

THE RIVIERA REPORTER

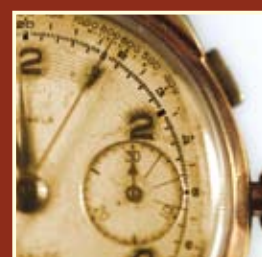


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On 2012

This is our first issue in a year that promises to be remarkable in many ways. 2012 is a leap year, there are three Friday the 13th (one down), the end of the world according to a growing number of nutters (see page 6), an Olympic year and the celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee. We will also see increased atmospheric activity as our sun nears the peak of its eleven-year solar storm cycle, and there'll rarely be a better time to travel to the Nordic countries to witness the Aurora Borealis, one of nature's greatest spectacles. Finnair and SAS will fly you there from Nice.

I won't be waiting for the apocalypse in the Pyrenees or light spotting in Lapland, but I will be escorting a French neighbour to the UK for the Jubilee to show him one of the few things that Britain still does best: pomp and ceremony. Our little Buckinghamshire village will be part of the link that lines the torches from the north of Scotland to Land's End. In spite of naysayers who predict a fiasco, I believe the London Olympics will go well. What will be less appealing is the bill that will be left to pay by the British public. As a French taxpayer, aren't you glad that Paris didn't get it?

Online

Currently on our forum is an ongoing discussion between expats who are battling for the vote for Brits abroad. Keyword: ukexpatvote. Also, last November a stag was shot near a residential area of Tourrettes-sur-Loup. There is no doubt that the killing was illegal. It was also immoral as this animal was known to the locals and even ate out of the hands of local children. See our forum (keyword: stagkill) to read more and perhaps help bring the killer to justice.

While you're on the site you might want to be one of 3500 readers who download the *Reporter* in PDF for reading on PC, Mac, iPad and other mobile devices. You can follow our Twitter stream, as we try to RT subjects several times a day that will be of particular interest to expats here.

On the move

In the next few months the *Reporter* will be modernising its administrative structure. We will be moving from our current office to a more convenient one in Mougins, as well as junking outdated devices like our fax machine. Looking back over nearly 25 years, at one time we were getting about 40 pieces of post a day. Now instead we receive hundreds of emails daily, many of them informative and useful. As with any publication these days, if you want to contact us, email is the best way, either directly or through the contact form on our website.

Mike Meade

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Cover Photo: Nice Airport T2
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CLASSIC COCO

Your account of Coco Chanel's "Secret War" (*Reporter* 148) made for uncomfortable reading. On a more positive note, it's worth noting that 2011 marked the 90th anniversary of the creation of her most famous product Chanel N° 5. She didn't, as I've seen claimed, "invent" the perfume, but rather she commissioned it. When she decided to launch a perfume she turned to Ernest Beaux, formerly parfumeur to the Imperial Russian Court. He came up with a remarkably subtle concoction, based on *rose de Mai* and jasmine, still harvested on the Mul family property in Roquette-sur-Siagne, along with other "secret" ingredients.

As to the iconic flacon, this was inspired by a Russian military vodka flask Chanel had seen in the home of a former lover, Dmitri Pavlovich. And the name? Beaux presented her with around a dozen numbered versions of his perfume and asked her to choose. As it was the fifth day of the fifth month, she said, "I'll go for number five"...
Becky Sanford, by email

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

Your British column (*Reporter* 148) made an interesting point about Germans who "fought under Wellington", but it was, in fact, historically inaccurate. While a Prussian army under von Blücher fought with Wel-

lington at Waterloo he was never actually in charge of them. Wellington's and von Blücher's troops never physically combined and, in fact, attacked Napoleon's forces from different directions.

Richard Kimball, by email

BREEZING THROUGH

We spend quite a few weeks during the year at our second home in the Alpes-Maritimes but we don't have a French bank account. I've always been told that this means we can't buy one of those little devices which allow you to sail straight through the tolls on the A8. Is there any way around this?

Robert Mander, by email

Regulations have changed and you can now buy an autoroute tag online from Sanef Tolling (Automated French Tolls Payment Service) at www.sanef Tolling.co.uk with the price and toll fees collected by direct debit in sterling. A toll badge is especially practical for RHD drivers who have to get out of the car to pay. M.M.

HEAR, HEAR

Not long ago I was blamed for a driving incident involving a pedestrian who was wearing headphones. Luckily we both got off with little more than a scare but it could have been much worse. I never imagined that the young man would just step off the pavement into oncoming traffic, which was moving slowly because it was rush hour, I'm glad to



say. Headphones are a dangerous menace because they isolate walkers or drivers from the real world. With some nice music in your ears you could be on another planet. Beware.

Maureen Osborne, above, by email

You are referring to "sensory deprivation". Studies in the US show that the number of pedestrians killed or seriously injured while wearing headphones has tripled in the last six years. In 70% of collisions, the pedestrian died. Two-thirds of victims were men under age 30, and many were under 18. Things have become so serious that some states now even ban texting while walking. Know that in France it is forbidden for motorists or motorcyclists to wear headphones or ear buds while driving ... but not while walking. M.M.

NOTES ON EURO NOTES

I am a bank note security specialist and your article in *Reporter* 147, pg 10, regarding the euro notes is totally wrong. It is clear that the letter in front of the numbers indicates the origin of printing, but it has absolutely nothing to do with the validity of the bank notes. All notes are issued by the European Central Bank, but printed in different printing works. Basically each domination is printed in two places, one in northern Europe and one in southern Europe, this to avoid unnecessary and risky transport. The letter is only for the

ECB to be able to follow up the quality for print/durability of the notes as they can track back to printing house and producer of the paper.
Stig Svensson, Nice

The euro-sceptic press likes to stir up unfounded rumours but your piece about Greek notes does not represent how the euro works. If a country like Greece pulls out of the euro, here is what is likely to happen to bank notes. Notes representing the worth of the Greek economy – no matter which country's tag is on them – will be immediately withdrawn from the money supply thereby subtracting the value of the Greek economy from the euro note total. Notes tagged as Greek ("Y" notes) will still be valid but will be replaced with other countries' notes gradually as they pass through the banking mechanism in the months following the withdrawal. The withdrawal of a country from the euro was never planned for so there is no set rule on this but the most likely scenario for intra-European compensation is that the value of the replacement bank notes will be calculated according to the relative bond issues that Greece sold to each euro country. The whole process will be relatively seamless and no doubt catastrophic for Greece but not for the other euro nations. At least not for any technical reason. The euro note pool will merely be reduced by the value of Greece's participa-



tion to the euro economy – about 3%. Based on the notion of supply and demand we may even see the value of a euro increase if a weak economy such as Greece or Portugal withdraws – or we may see confidence in the euro collapse as a result. It's all speculative until something really happens but it is very unlikely that "Y" notes will drop more in value than any others.
Hugh Winston, by email

You might well be right but I'm checking my notes for Greek ones all the same. M.M.

EXPAT VOTING

Brits are still disadvantaged compared to other nationalities when it comes to voting rights in Britain. It's almost like we're no longer British just because we no longer live there. We can't vote in France either so where are our rights?

Lewis Shane, by email

There has been quite a discussion about this on our forum, especially since the public comments by Labour peer Lord Lipsey on one side of the argument and Conservative peer Lord Lexden on the other. Go to forum.rivierareporter.com and have your say, too. M.M.

FRACKING

I find Mr Stobbs' piece on shale gas extraction last issue somewhat unrealistic. We need to be free of the Middle Eastern energy supply which is costing our economies dearly. Most of the oil rich countries are undemocratic autocracies, devoid of basic human rights (especially for women) and subversive. We only kowtow to them in our hypocritical fashion because they have the oil we need. David Cameron recently seen butt kissing the Saudi

elite was grotesque and Sarkozy did it too last year. Is fracking any more risky than transporting oil by sea (Exxon Valdez), nuclear power (Chernobyl) or offshore drilling (BP in the Gulf of Mexico)? I don't think so, although I admit to being a Nimby on this.
Helen Crawford, Monaco

In the Var we're all Nimbys but you can be sure there won't be any fracking in Monaco so you're safe. H.S.

A HEALTHY STORY

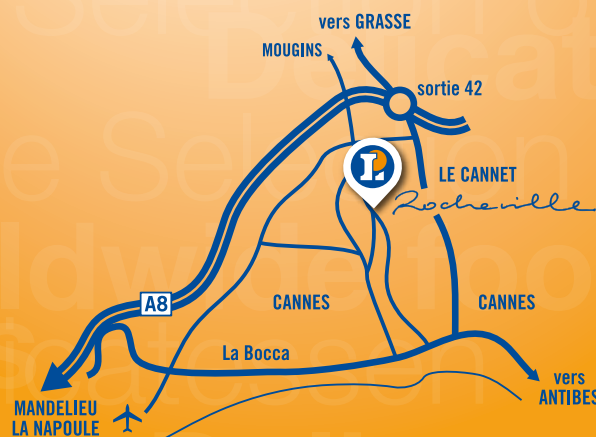
I am a Brit who is a tax-paying resident of Antibes with a *carte vitale*. When walking the beautiful *Sentier Littoral* with my Golden Retriever I fell and broke my hip. Within thirty minutes, alerted by a helpful passerby, four *pompiers* and two medics were with me and I was soon in Antibes' Fontonne Hospital. Owing to various complications I then had to spend two and a half months in the hospital and in the Montsinery rehabilitation centre, with two major operations. Readers not familiar with the French medical system should know how excellent it is. In both establishments the staff, especially the nurses, could not have been more helpful, warm and cheerful; many were keen to improve their English. The food was excellent and the hygiene impeccable. I had physio every weekday morning and could entertain guests to lunch or dinner in the dining room. All I had to pay – outside the system – was a small premium to have a private room, and food (and wine!) for my guests. Future patients can rest assured that in both establishments they will receive the very highest standard of professional attention from people who care.

Barry McFadzean, Cap d'Antibes

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EVS CHOIR TURNS 20 IN 2012

Originally formed by a group of friends and colleagues who liked singing together, in 1992 Ensemble Vocal Syrinx (EVS) evolved into an *Association 1901* and confirmed Errol Girdlestone in the role of artistic director. Errol, who is British, has had an illustrious professional career as conductor and composer but has always enjoyed working with amateur choirs. Over the last two decades, under his direction, EVS has performed numerous concerts both *a cappella* and with orchestra, and can count quite a few firsts to its credit, notably as the first choir in the region to sing the *Messiah* in English! EVS prides itself not just on

its high musical standards but also on being a truly international choir. Current membership includes French, British, American, Swedish, Italian, Austrian and German singers.

If you are interested in joining, the choir is currently recruiting. You will preferably have some experience of choral singing, share a passion for choral music and be able to commit to weekly rehearsals. This year to celebrate its 20th anniversary, the choir is planning Haydn's *Seven Last Words* and Handel's *Messiah*, in English, of course.

Please feel free to contact me on 04 93 20 68 94 and evsyrinx@aol.com, or browse our website: ensemblevocalsyrinx.com
Kate Cobb, by email

Do you have something to say?
To send a Letter to the Editor see page 46
or go to forum.rivierareporter.com



Ensemble Vocal Syrinx, celebrating 20 years, is recruiting.

YES HE KAHN

In his letter appearing in the Dec-Jan Issue, Mr Hamel criticizes President Obama for pronouncing Cannes as *kahn* whereas he thinks that it should be pronounced as *kan*. It seems that English people tend to pronounce Cannes as *kan*, and Americans as *kahn*. A little research amongst my French friends produced the result that the Americans are closer to having the correct pronunciation than the English or Mr Hamel. As for pronouncing *Kaen* mentioned by Mr Hamel in his letter, I say good luck to him if he ever tries to buy a ticket to *Kaen* at the gare SNCF.
Al Mullery, via Reporter forum

OH THAT O'LEARY

You like to have a go at Ryanair's O'Leary but maybe you've missed the point. He's winding us all up with his talk of standing passen-

gers, paid loos, duct tape on windows, scrapping the co-pilot and complaints about sharing airports with the military flights to Afghanistan. He's just after free press coverage and the papers are too glad to oblige. He doesn't mean a word of what he says. By the way, I don't fly Ryanair. I like my comfort and to be taken to the place I actually want to travel to, at the price I expected to pay when I went online. But O'Leary is amusing, a cunning businessman and a brilliant self-promoter. You have to admire him.
Patrick Havers, by email

NICE PIC!

That is a spectacular shot of Monaco on your last cover but for the life of me I can't figure out how you got to wherever it was taken.
Gladys Napolitano, by email

Drive to the centre of La Turbie and take the Rue Jean

Jaurés down the hill a few hundred metres, then turn left onto Route de la Tête de Chien. Drive to the end where you'll find yourself next to a big dome on a military installation. Park there and take the footpath through a rock tunnel along the side of the cliff to the lookout where the photo was taken. Be careful as the path is rocky, very close to the edge in places and the footing is unsure. Most days you can see well into Italy in one direction and beyond Cannes in the other. On exceptionally clear days you can even see Corsica. G.D.

BURGLARIES

There seem to be a lot of burglaries at the moment but you don't report on them very much. Is this increase in crime normal? Are you not interested? The authorities seem just as complacent.
Caroline Howard, Biot

In the Alpes-Maritimes last year home burglary rose by 3.73% although pickpockets and street theft fell 4.2%. There was also in our department, by the way, an increase in financial crime (up 1.7%), mostly online with stolen or pirated credit cards. We are indeed interested but apart from protecting your home through one of our security advertisers, we can't really offer much advice. This has always been a region of infrequent burglaries. The recent upsurge can probably be attributed to Eastern European immigration from places like Romania. "Normal" is an ambiguous word. Are burglaries the "norm"? Perhaps, although I have lived near Cannes and Mougins for many years and never yet been a victim. If you have a personal story about burglary, post it at forum.rivierareporter.com and we'll see if other readers have something to say. M.M.

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20 years ago

California dreamer: Bernard Tapie – who's heading a list in the upcoming regional elections – has claimed that under his guidance the whole region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) would become "Europe's California". If this is the best he can do, the choice between him and Jean-Marie Le Pen as possible president of PACA becomes even more alarming and depressing.

It's about time the tired old California cliché was buried once and for all. First, what's worth noting about that state in 1992 is that it's got big problems, many of them similar to those of the Southern French littoral, but on a much bigger scale. That's not what Tapie's thinking, though. It's plagued by traffic congestion, pollution and unplanned development; it's a black spot for

drugs, crime and AIDS. Economically, it's got high and growing unemployment plus severe budgetary problems. The property market looks bleak. When Rod Stewart put his Bel Air mansion on the market a year ago it carried a price tag of \$14.5 million. Now it could be yours for a mere \$ 7.8 million. And so on.

But there's a second obvious point to make: comparisons between PACA and California appear grotesque when it's remembered that this region has only one-sixth of the population and only one-sixteenth of the area of that state. For all its problems California remains a major economic force in world (not just American) terms, accounting for a seventh of the United States' GNP. Tapie had better start thinking rather than sloganising. *Reporter*, Feb-Mar1992

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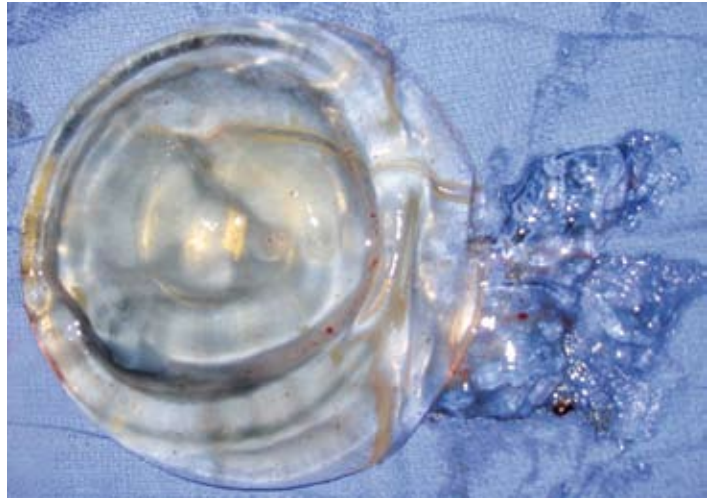
French news & views

Doctors are great, but ...

As we've quoted from time to time, the World Health Organisation has rated the French public health care system the best anywhere. But across the years there's been evidence of a darker side to French medicine, involving inadequate supervision of a range of products from blood to be used for transfusions to a variety of pharmaceuticals. The diabetes drug Mediator, also used as a slimming aid, is believed to have killed up to 2000 people.

Now there's the case of "low-cost" breast implants produced by the Var-based company Poly Implant Prothese (PIP). These, it's now known, contain a silicone gel which was not approved by the health products safety commission. Women who've had the implants have reported a higher than normal incidence of rupture with consequent inflammation and, it's been claimed, in some cases the development of cancer, although the government denies this. Health Minister Xavier Bertrand has ordered the 30,000 recipients of the implants have them removed as a precaution free of charge. PIP exported widely to Western Europe and Latin America but other governments are taking a wait and see approach. The UK Ministry of Health (about 50,000 British women have been fitted with PIP implants) claims "we have no evidence of an increase in cancer associated with these implants or of a disproportionate number of ruptures". PIP's chairman is facing fraud charges over the use of the unauthorised gel. He was last heard of in Costa Rica although his son claims "he's still somewhere in the Var".

