is a better place to do business than it was a few years ago. Manufacturing is starting to come back due to the rising expense of manufacturing in China and lowered costs in the US. Plus, Americans have learned to do more with less. They've learned to streamline operations across all sectors."

If only the politicians could do the same. ■

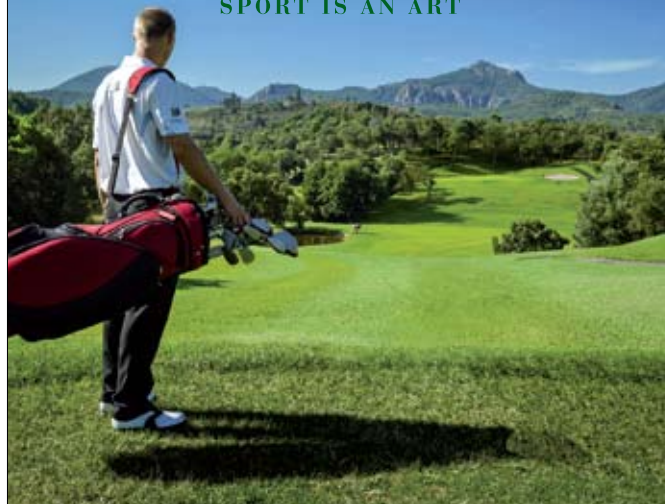
The Monaco US Business Roundtable Forum takes place June 10th-12th in Monaco. For more information, contact President Susan Feaster at MonacoUS.BRT@gmail.com

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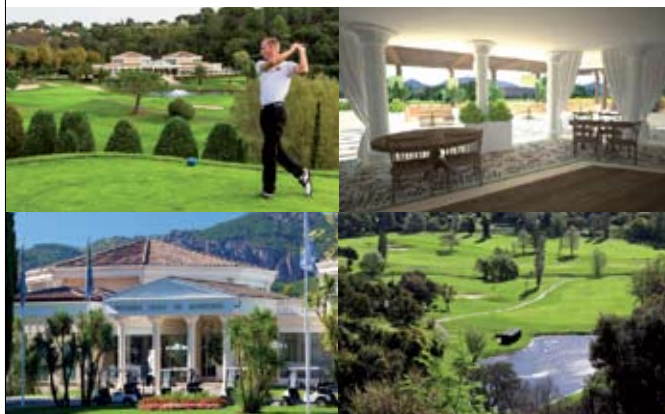


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A TWINNED CITY

BY MOLLY BROWN

THE year 2014 ended with such jubilation and celebration in the Principality of Monaco that we can only greet the New Year with optimism and confidence. The arrival of a new little Prince and Princess to Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene on December 10th was greeted with unbounded joy. Church bells rang, the Prince's Carabinieri fired a 42-gun *feu de joie* from the Palace and the boats in Port Hercule sounded a joyous welcome to Princess Gabriella Thérèse Marie and Prince Jacques Honoré Rainier (Prince Héréditaire). Following tradition, the tiny twins were officially presented by their parents to a delighted crowd of cheering Monegasques in the Place du Palais on January 7th ... and a pink and a blue balloon were released from a palace window to float over the Principality.

Quaint, cautious and content

IN the 21st century a Principality is considered rather "quaint" by Americans and many others whose heads of state are elected politicians, but over 700 years this "quaint" Principality has evolved into a modern city state with an enviable position in the world ... and a unique charm. Only those who have lived in this small community understand the sincere affection its citizens feel for their Prince and his family. He is respected as the head of the Monegasque family, responsible for their welfare as well as for their country's future; not an easy task. As head of state, the Prince personally appoints his government ministers to administer the government departments and liaise with the National Council, elected by the Monegasques.

Monaco is a respected member of the United Nations and the European community, but not part of the European Union; it prefers to keep its independence and unique way of life. Although criticised, envied and faced with the growing power of the EU, Prince Albert stressed in a Christmas message to residents that Monaco has no ambitions to join the EU and a future accord with Europe is about to be negotiated.

It is not surprising that the EU has its eyes on Monaco. After several years of falling revenues, the country took an

unexpected leap from caution and slow growth to economic recovery last year. In 2013, the economy grew by 9.3% with a GDP of €4.94 billion, due largely to investment in real estate. There were positive results in 2014 and the National Council has already passed the €1 billion draft budget for 2015; work has begun on the new hospital and construction of a new school, crèche and apartments for Monegasque residents begins this year. Real estate prices continue to rise, large apartments are at a premium, and some rents have been increased by 40 to 100 percent. However, there are some serious concerns that so many elegant Belle Époque villas are being destroyed by greedy builders in a rush to profit from the real estate boom, particularly the demolition of the historic Palais de la Plage at Larvotto.

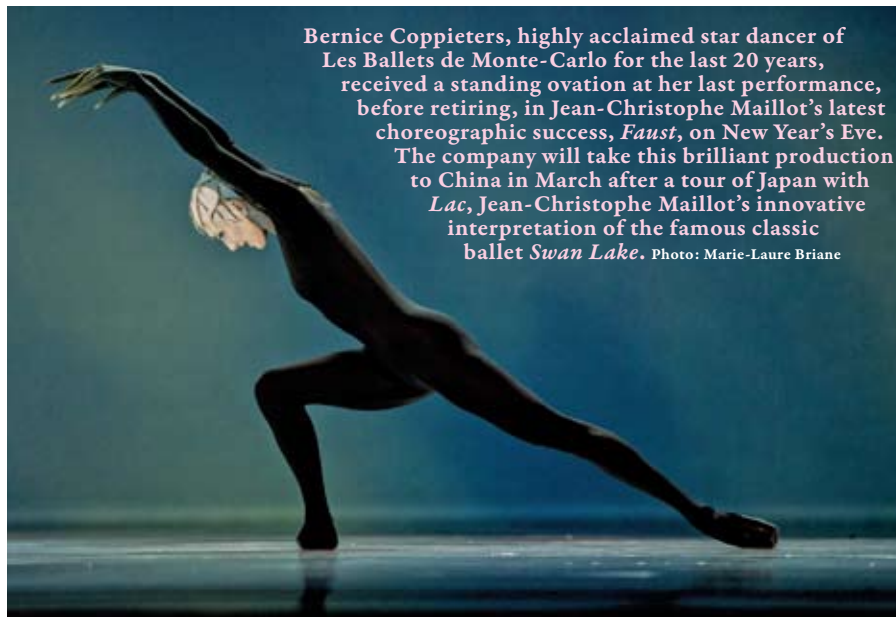
Mad about music

MONTE Carlo's casino owners, SBM, hoping for an upturn in their 2014 results, welcomed 2015 with bright lights, pink champagne and lots of music to attract larger crowds. Christmas trees sparkled in the Place du Casino and popular rock groups La Tribu and Beatlovs filled the night with music from a stage on the steps of the casino. Fireworks lit up the sky at midnight, and in the private rooms of the casino Monaco's own songbird, Cathy Brown, entertained the serious high rollers

while the New Year crowds danced the night away.

For more than a century Monte Carlo has been the place to be for the winter season, not just for the sunshine and elegant lifestyle but for the quality of the entertainment. Famous artists designed scenery and costumes for the legendary dancers of Les Ballets Russes and the world's leading musicians and singers performed in the Casino's elegant Salle Garnier in the Belle Époque. Some 100 years later, Monaco's opera, orchestra and ballet are leaders in the world of performing arts. After a brilliant opening of Monaco's opera season with Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* and a rousing *William Tell*, Opera Monte-Carlo's director, Jean-Louis Grinda, continues with his brilliant productions with Leoncavallo's tragic *Pagliacci* (Feb 19-28) and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, starring Erwin Schrott (Mar 20-29) in an amazing feast of music and drama. Members of the public are again invited to the Open House programme ... a chance to see great singers at a rehearsal of *Une Tragedie Florentine* (Feb 14) and *Don Giovanni* (Mar 14). Tel: +377 98 06 28 22 Opera Monte-Carlo (see opera.mc).

If music be the food of love, Monaco must be the place to be in spring ... for the festival of music at Printemps des Arts (Mar 20-Apr 12; see printempsdesarts.com). ■



Bernice Coppeters, highly acclaimed star dancer of Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo for the last 20 years, received a standing ovation at her last performance, before retiring, in Jean-Christophe Maillot's latest choreographic success, *Faust*, on New Year's Eve. The company will take this brilliant production to China in March after a tour of Japan with *Lac*, Jean-Christophe Maillot's innovative interpretation of the famous classic ballet *Swan Lake*. Photo: Marie-Laure Briane

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THE DEFYING DUTCHMAN

BUSINESS

A break for EU non-residents in France?

BY PETER JOHNSON

TOWARDS the end of last year there was massive debate about the legality of the French tax office charging “social contributions” paid by European non-residents on French rental income and capital gain on properties in France.

As we go to press, I’ve seen an absence of social tax on most rental income returns for 2013 and 2014, but appeals for a refund going further back have been rejected, while people living outside Europe have been mainly exempted, but occasionally not. Given that non-residents’ income tax is dealt with by a single tax office in Noisy le Grand (near Paris), this inconsistent approach is perplexing and infuriating.

The background is as follows: non-residents are subject to French social contributions at 15.5% on income derived from immovable property in France since 2012. However, based on EC Regulation No 883/2004, a European individual should be subject to only one social

security regime and pay social security contributions only in that State.

The French would argue that this “social contribution” is income tax by any other name and has nothing to do with social security as such, but goes to repay the national debt related to social security’s current running deficit.

In November 2013, the French Supreme Administrative Court asked for a preliminary ruling from the European Commission. The case related to a Dutch national and tax resident in France, who had challenged the application of the social contributions that France requires him to pay on income derived from life annuities that he concluded in the Netherlands, and that are unrelated to any professional activity.



According to him, he should only be subject to social contributions in the Netherlands based on Article 13 of the EU Regulation No 1408/71 stating unequivocally that “persons to whom this Regulation applies shall be subject to the legislation of a single Member State only”.

On October 21st, 2014, the Advocate General of the European Commission concluded on this preliminary ruling request that these social contributions on non-residents levied by France fall within the scope of EU Regulation No 1408/71, replaced since by Regulation No 883/2004.

The European Commission found that there was a “direct and sufficiently relevant link with the French legislation governing the branches of social security listed in Article 4 of Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 of the Council of June 14th, 1971”.

If this is correct, French provisions applying social contributions to income derived from French assets received by non-residents should be abolished!

If, therefore, as a EU non-resident of France you have been subject to social contributions in 2014 (on 2013 income) you need to make a claim to the French tax office before the end of this year (December 31st, 2015). The battle is not won and I’m sure the tax office will resist, especially on the massive loss of capital gains tax.

