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N° 153 October/November 2012



If you haven't had the message by now, a look at our website will convince you. Over a third of readers already download the *Reporter's* online PDF, which is identical to this paper version but much more practical. With this new readership increasing monthly, we're evolving as our advertisers and readers expect us to.

This doesn't mean we'll ever stop printing the *Reporter* on paper. That won't happen. Paper magazines and their websites are compatible rather than conflicting ventures, each with its own strengths and each with its own following. A paper publication is brought to you, whereas a website requires you to go looking for it. Ours is a CMS (Content Management System) site so updates and corrections can be made quickly. The forum is for you to have your say and place free classifieds. Use it without moderation: the more you do, the more helpful it will become. Much of the site is free for the moment, even for small businesses. (Commercial businesses will not have their posts removed or receive a bill.)

We have no intention of turning the site into an over-commercial, difficult to navigate, complex and visually unattractive place the way some sites can be. Simple and user-friendly is the way we go. We are certainly open to your suggestions about how to improve the site and forum, whenever technically possible.

Over the summer we added a Photo Gallery to the site. There are already hundreds of photos of the Riviera in the five main sections – from places and people to scenery and oddities. You are welcome to send us your photos for the Gallery and also for the new "Community" section we will be launching soon.

Many of you send us emails with PDFs attached, either as regular events, club news, editorial suggestions or as letters for Mailbag. That's just fine but do make an effort to keep the files to a reasonable size. If you send a 5MB PDF in an email entitled "Something you should know" how many people do you think will really download and read it? We have our incoming file size set to 1000KB for automatic downloading so you can be sure that we'll get anything smaller. Anything bigger requires specific agreement for download and we pick and choose before we agree.

The champion for getting it right has to be Lynette Beardwood at Sunny Bank. In a mere 135KB she manages to send attractive colour PDFs with text in two languages, images, and photos at good screen resolution. That's how it should be done. Whether you're on PC, Mac or iPad there are plenty of free or shareware utilities that can help reduce the size of your PDFs without loss of quality. You'd be doing yourself a favour by using one.

A reminder that we closed our Mougins office in favour of two SOHOs, although our postal address and phone number remain the same; faxes are obsolete so we no longer use them.

The next *Reporter* will be the Christmas issue (already!) and appear late November. **Mike Meade**

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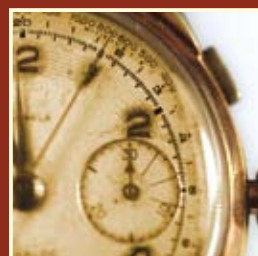
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**Cover Photo: Callian, seen from Montauroux**  
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## BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT THANKS

At the end of last year, my extraordinary wife lost her battle against critical illness. We had met on holiday in Antibes more than fifty years ago, both very young, she French and me English. It truly was a case of *coup de foudre*. We eventually married (July 14), lived in London, raised a family, and after my retirement also had an apartment in Antibes. Working for an international corporation, my work took me all over the world, but in all that time I never met a more interesting person or one more compassionate than her. She really was the sunshine in my life. Remarkably, we met in Antibes and she died here. Since her death, I have found it impossible to come to terms with my loss, and although a normally strong person, I no longer receive any contact from any of our many so-called friends. I then saw in the yellow pages of the *Reporter*, the Bereavement Support Network (Var). I telephoned their number and spoke with the most charming and helpful lady, who in turn, put me in touch with another lady volunteer. We finally met, and after spending a few hours together, her understanding and words of advice helped me enormously to alleviate a lot of my pain. The work they do, in giving their time in such a humane way I feel I must publicly acknowledge. They regularly keep in touch with me to check on my progress, and have my everlasting thanks. *Derek, Antibes*

## LET SSAFA SERVE YOU

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*Dick Bogg, Chairman  
SSAFA Forces Help*

## TIPPING THE SCALES

Your comments (Tips for Travellers, *Reporter* 152) on the increased average weight of airline passengers as relating to seat pitch and so to comfort can be supplemented by another point. Safety tests involving mock accidents designed to measure the reliability of seats and seat belts are carried out with dummies whose weight has remained fixed for some 30 years. I'm talking about the US where much of the work is done. A male dummy weighs in at 170 pounds; the average American adult male now tips the scales at 195 pounds. This puts into doubt the value of the tests concerned. *Ove Jespersen, by email*

## BEND IT, CHOP IT, BURN IT

I would like to warn others about a problem I've had with licence plates. I now know that other car owners have had the same. One of my old plates was peeling so I took my *carte grise* to a key place and had a new plate made. They will only make you a new plate if you show them your registration papers.



I installed the new one myself and threw the old one in the rubbish. About a month later I started getting *contraventions* (fines) through the mail and they continued to come. They were for speeding, parking and also because one plate was *manquant* (missing). Thinking that my self-installed plate had fallen off, I checked and found that both plates were still well attached. After a lot of visits to the police and considerable hassle it was finally sorted because the PVs didn't match the make and colour of my car, but it wasn't easy even though one gendarme told me that this is a problem that comes up from time to time. As it happens, there is a "market" for unused plates and my old one must have been taken from my rubbish bag. A lot of people know this and use it to say "it wasn't me because my plate was stolen" which explains why it took so long to sort it. They couldn't know if I was a poser or legitimate. Stolen old plates are sometimes installed on other cars (often also stolen) which means that speed traps and parking police record a number that doesn't fit that car. The gendarme even told me that some cars have a different number on the front and back! So my advice is this: install your plate with rivets, not screws which are easier to remove; whether you install the plate yourself or have

it installed by a garage, be sure to destroy the old plate by bending and even cutting it so that it can't be reused; don't put the entire sectioned plate in the same rubbish bin on the same day and certainly don't throw both plates away on the same day. *'Riviera Sun', from Reporter forum*

## DONKEY HEAVIER THAN ELEPHANT?

I suggest that you add someone to report on the USA in counterpoint to the Democrat ideologue. His praising Obamacare, which more than 60% of Americans of both parties dislike intensely, and his promotion of a president who has not delivered on any of his promises and whose policies have made everything worse, needs a second opinion. Otherwise, your excellent magazine looks like a Democrat blog. *Bud Lonergan, by email*

## THE EXPAT VOTE

Ref letter from Graham Richards, *Reporter* 152, page 3. In my opinion, a distinction should be made between long-term/permanent expats and those who are abroad for a limited time on business postings etc. Those who have the intention to return to UK, and thus have a vested interest in the governing of the country, might reasonably request a postal vote – especially since they will in due course be expected to resume paying taxes there. However, for those of us whose intention

**Do you have something to say?**  
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or go to [forum.rivierareporter.com](http://forum.rivierareporter.com)



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(hope?) is never to return, it seems unreasonable to expect a say in the election of the government. As a long-term expat (over fifty years) I do not believe I have any right to a vote. Indeed, I have never had one, since I went abroad before my 21st birthday, which at that time was the age of franchise. In the countries where I have lived, including now in Monaco, I have always been a foreigner and a guest, with no say in the government of the country, and this seems to me entirely reasonable, since it is not

my country. My one regret is that I consequently have no vote in the European election. Without a vote in a member state of the EU (which of course Monaco is not), I am not entitled to vote in the EU elections – and those do have a considerable effect on my life. Unless and until the vote in the EU election is separated from the electoral lists of the country of residence, there is no hope for people in my position of making our wishes known concerning an institution which is all embracing in many aspects of our lives.

Having said all that, I still feel entirely English, and am thrilled and proud of the success of Team GB and the Olympics 2012. Brilliant! Well done to all involved.

*Jennifer Fletcher, by email*

### RAILROAD BLUES

I spent several weeks in the UK this summer and had to use the disgraceful rail services several times. They will become even worse when Cameron and his band of bunglers have finished meddling on behalf of their cronies.

Reading *The Independent*

on one such journey I couldn't help but laugh over a piece by Andrew Martin entitled. "The French come over here, they make our high-speed trains run on time ...". If my experiences with frequent long-distance travel on the SNCF (I suffer from fear of flying) are anything to go by, the piece made the point very well. Britain should just let the French run all the railroads. They already run EDF and Véolia in the UK and do a darned good job of it. Britain has Europe's most expensive rail system and

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For more on French and UK train service, see page 10.

France has the cheapest. UK passengers would save over £4bn a year if fares were the same as in France where season tickets typically cost about half of what they do in the UK. Of course the decision to remove management of the West Coast franchise from Virgin Trains has created quite a stir of the type that will always happen when rail companies put profit before the vital wealth-creating mission of carrying people to work and goods to market. Even subsidies can be justified to keep these frontline services as cheap and efficient as they usually are in France. Bad service happens here but it's the exception whereas in the UK it's the rule. Rail travel is one thing France does better than we do and Britain would be better off letting them get on with it. While they're at it maybe they could sort the NHS out, too.

*Robert Westwood (pictured), Mougins & Oxfordshire, by email*

#### NUMERCABLE

I wonder if I am a lone wolf crying in the wilderness but through your letters page I might find I am not alone! I am a subscriber to Numericable's television network and am a regular visitor to Sky News. For many years Sky News has been allocated Channel No 68 on the Numericable cable service until July this year when it was

moved to No 400. Whereas one could select 68 and immediately receive the transmission, now No 400 has a 20-second *petit page de publicité* after which one has to down click onto a box called "Local Services"; press OK; then down click again ... press OK again ... and right click once ... and press OK; and *maybe* Sky News opens. Since the transition, I have visited the Numericable bureau in Nice seven times (three times with the Box and three times with the card). Each time I was assured that all was in order. Joke! Every day I am unable to open page 400 or a notice will say my card is invalid; the service (Sky News) is not available; or "consult your service provider". I find Sky News provides a very good news service and is nothing like as stuffy as BBC World News nor as politically correct. It provides a much wider range of information from sport to politics to world affairs and economic matters whereas BBC World News is trying to be all things to all people provided they are not British and can only talk about, on the News, its current hobby-horse.

*John Fordyce, posted on Riviera Reporter Discussion Forum*

#### SPORTING D'HIVER, WHY NOT THE RUSH?

I imagine when the Sporting d'Hiver was constructed it was simply regarded as a

modern building. It was not at all classic, just modern. As a "modern" building it counts for very little, being simply a rectangular shape, with five sets of vertical windows, and next to no decoration. *Austere* might be a good word for it; *ugly* could be another. To be sure it houses some splendid grand halls, but equally so could just about any old zeppelin hangar. It had to wait for 34 years before being given the description "art deco", since that phrase only came into use in 1966. Even now, in its 80th year, it doesn't really deserve the title "classic" except in the honorific sense, like for instance, "classic cars" which are really just not-very-old cars. Art it isn't. So the phrase "classic art deco" conveys scarcely anything to the reader except in an emotive sense that perhaps the building is untouchable, much less allowed to be demolished. In that context, the replacement of one "modern" building, for its time, with a set of perhaps half-a-dozen also modern buildings, also for their time, might not be at all a bad idea. That depends on the new buildings, and their interiors. Buildings of this type (the Sporting d'Hiver) were extremely popular in the Mussolini era, but for me they were awful. As for the "several" imperilled trees, which somehow in the text manage to get juxtaposed with rain forests, I well recall when Monaco decided to build what became the new underground car park in front of the

Casino. One day a high fence suddenly appeared around the construction site, and sounds of industry could be heard. This went on for about 18 months, and then the fence was removed and all revealed, the new gardens atop the parking. From day one those gardens had beautiful flowers, bushes, trees all functioning perfectly as if they'd been there since the beginning of time. Incidentally, as the then "new" car park must by now be about 30 years old, shouldn't it qualify for some romantic prefix, although I doubt that in this case classic art deco quite fits the bill. It certainly is a very good car park.

*Peter Melia, in answer to Molly Brown's online blog*

#### KEEP THE DATE

Could you please date the splendid archived articles that you put on the website? That way if they talk about an apartment for \$45,000, I will not get too excited if I realize the article is from 1987. I am reminded of the time in 1978 when I was visiting my sister in London. She had a menu from the famous Parisian restaurant, Maxim's. The soup was \$10. I was set to thinking that, not only could I afford to eat at Maxim's, but that obviously I was a superior type of person, being able to afford Maxim's. Imagine my dismay 10 minutes later when, on finishing reading the menu, I read in the fine print at the bottom of the last page, 1952!

*Richard Hall, by email*

*Palestinian writer Said K. Aburish, who was a resident in Nice from 2001-2010, died Aug 29th in Bethany at the age of 77. Educated in the US, his CV reads like fiction: "occasional unpaid assistant" to the local CIA in Beirut, arms dealer for Saddam Hussein, journalist and pundit known around the world, and writer of 11 books on the Middle East "accusing Arab leaders of being stooges of Western powers and indifferent to the well-being of their citizens". One thing he could never master, though, was to learn to swim. Aburish was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2002 but died from heart failure. RIP friend.*



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## 20 years ago

**Baked bean Barney gets life for killing mother.** Julian Ashley Cox, aka "baked bean Barney", former owner-manager of the Ashley's of England food store in Antibes, has been jailed for life at Winchester Crown Court with a recommendation that he serve at least 20 years. Cox, 30, was convicted of killing his mother and trying to murder his father, sister and nephew by setting fire to the family home at Emsworth in Hampshire.

The court was told that the whole family would have died in the flames had Cox's sister Jacquie not heard a noise in the night and discovered her brother splashing petrol around the house. But this was too late to save their mother, Joy Cox, 60, who died five days later of what were described as "horrific burns". The rest of the family escaped, unharmed. Cox himself suffered burns and could not be brought to trial for a year. According to the prosecution he had planned his crime to cash in family insurance policies to help him save his failing business. Passing sentence, Judge Turner said "a baser motive is difficult to imagine".

Among those who knew Cox in Antibes, reactions to his conviction and sentence were varied. Some found the details of the case unbelievable. "He was such a mild and decent sort of bloke," recalled a neighbouring shopkeeper in the Galerie du Port. "It doesn't make sense." Others took a different view. "He was too quiet," claimed a former customer. "I'm not surprised he had weird things going on in his head." Geoffrey Garnett – who took over Cox's business, now known as Geoffrey's of London – has mixed feelings. "I had quite a lot to do with him and I found him pleasant enough. I think the failure of his business put a lot of strain on him and he just went over the edge."

Reporter, Oct-Nov 1992



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# French news & views

## Would Hollande like us to leave?



Frankly, it's difficult to take François Hollande seriously. To start with, he has none of the style we expect from a French President. Sarko had his vulgar side but he still had something about him that impressed. "Wobbly pudding" showed up as the Queen's guest at Windsor in July wearing a very ill-fitting suit. The sleeves of the jacket were too short and it offered a classic example of what British tailors call "prole's collar", hanging inelegantly off the shoulder on one side. Earlier he'd had "frank and friendly" talk with David Cameron in Downing Street where he had laughed off the PM's invitation for French fiscal refugees to settle across the Channel as "an example of that British humour which I so much appreciate".

On the other hand, Brits living here didn't seem to see the joke when Hollande's government announced measures to increase taxes on foreign owners of second-homes in France. Rental income is now for both residents and non-residents to be taxed at a rate of 35.5% (since last year 20%); capital gains tax on property sales of French residents selling a secondary residence goes up to 34.5% (at the moment 19%). A UK treasury spokesman said, "We will challenge any proposal which breaches European laws and anti-discrimination rules." The higher tax

on rental income is backdated to January 1st; the hike in capital gains tax was applied from end July.