And what about this? Around a hundred French sufferers from Parkinson's disease who've been prescribed Requip (from GSK) have reported they've become addicted to gambling, gay sex or shopping. The drug now comes with a warning about these possible (but very rare) side effects.



Explanted ruptured silicone breast implant with leaked filler gel.

Which of three?

Last time, immediately after François Hollande emerged as the Socialist candidate, we echoed the common view that up to the first round it would already be a two-sided fight: Sarkozy versus Hollande. All the other candidates are no-hopers. But what of Marine Le Pen? Could we see a run off between the President and Jean-Marie's daughter?

Certainly, a lot of her policies seem, to some, very reasonable, even if deeply flawed on closer scrutiny: job and benefits preference for native French, clamp down on immigrants and expulsion of illegals, quitting the euro ... and dusting off the guillotine. Her big problem is the reputation of the Front National as a racist organisation, many of

whose members hold views which are either daft or dangerous. She's not helped, of course, by dad whose latest contribution on the Oslo massacre went down very badly. And she's quite capable of shooting herself in the foot, as with her silly outburst – "as a French patriot" – against the Sarkozy couple for against their new daughter an Italian name.

Madame la Présidente?
No way! As one UMP woman told us, "I'd choke, surely, but I'd rather see the Socialists back than vote for that lot."

Will we see another Christmas?

Some people don't think so: they believe the world will end at this year's winter solstice (December 21st).

The current end-of-the-worlders say that for the ancient Mayan calendar that point in time will mark the termination of a 5000 year cycle and the end of things as we now know them. Some believe in a total catastrophe; others in some form of transformation. Monique Mathieu, a *voyante* who claims special insight into the matter, says that there will be rather "a move from capitalism to a society where wealth is shared by all".

Others, including an increasing number in France, pin their hopes on selective survival, and some of these have been holing up in the village of Bugarach in the Aude (an easy drive from Carcassonne; see *Reporter* 144). This has meant a boom for local estate agents. As Robert Langerias, a journalist who has been closely

21.94%.

average increase of the *taxe foncière* across 2003-2010 in France's 36,568 communes. Among the biggest hikes were those in Nice (26%) and Toulon (25.6%).

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French minimum wage (*SMIC*) as of Jan 1, 2012. A 35-hour week will gross €1398.37/month.

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following the activities of the “end-of-the-worlders”, puts it, “Not everyone is a true believer.” The prediction has attracted a group of entrepreneurs who are offering everything from home survival kits through catastrophe shelters to enormous entertainment packages such as a thousand hours of DVDs. And what of the Jehovah’s Witnesses who’ve announced dates for the end of the world regularly for many years (most recently in 1975)? They’ve learned to be prudent: “the end is nigh”, they say, but they don’t know when. If you’re keen to know more google “End of the World” and you can wade through a billion and a half pages.

Rich like us?

Tell a lot of folks back where you come from that you’re a Riviera-dwelling expat and they’ll often assume you’re a fat cat and that almost everyone living in this neck of the woods is loaded. A case in point: when Alastair Campbell, Blair’s former spinmeister, revealed that he was taking off a few days down here with his daughter he got an irritable email



Highest living standards in France:

Île-de-France,
Rhône-Alpes
and Alsace.

Largest income inequalities:

Île-de-France.

Greatest poverty levels:

Languedoc-
Roussillon, **Provence-
Alpes-Côte d’Azur**,
and in Seine-
Saint-Denis.

From INSEE (insee.fr)

from Left-wing Labour MP Graham Jones: “Saint-Tropez? Nice? What about the working classes?”

So a brief reality check. Of course, there are some very rich people living here (and the number of residents paying the wealth tax went up by 5% last year) but in a population getting on for two million they are exceptional. A couple of figures from the national statistical agency (INSEE): one in eight residents of the Alpes-Maritimes and the Var is below the poverty line (set at a monthly income of less than €954); one in four of those working are taking home less than the minimum wage (€1398.37 a month) – often because they hold only part-time jobs. The Côte d’Azur’s poor are a diverse group: retirees on inadequate pensions, single mothers, the unemployed (including redundant executives), students and those whose lives have somehow fallen apart. As the British Association and local churches can confirm, there are quite a few in these categories within our own community. Maybe Graham Jones MP should come down and meet some of them.

Marseille and the new criminals

Marseille, France’s oldest town (it traces its history back some 2600 years) and European Capital of Culture 2013, has long enjoyed a dubious reputation both in France and abroad. Over the years we’ve insisted several times that to equate the city with crime and grime was unfair and that more people from this end of the Coast should make an effort to visit. It’s got quite a lot going for it: it’s the sunniest place in France and the people are friendly and (we’d say) less dodgy than many you come across on the Côte d’Azur.

So why are we now taking an at least partially less favourable view of Marseille? Anyone who follows the news may know the answer: the city has quite recently become a much more violent city. It’s always had a notable criminal population, involved in drug trafficking, prostitution and illegal gaming. Across recent years there have been some two dozen killings, usually of very young men, often gunned down in public in their cars or in bars. Clearly disquieted, the



Photo: Thomas Steiner

Marseille is France's second largest city after Paris, with a population of 867,000.



Photo: RR

"I've always been opposed to any increase in TVA which will affect purchasing power and consumption in our country. It's not a good thing."



Photo: Pierre-alain dorange

Legalised in France in 1995, there are now some 678,000 *vidéosurveillance* cameras in operation.

government has bumped up police resources in the area.

What exactly has changed? Local police are quite clear on this. As one senior officer told a local paper, "We're dealing with a new kind of criminal. What we had in the past was a traditional gangster class with some regard for each other's age and status. Young guys coming in would behave with respect towards their elders and work their way up. Today it's not like that. A lot of still teenagers in our housing developments can become millionaires – literally – by getting into the drugs trade. There are fierce rivalries, turf wars, between them and they'll kill each other without hesitation. If someone gets in the way, too bad. Don't forget: one in four of our population lives below the poverty line and these youngsters have nothing to lose." This grim view is shared by Olivier Marchal, ex-cop turned film director: "The old-style villains had a moral code of sorts. They'd carry out hold-ups without violence, they'd avoid collateral violence. That's all gone. These kids can kill as easily as they breathe."

On the mission

The Church in France is in a bad way, nobody can deny

it. Churches are often almost empty of worshippers and for many parishes there's no priest to officiate. If one does show up he's likely to be in a hurry – maybe responsible for a dozen or more parishes. As old clergy retire or die, there are fewer and fewer younger recruits to replace them.

Is there any hope for the Church, leaving aside belief in its divine support? The answer seems to lie in the gradual conversion of France into a *pays de mission*, needing to be re-Christianised. This difficult task is being undertaken by an increasing number of foreign priests, often drawn from countries to which French clergy once took the Gospel. One in seven active priests in dioceses across the country is now from abroad;

out of a total of 1500 nearly 1000 are from Africa.

How well are they accepted? As one Senegalese priest told the Catholic paper *La Croix*, "In general, very well. Older people are happy to see a priest more regularly. As to younger congregants, and this is something I hear from my colleagues, quite a few are attracted back to church by our style. We have a different style, that's true. We encourage singing, dancing,

even dialogue during the sermon. We don't expect people to sit still and largely silent. Worship should be an expression of joy." Some elderly churchgoers aren't happy with this, it seems. As the Senegalese priest put it, "*C'est dommage* – but they're not the future."

BIRTH OF A METROPOLIS

France's first metropolis came into existence January 1st. See nicedotedazur.org for more on Nice Metropolis and its 46 municipalities. Christian Estrosi was elected president.

What does he think about when shaving?

Christian Estrosi (pictured), Mayor of Nice and President of the Metropole de Nice-Côte d'Azur, is a much more interesting politician than some would have given him credit for a few years ago. Even in his showing so far he clearly ranks with Jacques Médecin (*Jacquou* had his faults but, as François Mitterrand admitted, he was "a very good mayor").

It's hard not to speculate where his career will take him. Although his departure from Sarko's cabinet was seen (including by himself) as a setback, at some distance from government he has been able to construct an image of moderation and social awareness that could stand him in good stead in the future. As he said recently, "Security issues are important, very important, but government cannot afford to neglect social policy. The state must see that wealth is shared in a fair way and protect the living

You've likely frowned when passing a French eatery that offers "sandwichs" and wondered why the sign writer doesn't learn to spell. Well, he did. According to the new rules for spelling approved by the *Académie française* back in 1990, all foreign words used in French must make their plurals as if they were native to the language. In most cases this means just adding an "s": so "sandwichs".

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standards of the less well off. You can't build a viable society on deep economic divisions. That's at the heart of my political beliefs."

Whatever his final political achievement Estrosi will be remembered for putting, as Jacques Médecin did, his personal stamp on Nice. He has vigorously supported various projects which will transform the city. To single out just two: first, *la Coulée Verte* – difficult to translate though we favour "the Green Line". This will be a 12-hectare open space, imaginatively landscaped and with a reflecting pool, which will run down to the Jardin Albert 1er, taking in the site of that ugly old bus station which the mayor was quick to get rid of. It will, wisely, be closed after dark. And then there's the new Pasteur 2 Hospital (due to open in 2014), replacing the present Pasteur and Saint-Roch branches of the CHU. Built in an agreeable Mediterranean style, it will have 625 beds, 90% of them in individual rooms. Speaking at the site recently, the mayor said Pasteur 2 was just "one element in an urban development which will be the envy of all". The *niçois* are rather lucky in their city and their mayor. ■



Nice parking job.

10,000 sidewalk sensors have been installed in Nice centre and from June will provide GPS transmissions to smartphones indicating available street parking within 15 seconds of vacancy. If there are no options, it will show the nearest public parking. Eventually with the introduction of new parking meters, you'll be able to pay for parking with your phone, and even from a distance if you are running late. The downside: the same technology will also point out parking violations, which can only mean more tickets. And what about that law that says you can't use your mobile phone while driving (see page 13)?

On camera

Although Mayor Estrosi is careful to make clear that he's not obsessed with security at the expense of other issues, he has been determined to make the city a safer place. It has France's largest municipal police force (380 men and women) and probably the best equipped (including with tasers).

Nice also has the country's largest number of municipally-operated surveillance cameras in public places; there's one for every 650 inhabitants. One motive for their installation is to demonstrate how seriously the *mairie* takes the problem of making people feel safe. But do they really work? In Jacques Peyrat's time a spot check showed that a significant number of cameras were out of order and hadn't been repaired. When this was announced it must have given the bad guys a chuckle. But if these "eyes on the street" are really functioning do they do any good?

In police and local government circles this is a topic of ongoing discussion. For some they are an expensive decoration with little deterrent effect (a view held by a number of senior officers at Scotland Yard). State-of-the-art models are very sophisticated, able to identify suspect packages, break-ins and even potentially dangerous crowd movements. But, again, do they really help to reduce crime? Nice's prosecutor, Eric de Montgolfier, no fan of the mayor and a persistent critic of the activities of the municipal police, has come out with a statement that must have gone down very well at City Hall: "Cameras do help prevent crime and discourage those who might commit it." And statistics are there to support this: last year (against the national trend) offences against individuals fell by 4% in Nice, and 17% of arrests made by the municipal police followed incidents monitored on camera.

Tackling the TVA

BY PETER JOHNSON



The basic rate of VAT (*taxe sur la valeur ajoutée*) has been raised from 5.5% to 7%. In addition to home repairs by artisans, this will also increase prices on restaurant meals, hotel rooms, travel, and books.

Austerity measures are the theme of the moment and the French government is keen to tax everything from fizzy drinks to top-up medical insurance (don't quite understand that: you make premiums more expensive, so people drop their cover and potentially become a bigger burden to the State ... or just die of obesity through drinking fizzy drinks!). *C'est du grand n'importe quoi!*

Another proposed measure of *grand n'importe quoi* is the hotly debated *TVA sociale* (a German innovation from June 2006), which reaches this column for the potentially wonderful effect it would have in reducing social charges. Anyone who has just survived the *régularisation* or reconciliation of the third and fourth quarters based on real income earned in 2010 will be hoping that any new measure might help keep some afloat. So how would it work? Effectively, it will reduce social charges by transferring the cost onto a new form of VAT (TVA), so instead of the extra funding coming from the fruit of labour it will be a product of spending, as all goods and services that we purchase include VAT. The cost of health cover, for instance, would be transferred from social charges to TVA. "Good news!" I hear a lot of you hard-working entrepreneurs say.

Not only will the cost of financing the health service be switched from one source to another,

but the increase in overall TVA on all products will add cost to the imported goods flooding the French market from cheaper production regions, such as India or China, thus giving local French businesses a more competitive chance in the market place. This extra boost will also be enhanced on the export side because the reduction in social charges will have an effect on the cost of production and make exports consequently more competitive.

For the above calculations to work, the added cost of TVA will need to be around 4%, so instead of paying 19.6% the overall rate of TVA would be approximately 23.6%

But watch out for the murky waters ahead: if TVA goes up by 4% surely workers will need higher salaries to retain purchasing power. And if salaries go up, companies will have less opportunity to be competitive in the market place. So, would it work? At present France is keen to place itself on the same economic rung as Germany, to create a harmonious platform for European growth in these troubled times. The *TVA sociale* in Germany worked, but only because the overall economy wasn't at a standstill. Times have changed since 2006. Would it work in France in 2012? Let's wait and see.

Regularisation of social charges

As I said, the third and fourth quarters in any year see the great "catch up" on the social charges due from previous years and, because times are hard for everyone, RSI/URSSAF have introduced a facility whereby you can pay in three equal instalments ... without having to make a specific application to do so. Just send in the first of the three equal payments by the due date with a note saying you will pay the other two instalments in one month and two months. Then make sure you send off cheques on the appropriate dates and ... cancel your Easter holiday. ■

What did we say?

A couple in Antibes have been arrested for selling fake business directories for nearly €100,000. All it took was a few sheets of A4 paper and an inkjet printer to muster up fake purchase orders and invoices.

Over 50 French companies – including Total Refining, BP France, PepsiCo, Credit Agricole, and Heineken – paid €478 to €5000 (for a full page) without even asking to see the listing.

In October, a Credit Agricole employee found that two of the directories contained the same Siren number and filed a complaint with local police. It was then discovered that the "business" was in the woman's name, as her partner owed €66,000 in taxes.

The couple is due to appear in court in Grasse March 26th. They face three years in prison for misuse of corporate assets.

See *Reporter* 148, page 10, for a list of known scams.

eVery exPat's Need



Even for a well-integrated expat there are some things from "home" that are nice to have. One of them is television, which is why so many of us have Sky TV, but satellite reception does have its limits. Line-of-sight between your dish and the satellite is needed and you can only watch one channel at a time – although the latest boxes do allow viewers to record a second channel. But for live viewing on the family set, it's either the football game or Earthflight – not both at once.

Wouldn't it be ideal if you could watch a second channel on your computer, iPad or Android in France just like Sky subscribers can in the UK? For copyright reasons, even free-to-air channels are usually blocked to foreign ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and downloading books in English (see Mailbag issue 145) or iPhone and iPad apps is almost impossible for expats.

UK or US television possible

Enter VPN (Virtual Private Network). Initially conceived for businesses requiring secure private connections for transmitting sensitive data, it's available for home use as well. A VPN connection tricks websites or other content providers into thinking you are in the UK or the US, even when you are in France (or elsewhere). Suddenly, UK or US television and web content becomes possible here.

It allows viewing in any room of the house where there is a computer and an existing

Ethernet connection or Wi-Fi.

There are few limitations. If you don't have a Sky subscription you can only use VPN for free-to-air channels, but with a Sky card ID you can catch up on films you missed on Sky Anytime or watch films on Sky Go. The Sky Player app can be used on iPad to watch news live and the day's featured news content. With VPN you can also use BBC iPlayer or watch 4-on-Demand from anywhere in the world. ITV public channels are also available. For US viewing, Netflix and Amazon Instant Video can be accessed under the same conditions as in the States.

So how easy is VPN to put in place? Surprisingly for such advanced technology, quick and simple. You need a VPN account provided by HasEurope.com (see page 9). They'll send you an easy to understand information sheet explaining how to connect to the internet using VPN with whichever computer system you have – Windows, Mac, Android, iPad etc. Configuration and connection the first time takes only a minute or so, and then it does not have to be repeated.

The cost is about a fifth of what you pay for your daily cup of coffee. HasEurope offers UK/US VPN accounts for €150 a year or €75 with purchase of a Sky card through them. HasEurope's Hopper Box allows connection of devices that are not normally VPN compliant, such as internet-enabled TV, Smart TV, Apple TV, some game consoles, media players and Kindle Fire.

Don't count on being able to anonymously pirate films from P2P sites – it's forbidden and illegal. **M.M. ■**

DO YOU HAVE A UK PRIVATE PENSION?

Considering a QROPS? HMRC is about to change the rules - from April 6, 2012.

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Expat Pensions is holding a FREE seminar on UK private pensions and investment opportunities at Brittain's Restaurant, near Valbonne on Thursday, February 23rd, at 6.30pm.

Please come and join us for a glass of wine and some refreshments - to reserve your place contact:

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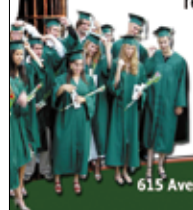
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ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Interior Minister Claude Guéant isn't too happy that 3970 people died on French roads last year, a figure up on 2010, and has pushed through several new measures designed to increase road safety.