The European Commission will soon rule on this issue and if the French tax office have to reimburse it will cost them about €4200 on average per person for 60,000 cases, so €2.5 billion. ■

A WINDOW ON THE PAST

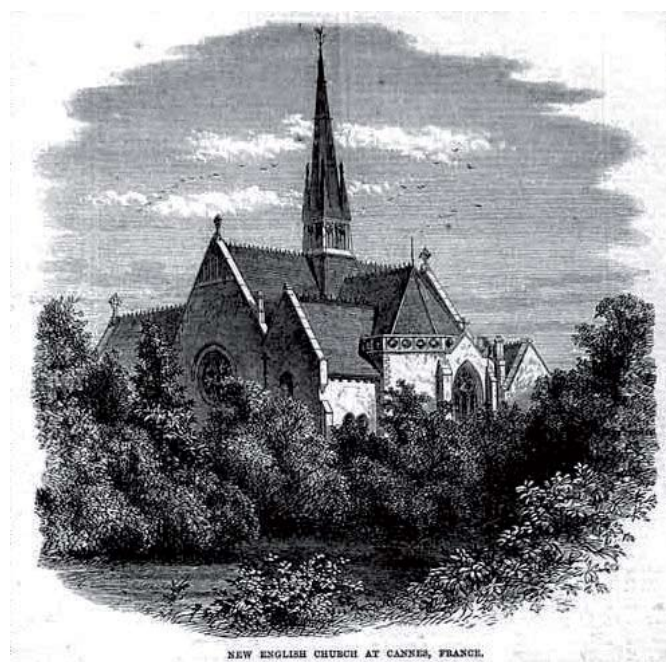


BY MARGO LESTZ

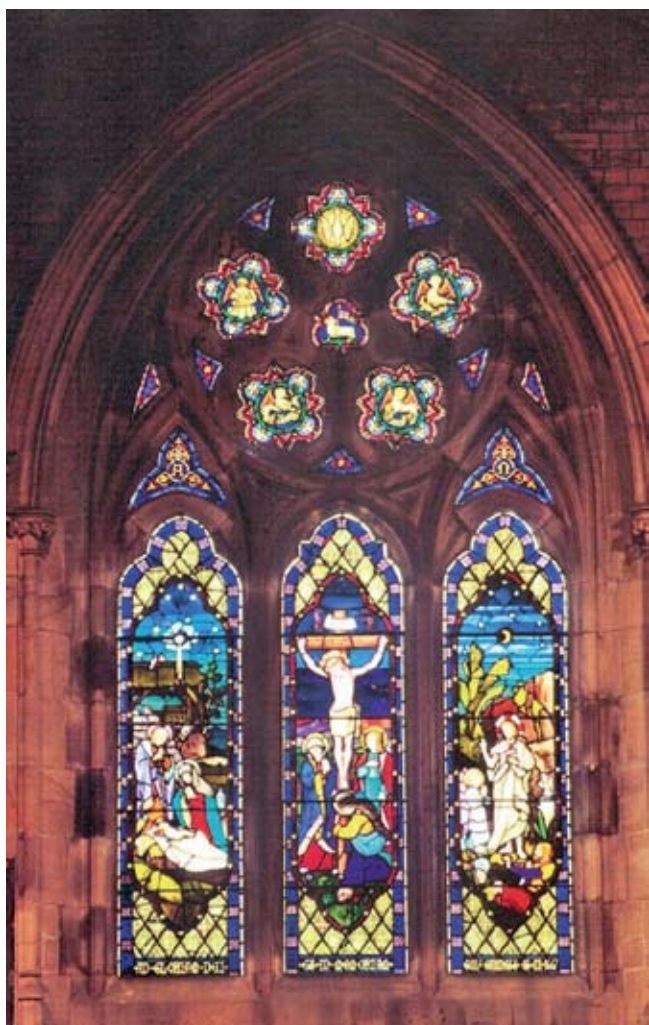
TOM Küpper (above) is a stained glass conservator at Britain's third largest cathedral, Lincoln Cathedral, where he's in charge of the upkeep of 750 windows, the oldest of which date back to the 13th century. The 51-year-old once owned a stained glass business in the northwest of England, and has an MA in the Conservation of Historic Objects. Mr Küpper has been working on his PhD, researching 19th-century amateur art in places of Christian worship, which led him to an old newspaper article from 1867, concerning the English Church in Cannes, immediately piquing his interest.

It's well documented that during the Victorian period, English nobles fashionably spent their winters on the French Riviera, often prescribed by doctors to cure health problems. One such upper class was Englishman Mr William James Garnett, a former MP for Lancaster. He customarily wintered in Cannes and during these visits would attend the English Church, then known as Christ Church Cannes.

Having greatly benefited from his French Riviera stays, Mr Garnett was happy to comply when the chaplain, Rev Rolfe, and the layman asked him to help fund a stained glass window for the new church expansion. The three-light window was made in London by Messrs James Powell & Sons of Whitefriars Glass,



and in October 1866 was shipped to Cannes. It was to arrive on the cargo ship *Fairy Vision* at the dock in Marseille. However, just before reaching the port, dense fog caused the ship to run



aground on a sandbank and all its cargo, including the window, sank into the sea.

Since the window was insured, an exact replica was swiftly made within a month and shipped to the church in Cannes. This second window arrived without incident and was installed in Christ Church Cannes.

In the meantime, the wreckage of the *Fairy Vision* lay submerged for five months before being sold to a Greek businessman, who then recovered the cargo and put it up for auction. Mr Garnett bought the original stained glass window, which had not deteriorated despite its temporary stopover underwater. He had it shipped back to Quernmore Park, Lancashire, where he lived and, in 1867, it was slightly altered to fit into the local church; the three lights depict

the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection (above).

Back to Lincolnshire and our curious conservator Tom Küpper to whom these two windows, comparable to a set of twins separated at birth and raised under different conditions, make the perfect case study. Mr Küpper was able to track down the window in Lancashire but, unfortunately, his search for the window in Cannes ends with the closure of Christ Church and the building being torn down in 1951.

It is possible that the window is still somewhere in Cannes. If anyone has any information as to where the stained glass may have ended up, please contact Mr Küpper via the *Reporter* at info@riviera-reporter.com ■

Photos supplied by Tom Küpper. Church illustration from Illustrated London News 1867.

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Fenella books her place in the sun

BY NICK KENT



The new owner of Antibes Books, Fenella Holt, invites you for a glass of Champagne to celebrate opening day on Sat Feb 14th at 12 noon. Photos: Ed Holt

FENELLA Holt looks over towards the snowy peaks of the Maritime Alps, lit by the last rays of the winter sun.

"I can't imagine ever wanting to go back to London," she says. "I've been in Antibes six years now, and I love it."

Fenella, 54, has decided to cement her roots firmly into the local landscape by opening a new English bookshop in Antibes, a replacement for the retiring Heidi Lee's famous literary emporium.

Although not quite as big as Heidi's old place, the new Antibes Books at 13 rue Georges Clemenceau, which opens for business on Valentine's Day, will have a range to equal that of Fenella's previous employer.

"I enjoyed my three years working for Heidi and, of course, she taught me an awful lot about bookselling.

"The new shop is a more manageable size, I needed a place that could be run by

just one person most of the time. We are putting together a wide range of books, with all the same sections that Heidi had.

"The books will be almost exclusively in English. I will be selling DVDs alongside various books that have been adapted for the screen, such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Hunger Games*. We will also offer a selection of e-books.

"We are setting up a website so that customers can pre-order books before their arrival in the South of France."

This will be a real boon for the busy yacht crews, who will be able to order necessary books such as up-to-date travel guides and newly published cookery books in advance of their arrival in port.

Fenella moved here from Palma de Mallorca with her photographer husband Ed, who will be helping out in the new bookshop.

"I wanted to take over the running of

the English bookshop in Palma but it didn't work out, so now I am delighted to be able to fulfil that particular desire.

"I am really looking forward to welcoming our first customers," says Fenella.

Although you would have to use the word *brave* to describe someone who plans to open a bookshop in a world increasingly dominated by online retailers, it seems to me that Fenella's enthusiasm and personal touch will win the day in the battle for increasingly scarce euros.

"I have always been an avid reader," she says, "and I had no greater pleasure while working at Heidi's than when

customers to whom I had recommended a book would come back in especially to tell me how much they had enjoyed it."

The February 14th opening promises to be a social as well as a commercial event not to be missed, and *Merde!* author Stephen Clarke will be on hand for the occasion to sign books.

And what will Fenella be recommending to her first customers?

"Naturally that depends on an individual's tastes and habits but for me one of the best reads around at the moment is *The Sunrise* by Victoria Hislop, it is so moving."

The *Reporter* team wish Fenella and Ed every success with this significant new chapter in their lives. ■

The new English bookshop at 13 rue Georges Clemenceau, Antibes, will open Tues to Sat: 10 to 18.30 and Sun to Mon: 11 to 17.30. See antibesbooks.com or call 04 93 61 96 47.

Lestz hear it for the French



Nice resident Margo Lestz studied art history in Florence, Italy. She fell in love with the city and decided one day she would live in Europe.

Photo: Sarah Vermeersch/sarahvermeersch.com

IN 2003, Margo Lestz and her husband Jeff left behind a 3-acre farmhouse in St Louis, Missouri, for a chance to live in London, where Jeff had a work opportunity. Margo had always been involved in her husband's business, taking care of the admin side, but when the big 5-0 rolled around four years later, Margo, a self-described "perpetual student" with a fascination for languages and history, decided to focus on things she more enjoyed. That same year, the couple bought a flat in Nice, and Margo continues to divide her days between London and Nice (and from time to time in Italy learning *la bella lingua*).

Like many other expats, Margo set up a blog about France – The Curious Rambler (curiousrambler.com) – which along with her French studies allows her to observe French culture up close and personally. Unlike other expats she kept up with her blogging, and has put together a collection of stories in the *Curious Histories* series. The first book, *French Holidays & Traditions* (Boo-

Tickety Publishing) touches on the history of Nice and women in French history.

Over 110 pages, you'll find a selection of short and lively stories, often revealing lesser-known but fascinating facts about French customs. If you have ever wondered how French Easter eggs are delivered or why the French walk around with paper fish taped to their backs on the 1st of April, you can find the answers in this book.

French Holidays & Traditions contains twelve chapters – one for each month of the year, and each chapter contains one or two short stories relating to a holiday that month or a tradition that may not be associated with any particular date. At the end of each chapter, you'll find a list of holidays and observances for that month, a handy reference.

For those intrigued by French culture and curious about the history behind French traditions, Margo's books can be purchased on margolestz.com ■

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LIGURIA LIKE A LOCAL: DOLCEACQUA

BY CHRISSIE MCCLATCHIE



Impressionist Claude Monet was one of Dolceacqua's earliest fans, and on canvas captured local scenes, such as the arched bridge that has come to symbolise the village. Photos: ©Jilly Bennett/jillybennett.com

ONE of my many New Year's resolutions for my blog, The Riviera Grapevine, is to start documenting all the wonderful villages that can be found in the hinterland of the French Riviera and Liguria. I started writing a list with my sister and brother-in-law over a glass of rosé and soon after the list was some 20 names deep. I'm really looking forward to getting out and about and sharing some of my favourite spots along this wonderful coastline.