What's been the reaction? Some owners – and estate agents – have sounded panicky. According to a spokesman for the realtors trade organisation FNAIM, "It's a catastrophe ... It's as if they want to kill off the foreign home owner market in France." One local estate agent (who didn't want to be named) was much calmer: "Don't forget that Sarkozy announced something similar but gave it up in the face of a British challenge. I'd make two points. First, what's proposed does seem clearly discriminatory and Brussels is pretty certain to object. Second, as former UMP Finance Minister Jean Arthuis has pointed out, the government has described these taxes as 'a social contribution'. But owners who would often be absent from France for most of the year would get little or no benefit in return and so the demand would be unconstitutional. I think there's a very strong possibility these measures will be withdrawn and my advice would be don't pay till things get clearer."

### TAX NEWS FLASH

**The rule on the new tax rate was RATIFIED in the middle of August (sneaky!), so effectively the tax rate for the sale of a secondary home in France by an EU resident is 19% (as before) PLUS the social charges of 15.5% = 34.5%.**

**This means that EU citizens will be repaying national debt in both their country of residence and France.**

**For more French tax updates, see page 11.**

## Hollande's holiday: reading, bathing ... and worrying

No fancy foreign trips for members of the new government, and certainly not for François Hollande. He took two weeks off at the highly secure official presidential holiday retreat Fort Bregançon in the Var, accompanied by "First Girlfriend" Valérie Trierweiler. His agenda, he announced, was a matter of books and beach ... and catching up with work. He certainly had a lot to think about.

His less than massive victory was largely due to those ordinary folks who believed that he would quickly make their lives better. They soon got a cold shower. The minimum wage was hiked by just €22 a month for a full-time

worker. Said a spokesperson for the CGT union, "This is a huge disappointment ... It's almost meaningless." A relatively small number of people will be able to retire earlier, compared with what Sarko intended, but the basic message is there for those with ears to hear. While Finance Minister Pierre Moscovici says, "We reject austerity ... We must increase consumption," the grimly realistic overseer of government accounts, the *Cour des Comptes*, declares that next year there will have to be "an unprecedented brake on spending and higher taxes".

This is disturbing news for France's huge regiment of civil servants, largely left-wing voters. They will be greatly resentful if the cuts fall on them. They are demanding more money, not



Photo: Eleifert

### DSK: always up for it

It's not the kind of recognition the former presidential hopeful would have been looking for. The zoo in Bordeaux has acquired a new orangutan ... and they've called him DSK. Says his keeper: "He's always up for it. When he feels like a bonk, he'll grab any female there and then."

less. But what can Hollande do? To face up to the deficit the country's running he needs up to €10 billion this year and €38 billion in 2013. Nobody is impressed by such "economies", as replacing Champagne with Muscadet at the Prime Minister's residence or making officials working overtime pay for their previously free dinner. On the other hand, economists warn that the increase in the SMIC could lead to higher unemployment and the announced rent freeze may depress the property market. As the President lay on that Var beach, he must have been tormented, as he tried to decide what to do. One thing's certain: public services face stringent limits on expenditure, and above all the deficit-ridden health service. Try to keep fit next year.

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## From cutting edge to museum in just 30 years

Exactly 25 years ago we brought out a special number devoted to the Minitel, at that time rated as one of this country's great technical triumphs, mentioned alongside the TGV and Airbus. “When it comes to technology,” we exulted, in adoptive cocorico mode, “France is second to none.” Ask a few younger folks about it today and they may simply look puzzled.

In brief, the Minitel was a (usually) grey or beige plastic box, distributed by *La Poste*, which could receive information down a

telephone line and later offer an interactive facility. Back in 1987 it already provided 4000 different services, ranging from weathercasts and healthcare tips through horoscopes and BBC news. There was an English service – Allotel – set up by former Antibes games room manager John Sweet (now long retired to Port Elizabeth), which was much appreciated. As we noted, “The device has had an extraordinary success in France”; elsewhere it never really caught on.

Its popularity peaked around 2000 when there were some 23,000 services available and an estimated 25 million users. An attraction

**65.6 million population of France at last count, a 5% rise year on year.**

**78.2 men 84.8 women current French life expectancy.**

*Source: INSEE*

for some was the 3615 option which allowed interactive sex chats – though rather milder than what's to be found today online. And that last phrase indicates what killed off the Minitel. The coming of the PC with internet access made that little box seem old fashioned. Usage declined, first slowly, then more rapidly, and on Saturday June 30th, 2012 the remaining active screens went blank forever. There were still some ready to express regret. Said one local Brit, “It was simple to use, didn't crash and there was nothing bad for kids.”

## Warning: poisonous plants

In our last issue we wrote about “the invaders”, those insects – most dangerous of all the Asian hornet – who've moved into our region and, in that latter case, can actually kill us. A woman died of an

**According to the sock makers BlackSocks French men are the most reluctant among Europeans to change their socks ... and so have the EU's smelliest feet. Italians change socks twice in a day, three out of four Brits do so daily but Gauls will often wear the same pair “for several days”. And yet ... French women must have a thing for *les pieds qui puent*. They are the second most fertile in Europe (average brood 2.1), after the Irish (2.7).**







Photo: OliBac

Brought to the region 50 years ago by “an English colonel” who planted it in his garden at Thorenc, the Giant Hogweed now looks like it’s becoming plant public enemy number one.

Asian hornet’s sting on Cap Ferrat just a few weeks ago. But it’s not just immigrant insects we have to worry about. Now we’re facing a threat from vicious vegetation. Imagine a plant which grows up to four metres high that – if you touch it – can leave you, to quote a victim, “with huge red blisters as if I’d been in contact with hot metal”. Sounds like science fiction? Not at all. Meet the Giant Hogweed (*Berberis pinnatifida*). According to the story it was brought here from some colonial outpost in 1960 by “an English colonel” who planted it in his garden at Thorenc in the Alpes-Maritimes. Around a decade or so ago it had escaped into the surrounding countryside and now looks to become plant public enemy number one.

Dr Bernard Pigearias, a specialist in phytogenic pathology (ailments caused by plants), explains: “If you touch it, get its sap on your skin and then are exposed to the sun you end up with very nasty burns.” (*Phytic dermatitis*). But there’s another unwelcome plant visitor with us: that’s Ambrosia

(*Ambrosia*) which came into France well over a century ago and in recent decades has been spreading rapidly in our region. According to Dr Pigearias, “Its pollen is among the most unpleasant in its effect, producing irritation of the eyes and nose, in some cases asthma.” So what’s the solution to these new threats to our comfort and well-being? Says Pierre Boyer, of the *Office National des Forêts*, “In theory, these species could be eliminated, but they’re spreading fast. The problem is we just don’t have the financial resources necessary to deal with them.”

### Le travail c’est la santé!

“Working keeps us healthy,” says the French popular song. So would most employees sing along with this? A recent Ipsos study across the EU

found that the French were a discontented lot: over four out of ten, a higher proportion than in most countries, were unhappy at work. But it turned out to mean that, although often satisfied with their job, they were not at ease with the human environment in which they worked.

Why should this be? Step forward Hubert Landier, author of *18 bonnes raisons de détester son entreprise* (“18 reasons to hate the place where you work”). He explains: “A lot of the problems come from specifically French attitudes, especially among managers. Hierarchy is very strong and it’s defined in all sorts of ways. I recall one place I visited where a secretary was deputed to make good coffee for her boss but had to get her own from a machine. That was quite normal, he felt. I’ve also been in companies where executives

barely acknowledged their subordinates, rarely offered praise for good work but were quick to bawl them out for mistakes. At its worst this emphatic stress on hierarchy can lead to bullying, intolerable stress for employees and – as we saw at France Telecom – cases of suicide.”

Can this situation be changed? “If the will is there, yes. The key thing is effective communication. That’s why the intranet is a bad idea, unless used very sparingly. People have to talk to each other face-to-face and not see this as a waste of time.” So what’s the secret for making the workplace agreeable? “First, it should be a pleasant environment to spend the day – comfortable, bright, cheerful. Second, the social atmosphere should be relaxed and happy – which doesn’t mean there’s not total seriousness about work – and no stress on hierarchy for its



Photo: Ville de Menton

The inventor of rugby, William Webb Ellis, is buried in Menton. His statue stands at the entrance of the cemetery.

**You come back from holiday and you’re not happy: 16 of your 21 days were spent in bed with a serious stomach infection** (and you’ve a doctor’s note to prove it). So can you ask your boss for more time off, equivalent to that lost to illness? The European Court of Justice has just ruled that you can. Sick leave is one thing, they say; holiday time is another and the two can’t run together. This decision has, in theory, force of law throughout the EU.

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own sake. Finally, there's a place for conviviality – regular occasions when staff can get together on a more equal footing and ideas be freely exchanged. Let me tell you I've known companies who've increased their productivity by 20 per cent in a few months by adopting a more human style of management." So can this happen on a large scale in France? "It's started, it's spreading slowly ... but there's a long way to go."

### Nice Rugby: kicked into touch for good

This isn't really rugby country in the same way as the southwest of France. Even in Toulon you won't find quite the passionate commitment they have in Perpignan. And yet the oval ball has its followers here, including many English-speaking expats. They were deeply disappointed, to say the least, by the recent news that Nice's pro rugby club had collapsed and died, just a few months before it would have celebrated its 100th birthday.

It's a complicated story which has created a good deal of bitterness. As one veteran French supporter told us, "The players were mostly great guys, management was

something else – indecisive, bad on budgeting, with no clear idea on leadership. On top of that, the club's problems turned it into a bit of a political football, as you might say." Nice Rugby France – as it was known for short – went down with debts of €1.5 million and that after receiving a load of cash from the City which finally gave up on it. Kiwi Fenner Sneddon in Antibes shrugged when we sought his opinion: "Of course it's sad but that's it. At least we've still got a couple of leisure teams – in Nice and Monaco. Nice are into Rugby Sevens which I actually prefer to the classic game." There was sadness, too, among those English-speaking players, here now or previously, who'd worn the Nice rugby shirt. Former Durban Shark Rudy Dames, now back in KZN, was "gutted" when he heard. "I enjoyed my time with them and I really believed they were going places."

Ironical that this depressing episode should play out on what is sacred ground for rugby enthusiasts. Why so? The alleged inventor of the game – William Webb Ellis – is buried in Menton where he died in 1872, vainly hoping – like many others – that the town's balmy climate would cure his consumption.

### They still don't want your blood

Across the years, in items about blood donation, we've mentioned that in many cases intending British donors are often turned away. And that's in a country with a shortage of blood which is especially serious in this region.

The Alpes-Maritimes is one of the rare departments which has to import blood from beyond its own borders.

So why the ban? Following advice from the World Health Organisation, in 2001 the French banned from giving blood anyone who'd spent 12 months or more in the UK between 1980 and 1996. There was a risk – very small, said some (but not all) experts – that they might have blood infected with CJD, the human form of mad cow disease.

Recently there was some talk of this ban on British blood being relaxed. But now the Ministry of Health – *Bon sang!* – says there are no plans to do this.



According to the received story, while playing football at Rugby School in 1823 the young Webb Ellis, as is spelled out on his statue in Menton, "picked up the ball and ran with it". Out of this highly irregular act there emerged the new game of rugby. So why "alleged" inventor? A radical historian

of sport has argued that this tale is just eyewash, cooked up by a bunch of Victorian toffs to obscure the fact that their "gentleman's game" was in fact devised by industrial workers in the Midlands. But don't bring this up with the Menton Tourist Office – they've done rather well out of William Webb Ellis. ■



# Tips for travellers

## NICE-CÔTE D'AZUR: A RECORD DAY!

If you passed through Nice airport on the Sunday after Bastille Day you were one of no fewer than 49,000 people who travelled in and out that day and contributed to an all-time record for the number of passengers counted within a single 24-hour period. That figure beat the existing record set on July 30th, 2011 by an impressive 12%. Said an airport spokesman: "We've got more flights this year and the awful weather elsewhere in France got people heading south."

## FAST TRACKING

If you fly out of Nice at least ten times a year, request a "Premier" card which gives you access to the dedicated rapid security checks at T1 or T2. No more queuing for security thanks to this fast-track initiative by Nice airport Marketing Director Filipe Soete.

And flying into London, IRIS scan recognition has been abandoned in favour of a much better system at Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton. Available only to EU passport holders over 18 and with new chipped passports (which have this image on the cover) you



just enter the "e-passport" booth, put your passport into a scanner which compares your face with the passport photo and opens a gate allowing you into the UK without even dealing with a real person. It works perfectly. Website details for both of these on page 46.

## PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT!

As usual at this time of the year we've been hearing

complaints about what some people see as rip-offs when they've used their bank cards while on holiday outside of France. The banks, of course, look for any opportunity to make a bit of extra money. A few points worth making: before leaving check that your card is acceptable where you are going both for purchases and withdrawals. If you're staying in the euro zone there's no problem with making payments – it's just as if you're carrying out a purchase here. With ATM withdrawals, however, there can be charges and commissions, depending on the bank. Find out first. Beyond the euro zone things can be more complicated and again try to inform yourself in advance. One tip: where there's a standard charge for ATM withdrawals you can save by drawing larger sums and so avoiding repeat payments.

But here's some good news: Ryanair and easyJet have agreed, under pressure from the UK's Office of Fair Trading, to include their charges levied for payment by debit cards within their headline fares. Ryanair has even said it will scrap these charges altogether "in the near future".

## "I'M ON THE TRAIN ... AND I'M NOT HAPPY"

Despite some clear improvements in service, the SNCF still attracts quite a lot of hostile comment. As we noted earlier, it's now offering a *Garantie voyage* to passengers using the TGV, Intercity trains and international services. This covers such things as information, refunds, punctuality and assistance to passengers. To take two of these points: for cancellations and delays of over an hour passengers can claim an immediate refund in cash; a serious effort is being made to improve the quality of information available to travellers, including that given



Photo: John Atherton

## Panamanian comes to Monaco

From November 1st through 4th over 650 former Pan Am employees will descend on Monaco to recall the carrier's glory days ... and to mark the 75th anniversary of its first passenger flight across the Atlantic in June 1931, from Port Washington, NY, to Lisbon (yes, the math is a bit out there but everyone was keen to get together).

Max Gurney, formerly Pan Am's rep in Monaco, has played a leading part in organising the event and gained the support of Prince Albert. I spoke to him down the line at his home in La Jolla: "There was always tremendous loyalty to the company and that survives among the veterans. This will be a marvellous occasion." And I had to ask: what did Max and his colleagues think of the ABC series *Pan Am* (much hyped, then cancelled): "Fantasy rather than fact ... I heard that Nancy Ganis, the former flight attendant who came up with the original idea, burst into tears when she saw the first episode." P.M.

To find out more see [dixie-clipper.com](http://dixie-clipper.com); Max Gurney can be reached at [gurneymcm@aol.com](mailto:gurneymcm@aol.com)

by audio announcements. In future these announcements will be made live by specially trained staff. Those currently in use are recorded in Paris and can surprise, as with references to B.O. (that's right: Biot).

To find out more, visit the English section of the SNCF website at [sncf.com](http://sncf.com). And if you want to make a claim with SNCF, download the form from our website: [rivierareporter.com/consumerism/273-got-a-beef-with-the-sncf](http://rivierareporter.com/consumerism/273-got-a-beef-with-the-sncf)

Worth noting: the rail link between Marseille St Charles and Aix-en-Provence has been upgraded (frequency, length of journey, rolling stock) and this makes a side trip to that attractive university city much

easier. Marseille itself has had an extensive facelift in preparation for next year when it becomes European Capital of Culture. Worth a visit maybe now before the crowds arrive (up to 3 million visitors are expected in 2013).

