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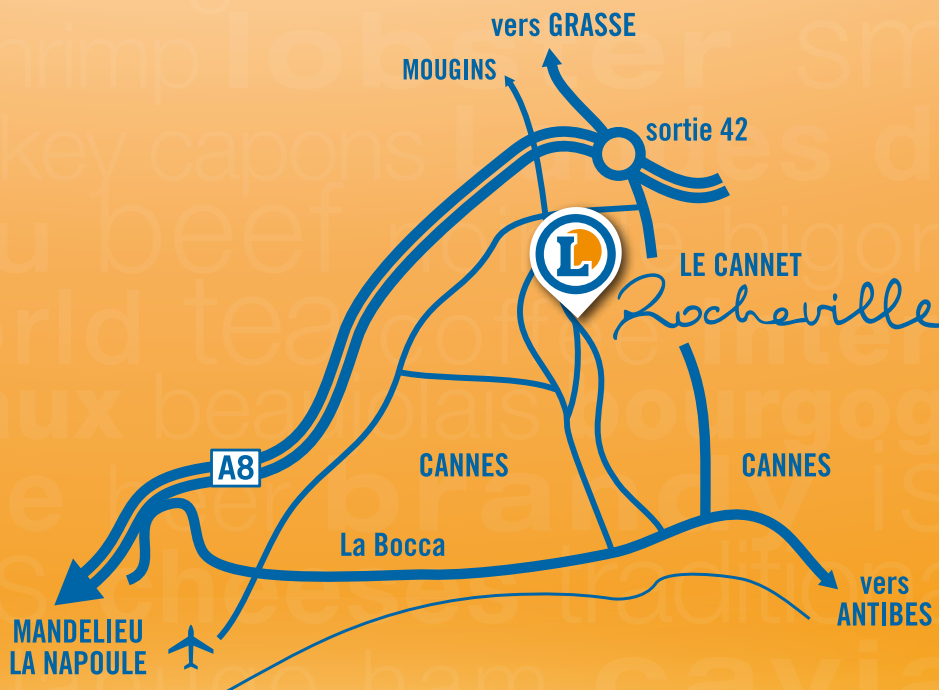
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YOU KNOW THAT YOU'LL PAY LESS

The Vendée Globe Challenge, the world's most difficult single-handed sailing race which takes place every four years, has once again set off. This is a very personal reminder of how this magazine started. Monaco-based yacht broker Nigel Burgess died in severe weather in the Bay of Biscay on his third day into the Vendée Globe Challenge in 1992. The yacht brokerage that he founded became one of the leading businesses in the sector and still bears his name.

A friend and client, Nigel encouraged me 25 years ago to start a magazine that would take an editorial line free from the puff and propaganda of any Riviera publication that had been tried before or since. This meant separating the hype from the truth about the Riviera's English-speaking population. Nigel pointed me towards *La Promenade des Anglophones*, a report about the demographics of the English community put together by students at the IUT in Nice under the guidance of their teacher, the sociologist Patrick Middleton. Together, Patrick and I started a long road that we never imagined would take us this far.

Over the years, there has been satisfaction and tragedy, from the career beginnings of Rebecca Clarke our first layout designer, to the early death from cancer of her successor Ellen Meijer, who preceded Cindy Andrews. The team is getting younger but Patrick is still as loyal as ever, as are early contributors Molly Brown and Michael Healy. British businessman Chris Griffiths brought his business acumen and the financing to pay for our first colour issues. Roy Cox left us to take on a managerial position in the transport business but has since returned to the fold to our delight. Nancy Heslin has been the impetus behind rejuvenating the magazine, and the refreshing new layout and younger editorial content are thanks to her.

Now, after 25 years at the helm, I'm thinking of sharing the managerial burden to finally take some time off and am contemplating a working partner and associate. Finding the right individual isn't simple, but what would be the profile of the ideal person? Firstly, it's essential to be truly bilingual and to know the French way of doing things. We deal in French much of the time so basic fluency is a must, and a realistic approach to doing business in France is needed – there's no room for dreamers. Secondly, be prepared for hard work and often-inconvenient hours. We love our jobs and we do them willingly and intensively for long and sometimes stressful periods. Thirdly, and above all, the person would have to fit in with the existing team.

This would be a partnership, not a salaried position. No one will become a millionaire with a foreign-language local magazine but there's a lot of scope for growth in conjunction with our ever expanding website. It's a fascinating business with an interesting underside that the public never sees. Is this you? Send an email to mike@rivierareporter.com and let's talk.

A very Happy Christmas and holiday season to all. Our next issue (see page 4) appears at the end of January. *Mike Meade*

news & updates

- 1** Meadia
- 2** We've got mail
- 6** French news: "Nice's natural iridescence"
- 10** Eco-Eye: a new column on green issues
- 11** Business: Franco-British double taxation
- 12** Bon App: Xmas & Ski
- 14** Travel: the Terminals' new man in charge



features

- 16** Health insurance in France: the essentials
- 18** The holidays: stuff to do, to buy and to read
- 19** English Christmas services & concerts
- 23** Côte culture: music
- 30** Beyond bereavement



columns

- 26** Gardening: Wrap up Warm
- 28** Var: Mushrooms and migrants
- 32** Monaco
- 33** Nautical: where did all the grand yachts go?
- 34** The US & us
- 36** Britain: Winter Fuel Allowance
- 38** Faces & Places



every issue

- 40** Events
- 42** Market Place
- 43** The Business Finder
- 44** Public services & Community numbers
- 46** Advertisers' index
- 46** Contact list
- 47** Classifieds
- 49** Property page



The Love Coach returns next issue.

Cover Photo: Monaco
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AMERICANISMS

It is not Americanisms that impoverish the English language as suggested by a reader's recent letter. In fact they are often lively and useful additions, which can at times breathe new life into terms that British English has forsaken. That is the case with "I guess", an Americanism which we now substitute for "I think", and "snuck" for the past tense of "sneak". It was Chaucer who first used "I guess" and it became common usage at the time. Even the f-word is an American resuscitation of old English. "Sidewalk" for "pavement", and "trunk" for "boot" are American terms that Britons could also use to communicate more clearly – especially when travelling abroad – and why not?

The real enemies of meaningful language are phrases like "outside the box", "clear sky thinking" and "cautiously optimistic". These defeat the very purpose of language: to communicate meaning. Such cryptic terms that are understood only by the speaker – or perhaps not even by him – are just as common in British English as in American. If American infiltration can help make our language more meaningful we should accept this or risk underpinning Syme's viewpoint in Orwell's *1984*: "It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words."

Giles Bradford, *La Motte*

LEFT AND RIGHT

I feel compelled to respond as a neutral Briton to the letter by an American, Bud Lonergan, where he suggested that the *Riviera Reporter* "looks like a Democrat blog", in that the Republican view was not presented as a counterpoint. I lived on the left and right

coast of the United States for a decade. Anybody from a western civilised nation will observe that it is factually a militarised republic (those are the words of Gore Vidal) and that it is hard to discern Stateside between the main two political parties. Soon you realise that the Elephant and the Donkey are both on the Right and that no Left exists, though one is more Right than the other. Here in Europe the political gap between the two ends is vast by comparison. When the subject is US politics it should be long understood that the Right of Europe is to the Left of the US.

Nicholas Anderson,
Villefranche-sur-Mer

VOTES FOR LONG-TERM EXPATS?

I strongly disagree with Jennifer Fletcher's view, expressed in your last issue, that if you've lived abroad for many years "it seems unreasonable to expect a say in the election of the government". I'm sure my case isn't untypical. I left North Yorkshire after completing my education in 1968 and I've lived and worked abroad ever since, though now retired in this region. Two points: I've got numerous close family ties in the UK and like Ms Fletcher, I "still feel entirely English". For these reasons I am concerned at how the country is governed and, like my French and American colleagues when I was a working expat, I should have had – and have – a vote. I'm sorry to add that the *Reporter* is almost certainly right to say that the law won't be changed.

Wilfred E. Midgley, *by email*

You can join others who share your opinion at votes-for-expat-brits.com



Photo: 20th Century Fox/Scott Free Films

Peter Mayle, right, with Ridley Scott. Mayle will be at the Cannes English Bookshop Saturday December 8th for a book signing of his latest release *The Marseille Caper*.

MAYLE ERROR

A brief note on your "20 Years Ago" item (*Reporter* 152) on the TV version of Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*. This was illustrated with a picture of Mayle with film director Ridley Scott. He had nothing to do with the TV adaptation which Mayle intensely disliked, both for its script and its casting. Scott directed, much later, a film based on the book. *Peter Crehan, by email*

The caption read simply "Peter Mayle, right, with Ridley Scott". It didn't state, either in the caption or the article, that Scott was associated with the TV adaptation of A Year in Provence. Peter Mayle will be signing copies of his new book The Marseille Caper on Dec 8th (14h30-16h30) at the Cannes English Bookshop. Don't be misled by the photo: Ridley Scott will not be there. N.H.

SENIOR RAILCARD

As a regular reader of the *Reporter*, could you please let me know whether expats are entitled to apply for the French equivalent of the Senior Railcard, and if so, where does one obtain it? *Desmond Cohen, by email*

A good question, answered by a reader on our web forum: "Pick up a Carte Senior+ brochure at any

railway station. Show your passport as proof of age and provide a couple of passport photos." The cost, I'd add, is €50 per year. M.M.

EHIC

I live here most of the year and am covered by the NHS through my EHIC card. A friend told me that I should apply to the French Social Security system, but I don't want to pay for this. Does it matter? *J.R., by email*

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) – in French, carte européenne d'assurance maladie (CEAM) – is intended to enable travellers within the EU to obtain free emergency treatment when outside their own country. It's not intended to give entitlement to overall medical care to those residing in a country other than their own. Some people, we know, do contrive to use it that way. They could get into trouble over this though cases are rare. The card has to be issued in the assuree's country of official residence – so for Brits in the UK. Note that the EHIC does not cover special cases like skiing and diving accidents and evacuation. Specific insurance should be taken out for these activities. For general information on French health insurance see article on page 16. P.M.

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To send a Letter to the Editor see page 46
or go to forum.rivierareporter.com

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ENGLISH COMMUNITY HISTORY IN GRASSE

I am a French historian who is writing a book (350 pages) on the English Church in Grasse (St John the Evangelist) and the English community (1880-2012). Could anyone help by sending details, anecdotes, photographs, documents etc. concerning that church or the English presence in Grasse? To do so please contact gilles.teulie@gmail.com or gilles.teulie@univ-amu.fr, or by mail 256 ave Paul Bourret, 13300 Salon de Provence. Thank you for your cooperation.
Gilles Teulie

WHY PAY THE TV LICENCE FEE?

The French television licence fee has just gone up again. It is automatically tacked on to your *taxe d'habitation*. You are supposed to pay

it even if you don't watch French television but if you don't have a set or any other device that can capture hertzian, satellite or cable television signals, you should ask for an exoneration. That doesn't mean you can't watch programmes, though. Unless you've attached a receiver to it, your computer doesn't qualify (yet) as a device that can capture a television signal but you can in fact watch streaming video and DVDs on it without paying the licence fee. If you have a large enough screen (Apple is best) you'll even find that the clarity and resolution is superior to most television sets. You can't get every programme but most of the French news channels – including the excellent BFM rolling news and France 24 in English – are streamed to computer and do not require subscription. ABC News,

CNN and BBC News also. Some podcasts, including the stimulating TED Conversations are as long as many television discussion shows and usually more interesting. Comics like David Mitchell and Bill Maher stream excellent video podcasts. You can watch any DVD on most computers without worrying which "zone" it is coded for. In spite of its small screen, the iPad is television heaven. You don't even have to put up with the adverts and can pause whenever you like. I stress that you shouldn't try this if you do have a television set or video recorder at home. They can check by radiogoniometer and sometimes do. The apartment next to mine got caught because the *controleur* could hear his set just by putting his ear to the door.
Todd Marlar, from Riviera Reporter forum

Remember also that a VPN subscription from HasEurope (see page 13) will allow you to watch even more American and British channels for about the price of the French licence fee. M.M.

SOUNDING OFF ABOUT BIKERS

Over the many years I have had the pleasure of visiting the Riviera, Antibes in particular, there has been one thing that has bugged me. Namely the lack of consideration by bikers – those with big and small motorcycles, Vesper's included – that like to express their presence by shattering the peace with their "doctored" exhaust pipes on their Harley or other two-wheeled machine. As an old biker myself I took pride in keeping my exhaust sound to the absolute minimum and never ever

removed the internal baffles to maximise the ear shattering sound that results. Do those so-called “bikers” think it’s more “manly”, gives them a bigger weenie (as the Aussies might say) or what? Did not the French authorities introduce a regulation a few years back to reduce the decibels that these idiots create? If they did then certainly it appears to be ignored by all concerned. Could someone ask *Monsieur le Maire* to bring a little peace to Cap d’Antibes and surrounds?
Rob Romano, Cumbria, by email

GRAZIE MOLTE, PAOLA!

I holiday in Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, my favourite place in the last 10 years. I use to go very often to Monte Carlo and drink a beer with English friends, I love the UK since I was young. I write you to

thank you for the beautiful and interesting articles that you put on your magazine. I took a copy in the English pub in Fontvieille and I read it *à la plage*. I liked a lot the article about of Joan of Arc and what you wrote about the Sporting d’Hiver, I completely agree with you. You are very professional and I am sure you do your best for your readers. All what you wrote is so interesting! And I like it because you go deeply to the problem. I am Italian and I work with media, so I really appreciate to read you and to follow you also on the website, and to receive all the information from the French Riviera. I send you my best greetings. I love *Riviera Reporter*!
Paola Gori, (pictured below with her mother) by email



“Our next issue...”

Mike Meade always rounds off his Page One column by reminding readers when we will next appear. But could this be our last issue? Well, there are people who’d say yes to that. They’re the believers in the notion that on the 21st of December the world will come to a catastrophic end and the *Reporter* with it. This, they’re convinced, is clearly spelt out in the Mayan calendar. But today’s Mayans won’t have this. Two “spiritual counsellors” turned up the other day at the Festival of Latin American Cinema in Bordeaux and insisted that the whole end of the world story was nonsense. Said Don Pedro: “This is no part of our beliefs. It was all invented to sell books and films.”

Making a difference for €10



Last year, Linda Trippier and Julie Hellonon, both Riviera residents, had an idea that has transformed the lives of scores of deprived children. They created the charity Kenyan Kids, registered here in France.

Kenyan Kids focuses on the tiny village of Namatatoa, 425km northwest of Nairobi. It is poor beyond belief by comparison with our lives in the South of France.

The village has little work. Small children, between 3 and 6 years old, are invariably left alone while their mothers seek work. Many of them are orphaned. The village has no source of drinking water, no education, and food is in constant short supply. Public health, such as it can be called that, is non-existent.

Since March 2011, Kenyan Kids has created a small school (pictured), which is the key to the future for these children. It also secured a full-time teacher and a cook. When it was announced that the school was to open and that there would places for 30 children, over 100 turned up on opening day. The charity invests every centime it receives into the children. There are no administration costs, which are provided by volunteers.

A tiny, local church serves as a temporary classroom. The wife of a village elder died and left a parcel of land which she, with great foresight, stated was to be used for educational purposes only. A permanent school is to be built on this land.

Kenyan Kids is all about helping others to help themselves. So what can we do to help this small village create a life for their very young?

- €10 feeds one child for a month, buys malaria medication for 20 children *or* a school uniform
- €20 buys 50 bricks for the new school *or* will sponsor an orphaned child on a monthly basis
- €30 will buy a water purifier *or* pay the cook’s monthly wage
- €40 pays the teacher for a month
- €50 feeds all 30 children for a week (52 very special people can feed them for a year)

If you wish to help Kenyan Kids, any amount counts, details of how to donate can be found on helpkenyankids.org or for more information contact Julie Hellon on 06 34 16 53 52.



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20 years ago

Pin's? Connais pas! When the *Reporter's* man sat down to a Chamber of Commerce lunch at the Negresco not long ago he found resting on his napkin a little box containing a set of *pin's*. Not all that surprising, given the extraordinary success in France of these promotional devices. And yet abroad this passion is virtually unknown. Visitors here have looked on in wonder as groups of enthusiasts of all ages gathered around a street-dealer displaying his wares on an open umbrella. Sometimes their zeal led them to extremes: several postmen in Marseille were arrested for stealing *pin's* from the mail; in one notorious incident an avid collector attacked a shop-keeper with a butcher's knife in order to get hold of a coveted specimen.

But now experts in the promotions field are predicting the end of the craze within months. The original appeal to business was that the *pin's* – or *épinglette* for refusers of *franglais* – seemed to hold an enormous attraction for a lot of people but was cheap to produce, usually costing less than 5 francs. From the beginning of 1991 and across most of last year it retained its appeal and was used to sell anything from skis to whisky. But suddenly consumers have lost interest. This has been bad news for speculative collectors since their market has collapsed. *La vie française* carried the sad tale of one holder in Charleville-Mezières who was offered 55,000 francs for his 4000 *pin's* just before Christmas. He refused but this summer when he tried to initiate a sale himself he got only 2000 francs as a best offer.

Reporter Dec 1992-Jan 1993



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Banque et propriété à la fois

French news & views



Fric et famille

Ask quite a few foreigners what matters most to the French and they're likely to say money and family. And, according to recent studies, that's exactly right. Those are the things they relate to very closely. Where money is concerned this shows up in a reluctance to give to charitable causes. Only one in five of the French (22%) makes regular donations totalling more than €75 a year. In the latest edition of the World Giving Index (cafonline.org) they come out in 80th place as measured by their scale of contributions to charities – below Kosovo and Haiti.

Why so? Jacques Malet, an expert in this field, has no doubts: "They pay a lot in taxes and social charges – or they think they do – and then they see the workings of the welfare system and conclude they've done their duty." He contrasts this with the American situation: "There's less state welfare and a lighter tax burden so people feel readier to dig into their pockets to help those in need. And at some levels there are tax breaks – much less available in France – to strengthen that impulse." Also, as we've noted before,

Do you have some time to give? Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) could put you to good use. For a firsthand HFHI account in Pitesti, Romania see rivierareporter.com, keyword "voluntourism".

the French are mean with their blood as well as their money: only 4% are blood donors and the transfusion service is permanently on the edge of crisis.