So it's time to stop talking, start writing and get at least one resolution off the ground.

I thought it fitting to start off with my favourite spot of all: Dolceacqua.

Where is it?

Dolceacqua is set back from the Ligurian coastline between Ventimiglia and Bordighera in the Nervia valley.

The village is split in two by the Nervia river; the historic centre (Terra) is presided over by the imposing 12th century Castello dei Doria, a great post-lunch climb even though the castle itself is rather ruined.

The pedestrianised Terra is connected to the more modern Borgo by a charming arched bridge that has come to symbolise the village. French Impressionist Claude Monet was one of Dolceacqua's earliest fans, and captured local scenes on canvas on more than one occasion.

Why I love it

Whereas the cobbled streets of France's Saint-Paul de Vence or Eze are teeming with tours and tourist shops, in Dolceacqua you have a similarly preserved medieval village (in a similarly spectacular setting, just without the water view), refreshingly free from crowds.

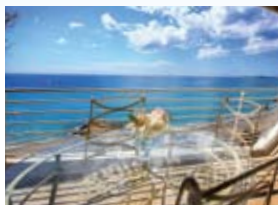
Take some time to explore the shaded, narrow streets, which are wonderfully cool in summer, and you'll quickly realise that it's still very much a lived-in village, with a strong local community and a proud heritage and culture.

Eat

Clustered around the Piazza Giuseppe Garibaldi, across from the Terra, you'll find no shortage of restaurants. Many offer standard pizza-pasta fare, which, if I'm honest, can be a bit hit or miss. I'd recommend a firm favourite, Casa e Bottega (ristocasaebottega.it). Visit in summer and dine *al fresco* with the wonderful view of the village as a backdrop, or in winter, amongst the cosy, vintage inspired interior. The menu focuses on Ligurian specialities, such as rabbit in a Rossese di Dolceacqua sauce,

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and uses fresh, locally sourced ingredients. When it comes to wine, they don't need to look far, and the list is overflowing with locally made whites and reds.

Save space, however, for the local *dolce*, the Michetta. The history of the Dolceacqua's Michetta dates to the Middle Ages and is a beloved tale: the tyrannical Marquis demanded every bride pass their first night of marriage ... in his bed. Cue the local beauty who refused and consequently sacrificed her

life. The uprising that followed saw the law overturned. The heroic Lucrezia is commemorated by this sweet treat, which has come to be known by a word for a lady's more intimate parts!

Drink

Dolceacqua is synonymous with wine, which shares its name: Rossese di Dolceacqua. This indigenous grape (and Liguria's first ever DOC), is grown in the hills that surround the Nervia river. There

are a dozen or so producers in Dolceacqua and along with the vibrant, fruity, light-to-medium bodied red, which the village is famous for, white wines are also made from two of Liguria's other great grapes, Pigato and Vermentino. In the Terra, I'd recommend a visit to Maixei on Piazza G. Mauro (maixei.it). This local co-op produces some outstanding wines. Across in the Borgo, Enoteca Re (Via Patrioti Martiri, 19) is an excellent wine shop, offering an extensive selection of local wines and more.

Explore

If you have a car, and a keen sense of adventure, wind your way up to the western ridge and the vineyards of Terre Bianche (terrebianche.com) to discover one of Liguria's finest producers.

On the eastern ridge, La Locanda degli Ulivi (lalocandadegliulivi.it) is an institution, a farmhouse high in the hills offering panoramic views and a set menu of homemade Ligurian specialties. Be hungry, as you'll be served a ten course gourmet extravaganza ... for €23! Wash it down with a bottle of homemade Rossese, and nominate someone else to drive home!

Getting there

Car: Dolceacqua is an easy 45-minute drive from Nice. Take the Ventimiglia exit, then cross through the town centre along Via Cavour to the coastal road to Bordighera. Follow the signposts inland to Dolceacqua at Strada Provinciale 64.

Public Transport: The best bet is to take the train to Ventimiglia and then hail a taxi at the station. It's about €20 one way, but the bus which serves the village from the train station appears to run to a rather irregular and unpredictable timetable. For the brave, look up Linea 7 (rivieratrasporti.it).

Excursions

Club Vivanova are hosting an Experience Liguria Wine and Lunch Tour on Saturday February 7th. Highlights include a tasting at Maixei in Dolceacqua, as well as visits to other vineyards in the area and a 4-course Ligurian lunch in the nearby village of Apricale. A full itinerary and booking details can be found at clubvivanova.com ■

Chrissie McClatchie is an Australian wine specialist who has been living in Nice for the past seven years. You can follow her travels at rivieragrapevine.com or on Twitter @RivieraGrape



In contrast to the bus loads of tourists congesting the cobblestone in Saint-Paul de Vence, Dolceacqua's shaded, narrow streets remain refreshingly free from crowds, even in summer.



SIMPLY GORGE-OUS

IN property parlance there is away-from-it-all, and then there is La Canabière. The location of this outstanding eight-bedroom bastide in the commune of Mons – designated a World Heritage Site – is simply outstanding.

Owner Molly Holt discovered it when she was snooping round the Siagne Gorge looking for a property on behalf of a friend. When she eventually found La Canabière she wanted it for herself – badly.

“It was love at first sight,” says Molly, a businesswoman turned professional sailor.

“I have been here 18 years, and I want to pass it on to someone who really appreciates the incredible setting of the house.”

The name Canabière one naturally

associates with Marseille, but there are canabières in just about every commune in France. It denotes an area used to grow hemp, and dates from the Middle Ages when communes were obliged by law to supply the raw material for rope to the French navy.

Molly is a realist who knows that it is likely that someone investing the €1,100,000 needed to secure the purchase would look to make some money back through renting.

“This has been for us a perfect family home for many years. I chose the area in part to satisfy the wishes of my two children. My son wanted to be in a place where he could ski in the morning and

swim in the sea come the afternoon, and my daughter yearned to learn the violin and become a ballerina. Living in the Alpes-Maritimes made all that possible.

“We are offering La Canabière fully furnished and ready for holiday letting, including towels, linen, shower gels and body lotions!” says Molly, who is planning to move on to new adventures now that her children have flown the nest.

The garden’s lawns sweep under olive trees – most years Molly gets around 100 litres of oil from them. Dotted around the 15-acre estate is a *boules* pitch, a badminton area, swings and hammocks, and of course the pool house and the swimming pool itself. The garage features



a sauna and gym equipment.

Just off the front terrace – delightful with old stone table and vine arbour – is the 17th-century bake-house that makes a wonderful barbecue area with sink and kitchen-standard work surfaces.

Three paths lead from the house, the first climbs to caves and potholes (for *speleo* enthusiasts only). Les Grottes des Canebière offers hundreds of metres of the underworld wonder. Another path leads from the wild flower meadow over a small footbridge and drops southward to the river Siagne – further downstream is the beautiful Roman bridge of Le Pont des Tuves. A third path leaves from the back, out the conservatory door and down northward to the river. Here you will find a series of rock pools and waterfalls, great places to dive and swim, fish, and explore. Upstream there is a natural stone bridge and no sign of civilization until you hit the Route Napoleon near Escragnolles. Enjoy, the trails are unending.

So if you are looking for absolute peace and

tranquillity, then look no further. Yet you are less than a 10-minute drive to the historic town of St Cezaire sur Siagne, and under an hour to Cannes. A private drive leads to the house, which is located in the centre of a wide valley with cliffs rising to several hundred metres on both sides. The house is positioned to capture the sun for the longest possible period of the day. The house is a traditional stone construction and has all of its original character intact.

To the rear of the property is a lovely self-contained *gîte*. Carved out of the cliff face, the *gîte* has fantastic features such as a bedroom is formed from a cave in the cliff.

The whole property has the special feel of a human habitation at one with nature. Surrounded by impressive cliffs and mountains, with the crystal waters of the Siagne running along the boundary, this hidden gem is one of the jewels in the crown of an area of outstanding natural beauty. For more details contact Tim Clark of Leggett Immobilier on 06 76 59 25 88. ■



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COME IN FROM THE COLD

BY TIM CLARK, LEGGETT IMMOBILIER



I TRUST you all had a wonderful festive season and enjoyed the amazing weather we had during late December and early January. This brings me nicely to the topic of this edition's article.

We all know our houses can look less than inviting during the winter months and even on the French Riviera it can get cold and damp, so what to do if you are trying to sell your home? Do you even consider taking it off the market until spring?

Well, in my opinion, despite the many challenges winter can bring us, selling your house should not be one of them and while things are not looking their best, you can make your home gleam with winter charm with just a few preparation tips.

First impressions. Is your garden path still covered in fallen leaves, or is the dead Christmas tree still rolling around the garden where you left it, promising to take it to the tip? Take a good look around the garden and parking area, does it look inviting, can we get to the front door without wading through mud and leaves or slipping on a moss covered stone path?

Heat it up. Despite the fact we are on the

French Riviera, as you all know it can get quite chilly. Make sure your house is warm when prospective purchasers arrive to view, even the rooms you don't use. I have arrived to blazing fireplaces in the living room, only for the rest of the house to be freezing and the owner proudly telling the prospective buyer, "Oh, I can't keep it warm all over the house, so I just move in here during the winter and stoke the fire up." Not the best advert for your home!

Talking of fireplaces, if you have a working one, get it lit a good hour before the viewing and ensure it stays so for the visit. Same goes for heating itself. This is especially important if your home is empty and you have a key holder who opens up. Ask them to go over earlier to turn the heating on before the viewing. A few euros of heating oil is worth it if the buyer falls in love.

Let there be light. I don't think it is necessary to turn on all of your lights, avoid main lights if you can, but strategically placed table lamps, corner standard lamps, and even feature lamps are worth getting around your home, especially

if the viewing is on a dull day. It makes such a difference to the cosy feel. If you have under-cupboard lights in your kitchen, or in display cabinets, turn these on.

Turn the TV off, it is distracting and you can guarantee there will be a news story on during the visit about an imminent crash in house prices.

Also it's worth ensuring windows are sparkling clean, so important in winter as a source of natural light.

Dress your rooms. Make your rooms inviting, one oft forgotten room is the bathroom; so how about placing some nice shower gels, lotions, perfumes around the bath or shower, and hang some freshly laundered dressing gowns and towels in the bathroom. They usually smell wonderful if washed with fabric conditioner.

Beware of smells. It is actually a bad idea to spray air fresheners (or my pet hate, automatic spray thingies that go off every 10 minutes); same goes for perfume, don't spray it around the house. Natural smells work so much better; its an old cliché I know but baking some biscuits or a cake is well worth it – don't forget to offer some to the viewers (oh, and the agent) – and what about winter flowers to add some natural scent and also pine cones in a table feature?