Talking of rail travel, the UK has the distinction of offering the EU's highest train fares along with some lousy service. So what about those intercity buses, National Express, especially? Much cheaper than the train. Well, that's soon to be less true for some people. In October the government is scrapping the subsidy which has allowed reduced fares for oldies. Start saving, gran, and take a train in 2014. ■

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## Business

# Minding your own business

BY PETER JOHNSON

## Hollande's new measures that particularly hit expatriates

Well, the dust is slowly settling on the first few months of Hollande's Presidency and, no surprises, there have been several unpopular tax changes to try and make inroads into the economic crisis and France's crippling national debt.

### CAPITAL GAINS TAX

Under Sarkozy "tapering relief" was abolished, so now a secondary residence has to be owned for a full 30 years before Capital Gains Tax disappears. Hollande's extra "punishment" to the *wealthy* foreigner with a holiday home in France is to add the wretched *prélèvements sociaux* to the Capital Gains Tax; so whatever rate you were at before (most typically for EU members at 19%) add on another 15.5%.

### TAX ON RENTAL PROFIT

Actually introduced last year under Sarkozy (remember him?), but rarely applied by local tax offices across France, and where it was applied often overturned on appeal. Effectively, any expatriate with a second home in France generating rental income will now be subject to a flat-rate 20% income tax PLUS 15.5% *prélèvements sociaux* (nothing social about this; just tax by a different name!) on the profit.

### WEALTH TAX

Hollande's new measures have overturned Sarkozy's previous lax attitude to collecting this tax; now, anyone with over €1.3 million is taxed at 0.25% on EVERYTHING over and above €800,000 (for amounts over €3 million, it's 0.5%).

### INHERITANCE/GIFT TAX

Previously the gifting allowance per child was €159,325 every 10 years; now the tax-free allowance is €100,000 every 15 years with no inflation-proofing.



### VAT

Proposed increases to basic VAT on goods and services will not be happening, except for those at the 5.5% rate, which passes to 7% (not good news if you're doing renovation work on your home).

Other changes are afoot, but these are the ones likely to affect the expatriate reader of this magazine most. "Will the last person out, please turn off the lights!" Anyone still staying in France?

### GOOD NEWS

The above bad news may be tempered by a sliver of good news, along the lines of the great PPI misselling scandal in the UK. Every time anyone takes out a loan or mortgage they are "sold"

life and disability insurance (and loss of earnings cover) to repay the loan if something happens to them. In an actuarial world, only a small portion of the premium is actually needed to cover the risk, ie, that the borrower dies or gets injured. So, the remainder of the premium is pure "profit". A French consumer association (*UFC Que Choisir*) has tested the water and believes that French consumers have also been "ripped off" and are due for a refund of an average €2000 per case. The banks and insurance companies may voluntarily pay up, or may be forced to by legal action; it's early days yet. Watch this space.

Ah well, it may help with all the lovely new taxes. ■



# Bon App!

This issue we look at apps about returning to school or work now that the summer break is well behind us.

Easily download these apps from the links on our website, keyword "ExpatApps" or use the QR code on the next page.

## OFF TO SCHOOL

### • iTooCh - Les Bases du Français



Paid language app to learn French basics (€4.99). If your child is struggling with French at school this app is a fun way to work on improving. Presented in game form, it can even become addictive for parents. It teaches French grammar, spelling, verb forms and vocabulary in a child-friendly way. A little pricey but well rated by French teachers and parents. iPad compatible. Fr.

**Have you found an App worth sharing? Email us via the Reporter website**

### • Orthographe CE2



If your child is entering CE2, this French spelling app (€4.99) should help with the pesky business of accents, subject/verb conformity and conjugation. iPhone and iPad optimised. Fr.

### • Quelle Histoire (Editor)



No child in the French school system can escape history lessons concerning Napoleon, Louis XIV and Joan of Arc. These three apps from the educational editor *Quelle Histoire* make French history easier on the brain cells. Jeanne d'Arc: Fr, En, Ge, It, Sp. (€2.39) Napoleon: Fr, En, Sp. (€2.39) Louis XIV: Fr, En. (€0.79)

### • On tient la forme!

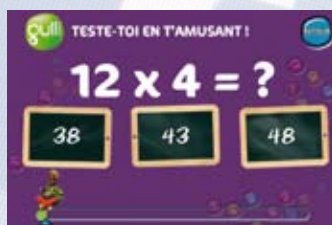


The basics of elementary geometry using a farm and its animals. Very basic but good for *maternelle* and first year primary students. iPad compatible. Fr, En. (€2.39)

### • Larousse Dictionnaire Anglais/Français

French-English dictionary with 250,000 words and expressions. 400,000 translations in both directions. 3000 abbreviations. Idiomatic expressions and proverbs. Conjugation. And it also pronounces words and phrases in French or English. All without internet connection making this app an investment for all the family. iPhone and iPad optimised. Fr, En. (€4.99)

### • Les tables de multiplication avec Gulli



Using French terms to teach simple multiplication tables with a game-like interactive interface. Fr. (€1.59)

## AND BACK TO BUSINESS

### • VAT Tool



If you struggle with "off the top" or "from the bottom" TVA/VAT calculations this is one for you. This works out the TVA from a tax-included price (TTC) or the tax-excluded price (HT). Select in-app VAT from among the rates for 59 different countries or enter your own rate if you don't find the rate you need (such as special French construction rates). Fr, En. Essential and Free.

### • CCI Nice Côte d'Azur

From the Chamber of Commerce, local business news, trade shows, businesses for sale, useful contacts and addresses. For iPhone but iPad compatible. French only. Free.

### • Invest in Côte d'Azur



Team Côte d'Azur, the economic development agency offers an app with several functions. "Meet your peers:" for business networking; investment case studies; economic news; practical info and services. For iPhone but iPad compatible. Entirely in English. Free.

### • Cyberplus (Banque Populaire)



You can't be in business without using a bank and this app means you can take your BPCA Cyberplus account with you wherever you go. Consult your balance on an iPhone or iPad, report a stolen or lost bankcard or chequebook, get emergency numbers, find the nearest cash point. Fr. Free to BPCA clients.



## APP DU MOIS

### • GPSMemo

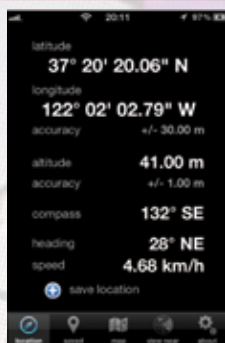
If, like me, you do business in Sophia Antipolis and still can't find your way around one of the most inadequately signposted business parks anywhere, then GPSMemo is for you. It's perfect to remember just where that elusive office building is. Hit the app's "+" button when you finally find the place and you'll be able to locate it again anytime you want.

So how does this differ from your car's SatNav? To start with, your iPhone or iPad is a lot more portable than an in-car GPS. And the list of recorded destinations gives the precise distance from where you are at the moment to any location you've added to your list.

Another unique feature is the "View" mode. Simply hold your iPad or iPhone in front of you and turn in a circle. All recorded locations within 5 kilometres from where you are facing will show in their precise direction with distance so you know which way and how far to go.

**TIP:** You can also record where you took a holiday photo, found that shady picnic spot or that nice little restaurant, or even a Reporter distribution point.

GPSMemo requires a GPS-equipped iPhone or iPad but does not need an internet connection. It's iPad optimised with HD resolution for the new Retina screen. We had a crash with this app but an email to the German developer, Bernhard Koenig, corrected this in the version now in iTunes. *Danke Bernhard!* En, Ge. (0.79€) **M.M.**



## READER'S APP

### • Gourmet Guides



From St Pois, Robert West at [gourmetguides.eu](http://gourmetguides.eu) has developed an app for that welcome break of eating out, whether for work or pleasure. There's nothing like a nice

restaurant meal for a relaxing break but do you know what Italian or French dish you're eating? This app translates dishes and culinary terms between English, French, Italian and German. It aims to avoid those sometimes comical translations often to be found even in the finest establishments and removes doubt from menu terms. Can be used offline and contains more than 2000 food definitions, not just merely translated into English but often explained in more detail. Compatible reference books available also. iPad compatible. En. Fr. It. Ge. (€0.79)



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# Off to school

## A look at education options at the primary level



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BY JILL PENTON-BROWNE

### Going international

Our region is well served by international schools such as the three I write about here which have excellent reputations. A very significant part of their market is drawn from the expat community where parents want their children to have a broad international perspective similar to their own. That's rarely to be found among French teachers who tend to have an outlook which is firmly *franco-français*. "That's the problem," a British father once said to me. "I don't want my boy coming home saying Napoleon was a good bloke."

### Mougins School

I spoke to Brian Hickmore who's been at the school for 27 years, 17 as head. (Mougins School will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2015.) "Our big news, of course, is that with the opening of this school year we've got a brand new primary building with 12 classrooms. That will enable us to have double classes in

years 3, 4 and 5. This September our total enrolment tops 500 with some 200 in the primary section. About one-fifth of our pupils are French. The strengthening of our primary activity is important to us as many who enter at that level stay with us right through to university entrance. Historically, we have a close relationship to the British system and our curriculum is mainly UK-oriented. French, of course, has an important role, with sessions four times a week.

"I'd stress two points. Firstly, we firmly believe that a happy child learns more easily and we aim to have an atmosphere that is serious but relaxed. Activities, which aren't strictly academic, play an important role, notably music, art and sport. Secondly as a non-selective school we need to be very alert to some pupils' special needs. As well as our overall special needs coordinator we have another member of staff who deals specifically with the learning difficulties of those at the critical primary level. It's at that time you can set a child off on the path to realising his or her full potential. Dealing with those special needs

calls for special skills on the part of a human teacher. Today, of course, we have to find the right role for those new technologies which have largely replaced chalk and talk. They are very useful but need to be used with care and discretion."

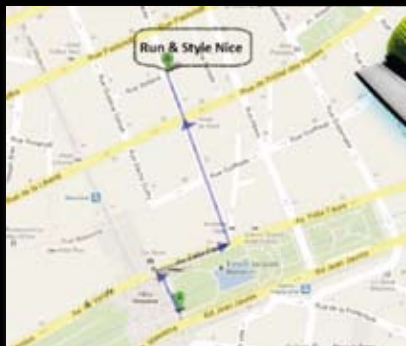
### International School of Monaco

ISM was founded in 1994 to serve the Principality's expanding expat community. Today it has some 500 students on roll representing 44 nationalities; of these 146 are in the primary section. I talked to Jenny O'Fee from rural County Down in Northern Ireland ("There were just 50 in my school") who heads up the section. She came to Monaco four years ago after eight years teaching in Italy.

"We're a bilingual school which means English and French are used for teaching on alternate days. That means a lot of effort all round but it seems to work well. Where the basic subjects are concerned we put a lot of stress on treating each child as an individual. This takes account of our students' varied backgrounds – coming out of Monaco's international community – and also of their likely specific futures in similar communities.

"Obviously, developing basic skills is the priority but we want our pupils to develop into well-rounded human beings. There's a lot of music, sport, and extra-curricular activities, too. And we're very concerned that they should develop a high degree of self-confidence and feel ready, when appropriate, to express themselves on the social problems we bring to their attention – everything from the protection of the environment, where we've got a good case study to hand in Prince Albert's

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## Kids born at Christmas don't do so well

**S**o says Julien Grenet of France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) who's been studying the educational performance of children born at the beginning and end of the year: "A baby arriving around Christmas might seem the best present the parents could hope for. But there's a snag. Because of the way French kids are recruited into the school system, those born at the end of the year are likely to start when they're less mature than those born earlier. Those born in the last few weeks get poorer

grades, are more likely to repeat a year and don't qualify for the more prestigious lycée courses. And then after school they end up earning less. Sad, I know, but true."



## "I speak English to Richard, and Gabriel talks to him in French"

**T**hat's right: it's one of those savvy expat families who've picked up on the oft-repeated advice that in a mixed couple each parent should address a child in his or her own language and so offer the youngster the best chance of growing up bilingual. But the outcome can be unexpected. The famous Bristol-born physicist Paul Dirac – who grew up very weird – heard only French from his Swiss father and English from his mother Flo. He concluded, and long believed, that all men and women spoke different languages. In the young Dirac's day, of course – he was born in 1902 – there was neither radio nor television to disprove his induction.

campaign for the bluefin tuna, to the role of IT in our lives, including social media. In terms of teaching material, we've selected from the very rich range available from the international bilingual curricula and we've arrived at a programme that is effective as a basis for teaching and clearly stimulating. They're learning and they're enjoying it."

## École Bilingue Internationale de la Côte d'Azur

EBICA is the youngest of our international schools, opening its doors on September 18th, 2006. In at the beginning was Jayne Pirson ("I'm always explaining that I'm not Jane Pearson") who moved here after seven years teaching in Silicon Valley. "California here I come, okay, but eventually I needed to get away. It wasn't the life I wanted for my children."

Jayne has seen the school grow in size as at each *rentrée* another year is added on. Currently there are 122 on roll of which 80% in the primary section, which she heads up. "Obviously that proportion is going to change. By the way, we've got 22 nationalities with us at the moment." Jayne is fully aware that those children are experiencing something very different from what goes

on in the average French primary school. "First of all, for us each child, with his or her particular talents and difficulties, represents an individual educational project. Secondly, and this is not much appreciated by the French, children have changed over recent years and can't be treated as they were 30 years ago. Their relationship with adults has changed and then there's the whole IT factor and especially social media. My time in Silicon Valley taught me that their use needs careful monitoring."

"As our name makes clear, we're a bilingual school with one of the two languages used on alternated days. Where subjects like art and music are concerned, we take an integrated approach. For example, some classes have been studying Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* which offered scope for work in several areas, from painting and song to history and geography. In all our work we want our pupils to learn and at the same time have the fullest opportunity to express themselves."

Finally, with obvious pride, Jayne showed me the school's brand new premises, just opened. "We did a great job in the old building, no doubt about it – but this is marvellous." ■



# So what about the French school up the road?

One advantage, you might think, is that it's free. Well, not quite. That's to overlook the rather long list of items that parents are expected to pay for at the start of each school year. Actually, there's a bit of good news this time round. François Hollande has kept his campaign promise to up the government grant given to parents to help them meet this expense. This year at primary level there's a payout of €356.20 for each child, a rise of 25% on 2011. And yes you can claim this if you have a child in one of the international schools on condition you are within the qualifying income band and you produce a *certificat de scolarité* from the school. To find out more ask at your *caisse d'allocations familiales*.

## Incoherence of educational policy

In theory, there's great uniformity among schools at every level in the French system, a notion much cherished by Napoleon. In fact, there's quite a lot of variation. One point not always appreciated by foreigners is that the local mayor has considerable influence over the *école communale* for which he has direct responsibility. I recall a story from the Var of some years ago about a mayor who was violently anti-British after his daughter was dumped and divorced by a man from *perfidie Albion*. His lead was followed by the primary school's *directrice* and a couple of English kids in school weren't treated too well. Teachers, of course, are a mixed bunch and expat parents have talked to me over the years of a range of attitudes from the immensely helpful to the openly hostile.

What I'm talking about here really are the public schools, attended by 80% of children; the rest are in private schools, mainly run by the Catholic Church. These have a reputation for higher academic standards, stricter discipline

and a more pastoral approach although these days religion is less salient than in the past. Funded by the State, they are remarkably cheap and are subject to overall government direction. To a greater or lesser extent, they share the problems of the public schools.

One of those is the incoherence of educational policy which is constantly being modified. In half a century there have been 30 ministers – an average of one every 20 months – and each appointee likes to appear to be a new broom. Sarkozy's last Education Minister, Luc Chatel, was pushing for "philosophy from age five" (*Huh!*). His socialist successor, Vincent Peillon, has binned that idea but, to the sighs of many teachers, has announced a great debate about the schools covering everything from the length of the school year and pay to the training of teachers.

