

THE RIVIERA REPORTER



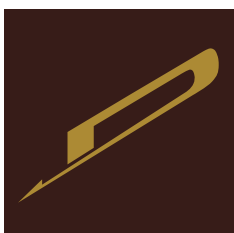
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N° 150 April/May 2012

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Issue number 150 already, and the *Reporter* remains the Riviera's leading publication for expats.

Despite what sceptics were predicting, the internet hasn't at all replaced the printed press. If anything, the web complements printed media very well and our new website is a good example of this. Updated every day, there's a lot of information: daily news in English, practical information about living here, a discussion forum including questions and answers, free private classified ads, a directory of English-speaking businesses, events, and even the week's VO films along the Riviera, with links to the various cinemas for the latest screening times and location maps. The site is there for you to use – and to download this issue or previous ones directly to your PC or iPad.

Our editorial staff mostly writes the *Reporter* but we regularly receive outside articles and ideas. (There's a contact form on our site for suggesting subjects so feel free to use it.) We've had some pretty dire submissions from contributors at times but occasionally we get a well-written piece that is both pertinent and interesting. Karen Armstrong wrote about staying in Abbeys along the Riviera (you can read it on our website) and a short note from beekeeper Mandy Dowd incited us to ask her for a longer story. On page 4 you can see her piece about how vitally important it is to preserve the local bee population.

Thanks to readers' input over the years we've drawn attention to some interesting local expats and relevant issues, and we've even helped to bring down a few conmen and fraudsters preying on the community. We're particularly pleased about that. We're also glad to be of practical assistance when we can, but some readers expect us to help them with individual questions and problems. We've even been asked to translate official documents or to intervene with French administration but we simply don't have the time. There are professionals amongst our advertisers who can do this for you for a fee. Nevertheless, if you have a specific question about any matter you can post it on our web forum. If we know the answer, we'll respond online so that others can benefit. And maybe you've had an experience that can answer someone else's query. Register on the forum using a pseudonym if you want to reply anonymously.

Over 150 issues, we've seen the Riviera expat community become younger, more cosmopolitan and better integrated. Gone are the days when it consisted largely of idle oldsters. France is the European country where expats say they are the happiest. In our small way, we hope we've contributed to that.

Our next issue appears in late May. *Mike Meade*

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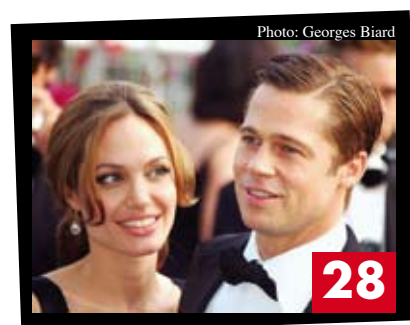
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Cover Photo: Le Negresco Hotel Nice ©Roy Cox



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ANTIBES OUTRAGE

Can you please tell people who are outraged at the over-zealous ticketing in Antibes that there is a Facebook page they can join to protest this: facebook.com/antibes.pv
Joe Wilcox, Antibes

RED LIGHT RADARS

You say that cameras are being installed to “flash” us when we run red lights. This system can lead to rapid braking which is dangerous. From green to orange, they don’t leave you much time so be sure the intersection is clear before you enter it or you’ll be trapped in limbo and probably ticketed by a mindless robot like I was. Your Cannes’ readers should note that the system exists in 2 new places: the corner of Avenue Dr Picaud and Bd Beausite, and the corner of Dr Picaud and Bd Leader.
G.R., by email

BREATHALYSERS

So we will have to carry a breathalyser in our cars from now on? Sounds daft to me. Chances are that if you reach for the breathalyser, you already feel too drunk to drive. This is just another way to get money out of motorists.
Randolf Treats, Reporter forum

MEDIA THEFT

The article in your last issue about receiving television using VPN says that it should not be used to pirate films. These films have already made their money and are available all over the net. Why shouldn’t we download them if we can?
Name withheld, by email

Because it’s theft. There’s an ongoing debate on this on our web forum. Join in if you wish. M.M.

HAIRLESS BED BUGS

Ref your article in last issue about bed bugs I have never seen them in France but I did stay in a London hotel where my wife was bitten several times but I was not. We never figured out why.
Peter Zammit, Reporter forum

Let me guess. Your name is Maltese. Like many of your countrymen, you probably have quite a lot of body hair. Researchers at Sheffield University have found that hairy skin may be the key to avoiding being bitten by bed bugs. The bugs prefer smooth areas like wrists and ankles, of which hairier men have less while women have more. M.M.

DISABLED BADGE RECOGNITION

I have friends visiting from America this summer and they want to know if a California disabled badge will be recognised here if they rent a car.
Sue-Ann Pearson, Nice

Riviera municipalities are terrible at recognising the disabled badges of other EU countries (even though they should comply to EU convention), so an American badge doesn’t stand much of a chance. The APF (Association des Paralysés de France, 04 92 07 98 00) do what they can for people with mobility problems but they’ve never heard of a temporary badge. It must be said however that Nice Airport is one of the best I know at dealing with disabled passengers. But once out of the airport, you’re pretty much on your own. M.M.



COCO AND WINNIE

I’ve just seen your item on how Coco Chanel avoided retribution as a *collabo* through the intervention of Winston Churchill. Years ago I was told by the late Cuthbert Charlton, a long-serving John Taylor employee, that Chanel had gained Churchill’s action on her behalf by threatening to reveal his secret payments to Germany during the war to ensure the protection and upkeep of the Windsors’ villa here. These were made without the approval of cabinet or Commons and we may wonder at Churchill’s motive. Charlton himself, who spent most of the war here, had dealt directly with the Germans over the matter.
Nicholas Shadbolt, by email

CHURCH TIMES

Following the comments in *Riviera Reporter* with regard to the Anglican Church in Menton building undermined by neighbouring development work (edition 149 page 38) in October 2010, I feel it is important to outline the developments as of Saturday 18.02.12. [...] The Locum Chaplain for December 2011 and January 2012, the Revd. Alan Charters, wrote to the Bishop in Europe about St John’s and a reply was received on 20th December 2011. The Bishop offers his support and concern. [...] We all look forward to the full restoration of this important and significant building at

the junction of the Avenues Carnot and Verdun. With our own building we can offer a fuller range of Church Services and resume the fund raising activities that are vital to the functioning of a Church and its community, including its ministry to local residents and visitors.
Peter C. Knapper, Locum Chaplain

Our thanks to Peter Knapper for this information. His full letter is posted on our web forum and includes more details about the future of the church. We have noted, however, that letters to Bishop Rowell on significant topics concerning our area were either treated in a cavalier fashion (such as Richard Challoner’s campaign on behalf of the Caucade graves) or simply ignored. Maybe only clerical correspondents are deemed worthy of a considered reply? M.M.

FOLLOWING THE KIDS

As the parent of a former pupil at the International School of Nice I was surprised (*Reporter* 148) to read the statement of an ISN official that “our students all leave at seventeen and then we usually have no further contact with them”. Much must have changed since the excellent Dorothy Foster was head. Anyway, it seemed weird to me.

Name and address provided

And it seemed weird to me, too. Actually, I had earlier

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

contacted *ISN* about our feature on former local pupils from international schools currently at universities. The attitude was totally unhelpful. This contrasted not only with the ready assistance I received from Monaco, Mougins and the CIV but also with the enthusiastic co-operation I was used to from both Dorothy Foster and her successor Michael Wylie. For the article on university entrance I did finally speak to a Gene Stevelberg, a member of the teaching staff, who assured me that he would ask the head Don Johnson to get back to me. I heard nothing. P.M.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING II

In your penultimate number Patrick Middleton noted that he had just learned that “24,000 Germans fought under Wellington at Waterloo and so helped see off Napoleon”. But in your latest edition (149) under “Letters – Historically Speaking”, Richard Kimball states that this is incorrect. Let’s set the record straight: Mr Kimball seems curiously to believe that Mr Middleton must have been referring to the Prussian army under Blücher, and not to the Allied army under Wellington. In fact Mr. Middleton is pretty much correct. The allied army contained about 67,000 soldiers (slightly less than Napoleon’s) of whom about 25,000 were more or less British, 6,000 were the King’s German Legion (the King was a German), 11,000 were Hanoverians (the King was Elector of Hanover), 6,000 were Brunswickers (the King’s eldest son, the Prince Regent, and later George IV, was married to Caroline von Brunswick), and 3,000 were from Nassau, not to mention 17,000 Dutch and Belgians. So the total number of Germans in Wellington’s army was at

least as high as stated by Mr Middleton. What’s more the commander of the allied centre at Waterloo was General Carl August von Alten (later Sir Charles), a Hanoverian, whose current descendant lives peacefully on the Côte d’Azur. Finally, as Prince von Metternich said when sending young archduchess, Maria Louisa von Habsburg, from the court in Vienna to marry Napoleon, “We can’t defeat him on the battlefield, so let’s wear him out in bed.”

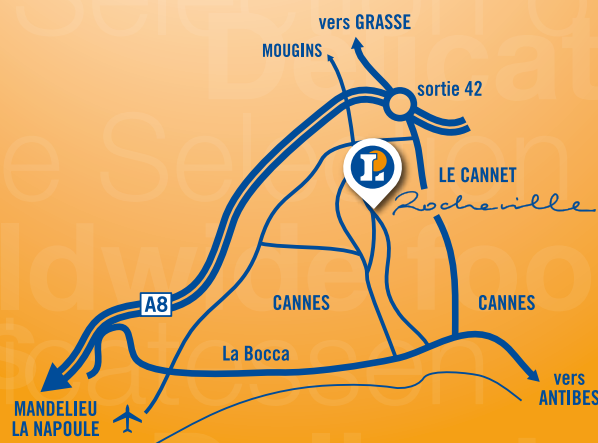
Still, Mr Middleton’s article contains inaccuracies nonetheless. One might reasonably dispute whether the current Queen’s “real” surname is von Sachs-Coburg-Gotha (deriving from Queen Victoria’s husband, Prince Albert). Does that make the heir to the British throne’s “real” name Prince Charles of Greece and Denmark (as his father was originally titled)? Or Prince Charles Mountbatten (using the anglicised name of Philip’s mother which he later adopted as his own)? Of course the name of King Edward VII (Sachs-Coburg-Gotha) sounded better when changed to Windsor during the First World War, and it was a bit awkward that the First Sea Lord at the British Admiralty (and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh’s grandfather), was called Prinz Louis von Battenburg. Mountbatten sounded, well, more British!