BY MIKE MEADE



Contrôle Technique

A vehicle's first CT (MOT) must take place within 4 years of the *1ère mise en circulation* shown on the registration paper. The CT is then obligatory every 2 years for private vehicles and every year for vehicles registered to a business. Camping cars must now have a pollution test every year. When you are registering a newly acquired car the CT must have been done within 6 months of purchase if the vehicle is more than 4 years old.

The *contrôle technique* 2012 looks at more items than previously, will take about 10 minutes longer and cost about €10 more. The speedometer must now be shown to function but its accuracy won't be tested. The horn must be in working order and its fixations will be verified. Brake fluid lines are now tested for cracks and potential leaks, as are power steering lines and fluid levels. Wheel bearings will now be checked for wear and excess play. Fog lights and rear windscreen anti-misting are now tested as well. Lateral body parts such as rigid decorative door guards must be firmly installed with no risk of them coming off and injuring someone. All

doors must now function so that passengers can escape in case of accident or fire. The petrol tank must be in good condition and not leak. The anti-theft steering wheel lock will now be verified to ensure there is no danger of it locking while the car is in motion.

The penalty for an outdated CT is €135 and results in immediate confiscation of the vehicle. The registration papers will be retained by police and you may then be granted a *fiche de circulation provisoire* allowing you seven days to get the car to a testing station. Once the car passes the CT, registration papers will be returned. Except for registered collectors' cars, even vehicles that are not used must now be tested although it's hard to see how this can be enforced.

The new CT sticker shows the expiration date in much bigger letters than before so police can read it from a greater distance.

Responsibility

A valid *contrôle technique* is the only accepted indication that your tyres, brakes, lights and other safety features were working properly at the time of an accident. Without

an up-to-date CT you can be held responsible for an accident even if, in theory, it isn't entirely your fault. This isn't new but it's something too many drivers ignore.

If you are found to have been using your mobile phone for speech or texting at the time of the accident you will almost certainly be considered at fault no matter what the other driver did.

A vehicle that strikes you from behind might not be judged at fault if you are found to be over the drink driving limit and therefore more likely to brake suddenly or without reason. You will always be held responsible if you are over the speed limit or run a red light, and very likely to be at fault if you drive through an orange light when you could have braked safely.

You still can't turn right on a red light (as in some countries) but in recent months a few French intersections in congested areas do allow it to assist traffic flow. These exceptions are clearly marked so don't make any assumptions unless you see the sign.

Radar detectors

After much debate (see issue 147) devices that detect speed cameras

Attractive Lifestyle in the Tax Friendly Pyrenean Paradise of Andorra



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are now formally forbidden. In theory, using a device that actively warns of cameras is now punishable with a €1500 fine and the loss of six points. It is generally accepted that passive devices which show known speed camera positions without detecting them actively are acceptable if they are dubbed "danger zone warning devices".

In 2012, 400 new fixed radar traps will be installed and there will no longer be advance-warning panels on roads equipped with them.

In-car alcohol tester

As well as the yellow safety vest and road triangle, by spring it will be obligatory to carry a breathalyser (*éthylotest*) in the glove box (not in the boot).

School buses must now be fitted with equipment that tests the driver's breath before allowing the vehicle

to start. This is expected to be extended to include all buses within a couple of years.

Police (including municipal police) can now test drivers for narcotics, including cannabis. Driving while under the influence of drugs is sanctioned like alcohol-related offenses.

Foreign licence

Firstly let's dispel an unfounded rumour among expats. A French gendarme can indeed confiscate your foreign licence and impound your vehicle as if you were driving a French registered car on a French driving licence. If you've committed an offence you can be forced to exchange your foreign licence for a French one, from which penalty points are docked.

Holders of UK licences can find themselves trapped in a particularly difficult situation concerning photos. According to the DVLA,

1.6 million Britons have not renewed the photo on their licence and a further 2.9 million drivers must do so by the end of 2012. This is obligatory every 10 years at a cost of £20 (the fine for not doing so is £1000). Renewing their licence is a quandary for UK licence holders who no longer have an address in the UK.

Getting points back

On December 16th a law was voted to make it easier to earn back some lost points on your licence. For minor offenses, you will now get points back after two years instead of three. Serious offenses such as drunk driving or putting the public in danger will still require a wait of three years.

Expect to pay more:

Stopping in a place intended for Brink's-type transport vehicles can bring a fine of €135.

The fine for using a mobile phone or texting while driving has been increased from €35 and a 2-point penalty to €135 and 3 points.

The fine for watching a film while driving (yes, it has happened) is now €1500 and 3 points from €135 and 2.

Except for emergency breakdowns, driving on the hard shoulder will cost drivers €135 (previously €35).

Women can expect to pay more for car insurance than previously, as European anti-discrimination rules kick in.

The cost of keeping a car (fuel, maintenance and insurance) rose across 2011 an average of €5350 for a small car (petrol), or 18% of a household budget. More and more motorists are driving less, looking for car sharing and ... doing some of their own repairs (!). ■

DOING IT ONLINE

Consult French licence points:

interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a_votre_service/vos_demarches/vehicules/permis-conduire-points/infos-releve-integral

Pay your fines in English:

amendes.gouv.fr/portail/index.jsp

Register newly acquired vehicle:

ants.interieur.gouv.fr/siv/-immatriculation-.html

Request duplicate of a lost registration:

ants.interieur.gouv.fr/siv/Demande-de-duplicata.html

Get a *certificat de non-gage* to sell a car:

siv.interieur.gouv.fr/map-usg-ui/do/accueil_certificat

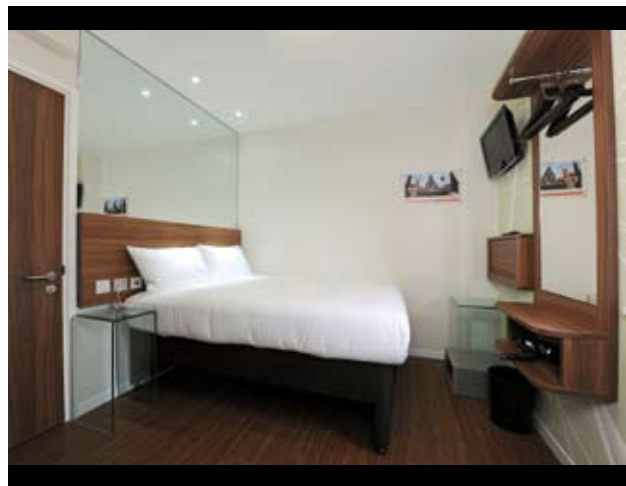


Photo: ©Tune Hotels

Opened since 2010, Tune Hotel Westminster's 79 rooms work à la carte: towel £1.50; TV £3 (don't even turn it on); maid service £7.50; Wifi £3/day.

"Immediate boarding"

At those words your anxiety level rises and you're not alone. As we quoted recently, an Air France survey found that 40% of passengers feel uncomfortable when aloft. But is that reasonable? Surely advances in aviation technology mean that flying is safer than ever. There's some truth in that but in a lot of professional discussion these days it's a view that gets heavily qualified. So Rory Kay, a pilot and chairman of the American Federal Aviation Administration's committee on pilot training: "We are seeing a new kind of accident with these new state-of-the-art planes. Pilots are simply forgetting how to fly. On a normal flight they may only be driving manually for a few minutes at take off and landing."

According to a spokesman for the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA), "Manual flying is discouraged during normal operations, and so the skills which need constant practice are eroded." Captain Ove Jespersen, a 30-year veteran of flying big jets and now retired in the Var, makes another point: "On these fly-by-wire aircraft you spend a lot of time feeding data into computers. It's all

about routine and your training hasn't really readied you for a mid-air crisis. A lot of that training these days is on simulators. When an aircraft stalls it's not just like a simulation. It's terrifying and you need to act correctly and fast. Those poor guys up front on AF447 which went down between Rio and Paris back in 2009 quite clearly didn't have the training, and partly because of that 228 people died. Let's hope the companies, whatever is said in public, have learned a lesson."

Dubai. Worth seeing ... once

When Emirates brings its A380s here many passengers will be flying to Dubai to connect with other flights in the carrier's extensive Asia-Pacific network; some will be staying there for a while. It's a place worth seeing. Once. What it illustrates is the deep need of rich Arab families – in this case Dubai's Al Maktoum clan – to have something to be proud of. The "achievement" that is the Gulf state has, of course, depended on the physical labour of South Asians and the skilled professional input of Western expats. So you can wonder at the world's highest tower (the 160 storey Burj

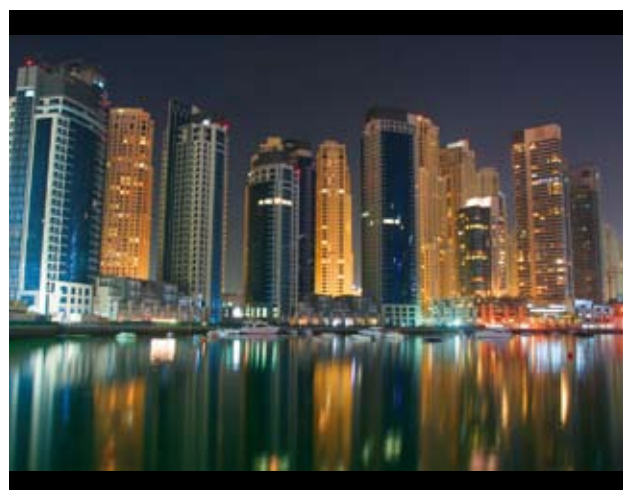


Photo: David Pim/DDPN

Dubai Marina, stretching along 3 km of the Persian Gulf, was designed after the Concord Pacific Place development of False Creek in Vancouver, Canada. The residential towers, once completed, will house more than 120,000.

Khalifa) and the world's biggest mall ... and even go skiing on artificial snow. The city itself is vast and vulgar and, yes, worth seeing once.

If you decide to go, watch out. The local cops have no tolerance for druggies, drunks and even those who show affection to an opposite-sex partner in public. If you feel like giving it a try, Emirate's currently has a daily flight at €550, at the moment with A340s. There are some remarkable bargains available, both for flight and accommodation, including sometimes "kids-go-free" offers.

To find out more see uk.definitelydubai.com. The first few months of the year are a good time to go with temperatures in the twenties; in the summer they can reach 40°C. and, away from the air con, it's unbearable.

Cooler than Dubai and more tolerant, too ...

... that's Essex and including Stansted Airport. It's a convenient destination for some but reader Sandra Freeman warns of problems for the unwary. If you're in central London it takes quite a time to get there, parking is expensive (£79 for 8 days; stanstedairport.com)

and the terminal has a lot of space to walk through. Check-in and security procedures can take a long time. Easyjet serves Stansted on four days of the week. One of their people advised avoiding problems by spending a night at the closest hotel, the Radisson Blu, just a few minutes from the check-in zone. Their normal rate is £120, if that's okay with you.

Here's news of a London hotel bargain: the capital now has two Tune hotels in Liverpool Street and Westminster. This is a Malaysian brand, rapidly expanding in Asia. Explains CEO Mark Lankester, "We've taken the low-cost model from the airline sector and applied it to hospitality." This means you pay a basic nightly rate – £35 in London – and then extras are treated as "add-on purchases" and offered separately, everything from aircon to toiletries. These you take or leave as you please. People seem to go for this; currently Tune averages 90% occupancy in its properties. For more see tunehotels.com

Low cost but not as O'Leary knows it

Air France has given details of its new base in Nice,



Photo: ©Singapore Airlines

With Singapore Airline's Business Class, passengers can *Book the Cook* and order meals like Lobster Thermidor with buttered asparagus, slow-roasted vine-ripened tomato and saffron rice, and a glass of Dom Perignon.

due to open on April 3rd, which is designed to compete with low-cost operators. As the carrier's new CEO explains, "We can offer attractive fares not because we've abandoned the usual quality of our service – we haven't. We've concentrated on raising productivity: crews will work rather longer hours, will not overnight away from base and we'll be doing quick turn-rounds at our destinations." Fares will range from €50 (Barcelona, Venice, Naples) through €80 (Athens, Istanbul) to €110 (Tel Aviv). These will stay fixed across 2012.

We're all in this together

So apprehensive passengers might reflect as they troop aboard an A380, the largest aircraft ever built, which, with some configurations, can carry around 800 passengers. It doesn't fly into Nice at the moment although, at a cost of €8.5 million, the airport is now equipped to accommodate the plane and its huge load of passengers. Emirates – the biggest single purchaser of the A380 – hopes to begin flights in the near future.

So what's it like flying in

\$40 billion
current value of
the cruise industry

16
Until the Costa
Concordia incident
(see page 30),
total number of
maritime deaths
from more than 100
million passengers
carried on cruise
ships since 2005.

14%
drop in Carnival
Cruise Lines stock
after the Costa
Concordia accident.
Costa Cruises
is subsidiary of
Miami-based
Carnival. (Shares
of Royal Caribbean
Cruises Ltd.
fell 6.2%.)

\$100 million
estimated cost of
Italian accident
to Carnival.

an A380? Reader Lynda Joyce recently flew from Singapore to Zurich on an A380, the second leg of her Brisbane-Nice journey with Singapore Airlines and its associated carriers. "I was rather surprised by the look of the aircraft. What you notice is its height rather than its length. There are separate entrances for each class and boarding was swift and easy. I was in Business and immediately appreciated the seat with its 80 centimetre width. There's a 1-2-1 configuration so an individual traveller as I was gets lots of space.

The whole atmosphere was relaxed and – this was very striking – remarkably quiet. Service was attentive without being intrusive and one of the flight attendants told me it was a very easy aircraft to work in. I'd taken advantage of Singapore Airline's 'Book the Cook' system which allows you to choose your meal in advance. I've flown to and from Oz many times and I'd say this was certainly the best flight I've ever had. Even in a traditional Business Class, 24 hours in the air can be exhausting. This time I arrived in very good form." ■



The Grass ...for carefree enjoyment

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Team



Côte d'Azur

Airport people

We continue this series with *Commissaire divisionnaire* Didier Martin of the *Police des aéroports et des frontières*.

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



Photo: Kevin B.

The police service in France has a complex history and a complex structure. Didier Martin is in charge of 380 specialised officers working across the Alpes-Maritimes. “We have a variety of missions. We control the frontier with Italy and track down those who’ve managed to enter France illegally and are living and maybe working here. Then we have major responsibilities at the airport where some 120 of our force are based.”

The good cop’s nose

Surely frontier control has been made much more difficult by the EU’s introduction of free movement between most member states without passports? “Well, we have to work within the legal framework as it is. But these changes have a positive side: within the EU there’s been a growing coherence of practice among the different states and that makes things easier. Quite other, of course, was the situation with the Tunisians last year. Since there was no government in place we or the Italians could liaise with, there

was a free-for-all of migrants.”

For most of our readers their main awareness of the PAF – as the force is generally known – would be when passing through the airport. Checking on passengers can’t be easy, given the EU’s relaxation of border controls and the huge growth in the number of travellers. “A couple of points on that. We do continue to make random checks and there’s always the factor of ‘the good cop’s nose’ – you can look at a moving line and often get a feeling that someone might be worth having a word with. Remember, too, that we’ve invested a lot in new technologies. Checking identities and the authenticity of documents is now much faster and more efficient with our computerised systems.”

Talk of investment brings up the cost of security: in France, since 2001, this has grown from €140 million to €678 million in 2011, much of it incurred at airports. “And it’s necessary. We’re faced with a determined enemy and we can’t relax.” So why is checking baggage outsourced to civilian



Didier Martin is now in his third decade as a police officer. “It’s a great job, very varied, always interesting.”

staff who might be less reliable? “That needs some qualification. Those civilians are under constant surveillance by my officers. We actually send through mystery passengers to make sure they’re doing a good job. Anyway, travellers can feel safer because of that massive investment in staff and equipment. Another point: when airports are built or modified these days structures are designed to make security easier to maintain. Here in Nice, for example, Terminal 2 is easier to deal with than the older Terminal 1.” It can’t be denied that security measures do irritate a lot of passengers and IATA – the airlines’ trade body – has suggested some relaxation involving a pre-filtering of travellers with some regular business fliers, for example, recognised as low risk and so given fast track clearance and others seen as for some reason meriting closer scrutiny. “I’m not convinced. For one thing, that would involve a kind of discrimination that some people would object to. More important, terrorists are always looking for weaknesses in security

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and that system could be obviously exploited. There's a permanent threat there and to deal with it we need to maintain vigilance, control and dissuasion."

Airport crime: the big problem is theft

The PAF also have more basic police duties to perform at the airport. "Indeed. In a busy airport like Nice-Côte d'Azur there's a lot of low-level crime to deal with. The big problem is theft. Travellers tend to be either relaxed or tense and maybe less alert than usual, more careless, and they can suddenly find a bag has disappeared. We've got officers on patrol all the time, either in uniform or in plain clothes. Then there's the recurrent issue of thieving *bagagistes*. The big deterrent now is that, with our computerised records, once caught they'll never get another airport job." And what about the taxi drivers? "We do have to intervene sometimes but let me tell you the drivers here are a much better lot than the ones I dealt with in Lyon."