In recent years, there has been increasing criticism of the schools by French observers. Jean-Paul Brighelli, a vociferous commentator on the topic, calls the primary schools "a factory for making

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**64,835**  
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colleges, public  
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per student per year**  
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**€8330 junior high**  
**€11,600 high school**

Source: *education.gouv.fr*  
- 2010/11 school year

## At school in Nice but growing up with a Kiwi outlook



Julie Belleudi, from Wellington, New Zealand, came to Nice in 2002 with her French husband Guy whom she'd met in London. They have three children (above) – Chloe, nearly 9, Estelle, 7 and William, who's 5 this month. I spoke to her down the line to Wellington where she was spending her summer break with the children.

"We looked at the local public primary school which was very big, too big, we thought, but luckily there was a Catholic school close by, much smaller, easy to get to, and that's where all three Belleudis now are. Of course, I've been making comparisons with my own primary school days back in New Zealand. It was much more relaxed than here, less demanding. My children's school expects them to work hard and show that they're really learning although just last year they stopped giving marks. I'd say that we were made welcome when we arrived – we as parents, and then each of the children. One thing I notice, though, is that they don't take an especially personal approach to their pupils. There's a more or less standard line for everything. For example, they decided Estelle had a language problem – with pronunciation and vocabulary – and she was sent off to a speech therapist. Actually, I think it was just that growing up bilingual she got a bit confused at times. Another thing is how early they teach kids to do proper handwriting. Back home, friends tell me their children go on using big block letters for years. I think we've been very lucky in one way. The school isn't like those places I've heard of which are very academic. They do a lot of music – with an excellent teacher – and they get art and sport each twice a week. If you put it to me, I'd say they're happy in school, and I think they're getting a good education. But I'd like them to grow up with a Kiwi outlook and that's my job." *J.P.B.*

idiots”, employing a style of teaching which still depends largely on the mechanical learning of facts then measured by old-fashioned testing methods. This makes pupils anxious to show they’ve done what the teacher required but offers little scope for originality. On the other hand, they often become anxious over their marks and, according to several studies, are prone to stress-related conditions such as disturbed sleep and stomach upsets. They are also frequently tired, given their long school day. As Peter Gumbel, a British writer (who’s had three children in the system) has said, “Just look at the kids in the *école primaire* – at that age they should look happy; often they don’t.”

**Kindergarten - Maternelle**  
Ages 3-6

**Primary school - École élémentaire**  
Ages 6-11

**Junior High - Collège**  
Ages 11-15

**High school - Lycée**  
Ages 15-18

### Uncomprehending treatment

What strikes foreign – especially Anglo-Saxon – observers is how the French school, and this is especially damaging in the earlier years, reacts to the child who is clearly “different”. Historically this is explicable. Until the end of the 19th century the official doctrine was that *l’instituteur institue la nation*. In other words, it was the task of the primary teacher to create good little French citizens out of a population in which there was enormous cultural and linguistic diversity. The legacy of that mission survives in the often poor and uncomprehending treatment accorded to dyslexic and autistic children in today’s schools and, in some places, the less than warm welcome given to foreign pupils. Slow learners – defined as anomalous – are also offered little understanding. The common remedy for a poor report card is to make the child repeat the year (*redoublement*). This happens to one pupil in six, on average, in primary classes. It often achieves almost nothing (performance in 80% of cases remains static or declines).

Christian Forestier, a former senior Ministry of Education official, points to two major deficiencies in the French primary school: “First, our teachers get no serious training in how to teach, just a basic grounding in subjects. That’s a huge lack. Secondly, the curriculum is in a mess. On one hand, certainly in practice, it’s too rigidly academic – virtually no music or art, very little sport – and on the other hand it’s always being tinkered with. Start English at five – a great idea but not for kids who in many places aren’t being taught their own language properly.” If you’re thinking of the French school up the road *Bonne chance!* ■



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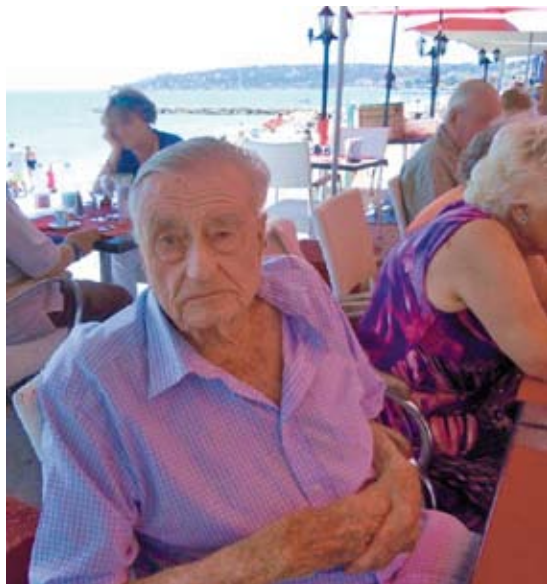
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# Old and younger in Menton

Patrick Middleton talks to two Brits living in the city who were born half a century apart



Richard West and Susanne Batstone, who is exactly half the age of Richard, are Menton residents.



**R**ichard West came on the scene in London in 1920. That's two years before the birth of BBC radio and sixteen years before the launch of television at Alexandra Palace. "Both these media have played a huge part in my life. I was actually an extra in a television play in 1937. My father was an actor and I suppose that's why I acquired what people always called my excellent diction. I didn't care for school much and at sixteen I went to France for a while which I much enjoyed. When I returned I enrolled at the London Theatre Studio where my teacher was the brilliant French director Michel Saint-Denis. Having the language proved useful when I was called up. I did liaison work with the Free French and met de Gaulle several times.

"When I got out of uniform I started on my long career as an actor and – much my preference – a director. For years radio was a very big thing for me, anything from very serious drama on the Third Programme to playing a villain in *Dick Barton*. You know, some people say radio acting is a soft option. No way! My inspiration was my mother who was Gladys Young, surely the finest

English woman radio actor of all time. I still meet people who remember her voice and her subtle

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an American born in Paris,  
began his winter garden  
in Menton. It took him two  
decades to complete the  
Serre de la Madone.

use of it. But I wasn't just that man on the wireless. I spent very little time 'resting'. I did cinema for Rank, a lot of repertory and in

later years I got to go on theatrical junkets to places like Australia and Canada. And by the late Fifties, of course, television was taking up a lot of my time. That was directing which I'm much better at than acting, to be honest. My favourite show was *No Hiding Place*, a cult crime series in the Sixties on ITV. I also had two longish spells with the BBC as a drama director."

When Richard decided to slow down rather (he remained on call for many years) why did he choose to settle in Menton? "I'd been here on holiday and I liked it and it was close to Italy where I enjoy having lunch." And how would he rate the experience of growing old? "Not very favourably! You can't get about too easily and – the worst thing – all your old mates die off. That's hard for theatre people who tend to keep in touch across the years and love to reminisce. As you can see, though, I'm still wide-awake. You have to keep mentally active so I read a lot. I don't have a television."

**S**usanne Batstone is exactly half the age of Richard West. "I was born in 1966 in Ipswich in Suffolk. Funnily enough, I found I'm living in a house here in Menton once

occupied by Daevid Fortune, a well-remembered figure from the old-style Riviera Radio, who also came from Ipswich. People often say, by the way, that I look and sound very English. That's a bit misleading. My father was Ukrainian – my maiden name is Bohush which I'm told means something to do with God – and my mother German. At school I decided I wanted to do something where I'd help people. When I was eighteen I joined a management training programme at Lloyds Bank which might not sound like what I was after. In fact, I was in what they now call Human Resources and did lots of people-oriented training and personal development, which I loved because it helps motivate people. At one point it seemed as if I had a career all mapped out."

So what changed? "I met my now ex-husband, another native of Suffolk. He was a marine engineer working on yachts. He got a job down here and I moved after a couple of years. I soon realised I was a yachting widow. He was often away working and eventually our relationship crumbled and ended in divorce. I was left, though, with two fantastic young children – Catherine, now 18, and Christopher, 15 – and I had ten rather tough years as a single working mother. That's the sort of experience that either makes you or breaks you. To win through you've got to be positive. I was helped, no doubt about it, by the fact that from the start I'd been determined to integrate with the local French community. When my marriage ended I didn't feel totally isolated as can happen in some cases. I had some English friends, of course, but I also felt part of a French world, too. School played its part: I'd put my children into private Catholic schools and made some good

friends among the parents. The advice I'd offer to anyone settling here is simple: learn French and reach out to people.

"I was brought up as a Catholic but drifted away. Then, in dealing with my various difficulties including the loss of both my parents after my husband left, I realised that I'd got through by calling on my inner resources. Easy to say but – for some people – not so easy to do on their own. I became interested in a variety of personal development programmes – I started off pretty sceptical, I admit – and I've been very active introducing these to our English-speaking community. I've organised seminars and courses with Alison Prideaux, a local who presents Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, and I've brought the life coach Cate Mackenzie down a couple of times who 'aims to help people build their confidence and create the life of their dreams'. It's easy to be dismissive but these approaches can work and need to be looked at with an open mind."

Has Susanne's Menton changed during her two decades here? "Well, it's always been for me an attractive town, and great place to bring up kids. On the social side, the English-speaking community has been changing. More and more younger people – often working in Monaco – have been moving in and the British Association, under Birgitt Nordbrink, has been widening its activities to take account of this. I've played my part – by running charity walks, for example, which don't attract those with walking-sticks." At 46, and training to become a Bach practitioner, does she sense a midlife crisis? "Not at all. I go with the flow and take it as it comes with a positive attitude. Who knows – in 2058 I may be blowing out 92 candles like Richard's just done!" ■



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# The Love Coach

**Sex therapist and expat relationship expert for nearly 10 years, Nathalie Giraud answers readers' questions**



## The F-Word: fidelity

**W**hy are married men unfaithful and what are they looking for in an extra-marital affair? It seems worse on the Riviera. I've been married twice, cheated on twice and divorced twice. I'm a middle-aged woman who no longer believes in love.

DG, Menton

There are many ways to answer your question DG since it's such a vast and sensitive subject. However, the issue of a third party in a couple cannot be restricted to men alone; there are as many Western women nowadays that have the time, means, inclination, and freedom to engage into a one-night stand or an ongoing relationship whilst married.

Could it be that the sea and sun, the wealth and power and the enterprising women present on the Riviera have an added attraction for the married men? Well, the choice and opportunities here are similar to those you would find in major international cities.

Whether here or there, whichever way you describe it – unfaithfulness, cheating, an affair, a fling – the impact, once discovered, is not only shattering to the ego but is a source of immense pain and anger. You feel betrayed which leads to endless questioning, self-doubt and lack of trust in your partner's words and behaviour. Indeed, vows and promises you once took for sexual exclusivity when you got married are broken. This time of crisis during a marriage is said to lead to divorce in half of the cases. As for the other half, it has ... a positive effect, as the couple not only overcomes marital infidelity, but sometimes finds it even strengthens the relationship.

Once discovered, the first issue to consider is whether it was a very short (one-night stand), short or long-term external relationship. For me, these carry distinct weights and meanings and can be approached differently.

Then the couple needs to consider *if* they *both* want to work at repairing the relationship and build back the trust, as there is some serious talking to be done. At the risk of shocking a few readers, it takes two to make it, and in all fairness it also takes two to break it for whatever (un)conscious reasons there might be.

I would say it's a myth to believe that extra-marital sex is more male oriented because of their genes ("spreading his seeds"), hormones, predatory instincts or inability to conjugate love and sex. Of course you do have a few sex addicts, made famous with the likes of Michael Douglas or more recently with DSK, but they aren't representative of the male population. Very often long term extra-marital sex is the sign of an underlying problem in the marriage, showing that there is something wrong with the relationship and lack of sex isn't the driving force, so to speak. Here's the truth: the major pitfall in today's marriages is communication breakdown. In my practice, it's the number one complaint time and time again. Each partner has forgotten to share and communicate about what matters to them – goals, desires, money, education, interests, social life – which builds an ever-growing sense of frustration, fuels quarrelling and in turn leads to dissatisfied sex.

Then there are others who engage in affairs (small, big or supersized) because they need to reassure themselves of their power of seduction, to spice up a dull (love) life, to check everything is working properly, to be heard/understood/valued/recognized, to feel alive and vibrant again, to just hope again ...

Of course, it could just be that you've married the wrong person for the wrong reason, trusting him rather than trusting you and your inner feelings of what feels right and good for you. You wrote in your letter DG that your father cheated on your mother many times before he left the family to remarry and then divorce again. It would be interesting to find out, with the help of a therapist, how much of that past history is intertwined with your two divorces, repeating a scenario that is not totally yours.

"Should I stay or should I go now?" as the Clash would sing. There is no right or wrong, nor specific guideline to follow but certainly there are decisions to be carefully thought out, choices to be made, voices to be heard, and actions to be taken to give the relationship a "new go" or a "no go".

Whichever path you take, try not to build walls around your heart or the possibility to love again. There are good people out there (even on the Côte d'Azur!) you just have to believe that you are worthy. ■

Send your question to Nathalie Giraud *clo* the Riviera Reporter (see page 46) or email [TheLoveCoach@rivierareporter.com](mailto:TheLoveCoach@rivierareporter.com)



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# Gardener's Notes: Learning the trade

BY JAMES HARTLEY

DIRECTOR, ENGLISH GARDEN GROUP



**“**What a shame that successive governments continue to focus on what is, in my opinion, the wrong end of the spectrum to solve their problems. You can't keep looking at taxation of “the rich” as the solution.”

James Hartley

**I think I must be getting old. Oh, Lord – there I've said it.**

Though I've spent years berating my father for uttering that phrase, genetics would appear to have won through, as if some time sensitive-trigger mechanism has been tripped in my DNA relating to age consciousness. Yet the fact remains that it seems only yesterday that we were preparing for the onset of spring and waiting for the buds to burst forth; I must have blinked because the summer is already waning. The wonderfully intense heat that I adore is already slowly leaking out of the days, and dusk is starting his inexorable crawl back towards late afternoon so that darkness can reclaim the early evenings. I wonder sometimes why it feels that the passage of time appears faster with each passing year. The seasons seem now to flicker past, in a way too fast to enjoy. I used to believe that I was just busier each year, however I know now this isn't possible. I've come to the conclusion that the human perception of the rate of passage of time continually increases, as any fixed amount of time is a continually smaller fraction of the total experience of your lifetime, hence it feels shorter. I'm sure someone far wiser than I has elaborately discussed this subject in a thesis – I just haven't had the time to read it. Oh to rediscover that wonderful sensation felt as a child: playing in the garden at the start of the summer holidays you had eternity in front of you. Now, only two days after starting my summer holiday I'm already thinking about the important things that need to be done at work when I get back. Indeed, the immortal words of George Bernard Shaw, “youth is wasted on the young” never seemed more true (and no, it wasn't Robbie Williams that penned that phrase into the song *Eternity* in case you were wondering – but I will admit that I also had to look up the real author).

## Apprenticeships: worth more to the nation than taxing the rich

On the subject of youth, it's that time of year again we welcome into our ranks at the company a new apprentice (or two). This we do every year in partnership with the agricultural college in Antibes, which looks to place students for between one and three years in companies, while they prepare for various levels of exams in the horticultural industry. Amazingly they struggle to find places at times for all of the students. I feel passionately about this: it's crucial that young people learn practical skills “on site” whilst gaining valuable industry experience in order that they be able to make a useful participation later on. This has a huge influence on their chances of gaining employment at the end of their studies – and I can confidently say this with more authority than any politician since I run a small company and I take the decision who to employ. Over the years we have seen about one in two stay with us at the end of their apprenticeship to become a full-time employee, and some of our best new employees have followed this path. I started my working life with no intention of having anything to do with the horticultural industry – yet thanks to a year of experience within it – realised that this was where I could fulfil my potential doing something that I really enjoyed and that fitted my skill set.