Finally Dogs! I love dogs, and so do many viewing clients, but a wet dog in the winter is one of the most off putting smells to potential buyers. If you have a dog please take them for a walk or pop them in the car for a short time during the viewing. It makes such a difference and the clients aren't buying your dog, they are there to fall in love with your house.

By following such simple tips, you'll ensure your home is welcoming and appealing during the winter season. A homely midwinter home will tick all the right boxes, allowing your buyers to imagine themselves living there when the cold weather rolls around. ■

Contact local expert Tim Clark of Leggett Immobilier at tim@leggett.fr



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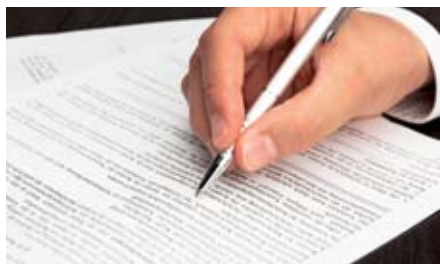
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RENTING IN FRANCE:

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PROPERTY



IN light of the current weakness of the euro against some other currencies, particularly the strong British pound, expats in France might be tempted to buy property here. However, if you prefer to concentrate on finding your feet in France first, before making such an investment, renting property could be the better choice for you. In the following, you'll find key-facts about renting property in France.

First of all, you should be aware that while furnished apartments and houses do exist, renting unfurnished property is by far the more common option in France. So the following focuses on renting unfurnished property for a long-term, principal residence. Long-term means here a minimum period of three years with an automatic renewal if not otherwise stated in the contract or terminated by either tenant or owner. When renting in France, you will have to be prepared for the following costs:

- Rent (*loyer*) and service charges such as community fees: typically, property owners look for tenants with an income

of at least three times the amount of rent. Landlords can and usually do ask for proof that this is the case (ie: recent pay slips, income tax declaration etc).

- Security Deposit (*dépôt de garantie*): for unfurnished property, this amounts to one month's rent. Deposits for furnished apartments can be higher.
- Agency Fees (*frais d'agence*): typically also amount to one month's rent, where applicable, and might be shared with the landlord.
- Residence tax (*taxe d'habitation*): to be paid if you are living in a rented property on January 1st.
- House Insurance (*assurance risques locatifs* or *assurance multi-risques d'habitation*): covering at minimum damage caused by floods, fire, natural disasters etc. and personal liability.
- Utility charges for electricity, water, etc.

Partly in order for tenants to be able to gauge how high these various costs are going to be, particularly in regard to energy and insurance, landlords are obliged to provide the following reports:

- An energy performance report (*Diagnostic de Performance Énergétique*, or *DPE*)
- A report on the natural and technological risks (*risques naturels ou technologiques*) if the property is in a "risk zone"; the report must be less than 6 months.
- A lead exposure report (*constat de risque*

d'exposition au plomb (CREP) for properties built before January 1st, 1949.

If everything seems favourable and you and your future landlord want to go ahead, then the next step is to set up a written contract or tenancy agreement (*bail* or *contrat de location*), including at minimum information on:

- Identities of tenant and landlord
- Information on property, including type, size and any additional elements (ie: garage)
- Amount of rent, deposit and service charges
- Date of commencement
- Contract duration and conditions for termination
- Obligations of tenant and landlord

In addition to the contract, it is common practice to put down in writing an initial inventory or condition report (*état des lieux*) at the commencement of the lease. Often, but not necessarily, carried out by a bailiff (*huissier*), and signed by both parties, this report is important to settle the questions of possible damages caused by the tenant and the refund of the deposit at the end of a lease. ■

Article courtesy of InterNations (internations.org). Founded in 2007, they are the largest expatriate network worldwide, connecting over 1 million members in more than 390 local communities around the globe.

A milestone for Riviera marinas

BY MICHAEL HEALY



The “Venice of Provence”, Port Grimaud in the Gulf of St Tropez. Photo: Jan Hiltmann

JUST 50 years ago a radical decision taken in the French parliament in Paris was being implemented along our coast. It was the dawn of the yacht marinas, developed in the 1960s by the pioneers Pierre Canto (in Cannes) and Camille Rayon (Golfé Juan), both distinguished Resistance fighters during the Occupation 20 years earlier, whose names are immortalised in their ports. François Spoerry, who dredged the picturesque canals of Port Grimaud (see photo) out of a swamp, was another visionary whose name we cruising folk should venerate. Without their persistence there could have been no coastline development because this was neither sea nor land, only a boundary between the two with no juridical precedent.

Harbours did exist, but mainly where a river joined the sea or where there was some other natural feature. Nice for instance had no harbour at all for centuries of import/export trade,

although most goods travelled by sea because the roads were so poor through the hilly landscape. Consequently, the cargo vessels had to load and unload on the Ponchettes beach, long before the Quai des Etats-Unis was developed, or in the sheltered Bay of Villefranche. It was only in 1749 that carving out the actual Port Lympia was started with the primitive machinery of the time and the hard manual labour of the “navvies”, many from the nearby convict prison.

But Nice and the other public ports were for commerce and fishing, and Nice became also a ferry port for Corsica, 98 miles southeast. Yachting for pleasure was far from the minds of those 18th-century coastal folk trying to scratch a meagre living here and to keep the dreaded Barbary pirates at bay. It was the invention of the steam engine that permitted the (mainly British) wealthy tycoons and aristocracy to construct large

steam yachts and cruise these Mediterranean coasts. Prince Albert I of Monaco was himself a pioneer from the 1880s with three successive yachts, which he used for scientific exploration of the oceans and their flora and fauna. Yachts of steel and wood followed over the next 100 years, but it was the advent of plastic which enabled the shipbuilding yards to be replaced after WWII, with factories churning out hundreds of yachts. This created a huge demand for berths to keep all these boats, and investors saw a profitable new field.

All the marinas along the Riviera were financed like a housing *copropriété*, the construction being financed by the sale of apartments or, in this case, of berths. In fact buyers received shares in the marina company, which conferred the right to lease a berth but not necessarily the one coveted.

Shareholders pay annual charges for maintenance, staff, cleaning the quays and yacht basin, for buoyage, lighting and security, for consumables etc. Over the years, yachts have tended to get wider, and the marinas have often met the new demand by converting 6 original stern-to places into 5 wider ones, requiring the berth-holders to buy extra shares. For decades, the *Reporter* recommended buying a long lease on a berth as the best investment available. But those days are over because the 50-year concessions are nearing expiry and the marinas will revert to the State. Profitable while it lasted but – like a gold mine – worth nothing once all the metal is extracted. We shall then all become pure tenants, and the local communes will benefit. And, unlike on the Italian Riviera, no new marinas are being built. The only buyers now are not buy-to-rent speculators, but real boat-owners, who desperately need a place to park their yacht – NOW. ■

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THE HAIR OF THE MOB

BY JAMIE IVEY



EVERY Wednesday I stand and watch them. Fifteen women of varying shapes and sizes, grunting and groaning to the music. Some of the moves are embarrassing to witness. Particularly the moment when as a class they get down on all fours, place their bottoms provocatively in the air and let out a deep moaning sound. It's unashamedly sexual

and always prompts me to look away.

My excuse for being such an avid fan is my toddler. She can take or leave "Teletubbies" but give her a Zumba class and she's hooked. I never for one moment thought my voyeurism would lead to anything more. However, last week I found myself in a small private room with the instructor. She's a toned young fitness

fanatic and unashamedly body confident. Quickly she began to strip off her clothes.

Before I explain further, I must go back to the cause of this compromising situation – the *Flashmob*. When the posters started going up all over our village I had no idea what a Flashmob might be. My best guess, given the cryptic internet link provided, was that Tinder Plus had arrived. Casual sex was so 2014. Enter Flashmob some sort of a new application, which, so I imagined, enabled one to issue a "flash" (ie strip) command to any passerby.

I Googled the name when I got home and instead came across a video of men and women in suits walking hurriedly across the concourse of Liverpool Street Station. On the stroke of 6 pm, music started playing over the station speakers and, almost down to a person, the commuters all broke into a choreographed series of moves from the musical *Chicago*. The best part was the shocked looks on the faces of those not in the know. I later learnt that the concept had started in America. People learn a dance on the internet, and then agree to meet at a set place, at a set time, and as a crowd (mob) break into dance.

This of course is not the sort of thing you would expect to happen in a Luberon village but there they were, posters for a televised Flashmob. Thereafter my evenings were spent, together with my children, learning the moves, which had been posted on the internet. *Step, step, step, knee bend, jazz hands ...* you get the idea. By the afternoon of the event I was competent, if not quite Len Goodman.

At the appointed time we waited *en famille* in the village square. There was the odd drop of rain in the air, but nothing significant. Entering into the spontaneous spirit of a Flashmob we acted as natural as possible, waiting for the clock to strike the hour. I looked around for other Flashmobbers. There was an old lady with a stick sitting on a bench and a man delivering wine. Cunning disguises I thought. Others would surely join from all corners of the square. The hour chimed, and we hit our marks, *step, step, step, knee bend, jazz hands*. Strangely there

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were no other dancers or music, just a confused looking delivery man. The old lady appeared not to have noticed.

Undeterred we continued with the dance.

Step, step, step, knee bend, jazz hands.

The old lady still stared into space. The delivery man took out his mobile phone to record our antics.

One more time we went for it.

Step, step, step, knee bend, jazz hands.

I was expecting a cavalier charge of dancers from the corner of the square.

Step, step, step, knee bend, jazz hands.

Nothing. Even the delivery man lost interest.

We eventually found the Flashmobbers in the municipal hall. I say mob, when in fact it was just the 15 or so women from the regular Zumba class. Fearful of the rain affecting their hairdos, they'd retreated inside and were now in discussions with the TV producers about how to create the necessary feeling of spontaneity. Counter intuitively, this

involved some warm up exercises to get everyone "hot". Energetic, moaning, whistling and bum-wiggling followed. At the climatic point of the dance there was a ripping sound, as the instructor's toned bottom burst its banks and flooded from all corners of her jeans.

Now my wife, Tanya, is something of an angel. While others stood and watched she ran to the aid, immediately offering to swap her jeans. In the dressing room behind the stage, with my back turned for decorum, I supervised the exchange, gathering together mobiles and loose change. Then we were off, ready for the most un-spontaneous Flashmob ever.

Meanwhile, an idea was germinating in my head, for an altogether different type of Flashmob, a mobile phone application to replace Tinder. I'd make millions if only I could find the right moment to explain the concept to my wife, the Zumba angel. ■

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

AU CONTRAIRE

Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous ... who cares?

THE South of France is known for being the second home to many of the world's rich and famous. But when the rest of the world sees photos of celebrities walking the red carpet at Cannes or partying at Paloma Beach Club, they assume that those of us who live here spend our days knee-deep in movie stars, industry moguls and rock icons.

But their paths don't cross with those of mere mortals as often as people seem to think. And when they do, it's not a big deal the way such an encounter might have been back home, as pointed out in a recent article in Australia's *Daily Telegraph*: "It's perhaps not difficult to understand why the filthy rich and famous flock to the South of France for the season – the French are generally so cool and low key, it is one place on

earth where they can be left in peace."