Finally, let me say that Mr Middleton does not sound like a very appropriate person to be proposing an (irrelevant) Anglo-German Club on the Côte d’Azur. *Ach so?* His antiquated rhetoric is that of a young British schoolboy in 1945, and attitudes like that will fortunately soon all have gone the way of the dodo or of those once-famous British pubs The King of Prussia. *Donner und Blitzen!*
Ian M.G. Ross, by email

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BEE MY FRIEND

Spring is an important time for honey bees. They naturally swarm and migrate to a new settlement at this time of year, and they may move in behind the shutters or under the eaves of your villa, or just hang around *en masse* from a branch in your garden while scouting out a new home. They won't usually move until a scout bee finds them a new home. If they have found their new home behind your shutters or in your dwelling somewhere, you will see one or more rows of wax comb, which is their nest. If you do not open the window or interfere in a manner that will threaten their hive, they will not interfere with your lives while you are waiting for someone like me to remove them. They are not generally aggressive, and less so than their cousins in the wasp family. If they are dangling from a branch resembling a strange bunch of grapes, or if they are forming a mass on a wall, this is what is known as a swarm. As a part of their natural reproductive cycle, they have gorged on honey for their journey, and are in a very passive state.

To decipher a honey bee from a wasp or some other bee, you should know that the honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) comes in a subtle variety of colors and sizes, but the various subspecies essentially resemble each other: about 1cm in length and tending to swarm in spring and in great number. For those with a musical ear, you will hear that they sustain a fairly even C Sharp with the hum of their wings.

(African Bees, despite rumours about being vicious, are mostly docile members of the *Apidae* family.)

If, however, you have a full swarm of, say, twenty to forty thousand bees gathering on your window ledge, I don't suppose you'll be looking that closely so the first clue is the size of the swarm: Are there lots of them? Are they huddled together in a large ball on their nest, or are they disappearing into an oval nest? Bees don't build an exterior structure; your shutters are their castle walls. If you see an external oval structure, you are most likely looking at a wasp nest. Some species of wasps may build cellular nests similar to bees, but these nests are much smaller, constructed of a white papery substance, not wax. If you are not sure, call me.

Remember, honey bees are our friends. The bee is utterly essential to our food chain, way above and beyond the pleasure of honey. Scientists have determined that if *Apis mellifera* becomes extinct, the human race will have about four years left to live for want of fruits and vegetables. Don't exterminate – bees are an endangered species, and are protected by French Law. Notify me and often I can come fetch the bees as soon as possible for no charge, usually the same day or within 24 hours. I also gather up abandoned garden hives, occupied or empty.

Mandy Dowd (pictured), by email
Tel: 06 10 88 73 23
beebefreed@gmail.com



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benefits-of-honey.com

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Riviera Reporter SARL
56 Chemin de Provence
06250 MOUGINS

TEL: 04 93 45 77 19

EMAIL:

info@rivierareporter.com

WEBSITE:

www.rivierareporter.com

Sarl au capital de 7.622€ - RCS Cannes 88
B519 - Siret 348 294 406 00023 - APE 221E

DIRECTEUR DE LA PUBLICATION/ MANAGING DIRECTOR

Mike Meade

RÉDACTEUR-EN-CHEF /EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike Meade

EDITOR

Nancy Heslin

DEPUTY EDITOR

Patrick Middleton

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Molly Brown (Monaco)

James Hartley (Garden)

Michael Healy, (Nautical)

LAYOUT

Nancy Heslin

COLLABORATED ON THIS ISSUE

Dr Walt Ambruster, Bill Calder, Robert Floyd,

PJ Heslin, Monique Humbert,

Peter Johnson, Jill Penton-Browne,

Harris Stobbs, Cressida van Zyl-Pithey

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20 years ago

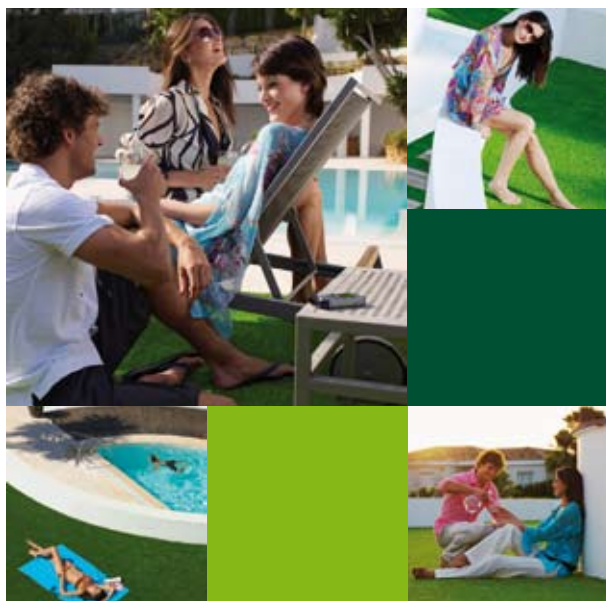
The young doctors: who does many a teenage girl in France dream of marrying? Patrick Bruel? Roch Voisine? No – the answer is one of the young medics working with *Médecins Sans Frontières*, the international medical service which is ready to intervene anywhere in the world from Croatia to Kurdistan. This organisation – which celebrated its twentieth anniversary last year – has become a star in its own

right to the French public. Around 60% of its income is drawn by donations from a notoriously tight-wadded people. On television they come over well: young, dedicated, enthusiastic – in other words, as romantic heroes.

This is not quite the impression they make on aid workers from other countries. British emergency expert Robert Dodd is typical of many when he dismisses MSF as “a pack of arrogant swashbucklers”. Their youth is one of the things

he holds against them: “They just don’t have the experience for the range of medical tasks they have to deal with,” he argues. Privately, some MSF doctors turn this argument round: “It’s a marvellous way to learn fast,” one young surgeon has said – and on patients, it could be said, who are unlikely to turn nasty if things go wrong. At the organisation’s head office criticisms are brushed aside: “We’ve got style and they’re jealous.”

Reporter April-May 1992



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Team



Côte d'Azur

French news & views

Does *maman* know best?

Casting around for ways to discredit Mitt Romney, the appalling Newt Gingrich thought he was on to a winner when he proclaimed that “just like John Kerry he speaks French”. And indeed the former Governor of Massachusetts learned the language when he came to France as a young Mormon missionary. But what would Newt have to say to this? An American, Pamela Druckerman, a former *Wall Street Journal* staffer and a long-term resident of Paris, has come out with a book arguing that Anglo-Saxons have much to learn from the way French women raise their kids. In *Bringing Up Bébé: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting* (US: Penguin Press) she would have the one-time Speaker of the House foaming at the mouth as she urges American moms to adopt the methods of those best known to some for producing “cheese-eating surrender monkeys”.

Arrived in the French capital, Druckerman wondered why the local children seemed so much better behaved than many of those she knew back home in the US. She soon realised that this was due to major differences in style of child rearing. This starts with sleeping: a French mother will take a peek at a restive crying infant but won't usually pick it up but leave it – as

usually happens – to fall asleep again; from very early on kids are taught to eat at regular times, are fed a varied adult-style diet and are expected to eat everything that's on their plate (including cheese); they are trained from early on not to expect too much attention from adults and not to intrude on their conversations; on the other hand, they are actively encouraged to extend formal courtesies to grown-ups they encounter (“*Bonjour, Madame ...*”). As Druckerman puts it, a French mother “is at once strict and permissive”. A framework of acceptable behaviour is defined and transgressions bring reproof; within that framework the child has a lot of freedom. We're told that the system is good for the kids and for the parent. Druckerman cites a Princeton study showing that mothers in Ohio found dealing with their children twice as “exhausting” as those in Brittany. A contributing factor, of course, is France's excellent social services: including paid maternity leave, free pre-school access and subsidies for nannies.

Not all French readers of the book have been impressed. Some have pointed out that her profiles of both French and American mothers relate to a selective group of middle-class subjects only. Reality is much more varied, but she's



Credit: Benjamin Barcia

Pamela Druckerman has a Masters of International Affairs from Columbia University, and trained in improvisational comedy at the Upright Citizens Brigade and Chicago City Limits. She lives in Paris.

making a good point. A regular complaint of Anglo-Saxon women married to Frenchmen is how *la belle-mère* – the mother-in-law – tries to impose a more repressive (as they see it) discipline on their offspring.

In the UK, Druckerman's book is published under the title French Children Don't Throw Food (UK: Doubleday). Join the discussion of this subject on the Reporter website at forum.rivierareporter.com

The “sadist in a black hat” bows out

Nice, in the time of Jacques Médecin and after, had a reputation as a centre of political and economic corruption. Elisabeth Guigou, as socialist Minister of Justice, concluded that too many of the *niçois* behaved as if the city was “not really part of France”. In 1999 she approved the appointment of Eric de Montgolfier as Nice's prosecutor, telling him his job was to “clean up”

the situation. Very soon, in his public pronouncements, he made it clear that such an operation was indeed necessary. He described a deformed judicial system in which lawyers, examining magistrates and even High Court judges were involved in an established web of corruption and mismanagement. One of his central charges was that Freemasons exerted an unhealthy influence over legal procedures.