G20: a successful exercise

I met *Commissaire* Martin just a few weeks after the G20 in Cannes. How would he sum up the event from a public order point of view? "It was a challenge, certainly, and the PAF had a major part to play, along with other branches of the police, the gendarmerie and troops. Things went well, I think, for three reasons. First, we prepared for G20 over a period of around eight months and found that 85% of the situations we were to face were predictable and could be planned for; as to the rest, we managed very well. Second, we learned a lot from the earlier experience of other cities – remember the disaster that was Seattle? – but we had the immense advantage over most of them of being able to call on a highly trained and efficient riot police, the CRS. Major demonstrations are no place for amateurs! Finally, it has to be said that, maybe because of our show of massive but restrained force, most of those who took to the street behaved reasonably. To sum up, it was a successful exercise, including for the PAF." ■

A policeman's lot

Like most members of the PAF, Didier Martin came to the force with a wide experience of other forms of policing. After the *École des commissaires* he spent many years with the *Police judiciaire* in Paris, based at the famous "No. 36 quai des Orfèvres" where he dealt with everything from murder to major narcotics cases. He then had five years with a department involved in international cooperation between police forces. After that he moved to the PAF, first in Lyon – which has France's third airport – and towards the end of 2010 he was posted to Nice.

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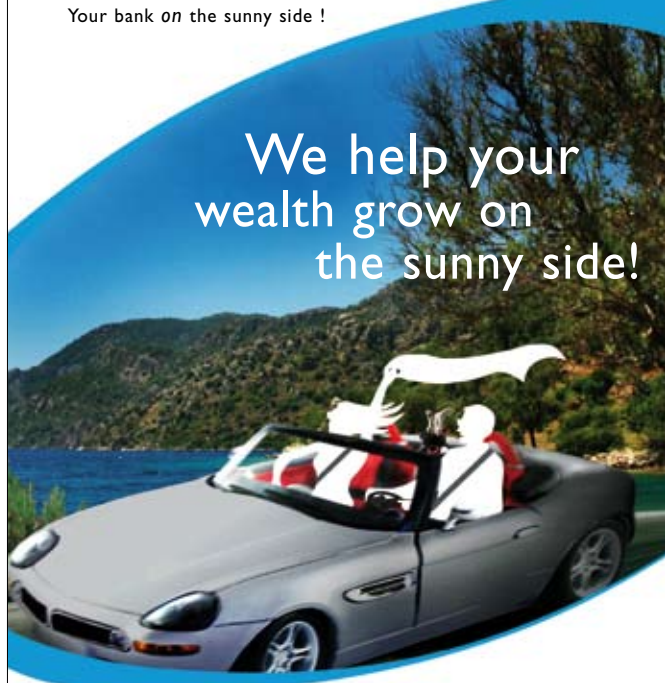
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Banque et populaire à la fois.

Bedbugs are back and difficult to get rid of

Maybe a beagle could help.

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



Photo: CHU de Nice



Normally, no larger than an apple pip, a feeding bedbug can swell up as it ingests a quantity of blood equivalent to seven times its normal body weight, and can then fast for months.

Nice has pioneered the use of canine bug hunters in France, beginning with Ficelle.

What can you do to protect yourself against a bedbug?

Not a lot: insect repellents aren't much use. Once bitten and when the itch begins, don't scratch. There are creams that can give relief but if a bite becomes infected anti-biotics may be necessary.

Last time we carried an item about London's Airlines Hotel where between them two women guests claimed they were bitten by bedbugs a hundred times in a single night. One of our readers told us she had found this "disgusting" but added, cheerfully, "You don't get them often nowadays, they're a thing of the past; that hotel must have been filthy." She was wrong on both counts: firstly, over the past ten years – from Manhattan to Mayfair, from Melbourne to Menton – those nasty little creatures, known to entomologists as *cimex lectularius*, have made a massive reappearance. Secondly, as a UK specialist has emphasized, "It has nothing to do with hygiene ... you can pick them up anywhere from a cinema to a church." Here on the Coast reports are increasing all the time of a bug-gish invasion.

Within living memory they were, of course, much commoner. As late as the 1930s it was estimated that one in four British houses was infested and they were a familiar presence in French households, especially in towns where they could spread more easily. In later decades their number fell sharply, indeed it was widely believed they had become virtually extinct in Western Europe. This was put down to the use of effective insecticides. So what explains their comeback? Entomologists offer two reasons: they have become more resistant to those insecticides and, crucially, with the development of mass travel they can now migrate easily, often in clothing or baggage, sometimes over enormous distances. On one theory, their reappearance in this region came about via modest journeys on sleeper trains from Paris. There's no telling where they'll show up. A Dutch doctor told one of our

readers, a compatriot, that he'd been bitten during a couple of nights in "a very good" hotel in Menton. In both London and New York tourism officials see bedbugs as a major problem.

The bite of these bloodsucking creatures has a treble function: it injects an anticoagulant to render the blood more easily digestible and also an anaesthetic so the victim feels no immediate discomfort (that can come later) as the insect begins to suck; luckily, a bedbug's bite does not spread disease. A sleeper is most at risk between 3 am and 5 am, their favourite shift.

Dogs working: bad news for bugs

Are there any effective preventive measures? Bedbugs hide away in nooks and crevices and only come out at night. Their presence can be detected, though, in infested premises by a distinctive smell, variously described as redolent of almonds, lavender, raspberries or dirty socks. Their smell has been the key to the detection and elimination of bugs. An authority in this field is Dr Pascal Delaunay, a medical entomologist at Archet 2 in Nice: "As you will know, dogs have noses far more sensitive than ours which can pick up very weak odours and locate their source. As to the nature of the smell, I'll describe it simply as sharp or pungent; once you've come across it, you'll recognise it again. Nice has pioneered the use of canine bug hunters in France, beginning with Ficelle, a beagle bitch, who was sent to Florida for two months to perfect her olfactory talent. She has a success rate in locating the insects of around 95%, very much higher than that of any human. Other dogs are now working in Paris and Toulouse. Bad news for bugs." ■

Useful sites:

nhs.uk/Conditions/bed-bugs/

badbedbugs.com

allthingsbedbugs.org

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HERE AND THERE: Valentine's Edition

What is a sex toy? Nathalie Giraud found out when she returned to her native France after years of living in England and Edinburgh.

BY NANCY HESLIN



Photo: ©Vincent Artus

Sex Therapist Nathalie Giraud can be heard on Sud Radio (99.9 FM) or read her blog at <http://nathalie.pimentrose.net>

Her book *Plaisir: Manuel pratique du sexe à l'usage des femmes* was published in 2008, and sold with a vibrator until theft of the toys became such a problem that Leclerc and FNAC had to stop selling it.

Nathalie Giraud was born in the South of France but grew up in Paris. She has quite a varied background – a mother born in Casablanca, a Turkish father, a Dutch-English grandmother – and admits, “In my heart I knew I didn’t belong to a place but rather to a set of cultures.”

This belief took Nathalie to the UK to study English-language immersion. One of her earliest memories of travelling abroad was at the age of 12 at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. “The airport had just been built, I was lost, had missed my plane and was on my own. I remember finally arriving in the UK, thinking I was so fashionable coming from Paris wearing my little socks and sandals, and I sat down to eat a cucumber sandwich on soggy white bread. It was so disgusting.”

Nathalie went to university in Aix-en-Provence to study *Langues Etrangères Appliquées* (LEA) and when her parents moved to Nice, she followed them and continued her studies at the IUT, taking *techniques de commercialisation* – marketing – with a certain Professor Patrick Middleton. “Thanks to Patrick, who had no subtleties in his approach but was such an enthusiastic teacher, I had the opportunity to take my MBA in the UK. Before starting the degree, I went to London for two months to brush up on my English and lived with a family, who mercilessly teased me about going to study in Bradford, West Yorkshire. ‘How awful!’ they would say. In fact, it wasn’t the place but the course load – I was doing a two-year program in 12 months – that was difficult and if it hadn’t been for my parents’ support, I would not have graduated.

“After I decided to stay on and improve my English. I got a job as a commercial manager with ICI – Imperial Chemical Industries – and worked six years with them, travelling Europe and the US implementing IT systems. It was a real male-dominated business and I wanted to assert myself but I reached the glass ceiling. I wasn’t from Oxford or Cambridge, and I was a woman. So on January 1st, 1992, I left and travelled the world for six months. My Scottish boyfriend at the time, who I had met in Manchester, flew to Australia to meet me and if it hadn’t been for him, I would have stayed Down Under or in New Zealand. But he was waiting so I went to Edinburgh.

“At that point, I was disconnected from routine and knew no one. I began to import furniture from Bali, and do home parties

until I became a wholesaler and opened my own shop. We got married, I had a son, and then the running of my own business took its toll. So we opted together to move to the South of France. My dad worked in the yachting industry and we figured my husband could find work in English through him. In 1999, we bought a house, my husband worked with my dad, and our second son was born in France.”

More than being a wife and a mum

“It was so hard for me to settle here. After the birth of my second child, I took a sabbatical year and did some volunteer work. I was lost in the middle of motherhood and being unemployed, and had too much free time to think. Meanwhile my husband didn’t like the sun, the French and especially the work ethic here (‘they’re all thieves’). And he couldn’t understand all the delays with the work on our house. We were each going through our own thing.

“I joined the AVF’s Tumble Tots and connected with other expat mums. This is where you see a big difference in the French, who are envious of what they don’t have, where as expats aren’t like this. And I find English speakers accept you right away but with the French it takes so much time – and I’m French! Anyway, every other week, the girls would meet for a potluck dinner – no husbands, no kids, no dogs – and we’d watch an episode of *Sex and the City*. This, especially the vibrator episode, led to some interesting talks about sexuality, something many of us had never dared speak of. It made me realise that I wanted to spice up my love life and eventually planted a seed for my business. An

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American girlfriend brought me some erotic cream and a vibrator from the US and I discovered a whole new world. I gave out samples of the cream to my friends who were calling me, "Where can I get more of this stuff?" I did some research, drew up a business plan and even approached Ann Summers in the UK to launch a business here – unheard of in France at that time – but they were interested in Spain. So I did it myself. Again, at that time, sex shops and websites were vulgar and I didn't want to be associated with that image. I trained in the UK and became a sex therapist and love coach, and in 2003, I set up www.pimentrose.biz selling lingerie and sex accessories online and at home parties. I was like a bulldozer on a mission to break through the taboos of sexuality, and the harder I pushed, the more

my own cocoon of femininity opened up."

Seen as a desperate woman with no values

"Unfortunately, the stronger I grew, the more isolated my husband became. At one point I had 15 sellers working for me. You can imagine how many audits my accountant had! At first, sales were 90% lingerie/10% erotica, and mostly within the English-speaking community. Then the scale started to slide and I knew I had to come clean with my parents about what my business really was. My mum would have preferred something else but they remained unconditionally supportive. I was on top of the world, and my MBA learning of brand and identity became pertinent. Journalists loved articles on me because the visuals, the duck and lipstick

vibrators, were so great and I was invited on national radio, like RMC Info. I worked with gynaecologists to explain to women the use of Geisha balls to strengthen the pelvis or help with urinary problems after birth. Even though there were strong moral barriers in this country, I was so convinced that what I was doing was right that I didn't see how hard it was on my marriage. Consequently, as fast as the business took off, so my marriage declined. I divorced in 2006. Two years later, I parted ways with my business associate and it was equally as painful. Now I mostly do workshops and consultations on the Côte d'Azur and in Paris, and also offer couple and individual counselling as a love coach. I'm still referred to as 'the pioneer of sex toys' and have a talk show on Sud Radio."

What are some of Nathalie's observations about the French and the English? "The difference between eating to live and living to eat, as Mr Jourdain from Molière's *The Bourgeois Gentleman* would say. The French are homebodies whereas the Scottish in particular loved to be out and socialise, there was always a barbecue to go to. On the work side, I learned that a French accent opens many doors but closes some, and that English tradesmen do as they say, whereas in France they just 'say'."

Did she ever have problems with the English language? "I really wanted to speak English well. When we bought our Victorian home in Scotland in 1995, I told everyone we had beautiful wooden *dildos* all around our home. Now I look back and realise that it was a sign of the future." ■

**1 of 3 women who meet men online have sex on the first encounter;
4 out of 5 did not use protection. Source: manvsdate.com**

Meet the vet

In the first of this series we talk to Dr Louise Pinet.



Dr Pinet, pictured with her cat Pinceau, has lived on the Riviera for more than 20 years.

Louise Pinet is Canadian and equally at home in French or English. Must be *Québécoise*, you might assume. “Not at all,” she says firmly. “I’m a *Nouveau-Brunswickoise* and we’re very proud of our separate identity. We became part of the British Empire close on 250 years ago but still around 40% of us are bilingual and deeply attached to our francophone culture.” Dr Pinet grew up on a farm in an area where her father acted as an unofficial vet. “I decided very early on it was the job I wanted. It wasn’t easy to get trained in the Maritime Provinces so I qualified as a nurse and then moved to France, taking up my veterinary studies in Toulouse. After graduating I moved to the Riviera and I’m now just outside Monaco.”

I quoted two figures to Dr Pinet. First, 50 years ago there were 40 vets in the Alpes-Maritimes; now there are 180. “That’s because people now seem more concerned with their animals’ health than was once the case.” Second, of working vets in France 80% are now women. “That’s largely because there’s now much less heavy veterinary work available on farms

– birthing calves and so on. Most of our time is spent dealing with small animals with a few vets choosing to specialise – like those who look after horses at the race course in Cagnes-sur-Mer.”

So what sort of canine patients does she see mainly? “Mostly smaller dogs. You need to be careful what breed you choose here. A big hairy Newfoundland wouldn’t be too happy in this climate.” How would she rate most of the dog owners she meets? “In most cases very highly. People are very alert to their animals’ health, occasionally rather too much so. Once the problems of puppyhood have been worked through, it should suffice to bring a dog in twice a year for a check-up. That’s of course, if there are no obvious problems.”

Leishmaniasis: good news

Such as? “Well, as you know leishmaniasis is a problem here and it’s a disease that can kill. Even when there’s apparent recovery a dog will be on permanent medication for the rest of its life. But there’s recently been some good news. There’s now a vaccine available that seems to be effective in well over 90% of cases. It can prevent the infection, but it can’t cure it once it’s been contracted.” And what about those prophylactic Scalibor collars? “They’re pretty effective against infections caused by ticks – such as Lyme disease – and also they discourage the sandfly mosquito which is the vector of leishmaniasis, though in that case vaccination is the way to go.”

In brief, finally, what’s the recipe for keeping a dog healthy? “Well, leaving aside accidents and sudden illness, it’s a matter of plenty of exercise, good hygiene, a sensible diet with a minimum of munching between meals and, of course, that regular check-up.” *P.M.* ■

Travelling from France with Fido

A *travelorg* survey in 2009 showed that nearly 50% of US leisure travellers consider their pet to be part of the family and 18% usually take their pet with them when they travel. If you’re moving or travelling and want to take your dog, Transports Mari in Nice now handles all the veterinary, administrative and customs formalities, as well as providing comfort and safety while transporting your pet.

Christophe Mari: “We have an established reputation for moving and shipping but we are the only certified specialist offering pet transport services. Pets must travel in suitable containers as required by your chosen airline, and be able to sit and turn around and have water in accordance with IATA regulations. The minimal documents you’ll need are the *carnet de santé* and rabies vaccination certificate, however, each country has specific regulations – for example, veterinary inspection at the airport and necessary import permits. From preflight to arrival, we’ll take care of it all.”

To calculate the size of a travel container your dog would need, go to transports-mari.com/animaux.html; for advice on bird, reptile, and even hamster containers, contact Transports Mari (see ad on page 17) directly.

A reminder also that as of January 1st the UK Pet Travel Scheme changed. In accord with other EU countries, all pets still need to be vaccinated against rabies but will no longer be subjected to quarantine. Says Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman, “The UK’s quarantine system was designed to combat the threat of rabies in the 19th century. It’s time we changed these outdated rules which have caused hardship to generations of pets and pet owners, with too many animals cooped up unnecessarily.” Pets can now enter and re-enter the country from the EU and listed non-EU countries, such as the USA and Australia, without a blood test and will only have to wait 21 days before they travel. See Travelling with Pets at defra.gov.uk

Policies for pooches

Here's an odd statistic: while 80% of Swedes take out health insurance for their dog as do 35% of Brits, only 4% of the French hold a policy to cover vets' bills. One common explanation we've heard is that health insurance for dogs is expensive – but so is a lot of veterinary care.

Our advice – with which most vets would concur – is that the Swedes show the way to go. But don't hang about – most companies have an age limit (between 5 and 8 years) after which a dog can't be signed up. Also policies don't kick in until a certain time after enrolment so don't wait until your canine companion gets sick or has an accident.

As in any area of insurance, you need to look carefully at what's offered. Prices vary with the animal's breed and the degree of cover required. Very cheap policies don't offer much. You need to check what sort of payout you'll get in the case of illness, accident, hospitalisation, surgery and for medication. Watch out for limits on payment and exclusions (commonly these include hereditary diseases and hunting accidents). A reasonable policy for a poodle would cost around €340 a year, for a Labrador maybe €385. For more detailed information see www.assurance-chien.com

The canine connection

Dr Thomas Stuttford, the very sensible medical columnist of *The Oldie*, wrote recently of the key role dogs play in human social life. Not only do they themselves offer valued companionship to their owners but, as any dog walker knows, they often lead to agreeable encounters with other people.