The meanness of the French is only tempered (yes, of course there are exceptions) when it comes to helping members of the family. A recent survey carried out for ING bank found that for 81% of respondents their immediate family was an absolute and overwhelming priority. As the survey commentary put it, "Even more in today's circumstances, the world is seen as unpredictable and threatening. Resources have to go to strengthening the fortress of the family."

WORLD GIVING INDEX 2011

Most charitable countries

1. US
2. Ireland
3. Australia
4. New Zealand
5. UK

4 new countries in Top 20

Thailand, Morocco, Nigeria & Liberia (from 39th to 14th place)

Only 3 countries are giving less

Canada, Sri Lanka & Malta

Source: World Giving Index 2011

The enemy within

A major news topic these last few weeks has been the arrest of a dozen or more Islamic terrorist suspects in cities across France, including Cannes. On one hand, as François Hollande assured a delegation of Jewish representatives, "No terrorist activity can be tolerated ... no racist, no anti-Semitic act"; on the other hand, there has been a wish to assure France's five million Muslims that they are not all regarded as murderous fanatics or even sympathisers with those who are. For Alain Belhassen, a spokesman for the Jewish CRIF organisation, "There's a fringe group of violent Islamists but they're exceptional and the two communities can get along with each other."

Some in the local Jewish community are less optimistic. As one elderly

shopkeeper put it to us, "In the Alpes-Maritimes there are 125,000 Muslims and 30,000 Jews. That's worrying when you pick up echoes of hate-talk. I'd like to hear more Muslims coming out and denouncing the so-called Jihadists." A Jewish schoolteacher voiced another concern: "I often drive past the Nice prison and I shudder when I hear what goes on inside such places." No reassurance there from Jean-Marie Delarue, head of France's prison system: "Between a third and a half of prisoners are Muslim – that's up to 30,000 or more of all convicts. We estimate about 400 of them are active recruiters to radical Islam. That's how the Toulouse killer, Mohamed Merah, became what he was. Same with some of those in the recent police round up. It's easy to see how things go. Some young Arab from a

France has Europe's highest Muslim population with between 3.5 and 6 million, though no figure as to how many are practising. (Source: AFP)

43% of the French believe the Islamic religion is a "threat" to national identity.

6 out of 10 feel the influence of Islam in France is "too big".

17% think Islam has "enriched" France's culture.

40% consider it neither a threat to national identity nor benefit to its culture.

(Source: Ifop/Le Figaro)

deprived area gets sent to jail and, bitter and resentful, easily believes what he's told about the evils of our society and the solutions offered by Islam. And it's not just Arabs. Young French – like Jeremy Louis-Sidney from Cannes who was shot dead by the police – also get drawn in. We try to limit the influence of *les barbus* – the bearded ones – as the Islamic militants are known but it's not easy. What are needed are educated and well-trained Imams as prison chaplains. They're hard to find."

Manuel Valls: A (not very) red star

François Hollande has seen his poll ratings tumble dramatically since his night of triumph half a year ago. No surprise, really, with three million unemployed and grim promises of tax



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hikes and public spending cuts. His response to criticism is realistic enough but hasn't reassured public opinion: "I can't do in a few months what my predecessors couldn't do in five or ten years." He's not helped by the ongoing saga of the spitefest reigning between his successive live-ins Ségolène Royal and Valérie Trierweiler, neither of whom seem very likeable at a distance. And then some of his announced policies – gay marriage, voting rights for non-EU foreigners – wouldn't seem likely to do much for a jobless Dupont.

But the government has got at least one star: Interior Minister Manuel Valls. Spanish-born of remote Jewish descent (his ancestors were forcibly converted to Catholicism), handsome, energetic and articulate, he clearly has no time for the dusty dogmas that still enslave "elephants" like Lang and Jospin. His activism has won him huge popularity: a vigorous

approach to Islamists ("anyone who threatens public order will be expelled"), kicking out non-French gypsies (this got the thumbs-up from 83% of the public), shoving votes for foreigners firmly on to the back burner and scrapping a daft plan to make police officers issue a "receipt" to anyone they stop and question (on the other hand, he's cracked down on the bent cops of Marseille).

He has, commented a CSA poll report, "cross-party appeal". That's clear enough. Sharing a platform with the Minister, Serge Dassault, owner of the right-wing *Le Figaro*, was enthusiastic: "Bravo, Manuel! Carry on the good work!" At the same time, neither Hollande nor his lack-lustre Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault can be altogether happy with this.

Estrosi: municipal socialist

In defeat the former governing party the UMP has been



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Dozens of pocket-friendly opportunities from free haircuts to amazing value eateries.

given by a fierce battle for its leadership, to be settled about the time we appear, with the main contenders being former Prime Minister François Fillon and Jean-François Copé. Here on the Coast this had a notable repercussion. For a time Christian Estrosi toyed with the idea of running for the leadership; however, his long-term partner Eric Ciotti, President of the *Conseil Général* – he of the permanent smile – came out for Fillon and relations between the two men became very sour. Finally Estrosi realised he couldn't raise enough support in the party and got in line behind Fillon and alongside Ciotti. He remains, however, fiercely ambitious and certainly sees for himself a future beyond the Metropole.

Nice's mayor is a subtle operator. This is seen, for example, in his attitude towards Muslims, a contrast with that of his predecessor Jacques Peyrat ("I've had a bellyful of them"). While vigilant on issues of security and others which he feels are troubling to the wider community he sees the need to yield to reasonable demands – he's just authorised a new prayer hall and granted more cemetery space to Muslims.



If you don't have an *ethylotest* (breathalyser) in your car you don't risk that €11 fine until March 1st 2013. The Government has pushed the date forward given the difficulty of buying the devices. Suppliers say they will be "readily available" in the New Year. Prices range from €1 for the throwaway variety up to €149 (electronic).



The gay travel market accounts for nearly 8% of local visitors. They are “relatively young, free-spending, and unconstrained by school holidays”.



Photo: Romain Clercq-Roques

Education Minister Vincent Peillon told France Inter Radio in October that he favoured a debate on the legalisation of cannabis.

He’s also shown himself to be something of a “municipal socialist”. He clearly believes that certain activities are best run by the city than by private companies, so he has “municipalised” the Jazz Festival, the school meals service and most recently Nice’s buses and trams, scrapping the concession Peyrat had awarded to Veolia. “I am convinced,” he says, “that both financially and in terms of management efficiency this is the way to go.” One concern for the mayor is the Alpes-Maritimes’ persistent and growing level of unemployment. “This is a tough one,” he admits, “but we’ve just got to get more people working.”

Adam and Steve are really welcome

Of Nice’s past high profile mayors Jacques Médecin was rather openly homophobic while Jacques Peyrat – exception made for Elton John to whom he awarded honorary citizenship – didn’t seem very favourably inclined towards gays. Since their days things have changed. With the full support of Christian Estrosi, the Nice tourist office has been committed for some time now to a policy of offering an unambiguous welcome to the non-hetero visitor.

As Denis Zanon, the city’s director of tourism says plainly, “We must organise ourselves to win over the gay market.” On one estimate, this category involves up to 8% of those vacationing locally. Of course, this policy is as much self-interested as socially enlightened. “The gay visitor,” explains Zanon, “is likely to be relatively young, free-spending, with wide interests and unconstrained by school holidays.”

What does this approach actually entail? The tourist office has consulted with American gay activist Clark Massad to ensure an appropriate welcome: “Above all, your gay client needs to be able to feel entirely at home. At a hotel reception, for example, there should be no discomfort on either side when Adam and Steve ask for a double bed – or enquire about the location of gay bars. There’s now a listing – available at information offices – of hotels, shops, bars and restaurants which are known to be actively gay-friendly.” Particular initiatives are in hand to



Download free from en.nicetourisme.com “Nice: a natural iridescence” – a 28-page guide of “gay welcoming” establishments in Nice (all of which carry the logo above).

attract “the pink euro”. “As an example,” says Zanon, “we’ve worked on a honeymoon package for couples who’ve just entered a PACS or civil union.” Recently the Rialto cinema, with the support of city hall, ran a two-week festival of gay and lesbian films. Insists Zanon, “We’re not trying to ghettoize gays but we’re just targeting them as a specific market segment.”

So how will English-speaking gays react to these developments? Over a decade and a half ago we brought out a special issue devoted to “anglophone gays on the Riviera” (*Reporter* 48). At that time our conclusion was that “the French are tolerant in general but in the expat community majority opinion is censorious. An openly gay couple would be received coolly at a meeting of the British Association, we imagine.” These days, many people have assured us, this is no longer the case. Over a rather short period things have changed. This maybe is why we no longer hear, as we did in the mid-nineties,



Photo: Michael Apel

Chinese bug could do for French chestnuts. Yet another insect invader, an arrival in France in 2010 via Italy from China. The cynipids’ larvae make uniquely shaped gall on trees (pictured) which leads to a drastic fall in the quantity of nuts they bear. Half of France’s national production of *marrons* comes from the Ardèche and the Cévennes.

Says one trade spokesman, “It looks like this year chestnuts will be in very short supply and those available won’t be cheap.”

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of the need for an English-speaking gay club (one did get started). Today Adam and Steve can openly enjoy what's available to them in an area singled out by *Têtu* magazine as one of the most gay-friendly in France.

300,000

Estimated school children in France with same-sex parents.

pédé

Most used playground slur.

gay and single-parenting issues

Plans to include these in the school curriculum for children as young as 6 to "nip homophobia in the bud".

Next lesson? Good and evil

There are some nasty kids in school, these days, no doubt about it. When they're not stuffing their heads with cyberporn they're beating up their teachers. In one week recently across France there were four major cases of serious violence by pupils – in one case in a primary school – against teachers. As one young *prof* in a rough area of Marseille told local radio, "You just don't dare stop them smoking, taking drugs, using obscenities or

just doing as they please in class. If you try, you can get thumped. They've absolutely no respect."

So what's the solution? Socialist Education Minister Vincent Peillon has come up with two approaches. First, he's recruiting 500 *assistants de prévention et de sécurité* (APS), to keep order in the roughest schools. As one Paris head teacher put it, "Let's face it – these guys are virtually like prison guards." And then the Minister has called for the teaching of *morale laïque* – secular morality – in the schools, introducing an understanding of good and evil based on "the use of reason". This proposal has evoked a lot of criticism. As many commentators have pointed out, secular morality was an idea of the nineteenth century when France was a very different country. That view is echoed by Odile, a young *collège* teacher in Nice: "Think about it. In one of my classes for example, I've got pupils who've got fathers in jail, others whose parents aren't married and never will be and some from strict Muslim homes. What sort of common morality can you offer to kids like that?" One vigorous supporter of Peillon's project, though, is ... Marine Le Pen. ■

Santa's secretariat is 50!

That's right. It was back in 1972 that the French post office decided it had to react to the growing flood of letters (and now emails) from around the world addressed to Father Christmas. The idea had already got around that he could be reached via the mail processing centre at Libourne (Gironde) and it was there they set up a secretariat, since then an annual fixture, to handle Santa's postbag. This is staffed by volunteer postal workers and some temps. They read and – where there's an identifiable address – answer pleas from some 160 countries (last year there were 1,300,000 letters, 160,000 *courriels*). If the writer uses English then the reply goes out in that language. Some kids are likely to be disappointed – requests can be simple ("a Barbie doll") or rather more challenging ("a time machine"). And a surprise: says Véronique Toulières, the La Poste executive who's in charge of Santa's secretariat, "For some people the magic of Christmas never dies and we receive quite a few requests from adults. They get a nice letter, too." *Your kids (or you) can write to Santa at le Secrétariat du père-Noël, 33515 Libourne Cedex or email chef.lutin@laposte.net. See laposte.fr/pere-noel*



Photo: Nono

Price of stamps: pay more for a lick.

The price of stamps will increase on January 1st 2013 by 2.8%. For post up to 20g, Priority letters (1-day delivery) go up three cents to €0.63 (currently €0.60), and the Lettre Verte (2-day service) goes from €0.57 to €0.58. Save a few cents and buy your stamps now.



Eco-Eye

A new column about going green with a regional focus

Work smarter, greener and cheaper with EnergyWatchIT



UNEP Carbon Calculator

The United Nations app calculates users' carbon footprint, envisages ecosystems, and teaches ways to reduce emissions through specific actions. iOS. En, Fr, Ar, Ch, Ja, Ru, Sp. Free.

France signed up to the Kyoto agreement with a national objective to reduce emissions 25% from their 1990 levels by 2020, and 75%-80% by 2050. The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) lists 132 countries on 22 performance indicators, and France ranks in the Top 10. And while the EU has set carbon reduction at 8%, France and Finland are the only EU countries required to stabilise emissions.

In France, Anthony Woods of EnergyWatchIT has introduced The Green Button Campaign (thegreenbuttoncampaign.com/fr). What is it exactly? Anthony explains: "The Green Button Campaign is delivered through an application offered by EnergyWatchIT to reduce IT power waste. It puts desktop and laptop computers either into low power states or shuts them down completely when they are not being used. The solution is scalable from a single computer to large corporations with PC fleets in the thousands. This is part of a wider climate change campaign

that will ensure all enterprises, schools, public and private sector establishments and individuals play their part in reducing CO₂ emissions, while saving money on IT energy costs, too."

Brighter monitor displays use more energy. Reducing brightness levels not only saves energy but also helps eye strain.

How does it work? "The Campaign provides every PC owner with a small software application that carries out power-saving schedules as defined by your own agenda. For businesses that run backups at night, for example, this software can shut them down after the operation. Additional savings can be made as well by pressing the GREEN BUTTON function key, which allows the user to instantly put the PC into Hibernate or Sleep mode when needed – at lunch time or if you have a meeting."

How much energy and money can the software save an individual or business? "The Green Button Solo software app cuts down on

your energy waste and lowers CO₂ emissions. Savings on power of over €45 and 245.75Kg CO₂ per PC per year for an individual and €55 with 280.86Kg CO₂ per PC per year for a business. This can be big money when you have 500 computers in a school, say. Another advantage to the software is that it reduces risk of virus attacks on PCs when left unattended. And not to worry, MS Office files are automatically saved at scheduled shutdown times. This software is used in Ireland and the UK, and there has been no reported incidents of unsaved files."

Why don't people just turn off their computers? "Amazingly, they don't. As an example, I have friends who tell me they'll be working on their PC, then go off to do something and forget to turn it off. Or kids just close a laptop and think that means it's off. You'd be surprised." ■

The Solo product is available for use on single PCs with a lifetime licence (€19.99). Individuals or businesses can contact Anthony Woods on 06 85 55 02 99 or anthony@energywatchit.com

I am trying to move towards being more self-sustaining and would love if there are others in Nice already on that road or wanting to come on the journey. I'd like to:

- ✓ launch a sharing community of power tools, label makers, printers, battery chargers, etc.
- ✓ build my own solar panel and then teach others how to do it.
- ✓ create a window garden and co-op with others that have gardens.
- ✓ share my car that sits around 300 days a year.
- ✓ buy from someone making their own soaps (dish, laundry, shower, shampoo etc) or if no one is making this would someone buy from me if I did?

MelaNice, Reporter forum

Interested? See forum.rivierareporter.com and search "Going green and need-company"



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Business

Minding your own business

BY PETER JOHNSON



"Grossly unfair!" said one retired teacher in Mouans Sartoux. "For years I've paid tax at source on my teacher's pension in the UK and no tax in France. Now the French are taxing me again!"

The latest Franco-British double taxation convention came into effect on January 1st 2010 and one of its more obscure aspects has only filtered through and had an impact on British expatriates this year, based on declared income from 2011. Let me try to explain what's happened, *obscurum per obscurius*.

TAUX EFFECTIF

Before 2010 the French would add a UK-sourced pension already taxed at source in the UK to other French taxable incomes (such as the UK State pension) and come up with an

overall sum. They would use this to determine a marginal rate of tax, which would then be applied solely to the French taxable income, in this case the UK State pension. If – as often happens – this UK State pension was relatively small compared to the teacher's pension (essentially any civil service pension), then the resulting French tax would be minimal or nil. This is the method the French tax office refers to as the *taux effectif*.

CREDIT D'IMPOT

The new system works as follows: the French tax office adds all income together (say UK State pension, civil service pension, private pensions) and taxes the lot at whatever rate is applicable. They

then apply a tax credit (*credit d'impôt*) at the French rate of tax on the portion that is foreign-sourced and already taxed in the UK. They're effectively saying "You're in France, so we have the right to tax your income first, but because we're nice, courteous people – and because of double taxation conventions – we'll give you some money back equivalent to what you would have paid had this income been French-sourced." A bit like the classic line from the *Red Riding* trilogy by David Peace when a Yorkshire police inspector says, "We're from the North and we do what we want to do."

The trouble is that the relief or credit given by the French tax office is invariably at a lesser rate than the UK tax rate (usually 20 or 25%), because French income tax rates are generally lower.

If we take the case of our retired teacher from Mouans Sartoux, in 2009 she had a teacher's pension of €18,153 and a UK State pension of €8062, a total of €26,215, giving a French marginal rate of tax of 7.50%, which when applied solely to the State pension of €8062 gives a theoretical French tax bill of €605, or zero in this particular case as €8062 is below the threshold of tax.

Under the *credit d'impôt* system, the calculation of the tax is based on the total of €26,215, giving a tax bill of €2331 (ie a tax rate of nearly 9%), to which the credit is applied in the proportion €18,153 (the civil service pension) divided by €26,215 (the total), giving a tax credit of €1614. So, €2331 minus €1614 = €717 tax due, or €717 more than under the *taux effectif* method.

Hence the anguished cry, "But I've already paid tax!"

Well, I did say *obscurum per obscurius*. ■

Bon App!

This issue we recommend Christmas apps and others that will help you on the ski slopes

APPS FOR CHRISTMAS

We've ignored the multitude of endearing but point-less game apps that count down to Christmas or string Christmas lights across your screen in favour of those more practical. For the kids, though, there are fun apps for just about every Christmas Carol or Children's story and poem and we've included these on our website (keyword ChristmasApps) with the links from this article.