It's a shame that successive governments continue to focus on what is, in my opinion, the wrong end of the spectrum to solve their problems; you can't keep looking at taxation of “the rich” (itself a rather dubious concept) as the solution. Instead, it's the upcoming generations that will fill the boots of the older, and conversely, without employment, add dramatically to the cost of providing social protection. Ultimately, having a maximum number of young people gainfully employed as early as possible has to be, in my book, the surest way to ensuring individual fulfilment, community cohesion and enduring prosperity. It's therefore very sad that “manual” industries seem to be looked at with such low esteem: so many of the young people I vet for new positions have tried every kind of job imaginable and would rather be something else, or better still, a *fonctionnaire*, than get their hands dirty.

## The “pâtissier” theory

Indeed, when you step back and look at it, there has been an unrelenting devaluation of manual professions – this has to change. Although apprenticeships exist, the system needs to be widened and strengthened, back to something similar to a century



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ago when you properly learnt a trade before taking a fully-fledged role in a job. For some reason, as it is, when an entrance level position becomes available we collect applications of every kind – yet we receive a disproportionate number of applications from young men who have first tried their hand at just about everything, but among other things, being *pâtissiers*. A theory to explain the “*pâtissier* phenomenon in horticulture” is still a work in progress. Being a sucker for the enthusiastic and willing underdog however I’ll often give them a chance. Sadly, during the first couple of months they are often as useful in a team as a chocolate teapot, and we have to train them in every aspect of the profession. This can be expensive for us since all the while we’re paying full costs – salary and social. How much better it would be that they had followed an apprenticeship scheme? Not only would this allow them to learn the skills they need under the umbrella of reduced costs to the company training them, but also allow them to “commit” to a specific trade, something which if not present is rather an obstacle to training within a company as the risk is greater they are going to disappear when the going gets tough.

I believe France has got much right in many respects: good social protection (provided by the heavily-legislated labour law) and the fantastic healthcare (funded by high company social costs) are both in themselves things to be proud of in a modern society – but even the most dim-witted politician must see what every business owner knows: these collude to create a massive barrier to entry to employment at the lower level. While the apprentice system is open to abuse (I know small firms that have as many apprentices as full-time staff which is patently ridiculous) this is easily legislated against. As a small company I cap the number of apprentices to two (against a backdrop of twenty-five full-time staff) to ensure proper *encadrement*.

Apprenticeships remain though, in my opinion, one of the best ways to ease the passage into full-time employment for those with few industry specific skills, bridging the gap between unemployed and employed, making it easier on both sides during the transition. If you happen to know a politician, please feel free to give them a shake. ■

It's very sad that “manual” industries seem to be looked at with such low esteem: so many of the young people I vet for new positions would rather be a fonctionnaire, than get their hands dirty.

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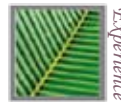
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# The Var Report



Photo: Florent Pessaud

Minister Vallaud-Belkacem wants prostitution in France to be illegal.



Photo: Robin Lacassin

Transhumance: shepherds facing more than snow falls to protect their flocks.



Photo: Angela George

Clooney rumoured to be house hunting in the Var. What else?

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## Another lap to go?

The question of the French Grand Prix returning to the Var (see previous issues) is back. Absent from France since 2008 the F1 GP wasn't thought to return and even if it did, the Var wasn't going to get it. And now ...

President Hollande states that he does indeed want the return of Formula One to France "after too long an absence" but the Socialist government has made it clear that the state will not help with funding. This leaves things pretty much in the hands of the two contending venues: Magny Cours in the Nièvre and Le Castellet in the Var with the FFSA (French Automobile Sporting Federation) as referee. We now learn that the FFSA has indeed resuscitated the French GP project by tabling three possible scenarios: either Magny Cours, or Le Castellet or alternating between the two like the Spanish GP – which will now take place in Valencia and Barcelona on alternating years. If funding is found and the Var track can be made ready in time for the 2013 season, it might just happen.

And speaking of laps, just when we thought they were gone forever, back come *les*

*girls*. Banning roadside prostitutes from the communes of Les Adrets and Montauroux by municipal decree hasn't really been all that effective. Soliciting for sex is illegal in France but prostitution isn't, a situation that Women's Rights Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem would like to see changed. As long as *les girls* along the lake road stand there passively and don't proactively tout for custom it's not easy to implement an effective outright ban as decreed by the two neighbouring communes. Again, there is a discussion topic about this on our web forum.

Some restaurants around the lake have been under rather more observation than the ladies of pleasure (a term very much questioned by some of our forum posters). Scrutinised in early September by URSSAF, the tax police and the *Inspection du Travail*, no serious illegalities were uncovered.

## Country concerns

It's transhumance time again when the shepherds drive their flocks to lower pastures before the first snows fall at altitude. It's a sight to see and photograph in all its pastoral glory. Shepherds are a hardy bunch so it's not for them that

the migration is necessary; the sheep prefer the warmer lowlands in winter and can feed more easily there.

Walter Ricci, a 67-year-old shepherd from Le Pradet stays outdoors with his flock through all types of weather and sometimes even brings them as near as the outskirts of Toulon. But Walter has the same gripe as other shepherds further to the east where wolves – a protected species and recently introduced in nearby Italy and the Riviera hinterland – are now making their way into the Var.

Deer also fall victim to these predators and several carcasses have been found, at times alarmingly close to villages. Although attacks on humans in our area are unheard of, that doesn't stop some Var residents from worrying about their families' safety in more remote areas. There is a discussion on this on our web forum. Suggestions and experiences are posted, so if you've come up against a problem with wolves where you are, do add your point of view.

## An early hunting season in Correns

The most farcical run-around of the summer in the

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Var had to be the Brangelina “non-wedding” in Correns. So persistent were rumours that Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were to tie the knot on August 18th at their Château Miraval estate that local mayor Michaël Latz had to deal with an influx of hopeful journalists and celebrity snappers from around the world.

Latz, however, was emphatic: “If there was a Pitt-Jolie wedding planned here, I’d know about it because you can’t marry in France without an official declaration to the local *mairie* which is then published on the notice board. We haven’t had one.” Latz went on to say that Pitt and Jolie were a welcome presence in the area and “a lovely couple with adorable children”.

Those children have ever more space to play in as the couple is gradually buying up properties around theirs to expand the Château Miraval plot. Their friend George Clooney, who resides much of the year on Italy’s beautiful Lake Como, is a regular visitor to Château Miraval. He is also rumoured to be looking at large properties nearby and has appointed a local estate agent to search on his behalf.

The mayor’s rumour management skills could well be called into action yet again before much longer.

## VARIABLES

Green thumbs in the Var, John Lancaster and Jim North (of cycling fame) have contacted us about the Var Gardener’s Group (see contact details on page 46) who regularly plan visits and tours, including a

trip to the English Garden Centre on September 26th with a stop off at Brittain’s Homestore followed by a visit of Les Bambous du Mandarin in Montauroux along the Siagne. There’s also *Gondwana Fête*, a plant festival at the Domaine du Rayol on October 6th while on October 23rd a plant swap is planned at Salernes. See Events pages 42-43 for more.

April 5th marked the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic* and even though the wreckage was found more than 25 years ago, there’s never been a device small enough to manoeuvre around the inside completely. Until now. The world’s smallest robot – Robin (*Robot observation and inspection of nautilus*) – was invented by engineers at the French Research Institute for Sea Exploitation in La Seyne. Thy robot snapped 13,000km of photos and videos of cabins, corridors, galleys, dining rooms and elsewhere.

A 36-year-old Var actor, Fabien Baïardi, has been chosen to protect Nicole Kidman in Olivier Dahan’s next film, *Grace of Monaco*. Baïardi, who lives on the outskirts of Toulon in Revestres-Eaux, was last seen on *Rust and Bone* (*De rouille et d’os*) where he chatted up Marion Cotillard in a night club. *Grace of Monaco* with its budget nearing \$15 million, will focus on the political and financial crisis between France and the Rock 1962. **Harris Stobbs ■**



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# Monaco Murmurs

BY MOLLY BROWN



The International Musical Fireworks Competition organised by the Monaco *mairie* since 1966, takes place during the summer season with four evenings that light up the sky of the Principality. This year's event took place from July 22nd to Aug 30th, with England's Aug 25th performance (pictured) earning first place.

Photo: S.Lobono

As thousands of tourists crowded into the Côte d'Azur for summer holidays, like the Parisians, most Monaco residents left to escape one of the hottest Augusts in years. The few who stayed went to swim at daybreak to escape the heat and the crowds which crammed the beach from morn to night. With an eye on the main chance, seaside cafes put their prices up as much as 30% and one restaurant in town startled late night diners by charging double for drinks ordered after 10pm! Massive cruise ships arrived daily with hundreds of passengers who trudged perspiring through the hot streets behind the ubiquitous bobbing umbrellas; some escaped into the cool of the museums or the underground grotto at *Jardin Exotique*, and the Oceanographic Museum's unique collection of the wonders of the deep is always a cool underwater experience. It all cooled down when the lively British fireworks display ended with a typical British downpour of rain ... and won the international fireworks competition.

## THE PEOPLE'S CASINO

A desperate deed in desperate times, or in tune with the perceived necessity to "modernise" Monaco, the Casino went Hip Hop this summer. As James Bond was busy escorting the Queen to the London Olympics, the Casino let its hair down and allowed the world and its wife to enter the glorious *belle époque* interior with no restraint or entrance fee, torn jeans and dirty sneakers notwithstanding. No news as yet as to how much was won or lost, but a few residents expressed surprise and some "shock horror" and John Cleese decided to get married in the Caribbean instead of Monaco ... and no one knows whether the suave, elegant James Bond will ever return.

## DON'T MENTION THE DEFICIT

Although Monaco's deficit is down from €57M in 2011 to €35M (which includes money for the new hospital) the government has stressed "the importance of economic stability if it is to attract more business" and is being cautious. The new hospital is badly needed; the busy Emergency department was overwhelmed this summer, with many staff and specialists on vacation and a shortage of beds. However, there is concern among staff about the proximity of the new hospital as patients are already suffering with the noise and dust of construction of an apartment building opposite, which will also obstruct the view of the first four floors of the hospital when completed.

The words "deficit" and "recession" do not spring to mind when Port Hercule is filled with 100 of the newest 25-90-metre super yachts at the Monaco Yacht Show, the Principality's most lucrative event, with 500 of the world's top shipyards, naval architects, interior designers and high-class service companies eager to sell the latest accessory or the newest design to the thousands of visitors; but with students back in school (teachers hopefully inspired by last year's successful *BAC* results ... 100% at *Lycée FANB* and 98.3% at *Lycée Albert Ier*) life returns to normal and the quiet winter season begins, though with a full calendar of events to keep up the Principality's reputation for year-round entertainment.

*Les Ballets de Monte Carlo* did not perform on the Casino terraces this year due to budget cuts and Director Jean-Christophe Maillot spent the summer with the Bolshoi Ballet, so the dancers were free for six glorious weeks. They are now hard at work preparing for their Brazil tour in October and the "Dance Forum" in December at the Grimaldi Forum, where the conference business is still slow but the "Extra Large" red rhinoceros lured 35,000 visitors into its summer exhibition and its enterprising management fills some of its 25,000m exhibition space with a lively choice of events. Eight finalists of the successful TV show "The Voice" open the season on October 13th as the world of sports media arrive for the popular Sportel Monaco, the Monaco International Clubbing Show (MICS) hosts the NRJ DJ Awards, a disco and 3 days of fashion shows for young clubbers, and Monte Carlo Opera presents Puccini's "*The Girl of the Wild West*" as part of the celebrations of Monaco's *Fête Nationale*. ■



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## Nautical

# The Privileged Ensigns

BY MICHAEL HEALY

People keep asking about the blue, the red and the white ensigns we see on the yachts here; there are many misconceptions. The Red is the basic maritime ensign for all ships registered in Britain and its Overseas Territories, which means most of the world's yacht fleet because the UK allows anyone to register their yacht through a company, and Britain (stupidly) makes nothing out of it. This does not mean, however, that there's anyone onboard who speaks English, nor that there are as many British billionaires as there are mega-yachts. The Territories (colonies like Bermuda, Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands plus the Isle of Man and Jersey etc) adapt the Red Ensign by adding a coat-of-arms, and owners registering there pay a heavy annual Tonnage Tax.

The White Ensign is reserved for the Royal Navy and for British members of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes, duly authorised by Warrant. And the Union Jack is taboo on yachts; Italians don't seem to know this so we see them quite a lot.

The Blue Ensign is the difficult one because many owners prefer the colour blue, knowing often that it is a privilege to which they are not entitled. Their wives may have chosen the curtains to match the colour of the flag, yet the Blue can legally be worn only by British owners who must be

onboard the vessel or nearby, holders of a named warrant from one of a small number of British yacht clubs, and flying the Club burgee of that yacht club. Warrant holders do not have to be distinguished Admirals or any other sort of personage, so that membership of the Royal Thames Yacht Club (splendid clubhouse in Kensington) is enough for a Brit to apply for a Warrant. My own comes from the Royal Naval Sailing Association, for which I must be Navy or ex-Navy – any rank. The Blue Ensign problem is the worst with yachts flying the National flag (rather than the civil one) of the Cayman Islands, BVI or Turks & Caicos because these are (yes!) the Blue Ensign with the badge. But only for use ashore or on Government vessels.

The biggest "colonial" yacht registry – Cayman Islands with 1500 yachts – takes flag etiquette very seriously, but the authorities are far away from the yachts on the Riviera. Their 90-page Law and Procedures Manual does indeed state clearly that the shore-based Cayman Islands Blue Ensign is not permitted to be flown, but it might be one of those books that nobody onboard reads, and certainly not the blue-curtain wife above! Her penalty on summary conviction for unlawful colours is \$25,000 and seizure of the Colours "which shall be forfeit to Her Majesty". ■

## Man to Monaco Yacht Show

The ritziest Yacht Show in the world brings amazing vessels (and people) to Monaco Sept 19th-22nd. One of these arrived by sea, but not by mega-yacht. He thought of making his entrée by parachuting in, but the Queen upstaged him at the Olympics. So he settled for paddling his canoe all the way from home in the Isle of Man ([mantomonaco.com](http://mantomonaco.com)), and was due in Monaco on the opening day Wed 19th after 2000km at sea, on the English and French canals and on the rivers Thames, Saone and Rhône. At least the latter were downhill: the current swept him southward; but the locks in the canals, and the real perils of the Irish Sea, English Channel and Mediterranean were daunting.



So full marks to Chris Allix (above, en route to Monaco), Founding Director of Dominion Marine Corporate Service, for this record exploit, which raises money for 5 charities, including Monaco's Outward Bound Trust. Find him (or donate) on Stand QP2 at the MYS.

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# EXPATS ELSEWHERE: The Pain in Spain

BY MIKE MEADE



Photo: CC-BY-SA 2.5, 2.0, 1.0

Spain has long been a favourite country for expats from Northern Europe, Ireland and the UK. Once cheap and cheerful places to settle, the coastal strips of the Costa Brava and the Costa Blanca were transformed from the sleepy fishing villages of the early 70s into a string of “Blackpools with sunshine” of the mid-90s. Even the region around Seville, one of my favourite cities, was affected by the blight of ill-considered and ugly developments to make expats “feel more at home”... which they didn’t. But life was good and the natives were friendly.