Case in point, everyone who lives here knows that Jack Nicholson moors his yacht in St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat and that his forays onto dry land usually include a stop at his favourite restaurant, The African Queen, but nobody goes so far as to stalk him there.

Occasionally there is a rumour that Brad Pitt or Johnny Depp has been spotted in some village outside the ones where they live peaceful, chaos-free lives. The alleged appearance causes a ripple of excitement that races through the populace and makes the locals swell with pride that someone so famous might grace them with their presence. But at no point does the rumour involve a tale of Johnny being mobbed by fans at the *boulangerie* or Brad fleeing from paparazzi outside the *maison de la presse*, because such a thing is just not done here.

Lisa Pepin, *lespastras.com*

Who can forget Robin Leach's "champagne wishes and caviar dreams" voice-over on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous", the fashionable TV series of the Eighties and Nineties? NBC is currently working on the show's revival with "fun profiles on ultra-wealthy individuals". This version is out with the old (real estate tycoons) and in with the new: tech billionaires and their taste for extravagance.

MASONS BUILT ON TRADITION



THE changes brought about by the progressive construction of a railway network across Europe in the 19th century have been the subject of many books, and at least one recent television programme. In 1864, four years after Nice became part of France after the Second World War of Italian Independence, the first railway was completed along the coast of the French Riviera making Nice, Menton and Monaco accessible to visitors from all over Europe. Some 100,000 visitors arrived in 1865 and, by 1874, residents from abroad living in Nice numbered 25,000 of whom the majority were British. Famous names amongst them included Queen Victoria who, along with eminent members of high society and the nobility, was anxious to escape the winters of Northern Europe.

Expatriates across the world bring language, traditions, ways of life, and customs with them, and perhaps we should not be surprised that this included Freemasonry. Abbey Lodge No 33 based in the Alpes-Méditerranée, which met

in Cannes, was consecrated in 1931. Founding members were principally English freemasons, and from the outset the Lodge adopted Emulation Ritual and conducted its meetings entirely in English.

The Lodge established a proud reputation and over time it was a significant contributor to the Provincial College of Officers as well as Officers in the Grande Loge Nationale Française (GLNF). Two Provincial Grand Masters were members of Abbey Lodge and throughout its long history, the Lodge enjoyed international support. Lodge papers record that in 1939, brethren from three ships of the US Navy regularly attended meetings before the German occupation destroyed any hope that Masonic meetings could continue. The Lodge was in darkness between 1940 and 1948.

As the Lodge gradually recovered in the early post-war years, numbers increased and by 1973 it was ready to welcome members of The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, who attended the Lodge's Installation Meeting.

More recently in 2011, 29 Freemasons from Norway were present demonstrating the reality of universal Freemasonry.

English working, combined with a warm and friendly atmosphere, prompted many Freemasons from the English Constitution to become members of the Lodge during this period, and they in turn encouraged visitors whose attendance contributed so much to the life of the Lodge.

Sadly, difficulties which culminated in the United Grand Lodge of England withdrawing recognition from GLNF, affected the Lodge dramatically as English Freemasons had to withdraw.

These problems fortunately have now been overcome, and Abbey Lodge is once again trying to re-establish its broad appeal across the nations in the hope that previous links can return. Its members are looking forward to returning Abbey Lodge to its former strength, and would welcome visiting brethren from recognised Lodges who may be in the South of France or others who live in the region.

They will find much that is familiar as Abbey Lodge continues to carry out ritual in English. Learning ritual in what for many members of the Lodge is a second language is proud testimony to the commitment of non-English speaking members of the Lodge to their Freemasonry. An interesting observation by the current Master of why he took up this challenge was that "the meaning, poetry, and rhythm underlying so much of Emulation Working is difficult to translate from English into French".

"We would of course welcome Brethren, particularly those who would like to become full members to help us revitalise Abbey Lodge and strengthen its membership," commented Richard Dawe, PM of the Lodge, "so that once again it can become a major influence in the Province. Our aim is to promote fellowship and brotherhood." ■

For more information email Richard Dawe at Richard.Dawe@wanadoo.fr or John Knight at john.fockbury@orange.fr. Alternatively, for those in the UK, please contact john_pagella@hotmail.com

Cook d'Azur FOOD

Katie Bills finishes a special Valentine's Day meal with a zesty and decadent dessert that's sure to impress. Serves two.



Pomegranate & Plum Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

130 grams digestive biscuits
80 grams salted butter
200 grams soft cream cheese
Juice of half a lemon
50 grams double cream
4 tablespoons caster sugar
200 grams plums
1 pomegranate
10 ml water

Using a rolling pin, crush digestive biscuits in a freezer bag.

Melt butter and mix well with the crushed biscuits. Place in champagne glasses, carefully pressing into the bottom until it fills a third of the glass. Set in the fridge for around 30 minutes.

For the cream, combine soft cream cheese with double cream and lemon juice. Mix well and

then whip lightly to thicken the mixture. Finally, mix in 1 tablespoon of caster sugar.

Spoon on top of crushed biscuits, filling another third of glass. Set in the fridge for an hour.

Meanwhile, roughly chop the plums and place in a saucepan with a large splash of water and 3 tablespoons of caster sugar. Bring to the boil, then turn the heat down and let it bubble for about 15 minutes, until the plums have dissolved and the mixture has reduced a little. Turn off heat and let the plums cool.

Hold half the pomegranate in your hand, with the cut side down, over a bowl. With a spoon, hit the shell of the fruit to release the seeds and juice, and mix this with the plums. Fill the remaining tier of champagne glasses and chill until ready to serve.

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LAYING DOWN THE LAW

BY ALEX IGNATIEFF



AFTER the over indulgence of the holidays and the frenzy of repentance that inevitably follows in January, February always seems to bring a breath of fresh air and equilibrium. A chance to take stock of where you are with the wild expectations that accompany the New Year; to congratulate yourself on efforts to-date or shrug, knowing that at least you gave it a good month and there can be no shame in that. Better yet, it's a chance to tweak those plans to satisfy the reality of life's more rigorous demands ... February is a time for reflection, planning and renewed action.

I'll leave you to wrestle with whether or not the gym membership is living up to its promises and concentrate on just how much your cellar, whatever that comprises, can benefit from a little planning and just how that can improve your well-being. There are a few easy steps to follow and they apply whether your cellar is a box on the floor conveniently located to trip up the other half first thing in the morning or a vast complex of tunnels that may have a few lost guests still trying to find their way back to the light (insurance for accidental loss is



Alex Ignatieff at the Liberty Wines' Portfolio Tasting at The Oval, London.

always a good idea while we're passing).

The perfect cellar works to three principles – know what you like to drink, know how much you are going to need and then plan how you are going to cater for those needs. If Brad and Angelina's latest rosé is your tippie, then meeting your needs is going to be a great deal simpler than if you absolutely only drink mature white Burgundy and red Bordeaux.

If your cellar is that box on the floor, take the plunge and buy a little wine rack that will at least spare your toes. Even

ALEX Ignatieff cut his teeth in the world of wine as a sommelier in Sydney's newly opened InterContinental Hotel. He then swapped serving for selling to the best restaurants around Sydney as an agent for Bollinger Champagne, a selection of great European estates and top independent Australian wineries. Next he turned down an offer to study winemaking at Adelaide University, and headed home to the UK to follow his dream of becoming a Master of Wine. Plans to shift boxes in a local Oddbins and taste his way to an MW had to be put on hold when Alex joined the team charged with launching Harvey Nichols' ventures into the world of Food, Wine and Restaurants. Twelve years on and with a young family, Alex set up as an independent merchant in the new family home of Itchenor near Chichester. After a brief stint helping to open the newly revamped Kennels (as a restaurant and bar that is!) on the Goodwood Estate, a chance to move to the Côte d'Azur presented itself. Five years later, Alex and his ever understanding wife, Melanie, wear many hats running a business from their warehouse in Mandelieu, selling to private clients, yachts and restaurants throughout the region and abroad and always searching for their next new favourite tippie.

with limited resources you can enhance your wine-drinking experience. Next time you are stocking up, throw in a couple of bottles that sound like they might be

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interesting. If advice is not there to be sought, take a chance on a pretty label. It's been close to thirty years that I've been working with bottles and I've only scratched the surface, having the confidence to grab a pretty bottle has led to many happy finds. If you can, make friends with your local *cavistes* and put them to work on your behalf. They'll be more than happy to make recommendations. But to get the best out of this new relationship you need to put in some work too, feed back your thoughts, note down what you liked or take a selfie of you with your new find. The more information we have to work with, the better we can capture your palate. And persist, not every recommendation will go exactly to plan but with your comments, any *caviste* worth his salts will quickly get a handle on your tastes and you'll soon be discovering delights, regions, and countries you never knew could tempt you.

The next step to the perfect cellar does involve a little outlay. A Eurocave or some similar contraption is a relatively inexpensive way to add an instant cellar to your home. This is the perfect tool in the battle against the commercial realities of the business of wine, realities that generally mean any wine with the potential to mature will be on the market well before it is at its peak. With a cellar you can now put the odd bottle away for a year or two to reap the rewards

of drinking a bottle at its prime. With enough space you might salt away a case or two and watch how the wine matures over time.

The next move is a full-blown cellar, which might sound daunting, but with a bit of work any space can be made suitable. You want a coolish temperature, between 10°C and 15°C (ideally 11°C if you have the choice) is good. More important is avoiding fluctuating temperatures. Think of a good night's sleep: constant heating and cooling is worse than a slightly warm or cool space. There needs to be some humidity, just enough to stop the corks from drying out. The late, great Alexis Lichine recommended a layer of gravel on the floor that you could sprinkle with water as needed. Too much and you'll rot your labels or, worse, those precious corks. Light is a killer, hence the orange wrapper on your bottles of Cristal.

Vibration is not good but don't write off the yacht before investigating the latest gimballed self-levelling cellars.