Within this context we were interested to hear of the *Association Chiens Citadins* – set up here by Marie-Anne Saccomano. She explains: "We are concerned with the interests of both dogs and their owners. We encourage our members to educate their animals to be good citizens with respect for people and places and especially on the street. We also want to share our pleasure in canine company with others. We've developed a programme of regular visits to retirement homes and this has been a great success. Then we've established a system of *nounous* – nannies, if you like – who visit or walk other people's dogs when necessary. At the same time, our members share their experiences of living with and training their dogs. We learn a lot from each other." To find out more (in French) see chiens-citadins.fr. So what about some English-speaking groups on these lines?



Photo: tanakawho



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So what comes next? In the long run, as J.M. Keynes famously insisted, we're all dead

And then what?

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



A few months ago, around All Souls Day, the French media were as usual full of items about aspects of death, from the cost of coffins to how to talk to the newly bereaved. But at any time of year thoughts may turn to the fundamental question of what – if anything – happens after we've been pronounced dead. Even though a lot of West Europeans have given up church-going (only one in ten of the French, for example shows up regularly at Mass these days), surveys reveal here and elsewhere a persistent hankering after some notion of a life after death.

Britain... most haunted country

This is easier in a way for Brits because they have a rich tradition of ghostly activity to draw on. As Peter Ackroyd points out in his *The English Ghost: Spectres Through Time* (UK: Chatto and Windus) Britain is the continent's most haunted country and he illustrates

this with dozens of stories from across the centuries. Currently, the most haunted village in the UK is Puckley in Kent that claims to host up to 14 ghosts.

When some years ago Florence Massin presented a guide to French hauntings – slim pickings compared with Ackroyd's crowded pages – she didn't list a single case in either the Alpes-Maritimes or the Var. When I made some enquiries myself I found that most of the Riviera ghosts I came across had chosen to haunt expat Brits, from the monk who materialised sometimes in the Chateaufort-de-Grasse home of the late Commander Gavin Goodhart through Edith Piaf who troubled an English couple living in her former villa (she sang to their small daughter from time to time) to Mr Duck, a suicide who (it's alleged) is a discomfiting presence in Posh and Beck's house in Bargemon (up for sale, I hear). And, as a matter of incidental

The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch, painted between 1490 and 1510. Is it a moral forewarning or panorama of paradise lost?

interest, France's most famous haunting – that of le Petit Trianon at Versailles – was only witnessed by two elderly English spinsters.

Doing the Devil's work

For some people, certainly, accounts of ghosts are consoling ("If that monk can come back, then why not Mum?"). They are discouraged by the body of research which offers a brisk dismissal of all such tales. Perhaps France's next eminent ghost hunter is Henri Broch, a professor of physics at the University of Nice. As he once put it to me, "In my work across decades I've never found the slightest evidence to support belief in ghosts. There's always a way, given time and effort, to dispose of these stories in rational terms."

With spooks rather rare here, and *lycée* teachers, especially, often exponents of Broch-style scepticism, the French have been



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inclined to seek comfort more in the activities of “seers” or *voyants*, individuals – usually women – whose claimed supernatural gifts often include an ability to put the living in touch with the dead. They do well in France – much to the irritation of Henri Broch – with a collective annual turnover of some €3 billion. They exist also, of course, across the Channel, even if fewer in number. Back in the Nineties I did a radio show here with the once celebrated London medium Doris Collins. Listeners called in, answered a few questions and then Doris would describe the dear departed who had arrived (invisibly to me, of course) in the studio. I quickly concluded that the lady – a cheery though decidedly common sort – was a purveyor of hokum. Anyway, she quickly decided that I had no competence in psychic matters. During an ad break she told me, sadly, that nobody “on the other side” wanted to make contact with me ... and that, ultimate humiliation, I didn’t have “an aura”. On the other hand, I got calls and letters later from listeners – all women – who told me they had been greatly comforted by the show. Not so Alan Mathers, then Anglican chaplain in Cannes, who told me Doris was “doing the Devil’s work”.

You go in these big golden gates

The chaplain’s point appeared to be that it was not for us to enquire into the nature of the post-mortem world, despite the complex and often contradictory character of, for example, Christian teaching on the subject. That’s not a universal view, of course, especially in America. A current best-seller – two million copies sold – is *Heaven is For Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* (US: Thomas Nelson). Here’s the background: coming up to four-years-old, Colton Burpo fell victim to peritonitis, went into a coma but recovered. Later he told his father Todd, a garage-door salesman who moonlights as a pastor, that he’d “been to Paradise”. So what’s it like? Colton related his heavenly experience and his father, aided by Lynn Vincent (who’s ghosted material for Sarah Palin), turned it into a book. The boy recalls: “You go in these big golden gates all covered in pearls ... everyone’s got wings except Jesus who moves up and down like an elevator ... everybody looks young and nobody wears eyeglasses ... and I saw Jesus close up and he’s got a pointy beard and bright blue eyes.” Well, thanks for that son but I have to tell you it doesn’t make me any keener on dying. ■

Brits buried. Who cares?

Just a year ago we wrote about what was happening to the old British graveyard at Caucade in Nice. As Richard Challoner explained, “Back in the Seventies the Church of England handed the cemetery over to the municipality. They began selling off graves classified as *abandonnés* at €6000 each. The remains in such cases go into a common grave. They stopped that for a while but now they plan a massive clearout.”

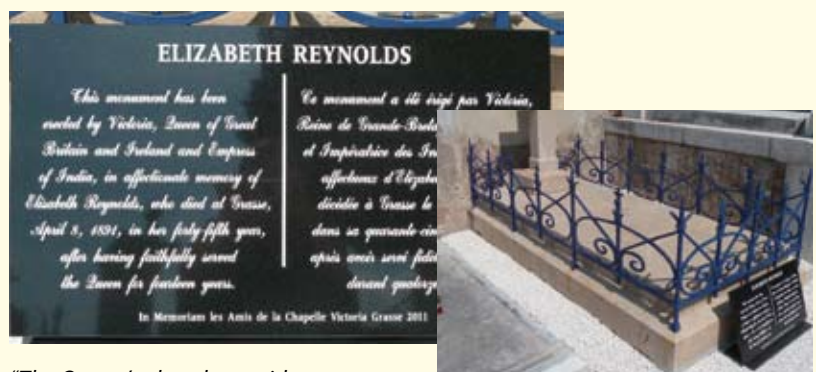
This was a slice of our community history which had long been neglected. Richard, among others, felt strongly about this, and worked on getting the situation more widely known, here and in the UK.

He wrote to Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Gibraltar, who was too busy to reply personally but instructed a curial flunkey to send a few lines suggesting that Richard get on with cleaning up the graves himself. “With all respect,” says Richard, “I was disappointed.”

But a more heart-warming story: in his fascinating book

Queen Victoria and the Discovery of the French Riviera, Michael Nelson (see Bookshelf) writes that in April 1891, when Victoria and her itinerant mini-court were staying in Grasse, her personal maid Elizabeth Reynolds died of blood poisoning. The Queen was greatly upset by this, writing in her diary “I went to see her lying peacefully and with such a happy look on her face after such a sad time of suffering.” She took a close interest in the funeral and before returning to England visited the grave in St Brigitte’s Cemetery which she found to be “a neglected dreary churchyard”. Michael Nelson wrote: “Today Elizabeth’s grave is neglected with the lettering indecipherable.”

This caught the attention of Gilles Teulié, a member of *Les Amis de la Chapelle Victoria* where Elizabeth’s body had lain before her burial. As M. Teulié explained, “We were touched by what Michael Nelson wrote about the grave and we decided to take care of it.” And so they did, as our pictures show. Their gesture puts to shame the descendants of those classy folk in Caucade. ■



“The Queen’s chambermaid, Elizabeth Reynolds, was poisoned by a sting and died in Grasse on April 8th, 1891. Queen Victoria was in the throes of agony for her servant, while at the same time being kept up to date with events in India where a revolt in Manipur was causing British nationals to fear the worst.” Gilles Teulié, *The English Chapel*

Can words help?

Peter Massey, a priest of the Church of Ireland, who has worked in the Var for some years, has much experience of talking to the dying and to those they leave behind.



Peter and Shirley Massey run L'Oasis, a support group that meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month in Lorgues.

It's been one of those weeks which has involved three funerals. This actually means three families experiencing the loss of a loved one and each in their own way asking the question, "What comes next?" As a Christian minister serving in the Var amongst an ageing expat community, this is a regular part of our ministry here and increasingly so. The question, "What comes next?" is seldom asked directly, but is clearly part and parcel of the whole experience of losing a loved one and the subsequent grieving process. People search for connectivity and will often explore many avenues to do this, but for the Christian, the answer is, on the face of it, simple: Jesus died for me, took on the burden of all that was wrong in my life, and set me free. That gives me a hope and a future beyond this life, if I am able to accept that. And there is the dilemma because it requires me to believe, firstly, that Jesus did actually rise from the dead and, secondly, that that is my hope as well. Regrettably there is no proof, no one has come back to say, "It's all okay"; there is only faith and the message of the Gospel.

In the secular and violent world that we live in, full of natural and man-made disasters, it's a hard sell. How can a loving God allow all this pain and suffering on a national and personal level? It just does not add up. But that is part of the big picture, we are just passing through this life and make the best of it we can. Death is after all a fact of life but a belief in God or a power higher than ourselves, and life after death is not a unique thing to Christianity and is shared by many world religions. So who does

have the answer? Maybe we all have a bit of it, a piece of the truth and could benefit from listening and sharing with each other, which has to be better than fighting and history proves that. The track record of religion, if we are honest, is not great.

For me the message I must convey is clearly expressed in the opening of the Anglican Funeral Service, "God's love and power extends over all creation. Every life, including our own, is precious to God. Christians have always believed there is hope in death as in life, that there is new life in Christ after death, that is our hope." And I try to share that sentiment at every funeral I take, and with every family I am privileged to help at this difficult time in their lives. I think it is true to say that most of these occasions are with people of no faith or belief, but I also have to say that never is there an absence of hope which is expressed through those who love and support the grieving families.

Whether anything at all "came after"

So what does come next? Jesus said, "Seek heaven here on earth, the Kingdom of God is all around you." I never cease to be amazed at the expressions of love, empathy, compassion and care for those going through the pain of loss. I see Christianity living and breathing through many people who have yet to work it out in their heads and their hearts and for whom church has no relevance. The simplicity of accepting "Jesus died for me and that I will live in eternity with him" is always a unique journey that can be completed in an instant or may take a lifetime; it took me 40 years and I have still much to learn through the experiences and people I encounter. I have been with two people as they have died, one was my father many years ago, and the second, a friend quite recently. Through both those occasions, as I questioned the very existence of God, and I was left with absolutely no doubt of God's love and his presence. My faith was strengthened, and perhaps that was necessary for the ministry that we are immersed in here in France. My conviction, as life ebbed away before me in these two people, was the assurance that there was a life after death in the way I believe and share with others through our ministry. I am certain that belief will be challenged again and again in the years ahead, for doubt is the other side of the coin of faith; the two are inseparable. But I am also certain that every time that coin is spun, it will come down Faith side up. I do not understand it, but I know it to be true. I doubt if I have answered the question about what follows this life, but just maybe that question has become a little more relevant and worth exploring. **Peter Massey** ■

2011 Ipsos/Reuters poll of 18,000 people in 23 countries found:

51% believe in the afterlife

23% think they'll just "cease to exist"

26% don't know what will happen after death

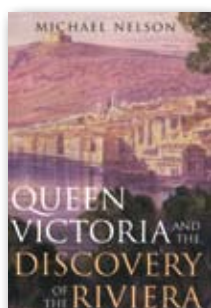
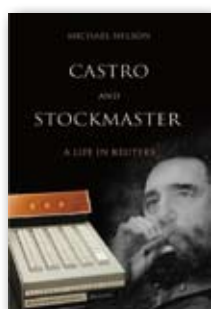


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BOOKSHELF

The Riviera's history man



There's a constant flow of books about this region, ranging from dreary helpings of pastis-flavoured mush to works of genuine historical and social interest. These latter offer a rewarding task to the reviewer and I recall with pleasure Michael Nelson's books on Queen Victoria's visits to the Riviera and on the American connection to this area. Nelson is unusual in that he took up historical writing only when, at 60, he retired as General Manager of Reuters where he'd worked for 36 years. In his recently published *Castro and Stockmaster: A Life in Reuters* (UK: Matador) he looks back on that career and on his years as a born-again historian. (He'd been a pupil of A.J.P. Taylor at Oxford.)

Historian of "the Anglo Riviera"

According to the *Financial Times*, Nelson was "the real mastermind behind Reuters leap into electronic information services". Business memoirs can be boring but he has avoided this by blending a basically chronological account with a shifting focus on a variety

of topics. Along the way he introduces a diverse mix of personalities, from Maxwell and Murdoch to lesser-known figures such as Ronnie Waldman and Robert Escarpit. He has little use for the *nisi bunkum* approach towards those he writes of but presents his own considerable achievements with a well-managed modesty.

After retiring he got down to serious writing and in 1997 brought out *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War*. The topic attracts me but I've not yet managed to get hold of the book. It was finished, by the way, in the house in Opio where the Nelsons have been spending part of the year since the early Nineties. Living here he eventually found a vocation as an historian of "the Anglo-Riviera".

Thorough research

In 2001 he published *Queen Victoria and the Discovery of the Riviera* (reviewed in *Reporter* 86) which made a significant and innovative contribution to the well-tilled field of the Queen's biography. Curiously, he now reveals, when he submitted his

text for comment to Lady de Bellaigue, Registrar of the Royal Archives at Windsor, he was faced with marked disapproval: "Such was her negative reaction I could see the book might never be published." He won out finally, though, and was pleased to be told that the present Queen "said it looked most interesting and took it to Balmoral for her summer holiday". Seven years later there followed *Americans and the Making of the Riviera* (reviewed in *Reporter* 126). Again, a work based on much thorough research and, as I wrote at the time, "a plum cake of a book, full of tasty morsels". One remarkable discovery in a Washington archive was that as the war ended Prince Louis II, earlier an enthusiastic schmoozer of Hitler, "vainly requested the US to annex Monaco as an American territory".

As an old pro, Michael Nelson has a scrupulous eye for copy and, as usual, offers few nits to pick: the Bowes Lyon family name, though, acquires an unwanted final-s and in the text (though not in the index) we hear of a mysterious *Colombia Journalism Review*. **P.M.** ■

Talking dirty

BY JAMES HARTLEY
DIRECTOR, ENGLISH GARDEN GROUP



Wild pigs (*Sus scrofa*) can reach up to 2m in length, weigh over 200kg, live an average of 15 years and travel up to 50km/h – surprising for their stature. Combined with their bristly fur and tusks these can be quite formidable beasts, but the reality is that these are fairly timid animals that usually run (and fast!) when disturbed.

For some reason I seem to keep turning up at wild parties well after they've finished. By the time I get there, all of the participants have long departed, but I can usually tell from the mess that's left behind that I missed out on quite an event. The last time this happened, up in Roquefort-les-Pins, it looked like an EU summit after-party had taken place, and shockingly, from the marks left behind in the garden and the footprints in the mud, all the indications were that some of the participants had engaged in some very dirty frolics indeed. Outrageous you might think, and possibly no doubt the kind of event Berlusconi would have relished – yet thankfully I didn't feel that excluded, as it transpired that the owners of the property hadn't been sent invitations either. It turns out the occasion was less "car keys in the bowl" and more "trotters in the birdbath". That's right: I'm talking boar.

I might make light of it, but to the uninitiated, seeing your garden after a visit from these blighters is no laughing matter. Indeed, the party atmosphere evaporates faster than you can say *daube sanglier* when you realise that the grass you've been lovingly tending has been assiduously ploughed from end to end. Annoyingly, they manage to shred the turf in a manner that makes replacing it in even a vaguely satisfactory way nigh on impossible: the result is nearly always that even after your best efforts, what was once a gloriously even emerald thatch looks like it has suddenly protracted a bad case of alopecia. On one memorable occasion I had nearly all of the plants my staff planted in a garden the day before lifted out of their holes as if someone had passed round a memo indicating that a giant truffle had been hidden under one of them. I say memorable – nobody was smiling that morning.

What a boar

The word "boar" is used for adult males of several species including the domestic pig, however although perhaps a little confusingly, in the case of wild boar, the title covers the entire species. Despite their reputation, these animals will only attack if cornered or when defending their young. Young boar, known as *marcassins* in French, have classic striped markings that disappear as they get a little older, so if you get to see these stripes, there is probably a mother nearby and you should probably be running away. That said, they are known to give fair warning when they are getting agitated, announced by a loud smacking of their teeth (*casse la noisette*) – probably another feature best experienced in conjunction with rapid movement in the opposing direction.

The term "wild boar" in common parlance covers both feral pigs (domestic animals that have escaped) and the native species. The two animals can freely hybridise (and indeed do, to produce animals with much bigger litters than normal), and wild boar are native right across central and northern Europe, the Mediterranean region, much of Asia and as artificial introductions to the Americas and Australasia. Interestingly, while the domestic pig has 38 chromosomes, the boar has only 36: first generation hybrids have 37 and after this they can have 36, 37 or 38. In French, the word *sanglier* is derived from the Latin word *singularis*, since adult males live a solitary existence outside of the breeding season (in autumn, triggered by shortening days), wandering around much of the time on their own. Mainly nocturnal, these stocky creatures will eat almost anything edible they come across, from fruits and berries, to roots, tubers, insects, refuse and small reptiles.