Inevitably, he aroused dislike and indeed enmity.

Even an official government report accused him of basing his accusations on “unproved assertions and gossip”. Soon the *niçois* were using the nickname that had followed him from an earlier posting in Chambéry: “The sadist in a black hat”. Although some asserted that he was himself an ex-Freemason (while others said he was a member of Opus Dei, the secretive Catholic organisation made famous by Dan Brown), he launched a frontal attack on the men in aprons, claiming

that criminals, from offenders against planning laws to paedophiles, had benefited from their protection. His belligerent approach was largely vindicated by a series of sometimes quite spectacular corruption cases, some involving Nice City Hall in the time of Jacques Peyrat (who seems to have been genuinely shocked by some revelations). Of de Montgolfier's own probity there can be no doubt and he has wryly recalled attempts to win his favour

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with anything from the offer of a free apartment to an invitation to pick up (without payment) whatever he wanted in a local DIY store.

Christian Estrosi, it's no secret, will not be shedding a tear as de Montgolfier leaves to take up his last posting before retirement as *Procureur général* in Bourges. He promises to be back in the city by the end of 2013, this time as a pensioner. He has objected to some of the mayor's measures, sometimes in ways which not everyone has seen as constructive. He claims that the now highly efficient municipal police have been encouraged to exceed its powers; he's come out against a night curfew for youngsters even though it's known they commit a lot of offences after dark; and – more convincingly – he's questioned the mayor's campaign against prostitutes. "I feel sorry for the girls. They're victims. It's the pimps we should be targeting and then maybe the clients." Finally, as he leaves, he sounds more philosophical about the realities of Nice: "You can't get away from it: where there's money, there's corruption."

Perfume and wine: some good news

Although Chamber of Com-



Five years ago smoking was banned in enclosed public and work places. A year later this prohibition was extended to bars, restaurants and discos. Since then the number of adult smokers has risen by 2% and two out of three people polled claim they see the law increasingly disregarded, including at work. But some progress: following La Ciotat in the Bouches-du-Rhône, from this season, Nice will have its first non-smoking beach, *la plage du Centenaire*. Penalty for illicit puffing: €38.

merce spokesmen are, as so often, whistling to keep their (and hopefully other people's) spirits up, within the local business community there are a lot of long faces. Talk to people in Sophia Antipolis and you hear gloomy stories. Last year was "pretty dreadful", as one executive put it, for the once booming IT sector. So apart from tourism (2011 was excellent), is anything else doing well? Two areas of satisfying growth are the perfume and wine industries (actually, the *rosé* wine trade, to be precise).

Last year perfume makers, centred in Grasse, were pushing towards a 10% growth rate and were creating jobs. As to wine, while there's a lot of pessimism in the face of fierce competition from Spain, Italy and the New World producers and a continuing fall in domestic consumption, there's one bright spot in the situation: that's a growing demand for *rosé* which is very good news for the *viticulteurs* of PACA and especially of the Var. That includes Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie whose clients

for their Chateau Miraval product include celebrity chef Alain Ducasse. But why is *rosé* doing so well? Explains one happy *varois* grower: "It's an easy wine to drink, ideal in summer, and it's not encumbered with all that winebabble you get with reds and whites. From Toulon to Tokyo it's become a favourite *apéritif*."

"They put you up, your mum and dad"

As certain readers are well aware, the word "family" means something rather different now from fifty years ago. A quick glance through the recent profile of *la famille française type* issued by the National Statistical Office (INSEE) makes this clear. To take just two examples: over half of all babies are now born to unmarried mothers and one in four of these women has their first child at age 35 or over. Every year more and more couples opt for a civil union (PACS) rather than traditional marriage at the *mairie* with, maybe, a church ceremony to follow.

Vintage Brad: An auction of Correns white wines in March raised nearly €25,000 to help Congo-based Sustainable Villages. A barrel of Chateau Miraval, signed with the words "For Sustainable Village" by owner Brad Pitt, broke all records when it auctioned for €10,000.



Credit: Will Kirk

Katherine Newman, author of *The Accordion Family: Boomerang Kids, Anxious Parents*, is a widely published authority on poverty and the working poor, and an experienced academic administrator at Johns Hopkins University.



Credit: Georges Biard

Adjani has appeared in 30 films and won five César Awards for Best Actress, a record in France.

But one growing development in family life is not dealt with: that's the Tanguy syndrome as it's called, a name drawn from a film which depicted just such a case. We talked to one of the increasing number of real-life Tanguys – Derek (not his true name) – a young man of British parentage, born and brought up in the Var. As he told us, “Yes, I’m a Tanguy. I took a marketing degree at the IUT in Toulon and then found I just couldn’t get the sort of work I was qualified for. That was three years ago. Since then I’ve had various jobs but nothing secure or serious. Anyway, my parents said it was okay if I continued to live with them and that’s what I’ve done. I know that until recently that would have seemed a bit weird – I’m 25 in June – but today it’s becoming quite common, including for graduates.” Is he unhappy? “Frankly, not at all. I couldn’t afford my own place, anyway. Here I’ve got my room, I eat at home, and mum does my washing. Couldn’t be better. I pay a little when I can afford it and my parents seem quite happy. They’re very good, I have to say. I bring my girlfriend in when I want to and they don’t mind when she sleeps over.”

Accordion family

“A multigenerational household with working or non-working young adults and their parents, with a sense of expansion and contraction that the family is not a stable group,” says sociologist Katherine Newman.

5.9 million

adults between 25-34 years of age in the US currently live at home with their parents.

85%

of college seniors in 2009 planned to move back home with parents after graduation, according to *Twentysomething Inc* poll, up 67% from 2006.

Kippers

“Kids in Parents’ Pockets” who *choose* to stay living with parents in UK.

25%

of men aged 25-29 live with their parents in the UK, nearly double that of women in their late 20s.

Family therapist Geneviève Djenati takes a less positive view of the Tanguy lifestyle. “Back in the Sixties and Seventies most young people were out of the family home by 21 or earlier. As your Derek makes clear, it’s an economic issue, really. But, as I’ve seen quite often, things can get complicated. One possible problem is when the two sides become excessively dependent on each other emotionally and the idea of a separation becomes very painful. In other cases the relationship can become affectively asymmetrical, as I describe it. For example, the parents may want their son or daughter to leave and give them more space together while the young person may prefer to stay. Such a life is very secure, it seems, but frankly it’s not normal and shouldn’t go on for too long.” Told of this opinion, Derek shrugged: “Until I get a permanent job I’m staying put and I’m sure mum and dad won’t push me out.”

DSK: the naked truth

Dominique Strauss-Kahn’s opinions on economic questions seem less in demand these days but he’s still ready to share the insights he’s gained from his varied exper-

ience. “I challenge you,” he has told an interviewer, “to distinguish a naked prostitute from another naked woman.” A useful notion if you want to deny, as the ex-IMF boss has to, that he knowingly used the services of the Lille-based Carlton vice ring.

Meanwhile work is shortly to begin on a film about his New York misadventure. DSK will be played by Gérard Depardieu. Says Director Abel Ferrara, “He’ll be perfect for the role.” The actor has boasted that he first encountered a prostitute when he was twelve years old. Anne Sinclair will be portrayed by Isabelle Adjani.

Me, me, moi

The French, claims a report in the free sheet *Direct Azur*, are becoming more and more “uncivil” in their public behaviour: allowing their dogs to shit on the pavement and then tossing their cigarette butts and unwanted free sheets on the street. Why such attitudes? Says psychologist Patrick Lestrade, “It’s a legacy of decades in which individualism has eroded any sense of social responsibility, or in other words, ‘the cult of me’. The economic crisis has made things worse and encouraged selfishness.” ■

So, what's new in 2012?

BY PETER JOHNSON

Before Christmas an ugly rumour had been circulating that Auto Entreprises were going to have to file proper accounts after their first two years of business. It was proposed that their accounts would need checking by an *organisme de gestion agréé* or accountant, but this idea has now been shelved. Budget Minister Valérie Pécresse said that this move would have been unjustified for the often small turnovers of such businesses. However, the debate could persist, as VAT-registered micro BNC businesses are losing out to Auto Entreprises in tendering for work, simply because the Auto Entreprise is undercutting on price (no VAT) and – so it is suspected – “cooking the books” in taking part payments in cash.

In the vanguard of defense of the Auto Entreprise in this matter (amongst others) is the newly-formed *Fédération des Auto Entreprises* (FEDAE) whose activity can be found at *federation-auto-entrepreneur.fr*. They organize workshops and seminars, using social networking mediums to create a “community” of small businesses who are able to interact and assist one another. Apparently they have 30,000 members. Run

as a non-profit making *Association loi 1901*, you have to ask yourself the question: why?

You also need to ask yourself this question as to a new measure introduced in 2012 whereby sub-contractors (of any size, Auto Entreprise, Entreprise Individuelle, SARL etc) will have to provide certificates from URSSAF confirming that they're up-to-date on their social contributions. This measure was introduced by law on November 1st, 2011 and came into effect January 1st, 2012, and will provide another raft of time wasting bureaucracy, which I've already had the misfortune to see “in the flesh”. Joe the Plasterer is tendering for a job in Nice, plastering Mrs Robshaw's new kitchen walls. It's Monday morning, Joe needs to pick up supplies and his mate Dave, who is helping out on the job. Plus the kids need to be dropped off at school and various late bills have to be paid to prevent the phone and electricity being cut off. Just a normal day for Joe, until he reads about this new law.

“Em, Dave, me old mate, before we start our busy day would you mind providing me with a certificate from URSSAF saying

you're up-to-date with your social contributions?”

“Yeah, no problem; let's go and queue up at the URSSAF office for two hours and get one.”