The right space will allow you to collect cases today to be drunk when the wines reach their peak in five, ten even twenty years or more. And drinking more wine in its prime and served correctly is a worthy resolution. We just need February's calm to plan how to get there. ■

For more information contact Alex or Melanie at L'Emporium du Vin on 04 93 49 27 01 or visit www.emporiumduvin.com

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SECRETS THAT WERE LOCKED AWAY

BY PATRICK MCCREA

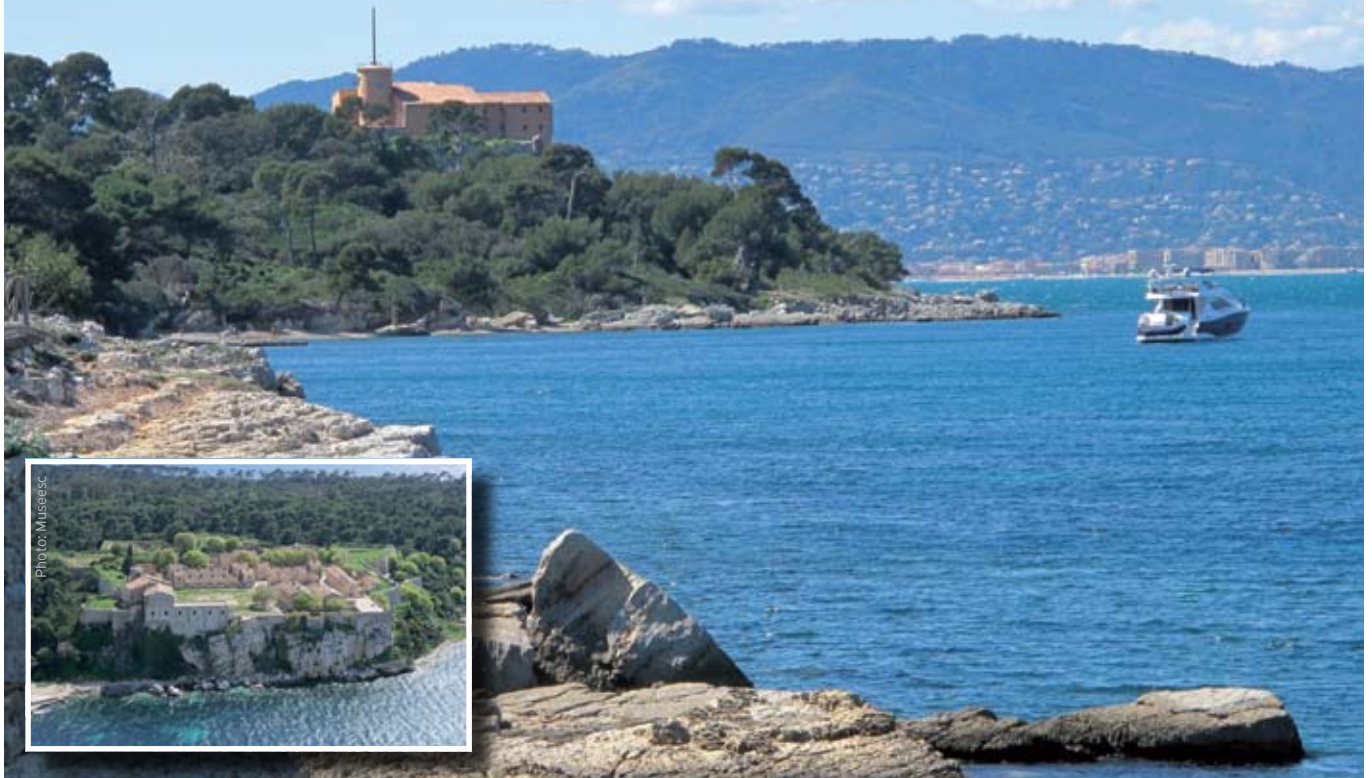


Photo: Museesc

THE Lerin Islands are well known for the boat service from Cannes with pretty promenades on the Île Sainte-Marguerite and visits to Île Saint-Honorat for church services and spiritual retreats at the monastery.

A small number of visitors (and residents for that matter) are aware, however, of the history of the Royal Fort on Sainte-Marguerite, which became a political prison under Louis XIV and was more specifically the prison for the celebrated Man in the Iron Mask, imprisoned 1687-1698, and for six Protestant pastors.

In the 1680s the French severely persecuted the Protestants in France culminating in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV, which gave Protestant pastors two weeks to leave France and anyone else trying to emigrate was liable to the galleys or life imprisonment. Nevertheless, a quarter of a million Protestants, including businessmen and skilled artisans, fled France during this period, to countries like Holland and South Africa; others went further abroad to North America.

My ancestor Gabriel Mathurin was one of the six pastors imprisoned on Sainte-Marguerite for religious crimes, he had returned secretly from Holland to Paris in order to carry out clandestine masses. He was denounced and sent to Sainte-Marguerite, where the priests lived a horrific existence of solitude. The group – Paul Cardel, Pierre Salve de Bruneton, Gabriel Mathurin, Matthieu de Malzac, Eliée Giraud and Gardien Givry – were allowed no physical activity nor any communication between them. Held in the strictest secrecy, they constantly tried to break this isolation: the singing of psalms heard, despite the thick walls of one dungeon to another, was a sign of prayer and affirmation of their faith but also a sign of recognition and mutual encouragement to resistance.

Most of the six priests died on the island. Thanks to Queen Anne of England my ancestor was released

after a quarter of a century of detention, at the age of 75, and rejoined his wife in Ireland where he died three years later.

Visitors to the island can see the prison cells where the priests were held and the Huguenot memorial.

The Man in the Iron Mask has never been identified. He wore a black velvet mask, not an iron mask, and spent ten years on Sainte-Marguerite. Clearly Louis XIV had good reason for his identity to remain anonymous, and numerous researchers have tried to solve the enigma.

The period of Protestant Persecution in

France is long forgotten but any visitor to the fort of Sainte-Marguerite will have his or her memory awakened as to the historic horrors conducted in the name of religion.

Guided tours of Fort Royal from June 15th to September 15th are included with the Musée de la Mer's €6 admission charge. ■



Huguenot memorial at Fort Royal.

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MOSAIC artist Rachel Casimir recently moved to Nice and opened an art studio in the city centre, at 8 passage du Temple Vaudois. She is now offering year-round (including school holidays) art classes for children with a native English teacher so that kids can practice English while doing an artistic activity.

"The idea came to me as I was looking for bilingual activities for my son," Rachel explains, "and I thought that this idea might garner enthusiasm from other families!"

Children will learn mosaic or other creative techniques, and lessons are adapted to the age of the children: study of drawing, colours and evolution towards personal creation. Groups are organised according to the level of English. On the agenda: create a picture, pillow, lamp, photo frame, decorative box ...

Materials (mosaic support and colourful glazed tiles) and tools are provided. A 2-hour trial workshop is €36 but for more details, see backstage.stuc-mosaic.com and click on "New mosaic studio in Nice". Rachel can be contacted on 06 64 29 19 31. ■



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AS a bilingual teacher in a Franco-British *collège*, Fiona Lacquement had the idea of a more effective way of learning English, and for children especially, a natural, more fun way to study. Eight years ago, she launched English For Success (englishforsuccess.com), offering residential study programs for children, but now EFS caters also to adults, professionals, even whole families – anyone wanting to learn English in a secure environment.

"Right off the bat, we were busy," Fiona tells us. "We had to expand and recruit host families very quickly. We now have an agency in Honfleur with five full-time staff.

"We have been recognised by Unosel, an organisation that gives quality labels to the best *séjours linguistiques* in France – and elsewhere worldwide."

EFS has taken off and Fiona is look looking for British and other English mother-tongue families (singles, couples or families) to host French teenagers in their home in France, the UK or another country.

"It's a job with a meaning, a rewarding well-paid job of up to €1800 a week," explains Fiona. "You host students during the holidays, a minimum of 6 weeks up to 23 weeks a year – it's up to you – teaching in the morning with activities and outings in the afternoon."

"Of course, you have to like children and their company and need to have at least one spare bedroom. Maybe you are already a teacher or feel capable of teaching English, we provide help, advice and material if you need."

"We offer work all year round and there's the possibility of hosting-teaching French adults too, if this interests you." ■

For more job information, email Fiona: info@englishforsuccess.fr

The artist who came to dinner ... and never left

BY MARGO LESTZ



Villa Santo Sospir, the villa *tatouée* in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, where Cocteau covered every wall, door and ceiling, beginning with one drawing over the fireplace of Apollo with his fish-shaped eyes.

HOW would you feel if you invited someone to spend a week at your holiday home and that person decided to redecorate and then stay on – indefinitely? Francine Weisweiler was thrilled.

In 1950 when Francine met artist and writer Jean Cocteau, she was a 34-year-old Parisian socialite bored with her bourgeois lifestyle. Cocteau, 61, was overseeing the making of a film based on one of his books, *Les Enfants Terribles*. Francine's cousin, who was an actress in the film, introduced them and a friendship immediately bloomed.

When the movie was finished, Francine invited Cocteau and his 25-year-old companion, Edouard Dermit, who he had adopted, to spend a week at her Villa Santo Sospir on the French Riviera. It was in the village of Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, which was once known as Cap-Saint-Sospir, named after a sixth century monk who had lived in the area.

It started with one drawing

After just a few days of rest and relaxation at Santo Sospir, Cocteau was ready for another project. Since most of the walls in Francine's newly acquired villa were bare and white, they reminded him of giant canvases calling out to be filled. He asked Francine if he could make a charcoal sketch over the fireplace, she immediately agreed and a drawing of Apollo, the Sun God, appeared (above).

He just couldn't stop

Cocteau decided that Apollo needed to be flanked by two priests, one on each side. Then he took the advice of Matisse, who said that if you decorate one wall of a room, you have to do the others. So he did all the walls in the living room. Then the doors. Of course the doors led into other rooms with bare walls, so he had to draw on them as well. His one-week holiday had turned into a

six-month decorating frenzy throughout the house.

The villa "tatouée"

To Cocteau, the walls were like the skin of a person that he didn't want to dress but rather "tattoo" – and so this villa got a full body tattoo. He worked his way around the house covering every wall with his art. He didn't move the furniture, he simply drew around it or, in some cases, over it, making it part of the picture. He did the entire house without sketches, drawing directly on the walls. First he drew in charcoal, then with coloured pigments mixed with raw milk to create tempera, to highlight his lines.

The Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat coastline reminded Cocteau of Greece and much of the villa's art is inspired by Greek mythology, with a little nod to local culture and the sea. For example, Apollo over the fireplace has fish-shaped eyes while the priests on each side are Villefranche fishermen, wearing traditional hats and carrying nets. You'll also see representations of sea creatures and *fougasse* (a local bread) scattered along the walls.

Cocteau left only one wall "tattooless". The dining room wall is covered by a tapestry representing the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes. And this was designed by ... who else, but Jean Cocteau. He had it made as a gift for Francine.

But even when all the walls were inked, Cocteau still didn't leave. He found more decorating to do. He designed two mosaics at the entry of the house and decided that the tattooed walls made the ceilings look bare so then he had to do all the ceilings.

One big happy family

It was an unconventional household, but they formed a seemingly happy family consisting of Cocteau, the resident genius in his sixties; Francine, his adoring friend and patron in her thirties;

Edouard, Cocteau's adopted son in his twenties; and Carol, the young daughter of Francine, who was seven when Cocteau arrived. Carol lived with her father in Paris where she was raised mostly by nannies but she counted the holiday time spent at Santo Sospir as her real family time. She adored Cocteau and looked at him as a friend and second father.

At Santo Sospir, this little blended family painted, read and entertained other famous artists and actors that is, when they weren't travelling around on Francine's yacht.

Cocteau came for seven days and stayed almost eleven years. His stay finally ended when he and Francine had differing opinions about her new boyfriend.