• Prixing



Not strictly a Christmas app but a real Santa's helper when you're out shopping for under the tree or on the table in France. In the supermarket or appliance store point your iPhone or Android camera at the item's barcode and the app will look through a database of (they claim) 10 million items for identical products in other shops nearby and compare the prices. You'll need a GPS and a Wifi/3G connection to use it but you can also take a photo of the barcode and consult the app later when you're connected at home. We know one reader who saved €150 on a Samsung television by switching to a different shop just down the road thanks to Prixing. iOS, Android. Free.

• Good Food Festive Recipes



There's nothing like a proper Christmas feast but if you've been in France for a while you may well have forgotten those traditional English recipes. This paid app (€2.69) will give you 20 of the best, from cider roast turkey to real Christmas pudding. You'll need a few items that you can't get in a French supermarket so a trip to Britain's in Valbonne or Geoffrey's in Antibes is in order once you've noted the in-app list of ingredients. The app also takes you through some of the preparation by demo clips. iOS only.

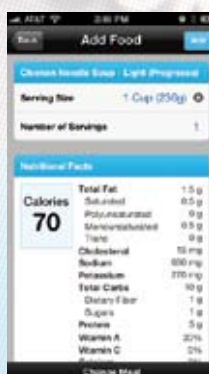
• French Wines

Now you've got the grub sorted, what about the wine? We are in the country renowned for it and Hachette, the editors of this paid app (€0.79), are an authority. The app rates the quality of every French vintage since 1945 and tells you what every wine snob wishes he knew about *appellation contrôlée* wines: description, colours and aromas, grape variety, ageing capacity and serving temperature. There is a complete cartography of French wine growing regions and a lexicon of wine terminology, with 230 definitions in both French and English. Santé! iOS and Android.

• LaPoste

Sending cards or presents in France or abroad? LaPoste has an app that calculates mailing costs, indicates postal codes, the nearest post office, controls address syntax and even tracks and traces your recorded delivery parcels along their way. For downloading to your device, links to the App Store and Google Play are at LaPoste.fr. Part of the site is in English.

• Calorie Counter & Diet Tracker



All that festive fare might be quite a strain on the waistline so you can keep an eye on your dietary excesses with this free app from MyFitnessPal. It's a calorie and nutrient counter which draws on a database of over 2 million foods. Enter your own recipes and calculate their nutritional contents. You can also enter desired daily calorie needs and the app will help you stay within them taking into account your daily fitness routine and even suggest exercises to burn off that Christmas meal. Set a goal and the app will track your progress towards it. Does not require internet connection. iOS, Android and BlackBerry.

APPS ON THE SLOPES

• Prépa Ski & Snowboard



Your skis are ready for the season but is your body? This paid app (€1.79) in French and English guides you through an exercise routine designed to tone the muscles that are most needed for skiing and snowboarding. Your legs and back will love you for it. iOS.

• iSki Instructor

It might not be quite as able as that hunky instructor at the station but at €4.49 iSki, in English and Danish, is a much less expensive way to get you back into the right habits at the start of the season. With your earbuds (adjusted for safety reasons so ambient noise is not entirely blocked out), this app reviews the basics of position and control as you ski. You can also follow video lessons of recommendations for better skiing. iOS.

• Ski Montagne

Now that you're ready, where to go? Ski Montagne is a free iPhone app jointly sponsored by tourist offices of major resorts, including 18 in the Southern Alps. In English and French it gives snow conditions, weather forecasts, useful numbers, slope maps, accommodation, events and webcams. iOS.

• Ski & Snow Report

This free app for iPhone lets you consult snow conditions for your 12 favourite resorts, which you can choose by GPS or from a modifiable list. Conditions are pumped from *OnTheSnow.com* and include French and European stations, but it's also handy if you're considering a ski vacation in North America. Indicates snow conditions, number of lifts and trails open, plus webcam views. iOS.

• Ski360

This French-only free app is not optimised for iPad, but on iPhone it gives real time insights into weather and snow conditions at most French stations including the nearby Alps. There is some commercial content plugging accommodation and ski shops. The 2013 version is due out soon. iOS, Android.

• Peak.ar



What's the name of that peak over there? This free app in German and English by Salzburg Research uses your iPad or iPhone GPS and camera to tell you what mountain peaks you can see in the distance as well as their altitudes, latitudes, longitudes and distance from you. Claims to work worldwide. iOS.

• SkiersApp

We don't guarantee its accuracy but this app is fun and free. SkiersApp uses your iPhone's GPS and motion detectors to give you stats on your downhill run: average and maximum speeds, time, altitude difference and even the G-force you endured. Don't try consulting it while still on the move though – it doesn't tell you where the nearest First Aid station is. iOS, Android.

• SnowTrails



Eurosmartz, the clever people who brought us the printing apps that emulate AirPrint technology to any printer from an iPad or iPhone, now offer SnowTrails. If you're willing to cough up €2.69 for this app, it goes one better than the free SkiersApp. With a 3G device, you can also see your run on a slope map underlay, record each one, memorise and compare them. You can even play runs back in real time on the map. The app claims to work in any resort worldwide and can be tweaked for either skiing or snowboarding. iOS.

NOT QUITE AN APP BUT ESSENTIAL

• VPN

This isn't an app; it's a service which works seamlessly on mobile devices. Subscribe to VPN with HasEurope and for €150 you can watch UK (Sky, ITV, BBC iPlayer, Demand 5 and others) and US television for a year on your iPad, iPhone, Android or laptop. Internet connection required. A VPN Hopper Box available separately allows an Internet Enabled TV, Smart TV or Apple TV to use the same service. See haseurope.com/vpn.aspx

Use this QR Code to access app links on our website.



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Tips for travellers



Photo: Peter Kuchar

HERE COMES THE SUN

Vacationers and yacht crew joining their winter jobs can now take advantage of exceptional connections to the Caribbean and Indian Ocean from Nice via Gatwick with a smooth and stress-free transfer in the recently refurbished state-of-the-art British Airways terminal. This offers the best connections on Saturdays and Sundays, which include Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua, Grenada, Punta Cana, Jamaica, Port of Spain, the Maldives, Mauritius, Bermuda, Orlando, Tampa and Cancun. Four cabin classes are available and the new First Cabin is featured on the St Lucia and Port of Spain routes. Full schedule information at ba.com

HOME SWAP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

A lot of hotel chain executives in tourist areas around the world have had long faces as the economic downturn has led to a fall in bookings. This doesn't mean, though, that all those missing guests have decided to do without a vacation. These last couple of years have seen something of a boom in home swapping. What's that exactly? For an agreed period you exchange your house or apartment with someone else in a country of your choice and you live in each other's home during that time. This is best arranged through an established specialised agency such as Homelink (which has an office

MAURITIUS

1,313,095
Population

Port Louis
Capital (pictured)
with 149,000
inhabitants.

2000km
Distance from
Southern Africa, in
the Indian Ocean,
east of Madagascar.

**11 times the
size of
Washington, DC**
Comparative area

**32.2 male
34 female**
Average age
of Mauritians.

Source: cia.gov

in Aix-en-Provence, homelink.fr) or Intervac (intervac.fr), both of which have been in the business for over half a century. On their sites you find details of thousands of properties around the globe. To get contact information concerning their owners you have to pay an annual fee and you can then list your own home on the site (this costs €125 with Homelink, €75 with Intervac).

We talked to Bill and Madge Haskell who've exchanged their seafront home in the Var several times with couples from the US (three times), South Africa, Hong Kong and Ireland. Explained Bill, "You get a totally different kind of holiday this way. If you like, you can go native and live more or less like the locals. And it's cheap, too. You've got the fares but then it's just normal expenses and there aren't many places more expensive than here." What if your home is taken over by breakers ... or even takers? "You have to choose, obviously, and we wouldn't accept young kids, for example, even though we've got five grandchildren. Actually, in terms of damage or theft we've never had a problem

and that seems to be a common experience."

What about the practicalities? "We always go for swapping cars and look for people who'll look after our cat. In Durban we cared for a parakeet! We tell our insurers "friends" are moving in for a while. You have to settle how utility bills will be dealt with but the telephone is no problem these days – we disconnect the landline and tell our guests how to rent a mobile." And for singles there can be a bonus – as depicted in the 2006 movie *The Holiday* in which Cameron Diaz in LA, and Kate Winslet in the English countryside, swap homes ... and find romance.

FLYING LOW COST? BE SAVVY – BYO!

BYO? That's the Australian expression meaning Bring Your Own and refers to the Oz custom of allowing customers to bring their own wine to a restaurant. Unlikely in France, of course, although Graham Greene was allowed to do so at *Chez Félix* in Antibes and that's why he stayed so loyal to the place where the food – an old Antibes hand told us – was nothing special. They really pampered old *Grim Grin*: any wine left in the bottle was put away for his next visit.

BYO is certainly advisable when flying low cost. That's according to the website travel.supermarket.com which has highlighted the extravagant mark ups the budget carriers apply to food and drink products purchased on board. A few examples: on easyJet a tube of Pringles costs almost 350% more than at an ASDA supermarket, Flybe offers

At the end of September Nice-Côte d'Azur Airport introduced a full body scanner as part of its security equipment for checking international passengers. This shows up on screen anything that might be secreted about his or her person. Nice is the only French airport so equipped and only volunteers will be scanned. Other travellers will get the familiar security check (pat-down and the walk-through metal detector).

GEORGEYs

* The British Supermarket in France *

9.00am to 7.30pm Mon to Sat

Tel. 04.92.90.66.40

rue Lacan, Antibes

Email shop@riviera.fr



Wishing you a Great British Christmas

flapjacks at a 1000% mark up and a Ryanair cup of tea is priced at 250% more than a single ASDA teabag.

A spokesman for the website advises travellers to buy their food and drink in the departure lounge (liquids, of course, must be bought airside or risk confiscation). Ryanair has reacted with its usual truculence: "We aren't a supermarket, we're Europe's only ultra low-cost airline guaranteeing the lowest airfares"... and some remarkable rip-off prices for food and drink.

But good news for some passengers: it's an end to push – and shove – when boarding easyJet flights. The low-cost carrier has introduced allocated seating, following a trial period earlier this year. All passengers get a numbered seat without charge. "Ancillary revenue", though, is collected off the choosy: £12 for the front row, £8 for rows 2-5, and £3 for a requested seat elsewhere. ■

New man at the helm at Nice-Côte d'Azur Airports



Photo: CCI

After more than 40 years of service, 25 of them as General Director, Nice Airport's Hervé de Place retired in September. Under his tenure, Nice-Côte d'Azur evolved from a single terminal, single runway airport into France's second platform with traffic of over 10 million passengers a year directly to 105 destinations in 2011. De Place's watch saw triumph and disaster with the 1979 collapse into the sea of what was then Europe's biggest construction site resulting in the loss of 11 lives and a tidal wave which flooded much

of Antibes. Not one to be beaten, he went on to oversee the ambitious and innovative expansion including the extension of Cannes-Mandelieu, the revamp of Nice Terminal 1, the construction of Terminal 2 and one of the first A380-capable airports in Europe.

De Place's replacement is 43-year-old Dominique Thillaud (pictured) who started his management career with the BNP Paribas Group in Brussels before joining the corporate finance arm of PricewaterhouseCoopers. In 1997 he worked in mergers and acquisitions at JPMorgan Chase. In 2002 Thillaud entered the transport sector, becoming Director of Operations at SNCF before advancing his career by overseeing the national rail carrier's development through cooperation with Eurostar, Thalys, Kéolis, iDTGV and Géodis. Since January of this year, he was also chairman of SNCF Energy.

If Thillaud's accomplishments are anything like those of his predecessor, he will be a vital player in the economic development of our region.

Ills and bills

Patrick Middleton on health insurance



Not so long ago Timothy Egan, a *New York Times* columnist, referred blithely to the “free” healthcare available in France. This is a deeply misleading notion and anyone coming here needs to understand the realities of the situation. Treatment is genuinely “free” – that is, the person receiving care pays nothing – in two cases: pregnant women from their 33rd week and for 12 days after giving birth; and then those benefiting from the special provisions for the poor, CMUC, as they’re known.

It’s worth expanding on some basic coverage points (see box). First, for some serious illnesses and treatments full cover is available if the doctor or treating establishment is charging only the *Sécu* approved rate (*tarif conventionné*). These include cancer, heart disease and diabetes; most surgery is also covered, though, usually not if undertaken for aesthetic reasons. Other conditions can attract full cover if defined as long-term (*maladies de longue durée*). There is, it should be noted, a clear and ongoing tendency for the *Sécu* to reduce its generosity – this in the face of its massive deficit which this year is estimated to be around €12 billion. Some reasons for this are clear enough and just have to be lived with: increasing cost of medical care and an ageing population. Many critics, however, are ready

to identify other contributory factors, including poor management of the system, the greed of the medical profession (some would say) and the voracious, indeed, inflated appetite of French consumers for therapies of all kinds.

Despite its catastrophic financial state, the *Sécu* is still ready to offer free care to those genuinely unable to pay. This comes through what’s called the *Couverture Maladie Universelle* (CMU) and applies to EU citizens who’ve been accepted as “permanent residents”. Under this system you get state healthcare even if not otherwise eligible and, if you’re really poor, the equivalent of “top-up”, insurance is also offered to you. Sounds fine, and in general it is, but some medics are less than enthusiastic about taking those on CMU/CMUC, and that’s notoriously the case with tooth pullers. The guys in white coats bluster when this is mentioned but it’s well documented. One Irish middle-aged woman told us, “I was sick and I was treated like a beggar.”

Some readers will need full cover, almost all others a top-up

One point to take on board is that doctors are either *conventionné* (charging the approved *Sécu* rate) or *non-conventionné* (free, more or less, to set their own fees). To indicate how the system works, a visit to a GP costs €23. Of this sum 70% – or €16.10 – is reimbursed by the *Sécu*, the remaining 30% – or €6.90 – by the *mutuelle*. It’s important to understand the figures quoted by the top-up insurers: 100% means 100% of what’s paid above the *Sécu* contribution (so: €6.90), 200% means twice that amount up to the total sum paid (you can’t claim beyond that, obviously). What you get back on fees paid to a doctor who’s *non-conventionné* can be very variable between providers. A positive point to make: insurers can’t hike premiums in direct relation to a client’s medical condition, only on the grounds of increasing age. Also they can’t cancel top-up insurance once it’s been running for two years except in cases of non-payment of premiums. ■



So what’s your health coverage situation?

- **You’ve retired from an EU country and you’re drawing a state pension so you can join the French system of *assurance maladie*.** This doesn’t mean that everything comes automatically “free”. Unless you’re on a poverty level income you’ll be left with a certain proportion of costs to pay yourself and for this you’ll need to enrol with a *mutuelle*, an organisation offering “top-up” cover (*assurance complémentaire*).
- **You choose to settle in France at any time below pensionable age so you’ll not normally qualify for cover under the *Sécu*,** the social security system. This may soon change but currently you have only one option: to take out full private cover. However, after five years living here you can apply to your *préfecture* for recognition as “a permanent resident” and then apply to your local CPAM.
- **You come here as a salaried employee and so get automatically insured** under the state system just like any native colleague. This is the easiest situation.
- **You’re not salaried and are some kind of independent worker so your status is rather more complicated.** Contact Peter Johnson for advice if this is your case (see page 37).



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ADVERTORIAL

"There's always a helping hand out of St-Raphaël"

Patrick Middleton talks to Charles Wilson, Managing Director of Exclusive Healthcare

The origin of Exclusive Healthcare (see page 3) has an important message for all of us. "That's certainly true," says Charles Wilson. "Larry Fulton, the company's founder and my predecessor, was living here without health insurance. He had a serious accident and was confronted with a massive hospital bill which he had to meet out of his own pocket. He'd taken the view that bad things only happen to other people. He learned a lesson and decided to help others avoid a similar disaster. He started Exclusive Healthcare."

How would Charles Wilson describe the company? "We exist to help people to deal with the cost of their health problems and to assist them with the workings of the French medical system. We don't just write policies. We look at a client's overall circumstances and we're always there to cope with any later difficulties that may arise." At its base in St-Raphaël Exclusive Healthcare has a team of native English-speaking advisors who are veterans in the field. "I'd say 90 per cent of our clients are Brits, many of the rest Danish. They greatly appreciate being able to use English in their dealings with us."

So what advice would he give to those wanting to avoid a Fulton-style mishap? "First, they should try to assess their needs in terms of health cover, realising that these can change over time. The majority of our clients are now in the French system but they still need top-up insurance. Second, they have to take a realistic view of their ability to pay. We offer cover at seven levels so there's plenty of choice. It's not always wise, though, to go for the cheapest option. There's a lot of cost pressure on health insurance these days but for 2013 we've held down premium increases at two per cent." ■

How to choose health insurance:

- ✓ What are your basic healthcare needs?
- ✓ How are these needs likely to change (notably with advancing years)?
- ✓ Are you certain you can keep up the premiums on the policy you have chosen? That being said, the cheapest product you can find certainly won't be the best.
- ✓ Have you really understood what you've signed up for? As William Gerard puts it, "The large print giveth, the small print taketh away." Read through a policy very carefully – there may be exclusions (do they cover outpatient treatment?) or treatments you're unlikely to need.



WHO ARE THE INSURERS?

Providers known to us and who do business in English

The Eric Blair Network

EBN has a long history in Monaco both as a general insurance broker and as offering health cover. Says Eric Blair: "We deal with a lot of clients who want full cover and we've developed our own package Optimus which is especially crafted to meet specific needs." See pg 29.

Roy Cox, Spectrum IFA Group

Spectrum IFA offers full cover from BUPA International, who have interesting Business, Maritime and Travel plans. In addition Spectrum offer travel insurance from Worldwide Health whose travel policies include products for over-80s and people who have already started their trip, in certain cases. See pg 39.

Eurassur Monaco

Explains MD Guy Boscagli, "We offer both full coverage and top up products and we're especially aware of the needs

of anglophone clients. We aim to provide a package closely tailored to individual needs, taking into account of whether the insured person lives in France, Monaco or Italy." See pgs 27, 35.

William Gerard, AXA

This office does 90% of its business with AXA products, both in general and health insurance. "We have a lot of English-speaking clients, most of whom require top-up insurance to complement their social security cover." See pgs 5, 39.