Obviously you have to consider protection from these horticultural louts, and ASBOs just aren't going to cut it. You need to consider more comprehensive measures, and this boils down to two options: electric or physical prevention.

Amped up

Unfortunately, while many will tout the benefits of a good electric shock (something else that would perhaps be good for quite a few members of an EU summit), electric fences in my experience never seem to work that well for gardens in our area.



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In principle, they work superbly, by sending very short duration pulses of low-current high voltage power (usually between two and ten thousand volts) at regular intervals around twine cables woven with a wire strand, which is delivered when any earthed animal (or unsuspecting gardener) comes into contact with it. The problem however is that every branch and bit of scrub that touches the cable is also earthed, consequently sapping the power from the cable. In almost every case where garden owners have tried an electric fence, the protection is soon rendered useless by vegetation as they are simply not able to adequately maintain it, and the boars have returned. That said, if you have a problem with boar and have a property where the periphery is clear of shrubs and scrub and is easily maintained, an electric fence could be a good solution for you. They are quick to install and fairly inexpensive, the best units being those that have electronic power controls and can adapt their output to the installation they are attached to.

Border control

For those that have given up on electric fences or are reluctant to adopt Guantanamo-esque property protection, the solution that remains is better fencing. The reality is that fencing is quite capable of repelling boar on a definitive basis, however it does need to have some specific characteristics and the downside is that it is more expensive to install. It should be at least 150cms high (180cms is better as they are surprisingly athletic and can jump!), be made of wire at least 2.5mm thick and have stakes no further apart than 3m. Probably most importantly, the base needs to be continued out towards the boar and pinned down. (This is the alternative to burial of the bottom of the fence that's even better but difficult in our rocky ground). Adding a line or two of barbed wire at ground level (a "snout wire") increases protection by dissuading their investigation of your new installation. A well-installed boundary with these characteristics will usually do the trick.

However, when all's said and done, if you happen to have a particularly tempting garden and they are persistent in trying to get in, keeping them out isn't easy and you'll no doubt have to put up with the occasional unplanned social event. But I suppose some consolation can be drawn from that fact that even the EU have trouble with guests that really should never have been invited to the party – they're all still wondering how Greece got in. Sadly, as with the boar, it's a "feta" compli. ■



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Banque Populaire V skipper Loïck Peyron and British helmsman and trimmer Brian Thompson break round-the-world record

Around the world in 45 days ... and 13 hours, 42 minutes, 53 seconds

Jules Verne – who reckoned it could be done in no less than 80 days over land and sea – would be astounded that the round-the-world record named after him could take less than 46 days under sail. As proven by the 40-metre maxi-trimaran *Banque Populaire V* on January 7th, when it slashed nearly three days off the existing record held by *Groupama 3*, skippered by another Frenchman, Franck Cammas.

Circumnavigating the globe is sailing's ultimate iconic challenge and one of the most dangerous. Nigel Burgess, who inspired the founding of *The Riviera Reporter* by first introducing Meade to Middleton, perished at sea in 1992 during his participation in the Vendée Globe single-handed challenge.

Non-stop or in steps, solo or crewed, with support or without, French or British claimants to maritime records have historically been top of the leader board. This time round it was a 14-man team under 52-year-old skipper Loïck Peyron to claim the latest Jules Verne Trophy for the fastest

circumnavigation under sail by any type of boat. The last non-French yachtsmen to win the trophy were Briton Robin Knox-Johnson and New Zealander Peter Blake in 1994. Since then the record has been broken five times, every time by a French entry – twice by Bruno Peyron, Loïck's elder brother.

Also on board *Banque Populaire V* was Swiss shift supervisor Yvan Ravussin, 46, and British helmsman and trimmer, 49-year-old Brian Thompson who has been sailing since the age of three. He described his *Banque Pop* teammates as "talented, industrious, dedicated, fun and welcoming to an English guy with schoolboy French". If only Sarko and Cameron could get along that well.

As part of Peyron's crew, Thompson became the first Briton to circumnavigate the globe non-stop for a fourth time, beating existing records held by fellow sailors Dee Caffari and Mike Golding. *Banque Populaire V* averaged over 800 miles a day at speeds of up to 48 knots (55mph) over the 33,396 mile course from the Créac'h Lighthouse on the French Island of Ouessant to the Lizard Lighthouse in the UK, the accepted benchmarks for round the world sailing records.

Could it happen here?

BY MICHAEL HEALY

When Captain Francesco Schettino sailed from Civitavecchia on Friday January 13th, he knew of the old seamen's superstition about putting to sea on such a day in his ship *Costa Concordia*. But his job was to follow the Costa Line cruise plan with safe entertainment for seven days of Mediterranean cruising. That evening he deviated to pass close along the east coast of the isle of Giglio, providing a spectacle for the islanders. Alas, manoeuvring by eye too close, he grounded on Le Scole, a cluster of (well-charted) underwater rocks just south of Giglio Porto, tearing a huge gash along the port hull. Continuing northward, he was forced to turn back and find a place to beach his stricken ship and avoid her sinking in the deep water with 4000 souls on board, and so she arrived on Punta Gabbianara where she half capsized to starboard. That emergency manoeuvre allowed passengers and crew to be evacuated to the nearby port; it is a miracle that the death toll was only in double figures, thanks to favourable weather rather than the leadership of the deck officers. Almost everyone on board lost all possessions, and Italy is faced with an environmental disaster from oil pollution and to the huge task of salvaging or demolishing the wreck. Neither may be possible.

Costa Concordia was a proud cruise liner of 114,500 tons, the biggest ever built in Italy when launched near Genoa in 2006. At 952 feet long, she was bigger than the *Titanic*, which had foundered 100 years earlier (April 1912) losing 1517 lives. *Concordia's* loss on global TV, apart from the human tragedies, is a catastrophe for the popular cruise industry, which was forecast to attract 20.3 million passengers in 2012.

Captain Schettino will be judged for manslaughter by recklessness, and on other charges. But could it happen here on the Riviera? We see huge numbers of cruise liners close inshore – in Monaco and Nice, and anchored off Villefranche, Cannes and Monaco. Most of them are Bahamas-registered, and a majority by tradition have Norwegian captains – not Ferrari drivers. But there are also many British captains, and these are also the men and women who command most of the mega-yachts spending the summers here. While the *paquebots* are guided inshore by local pilots, the yachts are free to manoeuvre (outside 300 metres from shore) wherever the owner wishes. (Pilots board mega-yachts only for Villefranche Bay and in the harbours.) Yacht captains are expert ship-handlers because they usually berth their vessels stern-to in the Riviera ports, laying out two bow anchors before backing in to a narrow gap between neighbours. But accidents will always happen. Make sure you can swim. ■

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Monaco murmurs



BY MOLLY BROWN

Earlier in the month, SBM presented the new face of Sporting d'Hiver (above). This project is expected to create 750 jobs in the Principality and save €40 million a month. SBM Chairman Jean Luc Biamonti recalled: "The Monte-Carlo Bay cost €220 million. Sporting will be far more complex to achieve so we will be above that figure."

Photo: ©SBM.

Monaco begins the New Year in a positive mood for, after all, the circus is in town and Minister of State, Michel Roger, is optimistic about the future. With enough money in reserve to keep the economy going for two years in case of a euro disaster, he stressed the need for caution, but also the importance of continuing future growth. Instead of using reserve funds, private investors will participate in financing future government projects, as with the Odeon Tower, Novotel and Columbus Hotels; thus, economic development will continue.

Sporting d'hiver doomed

SBM immediately unveiled their plan to demolish the unique art deco Sporting d'Hiver and build a group of three uninspiring modern towers, designed by Lord Richard Rogers, architect of London's controversial Millennium Dome. With a provisional budget of €220 million, the 4-year project will begin in 2016 and provide 36 luxury apartments, 3000sqm conference space, 4500sqm offices, an 800sqm exhibition area, another luxury shopping centre, more than 500 underground parking spaces and ... "to preserve the architectural memory of the Sporting d'Hiver, the Salle des Arts will be recreated inside this contemporary setting"!! After 90 years of history at the heart of Monte Carlo, the scene of grand balls, legendary performances, world famous artists and Les Ballets Russes, where Maurice Chevalier hosted the first broadcast of Radio Monte

Carlo on July 17, 1943, the whole building should be preserved as an architectural memory. Although all objections to this contentious scheme have been so far ignored, surely there will be second thoughts or other economically viable ideas considered in the four years before the bulldozers move in to destroy the most important art deco building in the South of Europe and replace it with a "nice" modern provincial High Street.

New year, new look

There is no danger of urban sprawl in Monaco as in the UK, no countryside to lose (just a park and a few old trees) and the sky is the limit; so a Hong Kong-style skyline seems inevitable as Monaco's big developers tear down last century's elegant villas and build Stalinesque apartment blocks, with no apparent control on either their location or architectural design. As new businesses are essential for growth and to encourage them to move to the Principality, the government is building more schools and a larger hospital and, to make it easier for newcomers to deal with the formalities, opening a "Monaco Welcome Office". It seems that Monaco will remain a building site for the indiscernible future.

A spring festival of music

Monaco's music festivals are certainly part of its charm. Not only is Sting celebrating his 60th birthday with a special performance in Salle des Étoiles on February 26th but Printemps des arts (Mar 16-Apr 8; www.printempsdesarts.com) celebrates accordion music and Bruckner, with orchestras of Zurich, Dresdner, the London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra and a "Bling Bling Classic" evening starring pianist Anastasya Terenkova. An outstanding performance by Erwin Schrott in Opéra de Monte Carlo's *Mefistofele* at the *Fête Nationale* with the choirs of Monaco and Nice opera opened an exciting opera season, which continues with Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa* and *Francesca da Rimini* in March. As music is not the only food of love, Monte Carlo's Food and Wine Festival (monte-carlowinefestival.com) is celebrating the specialities of the Cote d'Azur and Italy (Feb 10-12) just before Valentine's Day, but it could be diamonds instead of chocolates this year. It is a Leap Year, so bachelors beware! ■



Long seen as *the* original beach club and where parts of *And God Created Women* were filmed, La Voile Rouge has served Bardot to Princess Grace and in more recent times, Paris Hilton, left, and Pamela Anderson, right, proving there were “no qualms seating a grandmother in a Chanel pantsuit next to a topless-teenager having Chandon sipped from her belly button”.

HS2 and LGV: the same battle?



The controversial HS2 high-speed line between London and Birmingham has been given the go-ahead by the House of Commons. Applauded by those who will cash in on the £32 billion investment, it will nevertheless desecrate some of Britain’s historic old homes, traditional villages and areas of outstanding natural beauty, notably in the Chilterns. Political careers are on the line as opponents and supporters of the project continue to cross swords.

The same could certainly be said for the LGV (*Ligne à Grande Vitesse*) plan to link the current TGV hub at Marseille St Charles with Nice, and eventually on to Italy over high-speed track. Currently the TGV Marseille-Nice route travels at conventional speeds over existing rails. At least €15bn will be needed to build and upgrade the infrastructure to high-speed capability and, even in the most optimistic estimate, this will mean new routes through many beautiful parts of the Var that have not yet been defaced by “progress”.

Environmentally disruptive, swathes of farmland will be expropriated and quiet country roads will see a massive increase in heavy vehicle traffic during construction, which could go on until the trains start to roll in 2023.

The final decision of the LGV route should have been decided 18 months ago but, following increased local opposition, that has now been pushed back until after this year’s elections. There are four possible scenarios, some of them alongside stretches of existing track, notably between Toulon and Draguignan; other options will require mostly new track through untouched areas along proposed northern or southern routes. In all cases the LGV will go through the switching yard at Les Arcs, which will be inevitably transformed from a sleepy village to a modern high-speed rail hub.

Many *varois* question the wisdom of such an expensive investment during times of economic difficulty and opposition to the LGV is still very much an issue, especially with local farmers and winemakers who will see their land annexed or bisected by the line, making agricultural use impractical at best.

“Everyone wants the stations but no one wants the lines,” quipped Labour peer Lord Adonis about Britain’s HS2 project. The same could be said in the Var. See the contacts on page 46 for links to opponents and supporters of the project.

Red sails in the sunset

For more than a decade, St Tropez’s Voile Rouge beach has been one of the trendiest seaside venues anywhere. The “famous for being famous” – which included the deplorably vulgar Paris Hilton and silicone-enhanced Pamela Anderson – made it a regular summer hangout, but now they’ll have to be annoying somewhere else.

It seems the beach restaurant and other installations were illegally built on public land protected by maritime coastal law. In November, prefect Paul Mourier sent in the bailiffs to execute two court judgments ordering the demolition of the Voile Rouge after owner Ange Tomaselli refused to pull it down at his own expense. Before the bulldozers did their work, the kitchen and other equipment Tomaselli brought in over the years was removed.

The Tomaselli family have lost two judicial appeals but they haven’t given up quite yet. They’ve appealed to France’s highest court for a reversal and have also requested a new building permit at Ramatuelle town hall. Despite their struggle to save their business, there’s every chance that by spring the stretch of beach will be open to the general public once again. Don’t expect to run across Paris or Pam there, though. They’re heading for Nikki Beach.

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Yellow hills

Mimosa is symbolic of the Var at this time of year as the hills take on a yellow glow, and towns like Bormes-les-Mimosas, Agay and Tanneron host flower festivals.

There are some 400 varieties of mimosa and not all of them bloom yellow; South American species are often blue or violet coloured. The most common in the Var are *mimosa karoo* and *mimosa doré*, originally imported from Australia but well at home in our southern European climates. (Called Golden Wattle down under, it's Australia's official national floral emblem and featured on the country's coat-of-arms.)

Gathering mimosa without a permit is forbidden as many *varois* make a living from the cultivation of these trees, which they can harvest only once a year. So better to take golden photographs instead along the 130km *Route du Mimosa* that goes through the Corniche des Maures through valleys and hills to the Massif du Tanneron. A detailed map of the route is at visitvar.fr

Call it pastis or call it the slang "pastaga", Toulon wants to unseat Marseille as the official world capital of anisette, the descendant of absinthe. Last year, 400 anysetiers gathered in the Var's capital to lay claim to the title.

VARIABLES:

Ste Maxime is getting fed up with having to put up with increased traffic while getting none of the benefits and most of the expense as up to 30,000 vehicles a day cause massive traffic jams on their way to St Tropez. Mayor Vincent Morisse wants regional authorities to construct a bypass around the town which has grown from 7000 to 12,000 inhabitants in the past 30 years. In August 1944, the beach of Ste Maxime was the focal point of Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France. The town was founded 1000 years ago by monks who named it Santa Maxima in the Provençal Roman dialect.

Hyères and Fréjus are among the most expensive French towns in which to live according to *Liaisons Sociales Magazine*. Hyères is 3rd and Fréjus 17th.

Here's another record the Var could do without: the radar camera on the A8 near Adrets-de-l'Estérel is France's second high earner. Almost 125,000 vehicles a year are ticketed by this robot, a record only beaten by its brother in Maxéville, Meurthe-et-Moselle (Dept. 54). It's easy to be caught out as the speed limit of 130km/h drops suddenly to 110km/h within a few hundred metres east of the Les Adrets exit.

What incites some men to spend their entire lives in prayer and meditation for hours every day? This is a question we'll be asking when we visit Don Alcuin of the English-speaking community of monks who follow the traditional Benedictine rule at the Monastère Saint-Benoît near La Garde-Freinet. **Harris Stobbs ■**



Photo: J. Dietrich

The nightingale population has fallen 90% in 40 years.



Photo: Xenocyst@Antares Scorpi/Badagnani

The citrus fruit bergamot, now grown in Italy, is the key flavour in Earl Gray.



In 2010 there were 52,300 public houses in the UK, 8500 fewer than 30 years ago.

News of Britain & the British

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON

Want to hear a nightingale? Then go online

Anybody who visits a British city after a fairly lengthy absence quickly realises how the human population has changed, with some seven million foreigners now being mixed in with the natives. Less obvious is how wild life has been changing, sometimes – ecologists tell us – on a catastrophic scale. Across the past 40 years, for example, the nightingale population has fallen by around 90%. Such developments can have complex causes but nightingales, along with owls, have become frequent victims of avian malaria, spread by mosquitoes, themselves surviving well in a warmer and wetter climate. According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, other species in sharp decline are swallows, starlings and the rather less common willow warbler. This is put down to a drier climate in Africa where these migratory birds go in winter with a consequent reduction in the supply of the seeds, plants and insects they feed on. Malnourished, they are often too weak to make or complete the flight back to Europe.

And it's not just birds that are disappearing: native ladybirds are dying out, displaced by the

invasive Asian Harlequin species, originally brought in as a pest controller. And these days you're unlikely to come across many hedgehogs: their number has fallen from an estimated 30 million half a century ago to probably fewer than a million today. Many have ended up as roadkill or have been eaten by badgers; and the disappearance of much open countryside has made it harder for them to find food. Any good news, then? Well, last autumn Prince Charles gave up his usual grouse shooting and, alone and looking rather mournful, went mushroom picking instead. That must have spared a few avian lives.