Perhaps too friendly. Lax laws on transactions and local corruption meant that some expats didn’t even legally own the property they thought they’d bought. Many found that once they’d put in a pool, added an extension and made that old shepherd’s hut into a comfortable home, the shepherd then wanted it back. And in some cases he got it, leaving the expat destitute.

## Things change

As the world financial crisis hit, numerous foreigners became the only residents of half-built housing projects with dozens of empty plots that the locals didn’t want. Communal sewage systems, water and electricity supplies were abandoned and squatters moved in next door. Some were even “illegal” properties cut off from water and electricity supplies and therefore unsellable.

Other expats learned the homes they had bought were in fact built without permission and were slated for demolition without compensation. They lost everything.

None of this was helped by official reaction. Andalucía’s Minister for Public Works described some expat homeowners as “people who settled illegally”. She might have thought so but those expats didn’t imagine they were not within the law. British expats Len and Helen Prior have had their Spanish dream home demolished through no fault of their own and continue to fight for compensation. Others who can afford it have started drawn out and expensive legal action, including cases against local politicians who they maintain facilitated the property grabs.

## The last straw

The last straws have also been drawn on the issue of tax and Spanish medical care. As with expats everywhere, tax dodging is a tempting practice. Many here on the Riviera have found that the French authorities are becoming very much more proactive at routing out expat tax dodgers, and in some cases even imprisoning them. You can expect that to continue and even accelerate under the Hollande administration. In Spain, however, a great number of expats ignored the taxman for years without being caught but the need for more revenue has brought that ride to an end. Expats in Spain are now being hit with tax bills that they

Costa Brava’s most popular summer resort, Bay of Lloret de Mar.

**The percentage of foreign nationals treated in Spanish hospitals is disproportionately high, although much of that can be attributed to boozy tourists. In the past year several have fallen from hotel balconies to their deaths or serious injury. One drunken young Briton dived into an empty pool this summer.**

had never seen before and hadn’t budgeted for.

It gets worse. EU expats who settled in Spain were once granted healthcare within the Spanish system under the same conditions as locals. The high cost of providing medical care for millions of expats, some of them chronic drinkers or advanced in age, has become impossible in Spain’s current financial situation with unemployment at well over 20%. The percentage of foreign nationals treated in Spanish hospitals is disproportionately high, although much of that can be attributed to boozy tourists.

## Could it happen to expats in France?

For most of the above points, the short answer is “No”. The French are not at all inclined to sell the soul of their country for a handful of foreign silver. So, despite the popularity of Subway, McDonalds and (recently) Starbucks, there’ll be no Blackpool-sur-Mer.

As for property sales, French transactions have always been properly regulated here and the obligatory *notaire* means that there’s no chance a gullible foreigner can easily be tricked into buying a property that he won’t really own or that was built illegally. The medical exclusion situation that Spain is introducing is already in place in France. EU expats only get the *Sécu* if they are of retirement age and have previously benefited from the national health cover of another EU country or Switzerland. The self-employed and salaried are covered by the state system through “social charges” paid to URSSAF. Visiting tourists are covered by their EHIC card if they already have national insurance elsewhere in the EU.

That leaves the non-working but not-yet-retired expats and the ones living here “on the black”. Both groups will need private health insurance – or in the former case – trying to get the CMU which can be applied for but is granted on a case-by-case basis. ■

## Paris in the spring of 1968

"Everyone," so the conventional wisdom tells us, "has at least one book in them." In not a few cases it's hard not to regret that the work in question ever made its escape into public prints. This is sadly true of many novels produced by the elderly who become suddenly aware of a literary vocation. John Hefford's writing is a heartening exception.



When I met him (above) over lunch in Nice he filled me in on his background. "When I came to Nice a long while ago I ran a bookshop and wondered if I could write. Then for many years I was very busy in the property field. Actually I did a bit of rather tentative writing but didn't take it very far. When my wife died I took up my pen again, I suppose as bereavement therapy. I then realised I could actually produce a good book."

That first book – *The Rebel Legionnaire* (UK: Matador), reviewed in *Reporter* 114 – was a reworking of an earlier attempt at fiction, which this time turned out well. It's got a strong autobiographical basis, relating the experiences of a young British surveyor who marries a French girl, moves to Paris and gets involved willy-nilly in the Algerian crisis. The book is not only highly readable but offers real insight into the events of that time.

In his new title *The Spy She Loved*, Hefford claims to have found evidence that

East German secret services orchestrated the student riots all over Europe in 1967-68, but it also has some autobiographical reference, drawing on his first-hand experience of Paris at the time in which the story is set. Max Patterson – the hero of his earlier book – reappears but the plot's central figure is Angie, daughter of his former boss, the American building tycoon Joe Bennett, a rich kid who became "an anarchist" at her convent school. She meets and falls for a handsome German at university in New York. What she doesn't know, in fact, is that Karl Kruger is an agent of the Stasi, the East German secret service, sent to the West to stir up student violence. Karl fails in an attempt to enlist Angie's help in a scheme to bring pressure on her father. This "failure" leads to his recall to Berlin but he's then dispatched to Paris to provoke disorder among the city's volatile students. There – *Quelle chance!* – he comes across Angie who's arrived to begin a European year at the Sorbonne. The following pages are dramatic: Karl eventually murders Joe Bennett so that he will gain influence over his powerful foundation when Angie inherits. So do we end up thinking young Kruger is a very bad German indeed? Well, maybe, but there's a twist at the end of the tale that makes a judgment rather more complicated.

Hefford's strength is to know how to tell a good story that carries the reader along in a readable style, clear and uncluttered, that never gets in the way. The good news is that he's now carrying his third literary offering – *The Débâcle* – set at the time of the *drôle de guerre*, the phoney war. Those who know his earlier books will look forward to it. **P.M.** ■

See also [johnhefford.co.uk](http://johnhefford.co.uk)

## An agreeable way of learning history *The Spy She Loved*



A love story and thriller set in Paris during the May 1968 student riots which brought France to a standstill. Based on real events and with a surprise revelation.

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# News of Britain & the British

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



British press has hailed Axelle Lemaire as the new "MP for Paris-on-Thames".



Harold Wilson was a huge supporter of the OU when it started in 1969.



Roy Hodgson: "I'm not Harry Redknapp but give me a chance as England boss."

## Better an *expatrié* than an expat?

No doubt about it: France treats its citizens who've chosen to live abroad better than Britain looks after its expats (see last issue). Take education. For some years now parents get school fees paid when their children attend the local *lycée français*. This is questioned by some (especially on the Left and indeed the new government is making noises about scrapping the subsidy) but is much appreciated by the parents and ensures that their offspring are imbued with the desired quality of *francité*. This contrasts sharply with the attitudes found in Westminster and Whitehall. I recall when Kenneth Baker, then Tory Minister of Education, came to inaugurate the new building of Mougins School in 1987 (then known as the Anglo-American School). On the previous evening I attended a meeting for local Brits addressed by Baker at the Gray d'Albion in Cannes. His answers to questions were negative in many ways. Asked if "British schools abroad" – at that time a pretty fair description of the school in Mougins (it now hosts 38 nationalities) – could ever hope for any form of financial assistance from the government he scowled and insisted "they'll never get a penny. If people choose to live abroad they have to live with the consequences." In those days I regularly interviewed British politicians for my local radio programme. I rated Baker the second least likeable of those I dealt with. Easily leading the field was John Prescott, then Labour's deputy leader (on the quarantine issue: "What do people want dogs for, anyway. I've never understood."). And who did I take to? Certainly on the Labour side Roy Hattersley, who made tea in his Commons office while telling me "anyone born British – wherever he lives – should have the vote for life" and, from across the aisle, Chris Patten who when called away suddenly to the House quickly ordered coffee and sandwiches for the waiting journalists. Couldn't imagine Baker being so thoughtful.

Hattersley's views on the expat right to vote weren't shared by everyone, even among Tories. The French *expatrié* now gets a very good deal. As from this year's *législatives* the French abroad were able to vote in eleven constituencies across the world and to send their own *députés* to Paris. This was Sarko's idea and he may have thought most overseas voters would be on the Right. In fact, the socialists did rather well – the 400,000 French in the UK, along with others in Northern Europe, are represented by Canadian-born Axelle Lemaire, a socialist who saw off her UMP opponent. This first time round the turn-out was not impressive (overall around 20%). This should improve in 2017 – as long as the eleven lawmakers in question show they're doing something useful for the expat community. Not much chance, I'd say, that Brits in the Dordogne and Dubai will get their own MPs.

## What's happening at the OU

More praise for a Labour pol: I've always had a soft spot for Harold Wilson (according to Andrew Marr's recent book on the monarch, the Queen's favourite Prime Minister of all those who've across 60 years gone to Buckingham Palace or Balmoral for their weekly audience). Like HM, I can't think badly of a man who had the right attitude – deeply appreciative – to dogs. And, of course, he gave great and possibly decisive, support to the Open University. Launched in 1969, it has become one of the world's most successful dispensers of distance learning.

**Brits have been coming here for some 400 years. Patrick Middleton looks back at the history of visits and settlements from John Milton to Peter Mayle (and after). For details see Events on page 40.**

**The Nice-Monaco Branch of the Royal British Legion will hold a Grand Poppy Party at the Yacht Club de Monaco 18h30-20h on Thurs Oct 25th.**



**Happy-Hour style – just pay for your drinks and give the rest to the Poppy Appeal. The traditional red Poppies will be on offer. Contact Michael Healy: 04 93 01 30 00 or mhealy@orange.fr**

Photo: Benoit Aubry

Originally it was conceived as offering “a second chance” to those who’d missed out on a university education and it offered mainly conventional academic courses (history, literature, science). Two things later became evident: firstly, a lot of people who had graduated “normally” (in their early twenties) were glad of the opportunity to acquire further qualifications (or, in some cases, just wanted to study without taking an examination); secondly, it was realised that there was a growing demand for courses of a vocational kind, especially with a business orientation and in 1989 the OU Business School was launched (its MBA quickly became a highly-rated degree).

Another development was an extension of the OU’s catchment area beyond the UK especially within the EU. Many students were expat Brits but foreign nationals also enrolled. Over the years we’ve several times profiled local OU students who’ve been very varied in background and intention: Selwyn Glick, a retired surgeon, who decided to investigate the new field of virology; Bryce Johnston at Texas Instruments, an electronics engineer, who took an MBA to facilitate his move into marketing management; Gillian Attard at Amadeus, who followed the same path to enhance her prospects; Bianca Roberts-Crook, a member of a rather nomadic family, often on the move, who saw that a BA from the OU was her most practical option.

Students in France benefited from the energetic support of Rosemary Pearson, national co-ordinator, and a network of local tutors. Barbara Wilson had responsibility for MBA candidates. Why these past tenses? Well, recently the OU announced it was reorganising its service for students outside the UK and Ireland. Some reports have put a rather negative spin on this. To get the true picture, we contacted the OU headquarters in Milton

Keynes. Will Swann, Director, Students, tells us: “One of the main reasons for the changes is the complexity associated with maintaining business operations and direct employment in 10 countries across Europe and ensuring these are fully compliant with the varying regulatory, legal and fiscal regimes in the various countries. In light of this decision all students will be supported by UK-based tutors, an approach which is already proven to deliver an excellent learning experience for our students. The OU is not scaling down operations in the South of France or anywhere else in Continental Europe and remains committed to recruiting and supporting students both now and in the future. The OU has made a firm commitment to continuing and building upon the high level support that students outside the UK receive.”

### Home truths:

Are all British football managers thick? Some pretend to be: Harry Redknapp told a court he couldn’t spell his own name. Cheeky Chappie Harry had been favourite to succeed Capello as England’s manager but the job went to Roy Hodgson who not only reads serious fiction – anything from Martin Amis to Milan Kundera – but also speaks at least four foreign languages fluently.

Big Ben is to be renamed in honour of the Queen: by the end of this year it will become the Elizabeth Tower. The old name refers not directly to the tower but rather to the great bell which marks the hours. The new title is clearly an architectural reference. Last year, by the way, a survey revealed that the future Elizabeth Tower is tilting (it’s now 50cm out of true vertical). But don’t panic: the 153-year-old structure is in no danger of collapse for “hundreds of years”. ■



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# American Notes

BY PJ HESLIN



Photo: McSMit

## Lance Armstrong

I am a Lance Armstrong fan. When he was training last spring for the Nice Ironman in June, swimming at our local pool and cycling along the path in Cagnes-sur-Mer (he would definitely have been going faster than the 10km/h imposed limit – see our website forum), it was, I admit, rather thrilling. Throughout the years I cheered as he won the hardest race in professional sports and was happy that he had beat doping allegations without a single shred of

hard evidence proving that he had cheated. Sadly it seems that he is guilty of some form of cheating.

Regardless of what I have read, I think you have to look at what the USADA stands and are responsible for in order to get to the heart of the matter.

Armstrong has said that the United States Anti-Doping Agency has rode “roughshod on slippery rules and sketchy standards” and declared that the USADA set up the rules of arbitration, set up the arbitrators and that, “It might as well have been a firing squad.”

Yet if you visit their website you can easily see that the USADA simply follows the same guidelines of the World Anti-Doping Agency as well as the International Standard of Testing.

US District Court Judge, Sam Sparks and countless fans (including myself) have wondered about their motives. But why would anyone want to take on Lance Armstrong? His image is one of a hard working athlete who has won the world’s toughest race seven times after beating a whack of cancer, and has raised millions of dollars to fight the disease, creating one of the highest profile charitable organizations along the way. If you created a hero like him in a movie you’d say he wasn’t believable.

What possible motive would a non-profit American organization recognized by the US Congress have for wanting to take down such a beloved and inspirational

sports hero other than they are merely doing their job?

It does seem odd to me that the USADA would want to bring charges against an athlete who is no longer competing in the sport. However, since Armstrong is participating in marathons and triathlons, he is still a high profile competing athlete. Furthermore, the USADA’s mission statement clearly states, “... our organization’s anti-doping programs are comprehensive, including in-competition and out-of-competition testing”.

I also wondered what jurisdiction the USADA has over the Tour de France. Just because they strip him of his victories does that mean the Tour has to obey their commands? After wading through a bunch of WADA and IST online legal PDFs it seems to me that if Armstrong does not fight the charges, then other agencies such as the Tour can impose their own sanctions and penalties under the WADA and UCI rules.

Even though it appears they have no physical proof that Armstrong was doping, the fact that Armstrong will not fight the case and agrees to their conditions, which includes handing back millions of dollars in prize money, is as much as an admission of guilt.

Still, a casualty of his lifelong ban, Armstrong’s unworn Ironman bib with the number 7 is framed on a wall at the Nike shop in Nice. I guess there are others like me, who don’t want to believe. *P.J.H.*

## Animals & elections

Judi Collora, owner of Mrs Doe Pee’s Buck Lures believes that if Obama wins it will cause not only her deer urine business to falter but a Democrat victory will cause her entire industry to collapse. She collects the urine and sells it to hunters who use it as hunting lure. According to *Businessweek.com*, she is a multimillionaire. Personally, I am not taking any chances and am hoarding my deer urine as we speak.

As the American Presidential race heats up so too does the Alaskan Zoo Presidency where the choice is between Ahphun the polar bear and Denali the gray wolf. The race has turned ugly as Ahpun has demanded to see Denali’s long-form birth certificate under claims that he is really a Canadian timber wolf. The zoo election will follow the same timeline as the national race and ballots can be cast until 8pm November 6th at [alaskazoo.org](http://alaskazoo.org)





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## Local expats: for or against Obama

According to a recent Gallup poll conducted at the end of July, 86% of voters who say they voted for Obama in 2008 are backing him again in November while 92% of 2008 John McCain supporters will vote for Romney.