Mike Lorimer

Mike Lorimer in Antibes has been dealing with health insurance for nearly a decade. "As part of the Spectrum IFA Group, I'm affiliated with several insurers which allows me to provide the right health insurance for the international client living in the region or on a yacht, with all the documentation being in English." See pg 37.

Toys bring joys to children but when parents are buying they need to be careful



santaclausetalks.com lets kids talk to Santa, play educational and seasonal games, do puzzles and send e-cards.

BY JILL PENTON-BROWNE

One of the pleasures of parenthood, a lot of us would say, is sharing the brief magic of Christmas with our kids and seeing their joy at receiving their Yuletide gifts. This remains a special time until they're about seven when, child psychologists tell us, most youngsters have lost their faith in Father Christmas. But they still like to talk about their wished-for presents, however, and well before the big stores have launched their marketing campaigns. My friend Eliane, who teaches primary school, tells me that at the *rentrée*, once they've swapped holiday stories, the big topic of schoolyard talk is what they're hoping for at Christmas. This current of junior conversation does a lot to decide what will sell well across December.

The world's fourth largest toy market

Frankly, it's not much use thinking back several decades to one's own childhood to try to understand what's going on in the minds of today's children. France is the world's fourth largest toy market – after the US, UK and Japan – and, with a turnover topping €3 billion, the most important in the EU. In recent times there has been a great widening of the range of toys on offer. In my childhood, not so distant (at least I like to think so), girls got dolls and tea sets, boys model trains and cowboy outfits. The coming of IT has changed all that. Now the biggest

component of the French toy market is made up of various kinds of electronic games. Some of these, frankly, offer little real mental stimulus to the player but that's not true of all. There's been a big growth of educational toys – some specialised in history, say, or geography, others aiming at general intellectual development, so-called *jeux de réflexion*. Of course, kids deserve some fun pure and simple so alongside what the Americans call “edutainment” products there are others – like Spiderman or Barbie – meant just to be enjoyed.

So where to go to buy your toys? I'll come out totally in favour of smaller traditional shops rather than a megastore such as Toys R Us which in Nice has France's largest *magasin de jouets*, with a sales area of 2500m². It offers an enormous – indeed, bewildering choice – and, as a recent assessment in *Aujourd'hui* points out, there is not sufficient staff in such a store, and especially over the Christmas period, to provide adequate advice. In a smaller outlet, such as Contesso (Nice) or Bambino (Cannes), assistants have the time to guide parents and children through the cornucopia of modern toys without their becoming lost among seemingly endless displays.

You can't neglect safety

And wherever you buy there's another issue you can't neglect and that's safety. As one Nice retailer put it to me, “In recent years this has become an increasingly serious problem. Nearly 60 per cent of toys sold in France are now made in China. As far as possible our Customs and the state consumer protection agency the DGCCRF check on consignments coming in and I'd say the Chinese have had to become more attentive to safety issues. There are two things to watch out for in particular. In some cases, parts of a toy – say the eyes of a doll – can easily be detached and be swallowed by a child. Then there can be toxic elements in the make-up of a toy. This can be the case with plastics.” So what general advice can be given to a buyer? “Several points. First of all, look out for the CE logo on the product – that means that, wherever manufactured, it respects EU norms. Then don't be tempted by cheap toys, especially those sold in street markets. They can be very dodgy. Look out yourself for likely dangers – for example, some toys have cords or leads to pull them along and I've known of young kids strangling themselves. And that suggests an important point. Read the notice with any toy and be sure it's suitable for your child's age group. Finally, do ask for advice in the shop. Many of us have kids of our own, and we're very anxious that things we sell should do no harm.” ■

Hamleys (which was purchased in September by French toy retailer Groupe Ludendo) released its **Christmas Wish List for 2012**: **Web Shooting Spiderman** (£45); **Innotab 2** (£105); **Nerf Elite Hail Fire** (£58); **Monster High Dolls** (£23); **Lego Lord of the Rings, The Battle of Helms Deep** (£125); **Cabbage Patch Kids** – yup, they're back – (£39). See hamleys.com

CHURCH & CHOIR SERVICES CHRISTMAS 2012

AIX★EN★PROVENCE: ICCP INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF PROVENCE

Cathedrale St Sauveur, rue Gaston de Saporta
04 42 21 55 31 ★ iccpaix.org ★ Dominic Rivera

Sun Dec 2: Annual Christmas Carol Service in English. A city-wide candlelight celebration of the birth of Jesus! Contact for time and details, which were not available at press time.

BEAULIEU★SUR★MER: ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

11 chemin des Myrtes ★ 04 93 01 45 61
stmichaelsbeaulieusurmer.org
Father Peter Bustin

Fri Dec 21, 18h30: Carol Service, followed by Mulled Wine & Mince Pies.

Mon Dec 24, 19h: Christmas Eve Eucharist by candlelight.

Tues Dec 25, 10h: Christmas Day Festal Eucharist, followed by fizz.

Tues Jan 1, 10h: Eucharist.

CANNES: HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Ave Branly ★ 04 93 94 54 61
holytrinitycannes.org ★ Rev Giles Williams
Sat Dec 8, 12h-15h: Christmas Fair with various stalls, tea and cakes, Christmas gifts.

Fri Dec 21, 19h30: Carol Service.

Mon Dec 24, 16h: Children's Carol Service.

Mon Dec 24, 23h30: Midnight Communion.

Tues Dec 25, 9h: Early Communion.

Tues Dec 25, 10h30: Family Service with Communion. All welcome.

MARSEILLE: ALL SAINTS' ANGLICAN CHURCH

4 rue de Belloi ★ 09 51 44 23 97
anglican-marseille.org ★ Rev Gabriel Amat

Sat Nov 24, 13h-17h: Christmas Fayre.

Sun Dec 9, 18h: Carol Service.

Mon Dec 24, 15h: Carol Service at the Oratory (34 place des Martyrs de la Résistance).

Tues Dec 25, 10h: Christmas Day Service.

MENTON: ST JOHN'S CHURCH

Chapelle St Roch, Place St Roch, Menton
04 93 57 20 25 ★ agh.va@free.fr
Rev Dr David Hart

Sun Dec 23, 10h30: Christmas Eucharist with Carols.

Tues Dec 25, 10h30: Christmas Day Eucharist.

MONACO: MONACO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Eglise Réformée, 9 rue Louis Notari
06 80 86 47 03 ★ mcfellowship.com

Sun Dec 16, 18h: "The Hope of Christmas" – a celebration of Christmas with songs old & new. There will be a collection, all of which will be donated to a local charity – Musique sans Faim. All welcome.

MONACO: ST PAUL'S CHURCH, MONTE CARLO

22 ave de Grande Bretagne ★ +377 93 30 71 06
stpaulsmonaco.com ★ Father Walter Raymond

Sun Dec 9, 10h30: Children's Nativity Play.

Sun Dec 9, 18h: King's School Canterbury Crypt Choir Recital.

Sun Dec 16, 19h: Annual Carol Service.

Mon Dec 24, 17h: Children's Christingle Service.

Mon Dec 24, 23h:

Christmas Eve "Midnight Mass".

Tues Dec 25, 10h30:

Family Christmas Communion.

Sun Dec 30, 10h30: First Sunday of Christmas.

NICE: HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH

11 rue de la Buffa ★ 04 93 87 19 83
anglican-nice.com ★ Father Kenneth Letts

Mon Dec 24, 23h: Midnight Mass.

Tues Dec 25, 11h: Christmas Day Eucharist.

INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH NICE & ST PAUL DE VENCE

06 64 96 94 22 ★ ibcfrance.org
Pastor James Arnold ★ 13 Rue Vernier, Nice
Commercial Centre Saint Claire, Niveau 0,
St Paul de Vence

Please contact for service times.

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06 17 81 15 08 ★ 06 88 82 91 58
riviera-international-singers.com
Thurs Dec 6, Fri Dec 7 & Sat Dec 8, 18h:
Get into the spirit of Christmas with RIS'
Christmas concert of traditional carols and much more at St Blaise Church in Valbonne. After enjoy a warming cup of mulled wine outside the church and meet choir members. Tickets: Adults €10 (wine incl); children under 12: €5.

FOR MORE CHRISTMAS EVENTS
SEE PAGE 40 &
RIVIERAREPORTER.COM

VAR: ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

04 94 60 87 05 ★ sjevar.com ★ Rev Keith Bretel
GRIMAUD VILLAGE: Grimaud Parish Church

Fri Dec 21, 19h: Traditional English Carols.

ST RAPHAEL: St John's ave Paul Doumer

Sun Dec 16, 18h: St John's Carol Service followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

Tue Dec 25, 10h30:
Christmas Day Communion Service.

VAR: ARK PASTORAL CARE & CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

04 94 73 93 37 ★ www.arkpastoralcare.org
Rev Peter Massey
LORGUES: 1801 chem des Pailles

Wed Dec 19, 16h: Fete de Noel at Notre Dame des Anges (17 rue Quatre Pierres).

Sun Dec 23, 11h30: It's All about Jesus. Christmas Service and Lunch Arc-en-Provence.

Mon Dec 24, 17h: Christmas Eve Mass at Notre Dame des Anges (17 rue Quatre Pierres).
Directions at arc-en-provence.com/oasis

CALLIAN: Le Pradon Anglican Congregation
25 Route de Fayence, Callian

Sun Dec 9, 10h30:
Christingle Communion Service.

Sun Dec 16, 10h30: The Gift of Christmas Carols and Readings.

Tues Dec, 10h30: Christmas Communion.



How to make the Riviera season bright

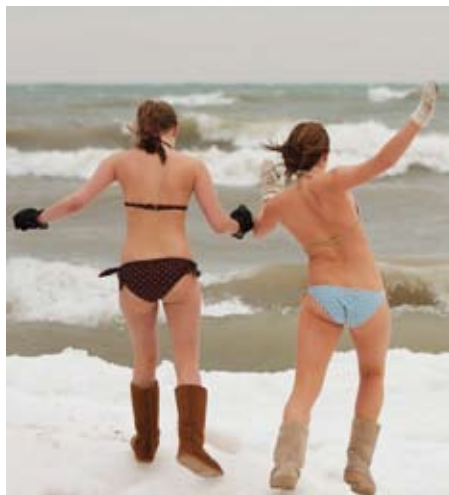


Photo: Dori

Take the plunge

The traditional New Year's Day swim (*Baignade du Nouvel An*) takes place in Antibes (11h30 at plage de la Salis) and Nice (Plage du Méridien, 11h30, TBC). For the dry-hearted, there are fireworks Dec 31st at midnight at the Bay of Cannes and Jan 1st, 18h, in the Bay of Juan-Les-Pins. More French holiday events can be found under "Activities" on our website.

Toy exchange

The 20th *Bourse aux Jouets de la Saint Nicolas* is on Dec 2nd in Ste-Maxime from 9h-17h. Children can sell or exchange their old or new toys ... and celebrate the arrival of Saint Nicolas with a candy shower. For other local *Bourse aux Jouets*, see rivierareporter.com (keyword Toyxchange).

29th Santon Fair

The santon fair in Mouans Sartoux is the oldest and biggest in the department. *Santonniers* come to sell thousands of figurines of all sizes and styles. There are also hundreds of nativity scene accessories and art figurines to paint. From Nov 16 to Dec 24, 14h-18h (Wed also 10h-12h). Info on 04 92 92 47 24. Or to make your own *santon* check out santondeprovence.com

More than gifts

Contact The Grange on 04 93 47 94 20 to arrange visits at Victoria, the retirement home next door, and bring in some Christmas joy from the outside world. See francebenevolat.org and espacebenevolat.org to locate other associations in need of your time – and not just at Christmas.

UNICEF

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund needs local volunteers even before the holidays to help with selling Unicef goods in local shop, fundraising events or even keeping the public informed about its activities. Contact Dianne Brothwell on 04 93 55 67 65. A reminder that Christmas cards and gifts are sold at Unicef shops in Nice, Cannes, Menton and Cagnes sur Mer.

Are you stuck?

Looking for a gift for the man who owns everything or impossible in-laws? Try thepresentfinder.co.uk. And don't forget Fido. For your mutt's Must Haves this Christmas, see "A Dog's Blog" on our website.

So you've been asked to organise the office party?

Cressida van Zyl-Pithey offers some advice based on experience in three countries

It can be fun but it can bring you aggro. First point: if there's likely to be more than a handful of people (which will be the case if partners and other outsiders are included) involve colleagues in the planning (and not just your mates) so if there's any dissatisfaction you're not the only one who gets the blame.



- Management is likely to be there but don't forget that you're in France and warn those who might need to be told that over-familiarity will not go down well with executive Gauls even if it's an international company.

- Again, given a reasonable number of participants it's likely a good idea to use an outside venue (hotel or restaurant near a taxi rank). This won't guarantee good behaviour but its consequences are likely to be less serious. If the party's at the office your chief accountant (especially if French) will not quickly forget who vomited over his computer.

- If you have a disco make sure you've got a DJ whose tastes go back further than the day before yesterday. If you're really serious about the music call media man Mark Dezzani (see page 46).

- Make sure there's plenty to drink (including soft drinks). Go for quantity rather than quality as there's nothing worse than a party that runs dry. And note this: if the event takes place on work premises only "light alcohols" (wine, beer, cider, mead) can be served; if spirits are provided the boss could get a fine of €3500 ... per person present. Could it come to that? Imagine someone complains about the noise, the cops come and notice the vodka bottles.

- There should be plenty of tasty and filling food. Contrary to popular belief, food does not soak up alcohol but a full stomach does slow down its absorption into the body. Britain's new Freezer Centre (see page 27) offers a wide range of party favourites.

- Finally, it's part of your job to keep an eye out for silly behaviour and, when possible, to warn likely offenders (tactfully) in advance. Remind them, if it's the case, that management will be there to notice. Two no-no's in particular: they shouldn't get obviously drunk and should avoid displays of enthusiastic snogging (these days who knows where that could lead?).



6 Ways to Beat the Expat Christmas Blues

1. Eat like you would at home.
2. Put up Christmas decorations.
3. Give gifts.
4. Do something special.
5. Throw a party.
6. Watch Christmas films.

Source: expatinfodesk.com

Christmas bookshelf

ANTIBES BOOKS

Weird Things Customers Say In Bookshops

Jen Campbell (Constable)



This collection of the amusing, unbelievable and sometimes horrifyingly ignorant things customers say and do in bookshops is a hilarious, slightly surreal glimpse into the world of bookselling. A world where you may be asked, "Do you have this children's book I've heard about? It's called Lionel Richie and the Wardrobe." Combine with *101 Uses of a Dead Kindle* for a perfect gift for book lovers. **Heidi Lee**

CASTLE BOOKSHOP FAYENCE

The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared

Jonas Jonasson (Hesperus Press)



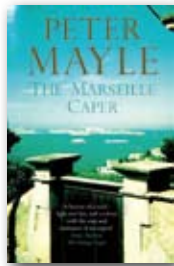
Not English, not French but Swedish! This has been a great success in French and certainly deserves it. A very amusing and instructive account of the last century by a 100-year-old man who escapes from the retirement home to avoid his 100th birthday party. His subsequent adventures keep us laughing and his reminiscences give us a potted history of the 20th century. Just what's needed to curl up by a log fire.

Christine Buisson

CANNES ENGLISH BOOKSHOP

The Marseille Caper

Peter Mayle (Quercus)

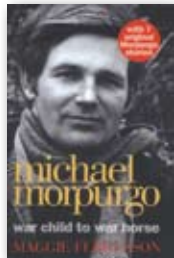


Following the humorous exploits of Sam and the fiery Elena in *The Vintage Caper*, they have another serious problem to solve. The immensely wealthy Francis Reboul, Sam's previous client, needs them to undertake a dangerous job in Marseille. Written in Mayle's inimitable style, a signed copy of his latest book will make a marvellous Christmas present. **Wally & Christel Storer**

ENGLISH BOOK CENTRE VALBONNE

Michael Morpurgo: War Child to War Horse

Maggie Fergusson (Fourth Estate)



If you are a parent, or a grandparent, you will most certainly know this author. If not, you'll have heard of the stage play, and then film, *War Horse*. Morpurgo is a prolific author, primarily of children's books, and is the successor to Roald Dahl, without the grumpiness. With this book, which separates biographical chapters with new fictional contributions from Morpurgo (an unusual formula, but it works) we learn that his life is every bit as interesting as his novels. I dare you to read the first page and try to put it down. **Lin Wolff**

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Have a Merry Christmas!



A life in music

As the Ensemble Vocal Syrinx celebrates its 20th anniversary, Patrick Middleton talks to its conductor Errol Girdlestone



As a session singer in London Errol Girdlestone, above, once sang with Pink Floyd.

When I first heard of Errol Girdlestone his name suggested to me he could be from the Caribbean or maybe Bermuda. “Well, no. I’m of Irish, Welsh and Norman descent – Girdlestone is a deformation of a French name – and I was born in Oxford. In fact, my father was a don at Christ Church, though he died when I was five, and I went with my mother to Rye in Sussex. I suppose that’s where my interest in music began, singing in the church choir and then getting lessons from the organist. But until I was about sixteen I was also quite keen on pop music, too. Anyway, as I was getting ready to go to Oxford I set my sights on an organ scholarship. That didn’t work out and I went up to Keble to read music. I got very involved with the musical life of the university but I don’t think the actual degree course did much for me – it was about musicology rather than music – though it did give me ability to read a score intelligently and analyse it which are absolute necessities for a conductor.”

My best break of all

And after Oxford? “Well, then as now, a music degree wasn’t an automatic meal ticket so I found myself selling suitcases in a shop on Oxford Street. Then I got the first of those lucky breaks you need in this business. I became a deputy at St Paul’s which meant I was on call to replace regular choirmen who were off for any reason. That gave me time to be a session singer all over London, mainly classical but also with a bit of pop; I once sang with Pink Floyd. After five years of that I did some school teaching and then got a British Council scholarship to do a conducting course in Warsaw. I enjoyed Poland but I was surprised, or flattered rather, to discover how closely observed I’d been there by the British authorities. Then another big break. I got taken on by the English National Opera where I was involved with their Ring cycle. Next came

my best break of all. I was invited to South Africa where I worked with the Pretoria and Cape Town Operas and then became municipal director of music for Pietermaritzburg. I owe a lot to South Africa – including a wife – and I met a lot of very talented people there. In the opera world apartheid was applied less rigidly to performers and I worked with some amazing Zulu choirs. The audiences, though, were all white.