Well, you can see the sort of self-policing logic behind it, but the reality is just another piece of paper that neither Mrs Robshaw, Joe nor Dave have got time for. So, it won't get done, and will the law be enforced anyway? And how will it work across EC boundaries?

Dividend tax

For those of you registered as an SARL, and who take most of your remuneration out of the business in the form of dividends, 2012 will be more expensive in tax. The basic income tax level passes from 19% to 21% whilst the social charges (*prélèvements sociaux*) increase from 12.3% to 13.5%. This represents nearly 10% more in the “stealth tax” that these social charges represent. And don't think about saving: bank interest tax goes up from 19% to 24% plus the social charges of 13.5%, making a grand total of 37.5%. So, you really wanted to know what was new in 2012? Probably wish you'd never asked! ■

72%

of the French want to keep the euro and have no wish for a return to the franc, according to a CSA poll for M6.

02/17/12

date that French francs could no longer be changed into euros.

€256m

amount pocketed by the State from 55 million unexchanged franc notes



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Dorothy Chamaide

Survival and after.

I had guilt feelings about Dorothy Chamaide since, indirectly, I almost certainly brought upon her an experience that darkened her later years. Some time in the Nineties I was called up by a journalist on the London *Times* who wanted to meet a Brit who'd lived through the war years here. As with earlier requests of that kind, I immediately thought of Dorothy. She enjoyed the subsequent interview but was less happy with what appeared in the paper. "I talked to Madame Chamaide," wrote the *Times* man, "in her luxurious Cannes apartment as she sat beneath an original Picasso hanging on the wall." She felt uneasy about this and with reason. A few days after the article appeared her apartment was broken into. She was tied up and thrown into a cupboard and many valuables were taken (not the Picasso, though: the thieves may have realised it would be a hard sale). Some of her friends have told me that she never really got over this experience.

"Dorothy's energetic and flamboyant support for both France-Grande Bretagne and Sunny Bank over 40 years or so was the stuff of legend."
Anthony Vyvyan,
Treasurer, Sunny Bank

The uncertainties and miseries of war

Dorothy Chamaide, who died on December 29th, aged 96, was for half a century a leading figure in the English-speaking community of Cannes. Many of those who met her after the war knew little of her life in the preceding years. Sole girl among the six children of a wealthy Jewish Brighton family, at 21 she met Henri Prejger, a *niçois* whose family ran an upmarket menswear store on Avenue de la Victoire (now Avenue Jean Médecin). In 1938 the couple got married and Dorothy was to spend the rest of her life on the Coast. To begin with, all this must have seemed like the fulfilment of any young girl's dream. The 1939 Riviera season was especially lively – even the young Kennedy boys, John and Robert, were here, with father Joe, and so were a host of cinema stars (Dorothy recalled seeing Edward G. Robinson on the Prom'). A wonderful life seemed to await the young bride.

But then, of course, Chamberlain's "peace in our time" dissolved into the uncertainties and miseries of war. At first during the deceptive days of *La drôle de guerre* (the Phoney War) the Côte d'Azur seemed relatively unaffected but with the fall of France in June 1940 there came the intrusion of the Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain, and then the successive occupations by the Italians (relatively humane) and the Germans (typically brutal and barbaric). Dorothy was obviously particularly vulnerable. She was not only British but also Jewish and married to a Jew. As France turned into enemy territory, she was offered a place on one of the famous coal boats used to evacuate many of the local Brits. She refused to go: "It was out of the question," she later explained. "I was so much in love with Henri." She never regretted this decision but was soon made aware of what lay in store for Jews. On Christmas Eve 1940 the Prejgers' shop was vandalised and looted by French fascist thugs who knew they risked nothing by such criminal behaviour. Pétain, in his eighties, was a visceral anti-Semite who, as recent research has shown, actually went out of his way to strengthen the racist laws dictated to Vichy by the Nazis.

When the Italians came in at the end of 1942 they protected the Jews to some extent from those laws. At one point Henri was taken into custody. Dorothy visited the officer in charge – who had once bought a suit at their shop, it turned out – and by a combination of guile and charm secured his release. On another occasion the couple had a narrow escape when, risking a return to their home in Nice after a period of refuge in Vence, they were warned by a neighbour that the *Milice* were waiting to arrest them. The outcome would have been inevitable: at that time *Hauptsturmführer* Alois Brunner, one of

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the vilest of SS commanders (who died decades later in Damascus as a cosseted guest of the Assad family) was carrying out a systematic round up of the Côte d'Azur's Jews. Those taken were first held (and often tortured) in Nice's Excelsior Hotel and then deported to Auschwitz. Luckier than many, the Prejgers were able to spend the rest of the German occupation in uneasy sanctuary in the *arrière-pays*.

Services to the British community

Nice had too many grim memories and so after the war they moved to Cannes. There, for the next five decades, Dorothy enjoyed a varied social life, which included friendships with such local celebrities as Charlie Chaplin, Tino Rossi and Pablo Picasso. Her link to Picasso came about when she volunteered to look after his pet owl while he was away. As Richard Challoner remembers, "No one else would take it on and the fact that she did – without realising what looking after an owl entails – won her Picasso's friendship." She then began to send him cakes and then one day added a note: "I'd like my plates back." Instead, Picasso gave her a number of paintings and drawings, and she went on to purchase the painting

that had drawn the attention of the *Times* reporter.

After the war Henri became a highly successful property developer. Sadly, the couple's marriage ran into difficulties and they eventually separated. One of Dorothy's major activities over many years involved the Cannes branch of the Association France-Grande-Bretagne. Not being French she couldn't be President but it was largely her enthusiasm that made the branch so successful. She was also closely involved with the old Sunny Bank Hospital. However, unlike many of her generation, she appreciated that its founding concept (at the end of Victoria's reign) as a sort of expats' cottage hospital was redundant a century later. As late as 2007 she turned up at the General Assembly to voice her opinions with characteristic vigour. MBEs, it sometimes seems, are handed out to some for simply growing old. Dorothy's citation – "for services to the British community" – was fully deserved.

She wasn't universally liked, of course: her "can't suffer fools gladly" personality aroused either admiration (count me in) or resentment and distaste (a handful of stuffier Brits come to mind). A remarkable woman ... and indeed a *Mensch*. R.I.P.

Patrick Middleton ■

What's the French for Ms?

One of the outcomes of feminism in the Anglo-Saxon world has been the emergence of "Ms", applicable to both married and single women. In fact, the form was first suggested in a local newspaper in Springfield, MA in 1901 but was ignored for decades until reinvented by Gloria Steinem (it's usually claimed) in the Sixties. The usage reflects the reluctance of some women to have their identity in any way made dependent on their juridical attachment to a man, as is implied by the traditional use of "Mrs", while "Miss" has often been regarded as a badge of social incompleteness.

Au revoir Mademoiselle

In France for years there's been a similar discussion over forms of address for women. There are many feminists (and maybe not only) who were irritated by the requirement on official forms to tick a box marked *Mademoiselle*. Says Julie Muret, spokesperson of the association *Osez le féminisme*, "This is an intrusion into private life which isn't inflicted on men." Well, as Ms Muret is well aware, as of last month, Prime Minister François Fillon announced a ban on the word *Mademoiselle*, and the removal of *nom de jeune fille* (maiden name) from all administrative documents as it's seen as "archaic" with "connotations of virginity". But don't expect to see *nom d'usage* (family name) next time you're at the prefecture. Changes won't occur until current stocks of official forms "run out". Danish law has imposed a comparable solution so everyone's *Fru*; in Quebec, we're told, *Mademoiselle* is now considered an insult and in the French of *la Belle Province* there's now the word *Madelle* available which can be used by any woman, whatever her status.

In the bag or in the pocket

Travellers in Europe and the US are getting increasingly irritated at charges levied by airlines for baggage, both carry on and checked. Policies and pricing vary: in the US, Delta is notoriously grasping in this matter, Southwest and JetBlue are more passenger-friendly. No surprise that on this side of the Atlantic the worst offender is Ryanair. What about this, then? If your one permitted piece of carry on baggage is only slightly over the weight limit of 10kg you now face a penalty of €100 or equivalent.

In the last couple of years there's been a reaction to this sort of thing with the appearance of special clothes with big pockets allowing you to stow on your person as much as you would put in a carry on bag. The best of these is the American Scottevest line (*scottevest.com*). According to Kate Hanni, spokesperson of *flyersrights.org*, in their overcoats, jackets and other garments you can easily fit items weighing 10kg or more; a Dutch entrepreneur has come up with the Jaktogo (*jaktogo.com*) while a British company has launched the Rufus Roo coat (the allusion is to the marsupial pouch, *geddit?*; *rufusroo.com*). A Ryanair spokesman was dismissive when asked about these products: "We don't think they'll take off in any major way." We'll see.

By the way, those who want to shout at those who want to shout at Ryanair often find it's hard to get through to an employee rather than an unhelpful recorded message. Here's a trick: you call 00 353 1249 7791 ... hold, then press 9 and you'll get a real live O'Leary at the other end.

Take off ... in seven years

Well, maybe. Nice airport has announced that studies are underway for a projected Terminal 3; if things turn out well it could be in operation by 2019. By that time Terminals 1 and 2 will be

very close to their full capacity. The new terminal, estimated cost €82 million, would take a further 4 million passengers and allow for a quicker turnaround of flights. One point: these would be what's being called "middle cost", which gives a clear signal that O'Leary, for example, won't be invited to the party.