What the poll suggests is that the vast majority of US voters will remain consistent in their 2008 voting patterns for 2012. But since loyalty to Obama is slightly less than that of the Republicans, November's election is probably going to be quite close.

Looking back at the 2008 Democrats Abroad's gathering in Nice (there was no locally organised Republican event), I emailed a few local expats to see how they'd evaluate Obama's performance and whether or not they would vote for him again. All reiterate the findings of the Gallup poll. Those who voted for him are still supportive of him. Any criticism of his presidency is due to Republican attacks on Obama's administration. Most believed that he over-promised or was too hesitant at the beginning of his administration but believe the next four years will allow him to complete his mandate.

In the words of Mario Tosto, "At first he seemed to be too timid, civil and conventional for me. Appointing some of the banksters who caused the crisis was a disappointment. I'm hoping to see a much more savvy and forceful campaigner. If he gets elected, I think he will pull out all the stops and move things swiftly forward – which Republicans realize, and which partly explains their opposition to his second term." ■

Democrats Abroad France Riviera Chapter Campaign Kick-Off on Sun Sept 30, 15h with Bob Vallier, Member of DAF Executive Committee and Delegate to the National Convention in Charlotte. See page 40 for details.

Remember when Americans talked of "freedom fries" and bottles of good French wine were angrily poured down US toilets? That was all forgotten recently when Californians went crazy for foie gras. Why so? Back in 2004 governor Schwarzenegger banned goose liver from being sold or served in his state. But he offered an 8-year period of grace. This ran out on June 30th. In the run-up to the ban coming into force thousands of people in the Golden State stuffed themselves with the delicacy or stocked up their freezers. Predicted one San Francisco paper, "Remember prohibition? You can be sure there'll be bootlegging."



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# Sorry, no tea, no coffee but try these magic underpants

Patrick Middleton revisits the Mormons



Joseph Smith was founder of the Latter Day Saint movement.

A topical subject with Mitt Romney aiming to push Barack Obama out of the White House, but “revisit” is perhaps not quite the word. I first had contact with our local Mormons back in 1988 (*Reporter 10*) since I was curious about those young missionaries (“elders”) I’d often noticed travelling on buses or parking their bicycles. On that occasion I visited their centre, with adjacent temple, on avenue Thérèse in Cimiez. I was welcomed, I recall, but with little evident warmth. The young guys I met were hardly brimming over with joy and when I observed them out on sales expeditions they seemed rarely to smile and spoke to each other as little as possible. However, back then I was allowed

to talk to a group of missionaries and concluded that, as I wrote, their theology was “baffling” but they seemed to have some notable virtues.

## Joseph Smith: going for gold

When early this year I asked to talk to the latest cohort of elders, I was given the run-around. First my request to Cimiez was simply ignored then, when politely repeated, it was passed on to national headquarters in Paris. A rather unhelpful-sounding woman told me they “would think about it” and I would hear back. I didn’t. A clue to this attitude I found in a *USA Today* report a while back which said that, in the context of Romney’s run for the presidency, they were anxious to present a favourable image of their church and in the US have been running an information campaign (“I am a Mormon”) with exactly that purpose. They don’t however seem too keen on open-ended discussion. In fact, Romney himself is now remarkably reticent compared with how he was as a Boston church leader in the Seventies. As *The New York Times* recently put it, “He speaks so sparingly about his faith that its influence on him can be difficult to detect.”

So who are the Mormons or Latter Day Saints, as they’re officially called? Of course, it’s easy for an outsider to make fun of any religion – an uppity Prod in Belfast once assured me that “Catholics worship a biscuit” – but there are aspects of Mormon belief and practice that lend support to Bill Maher’s view that it’s “more ridiculous than any other religion”.

In a nutshell, so to say, Mormons are taught that thousands of years ago a bunch of Israelites crossed the Atlantic and settled in North America. Later Jesus Christ paid a visit.

The precursors of the Mormons died out around 400 AD. The modern history starts in 1827 when Joseph Smith, a farm boy in upstate New York, was accosted by a guy called Moroni who gave him a set of gold metal plates covered in hieroglyphics. He was inspired to put these into English and so we have the Book of Mormon, which offers what most non-Mormon scholars dismiss as fantasy history and theology with a variety of injunctions to the faithful: no tea, no coffee but try these magic underpants. I was given a copy but I’ve never been able to get into it – it’s like trying to read Terry Pratchett. Mitt Romney is notably evasive when asked about the magic underpants (“temple garments”) although his more forthcoming co-religionists are happy to claim that they can protect the wearer from road accidents, fire and a range of natural disasters.

## From six ... to six million

Joseph Smith announced that the Book of Mormon offered “the fullness of truth leading to the highest blessings of heaven”. He started with six followers, today the US counts some 6 million Mormons with another 8 million worldwide. This growth owes much to the pressure put on young Latter Day Saints to give up a couple of years after high school to go on a mission and spread the word to all nations. The first elders to leave America departed in 1837 for Preston in Lancashire and Romney’s roots lie in that, then as now, unlovely place. Here along the Coast a couple of dozen young men arrive regularly to try to sign

Joanna Brooks recently promoted her memoir *The Book of Mormon Girl: A Memoir of an American Faith on The Daily Show*. The book has been received with glowing reviews. See <http://joannabrooks.org>





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Temple garments (Mormon underwear) are worn both day and night and are seen as "either a symbolic or literal source of protection from the evils of the world". These are worn only after the Endowment ceremony, a ritual that is prerequisite for full-time missionary service and temple marriage.

Photo: Duke53

### So can a Mormon become President?

That mission experience can sound rather like a religiously-flavoured boot camp, but it's got its positive side. As I recall one young elder putting it to me, "You learn a language, you get to know how to relate to people, you're able to handle yourself. All this helps when you're on the job market and we've even got the same dress code as IBM." There's more to that than a smart one-liner. Steven C Wheelright, a fellow Mormon who was at Harvard Business School with Romney, says, "You know, on the mission you learn a lot of things you later get taught more formally at HBS." And Romney, while playing up his business experience, has also sometimes – although more rarely now – at least implied his success owed a great deal to his specific religious background. So can a Mormon become President? Well, polls show that over a third of Americans don't accept that Romney is a Christian. Maybe this doesn't matter so much in 2012. ■

up locals as new Latter Day Saints. It's a tough life: up at six, in bed at 10:30, 10 hours a day spreading the word; not much spare time, then, and anyway they're forbidden to date, play sport or consume secular media; they can call home just twice a year. Romney was on the mission in the Bordeaux area although the details of his activity are obscure, the more so because he was out of the loop for a while following a car crash (had he

forgotten his MUs?). How many converts he made we don't know although later he Mormonized his future wife, her two sisters and his mother-in-law. Across the years I've managed to engage a few elders in conversation but it's not easy. I did get one couple arguing with each other, though, when I mentioned Glenn Beck, the right-wing talk show host, who's an adult convert to the church. One guy admired him, the other didn't.



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## Clubs & Associations



### The play's the thing!

Last time we looked at opportunities for singing here, specifically with the Riviera International Singers and Ensemble Vocal Syrinx. Some, though, prefer acting rather than warbling. For them there's a well-established drama group the Riviera Amateur Dramatic Association (RADA, pictured). To give an idea of the sort of things they do these were their last three productions: *The Odd Couple* (Neil Simon), *Forget Me-Knot* (David Tristram), and *The Scottish Play* (Graham Holliday).

To find out more I spoke to RADA's President Lena Walsh. "One problem for drama groups these days – and I'm told this is true in the UK, not just here – is that so many younger people prefer computer-based activities to something more creative like live theatre. That being said, we've two decisions to make: what plays to choose, and who's going to act in them. We basically go for accessible drama, entertaining with nothing too raunchy, nothing

obscure. When it comes to casting, we've got a chronic shortage of men who seem to be more taken up by work commitments. When people come and tell us they'd like to go on stage we try them out first in a very small part to see if they can do what it takes – I've known some people with good presence, good voice who just couldn't learn lines. Anyway, whatever they're doing, everyone seems to find RADA great fun." The group's next presentation will be Alan Ayckbourn's *How the Other Half Loves* (November 1st-3rd; see Events calendar page 40).

And what about the South of France English Theatre (SET) whose close ties with the removals business we mentioned in an earlier issue? According to another English-language paper its second production offered "an incredibly professional performance". One of our readers – an experienced actor – gave us a rather different take: "They brought down a chap they said was big on UK television – well, it showed. They hadn't told

### "If you're going to the temple tonight, dear, I'd better iron your apron"

The Brits have brought a lot to France: sports like golf, tennis and rugby ... and, a less familiar example, Freemasonry. According to the usual history, traders from across the Channel settled in Dunkirk in 1721 and brought their aprons with them. After the Revolution, especially, native *maçonnerie* flourished. What's been notable in the movement's history is its tendency to dispute and division – there are half a dozen or more competing brands, sometimes only looking at each other with bared teeth. And, notably in recent times, there's been an alleged involvement with the seamier side of French business. The campaigning Grasse judge Jean-Pierre Murciano declared "masonry is the power of money... it can 'touch' a judge, a policeman, a tax inspector or other authority having the power to defeat a procedure."


Locally, one major scandal involved *la Grande Loge nationale française* and Cannes' later disgraced and jailed mayor Michel Mouillot; Jacques Medecin and his close collaborators preferred *Le Grand Orient de France* (Christian Estrosi, by the way, once elected to parliament, withdrew from active membership).

British masons arriving here might find the atmosphere a little different from that in Swindon or High Wycombe. They do, though, have the option of joining up with English-speaking masons. What are the possibilities? We spoke to Richard Dawe who's based in La Garde-Freinet (Var): "Our English-speaking lodge – the Abbey Lodge – was set up in 1931. It's interesting that quite a few French masons have joined us. They like our atmosphere – and maybe enjoy speaking English. Also we keep well clear of the controversies that beset French masonry. We're about helping each other, charitable activity and conviviality. Anyone in the Alpes-Maritimes and the Var can give me a call to find out more."

In Monaco I spoke to Derek Sutchter, a senior figure in the Principality's English-speaking lodge. "We were founded in 1924, taking our name from the Port of Hercules. In an officially Catholic country, at that time, masons were disapproved of but in our case eyes were closed and we had no problem. Until quite recently we depended on the United Grand Lodge of England but this arrangement has been terminated and we are now part of the *Grande Loge de Monaco*. Incidentally, our meetings are at St Paul's Church whose foundation stone was laid by the Duke of Connaught, a leading mason of his time. We are strictly English-speaking but apart from that we welcome any mason who wants to join us."





**Listen Up!** The International Club is to have its own **weekly radio program** from October 1st. Says President George Kasiliyake, "We're starting very modestly. **One hour** which can be accessed at anytime across a seven-day period. The items will be of **local interest and will aim to be informative and entertaining**, and the show will be hosted by the ICR's "in-house" MC, Kerry Cooper. To find out more see [internationalclub.fr](http://internationalclub.fr) and go to Radio ICR.





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## For Events Calendar see pages 40-41 & our website

him that, unlike in a TV studio, in a theatre, even if it's small, you've got to project your voice out to the audience. He didn't do that and people had to move closer to the stage so they could follow what he was saying."

### Not quite High Table

Fifteen out of the twenty-three members of the UK's coalition cabinet are Oxbridge graduates, including David Cameron (Oxford) and Nick Clegg (Cambridge). For some on the Left, particularly, this indicates an unhealthy concentration of power in the hands of a social elite. A vast exaggeration! Those from "the older universities" have nothing like the influence of old boys (and girls) of *Polytechnique* and *ENA* in France. Most end up doing – and contentedly – rather ordinary jobs. Members of their lunch club here – the Oxbridge Set – have ranged from parson and yacht captain ... to tree surgeon and ironmonger.

For some years now the lunches, held twice a year (one on Boat Race Day), have been organised by Rosemary Halford (Oxford). We spoke to her as she looked ahead to the autumn meeting: "For our autumn lunch on Sat Oct 6th, we're offering something rather less formal than usual. We've arranged with Le Bellanda – a very agreeable and relaxed restaurant in Nice at 85 qui des Etats

Unis – that people can call in on 04 93 76 65 28 to say they'll be coming along and will then be able to choose what they feel like eating. Menus start at €22. So they can eat what they like and spend what they like. Calls should be made if possible two weeks before the day. Aperitif at 12h, lunch from around 13h. We'll be interested to see if a lunch arranged like this appeals to members."

### Don't miss out on the mateship!

In recent issues we've mentioned that we've been getting enquiries about an Australian Club. Well, for some time now there hasn't been one. Quite recently, though, we met Sylvie Chanoni who'd like to relaunch a club for exiles from Oz. As the name might suggest she's a *Française de souche* but lived in Australia – 8 years in W.A. – and like many French who spend time there became a great enthusiast for the country. What seems to appeal is "mateship", that unforced solidarity among Australians that comes out in their typical friendliness and helpfulness. We learned, by the way, from Joanna Tisdell of AAGP that the idea of "mateship" originated in Eureka during the tax riot of the gold miners in 1854.

Anyone interested in an Australian Club can contact Sylvie at sylaussie@yahoo.fr or on 06 21 77 38 17. ■



## The Sports Box

**W**hen I decided to take up running for my 40th birthday, my goal was the Nice-Cannes Marathon (see "Run Lola Run" on our website). Running quickly became a passion but I discovered I'm very prone to running injuries and so decided to cross train: during the winter it's swimming and boxing, and in the warmer weather, I cycle (in the vaguest of terms as I only started last year).

One of the advantages of living in this region is the vast number of sport clubs and events on hand. After getting some feedback from local triathlete Stephen Gale of GALE FORCE Computing (see ad page 19), I registered for the Ironman 70.3 in Aix en Provence ([ironmanpaysdaix.com](http://ironmanpaysdaix.com)) on Sept 23rd, which is a 1.9km swim, 90km bike, and 21.1km run. This is only the second edition of this event, and in a future issue I'll interview Yves Cordier, the event organiser. Until then, for those who may consider signing up next year, I'll post on our website (keyword "AixIronman") my experience including a description of the course. That is, if I have energy after I cross the finish line of my first triathlon. **N.H.**

*PS. Finally Nice has it's own Nike concept store. Run & Style is located at 4 rue Blacas, a few blocks from Galeries Lafayette.*



# september

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## VAR GARDENER'S GROUP

04 94 85 22 06 - [jim.north@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jim.north@wanadoo.fr)  
Wed Sept 26: a trip to the English Garden Centre with a stop off at Brittain's for stocking up on English fare followed by a visit of Les Bambous du Mandarin in Montauroux along the Siagne.

## COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

[commonwealthclubriviera.com](http://commonwealthclubriviera.com)  
Fri Sept 28: Guided walk along the Cap d'Ail coastal path to see the belle époque villas, followed by lunch. Details on website.

## LA TIMONERIE: VIVIENNE MCKEE & BARRIE BIGNOLD

0493610171 - [magsaldrige@gmail.com](mailto:magsaldrige@gmail.com)  
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## DEMOCRATS ABROAD FRANCE RIVIERA CHAPTER CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF

[dafrance.riviera@gmail.com](mailto:dafrance.riviera@gmail.com)  
Sun Sept 30, 15h: Bob Vallier, Member of DAF Executive Committee & Delegate to the National Convention in Charlotte. Relive the Convention and hear Bob's analysis of the presidential and congressional campaigns. Campaign buttons & T-shirts for sale. Snacks available. At Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11 bis rue de la Buffa, Nice. Suggested donation: €10. RSVP by email if possible.