“In the mid-eighties I returned to the UK. Didn’t like it, couldn’t get a job, so I went off to work with the Oslo opera for a couple of years. After that I launched into my Côte d’Azur adventure which has now been going on for nearly a quarter of a century. I got invited to join the Nice Opera. As you probably know, it wasn’t an altogether happy house. There was quite a lot of aggro going on, some of it political. I was there for four years and then twenty years ago something really interesting turned up. I got an offer to take over a choir which eventually became part of a wider musical organisation mainly involving some very enthusiastic and dedicated Germans working at IBM. That was the beginning of what’s now the Ensemble Vocal Syrinx. From the start it aimed to perform at a decent standard, bringing together 45 singers of half a dozen nationalities and has come to play a notable part in the cultural life of the area. For me it’s ideal since it gives me the time to travel elsewhere to undertake one-off commissions.”

What sort of repertoire does Syrinx draw upon? “I’ve basically got two aims. On one hand, I like to offer reasonably familiar works which please a lot of people; on the other I bring in material which expands the audience’s knowledge and appreciation. A Fauré favourite, for example, paired with some unblatant Britten. It’s rather like the policy behind the BBC Proms. I’m happy to say many people seem to welcome the challenge of new musical experiences.” To mark its 20th anniversary the choir wanted to recreate its original first complete performance of an oratorio – which was Handel’s *Messiah* at the Monaco Cathedral in November 1996. Rather ambitious, surely? “Not overly so. The *Messiah* is a work which can be dealt with adequately by choirs of very different sizes. Its first performance involved only 18 singers; much later Haydn heard it in Westminster Abbey bellowed out by a thousand voices.” And a last question: what sort of conductor is Errol Girdlestone – bully, cajoler, comic or something else? “A mixture, I’d say, except I’m never a bully.” ■

Anyone interested in auditioning for the Ensemble Vocal Syrinx (ensemblevocalsyrinx.com) should contact Kate Cobb (details on page 46).

Bookshelf: Not quite cut-and-dried

Traditionally, the plots of books and films were intended to be neatly structured – *bien ficelé*, as the French say – so that the reader or spectator was left feeling satisfied that the world was indeed an orderly place. That's no longer always the case. I've just seen Oliver Stone's latest film *Savages* which offers two different endings, allowing a choice between a bloody shootout or a less dramatic resolution. Charles Moore Wilson's novel *No Pockets in a Shroud* (UK: Kennedy and Boyd) departs in another way from the accepted model of the well-made tale.

Set in Paris, it has a secondary topographical appeal to those familiar with the city. The narrative is deliberately loosely structured although the leading theme is rivalry and possible skulduggery (murder? arson?) at a British hospital in Paris. Access to this rather special world comes when Commissaire Guiramand, a veteran police officer, is admitted to the hospital for a knee operation. He becomes sexually obsessed with his nurse who happens to be a staff representative on the Board. This body is an arena of fierce animosities, notably over a project to merge with a French hospital as a solution to a financial crisis. Guiramand's girl gets run over. The main opponent of the merger falls under a train. He becomes more than curious when a fire breaks out the hospital, where the installation of smoke alarms has divided the Board, and a young mother dies with her baby. These themes are pursued with a subtle attention to the characters of those involved.

But here's what's special about Wilson's book: the questions that the reader is likely to ask as the narrative proceeds don't get answered (as often in real life as against fiction). Instead, at the end eight queries are raised and we're asked, "Does the author know the answers?" This is an unusual and intriguing book, though frustrating maybe for those who like everything to be cut-and-dried. *P.M.*



Just in time for Christmas:

"Cook au Vin"

"I have much enjoyed his exuberant wit ..."
Boris Johnson.

Brown Paper Editions announces *Cook au Vin*, some personal typed-up notes on entertaining by cooking with wine accompanied by 57 various café drawings all by local artist Jonathon Brown with a cover portrait by David Hockney. At nearly 200 pages and 40,000 words, it has grown hugely from an initial idea to make a collection of café drawings to adding the odd recipe . . .

The result is a personal guide, both practical and carefree, to the art of entertaining guests to a lunch or dinner – with wine – illustrated in colour by the author's café sketches. To order: villaparasol@aol.com or see amazon.co.uk

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YOUR DAILY FIX ON THE RIVIERA

Gardener's Notes: Wrap Up Warm

BY JAMES HARTLEY

DIRECTOR, ENGLISH GARDEN GROUP



"The simplest and most practical method of protection is placing the plants under a covered structure of some kind. If they are too large or if it isn't practical to move them, then you have to bring the cover to the plants."

James Hartley

There are scant few things in life on which one can depend unequivocally, and gardening is no exception. However over the years I've found horticultural certainties to abound, and they all tend to be rather perverse: You can count on it raining as you dig trenches to install a watering system (just as you do not need to check the weather forecast to know it will be particularly hot the day you dig a trench for a drain); equally, while you can count on grass growing in cracks in a path while it stubbornly refuses to grow in gaps in your lawn, you can assume that something unexpectedly thriving in a bed is a weed, yet a plant touted as "evergreen" will turn a peculiar shade of brown in the winter. Truth be told, winter stands head and shoulders above the rest with regard to its collection of inevitabilities, united by their involvement of cold. With an antisocial habit of announcing its arrival by way of a precipitous and unexpected drop in temperature, even the onset of winter is usually unappreciated by gardeners and their plants alike. For plants of a delicate disposition, good preparation is usually key to ensuring they make it through to spring in one piece.

Russian roulette

At the nursery we go to great lengths to make sure that clients are at least well informed about the risks they are taking with some plants, such as growing hybrid bougainvillea further than a stone's throw from the coast which is nothing short of dicing with death. Despite this, since many of the plants that produce the best colour and do so for longest are those that cannot tolerate the cold, people just can't resist the urge to take the gamble. If this sounds like you, you'll probably have a large citrus tree planted somewhere nearby despite living nowhere near the sea, and as a consequence, you have a horticultural car crash waiting to happen. So – how to mitigate

the inevitable consequences of a Siberian cold front sweeping across the region? Well, you'll be pleased to know that it isn't all in the lap of the Gods, and that there are good practical measures you can take to protect your treasured plants.

Hopefully, if you live in an area where frost is inevitable, you'll have wisely planted your citrus and other frost-sensitive plants in containers. If this is the case, the obvious and best protection is to move these to a position under cover. Direct, or "radiation frost" is always a danger when the skies are clear, with the warmth remaining on the land's surface after a sunny winter day being rapidly leaked away by radiation into the clear night sky. This effect is so dangerous due to the sheer speed with which the heat is lost: in many cases the temperature of the leaves of the plants will actually drop below the ambient air temperature as heat radiates away. As if this wasn't bad enough, the effect is compounded as the sun bursts out the next morning, rapidly defrosting the leaves and in the process, bursting the cell walls within the leaves.

The simplest and most practical method of protection is placing the plants under a covered structure of some kind. If they are too large or if it isn't practical to move them, then you have to bring the cover to the plants, and this involves large quantities of winter protection fleece. Winter protection fleece is a breathable fabric that helps to create a small microclimate in the canopy of your plant, keeping the temperature of the leaves several degrees above the ambient temperature, in particular under conditions that could lead to the reverse. The word "breathable" is crucial: never ever use plastic directly over plants as this allows moisture build up and rotting to start in the leaves and outer branches. The membrane sheets provide the protection required against heat radiating away and wind stripping the warmth from the leaves, whilst allowing moisture to permeate out and away each day.

On the subject of rotting leaves, it is well worth noting that fresh tender leaves are far more susceptible to frost damage than leaves that have been on the plant a while and have had time to harden off. To this end – make sure you ease off on the use of fertilisers containing high levels of nitrogen towards the end of the year as these will push plants into extended vigorous growth – leaving you with foliage that is badly unprepared for the ravages of a cold winter. If you are keen to keep your plants well fed, then opt for balanced feeds later in the season, or better still, feeds with elevated levels of potassium.

It's worth noting that in these kinds of conditions it isn't only tender and half-hardy plants that you have to keep an eye on. In extreme cases even evergreens and other hardy plants can be affected when

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the soil becomes frozen and the morning is particularly warm. Roots then find it impossible to lift moisture up to the plant and the plant can die from drought.

Winter can be cruel

It's one of those inevitabilities that very cold weather will follow a windy period – something we have a problem with time and time again. The part we always have trouble with is when it has been particularly windy as this is when we can experience damage to our heated glasshouse or have winter protection removed. Then, with sadistic unoriginality, the temperatures plummet before you have time to react, and plants that have been kept tucked up warm are suddenly exposed to the elements.

In gardens this is also problem, and for those that have climbing plants protected on a wall, these are some of the most susceptible to having the winter protection pulled away by the wind. To avoid this, I strongly recommend using a particularly good method of attaching the fleece, taught to me when I was learning the trade.

Attaching fleece to a climber on a wall to stay up for an entire winter can be difficult to do effectively. This problem however can be solved elegantly with a couple of slats of wood. The strips of wood in question should be light, no more than about five or ten centimetres wide and a couple of centimetres thick, and should be as long as is required to be mounted vertically on the wall to match the height of the climbing plant you are trying to cover. Drill two or three holes (top, bottom and centre) in the strip, and hold the strip up to the wall on either side of the climber and mark the wall in the position of the holes. The wall can then be drilled and fitted with plugs to take screws. In this way you can screw the wood batons to the wall and use the wood to staple up the fleece. Starting on one side the fleece can be drawn over the plant, stapled on the other side and drawn back across in the same way a couple of times, stapling on each side, to create a protective layer that is both effective and reliably attached. Once winter is over, the fleece can be removed, and the wood strips taken down simply by removing the screws, allowing them to be stored and reused the following year.

A word of advice: be sure to drill the holes identically in each of the wood batons to avoid having to figure out in which position and in which orientation each piece of wood goes the following year. Accepted – this does have potential for a certain degree of yuletide horticultural hilarity, but you'll just have to trust me. Invariably you'll be doing this when it's very cold outside (having misjudged the onset of winter), and the novelty value in such capers in indirectly related to temperature. ■

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The Var Report



Photo: Игорь Лебединский

38,000

Varieties of mushrooms.

€2200/pound

World's most expensive mushroom, the rare European white truffle, which grows among the roots of poplar, beech, hazelnut, oak and willow trees in Italy.

Amino acid count

Higher per serving in mushrooms than corn, peanuts, kidney and soy beans.

Mushroom pickers gather round

This year's climatic conditions in the Var mean that wild mushrooms will still be in season until Christmas and well beyond. Mushroom hunting is an enjoyable and worthwhile pastime in the region, but every year a few residents fall victim to the seemingly benign practice of *la cueillette de champignons*. Here's how not to be one of them.

The first cause is through intoxication by a poisonous variety. Illness – or death in cases such as with the lethal *amanite phalloïde* (known as the death cap) – often happens because some poisonous species can closely resemble edible varieties. There are thousands of mushroom species but only about 60 are poisonous and few of those are fatal. French pharmacists are trained to tell the difference so take the results of your gathering to any pharmacy. It is important to keep varieties separate as you gather them, preferably in cloth or paper rather than plastic bags. Mushrooms like to breathe and plastic bags are not suitable for this. If an edible and inedible variety come into contact, poison can be transferred over in some cases. Keeping the varieties separate makes the pharmacist's job quicker, too.

Consume (or bottle in olive oil if you know how) your mushroom harvest within a few days and keep it in a cool dry place in the meantime. A few varieties that are edible when fresh and young become mildly poisonous when they are old, hit by frost or decayed.

Remember also that some varieties may well be edible but are not particularly tasty. The *lactarius rufus* (common in the Var and called locally *lactaire roux*) is too bitter to be used in cooking. The Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*, pictured) is one of the most delicious and common mushrooms but the False Chanterelle (*Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca*) can look like the real thing yet is very bland with no culinary value. Most pharmacists or a good book (try *Champignons* in Hachette's *Guides Nature* series) will help you identify these. Owners of iPads might buy the paid iPad-only app (€3.99) *Champignons*:

Le Guide. The *Champignons en Poche* app (€2.99) is compatible with iPhone and iPod Touch. You can try restricted free versions of both these apps before purchase from the App Store.

Something you can't download to your mobile device is the location of hunters in the woods. Beware: each year a mushroom gatherer is injured or killed by a careless (or drunk) *chasseur*. Try to avoid areas where hunters are present, wear bright clothes, don't hide behind bushes and even whistle or sing while you gather. Almost every accident is due to a hunter mistaking a mushroom gatherer for an animal so make yourself as "human looking" as possible. If you take your dog with you, keep it on a leash – you don't want Fido wandering off and mistaken for a wild animal by a careless hunter. Some dogs bark whenever someone unknown is near and they can sense this presence much sooner than you will. A barking dog is a sure signal to the hunter that you're not a wild boar.

This may sound self-evident but don't get lost! It's easy to become disoriented in the woods after a couple of hours looking mainly at the ground in unfamiliar territory. Near La Mole in early November two women in their fifties from Cogolin set off at 3pm and spent most the night in the forest after losing their way. They weren't found until well after midnight when a family member noticed they hadn't returned and contacted the gendarmes. Also in November, an elderly Draguignan mushroom hunter was only found after the gendarmerie mobilised a helicopter with a thermal detection camera on board.

If you have a GPS device like a portable SatNav, iPhone or iPad, take it with you. Also take a whistle, some water, a good map and your mobile phone. Do be sure that someone knows you have set off into the woods, not forgetting to tell them when you plan to return.

Gathered with these elementary cautions, wild mushrooms in the Var offer free and tasty treats for the festive table.

When in Roms

There's still plenty of empty space in the Var, making it prime land for Eastern European gypsies to winter in. These *Roms* are rarely welcomed by the locals who – rightly or wrongly – blame the travelling bands originally from Romania and Bulgaria, for increased crime, unsightly encampments and hygiene risks. They are also non-taxpayers, often accused of putting a strain on local resources. During the summer floods of 2010, residents around Grimaud and Fréjus sometimes saw the most urgent assistance given to the fragile Roma caravan encampments before other residents were looked after.



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The cause of the *Roms* is not a popular one but it does have its defenders. The Bishop of Fréjus-Toulon, Monsignor Dominique Rey, is calling for “greater respect for human dignity” when dealing with these immigrants and he is supported in this by the Archbishop of Aix-en-Provence-Arles, Monsignor Christophe Dufou. The Var churches and the *Secours Catholique* are finding themselves united in an unholy alliance with parts of the local left wing who are not usually known for their religious fervour. The CGT union, the Var branch of the French Communist Party, the *Europe Écologie-les Verts* and *Toulon@venir* have sent a joint letter to the Prefect, warning that the treatment of these marginal and temporary immigrants should be improved, notably around Toulon and Draguignan where many problems persist and where public opinion remains negative. Most of these defenders come from urban areas and so are not likely to see an ugly encampment appear at the bottom of their garden. Ask local farmers around Lorgues or Cotignac and you’ll get quite a different opinion.

Harris Stobbs. ■

Saint Barbe in Provence

The Sainte Barbe (or Barbara) Feast Day on Dec 4th starts the Christmas season in Provence, which continues to Candlemas Day (see page 37) on Feb 2nd.

Barbara was born in the third century, probably in Turkey, on the shores of the Marmara Sea. As a girl she converted to Christianity, which provoked the fury of Dioscorus, her father, a rich and powerful pagan. He dragged his daughter before the prefect, who ordered him to behead his daughter. Dioscorus executed the sentence and was immediately struck by lightning. Since then, Christians pray to Sainte Barbe asking for protection against explosives and lightning, and by extension, fire. She became the patron saint of artillerymen, as well as professions that face the dangers of fire or explosions like miners and fire-fighters. (And, for some reason also mathematicians and architects.)

The tradition of the Feast varies in France. In Alsace, they believe that cut cherry branches must flourish before Christmas to ensure an abundant year, while in Provence, wheat seeds are planted and covered with wet cotton. If the stalks grow properly, the harvest will be good. Provençal bakeries sell small packets of wheat germ, and the proceeds go to charity.



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Nobody knows how long it takes

On bereavement and a source of help from the Var



President of the Bereavement Support Network, of the Var Mim Kay, above, took over from Peter Massey.

The US Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – known in familiar shrink-speak simply as “DSM” – has indicated that in its new edition, due out next year, discussion of the grief of the bereaved will be modified. “If this continues beyond two weeks,” we are told, “it ceases to be normal and becomes a mental disorder ... more precisely, clinical depression.” This dictum will surprise many. Much closer to common human experience is what Dirk Bogarde wrote in a letter after the death of his partner of nearly half a century: “I’ll get better, they tell me but nobody can tell me how long it takes. Forever, I’d think.”

In our last issue we carried a letter from a reader whose wife

had died after a marriage which had lasted for over five decades. “Since her death I have found it impossible to come to terms with my loss. I then saw in the yellow pages of the *Reporter* the Bereavement Support Network (Var). They put me in touch with a lady volunteer and after spending a few hours together her understanding and words of advice helped me enormously to alleviate a lot of my pain. They regularly keep in touch with me to check on my progress and have my everlasting thanks.” This is just one of several testimonies to the work of the BSNV we’ve received over the years and we are happy to know when contact is made through our pages.

A grieving person needs to talk

The organisation was founded seven years ago by Dr Trevor Zutshi and Peter Massey, a priest of

the Church of Ireland now working in the Var, who commented: “That two week limit on grief is nonsense. The reactions to bereavement are complex. There’s the initial feeling of shock, then sadness but often later feelings of anger and resentment and, yes, finally there comes acceptance. Above all, a grieving person needs to talk – often compulsively – about the loved one they’ve lost and it helps a lot if they’re talking to someone who’s been through the same experience. Our people are trained and experienced to offer really useful advice for those at a difficult and painful time in their lives.”

Mim Kay, president of the BSNV, reminds readers, “This organisation exists to support not only the bereaved but also those who are terminally ill, and their families and friends. If you, or someone you know, could benefit from our confidential, free support, then please contact us.” **H.T. ■**

See bsnvar.org. BSNV’s updated contact details are on page 44.