London could be one of the destinations served from Terminal 3 ... but where would the aircraft be landing? A big issue in the UK is the so-called "Boris Island" question: what to do about the scheme, vigorously supported by Mayor Johnson, for a new London airport in the Thames Estuary which would (he claims) see the eventual closure of Heathrow and Gatwick? The aviation industry's big hitters are divided: Willie Walsh, boss of International Airlines Group (IAG) owner of BA, is totally against this: "It's all eyewash ... It won't happen and anyway we won't move and if we stay so will most other carriers. Our future is still at Heathrow. We've just bought BMI and that's given us a precious 56 extra slots there." A reverse view from Tim Clark (ex-BA), head of Emirates: "Heathrow just doesn't have a long-term future, no way. The Thames Estuary site has everything going for it: it's accessible, has great potential for growth and scores well on environmental criteria. When it happens, we'll be there." The estimated price tag of Boris Island: £50 billion.

Some airport moves sound glamorous, others don't. Southend? No thanks... but easyJet has chosen it as its third UK base. No plans for flights to and from Nice yet but that could come.

So Gatwick's you?

There's good news: Quite a few readers will be glad to know that BA are resuming flights from Nice to London's second airport as from March 25th. Departures at 07h05, 11h25 and 16h50. See *ba.com*

Forget check-in charges. Wear your carry on.



Photo: Scottevest

Scottevest's 19 pockets Essential Jacket has magnet closures for travel documents.



Photo: Jaktogo

Jaktogo can hold about 15 kg of stuff, with a pocket for your laptop.



Photo: Rufus Roo

Rufus Roo has 4 large and 2 small pockets to fit clothes, books, laptop, shopping etc.

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 **BRITISH AIRWAYS**

The perils of flying: sniffles, DVT and jet lag

Most people would agree that the airport and airline experience isn't much fun these days. It can be stress all the way. And it can make you sick in a trivial way or much more seriously. According to a recent US study an average flier has nearly 200 times more chance of catching a cold than if he were about his normal business on the ground. Pack several hundred people into a small space for hours and hours and viruses have a great time. Solution? Wear a facemask, suggests a writer in the *New York Times*, even if fellow passengers put

you down as a Jacko-style weirdo. Then there's deep vein thrombosis (DVT), which occurs when a blood clot forms owing to prolonged immobility (for Patrick Middleton's firsthand account of DVT after a flight from London to Sydney, see our website). It used to be said that travellers in Economy were especially vulnerable to the condition. Not so, claims a new report from the American College of Chest Physicians. This says that where you sit, even if leg-room is restricted, isn't critical; what matters is that during a long flight (over 4 hours, say) you get up and move around from time to



Photo: Mike Strand

Shop at Harrods or Macy's without leaving St Benoit-les-Crétins. Usefully reader Sara Fiedler tells us that shopping in London and New York – "better than Toulon" – is easy at shoppingonlinelondon.com and cnewyork.net

time. The report concludes, "The risk for most people is extremely low."

Finally, jet lag: remedies for this malaise seem as common and as varied as those for a hangover. Now comes UK medic Jason Ellis who urges travellers before and after the flight to quaff cherry juice which contains a high concentration of melatonin, the hormone which regulates the sleep-wake cycle. If you give this a try, tell us the result. And a tip for travellers with health issues: before departure you can call Nice-Côte d'Azur Airport's medical centre for advice in French or English (04 93 21 38 81). ■

Recently we've written about the formalities involved in travelling out of France with a pet. The *Fondation 30 millions d'Amis* offers a free holiday kit for those travelling with an animal, covering formalities and offering all kinds of practical tips. You can order it at 30millionsdamis.fr

Making doctors

Most anglophones living here are impressed by French doctors but the media make it clear that a lot of those men and women in white coats aren't happy. To find out more meet Daniel Benchimol, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Nice.

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



Professor Daniel Benchimol is Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Nice.

Nice's projected new hospital Pasteur 2 to open in 2014 will have 95% single rooms.



Photo: CHU

Discontent for some seems to begin in the first year of medical school. As one clearly harassed student told me, "You've got to work, work, work and in the time that's left sleep, sleep, sleep ... and forget about living." Professor Benchimol offered a more nuanced view of life as a *carabin* – the familiar term for a medical student: "To start with, I'd say two things. Firstly, entry to the Faculty is open to anyone who has the *bac*. Like many of my colleagues, I'm not in favour of that but most students are fiercely opposed to any form of selective admission. Inevitably in the first year there are those who don't make the grade or come to feel that medicine is not for them. And let's face it, medical studies are tough. There's a lot to learn. Then I'd say that although today's students are basically as highly motivated as those of earlier generations, they come out of a different culture in which total dedication to work

with personal life taking second place is no longer widely acceptable. For good or ill that's how things are. Most newly qualified doctors now enter the profession with a wish to have a life outside of medical practice."

Only one in ten chooses primary care

As Professor Benchimol emphasised, there's a lot to learn in medicine and the body of required knowledge is growing all the time. "And that's not just in strictly technical matters relevant to qualification as a physician or surgeon. To give you an example, there's now more stress on training students in effective communication with patients, something that used to be left to the good sense – or lack of it – of the individual. In Nice we've pioneered simulation programmes in which students work with mannequins while the instructor puts the kind of questions patients typically ask and then rates the responses. Special attention is given to the problem of conveying bad news. There are sensitive and less sensitive ways of telling someone they've got an inoperable cancer. Then there's the matter of handling diagnostic or prognostic uncertainty. Multiple sclerosis is a case in point where you often can't give a cut-and-dried answer about the likely evolution of the disease. These sort of issues demand a careful approach and with the right training a doctor can do much to relieve anxiety and confusion."

It's clear enough that today's young medics are emerging from their six years of basic training better prepared technically and in some ways psychologically than their predecessors. But what is

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disturbing is that so few of them want to serve on the frontline of medicine by becoming what used to be known as general practitioners and are now often described as primary care physicians. Currently only one in ten newly qualified doctors from the Nice Faculty chooses that field of activity. "That's correct and it's unfortunate," said Professor Benchimol. "Again there are cultural factors at work. In the medical community higher status goes above all to the specialist and that gets reflected in general public attitudes. For most of our students to end up as a *généraliste* means more or less to be labelled a failure. We're trying to change the culture by redefining primary care as a speciality in itself. It's a slow process but it's beginning to happen." Well, let's hope so, I reflected. At the moment there are only 600 primary care physicians working in the Alpes-Maritimes. Over a hundred retire every year and two out of three aren't replaced.

This desertion of general medicine is not simply a matter of status. There are other issues. Pay and conditions are a matter of grievance. A *généraliste* will on average earn less than €6000 a month

– that's about two-thirds less than a radiologist – and for that he'll have to put in well over fifty hours a week, often with weekend and night duty. It's not easy to have a normal family and social life. A recently retired GP I spoke to in Menton added a couple of points: "Compared with my early days – you're going back nearly forty years – you've got a huge burden of paper work. And then there's been a change in people's attitudes, all part of that decline in respect in society. I've been shouted at, and insulted by patients several times and a colleague in l'Escarène was punched in the face. Unthinkable, I'd say, in the Sixties."

A doctor is a healer not a dealer

No surprise that so many medical graduates aim to become specialists or look for salaried positions with shorter hours. Life as a trainee hospital consultant can also be hard but the financial rewards can be very attractive.

Money, of course, is at the heart of many of the problems of the French health care system and doctors routinely take decisions which involve expenditure – from writing a prescription to recommending specific surgery. I asked Professor

Benchimol whether he thought this should be more clearly recognised in the medical school curriculum. In the US, for example, dozens of universities now offer joint MD/MBA programmes to equip doctors to take prudent decisions in the use of resources. The Dean was not happy with this idea. "A doctor is a healer not a dealer, and he shouldn't be over preoccupied with the nuts and bolts of management. At the same time, looking at the deficit of the *Sécu*, it's obvious that we need to make the optimum use of our resources but those sort of decisions need to be made on medical grounds. We are, in fact, looking for ways of reforming the system all the time which would benefit both patients and the medical staff."

So is he optimistic for the future? "Overall, yes. We have, we're told by the World Health Organisation, the best health care system anywhere, supported by an outstanding medical educational infrastructure and, for all its defects, a high performance social insurance system. Certainly, as you well know, students, GPs, and hospital doctors aren't all happy but there's real determination to address their problems." ■

51.8%

**drop in the
number of
US medical
school
students
going into
primary care
since 1997.
(AAFP 2009)**

6.6%

**fall in
2008/09
income from
2005/06 for
a typical
GP partner
in the UK,
who ran a
practice on a
national
contract,
and did not
dispense,
earning
£95,900.
(BMA 2010)**



One in four residents in our region is affected by allergic rhinitis – aka hay fever (*rhume des foins*) – in spring. So what can you do if you're reading this sneezing, snuffling and wiping your eyes? On April 5th, free examinations and diagnoses will be offered by allergologists in local hospitals. For details see asthme-allergies.org

The Business of Education

BY NANCY HESLIN



In Monaco, Carfax Educational Consultants' Academic Director Jeanne Spoeri, with Director Grisel Damgaard.

Things have changed in the years since I applied for university in Canada some years back. This became apparent to me last fall when my niece in Toronto started her university application process. With tuition fees five times more expensive than just two decades ago, nearing \$10,000 a year, high school grads face more pressure to secure fewer places at a higher price ... with a much tougher economy waiting for them on the other end. A wrong choice when picking a Major could be an expensive one.

Enter the educational consultant. A professional who meets with students and their parents to discuss potential universities, help them prepare applications, and explain available financial aid. I knew the educational consultant as a high school counsellor, but like everyone else, these people are overworked and under-resourced, and there's just too much at stake for seniors.

Educational consultants, or college coaches as they're sometimes called, have the largest market in the US. According to the Independent Educational Consultants Association, 22% of first-year students at private

colleges – as many as 58,000 – had worked with some kind of consultant. Parents look at the service as an investment. A tax attorney in NY paid for about a year's worth of advice. "We had a very motivated son who wanted to attend a top university," he says. "We wanted to give him every opportunity we could."