Fortunately for Francine, she liked Cocteau and his art (because she ended up living with both for quite a long time). So let this be a lesson if you are thinking of inviting an artist for a visit. Be sure to check his portfolio first!

How to visit

Villa Santo Sospir is now owned by Carol Weisweiler and listed as a historic monument. Tours are by reservation only. See villasantosospir.fr for prices and information.

Where else to go to see Cocteau

The Chapelle St Pierre in Villefranche-sur-mer is the tiny but beautiful chapel of the fishermen of Villefranche. Located past the Welcome Hotel at the end of Quai l'Amiral Courbet, Cocteau's handiwork can be seen here both inside and out. In Menton you'll find several Cocteau sites, including the Marriage Hall (*salle de mariage*) at the *mairie*, the wonderful new Cocteau museum (museecocteaumenton.fr) and an older smaller Cocteau museum, the Bastion. ■



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we've got mail...

HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

WITH reference to your article "Hair's the best way to beat the boars in your garden" (issue 166, pg 36) HeadHunters in Valbonne is happy to give out hair if anyone needs some (info@headhunters-beauty.fr).
Nicky Hooper via Facebook

LETTERS STAMPS

I HAVEN'T found your usual request for stamps in the more recent copy of the *Reporter*. Does this mean you no longer provide this service? If so, could you please make this clear in a future magazine.
Irene Harcourt, St Jeannet

Yes, we still have a reader who gathers stamps for handicapped collectors. Please help by sending stamps to: Riviera Reporter, 56 chemin de Provence, 06250, Mougins, and we will make sure she receives them on your behalf. RR

MAKING SENSE OF THE CENSUS

A work colleague says that even expat residents are legally obliged to complete the 2015 French census forms soon. Is this true?
Mary Bund, by email

Yes, you must fill in the forms if your commune is included in this year's census. Authorised census takers will call personally and carry photo identification similar to the image shown below. They can help you complete your declaration if necessary although some might not speak English. The completed forms will then be collected by appointment or you can hand them in at your mairie before Feb 15th in small communes or by Feb 21th in some larger towns. You can request an extension of these delays at your mairie.



The website le-recensement-et-moi.fr will tell you whether or not where you live is included in the census. Simply look for the "Suis-je recensé(e) cette année?" link on the right and fill in your post code. There is also a link to an online census declaration, which you can opt for if you prefer. RR

A TAXING ARRIVAL

THANKS for your useful magazine. We've just moved here and the sale of our house in Croydon plus a weaker euro means that we have bought a much bigger property in the Var than we had in the UK, and still have something left over from the sale. As we sold our primary British residence and were therefore exonerated from British CGT, we are worried that the rumour of a 5-year rule will mean that we may have to pay if we decide to move back.
Hank and Gerda Harrison, Cotignac

It's not a rumour but it shouldn't apply to you. Changes to the non-resident rule becomes effective from April 6th but would only be applied if you were still a UK resident at the time you sold your Croydon house and if you again become a UK resident within 5 years of leaving the UK. So, in your case you should be exempt but, to be sure, it's a good idea to consult financial experts like Blevins Franks (see page 9) or Peter Johnson (see page 41). RR

THE PAIN IN SPAIN IS NOT THE SAME

WE are house hunting in France but are rather alarmed by stories of expat property owners in Spain, whose villas are now being demolished because they were built illegally long before they purchased them.
Mr & Mrs Gladwell, Stevenage, by email

It can't happen in France because conveyancing always involves a "notaire", part of whose job is to ensure that property transactions are legal and transparent. If you buy through estate agents, they will probably have a trusted notaire that they regularly deal with. So, happy hunting and don't worry. France protects you from a Spanish-style situation. RR

INTEGRATED EXPATS

IT is interesting to note that the courageous young Malian Lassana Bathily is only one of many worthy personalities that have been granted French nationality either by candidature or by way of their worthy acts and accomplishments.

**Star
letter**

Prime Minister Valls was born Spanish and only acquired French nationality at the age of 20. Carla Bruni-Sarkozy was still Italian when she married the former president and became French in 2008 a few months after her husband was elected. The talented Austrian beauty, Romi Schneider, chose to become French in the 1960s at the beginning of her illustrious French film career. Renault CEO Carlos Ghosn was born Lebanese and was granted French nationality after finishing his business studies in France.

The "father" of France's beloved Asterix character, the cartoonist Albert Uderzo, was born Italian and naturalised at the age of 7. Who could be more French than the French language's greatest writer, Guillaume Apollinaire, who many French schools and institutions are named after? Yet he was born in Italy of Polish parents and was only granted French nationality in 1916 when he volunteered to serve in WWI combat with the French army. Another Polish immigrant was the first woman ever to win a Nobel Prize and the first person to win two Nobel Prizes in two different categories (physics and chemistry). She remains one of only two laureates to have done so (the other was American Linus Pauling). Marie Curie only took French nationality in 1895 after marrying her fellow scientist Pierre Curie.

If ever there was an argument in favour of immigration and integration, this is it.

Jacinte Hedding, by email

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LETTERS

JE SUIS CHARLIE

Our daughter works at a maternity clinic in Nice and she says that since the terrorist atrocities in Paris, two newborns have been given "Charlie" as a first or middle name. A touching gesture.

Viv and Glenn Matthews, Beaulieu

POPULARITY AT A COST

FRANÇOIS Hollande's popularity quickly rose to 34% after the Paris attacks but we should all remember that George Bush was also advantaged by a similar wave of popular support after 9/11. In fact, he probably wouldn't have been re-elected for a second term without that tragic attack.

Todd Marlar, by email

POINTLESS POSTURING

SOMETIMES French politicians astound me when they carelessly opt for counter-productive principles instead of practical logic. The now defunct 75% tax, which sent all the wrong messages, removed billions from the economy and brought precious little into the public coffers, was a monumental mistake. It was pure ideological principle without any productive advantages.

And what are we to make of the mayor of Paris launching a legal attack on the atrocious Fox News over their claims that parts of the French capital are "no-go zones" for non-Muslims?

The whole idea of a city suing a foreign news channel – however malicious and inaccurate their reporting

may be – is merely expensive drum beating of the worse kind and a waste of time and taxpayers' money that could be much better spent improving the lives of Parisians. Such principled posturing cannot succeed in a French court because the City of Light is not a legal entity (*personne morale*), which would allow it to sue for defamation. And even if it were possible to bring on a case, American law does not recognise free speech convictions handed down in foreign courts, so a win would not be enforceable. Action in an American court would also be impossible because of the First Amendment and the SPEECH Act of 2010.

I adore living in France among the French and wouldn't live anywhere else but their politicians just don't get the fact that discretion is usually the better part of valour.

James Hirotaki, by email

WHEELS IN MOTION

AFTER the success of last year's inaugural Cogs4Cancer charity cycle ride in aid of Cancer Research and support for patients, this year's 16 riders from the yachting industry smashed the previous total of €114,000 by raising €285,560.06 (see below) for Cancer Research UK and two local charities: the Children's oncology unit in Nice and Clinique Tzanck in Mougins.

The group rode 850km in five days starting in Ancona, Italy, and arriving in France via a special "tribute stage" from San Remo through Monaco to Antibes, with 100% of funds raised going directly to the charities. Riders providing their own funding for the ride and sustenance en-route was provided by Gourmet Deliveries.

John Balodis, cogs4cancer.org ➤



LETTERS

BEAUSOLEIL ISN'T MENTON

THE cover on your last edition is Menton but the exact same view taken in daylight was used in the *Daily Mail* newspaper and online to illustrate an article about the British murderer who lived in Beausoleil. I pointed the error out in the comments section but they didn't even change the picture!

Mark Issert, by email

HELP IN THE HILLS

WE live in Le Tignet but our BPCA branch in Peymeinade runs out of *Reporters* quickly, and we are not always in town during banking hours. *Bert Hamish, by email*

The boulangerie across from the bank now carries the Reporter. While you're there you can also buy the best pastries in town. Don't forget to congratulate the patrons, Nicolas

and Virginie, on their new baby, Manon, born on Jan 22nd. RR

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



Many demonstrators couldn't gain access to the Promenade des Anglais in Nice because the side streets were blocked with people.

WE ARE EXPAT CHARLIE

THIS was my first and hopefully last protest march.

I am too small to take good pictures of a crowd and am not fond of huge crowds either, but I went this morning [Sat Jan 10th] because I am horrified and upset about what happened in my adopted country.

There was an immense crowd for Nice (above). They estimate between 20-30,000 people this morning but I think there were more who simply got there too late because of the jammed streets. The crowd only started walking at about 11h30 and on a podium, a young man climbed up and shouted: "Qui est Charlie?" and a few voices answered "Je suis Charlie" (Who is Charlie? I am Charlie). The second time he asked the question, there were more voices and the third time, someone shouted back: "Nous sommes Charlie" ... and from then, this is how the crowd answered. We are Charlie.

There was no average age. Young and militant, middle-aged ladies, mothers with kids and dogs and really old people. Normal people, not militant protesters; people who are probably like me – manifesting for the first time in their lives. Shocked into manifesting.

What was surprising was the relative silence, and the fact that they were all

white. There was one single mother with a red headscarf and a baby in a push pram who carried a card "Musulmane mais pas terroriste" (Muslim but not terrorist).

I am not a reader of *Charlie Hebdo* and never was. BUT... This is no longer only about the victims, but about our future and the future of Europe. I will buy the magazine on Wednesday when it comes out, as so will thousands and thousands of others in France.

My heartfelt condolences to the families

of the journalists, the police and the Jewish shoppers who were murdered by these three barbarians. Their horrible death brought together hundreds of thousands of people who do care about them – and also about freedom of speech, personal and intellectual freedom in general.

And that for the librarian, reader and writer that I am, these are an ESSENTIAL part of life and an essential part of our civilisation.

JK, Nice



Solidarity rally in Fayence Jan 11th, with an estimated 8000 marching about 1.5km from the village down to the memorial near the swimming pool. Photo: David Rowe

february

BILINGUAL CONVERSATION

Tuesday mornings: informal bilingual conversation with France-Grande Bretagne Nice Café Franco-Britannique. Contact us for details on 04 93 07 67 04

POLITICAL WINE

Wed Feb 4 & Wed Mar 4, 18h30-20h: The Riviera Chapter of Democrats Abroad hosts its monthly Political Wine at La Canne à Sucre (11 Promenade des Anglais, Nice). All Americans are invited to join us as we listen to a brief presentation, by one of our members, before engaging in thoughtful discussion. There is no imposed formal entry, however we ask that you support La Cannes by ordering at least one drink during the event. Please RSVP (even "maybe") to dafrance.riviera@gmail.com

CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED

Thurs evening starting Jan 29, 20h: Holy Trinity Church Cannes are running a 7-week course on Thursday evenings entitled Christianity Explored, a deeper look into the life, the message and the person of Jesus Christ as told in Mark's Gospel. A book will be provided as part of the course. No prior theological knowledge required. Ave Branly, Cannes. See holytrinitycannes.org or tel: 04 93 94 54 61.