For some the only way out

Bette Davis once said: “Old age isn’t for sissies.” This view would likely be shared by many of the increasing number of men and women who survive for years beyond the biblical span of threescore years and ten. A significant proportion of these find in old age only misery and despair and take, or try to take, their own lives. In the Alpes-Maritimes at least one elderly person commits suicide every week. Experts believe this understates the reality since in some cases the true circumstances of a death are concealed.

Why does this happen and why so regularly in our region? Euphoric accounts of medical advances which are increasing the expectation of life disguise the fact that for many their later years are a grim experience. Says Dr Michel Benoit, head of geriatric psychiatry at the Pasteur Hospital in Nice, “Very often the elderly are trying to cope with loneliness, poverty, chronic illness and dependency. Whether living alone or in retirement homes they are prone to clinical depression – we estimate that that’s the case for between twenty

to forty per cent of over sixty-fives.” The Alpes-Maritimes is an area of particular problems, given the high concentration of the elderly and also the extent of old age poverty here – one in eight elderly households is defined as having inadequate incomes.

This does not, some may think, match up with our comment on the French attachment to their families (see *Fric et famille* on page 6). Marie-Laure Lucchini, a local senior social worker, shrugs at this: “You get different attitudes in different families but there’s a general tendency for old people to be pushed aside – into retirement homes or just left alone to get on with things as best they can. These tough economic times don’t help.” Dr Benoit is not resigned to this: “We can’t go on like this. We’ve got to mobilise community and family in the essential task of giving our older people hope, a wish to go on living. Last year ten thousand of them took their own lives. That’s a terrible indictment of our society.” **P.M.**



Grief at bereavement is not made easier by the anxieties that can arise when arranging a funeral. The average basic cost (burial) is around €3500 but there are major variations between regions and this is an area where it can be notably expensive.

Cremation is cheaper, as little as €2000 in Lille, for example, but yet again it can have a pretty steep price tag here. It pays to ask around.

The *Association française d’information funéraire*, an independent organisation, has advice in English and German on their site. See afif.asso.fr or call 01 45 44 90 03.

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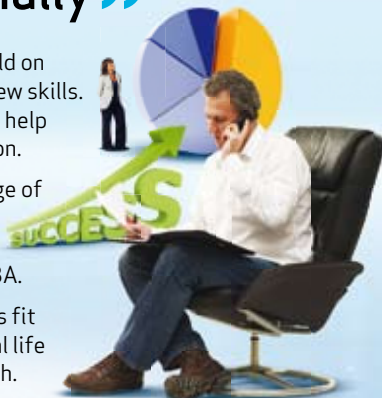
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Monaco Murmurs

BY MOLLY BROWN



200 chefs from 25 countries and 5 continents – a total of 300 Michelin stars – celebrated “25 years of culinary creation” with Ducasse, above centre, at Louis XV in Monaco earlier this month.

Photo: SBM
©T.Dhellemmes

Monaco has not escaped the financial crisis, but the Principality has its own special ace up its sleeve: its long and fascinating history of star-studded elegance; glamour and romance which lure tourists from around the world to its shores. An extra ace is not always enough ... but with an unexpected 7% rise in estimated year-end income at €895 million (and estimated expenditure only 3.1% higher at €917 million) ... the government, with a true gambler's flair and enviable if questionable optimism are playing for high stakes, placing €600 million on the red; betting on an upturn in the economy. Well, with €350 million on the table, why not €600 million and modernise the Hôtel de Paris (retaining its *Belle Époque* restaurants and façade) as well as the adjacent Sporting d'Hiver (to be demolished). *Faites vos jeux*, roll the dice, it's a done deal. From January 2014, the Place du Casino is to be an absolutely modern building site... for the following 4 years. And why not! How many hotel guests would stay in the hotel anyway with the noise

and dust of destruction around them ... and the avenue des Beaux Arts is a perfect spot to park the bulldozers and wrecking ball.

Feeble protest

The proposed 2013 budget has not yet been approved and the Finance Minister, Marco Piccinini, has resigned and as realisation finally hits the Principality's elected parliamentary officials that 2014 is only a year away, a few voices are being raised in feeble protest (buildings behind will lose their view, it might put off the tourists), but Monaco has no society for the protection of its historical sites and little apparent interest in the past. Before it all falls about his ears, Monaco's legendary chef, Alain Ducasse, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Louis XV restaurant at the Hôtel de Paris, with 200 top chefs from around the world toasting his success with wine from the hotel's renowned cellars and sampling the delights of his Mediterranean cuisine.

Why not a celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Sporting d'Hiver? NMNM are carefully restoring a unique collection of Monaco's art treasures, including costumes, stage sets and paintings from the golden years of Les Ballets Russes, for exhibition next year. The ideal setting for this exhibition is undoubtedly the elegant Salle des Beaux Arts in the Sporting d'Hiver, itself a part of the Principality's architectural heritage. As SBM writes*: “In 1932 ... this building featured a monumental façade surveying the Jardins des Boulingrins ... it became a must for Monaco's nightlife ... it was in Sporting d'Hiver that Radio Monte-Carlo made its first broadcast on July 17th 1943 ... by Maurice Chevalier... art deco was also celebrated in Café de Paris...” An exhibition of 20th century art in this magnificent setting would be an instant success, bringing recognition of Monaco as a cultural centre of Europe's thriving

art world and an elegant farewell to what one SBM official calls a “tired old Mussolini building”.

Festive times

Monaco is a delight for children at Christmas time; with decorated Christmas trees, sparkling lights, music, skating and a fairy like miniature Christmas village on the port; shops are ablaze with sparkles and sweetmeats and Monte Carlo Opera is staging Mitch Leigh's musical comedy *The Man from La Mancha*, the story of Don Quixote, for their entertainment. Families meet at the Ecumenical Kermesse at the Chapiteau on December 1st to buy toys and books and SBM light up the Place du Casino (see cover) on December 8th. Dance companies from all over Europe perform in Monaco Dance Forum (Dec 13-22) and Les Ballets de Monte Carlo perform Maillot's acclaimed, *LAC* (Dec 29-Jan 3). The New Year brings on the clowns for the 37th International Circus Festival (Jan 17-27) and tickets are already on sale so have yourself a merry little Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. ■

(*Source: *Decorative Arts in Monte Carlo 1930-39*, SBM)

As true now as when he wrote it

Just 150 years ago Charles Dickens insisted, “There are people who will tell you that Christmas to them is not what it used to be. Never heed such dismal reminiscences. Reflect upon your present blessings – of which every man has many – not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some. Fill your glass again with a merry face and contented heart ... your Christmas shall be merry and your New Year a happy one.”



Loading operation of the Super Servant 3 in Martinique.

Photo: www.vanderwal.com

Dockwise: the disappearance of the grand yachts

BY MICHAEL HEALY

A few weeks ago there were 30 grand yachts anchored at the bottom of our garden enjoying the warm Indian summer. Now, there are none even though many fine days remain over winter to go boating. Where have they gone? West. In the days of the now defunct *yachtspotter.com* they would be reported passing Gibraltar en-route to their winter season in the West Indies once the hurricane season ended. But now many benefit from the recent invention of special dock ships to transport them around the world. These ships flood down to float-on/float-off the cargo of up to 20 valuable yachts. It is a spectacular operation but needs very deep calm water and is not routinely done on the Riviera. Toulon and Genoa are the usual termini for our Coast and the main routes go to Florida and the West Indies in October, and back in April/May before the West Atlantic hurricane season starts. The two leading ships in this trade are the *Yacht Express* and the smaller *Super Servant 4*, which in

their latest westbound trip carried yachts worth a cool \$358 million.

This is big business, but how did it start? As motor-yachts got bigger in the 1980s, owners used the increased range for a double-season mode: summer in the Mediterranean and then winter in the West Indies – a big change from the short summer use and long winter hibernation that Riviera crews were used to, and with new regulations requiring generous leave periods, life became hard on a yacht constantly on the move. Rotating crews was one solution, but millionaire owners prefer their loyal captains and sea persons to be always there onboard their expensive vessels. A tradition grew up of relief captains taking over for the long trans-Atlantic passages when the owner's party is unlikely to be onboard, giving two weeks leave twice a year to the permanent master.

Meanwhile the Dutch company Dockwise had developed expertise in heavy marine transport, mainly for moving oil rigs around by ballasting down, sliding them under the rig and then rising so the rig was clear of the water and could be transported swiftly to its destination. The company now operates the largest fleet of specialized vessels in the world, some transporting loads of up to 117,000 deadweight tons. The new market for yacht transport inspired Dockwise to develop real dock ships (*yacht-transport.com*) so that the precious white yachts could have protection from heavy seas, and these ships are now getting bigger and faster, with several new destinations worldwide. Since its maiden voyage in 1987, the company has transported over 12,000 motor and sailing yachts to destinations around the globe. Float-on/float-off is expensive, but offers a big saving in engine hours and the alarming cost of fuel, not to mention the Admiralty Charts needed for these long voyages. An amazing new nautical industry, worth investing in – on the Oslo Stock Exchange. ■

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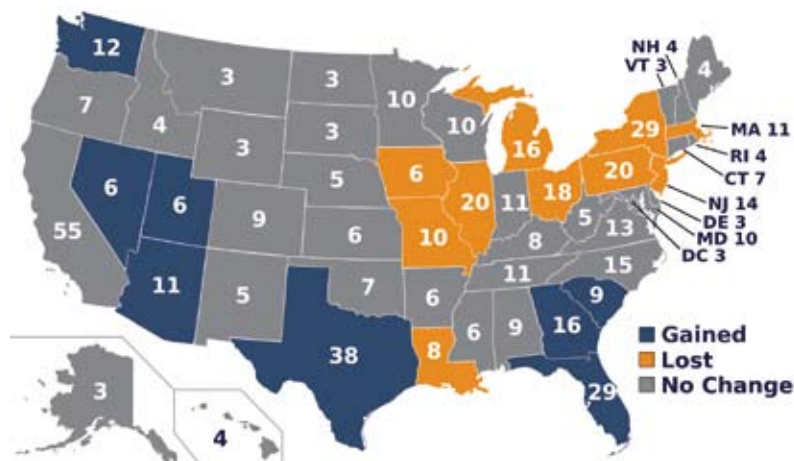
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American Notes

BY PJ HESLIN



The electoral college, above, was created by the Founding Fathers in 1787, most of whom distrusted a direct-vote democracy. Based on congressional representation (the sum of Senators and Representatives) the total vote is 538, with 270 needed to be elected president.

Some say this system doesn't reflect the national will. For example, Gore won the popular vote by almost half a million ballots in 2000 but lost one electoral vote and so it was President Bush.

As *The Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen wrote: "An electoral-college tie or another election won by the loser of the popular vote will do incalculable damage to the public's faith in democracy."

Ghost of election present: division

On November 7th Democrats Abroad Riviera Chapter held a post-election breakfast at Nice's West End Hotel, which as of the night before was anybody's guess as to whether this would be a celebration or consolation over croissants.

Carol Labrouse, Acting Chair for Democrats Abroad, was pleased not just with the election results but also with the morning's turnout; they thought they might attract fifteen people but 46 had emailed confirming attendance.

Speaking with those on hand about why they thought the election was such a nail-biter, most believed it was due to the increasing divide between Republicans and Democrats. As a fairly new expat, and someone who has family and friends living in the US that are on both sides of the political aisle, I can attest to this. A friend of mine back in Chicago got into such a big political argument with his brother that he was banned from family barbecues until after the election. Now that the election is over, he must bring over his own barbecue for what his brother refers to as his "special Obama veggie burger". My friend is not a vegetarian.

William Beachner, former local chair for Democrats Abroad told me that he believes America's polarization is the way Europe used to be several years ago. He finds there is less of an ideological divide between European parties as all struggle with austerity measures. In the US, however, people and political parties are more divided than ever. This creates an even smaller margin of swing states and accompanying swing voters.

A note that Democrats Abroad will have an executive meeting on January 9th. While I have been at times accused of a liberal bias in this column and would be happy to show my true "can't we all just get along" nature, I welcome news from any expat political party and can be contacted through the *Reporter*.

Ghost of election past: race

When Mitt Romney started asking Americans if they were better off now than they were four years ago, I thought first of Reagan and how he asked the same question more than 30 years ago. Back then I definitely was better off than four years previously since Sergio DiNunziato was no longer bullying me in grade school thanks to a growth spurt. Personally I'm in a better position than I was in 2008 but I can't exactly say that Obama is responsible for me coming to France and finding a job that I enjoy. This question, though, in a political context had me thinking about the last election and, in particular, about race.

Remember what a big deal that was? No matter who you voted for you had to admit that election was a little more special than prior ones. At the time, and maybe it was just in Los Angeles, there were those genuinely worried about Obama because he was black: "I wonder if he'll be killed before the end of his term?" Even Steve Croft (venerated reporter for one of my Mom's favorite news programs) asked Michelle and Barack in 2008 if they feared an assassination attempt that was racially motivated. How many Americans held their breath as the 44th President and First Lady took the inaugural walk down Pennsylvania Avenue? Four years on, though, there wasn't one newsworthy attempt on the President's life. In fact, people are more apt to refer to him as a socialist than African American.

So does this mean that there is no longer a color bar in the US? No. I was listening to one of my favorite podcasts and the host was actually chastised by a listener because he had the audacity to differentiate between black comedians and white comedians. The listener posited that since the 2008 election, America had moved on from race and the bigger fight was now homophobia.

I don't agree. If you worked with two guys named Larry and one was African American and the other was white, you could never say "black Larry" when trying to differentiate between the two. Why can't I say that somebody's black and that they're different than me? I see the next big hurdle in US race relations is the ability to say this without being accused of being a racist. Then we can move on to saying there is no gender bar.

My perception of France while living in North America was gleaned mostly from the 1986 movie *Round Midnight* where old jazz musicians found refuge and work in Paris after having been shunned in their own country for being too black and jazzy. That and something about Josephine Baker made me think that France didn't have a color barrier. Then I moved here and realized that if Arabs played jazz, *Round Midnight* would have some very different scenes in it.

Ghost of election future: Catholics

I was very disappointed to find out that Paul Ryan was Catholic. As an American citizen with Irish Catholic roots it pains me to find out that my generation of Catholic American politicians are defined by guys like Ryan and Rick Santorum. They are taking the "cache" out of being Catholic. American politics needs a few more Kennedy-type Catholics. With their full heads of hair, winning smiles, effortless charm they made being Catholic cool. Things like big families, drinking and adultery seemed acceptable personality flaws with that generation of political Catholics, but now we have these straight-laced, uptight guys who are devotees of P90X and lie about their marathon times. I bet Ryan's never had anything stronger than a light beer and never even been in a fight. The only hope Irish American politicians have is if Clinton converts. But there's more chance that the Arkansa-born Clinton would run for president in Ireland or, thanks to a little concession known as the Louisiana Purchase, in France.

Giving a finger to health care

A recent episode of *Modern Family* made a very funny joke about Obamacare. It came to mind when I had a sports-related injury and, still accustomed to American health care where even when you have health insurance you still pay huge out of pocket sums, I decided to forgo a trip to Emergency. I thought I could fix a broken finger with duct tape and strong will, but when the following morning I saw the

position of my new finger, I decided to make my first visit to a French hospital. Even though I have a *carte vitale*, I figured I'd have to shell out something as it was an emergency on a Saturday. As an example, with my last job in LA, I paid \$120 a month through work for a health care plan, and still would be charged \$112 for simple blood work. (A co-worker died from ruptured appendix because the cost of visiting a doctor overrode his stomach pain.) At St Roch in Nice, I only waited fifteen minutes in ER (unheard of back home), and was quickly given an X-ray and cast. The whole ordeal took less than an hour and cost me €9 for Doliprane, which was not covered under state health care (*Sécu*). The

Without health insurance in the US

\$360 to \$479

Cost of treatment for finger dislocation or fracture, not including doctor fee.

\$1000

Typical cost of including cost of X-ray, facility fee and doctor fee for nonsurgical treatment; up to \$5000 or more for surgical treatment.

\$100 vs \$1000

Average cost of finger X-ray vs cost some providers charge.

(Source: health.costhelper.com)

Sécu is not free by any means: I pay healthily into it each month, but it's a more civilized system when the sick or injured don't have to weigh the pros and cons of visiting a medical professional. ■

See page 16 for more on French health insurance,



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News of Britain & the British

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



Photo: London Youth Games Ltd

The Olympics! “Wonderful Games”, okay, but the jury’s still out

One of our readers – a fan of the *FT*’s Lucy Kellaway, the Pink ‘Un’s excellent columnist – admitted that she’d got it wrong in a knocking piece about the Olympics published on the eve of the Games: “The biggest pile of hogwash I’ve ever written.” She suggests – our reader, that is – that we also need to fess up after our own repeated negative comments on the topic. Not so. Ms Kellaway had said that the London event would be a mess. We didn’t say that. Our point was that there are lessons to be drawn from “Olympomania” as observed – by me at first hand, I might say – in Atlanta, Athens and Sydney. Quite apart from how successful a particular Olympics are as a sporting competition, there’s

UK’S MOST POPULAR NAMES IN 2011

Harry, Oliver, Jack, Alfie and Charlie.

One boy in ten was named Harry, put down to the joint influence of the Prince and H. Potter.

The 19th most popular name was Mohammed – a placing likely to be strengthened by the Olympic exploits of Mo Farah (left).

Top names for girls:
Amelia, Olivia, Lily, Jennifer and Emily.

Neither Catherine nor Kate made the list.

a depressing syndrome which seems to accompany every edition: euphoria when a city gets awarded the Games, a lot of excitement as they approach and, as with Sydney, especially, much joyful backslapping at their “success”... and then an at first slowish but then accelerating period of disillusion and recrimination. No reason to think London will be spared that.

Of course, with Team GB doing so well – 65 medals (of which 29 Gold) – and many spectacular performances Seb Coe was right enough to speak of “wonderful games in a wonderful city” and for a time almost all Londoners seemed infused with the impulse, as urged by Eric Idle, “to look on the bright side of life”. But, we’d wager, this won’t last. Why? For three familiar reasons: first, when the final cost of the event is revealed, and especially in this time of austerity, there will be cause for some deep frowns (it’s still too early for a definitive accounting of London 2012); second, experience has shown that the predicted post-Games tourist boom is unlikely to happen, certainly on the scale some optimists

imagine; third, the physical legacy of the Olympics usually fails to be much of an asset: Sydney’s Homebush has turned out to be a white elephant and – less of a surprise – Athens’ venues are rapidly becoming “modern Greek ruins”. And what about the much-vaunted regeneration of the area of East London where the Games were held? Even before the closing ceremony a BBC radio documentary was full of pessimistic voices. As one plaintive cockney put it, “If you ask me, people like us won’t be able to afford to stay here.”