Filling a need among parents

Educational possibilities are why Carfax opened its doors. From their new office on the port of Monaco, Director Grisel Damgaard, explains: "I've gone through the university selection and application process with one of my own kids and know that there is a need among parents who are also experiencing the same thing. Carfax Educational Consultants advise families on the optimal choice of schools and universities for their children, and helps them make the necessary preparation for entry into the most demanding establishments. The main expertise is focused on British or Swiss schools and British or American universities. All of Carfax British educational consultants are graduates of Oxford or Cambridge and most of them have been educated at,

taught or run boarding schools in England or Switzerland. Advice on universities in the US is provided by consultants who have their own experience of the American system."

Grisel is also quick to point out some very key services unique to Carfax in Monaco. "In spring and summer we will be running University Tours of the UK. These tours, which run for a period of roughly seven days, are designed for students who would typically be unable to attend traditional open days for whatever reason. We also organise an Oxford and Cambridge Preparatory Week, this is in addition to providing individual tuition in the centre of Oxford, which is complemented by a varied programme of extra-curricular activities and accommodation arranged with carefully selected Oxford families."

One-stop shop for higher learning

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It may be a confusing world of higher education, but Carfax Educational Consultants in Monaco is a one-stop shop for education and language learning. In the end it's about finding the university that's the right fit for your child, and that's certainly worth investing in. ■

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report

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Le Negresco: A Nice Centennial

BY NANCY HESLIN



Dangling from Eiffel's dome, the magnificent Baccarat 16,309-crystal chandelier in the Negresco's Salon Royal was originally made for Czar Nicholas II, but it never left France. Until 2010, non-guests had access to visit inside and take photos, but the hotel's policy has since changed to better preserve the 3000 works of art on display. Photo: Roy Cox

One of the Leading Hotels of the World, Le Negresco underwent a €12 million renovation in 2010: restoring the façade, a facelift for a number of the 117 individually decorated rooms, while some suites, 31 total now, were enlarged. Room rates were revamped and there are very affordable online specials now.

For nearly 100 years, visitors have flocked to the Le Negresco hotel, the famous Belle Époque landmark that graces the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. For some, a photo with the famously dressed hotel employees would have to suffice, for others who could afford it, a chance to stay at one of the most unique hotels in the world. Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and the Beatles have all slept here. So have Ava Gardner, James Dean, Frank Sinatra, Ernest Hemingway and Edith Piaf. It was used as recently as 1998 for the film *Ronin*, starring Robert De Niro and Jean Reno, and it's rumoured that the death of the American dancer Isadora Duncan in 1927 happened just in front of the building, when travelling as a passenger, her silk scarf became entangled in the wheel of the car.

Le Negresco was built in 1912 by Henri Negrescu, the son of a Romanian innkeeper. Negresco (as he became later known as a French citizen) arrived in Monte Carlo in 1893 and worked in hospitality, eventually managing the restaurant at the Municipal Casino in Nice in 1905 when he met architect Edouard Niermans, to whom Negresco entrusted his dream hotel; Alexandre Darracq financed the project and Gustave Eiffel was brought on board to design the glass dome, still as visibly glorious 100 years later in the Salon Royal.

Opening its doors on January 8th, 1913, the grand palace of the Riviera made a profit of 800,000 francs in gold its first year. Yet this success would be short-lived and with the outbreak of war, Negresco

transformed his hotel into a hospital, himself paying out of pocket for the expense of 100 beds. Within seven years, and at the age of 52, Negresco, a decorated Knight of the Legion of Honour, France's highest medal, died from cancer, a penniless man.

Negresco's Riviera was now subject to a Golden Age not so golden. Across the city of Nice, Belle-Époque buildings were being razed, as owners could no longer afford them, nor could they divide an individual property into enough small apartments to rent. A Belgian group fortunately purchased the Negresco, and the rich and famous reclaimed their place on the sunny Côte d'Azur (a name coined by Stephen Liegard, which, in 1887, officially replaced the term French Riviera). Again, though, prosperity quickly faded as World War II became imminent.

A tragic road leads to the Negresco

Meanwhile, Jeanne Mesnage, the daughter of a Breton butcher who had transformed himself into a real estate developer in Nice, was witnessing her father's depression from a financial setback on property he owned in Bordeaux. Eventually Jeanne Mesnage, an only child, had to take over the family business at the age of 20. Engaged to future Congressman Charles Ehrmann, she met the Sorbonne-educated lawyer Paul Augier through the Bordeaux incident, and they married in July 1957. (An active *niçois* politician and businessman, Paul Augier in 1979 received the Knight of the Order of Merit; he died in 1995.)

That same year Jeanne Augier's mother became paralyzed after an operation. The lift in the building on the Promenade des Anglais where she was living couldn't facilitate her movements. Down the street, the rundown Negresco, a shadow of its former glory, had the only wide lift in Nice, and so in 1957 Jeanne Augier and her father purchased their new home.

For eight years, Jeanne Augier took care of her mother day and night until her death, while determinedly rebuilding the legendary hotel with her father. She increased the number of employees from 76 to 260, created two renowned restaurants (one of which, Le Chantecler, received a second Michelin star in 2012, the only rating of its kind in Nice), and built a showplace for artists. The hotel-cum-museum has been a listed Historical Monument since 1974, and is home to 3000 *objets d'art* including 1600 original paintings (one of three full-length portraits of Louis XIV is in the Versailles Ballroom, the other two being the Louvre and Versailles). "I've never bought something for the signature," Jeanne Augier said, before explaining why she has no Chagalls: "He and I were friends, but I did not understand his painting: he made donkeys fly!"

An icon and her legacy

In April 2009, Jeanne Augier announced the creation of her "Mesnage" foundation, an endowment fund that will inherit her wealth upon her death. Part of the profits will go to the hotel's development, and the rest to three charities close to her heart: animal rights, disability awareness and contributing to the "influence of French art".

"The Negresco is intended to relieve human and animal suffering," Jeanne Augier stated at the time. "As an only child, I always had a dog at my side to replace the brother or sister that I didn't have."

The foundation will receive the family legacy, which includes a villa in Saint-Vallier, near Grasse, and two George V apartments in Paris.

Over the years Jeanne Augier, now 89, has turned down multiple offers to purchase the hotel, including from Bill Gates and the Sultan of Brunei who were told "You're not rich enough" or "the memories are not for sale". "I want this hotel to retain its spirit and Frenchness," she explained, and "to prevent the dismantling of the last independent luxury hotel on the Côte d'Azur."

From July 2012 to June 2013, Le Negresco will be celebrating its centennial, starting with a gala dinner June 30th and closing next year with a *Talente Finale* of musicians, chefs and artists. Hotel guests will be treated to a limited-edition art book, numbered and signed, while special meals, *la Cuvée du Centenaire* champagne and exceptional hotel packages will be available. "I am not enthusiastic," Jeanne Augier, who has resided at 37 Promenade des Anglais for 55 years, commented about the festivities. "I'm not 20 anymore and it's a lot of work." ■

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A Canadian on the Coast



"I like Europe because of the different cultures within hand's reach. Even in France, each region is so diverse. I'll definitely be staying here for quite a while."

Lori Armstrong left Canada over a decade ago with no set plan. She has earned her way up to director at one of the most distinguished hotels in the world.

BY NANCY HESLIN

Speak French with thirty-something Lori Armstrong and you'd swear that you're talking to a woman born and bred in France. Her command of the language is flawless, her accent untraceable, and yet she really only fully immersed herself in French over the past decade. Although born in Montreal, English is her mother tongue and she grew up in an Ontario suburb, opting to study English Lit at one of Canada's top ten universities, Western. So how did she end up in Nice, and as Sales Director of Le Negresco, no less?

"My fiancé at the time," she tells me over coffee at La Rotonde, as the carousel of painted horses rise to the occasion of announcing the hour, "was going to research his doctorate at Marburg in Germany. So I decided to move to Strasbourg, which was close to him, and where I could learn French. As luck would have it, I'd enrolled in a French

class at Western before coming to France, and one day ran in to my teacher outside of class. She asked my reasons for taking the course, and then told me that she lived in Nice, and that I should abandon my Strasbourg plan and come stay with her. And so I did, and she is now my daughter's godmother."

One thing leads to another

Lori had no real course of action other than to move to France and waitress while learning French. Within a few days of arrival, she distributed CVs to restaurants along Felix Faure and had a call within hours from *l'Horloge* of the Aston Hotel. Quite a challenge, as her French wasn't up to snuff at the time. "I remember just moving here and a young girl asked me '*Vous avez l'heure?*' and I had no idea what she was saying because I learned the question as '*Quelle heure est-il?*' In the beginning I

never heard words individually, just a slur of sounds."

After only a year, and a break up with the fiancé, Lori's waitressing turned into a sales job with the Aston Hotel. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, so when regulars came in to the restaurant, and they looked happy, I'd ask what was their job. One day one of the clients told me she was in sales and painted it to be the most glamorous job in the world. A week later, she offered me a job with the hotel, and the company even paid to apply on my behalf for a work visa, unheard of in France as it's incredibly expensive, not to mention painfully administrative. I stayed on for four years, working my way up to international sales manager and then in 2006, I became deputy director of sales with a hotel they'd purchased in Paris."

Lori left the Aston Hotel group but stayed in Paris for two and a half years before buying a ticket to come back to Nice, with no job. Coincidentally, she received a call from a head-hunter – "I must have signed up with them online years before that but had never heard a

word” – who propositioned her with a sales job with Le Negresco ... in Nice. “To be honest, I was more interested in the job part than the Negresco aspect. I did some research on the hotel and saw that at the time, this was August 2008, the hotel had a waning reputation.”

Not just a job but in many ways a family

“As you can see, though, I took the job and I love it. It’s stimulating and there’s never a moment to sit back and ask ‘What to do now?’ Every day starts with a morning meeting, reviewing arrivals and then I debrief my team. From there, it varies. For example, today I assisted a Japanese team scouting the premises for a program they’re shooting here next week.”