Storm in a teacup

As a number of brands have learned over the years, it rarely pays to mess with products which the Brits have learned to love across generations. Latest to receive this message is Twinings, which have been making Earl Grey tea for just over 180 years. Recently, they launched a modified version which included, they explained, "a dash of lemon, a touch more bergamot" and was intended to make their tea "more refreshing". Result? Hundreds of complaints, many on a dedicated website, with irate purchasers describing the new-style Earl Grey as tasting like "cleaning fluid", "a nasty air freshener" or "dish water". Message received, and, after initial resistance, the new flavour has been abandoned.

The French, I'm sometimes told, can't make a decent cup of tea. Well, I've had some pretty

165 million
cups of tea Brits drink daily (vs 70 million cups of coffee).

96%
British tea consumed by bag.

98%
tea taken with milk.

Republic of Ireland
largest per capita tea drinking nation, followed by Britain.

4 cups of tea/day
can be as good as a glass of water to keep the body hydrated, as proven in a clinical study from the Tea Advisory Panel.

From UK Tea Council tea.co.uk

horrid brews in England, but help is at hand for the less skilled tea maker. Researchers at the University of Northumbria have come up with the key to the perfect cuppa. They've actually put this into an algebraic-looking formula which I'll spare our readers. Anyway, *en bref*:

- Tea should be drunk exactly 6 minutes after being made since at that point it has the ideal drinking temperature.
- The quantity of milk (if taken) should be precisely 2ml.

The research which led to these conclusions occupied 180 hours of academic time and involved the drinking of 285 cups of tea. On an average day, we're told, Brits go through 165 million cuppas.

"Don't panic!"

And they didn't. We're not talking about *Dad's Army* but the men of the London Irish Rifles who just over 70 years ago took part in the only battle against the Germans fought during the Second World War in mainland Britain. Their story has been rescued from its long obscurity by Ian Drury, Defence correspondent of *The Daily Mail*. On the afternoon of September 27th, 1940 men of the LIR were relaxing in the bar of the Sportsman pub at Graveney Marsh near Whitstable in Kent when a message came that a German bomber – a Junkers 88 – had crashed nearby.

Grabbing their tin hats and rifles, they rushed to the scene ... to be met with heavy machine-gun fire from the Luftwaffe crew.

They withdrew before going on the attack and soon the Nazis emerged from the aircraft with their hands in the air, one of them – the only casualty in the encounter – with a minor wound to the foot. They were, surely, surprised to be led off to the Sportsman pub, given tankards of beer and invited to swap souvenirs with their captors. They were to remain in England as POWs until 1945.

Home truths:

Last time we mentioned that all those Union Jacks ordered up to fly in London during the Olympics are being manufactured in France. Now we learn that if you hop on a bus in the capital you're again likely to put money in a Gallic pocket. Two of the largest bus operators are French-owned: London Sovereign (Veolia) and London United (RATP).

Back in a town you once knew well in the UK you go looking for a favourite pub. Chances are it's gone: on average, at least six pubs close every day. If it's still there it might not be as you remember it. Taken over by a "pubco" – one of the four companies which run chains of depressingly characterless establishments – you likely won't want to return. Last year *The Good Pub Guide* excluded nearly 400 hostelrys from its pages following adverse input from customers. This ranged across issues from "regular presence of a very smelly dog" through "over loud music" to "awful food". Adds the *Guide*, "a genuine warm and personal welcome has become something of a rarity".

The Lost Pubs Project claims 50 pubs close weekly in the UK. See closedpubs.co.uk for how you can help keep a pub's memory alive.

If you ever think of going back to Blighty, Yorkshire might be the place to head for. According to a Mintel survey those living in England's largest county are the happiest people in the UK: six out of ten say they're satisfied with their lot. The unhappiest Brits are in London where over half wish they weren't there. ■

The National Service Association, in conjunction with the Royal British Legion, is offering all those who did their national service between January 1939 and December 1960 a medal. It comes with a three-colour ribbon and a classy tie. Yours (tie extra) for just £39.50. To find out more see awardmedals.com or call +44 1952 510 053.

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Taxing times

BY PJ HESLIN



George Donnelly is a Certified Public Accountant licensed by the State of California since 1990, and registered to practice before the IRS. He also holds an MBA and BSBA.

50%
of the world's
richest 1% are
Americans.

It's the time of year that most of us have already let our New Year's resolutions slip. And while we can avoid going to the gym or put off quitting smoking until maybe 2013, there is one perennial reality that none of us can avoid – taxes.

For any nationality, taxes can be as complicated as they are detested. But for American expats, the situation is particularly tricky. While most expats don't have to worry about filing taxes back home if their income is made in another country, Americans face no such break from the taxman. A chat with George Donnelly, a California CPA who made the move to France about two years ago and runs his own business, helped me clarify some of the finer points of what the IRS demands from those of us living abroad.

So who needs to file?

The filing thresholds are so low (see box) that unless you are a kept man or woman (not impossible in these parts) almost every American or American resident expat needs to file. However, the foreign income exclusions are fairly generous. George explains, "If you are a US citizen or resident alien and you live abroad, you are taxed on your worldwide income. You may qualify, though, to exclude an amount of your foreign earnings that is adjusted for inflation. For 2011, that amount is \$92,900. In addition, you can exclude or deduct certain foreign housing amounts."

While living stateside, filing my taxes was as simple as matching up my 1040 form with what TurboTax told me to fill in. As an expat, those simple carefree tax days disappeared the minute I got my *Titre de séjour*. George states that basically three things make filing as an American expat so complicated. "There's the foreign income exclusion, the foreign tax credit as well as the fact that if you

have more than \$10,000 in a foreign bank account at any time during the calendar year, then that account needs to be reported." The latter requires filing what's known as an FBAR, which is the Treasury Form 90-22.1. Fortunately, I'll never know what a 90-22.1 looks like.

Specified foreign assets and cash gifts

As everybody's well aware, over the past few years the US government has found unreported bank accounts at UBS Bank in Switzerland. This led to the 2010 Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA). "In December 2011, the IRS issued Form 8938, Statement of Specified Foreign Assets, which taxpayers will file to report foreign accounts, provided they meet certain requirements. For example, a married couple residing abroad and filing a joint return do not need to file Form 8938 unless the value of their specified foreign assets exceeds \$400,000 on the last day of the tax year or exceeds \$600,000 at any time during the year."

In reality, FATCA may make it difficult for US expats to even have French bank accounts. "The problem is that smaller foreign banks, which do not have any US holdings, may not wish to comply with the reporting requirements of FATCA so they may just decide they are not going to have accounts with any Americans," says Cathy Schultz, Vice President for tax policy at the National Foreign Trade Council in Washington.

For those of you who received a generous cash gift at Christmas, the annual \$13,000 gift exclusion remains unchanged and if you inherit a little something during 2012, the estate and gift lifetime exclusion rises \$120,000 to \$5.12 million. For some that may be 120,000 reasons to keep in touch with loved ones back home.

Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Initiative: it's back

In attempt to recoup additional revenue, this year the IRS has reinstituted an offshore disclosure program known as the Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Initiative (OVDI). This is the third time that the IRS has introduced such a program. According to George, "There is no expiration date on this program, though that can be set at any time by the IRS." For those with a guilty tax conscience you can file or amend the FBARs and tax returns for the last eight years. The incentive being reduced penalties should the IRS come after you.

6.3 million
number of Americans living
abroad, the highest number on
record, as confirmed by the State
Department.

The known countries involved in the US government's investigation include Switzerland, Liechtenstein, India, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel. However, just because France isn't on that list, expats here shouldn't assume they aren't at risk. Failure to pay your taxes or report financial accounts could result in criminal prosecution as well as fines that may exceed the value of your French accounts.

"Currently there is a reduced penalty of 27.5% assessed on the highest aggregate balance of unreported accounts," confirms George. "Additionally, if you owe back taxes, now is the time to pay them, if possible, or enter into an installment agreement, if you qualify. The IRS wants to see you making a good faith effort to pay your taxes." To back up this claim, the IRS announced the Fresh Start Initiative in 2011 to help those struggling to pay taxes.

Pay now or pay for it later

For those of you thinking about cutting tax corners and simply not paying, George reminds us, "It is our civic duty to file tax returns when needed. Also, the foreign earned income exclusion can only be claimed when a tax return is filed. The IRS will not grant this exclusion under an audit."

The budget for the IRS has been cut \$305 million this year, so you might have longer wait times if you call them. In any case, if you think you can dodge the taxman because of these measures, George informed me that the cuts would probably not dampen collection or enforcement efforts.

The US

the top country for those wanting to relocate permanently to another country. (Gallup Poll)

Should you find all the above too confusing to deal with and are truly settled in France, there is always the option of renouncing your citizenship. In fact, US renunciations were up in 2011 but whether due to politics or income, only those individuals and their lawyers know for sure. If you are considering renunciation, George can help you determine the tax impact of such an important decision.

Other than patriotic reasons, there may be practical ones for holding on to your citizenship even though you're being taxed excessively. For one, you may need a visa just to visit "home". ■

Filing Thresholds

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Single | • Married filing jointly |
| under 65: \$9,500 | under 65 (both): \$19,000 |
| over 65: \$10,950 | over 65 (both): \$21,300 |
| • Head of household | 65+ (one spouse) \$20,150 |
| under 65: \$12,200 | • Qualifying widow(er) |
| over 65: \$13,650 | with dependent child |
| • Married filing separately | under 65: \$15,300 |
| any age: \$3,700 | over 65: \$16,450 |

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Americans and friends of America

American clubs around the world can claim to have been inspired by George Washington. In 1777 he urged his fellow citizens of the newborn United States to gather each year to celebrate Thanksgiving and he specifically included “those sojourning in foreign lands”. And unsurprisingly a festive meal on the fourth Thursday of November is a fixed point in the calendar of American clubs everywhere.

But how varied are these groups? Burton Gintell of the American Club of the Riviera (americanclubriviera.com) had a chance to find out when he hosted the annual Conference of Presidents of American Clubs recently at the Marriott in Cap d’Ail. “We had representatives from 15 countries, all in Europe but there are obvious differences. Membership is open, as we say here, ‘to Americans and friends of America’ but the balance between US citizens and others varies a lot. In Lisbon, for example, about 90% of participants are Portuguese, with us the breakdown is about half and half, between American residents and those of other nationalities.”

Burton has noticed other changes in the make-up of clubs over the years. “The business component is rather smaller now as fewer firms are sending staff abroad. This has led to a reduction in the proportion of younger members. Club organisers have to devise a programme, which suits both the more mature as well as younger members who are certainly still there. Talking to our guests, I heard that in some places business networking can still be a significant function of a club, in others there’s a strong interest in political issues. Here our emphasis



Burton Gintell,
American Club of the Riviera



Lynn Fisher, International
Women's Club of the Var



Birgitt Nordbrink, BA Menton

is a blend of the social and the cultural. To give you a couple of examples, one of our lunches was preceded by a visit to Nice’s Museum of Historical Musical Instruments whose curator Robert Adelson is American, another was followed by an afternoon watching horseracing in Cagnes-sur-Mer. We’re also interested in extending our guest programme. As usual this year we invited some US military to our Thanksgiving lunch and we’re hoping to have regular exchanges of hospitality with other American clubs.”

Clubbing on the Coast (Var version)

We’ve had a couple of enquiries from new arrivals in the Var asking about clubs and associations for English-speakers. Two points to start with: first, although, if you’re planning to settle here, it’s important not to imprison yourself in an anglophone bubble, having little contact with the French; it’s also the case that membership of an expat association often provides a useful source of informal help and advice. Second, remember the Var is a big place and, especially in winter, it might not always be easy to get to and from events.

So what are the possibilities? Well, the British Association (britishassociation.info) has a large and flourishing branch in the department. At the same time, it’s good to meet people from other European countries – there are lots of Dutch and Scandinavians here, for example – and these often join English-speaking groups such as VIAC (viac.fr) and the International Women’s Club of the Var (www.iwc-var.org); a more recent arrival is the International Lunch Club. By the way, VIAC and AMIAC

are now inviting each other’s members to attend their lunches at the “local” price.

The church also functions as a social centre: there’s St John’s in Saint-Raphaël (whose new chaplain is profiled next page; sjevar.com) and Oasis Christian Fellowship in Lorgues (arc-en-provence.com/oasis). Roman Catholic readers may like to note that both Grimaud and St Tropez have British *curés*: respectively Fr Peter Watts and Fr Michael Hayes. All contact details on page 46.

“How long, O Lord, how long?”

Stepping westward to Menton the picture is less cheering. As we recorded a year ago, St John’s Anglican Church was severely damaged and rendered unusable following earth subsidence caused by neighbouring building work. As Birgitt Nordbrink, chairman of the Menton branch of the British Association, points out, “St John’s, along with its hall, library and garden, has long been a focus for the local British community and for visitors. They miss it greatly. Nothing has been done to expedite repairs although insurance money is available. I wrote to Bishop Rowell about this some time ago but I’ve had no reply.”

Along with Richard Challoner’s experience (see page 25), this rather suggests that the system for dealing with correspondence in the Diocesan Office is in need of some remedial attention. Geoffrey Rowell, we appreciate, is far from occupying what in the 18th century was known as “a bishopric of ease” – his see extends from Istanbul to Oslo, from Marrakech to Moscow – but those “hungry sheep” in Menton deserve rather better, we think. ■



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Benefit of clergy

This time we introduce Keith Bretel who took over in March as chaplain at St John's, St Raphaël.



Keith Bretel and wife Sherlie arrived in the Var March 2011.

When Keith Bretel tells you his name and that he was born in Guernsey you might imagine he comes from some ancient Channel Islands family. "Actually, no. I had two French grandparents – one from Paris, one from Normandy – and the Bretels ended up in Guernsey. My parents were brought up there but they were evacuated to England before the Germans invaded. I recall it as an agreeable

place to grow up after the War but I left when I was 19 and that was some time ago." How did he decide to become a priest? "I went to church from very early on in my life and as a teenager became interested in theology and that's what I read at university, rather to the surprise of my family. After graduation I worked for the Church Army, that's an Anglican organisation which does a lot of social work. Only after several years did I feel I wanted to be ordained and that was when I was 29."

His church career began as a curate in Essex but then took a rather special turn. "I suppose you could say that. I'd never seriously considered a military career. But then when I was in my early thirties I saw a recruitment ad for army chaplains. I applied and got accepted. That involved doing a professional officer's course at Sandhurst. That makes sense. If you're going into combat zones you need to know how to behave and having done that training gives you credibility with both officers and men."

And after Sandhurst? "I was assigned initially to the Royal Engineers, first in Germany, then in the UK. Next I was sent off to Belize. It's a hot place with lots of insects but I adapted to the conditions and, I'm happy to say, so did my wife Sherlie. An army wife has to be ready for anything! I was back in Germany after that and then I became Senior Chaplain for Army Training which meant preparing clergy for the specific pastoral demands of a military posting." Clearly, he enjoyed army life. "Indeed I did. There's a solidarity and camaraderie which runs right up and down the regiment and corps you're working with and that can be hard to leave behind."

But he did leave it behind. "Well, I put in close on a quarter of a century with the army and then we decided to take a break. We had a house in France – near Montpellier – and we spent quite a while there before I returned to active duty, as you might say. Again, I saw an ad – this time for the job of chaplain in St Raphaël. I looked into it, applied, was accepted and came here just nine months ago." How does it compare with his previous postings? "One difference is that the average age is rather higher here than in an army congregation. On the other hand there's a similarity: I like to say that here, as in the army, I've got an 'all souls ministry'. On a Sunday St John's welcomes English-speaking Christians from many backgrounds – along with Anglicans, we've got a range from Roman Catholics to Plymouth Brethren and that was also true of what they used to call the Church Parade. And, you know, an army chaplain has to be down to earth as well as hopefully helping people on their way to heaven. That's a good job description for a pastor anywhere." ■

february

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films (all VO) will be screened.
Meetings, discussions will also
be organized. Interested members
can call for more information.
The President of France-Grande-
Bretagne Toulon Var be on
hand Sat Feb 11 at 10h30 at
the Library of Clos Saint-Louis
for a conference on: "Ken
Loach and the Thatcher years."
Members of our association
are invited. Entrance is free.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com
Thurs Feb 2, 15h30: Trivial
Pursuit in French and English
at Holy Trinity Church Hall,
11bis rue de la Buffa, Nice.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE TOULON

afgb-toulon.net
Mon Feb 6, 10h30: Reading (in
English and French) at Lycée
Hôtelier, Rue César Vezzani in
Toulon. To mark bicentenary of
the birth of Charles Dickens
Excerpts (English/French) from
works of Oliver Twist, David
Copperfield, Great Expectations,
A Christmas Carol, etc. British
lunch specially prepared for our
association by the chief conser-
vators Lycée Hôtelier will then
be served. €25 (all inclusive).