SUNNY BANK OPEN HOUSE

Thurs Feb 5, Sat Feb 21, Thurs Mar 5, Sat Mar 21: Posh paraphernalia, bric-a-brac, books & lunch at the Grange (815 chem Gourettes, Mouans-Sartoux). And of course the library is open EVERY Thursday as usual (bric-a-brac and books). Tel: 04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org

IRIS MURDOCH PRESENTATION

Thurs Feb 5: Presentation of "Iris", the life of the English novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch. 04 93 81 76 74 - fgb-nice.com

FRIENDS OF THEATRE AND EDUCATING CAMBODIA

Fri Feb 6 & Sat Feb 7, door 19h40 for 20h: Hot from Dublin, La Timonerie brings you Orwell's award-winning *Down and Out in Paris and London*, adapted and performed by the brilliant Phelim Drew. This classic precursor to *1984* is superbly and vividly brought to life by one of Ireland's most distinguished actors. To reserve: 04 93 61 01 71 or magsaldrige@gmail.com. Your €20 donation incl. wine and canapés at intermission; all proceeds go to our wonderful Cambodian schools project (see next page).

BA OF THE VAR

Thurs Feb 12: Lunch and quiz at Lei Cigaloun, St Antonin. baofthevar.com - chairman@baofthevar.com

BA CANNES AGM

Fri Feb 13, 11h: Holy Trinity Church Hall, Cannes. €12 buffet & wine.

NICE CARNIVAL

Fri Feb 13-Mar 1: King of Music. See nicecarnaval.com/en for ticket information.

VISIT CHAPELLE NOTRE DAME DE VIE

Fri Feb 13: Guided Tour Mougins: Chapelle Notre Dame de Vie and Mougins Museum of Classical Art. 04 93 81 76 74 fgb-nice.com

BREAKDANCING FESTIVAL

Sat Feb 14 & Sun Feb 15: At the Palais de Festival in Cannes. Tickets €25-€28/adult. See en.palaisdesfestivals.com

LEMON FESTIVAL IN MENTON

Sat Feb 14 to March 4: "Tribulations of a lemon in China". For ticket info see: fete-du-citron.com

COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Tues Feb 17: Visit to Parc Phoenix, Nice, followed by optional lunch at an Indian restaurant in the Port of St. Laurent du Var. Details at commonwealthclubriviera.com

COMING RIGHT UP!



Photo: Planet_3

NICE CARNIVAL:

February 13 to March 1

CITRON FESTIVAL IN MENTON:

February 14 to March 4

FRENCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS:

March 22 and 29

CLOCKS CHANGE:

March 29

MONTE CARLO ROLEX MASTERS TENNIS:

April 11 to 19

TOP MARQUES MONACO:

April 16 to 19

ANTIBES ART FAIR:

April 18 to May 4

ANTIBES YACHT SHOW:

April 22 to 25

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL:

May 13 to 24

MONACO FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX:

May 21 to 24

MONTE CARLO TELEVISION FESTIVAL

June 13 to 18

IRONMAN NICE:

June 28

SUMMER SALES ALPES-MARITIMES:

June 24 to August 4

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July 7 to 12

JAZZ FESTIVAL IN JUAN-LES-PINS:

July 10 to 19

FESTIVAL NUITS DU SUD IN VENCE:

July 9 to August 25

JAZZ FESTIVAL IN RAMATUELLE:

August 16 to 20

CANNES BOAT SHOW:

September 8 to 13

INTERNATIONAL GASTRONOMY FESTIVAL LES ETOILES DE MOUGINS

September 18 to 20

REGATTES ROYALES CANNES:

September 22 to 26

MONACO YACHT SHOW:

September 23 to 26

LES VOILES DE ST TROPEZ:

September 26 to October 4

LES GRANDE BRADERIE ST TROPEZ:

October 23 to October 26

CLOCKS CHANGE:

October 25

NICE-CANNES MARATHON:

November 8

MIMOSA FESTIVAL

Wed Feb 18-25: In Mandelieu-La Napoule. See mandelieu.com

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wed Feb 18, 19h30: Holy Communion Service. Ave Branly, Cannes. Tel: 04 93 94 54 61 - holyltrinitycannes.org

FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE NICE

Wed Feb 18, 14h: Game of *pétanque*. Info: 04 93 07 67 04.
Thurs Feb 19: "La présence française à Philadelphie au fil des siècles" (Part 2). Presentation in French by Danièle Easton. Info: 04 93 81 76 74 - fgb-nice.com

AMIAAC

Tues Feb 24: joint lunch with VIAC in Fayence. Please contact Douglas Goldin to reserve on 04 92 94 02 47. All details on our new website amiac.org

RADA

Thurs Feb 26, Fri Thus 27, Sat Feb 28, 20h: The Riviera Amateur Dramatic Association is presenting *Talking Heads* by Alan Bennett at the Mougins School. Admission : 10€ (including a free drink). Three ways to book: phone 09 53 73 56 70, email bookings@rada.freesevers.com, or from the English Book Centre, 12 rue Alexis Julien, Valbonne.

AZUR IRISH DANCE ACADEMY

Sat Feb 28, 20h30: St Patrick dance show with Irish music in Fayence (Salle Iris Barry, Espace Culturel). Irish dance workshop at 14h. Contact 06 58 06 72 61 or azur.irishdance@gmail.com

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Sat Feb 28: Menton during the Lemon Festival. A morning visit to the citrus gardens of Palais Carnolès, former summer residence of the Princes of Monaco, and an afternoon concert in its splendid music room. Lunch at nearby Hotel Prince de Galles, facing the sea. Please see americanclubriviera.com or contact Nathalie Desseaux-Duck on 06 13 61 02 38.

2015 official French public holidays

Mon Apr 6: Easter Monday
Fri May 1: Labour Day
Fri May 8: Victory Day 1945
Thurs May 14: Ascension
Mon May 25: Whit Monday
Tues July 14: Bastille Day
Sat Aug 15: Assumption
Sun Nov 1: All Saints' Day
Wed Nov 11: Armistice Day
Fri Dec 25: Christmas Day

School holidays for 2015 for Zone B (Nice and region)

Winter break: Feb 21-Mar 8
Spring break: Apr 25-May 10
Summer hols: July 4-Aug 31
Toussaint: Oct 17-Nov 2
Christmas break:
Dec 19/15- Jan 4/16

Other 2015 dates of interest

Fri Mar 20, starting at 10h27: Total eclipse of the sun visible on the Riviera as a partial eclipse. The total eclipse will only be visible in the far north of Europe.

Sun Mar 22: first round of French departmental elections (2nd round on March 29)

Thurs May 7: UK General Election

Mon Sept 28, starting at 02h13: Total lunar eclipse, fully visible on the Riviera

Dec: French regional elections

march**COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA**

Mon Mar 9: Commonwealth Day cocktail dinatoire. Details at commonwealthclubriviera.com

MONACO-IRELAND ARTS SOCIETY

Fri Mar 13, 20h30: *The Three Wilde Cards*, conceived and directed by Lynn Sharpe. The first part will be Oscar Wilde in relation to his mother, "Speranza", Jane Francesca Elgee. The second part will be Oscar Wilde in relation to his wife, Constance. With a few poems, extracts from writings by Lady Wilde and Constance and five short scenes from Oscar Wilde's plays interwoven in the programme. The venue is the Auditorium of the Monte-Carlo Collège Charles III; drinks on the house. Free entry but please RSVP on 04 93 41 97 22 or 06 82 40 55 34. See monaco-ireland-arts.org

QUIZ NIGHT

Sat Mar 14, 19h: With BA Cannes at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Cannes. €15 meal & wine incl. Reserve: 04 92 99 09 37.

AMIAAC

Tues Mar 17: Les Peyrebelle Restaurant, Valbonne. Please contact Kim Crawford on 04 93 01 20 37 or see all details on our new website amiac.org

BA OF THE VAR

Wed Mar 18: AGM and lunch at Les Jonquieres, Le Muy. baofthevar.com - chairman@baofthevar.com

TEACHING MORNING

Sat Mar 21, 9h30: Teaching Morning on the Lord's Prayer covering the text, the importance and the origins of the prayer at Holy Trinity Church Cannes. Starts at 09:30 and finishing around 13h with a lunch provided. Ave Branly, Cannes. Tel: 04 93 94 54 61 - holyltrinitycannes.org

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Sat Mar 21: Bonnard in Le Cannet, which so inspired him. A Paris-based art historian will guide us through the Musée Bonnard, followed by lunch a few minutes away in the artistic centre of the Old Village. For further information please see americanclubriviera.com or contact Burton Gintell on 06 20 40 11 28.

Fund-raising Dinner at Royal Mougins Golf Resort

Fri Apr 24: Mougins School continues its fundraising collaboration with John Mann and Educatingcambodia.com. John has devoted several years to the building of three school buildings for the children of Prey Veng in Cambodia, along with a Clinic and a Guest House.

The Royal Mougins Golf Resort has generously offered to host a fund-raising dinner at which it is hoped that the necessary funds for the future project can be raised. There will be both an auction and tombola, and entertainment will be provided by the musical talent of Mougins School. In order to ensure the success of this evening, Mougins School is looking for gifts for the tombola as well as special offers for the auction, ie, a holiday in a luxury destination, a piece of artwork or jewellery, a gourmet or unusual experience etc.

Should you or your company wish to participate in this worthy cause, Sue Dunnachie, Marketing Consultant, would be delighted if you could contact her. "Naturally, you are also invited to join us at the dinner," Sue says, "which promises to be a celebratory event with an opportunity to enjoy the excellent cuisine at the Royal Mougins Golf Resort."

Please contact Sue Dunnachie on 06 80 02 57 52 or marketing@mougins-school.com

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Riviera Reporter SARL
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TEL: 04 93 45 77 19

EMAIL

info@riviera-reporter.com

WEBSITE

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B519 - Siret 348 294 406 00023 - APE 221E

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PUBLISHING DIRECTOR/ DIRECTEUR DE LA PUBLICATION

Mike Meade

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/ RÉDACTRICE-EN-CHEF

Nancy Heslin

EDITOR

Nick Kent

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Molly Brown (Monaco)
Michael Healy (Nautical)

DESIGN

Richard Coombs

COLLABORATED ON THIS ISSUE

Katie Bills, Bill Calder,
Roy Cox, Robert Floyd,
Simone Flückiger, PJ Heslin,
Alex Ignatieff, Jamie Ivey,
Peter Johnson, Margo Lestz,
Chrissie McClatchie, Patrick McCrea,
Lisa Pepin, Elodie Peyrano

WEB DEVELOPER

Marina O'Brien

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

CONSULTANT

Luc Beisser

PRINTED BY



Imprimerie Zimmermann
241 Av Docteur Julien Lefebvre
06270 Villeneuve Loubet

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