## ASS'N NIÇOISE CHINE HORIZON

[chinehorizon.com](http://chinehorizon.com)  
Sun Sept 30, 19h: Chinese Moon Festival at the Thai restaurant Auroy, 57 quai des Etats Unis, Nice. Chinese moon cake and folk dancing show. Cost €30 (members €28); to be paid at the dinner. Please reserve. Courses in Chinese for children and adults, painting and calligraphy start again at the beginning of October.

# october

## EUROPEANPWN NICE-CÔTE D'AZUR

<http://europeanpwn-nice.net>  
Mon Oct 1, 12h30: Monthly Nice Buddy Lunch.  
Thurs Oct 11, 18h30: Workshop in Sophia Antipolis.  
Tues Oct 23: Monaco Lunch.

## KIDOOKID MUMMABUBBA COFFEE MORNINGS

04 93 64 53 54 - [info@kidooland.com](mailto:info@kidooland.com)  
Weekdays, 10h30-12h: a social club for mums and dads who want to meet other parents with young babies up to 1yr-old over a cup of coffee whilst their children play. At 1890 chemin de Saint-Bernard, Vallauris.

## MONACO-USA NETWORKING HAPPY HOUR

[MonacoUSA.org](http://MonacoUSA.org)  
Tuesdays, 18h: a monthly happy hour of social and business networking. Open to the international community who would enjoy an opportunity to meet other like-minded English-speaking professionals.

## SWEDISH CLUB

04 92 13 15 34  
[rivieraklubben@wanadoo.fr](mailto:rivieraklubben@wanadoo.fr)  
Tues Oct 2: Lunch. Air and Space Academy member Fredrik Engström, at Gaston Gastounette, 7 quai St Pierre, Cannes.  
Fri Oct 5: Garden-visit at Domaine du Rayol, Avenue des Belges, Rayol-Canadel-sur-Mer.

## LADY GAGA NICE

04 92 29 31 29 - [nikaia.fr](mailto:nikaia.fr)  
Thurs Oct 4 & Fri Oct 5 20h: Lady Gaga in concert at Palais Nikaia.

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

## AMBER BOOK CLUB

06 07 93 16 62  
Every Thurs, 14h30: reading group meets up in the library of St Paul's Church Monaco.

## HOLY TRINITY CANNES

04 93 94 54 61 - [holytrinitycannes.org](http://holytrinitycannes.org)  
Thurs Oct 4, 19h30: 9-week Alpha Course in English introduces key ideas and experiences of the Christian faith, and tries to answer important "questions of life." All are welcome; no specialist knowledge of the Bible or theology is required. Study booklet and supper will be provided. Contact to reserve.

## SUNNY BANK SALE

04 93 47 94 20 - [sunny-bank.org](http://sunny-bank.org)  
Thurs Oct 4, 10h-15h: Sunny Bank Association & charity second-hand books in English and French for adults and children, bric-à-brac, posh paraphernalia and refreshments. At 815 Chemin des Gourettes, Mouans-Sartoux.

## BRITISH ASSOCIATION NICE

Every Friday, 18h-20h: Happy hour at Hotel Brice (44 rue Maréchal Joffre, Nice). This informal venue is very enjoyable, particularly in the summer in the garden. Both members and friends are most welcome. We are usually between 30 and 40 people present and look forward to seeing you.

## ORCHESTRE PHILHARMONIQUE DE MONTE-CARLO

+377 98 06 28 28.  
Sat Oct 6, 19h30: Roman trilogy of music (Feste Romane, Fontane di Roma and Pini di Roma) by Respighi at the Grimaldi Forum.

## OXBRIDGE SET

04 93 76 65 28  
Sat Oct 6, 12h: Lunch at Le Bellanda (85 quai des Etats Unis, Nice). Please call the restaurant (number above) if possible two weeks before the day, to say you'll be coming and then you can choose what you feel like eating. Menus start at €22. Aperitif at 12h, lunch from around 13h.

## VAR GARDENER'S GROUP

04 94 85 22 06 - [jim.north@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jim.north@wanadoo.fr)  
Sat Oct 6: Gondwana Fête, a plant festival at the Domaine du Rayol.

## VIVA ASSOCIATIONS 2012

04 93 99 44 54

Sat Oct 6-Sun Oct 7, 9h30-18h30: Cannes associations welcome the public for an informative weekend on the esplanade Pantiero, Cannes.

## NATURE AND SHARING DAY

contact@naturepartageaubar.fr

Sun Oct 7, 10h: Our 4th edition themed "The International Year of Sustainable Energy for All" at the Papeterie in Bar sur Loup is an all day event for the whole family with stands, performances, workshops, & childrens' activities: "Plantacloons", a "Scarecrow Competition" and a charity tombola

## SWEDISH CLUB

04 92 13 15 34

rivieraklubben@wanadoo.fr

Sun Oct 7: Theatre in French and Swedish, *Dr Glas* by Hjalmar Söderberg at Jazz Comedie Club, 8 rue Scaliero, Nice.  
Mon Oct 15: Garden-visit at Val Rameh with Swedish guide at Avenue Saint-Jacques, Menton.

## MIKE LORIMER FINANCIAL SEMINARS

06 21 85 84 42 - www.mikelorimer.com

Wed Oct 10, 9h: Domaine St Endréol, Var. Mike Lorimer, a member of the Spectrum IFA Group, will once again be holding his extremely popular Financial Seminar, in conjunction with the BA of the Var. Subjects to be covered: French tax changes update; Tax benefits of using assurance vie; Tax advantages of QROPS; Currencies Direct; Financial Market Update by Blackrock. Wine and canapés when visitors can relax and ask questions to all the respected speakers. Please contact to attend.

## BAM HAPPY HOUR

bam-monaco.org

Every second & fourth Thursday of the month from 18h30-20h: join the British Association of Monaco for their happy hour and meet some new friends. Venues change; see website.

## "WHEN THE RIVIERA WAS OURS"

06 62 18 20 58.

Thurs Oct 11: So Patrick Howarth called his 1998 book on the History of British settlements in France. Patrick Middleton has borrowed the title for the talk he's giving on this subject at the Grange, next to Victoria, in Mouans Sartoux. Tea from 16h and talk (questions welcome) at 17h. Call for more info.

## JOURNÉE MUNICIPALE DES PREMIERS SECOURS CANNES

04 97 06 49 24

Fri Oct 12, 9h-18h: Associations and services welcome the public to offer advice and information on emergency situations, first aid, life-saving and blood and organ donation. At Allées de la Liberté.

## AMIAI

Douglas Goldin 04 92 94 02 47

Sat Oct 13: Blue Lavande Restaurant, Valbonne. Please reserve.

## COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

commonwealthclubriviera.com

Sat Oct 13: Wine tasting and lunch at the Château St. Martin, Taradeau, in the Var. See website.

## SPORTELMONACO

sportelmonaco.com

Mon Oct 15-Thurs Oct 18: International sport media market & conference at Grimaldi Forum.

## VIAC - viac.fr

Tues Oct 16: Guided visit to the American War Cemetery and Memorial in Draguignan.

## HOLY TRINITY CANNES

04 93 94 54 61 - holytrinitycannes.org

Sat Oct 20, 9h30-13h: "The God Particle". What is it, and does it have anything to do with God? A half-day seminar of the Higgs Boson discovery earlier this year. The seminar will be geared towards non-specialists who know little or nothing about the particles that make up the world around us and how they fit together. Lunch provided. Contact to reserve.

## LITERARY LUNCH WITH

MICHAEL NELSON

04 93 12 21 42 - englishbookcentre.com

Mon Oct 22, 11h30: Lear's Bicentenary: Fun On The Riviera at Le Temps des Mets restaurant, Valbonne. Reservations essential.

## VAR GARDENER'S GROUP

04 94 85 22 06 - jim.north@wanadoo.fr

Tues Oct 23: Plant swap at Salernes.

## GRAND POPPY PARTY

04 93 01 30 00 mhealy@orange.fr

Thurs Oct 25th. 18h30-20h: Held by the Nice-Monaco Branch of the Royal British Legion at the Yacht Club de Monaco. See page 32 for details.

## MUSEUM TOUR & LUNCH

04 93 12 21 42 - englishbookcentre.com

Thurs Oct 25: Private tour of Misia, Reine De Paris at the new Bonnard Museum in Le Cannet, with art historian Mary Lynn Riley, followed by lunch and her talk at a restaurant adjacent to the museum. Reservations essential.

## AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

http://americandclubriviera.com

Sat Oct 27: a private cocktail dinatoire in a private home in Roquebrune with live music.

# november

## RADA

09 53 73 56 70 - rada06@yahoo.com

Thurs Nov 1, Fri Nov 2 & Sat Nov 3, 20h: Comedy "How the Other Half Loves", by Alan Ayckbourn at Mougins School. Entry: €10 incl drink at interval. Contact to reserve or visit the English Book Centre in Valbonne.

## VIAC - viac.fr

Sun Nov 4: AGM in Les Arcs.

## NICE CANNES MARATHON

marathon06.com

Sun Nov 4, 8h: Promenade in Nice to la Croisette in Cannes.

## COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

commonwealthclubriviera.com

Tues Nov 6: Guided visit of Les Hauts de Cagnes, followed by an optional lunch. Details on website.

## SWEDISH CLUB

04 92 13 15 34

rivieraklubben@wanadoo.fr

Tues Nov 6: Swedish chef Johan Adell telling us about the fish we find in shops and at the markets in South of France, and about his best recipes! Restaurant Gaston Gastounette, 7 quai Saint-Pierre in Cannes.

## ENSEMBLE VOCAL SYRINX HANDEL'S MESSIAH/GRAND CHARITY CONCERT

ensemblevocalsyrinx.com

Sat Nov 10, 19h: Charity concert at St Paul's Anglican Church (22 ave de Grande Bretagne) Monaco, to help the work of *Monaco Aide et Présence* with the poor in Third World countries. Ensemble vocal Syrinx & Orchestra and soloists: Liesel Jurgens, Cristina Greco, Frédéric Diquero, Thomas Dear. Conducted by Errol Girdlestone. Tickets €50 from *Monaco Aide et Présence*; to order tickets: 20, rue Notre Dame de Lorète - BP 525 - 98015 Monaco (+377 93 50 84 05).

## AMIAI

Laurie 04 93 56 34 92

Wed Nov 14: Le Caveau Restaurant in Cannes. Please ring to reserve.

## LITERARY LUNCH WITH VIC HEANEY

04 93 12 21 42 - englishbookcentre.com

Mon Nov 19: Vic's Big Walk - From SW France To NW England in aid of pancreatic cancer research. Vic walked 2000km in 70 days, arriving on his 70th birthday. Please reserve.

## AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA THANKSGIVING LUNCH

george@donnelly-cpa.com

http://americandclubriviera.com

Thurs Nov 29: ACR's infamous traditional Thanksgiving luncheon at the Hotel de Paris in Monaco in the gorgeous Salle Empire restaurant. All friends and family members are graciously invited. €85 ACR; €95 non-members. Please RSVP George Donnelly.



The image is a composite. On the left, a computer monitor displays the Côte d'Azur website. The website has a blue header with the 'Côte d'Azur' logo and the tagline 'Toute la côte d'azur de Menton à St Tropez'. Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Home, Horscope, Websites, Accommodation, Tourism, Real Estate. The main content area includes a section 'All about the French Riviera ... in english by Webstore' with a small image of a coastline, a 'Reservation Hotel' form, and a 'Special offers on hotels' section. On the right, a tablet displays the 'CÔTE D'AZUR VIP' newsletter. The newsletter features a red header, a welcome message, and several articles with images: 'RESTAURANT "VINO & CUCINA"', 'JARDINAGE', and 'LA FASHIONNÈRE DUBI JUMORT'. At the bottom of the tablet screen, it says 'Stay in touch ! With the brand new Côte D'azur V.I.P. Newsletter'. Below the monitor, the URL 'http://www.cote.azur.fr' is written in large blue letters. At the bottom right, there is a small box with contact information for Webstore and a 'WEBSTORE' logo.

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Toute la côte d'azur de Menton à St Tropez

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**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!**

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Hotel Le Provence, Golfe Juan 04 97 21 85 30  
Hotel Villa Vauban, Villefranche 04 93 55 94 51

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Arenas Partners, Office Hire [www.arenas-partners.com](http://www.arenas-partners.com)  
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**CONSTRUCTION**

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Corner Stone Renovations 04 93 40 81 20

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Pascale Florin personal assistance 04 97 21 10 63

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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](http://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**

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Midi Location, rental cars 04 93 34 48 00  
NetJets Executive Jets [www.netjets.com](http://www.netjets.com)  
WR Chauffeurs 06 09 52 17 83 / [www.wrchauffeurs.com](http://www.wrchauffeurs.com)

**MOVING, STORAGE & TRANSPORT**

Cadogan Tate Moving & Storage 04 93 90 01 01  
Delahaye Moving [info@delahayemoving.com](mailto:info@delahayemoving.com)  
Shurgard Self-Storage [www.shurgard.fr](http://www.shurgard.fr)

**PROPERTY, POOLS, GARDEN, SECURITY**

Affinity Villas, Montauroux [www.affinity-villas-france.com](http://www.affinity-villas-france.com)  
Bel Abri, Pool covers and shelters 04 67 78 90 08  
European Villas International [www.villas-international.com](http://www.villas-international.com)

**PUBS & RESTAURANTS**

Morrison's Pub & Lounge 10 rue Teisseire, Cannes  
Quay's Pub Quai St Pierre, Cannes  
Zucchini Blossom Best Burgers 1283 Ave de la Plaine, Mougins

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Cabinet Martin, Private Detectives [www.cabinetmartin.info/](http://www.cabinetmartin.info/)  
Carroll Media, convert videos to DVD [www.carrollmedia.co.uk](http://www.carrollmedia.co.uk)  
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**If your business would like to appear here email: [theFinder@rivierareporter.com](mailto:theFinder@rivierareporter.com)**



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## ASSOCIATIONS, HELPLINES & SUPPORT (Some in French)

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ALZHEIMER ASSOCIATION COTE D'AZUR (Fr) .....	24 hour live helpline: 0820 200 257 - <a href="http://www.aa-riviera.org">www.aa-riviera.org</a>
AODVCL (AMERICAN OVERSEAS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS LINE): .....	04 93 52 62 00
.....	0-800-99-0011 and when prompted 866-879-6636 - <a href="http://www.866uswomen.org">www.866uswomen.org</a>
BEREAVEMENT GROUP MONACO .....	06 98 44 49 01
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT NETWORK (VAR) .....	.....
.....	04 94 84 64 89 - 06 48 46 93 21 - <a href="http://www.bsnvar.org">www.bsnvar.org</a>
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.....	Anne Sookhoo 06 69 33 78 40 - <a href="mailto:cancersupport06@gmail.com">cancersupport06@gmail.com</a>
CHILD ABUSE (Enfance Maltraitée) .....	119 or 0800 054 141
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## ASSOCIATIONS HELPLINES & SUPPORT CONT ...

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ENGLISH SPEAKING FREEMASONS Meet in Cannes .....	abbeylodge33@yahoo.com
GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND - ECOLE DES CHIENS GUIDES (BIOT) .....	04 93 65 08 36 - <a href="mailto:uas@wanadoo.fr">uas@wanadoo.fr</a>
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HOMELESS HELP .....	115 or 0800 306 306
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# CLASSIFIED

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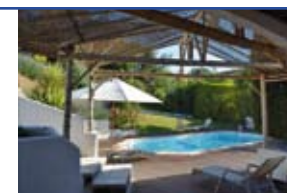
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