“Winter Fuel Allowance”: it’s excellent news but (we say) for how long?

That cheerful verdict came from Mary Hughes of the charity Elizabeth Finn Care (formerly the Distressed Gentle Folks Aid Society). What was she celebrating? Following a ruling of the European Commission the UK government has been forced to revise its policy on the payment of the Winter Fuel Allowance to those living abroad. This benefit – £200 a year to those aged 60 and over, rising to £300 when they’re 80 – is intended to help the elderly cope with their heating bills. For expats there were restrictions to eligibility: those who left Britain before 1999 – when Labour introduced the payment – haven’t qualified nor have those who never claimed the allowance when still in the UK. These excluding provisions have been overturned by the European Court of Justice which led one national expat paper to scream on its front page “Thousands more expats to get £200 Fuel Allowance!”. Okay, that’s likely true for this year but beyond that it’s very doubtful.

In the past we’ve had quite a lot of mail about the Winter Fuel Allowance. Some readers

Is your face red ... or green with envy? How 2000 Britons living in Monaco are costing UK £1 billion in lost taxes. Headline in *Daily Mail*

complained that they were unfairly denied it, others expressed anger that some politicians and others in the UK objected to expats getting the payment anyway, even within the rules ("most of us paid taxes for years"). Underlying that attitude was the false belief that most expats were wealthy – and especially those who could afford to live on the French Riviera with Philip Green and Joan Collins as neighbours.

Other naysayers have complained that it was ridiculous to pay such a benefit to those living in "warm countries" such as France and Spain. This muddled argument has just been restated by Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary for Work and Pensions, who has come up with a daft notion of "a temperature test" to decide who should get the payment. As N.J. Whiteside wrote to the *Daily Mail* from Alicante in Spain, "What the minister calls 'warm countries' can at times be very cold and there's a lot of climatic variability. A temperature rule is nonsense." He added that in January on average Madrid is colder than

Portsmouth by 2°C. Readers in the Var, especially, will get his point.

So what's likely to happen? Well for 2012-13 it's possible, as mentioned above, that new people will trouser a couple of hundred pounds. And then? Well, in 2011 paying the allowance to expats cost £314 million. If thousands more are to be awarded this benefit the cost will be prohibitive. Already David Cameron has strongly hinted that he is in favour of a tougher line on the implementation of European Court decisions while in the continuing climate of "austerity" a significant rise in payments to expats is simply not on. And, with many being voteless (and likely to remain so), they can't do much about it. The government will be as intransigent in the matter as it has been over "frozen pensions".

But don't miss out this time round at least. You can download an application form at direct.gov.uk. Type Winter Fuel Allowance in the Search Box or call the Work and Pensions' International Pension Centre on +44 191 218 7777. ■

A matter of mass

In a recent issue I alluded to Nice's Father Ken preferred spelling of Christmas with a double "s" at the end – so Christmass. He's clearly of a contrasting theological sympathy with his Victorian fellow-cleric Mark James Pattison who banned the use of the word in his vicarage on the grounds of "its termination being so dreadfully papistical". Down to Victorian times a number of other words with the "mas" termination, indicating a Christian feast, were in regular use. Candlemas, for example, was the Feast of the Purification when Jesus was presented in the Temple (February 2nd); Georgemas was the Feast of St George, and England's national day (April 23rd); Lammas – from Loaf Mass – was the Feast of Thanksgiving for the wheat harvest (August 1st). The only other survivor, with Christmas, is Michaelmas (September 29th) which marks the opening of the first term of – in some places – the academic year and also of the legal year. *P.M.*



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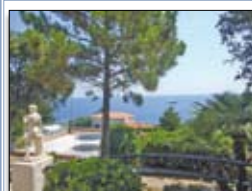
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Faces & Places

BA in the Var: 2 years of independence

Just two years ago the old Var branch of the British Association (started in 1998), then part of a joint Alpes-Maritimes/Var grouping, opted to become fully independent. We spoke to Clare Brown, until recently the association's secretary and who also did much of the administrative work necessary to set up the change: "The Var is a big place, there are quite a lot of us and it seemed natural enough that we should run our own show." So how have things worked out? "Very well. We've got a membership of well over 400 and now that things have settled down we'd like to expand that."

So why should anyone join? "It's important to understand that the BA isn't just a lunch club. Its essential function is to offer social support and welfare services to British citizens in need of help. The money raised by our activities goes towards that. One thing I'd say to younger people – one day you might need

assistance and we'll be there for you. We are a cause really worth supporting. As well as hoping for more younger members we're also aiming to extend our geographical reach. A lot of our members are from the south-western Var and we'd like to see more from other areas of the department."

Festival of Light: Swedish style

One of the advantages of living in a culturally mixed community like ours is the chance to share in other people's traditions. Across last year we attended a South African *braai*, a Guy Fawkes Night and an American Thanksgiving dinner. This coming December we hope to join our Swedish friends as they celebrate Saint Lucy.

This Festival of Light (the saint's name comes from the Latin *lux*) was taken to Sweden (which can get very dark in winter) by returning sailors who had encountered Santa Lucia in Italy. It's essentially a children's affair: they form a procession



Photo: Fredrik Magnusson

Saint Lucy's procession

(pictured), one of the girls wears a white dress with a red sash to symbolise Lucy's martyrdom (in 310 AD) and has a crown of candles on her head. The other youngsters follow, each carrying a candle, with a trio of boys representing the three kings and another wicked King Herod. This year Saint Lucy's Day will be celebrated on Sat Dec 8th (16h, Basilique Notre-Dame, Nice), Thurs Dec 13th (18h, Saint Pierre Church, Haut de Cagnes) and Sat Dec 15th (16h, Holy Trinity Church, Nice).

Keeping warm in winter: associations & churches could help

Elsewhere in this issue we discuss the UK Winter Fuel Allowance. A recent change – forced on the government by the EU – means that, at least in the immediate future, more people will qualify for this benefit. Some will still be excluded (and their number, we'd wager, is likely to increase) and these may

have difficulty in coping with their fuel bills. As Clare Brown pointed out, it can get very cold here; she once noted a temperature of -15°C on her back porch in the Var.

In the UK, TV personality Joan Bakewell (once "the thinking man's crumpet", now in her seventies) has mounted a campaign to help fellow oldies who shiver: "The Winter Fuel Allowance is a universal benefit that should be means-tested. Far too many payments are going to households that do not require them while other pensioners in desperate need, are struggling with massive fuel bills." Bakewell is encouraging those in the first category to transfer their unwanted two or three hundred pounds to the less fortunate via the Surviving Winter Appeal of the Community Foundation Network. That's not really practical here but we've suggested that both the British Association and the churches should see how such transfers could be arranged. Any thoughts on

Home on the Grange

A reminder of the Sunny Bank Charitable Association whose key role, as well as running the Grange, the anglo-phone community centre adjacent to the Victoria residence in Mouans Sartoux, is "bringing advice, help, companionship and financial support, to English-speakers in the Alpes-Maritimes and the Var".

Sunny Bank is currently fundraising to put weatherproof roofing on the Grange's terrace. The Grange is widely used by a whole variety of organisations, all year round and this would help with planning an event. Sunny Bank held a Raise The Roof Fun Casino evening (real Roulette, Blackjack & poker: phony money) last month.

Drop by the Grange (815 chem des Gourettes) Dec 15th for a "more festive" Open House, held on the third Saturday of each month (see page 41).



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this would be welcome.
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The poets are back

It was April 2010 when former Mougins teacher Richard Ward, who had a long-standing interest in poetry both as reader and “dabbler”, brought out the first edition of *Côte Poets*, the free magazine of poetry by local writers. Works range from the serious and reflective to the light-hearted – at times, the absurd. The latest edition includes a local young poet whose work received recognition in a worldwide competition organised by the network of British Schools, as well as a Guest Poet, the actor Ray Lonnen, whose face will be familiar to many. In addition, Richard points out, a design team has offered

its services to create a new cover for the magazine and that last, but certainly not least, Lin Wolff at the English Book Centre in Valbonne continues her generous sponsorship of the publication.

The 4th edition of *Côte Poets* will be available from Dec 10th in the usual outlets: Heidi's in Antibes; English Book Centre Valbonne; Mougins School; or direct from editor Richard Ward: cotepoets@hotmail.fr ■



Last chance to have a Head on the wall in 2013



For 36 years Alfred Head has been exercising his painterly talent to produce an annual calendar (earlier in Bloomsbury and Islington, for several years past in Nice where he lives). His 2013 calendar depicts *Les Artistes et la Riviera* and, as usual, proceeds from its sale (€10 at the English American

Library in Nice; nice-english-library.org) will go to charity. And “your last chance”? Alfred has written to us to say, “I shall reach the age of 90 in 2013 which seems a good time to retire from the scene.” Maybe. But we wish him many more years to come of tranquil maturity.

**New Year's Resolution not made yet?
 Some spare time?**

Why not become a Sunny Bank volunteer?

Sunny Bank supports the Anglophone elderly in need, socially and financially. Join in by visiting someone housebound or in a retirement home, organising a tea-party, helping with fundraising at the Grange.

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CHRISTMAS FAIR AT STILLEGÅRDEN

The Swedish Church (Côte d'Azur and Monaco) - 04 93 20 40 64
Sat Nov 24 & Sun Nov 25, 10h-18h: The Swedish Church (Côte d'Azur and Monaco) are holding the Christmas Fair at 1 chem des Caucours in Haut de Cagnes. Swedish Christmas food stand with salmon, herring, gingersnaps, Swedish candy, and much more. Great handcrafted Christmas gifts and Swedish Christmas decorations. A book-shop selling books in Swedish, English, and French. A big-ticket lottery with great prizes. The draw will be held at 15h on Sunday. Traditional Swedish Christmas food plate, "Glögg", coffee, pastries and hot dogs. The Saint Lucy's procession (see page 38), starts at 14h on Saturday. Park your car in Cagnes Sur Mer and take the free bus -Navette. It leaves from the bus station in Cagnes sur Mer "Gare Routière" every 15 minutes to Stillegården.

FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com
Thurs Nov 29, 15h30: Presentation in English by Judit Kiraly, PhD University of Nice, "The British Community of Nice in the 19th and early 20th century" at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11bis rue de la Buffa, Nice.

COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

commonwealthclubriviera.com
Thurs Nov 29, 19/19h30: Anniversary Dinner, L'Orée d'Opio (30 Route de Nice, Opio). Details on website.

december

ECUMENICAL KERMESSE MONACO

bam@monaco.mc
Sat Dec 1, 10h-18h: buy toys and books at the Chapiteau Espace Fontvieille. 25 stalls including clothes, books, antiques, toys, Christmas cards, youth boutique, Monegasque, Greek, Spanish and English specialty stands plus electrical goods, DVDs, CDs, shoes, jewellery, bags, household items, gifts and novelties. This year's Tombola has over 40 exciting prizes and tickets are just €2 each. Please contact if you would like to buy or help to sell tickets before the Kermesse, have time to be a helper, or can make a donation of items for the sale.

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE NICE

0892 707 407 - nicetourisme.com
Sat Dec 1-Wed Jan 2, 11h-20h: Christmas market, entertainment, crafts & gift ideas, oyster and champagne bar at Place Masséna.

29TH SANTON FAIR MOUANS SARTOUX

04 92 92 47 24
Until Mon Dec 24, 14h-18h (Wed also 10h-12h): Visit the oldest and biggest in the department with thousands of figurines of all sizes, plus nativity scene accessories and art figurines to paint.

TOY EXCHANGE STE MAXIME

0826 20 83 83 - sainte-maxime.com
Sun Dec 2, 9h-17h: 20th *Bourse aux Jouets*: children can sell or exchange their old or new toys and celebrate the arrival of St Nicolas with a candy shower. Promenade A. Simon-Lorière & Boulodrome du Prince Bertil.

**Post for free
non-commercial
events on forum.
rivierareporter.com/
calendar**

AMIAc

Doug 04 92 97 50 72
dougattwood@orange.fr
Mon Dec 3: Xmas lunch at The Carlton Cannes. Please contact Doug for a reservation form.

VILLAGE DE NOËL MONACO

+377 93 15 06 02
Wed Dec 5-Sun Jan 6: Port Hercule.

FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com
Thurs Dec 6, 15h30: Guided tour of the recently-opened Crypt, Place Toja, Nice

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

jennie.dallery@gmail.com
americanclubriviera.com
Thurs Dec 6, 19h: Dinner and a Movie! In association with Pop Up Cinema, we invite you to join us for Christmas dinner at the movies! We will enjoy a welcome cocktail followed by a 3-course dinner as we watch the classic Christmas movie *Miracle on 34th Street* on the top floor of the 5-star Aston Hotel in Nice overlooking old Nice, the sea, and Place Masséna. €51 for members, €56 for non-members. Please RSVP **george@donnelly-cpa.com**

**For Christmas Choir
and Church Events,
see page 19.**

CHRISTMAS PARTY OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE ALUMNI, HARVARD CLUB OF MONACO

halfordoxbridge@yahoo.co.uk
Fri Dec 7, 19h-21h: Organized for members of Oxford and Cambridge Alumni, Harvard Club of Monaco, INSEAD Alumni Association Monaco at EFG, Villa des Aigles, 15 avenue d'Ostende, Monaco. We hope you will join us for what always proves to be a most convivial event – excellent and copious food and wine in a festive setting, wonderful views of the harbour and lights. Price: €35 per person; guests are welcome. Please RSVP by email.

VIAC CHRISTMAS DANCE

j.steele@free.fr

Fri Dec 7, 19h: Christmas Dinner Dance at the St Aygulf Hotel. Welcome aperitif at 19h and banquet at 20h. Price: guests €63; make up a group of 8 or more, for a reduction of €3/pp: €60! Special price with St Aygulf Hotel, for those wanting to stay overnight. The price includes a fabulous breakfast with views over the sea: single room €71/ double room €82. To book a room please call the hotel 04 94 52 74 84, quoting "VIAC".

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR & COFFEE

06 21 46 54 93 - iwcr.org

Fri Dec 7, 10h-15h: at La Lune de Mougins with the International Women's Club of the Riviera. A great way to start the Christmas Season! Find all those special Christmas gifts; meet old and new friends! The cost is €5 for coffee, tea, and Christmas goodies—payable at the door. In support of the charity *Les Hirondelles*.

CHRISTMAS FAIR CANNES

04 93 94 54 61 - holytrinitycannes.org

Sat Dec 8, 12h-15h: Christmas Fair with various stalls, tea and cakes, and Christmas gifts at Holy Trinity Church Cannes.

CATHOLIC MASS IN ENGLISH

Shirley de Jonk sdejonk24@yahoo.com

Sat Dec 8, 18h: English liturgy and hymns in English at St Paul des Nations Church (allée Georges Pompidou) Sophia Antipolis (Access 12). See www.ndsagesse.com

Also on Sat Jan 26, Sat March 2, Sat April 6 (with Gospel Choir), Sat May 4, Sat June 1.

SAINT LUCY'S DAY

Swedish Church Côte d'Azur and Monaco - 04 93 20 40 64

Sat Dec 8, 16h: Basilique Notre-Dame, 37 avenue Jean Médecin, Nice. Thurs Dec 13, 18h: Saint Pierre Church, Haut de Cagnes. Sat Dec 15, 16h: Holy Trinity Church, 11 rue de la Buffa, Nice.

PETER MAYLE BOOK SIGNING CANNES ENGLISH BOOKSHOP

04 93 99 40 08

cannesenglishbookshop.com

Sat Dec 8, 14h30-16h30: *The Marseille Caper* at the Cannes English Bookshop, 11 rue Bivouac Napoleon.

For hundreds of expat & French events see rivierareporter.com

BRITISH ASSOCIATION NICE

Samantha Davison

sam.emily@hotmail.com

Sun Dec 9, 16h-18h: We warmly invite you to our annual Christmas Party in the hall of Holy Trinity Church (11 rue de la Buffa, Nice). This year we are asking each member to bring a platter of festive finger food (either sweet or savoury). Wine, soft drinks and prizes for the raffle will be offered by the British Association. As usual, all profits will go towards helping Brits in need. Please email Samantha to let her know that you are coming so that we know how many people to cater for. €10 members; €15 guests.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION CANNES

Lesley Joines 06 65 38 05 29

lesley.joines@yahoo.fr

Tues Dec 11, 12h30: Christmas Lunch will be held at the Restaurant Le Clos Cosette (1 ave du Tapis Vert, Vallauris). Price €30 per person. Everybody is welcome to enjoy with us the lovely Christmas atmosphere of this convivial restaurant situated in an ancient *poterie*. Please book before Fri Dec 9.

FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE NICE

04 93 07 67 04 - fgb-nice.com

Thurs Dec 13: Christmas lunch in a restaurant in Nice.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

06 21 46 54 93 - iwcr.org

Thurs Dec 13, 12h: Christmas Lunch at La Grande Bastide, Opio. Book with Christa by Dec 9. €40.

EPWN NICE CÔTE D'AZUR

europeanpwn.net/nice

Thurs Dec 13, 18h30:

Christmas Party. Details to follow soon. See website.

CONFERENCE IN ENGLISH

+377 93 50 12 25 - pglib@monaco.mc

Thurs Dec 13, 20h: Irish Culture in Ten Artifacts by Fintan O'Toole at the Princess Grace Irish Library (9 rue Princesse Marie de Lorraine, Monaco). Reservations required; entry: €10/person.

FRIDAY YOUTH GROUP

John Cookson 06 09 51 10 95

Fri Dec 14, 19h: Come along for a fun evening, have a meal and meet a mixture of teens in a social environment. After the meal there is a talk on a topic suitable for teens in preparing them for issues they may face followed by a group discussion then the yummy dessert. Call for more info.