EPWN (EUROPEAN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK)

www.europeanpwn-nice.net
Mon Feb 6: Buddy Lunch in
Nice. Pay your own way, all
welcome. Register online.
Thurs Feb 9: Webinar/Weaving
your way through webinars.
Members only. Register online.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION NICE

secretary.nice@britishassociation.info
Wed Feb 8, 14h: AGM of
the Nice Branch at Church
Hall at Holy Trinity Church,
11 rue de la Buffa, Nice.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com
Thurs Feb 9, 15h30: *Cranford*,
presentation of part 5, written
by English novelist Elizabeth
Gaskell (1810-1865) at Holy
Trinity Church Hall, 11bis
rue de la Buffa, Nice.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE TOULON

Michelle Lichtlé 04 94 89 48 50
Fri Feb 10, 15h: British Club.
English conversation with a
member of the association. This is
followed by a snack. The British
Club is organized by Michelle
Lichtlé: 112 Avenue Emile
Vincent, Toulon. Mandatory
registration (limited places) - call
for additional information.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION MONACO

bam-monaco.org
Wed Feb 15, 19h30: "Night
in Buenos Aires" at Baires
Restaurant (1 rue des Roses,
Monaco). Enjoy an Argentinean
dinner followed by an exciting
tango demonstration. Three-
course Argentinean meal includes
delicious Argentinean Aberdeen
Angus steaks, specially flown
in, served with all the local
accompaniments, country wines
and accompanied by music of
the region. Price for members:
€45 and for non-members
€55. See website to book.

DOROTHY CHAMAIDE OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENT

One of the few British
residents to have lived
through the German
occupation of the
Riviera, Dorothy
Chamaide, passed
away before Christmas.
We'll be looking at
her life next issue.

TUES MAR 6, 15H30:
The memorial service
for Dorothy will
take place at Holy
Trinity Anglican
Church, rue Branly
in Cannes (behind
the Carlton Hotel).

Everyone will be
welcome to participate.

Post for free your
non-commercial
events on
[forum.rivierareporter.
com/calendar](http://forum.rivierareporter.com/calendar)

EPWN

www.europeanpwn-nice.net
Wed Feb 15: Well Being/The
Boost - How to keep health on
the agenda. St Laurent du Var,
all welcome. Register online.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com
Thurs Feb 16: Guided tour
of Musée Masséna in Nice.
Contact for details.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

06 21 20 60 10 - internationalclub.fr
Thurs Feb 16, 10h: Golf Club
February Outing, Victoria
Golf Club, Valbonne.

VIAC

viac.fr
Thurs Feb 16: Lunch with music
at Auberge les Deux Pins, La
Motte. Please see website for
details as date approaches.

CARNIVAL NICE

0892 707 407 (€0,34/min) - nicedcarnaval.com
Fri Feb 17-Sun Mar 4: Tickets
at Tourist Office, daily from Jan
30th (exc. Feb 4th, 5th & 12th),
9h-17h30. Temporary ticket of-
fices (on parade circuit) 2 hours
before each event or call.

MENTON LEMON FESTIVAL

04 92 41 76 95 - fete-du-citron.com
Fri Feb 17-Wed Mar 7: Tickets
online or Tourist Office.

MIMOSA FESTIVAL MANDELIEU

04 93 93 64 64 - mandelieu.com
Fri Feb 17-Sun Feb 26: "From
Mimosa to Perfume" and
"Walks in the Mimosa Region".
Contact Tourist Office.

COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

[secretary@
commonwealthclubriviera.com](mailto:secretary@commonwealthclubriviera.com)
Wed Feb 22: A Day at the
Races at the Hippodrome in
Cagnes sur Mer with a 3-course
lunch. Contact for details.

HOLY TRINITY CANNES

04 93 94 54 61 - holyltrinitycannes.org
Wed Feb 22, 20h: Ash Wednesday
Holy Communion service.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE TOULON

afgb-toulon.net

Wed Feb 22, 15h: Literature Workshops. Fri Feb 24, 18h: British Club. Aperitif in bar of the La Corniche Hotel, 17 Corniche Frederic Mistral, Le Mourillon.

EXPAT PENSIONS FREE SEMINARS

07 70 04 83 61 - expatpensions.info
betty@expatpensions.info

Thurs Feb 23, 18h30: UK private pensions and investment opportunities at Brittain's Restaurant, near Valbonne. Please call to reserve and join us for a glass of wine. Fri Feb 24, noon: At the Riviera Marriott La Porte de Monaco, Ave du Port, Cap d'Ail. Please contact to reserve.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com

Thurs Feb 23, 15h30: *Brighton from Regency to Rock* by Ian Woolf at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11bis rue de la Buffa, Nice.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

06 21 20 60 10 - internationalclub.fr

Thurs Feb 23, 19h: Spotlight Charity Cocktails. Contact club for more details.

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

06 20 40 11 28 - BGintell@aol.com

Sat Feb 25: Day of Art and Gastronomy in Menton. Guided visit of the new Jean Cocteau Museum and lunch at Mirazur restaurant, all during the Menton Lemon Festival.

march

RADA - THE RIVIERA AMATEUR DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION

09 53 73 56 70 - rada06@yahoo.com

Thurs March 1, Fri Mar 2, and Sat Mar 3, 20h: The witty and humorous *The Scottish Play* by Graham Holliday at the Mougins School. Admission: €10 (incl. a free drink). Book by phone, email or at the English Book Centre, 12 rue Alexis Julien, Valbonne.

EPWN

www.europeanpwn-nice.net

Mon Mar 5: Buddy Lunch in Nice. Pay your own way. Thurs Mar 8: Cocktail and Talk/International Women's Day in Valbonne. All welcome. Register online.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE TOULON

afgb-toulon.net

Wed Mar 14, 17h: Conference Queen Victoria by Joanny Moulin, Professor at the University of Provence. Mozart Room.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

06 21 20 60 10 - internationalclub.fr

Thurs Mar 15, 10h: Golf Club March Outing, Victoria Golf Club, Valbonne. Sat Mar 17, 12h: St Patrick's Day.

FUND-RAISING ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

06 78 59 16 04

Sun Mar 18, 16h at Holy Trinity Church, 11 rue de la Buffa, Nice. Anthony Feltham, Baritone, accompanied by Jean-Marie Foucard, organ, will give a recital of everybody's favourite religious songs and ballads, both to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the building of the church, and to raise much-needed funds for the extensive renovations now being carried out. Admission €10.

VIAC

viac.fr

Tues Mar 20: Visit to Abbaye La Verne, near Cogolin. Please see website for details as date approaches.

EBICA OPEN DAYS

04 93 64 32 84 - ebicaschool.com

École Bilingue Internationale Côte d'Azur is currently taking registration for the 2012-2013 school year. We invite you on the following days to visit and meet our team: Wed Mar 21: from 9h-16h. Sat Apr 14: from 9h-13h. Wed May 23: 9h-16h.

BLEVINS FRANKS FINANCIAL SEMINARS

04 93 00 17 80

rob.kay@blevinsfranks.com

Thurs Mar 22: Media Garden Hotel WTC 2 - Sophia Antipolis, Valbonne. Morning seminar: 9h30 for 10 until 11h30. Afternoon seminar: 14h for 14h30 until 16h. Fri Mar 23: Monte Carlo Country Club, Roquebrune Cap Martin. 9h30 for 10 until noon.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

06 21 20 60 10 - internationalclub.fr

Thurs Mar 22, 18h30: Spotlight Spring Charity Cocktails, ArtHouse, Vence.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE TOULON

afgb-toulon.net

Wed Mar 28: Conference The English Sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1996).

CAREER & LIFESTYLE EXHIBITION

career-and-lifestyle.com

Fri Mar 30: At the Mercure Hotel, Sophia Antipolis. Christine Sweeney from The Art of Chic puts together a fascinating group of more than 60 professional experts: Medical, Education and Small Business owners as well as Sports and Leisure, Technology, Property and Interior Design, Fashion Accessories and Beauty advice. Bouncy castle and fun activities for kids, and an in-house cafe for those wishing to catch up over a spot of lunch.

MONACO-IRELAND ARTS SOCIETY

04 93 41 97 22 - monaco-ireland-arts.org

Fri Mar 30, 20h30: The Works and Sayings of Brendan Behan. Extracts from *The Hostage* and *The Quare Fellow*. Actors: Nick O'Connor, Paul Connell, Mike Muston, Ashley Muston, Derek Smith, Frank Dubuisson, Silke, Lynn Sharpe, Anne Fafoutakis. Irish dancer, Nonna Varley. Directed by Virginia Disney. At the auditorium of the Lycee Technique, Monte-Carlo.

regular

BOOK CHAT GROUP

04 93 12 21 42 - www.englishbookcentre.com

Every Fri, 11h: Meeting weekly, very informally, at the English Book Centre in Valbonne. Just come to discuss your latest reads, or to hear about other books - liked or disliked - for about an hour above the shop. Drop-ins welcome.

FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com

Tues mornings: Café Franco-Britannique, informal bi-lingual conversation. Every Thurs, 13h45-15h15: French class at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11bis rue de la Buffa, Nice.

HOLY TRINITY CANNES

04 93 94 54 61 - holytrinitycannes.org

Regular Events:
Every Wed, English library at 11h and Shepherd & Dog lunch at 12h30. All are welcome. Every Thurs, 10h: Keep-Fit.

RIVIERA HASH HOUSE HARRIERS

www.rivierahhh.com

A club for non-runners, runs are every other Sunday.

SUNNY BANK

04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org

Open House, 10h-15h on the third Sat. of each month at La Grange (815 chem des Gourettes, Mouans-Sartoux). 2nd-hand books & bric-a-brac, lunch & refreshments. Feb 18: Winter Warmer and Mar 17: Irish Eyes.

YOUTH CLUB

John 06 09 51 10 95

john.cookson1@wanadoo.fr

Every first Friday of the month, 19h-22h30: At Holy Trinity Cannes. Table tennis, darts, board games and DVDs. Parents are most welcome to stay if they wish. Geoffrey's kindly sponsors the DVDs and Holy Trinity provides pizza, drinks and snacks. This Youth Club is open to all.

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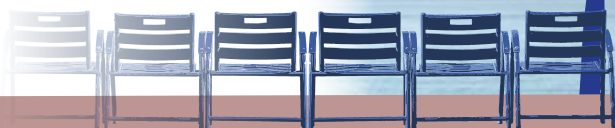
Courses and exams

- General French courses
- Business French
- Evening courses (2x2 hours per week)
- Test de connaissance du français (TCF), required to study at French universities
- CCIP testing center

Cultural Events & Outings

- Guided tours of Nice and the region
- Visits to municipal museums

Learn French in
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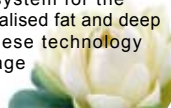
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The Business Finder ...

Does that business you once heard about still exist? Is there an English-speaking business offering a service you need now? If it's in the Reporter or listed here, the answer is **YES!**

ACCOMMODATION, HOTELS, B&B

Hotel Le Provence, Golfe Juan 04 97 21 85 30

Hotel Villa Vauban, Villefranche 04 93 55 94 51

BUSINESS SERVICES & SUPPLIES

Arenas Partners, Office Hire www.arenas-partners.com

Office Xtra 1501 rte des Dolines, Sophia Antipolis

Regus Sophia Antipolis, Office Hire www.regus.fr

CONSTRUCTION

Amahoki Maison & Bois, eco-friendly homes 06 83 45 12 47

Chartwell Construction +377 97 97 56 67

Corner Stone Renovations 04 93 40 81 20

EXPAT & RELOCATION

Riviera Expat Consultants 04 93 77 74 00

Pascale Florin personal assistance 04 97 21 10 63

FURNITURE, HOME DECOR

Daniela Vescovi Interior Design www.danielavescovi.com

Danielle Cook Design 06 12 21 66 78

Fiddes Leather Furniture Restoration 09 62 25 22 34

Qualimat Kitchens 107 av Pierrefeu, Valbonne

Riviera Property Services 04 94 47 42 24

Tresors De Lysa 2030 rte de Cannes, Mouans Sartoux

Yachting Decor 04 93 74 70 07

INTERNET, COMPUTING

Webstore www.webstore.fr

Wireless & Web 06 28 05 22 35

LEISURE, SPORT, HEALTH, RECREATION

Star Wellness 45 Bd de la Croisette Cannes

The Osteopathic Practice 04 92 28 51 75

MOTORING & TRAVEL

Heli-Air Monaco, Nice Airport 04 93 21 34 95

Midi Location, rental cars 04 93 34 48 00

NetJets Executive Jets www.netjets.com

WR Chauffeurs 06 09 52 17 83 / www.wrchauffeurs.com

MOVING, STORAGE & TRANSPORT

Delahaye Moving info@delahayemoving.com

Shurgard Self-Storage www.shurgard.fr

POOLS, GARDEN, SECURITY

Bel Abri, Pool covers and shelters 04 67 78 90 08

Riviera Realty 04 93 12 34 00

Wes-Stand Security Consultants, Protection, Chauffeurs 06 66 06 25 33

PUBS & RESTAURANTS

Kingdom Pub 21 Bd de la Republique, Cannes

Morrisons Pub & Lounge 10 rue Teisseire, Cannes

Quay's Pub Quai St Pierre, Cannes

SERVICES & RETAIL

Adams & Adams, Catering 04 86 68 50 30

Andree Browne Consultancy www.andreebrowne.com

Bruce Thomas Photography 04 93 12 99 63

Cabinet Martin, Private Detectives www.cabinetmartin.info/

Carroll Media, convert videos to DVD www.carrollmedia.co.uk

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Linda Alaniz Photography www.alaniz-photo.com/

Monte Carlo Weddings +377 93 50 35 95

Private Catering, Nice 04 93 21 27 50

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If your business would like to appear here email: theFinder@rivierareporter.com

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EMERGENCY NUMBERS

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General Emergency	112
Riviera Medical (English)	04 93 26 12 70
Doctors On Call (Nice)	04 93 52 42 42
Maritime Emergency	1616
Maritime Crossmed	04 94 61 71 104

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ASSOCIATIONS, HELPLINES & SUPPORT (Some in French)

ABUSED WOMEN	04 93 52 17 81 (English) - 01 40 33 80 90 (French)
AIDS/HIV (SIDA)	Info Service 0800 840 800 - Testing 04 93 85 12 62
AL-ANON/ACA	English-speaking meetings for friends and families of alcoholics five times a week http://alanonriviera.com
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS	Desperate to stop? Meetings every day in English 24 hour live helpline: 0820 200 257 - www.aa-riviera.org
ALZHEIMER ASSOCIATION COTE D'AZUR (Fr & Eng)	04 93 52 62 00
AODVCL (AMERICAN OVERSEAS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS LINE):	0-800-99-0011 and when prompted 866-879-6636 - www.866uswomen.org
BEREAVEMENT GROUP MONACO	06 98 44 49 01
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT NETWORK (VAR)
.....	04 94 84 64 89 - 06 48 46 93 21 - www.bsnvar.org
BRITISH ASSOCIATION CANNES	06 65 38 05 29
BRITISH ASSOCIATION MENTON	06 31 18 89 57
BRITISH ASSOCIATION MONACO	+377 93 50 19 52 - www.bam-monaco.org
BRITISH ASSOCIATION NICE	04 93 59 88 65
BRITISH ASSOCIATION VAR Secretary	04 94 72 37 42
BUSINESS DEBTORS ANONYMOUS: Our 12-step program offers solvency solutions to small business owners. Meetings weekly in Cannes: Sat at 11h, rear of Holy Trinity Church, 2 rue du General Ferrié	06 77 56 08 93 - www.dariviera.org
CANCER SUPPORT GROUP IN ENGLISH
.....	Anne Sookhoo 06 69 33 78 40 - cancersupport06@gmail.com
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ASSOCIATIONS HELPLINES & SUPPORT CONT ...

COCAINE ANONYMOUS IN MONACO We use the Twelve Step Recovery Program; because it has already been proven that the Twelve Step Recovery Program works CA helpline number:	06 20 00 66 36
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DEBTORS ANONYMOUS & BUSINESS DEBTORS ANONYMOUS Debts weighing you down? Over-spending and/or under-earning? 'Small Business' problems? Our 12-step program can provide a solution for you. Meetings held several times a week on the Côte d'Azur. Confidential enquiries. Phone Nice and/or Cannes 06 77 56 08 93	
DRUGS (Drogues Info Service)	0800 231 313
ENGLISH SPEAKING FREEMASONS Meet in Cannes..abbeylodge33@yahoo.com	
GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND - ECOLE DES CHIENS GUIDES (BIOT)	04 93 65 08 36 - uas@wanadoo.fr
HEPATITIS C SUPORT GROUP	06 22 82 16 18
HOMELESS HELP	115 or 0800 306 306
LIVING WITH CANCER	04 94 78 88 26
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OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS	04 93 87 18 97
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RIVIERA BUSINESS CLUB	www.bccriviera.com
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SOS HELP CRISIS LINE IN ENGLISH Feeling down? Call us up!	01 46 21 46 46 from 15h to 23h daily - www.soshelpline.org
SUNNY BANK Information & support for the elderly	04 93 47 94 20 - www.sunny-bank.org
TOUCHE PAS À MON CORPS In French, for abused women	06 62 32 62 50 - 04 93 00 35 72 - www.toucheapasamoncorps.com
UFC-06 QUE CHOISIR CONSUMER ASSOCIATION	04 93 62 43 72 - Fax 04 93 62 23 75, 20 Bd Raimbaldi, 06000 Nice

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report

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cious terrace with mountains
view. Garage and cellar.

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rage. Cellar. Large sunny terrace.
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