Lori’s passion about the hotel’s uniqueness is apparent. “The Negresco is the only one of its kind. Le Chantecler, which just received a second Michelin star, the only restaurant ranked so in Nice, is furnished with panelling from a 17th century chateau. Here in La Rotonde, we are sitting in a carousel, and then there are the 1600 original works of art throughout the hotel. Madame Augier, the hotel’s owner, seemed to have different phases in her life which reflects in her taste in art. There are masterpieces here but also less known artists for whose work she just appreciated.”

The legendary Madame Augier, age 89, lives on the top floor of the hotel. Her family bought the hotel in 1957 because it had an elevator, which could accommodate her mother who was in a wheelchair. This was their home. And she treats guests as company. Recently a hotel guest didn’t appreciate cats, and it’s common knowledge that Carmen, Madame Augier’s ten-year-old cat, has free reign of the hotel. “If a guest does not like the company of cats, they can find another hotel,” was the owner’s reply.

Lori joined the Negresco at an interesting time. There was the €12 million renovation completed in 2010, room rates were revamped on a more attractive scale, and Pierre Bord became the new general manager in 2011, turning that stuffy “waning” reputation into a fresher but still extravagant hotel with occupancy rates not seen since for decades. Americans, incidentally, make up the hotel’s largest visitors market, followed by Russians and then French, with an average stay of 2.5 days.

“I don’t consider myself French,” she answers my question pensively, “even though I have a French partner and our daughter was born here. Maybe if I lived in Canada I would, but in France I always know there’s something different about me.”

Does Lori ever think of moving back to Canada? “I don’t think so. I’m so comfortable with myself here and the quality of life on the Riviera is amazing. Actually my partner and I visited Canada last winter. He’s also in the hotel industry and was convinced the porters and doormen were going to die from the cold.” ■

For information about how to apply for a work visa in France as a non-EU citizen, see the Articles section of our website.

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Dive in ... to the pool

No matter how much I want to swim in the sea year round, I just can't brave the 11°C temperature like the old-timers: I observe from a distance, bundled up complete with a scarf and gloves, sipping on a coffee and still get goose bumps watching them casually walk in and out of the icy water. I do, however, keep up with swimming year round indoors. And, I've noticed lately lots more swimmers sharing the lanes as we gear up for pool and sea season, and they are bringing their kids for lessons. Of course, the champion of the swimming lesson is Pierre Gruneberg ("learn how to swim without getting wet!") at the Grand Hotel du Cap Ferrat, who at 80-years-old is still the swimming instructor to the stars: Picasso to Paul McCartney, Ronald Reagan to Robin Williams, and Bono have all learned a stroke or two from the master. (See *Reporter* website).

Operation Savoir-Nager was initiated by the Ministry of Sports to teach kids aged 7 to 12 swimming basics vital to water safety. Vincent Hamelin from the *Fédération Française de Natation* explains that the program, offered in July and August, is structured with fifteen 1-hour swimming lessons, five days a week. Each

group must have between 8 to 12 children who don't know how to swim, and the classes are free, except for the €15 cost of a license and insurance. See page 46 to find the programme closest to you.

The swimming complex Nautipolis (nautipolis.fr) opened its doors in Sophia Antipolis (150 rue du Vallon) at the beginning of the year. Spread over more than 3700m², there's a 25m pool with 6 lanes, and a learning pool, with lessons available for children from the age of six, as well as adults. Kid Mania helps teach diving and synchronized swimming and there's *Bébé Nageur* every Saturday morning. Nautipolis also has a fitness gym (open on Sunday, too), wellness centre (saunas and hammams), and a restaurant. A single adult fee is €6; under-12 is €4.

The Olympic 50m pool at the Palais de Sports Jean Bouin in Nice (2 rue Jean Allègre) recently underwent some renovations resulting in separate changerooms for men and women, paid lockers (€1) and a general refreshing. The pool has the advantage of being five floors up with glass walls, giving spectacular city views and in particular of the sunrise on Sunday morning when the pool opens at 7am. The complex also has a skating rink, gym and restaurant, and it shares

Mid-to late-afternoon
peak drowning time.

4 out of 10
drownings happen within 2m of shore or poolside.

Men
globally drown far more than women. (they take greater risks; overrate their swimming abilities).

3 age groups
worldwide drowning mostly amongst ages
0-5
20-25
over 60

International Life Saving Federation

paid parking with the Acropolis Entry: adult €3.50; under-18 €1.75. For more see "Complexe Jean Bouin" at nice.fr. *N.H.*

But you can afford Mauritius!

This is the time when many people are thinking of their coming summer holiday and frowning over their vacation budget. Belinda, a local British teacher, put that problem behind her several years ago. How so? She rents out her studio in a coastal town for the whole of August and then takes off for wherever she wants to go: "Last year was Goa, before that Costa Rica and this time – yes! It's Mauritius. It's simple," she explains. "I go through an agency called Homelidays who are very efficient—they handle around 30,000 offers a year. You pay them a registration fee from €149 for the year and they do the rest. I've had no problems with my tenants. It's a great system."

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cancellation, utilities charges and any damage caused to the property. They also say it's a good idea to inform your insurer of the arrangement. And what about tax on that rental income? We asked business expert Peter Johnson: "As a holiday rental and registered as such the amount you can earn is €81,500 with a 71% abatement. The status of *loueur en meuble non professionnelle* (LMNP – a non-professional furnished rental) is €32,600 with abatement of 50% whilst the regime of micro foncier is €15,000 with abatement of 34%. Or you can do real costs if more than the abatements as above. So, if you were LMNP and your real costs were say more than 50%, you would do a proper balance sheet with a Profit and Loss account whereby losses can be carried forward and offset against future profit." **P.K.H.**

A fish ... and a flower

A couple of seasonal customs:

Sites to see:

homelidays.com

wimdu.fr

VRBO.com

interhome.com

locappart.com

the April 1st ritual of making people look foolish by getting them to believe something daft is not limited to the English-speaking world; this sort of thing has a long history in France as well, going back many centuries. In medieval times slow-witted young villagers were sent off to fetch a dozen cock's eggs or a stick with only one end. So watch out: if on April 1st a po-faced French neighbour tells you that Sarko has been surprised in bed with Marine Le Pen remember what the date is. If you swallow the story you become a *poisson d'avril* (an April fish) and you may get a paper fish stuck on your back. Martin Wainwright in *The Guardian Book of April Fool's Day* (UK: Aurum Press) suggests that "the bulging eyes of a carp suit the bewildered look of a baffled hoax victim".

Moving on one month we come to *muguet* time: on May Day Frenchmen have traditionally given a small bouquet of Lily of

the Valley (*muguet*) to their wife or girlfriend. In fact in recent times the gesture has had a wider scope and the modest little blooms can be offered to friends and family members as a sign of affection. Even just two years ago *muguet* sales nationwide were estimated to have brought in some €25 million.

But there's bad news for the horticulturists of Nantes, especially, who produce around 85% of the annual crop. Every May fewer people are saying it with real flowers. They prefer to go online and send virtual *muguets*. No surprise: the genuine article is becoming more and more expensive (you're likely to fork out €4 this time) while online is virtually, as you might say, free. And your *cybermuguet* is more attractive, with a colourful surround of bees, butterflies or what have you. A surprise (to us at least): last year 70% of those going online with their May Day greetings were women over 35. See cybercartes.com **P.M. ■**



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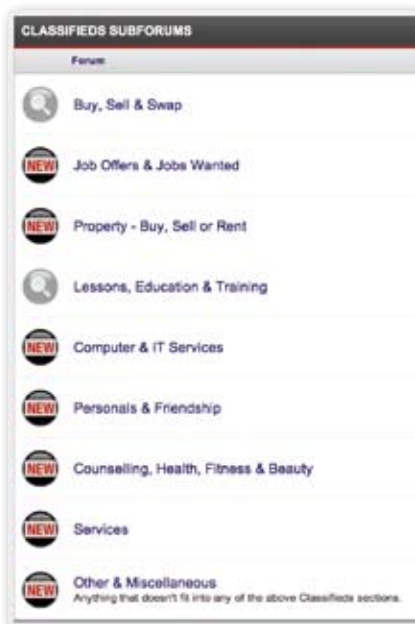
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Announcements, links to breaking news or events, strikes, traffic conditions and weather warnings ...

Spotlight...

- ➔ France on Security alert : after horrific school killings. - RFI - France24 - Telegraph - Reuters
- ➔ One minute silence : in all French schools today at 11h00
- ➔ 3 New flights to Gatwick : wit British Airways from March 25 - More
- ➔ VO Cinema on the Riviera : screenings for today and new screenings from tomorrow - Screenings and Access Maps
- ➔ Summer jobs fair : Cannes until March 24 - Event - Site
- ➔ Do you have undiscovered treasures? Hepplewhites will buy your antiques and works of art, jewellery, gold, watches, vintage luggage. - Info
- ➔ Blevins Franks Financial Seminars : In Sophia Antipolis and Monte Carlo Country Club - March 22 - March 23



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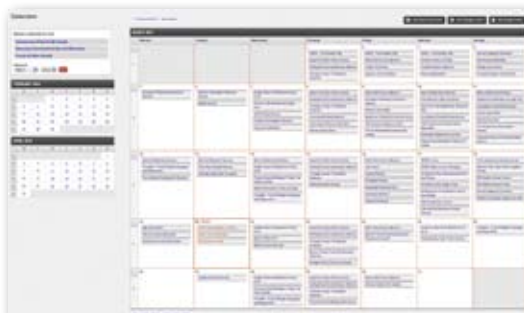
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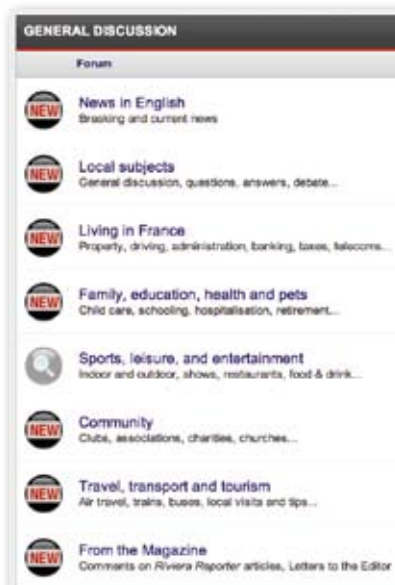


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www.rivierareporter.com

Spring thoughts

BY JAMES HARTLEY
DIRECTOR, ENGLISH GARDEN GROUP



A long cold winter

Nitrogen
focuses
on growth
and is most
important
early season.