SUNNY BANK

04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org

Sat Dec 15, 10h-15h: "More festive" Open House with coffee, drinks and a delicious 2-course lunch at The Grange (815 ch des Gourettes, Mouans Sartoux). Come along and browse our excellent range of 2nd hand books, quality 2nd hand clothes and bric-a-brac. Everyone is welcome, and well-behaved pets too.

CHRISTMAS MARKET VALBONNE

04 93 12 34 50

www.tourisme-valbonne.com

Wed Dec 19- Mon Dec 24:

100 stalls with artisans and local producers, animations and workshops for children, fireworks ...

NEW YEAR'S EVE FIREWORKS

Mon Dec 31, midnight:

Bay of Cannes.

january 2013

NEW YEAR'S DAY SWIM

Tues Jan 1: 11h30 in Antibes at plage de la Salis. In Nice at the Plage du Meridian, 11h30 (TBC).

NEW YEAR'S FIREWORKS

Tues Jan 1, 18h: Bay of Juan-Les-Pins.

14TH PROM'CLASSIC

www.promclassic.com

Sun Jan 6, 10h: 10km Nice run starts from Théâtre de Verdure.

ARS VOCALIS

06 12 75 27 56

arsvocaliscannes@aol.com

Sun Jan 6 2013: *Magnificat de Rutter* with soloist, organ and orchestra at St Paul's Church, Nice.

MARRIAGE COURSE

Eli & John Cookson 06 09 07 21 57

elicookson@hotmail.com

Starts Fri Jan 11, 19h30-20h30:

The Marriage Course gives any couple the tools to build and maintain a strong and healthy relationship. Over seven evenings a candle-lit dinner is provided. A talk is then followed by an opportunity to discuss the topic together as a couple. The setting is welcoming and relaxed. Privacy as a couple is always respected. There is no group discussion and no requirement to disclose anything about your relationship to anyone else. Dates: Jan 11, 17, 25, Feb 1, 14, Mar 8, 22 & Apr 11. Cost per couple for the complete course: €240 (meals, drinks and manuals included, apply for bursaries).

EPWN NICE CÔTE D'AZUR

europeanpwn.net/nice

Thurs Jan 17, 18h: AGM.

See website for details.

37TH MONTE-CARLO INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS FESTIVAL

+ 377 92 05 23 45

www.montecarlofestival.mc

Thurs Jan 17-Sun Jan 27: See the best circus acts in the world plus a new flying trapeze act from North Korea, some of the best clowns of our time and much more.

COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

commonwealthclubriviera.com

Thurs Jan 24 or Fri Jan 25: Ten-pin bowling at Bowling d'Antibes (575 Première Avenue, Nova-Antipolis). Details on website.

AMIAC

Kim 04 93 01 20 37 - 06 54 95 02 28

Sat Jan 26: Lunch at Le Catelan restaurant in Beaulieu sur Mer. Please ring to reserve.

The collage features three digital devices showcasing Côte d'Azur's online presence. The laptop on the left displays the Côte d'Azur website, which includes a navigation bar with links like 'Home', 'Horoscope', 'Websites', 'Accommodation', 'Tourism', and 'Real Estate'. The main content area has sections for 'All about the French Riviera ... in english by Webstore', 'Reservation Hotel', and 'Special offers on hotels'. The smartphone in the center displays the 'CÔTE D'AZUR VIP' newsletter, dated November 2011, with sections for 'RESTAURANT' (Le Jardin de la Villa) and 'GOLF' (Le Golf de la Villa). The smartphone on the right displays the 'Stay in touch!' section, featuring the website URL 'http://www.cote.azur.fr' and contact information for Webstore.

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The Business Finder ...

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

ACCOMMODATION, HOTELS, B&B

Hotel Le Provence, Golfe Juan 04 97 21 85 30
Hotel Les Oliviers, Fayence lesoliviersfayence.fr/en

BUSINESS SERVICES & SUPPLIES

Arenas Partners, Office Hire www.arenas-partners.com
Office Xtra 1501 rte des Dolines, Sophia Antipolis
Regus Sophia Antipolis, Office Hire www.regus.fr

CONSTRUCTION

Amahoki Maison & Bois, eco-friendly homes 06 83 45 12 47
Corner Stone Renovations 04 93 40 81 20

EXPAT & RELOCATION

Riviera Expat Consultants 04 93 77 74 00
Pascale Florin personal assistance 04 97 21 10 63

FURNITURE, HOME DECOR

Daniela Vescovi Interior Design www.danielavescovi.com
Danielle Cook Design 06 12 21 66 78
Fiddes Leather Furniture Restoration 09 62 25 22 34
Qualimat Kitchens 107 av Pierrefeu, Valbonne
Riviera Property Services 04 94 47 42 24
Tresors De Lysa 2030 rte de Cannes, Mouans Sartoux
Yachting Decor 04 93 74 70 07

INTERNET, COMPUTING

Webstore www.webstore.fr
Wireless & Web 06 28 05 22 35

LEISURE, SPORT, HEALTH, RECREATION

Star Wellness 45 Bd de la Croisette Cannes
The Osteopathic Practice 04 92 28 51 75

MOTORING & TRAVEL

Heli-Air Monaco, Nice Airport 04 93 21 34 95
Midi Location, rental cars 04 93 34 48 00
NetJets Executive Jets www.netjets.com
WR Chauffeurs 06 09 52 17 83 / www.wrchauffeurs.com

MOVING, STORAGE & TRANSPORT

Cadogan Tate Moving & Storage 04 93 90 01 01
Delahaye Moving info@delahayemoving.com - 04 93 29 24 16
Shurgard Self-Storage www.shurgard.fr

PROPERTY, POOLS, GARDEN, SECURITY

Affinity Villas, Montauroux www.affinity-villas-france.com
Bel Abri, Pool covers and shelters 04 67 78 90 08
European Villas International www.villas-international.com

PUBS & RESTAURANTS

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

SERVICES & RETAIL

Bruce Thomas Photography 04 93 12 99 63
Cabinet Martin, Private Detectives www.cabinetmartin.info/
Carroll Media, convert videos to DVD www.carrollmedia.co.uk
Creatif Flowers Galerie du Port, Antibes
Linda Alaniz Photography www.alaniz-photo.com/
Monte Carlo Weddings +377 93 50 35 95
Private Catering, Nice 04 93 21 27 50
Sound Galleries, Monaco +377 97 98 32 60
If your business would like to appear here email: theFinder@rivierareporter.com

PUBLIC SERVICE & COMMUNITY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

SAMU 15 - POLICE 17 - FIRE 18

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

For online access, go to www.riviera-reporter.com/directory

AIRLINES

AER LINGUS EI	01 70 20 00 72	KLM KL	0892 702 608
AEROFLOT SU	04 93 21 44 82	HÉLI SECURITÉ	04 93 21 45 85
AIR ALGERIE AH	04 93 21 48 20	JET 2 LS	0825 826 022
AIR FRANCE AF	3654	LOT-POLSKIE LINIE LO	04 93 21 46 90
ALITALIA AZ	0802 315 315	LUFTHANSA LH	0892 231 690
AUSTRIAN OS	0820 816 816	LUXAIR LG	0820 820 820
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BMI BD	01 32 61 81 81	ROYAL AIR MAROC AT	0820 821 821
BRITISH AIRWAYS BA	0825 825 400	RYANAIR FR	0892 780 210
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GERMANWINGS 4U	01 55 21 25 10	TURKISH AIRLINES TK	04 93 21 44 79
HELI AIR MONACO YO	04 93 21 34 95	VUELING VY	0800 905 461
HELVETIC 2L	01 55 69 83 50	VIRGIN EXPRESS TV	0800 528 528
IBERIA IB	0802 075 075		

AIRPORTS

NICE-COTE D'AZUR AEROPORT	Switchboard 0 820 423 333
.....	Lost & Found 04 93 21 31 11 - www.nice.aeroport.fr
NICE AIRPORT Busses and Shuttles	0820 423 333
AEROPORT CANNES MANDELIEU	0 820 426 666 - www.cannes.aeroport.fr
MARSEILLE-PROVENCE AEROPORT	04 42 14 14 14 - www.marseille.aeroport.fr
TOULON HYÈRES AEROPORT	0 825 018 387 - www.toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr

ASSOCIATIONS, HELPLINES & SUPPORT (Some in French)

ABUSED WOMEN	04 93 52 17 81 (English) - 01 40 33 80 90 (French)
AIDS/HIV (SIDA)	Info Service 0800 840 800 - Testing 04 93 85 12 62
AL-ANON/ACA	English-speaking meetings for friends and families of alcoholics five times a week
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS	Desperate to stop? Meetings every day in English
ALZHEIMER ASSOCIATION COTE D'AZUR (Fr)	24 hour live helpline: 0820 200 257 - www.aa-riviera.org
AODVCL (AMERICAN OVERSEAS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISIS LINE):	04 93 52 62 00
.....	0-800-99-0011 and when prompted 866-879-6636 - www.866uswomen.org
BEREAVEMENT GROUP MONACO	06 98 44 49 01
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT NETWORK (VAR)	04 94 84 64 89 - 06 32 35 31 24 - www.bsnvar.org
BRITISH ASSOCIATION CANNES	06 65 38 05 29
BRITISH ASSOCIATION MENTON	06 31 18 89 57
BRITISH ASSOCIATION MONACO	+377 93 50 19 52 - www.bam-monaco.org
BRITISH ASSOCIATION NICE	04 93 59 88 65
BRITISH ASSOCIATION VAR Secretary	04 94 72 37 42
BUSINESS DEBTORS ANONYMOUS: Our 12-step program offers solvency solutions to small business owners. Meetings weekly in Cannes: Sat at 11h, rear of Holy Trinity Church, 2 rue du General Ferrié	06 77 56 08 93 - www.dariviera.org
CANCER SUPPORT GROUP IN ENGLISH
.....	Anne Sookhoo 06 69 33 78 40 - cancersupport06@gmail.com
CHILD ABUSE (Enfance Maltraitée)	119 or 0800 054 141
CHILDREN MISSING (SOS Enfants Disparus)	0810 012 014

ASSOCIATIONS HELPLINES & SUPPORT CONT ...

COCAINE ANONYMOUS IN MONACO We use the Twelve Step Recovery Program; because it has already been proven that the Twelve Step Recovery Program works CA helpline number:	06 20 00 66 36
CROSSBOW INT'L CARE GROUP Sophia Antipolis	04 93 59 95 83
DEBTORS ANONYMOUS & BUSINESS DEBTORS ANONYMOUS Debts weighing you down? Over-spending and/or under-earning? 'Small Business' problems? Our 12-step program can provide a solution for you. Meetings held several times a week on the Côte d'Azur. Confidential enquiries. Phone Nice and/or Cannes 06 77 56 08 93	
DRUGS (Drogues Info Service)	0800 231 313
ENGLISH SPEAKING FREEMASONS Meet in Cannes	abbeylodge33@yahoo.com
GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND - ECOLE DES CHIENS GUIDES (BIOT)	04 93 65 08 36 - uas@wanadoo.fr
HEPATITIS C SUPORT GROUP	06 22 82 16 18
HOMELESS HELP	115 or 0800 306 306
LIVING WITH CANCER	04 94 78 88 26
NO PANIC	02 51 28 80 25
ORGAN DONATION (EGF)	0800 202 224
OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS	04 93 87 18 97
RAPE (SOS Viol)	0800 059 595
RED CROSS	0800 858 858 - Antibes 04 93 34 15 43
RIVIERA BUSINESS CLUB	www.bccriviera.com
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION NICE & MONACO	04 93 01 30 00
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION CANNES & EAST VAR	04 94 84 14 75
SOS HELP CRISIS LINE IN ENGLISH Feeling down? Call us up!	01 46 21 46 46 from 15h to 23h daily - www.soshelpline.org
SUNNY BANK Information & support for the elderly	04 93 47 94 20 - www.sunny-bank.org
TOUCHE PAS À MON CORPS In French, for abused women	06 62 32 62 50 - 04 93 00 35 72 - www.toucheapasamoncorps.com
UFC-06 QUE CHOISIR CONSUMER ASSOCIATION	04 93 62 43 72 - Fax 04 93 62 23 75, 20 Bd Raimbaldi, 06000 Nice

AVF (ACCUEIL DES VILLES FRANCAISE / Welcome Wagon - www.avf.asso.fr)

ALPES-MARITIMES	VENCE	04 93 58 36 71
ANTIBES JUAN LES PINS	VILLENEUVE LOUBET	06 80 54 36 41
CAGNES SUR MER	VAR	
CANNES LA BOCCA	CAVALAIRE	04 94 94 62 41
CANNES	DRAGUIGNAN	04 94 68 72 12
GRASSE	HYÈRES	04 94 65 34 77
LE CANNET	LE LUC	04 94 60 72 81
MANDELIEU	SAINT CYR-SUR-MER	04 94 32 11 51
NICE	SAINT MAXIME	04 94 96 64 73
SOPHIA ANTIPOLIS	ST RAPHAËL	04 94 95 27 53
VALLAURIS GOLFE JUAN	TOULON	04 94 46 30 73

BOOKSHOPS (ENGLISH)

ANTIBES BOOKS 24 rue Aubernon	04 93 34 74 11
CANNES ENGLISH BOOKSHOP 11 rue Bivouac Napoléon	04 93 99 40 08
CASTLE BOOKSHOP, FAYENCE 1 rue St Pierre	04 94 84 72 00
ENGLISH BOOK CENTRE, VALBONNE 12 rue Alexis Julien	04 93 12 21 42

BUSINESS FORMALITIES & JOB CENTRES

ANPE (INTERNATIONAL SECTION) 10 rue Shakespeare, Nice (appt only)	04 97 11 82 44 - contact.anglais@eei.com.fr / peei.nice@anpe.fr - www.anpe.fr
CENTRE DE FORMALITÉS DES ENTREPRISE (C.F.E.)
.....	CANNES 20 bd Carnot 04 97 06 66 06 - NICE 20 bd Carabacel 0820 422 222
CHAMBRE DE MÉTIERS ET DE L'ARTISANAT DES ALPES-MARITIMES	110 av de Verdun, St Laurent du Var 04 93 14 16 14 - www.cm-alpesmaritimes.fr
CHAMBRE DES MÉTIERS DU VAR (CENTRE DE FORMATION PAR ALTERNANCE)
FREJUS bd Mer Base Aéronavale	04 94 51 80 35
DRAGUIGNAN 23 bd Jean Jaurès	04 94 50 93 65
LES ARCS chem Guéringuier	04 94 99 51 80
SAINT RAPHAEL 123 r Waldeck Rousseau	04 94 19 83 90
CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE ET D'INDUSTRIE NICE CÔTE D'AZUR	0820 422 222 - www.cote-azur.cci.com
CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE ET D'INDUSTRIE DU VAR	04 94 22 80 00 - www.var.cci.fr

CHURCH & RELIGION

CORNERSTONE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL 10:30 am to Noon Sun Picard Bldg, St Bernard, Vallauris	04 92 38 98 91
DANISH LUTHERAN CHURCH 89 Bld Napoleon III, Nice	04 93 21 07 02

CHURCH & RELIGION CONT ...

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH CANNES Sun 10:30 am 4 ave Gén. Ferrié, Cannes (behind Carlton Hotel)	04 93 94 54 61
HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH NICE 11 rue de la Buffa	04 93 87 19 83
INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH NICE 13 rue Vernier	06 64 96 94 22
INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH ST PAUL Espace St Claire, Commercial Center Level "0"	06 64 96 94 22
MONACO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP 37 rue Grimaldi	+377 93 30 60 72
ST JOHN'S CHURCH MENTON av Carnot	04 93 57 20 25
ST JOHN'S CHURCH ST RAPHAEL Ave Paul Doumer, Sun 10h30 ...	04 94 60 87 05
ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH BEAULIEU Sun. 10 am, 11chem des Myrtes 04 93 01 45 61	
ST PAULS CHURCH MONACO 22 ave de Grande Bretagne.....	+377 93 30 71 06
SWEDISH CHURCH Svenska kyrkan, 1 chem des Caucours, Cagnes sur Mer	04 93 20 40 64

CINEMA (V.O.)

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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

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Reporter will remain free to readers.*

Alliance Française Nice	42
Books, Antibes Bookshop	21
Books, Cannes English Bookshop	21
Books, Valbonne English Book Centre	21
British Beds, Bed Concept	17
Brittain's Home Stores	27
Business Services, Peter Johnson	37
Centre Leclerc, Le Cannet	cover
Charity, Sunny Bank	39
Computing, Gale Force	29
Computing, MacService	35
Construction, JP Construction	5
Cycling, Vélo Station	43
Education, Ecole Bilingue Internationale	13
Education, Mougins School	23
Education, Open University	31
EnergyWatchIT	35
Expat Pension Providers	31
Finance, Banque Populaire	5
Finance, Blevins Franks Int. Ltd	9
Finance, Mike Lorimer SARL	37
Fitness, Fitlane	9
Fitness, Nico Training Coach	31
Fitness, Nike Run & Style	33
Gardening, English Garden Centre	cover
Gardening, English Garden Design	23
Geoffreys of London	15
Insurance, AXA Antibes	5, 39
Insurance, Eric Blair Network	29
Insurance, Roy Cox	39
Insurance, Eurassur Monaco	27, 35
Insurance, Exclusive Healthcare	3
Internet Webstore	42
Le French Mobile	43
Motoring, English Car Mechanics	39
Oasis Services	27
Personal Assistant, Nikki Manwaring	42
Property Management, Perles Azur	27
Property, Chrisma	37
Property, Coast & Country	35
Property, Immo 2000	27
Pub, Ship & Castle, Monaco	35
Removals, AGS Déménagement	35
Removals, Delahaye Moving	37
Restaurant, Enjoy Snacking, Rocheville	13
Royal Grass	42
Satellite, HasEurope	11
Security, Azur Security	31
Security, EASS	29
Square Foot Storage	39
The Spy She Loved (John Hefford)	43
Victoria Retirement Home	7
Villa Management, Sylvie Amouyal	29

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Menton Garavan - Villa, fully renovated by present owners, wonderful family accommodation. 4 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms, grand reception and hi tech kitchen. Very interesting botanical gardens. Pool. Private Self Contained 1 bedroomed apartment with salon and kitchen.

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04 93 35 96 55

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