Phosphorus
is key for
roots and
flowers.

Potassium
plays a vital
role in cold
weather
tolerance,
the formation
of sugars
and oils and
fruit quality.

After what was, if I'm honest, a pretty brutal winter – to have felt the sun start to make some progress into properly warming our days made me a happy man. Happier still when I finally started to catch wafts of the scent of spring (always as a precursor to the actual thing), drifting past from time to time. This winter, for the first time in years, temperatures at the nursery dipped below -5°C for extended periods and keeping the glasshouse warm, the outdoor water taps working and starting the vehicles each morning was becoming a bit of a grind. In a show of defiance, the large diesel powered air-heater that warms the glasshouse decided that the time was ripe to demonstrate that it felt unappreciated, and in a show of solidarity with French airport workers, it proceeded to stage a series of unannounced shutdowns (without the mandatory 48 hour warning that we are supposed to receive with “essential services”) – resulting in the poor plants near the doors and walls getting completely hammered by the cold. Quite inconsiderate in our opinion as those plants had nothing to do with the working relationship we have with our heater.

Mysterious numbers: they know we know

Every year around this time I usually feel the urge to stand and spread the word about fertiliser: that bit of Billy Graham in me itches to jump up and reach out with the importance of correctly feeding your plants (I'll spare you the donation requests), and this year's no exception. Leaving the dormant season and starting their spring growth, plants and lawns alike are in desperate need of a nutrient boost to ensure healthy growth and disease resistance.

This is best applied as a good dose of fertiliser, and those that follow my column will know that I'm a convert and now avid advocate of quality organic fertilisers (such as those fabricated by DCM), and have discussed this extensively in the past. One area however I realise continues to confuse many people is the numbering system on the fertiliser packs. If these mystical three-number combinations seem nonsensical to you, take comfort in the fact that you aren't alone. Moreover, fertiliser manufacturers actually capitalise on this, selling plant feeds of every imaginable kind with beautiful pictures of each type of plant on the front of the boxes, allowing customers that aren't already making their selections by way of tarot cards to be guided by the photos (rather than the actual nutrient content), and purchase more little boxes than they actually need. At this point I am breaking an industry taboo: What “they” don't want you to know. The reality is that with a basic understanding of the numbering system and plant requirements, you'll see that the vast majority of fertilisation needs can be suitably addressed with only a few nutrient compositions. Implicit proof of this is, rather ironically, provided by the fertiliser manufacturers themselves: I recently looked through a well-known fertiliser supplier brochure with over twelve pages of small dose compositions for the retail market – little boxes with pictures of everything from hedges to citrus trees. The very same manufacturer also provided a professional range in the same brochure, covering only two pages. Could it be that we professionals aren't as conscientious as the amateur gardener? That we don't really care what we put on our plants? Or course not! What they know is that we understand the meaning of the three little numbers on the packs and consequently that many of the “specific” fertilisers are all very similar in content.

So what is N-P-K?

To clarify the situation, I'll explain. Nearly all that counts is the ratio of the three main elements: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K). (The addition of one or two important microelements such as Magnesium (Mg) and Iron (Fe) tacked on the end of these compositions is one of the only areas individual fertilisers can truly differentiate,

but these are not really “game changers”). I won’t discuss what the individual elements do as I have addressed this before and a little reading on the internet will provide all you need to know.

A typical fertiliser for a lawn would be 14-5-8 (lawns need more nitrate than other nutrients to support their excessive growth) and the numbers represent the ratio of the N-P-K levels to one another. The attentive reader will note that these do not ever sum to 100. This is because they are not a total percentage: rather they are a percentage by weight of the respective elements* with the remainder being filler. One key advantage with organic feeds is that the filler material acts as a soil improver as it adds organic content, while with simple “chemical” feeds this remaining bulk has little added value.

Some real world examples

I like to use three main feeds on grass, although you could skip

the first and use just two. At the start of a season I recommend a slightly higher nitrate level to boost the lawn into growth (18-4-3), moving onto a normal nitrate level (14-5-8) through all the main season and then reduce this at the end of the season and increase Potassium levels to keep the lawn green over winter without growth (6-5-20).


For the beds, the principle is similar, using lower nitrogen content for “off” season than “on” season. I only use two feeds for my entire garden: 7-6-12 for the winter season and 10-4-8 for summer – just making sure these are applied regularly. I avoid high nitrate chemical compositions on beds as, although these produce spectacular growth, the resulting plants are not as disease and drought resistant.

The secret is not to be obsessed by the actual numbers – they don’t really matter to the average gardener: instead look for a pattern in the weighting between the nutrients

High N-P-K numbers do not mean a “better product”, but you can put less on for the same effect: so the price and the weight of the bag should be considered.

and you’ll start to understand on a more general level what nutrient is important for what function. Make a point of looking up a few well-known feeds and checking their ratios to improve your understanding of this system. In no time at all you’ll be impressing your friends by advising them they need a high Potassium feed on their lawn in the autumn to keep it green. ■

**For accuracy, and for the chemists among you who will probably point out that I have made an error here, the P and K numbers do not represent the elemental amount in the fertiliser, but instead the amount of the associated oxide (P_2O_5 and K_2O) that would theoretically be present if all the elemental P and K were oxidised. The elemental amount of P and K (unlike the N which is given as a direct elemental amount) present in a fertiliser composition are therefore slightly lower than the given ratio. (The elemental content of P in P_2O_5 is 43%; K in K_2O is 83%.)*



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Luck is a Lady in 83

The state-controlled gaming commission *Française des Jeux* has made it official. The Var can boast the greatest number of lottery and loto millionaires per head of population and the second greatest number by department (outdone only by Seine Maritime) in France.

Statisticians are quick to point out that games of luck know no logical rules. The chance of winning or losing is the same for everyone so the high number of Var winners (4 *gros lots* in 2011) is proportional to the number of players, just as it is anywhere else.

Why do so many people play the lottery, loto, keno and other games of chance in the Var? A largely rural population and many retired residents is one explanation. Several military bases and a high number of immigrant agricultural workers with little else to bid away their spare time is another. But in the Var village bars and PMUs (see page 37) they're having none of it. "It's because here in Provence we are blessed with the luck brought by the Mistral and the blessing of Pagnol," shrugs an old timer over his morning pastis as he picks his horses for the day's *tiércé*.

Française des Jeux sends experts to advise winners on how to use their payout sensibly. Most keep their wits about them but a few, unused to managing such large sums, have been known to squander it. A few years ago one

5973sqm
surface area
of the Var.

over 1 million
population of
the Var, 75%
of which is
under 60.

€232 million
amount paid by
Var residents in
2011 local taxes.

11.2%
last year's
unemployment
average in 83.

€2.6 billion
revenue gener-
ated by tourism
with 10 million
visitors to the
Var annually.
The average stay
is about 6 days.

Var winner started distributing cash to his friends and family without calculating how much would be left for himself – which turned out to be precious little.

According to Brigitte Roth, who is in charge of financial guidance for the biggest winners, most new millionaires choose reasonable paths. "The first instinct is to invest in property, still seen as the best way to safeguard wealth for the future. The second step is to look for risk-free financial investments." It seems that the *gout du risque* doesn't grow with the amount in play. Someone who is used to playing a few euros a week will usually become much more prudent if he wins a large amount. A reasonable attitude says Roth. "I've known winners who used the money to start their own business even though they had won enough to live on for life. Working for themselves had always been their dream. Some even return to school to earn that degree they always wanted."

And who are these lucky *varois*? Roth isn't at liberty to say but her advice to each one is the same, "Don't tell anyone!" You never know how many "old friends" you have until word gets out that you've won a lot of money.

The Var was here first

Quite a while back (like about 70 million years ago) the Alpes-Maritimes was completely under

water and the Var was part of an island about the size of Madagascar stretching as far as the Spanish Basque region. To see what is now the Mediterranean Sea you would in fact look north. To the south were mountains as Corsica and Sardinia touched the southern part of what is now the Var.

So says Thierry Tortosa, a 29-year-old doctor of palaeontology and Museum of Natural History (*museum-aix-en-provence.org*) curator in Aix. The whole Var region, he explains was a vast tropical plain, hot and humid, covered in rich vegetation and inhabited by – you guessed it – nasty creatures far more imposing than today's grass vipers or summer mosquitoes. Giant crocodiles roamed here and flying lizards with six-metre wingspans patrolled the skies.

If you start early enough, Aix is an easy day trip. Visit the Natural History Museum there to learn more about what your neighbours would have looked like way back when.

The Texas Connections

It's been a long ongoing battle and it's not over yet. Local mayors, concerned about the side effects of shale gas extraction in the Var (see *Reporter* 148), denounce "threats by shale gas concessions" and are themselves threatening to boycott the upcoming presidential election in protest. For the moment, the exploration licence held by a Texas drilling company has been temporarily suspended until a final decision is taken.

Pierre Jugy, mayor of Tourtour, told Europe1 radio that he has the support of several mayors in his area in a symbolic action to disrupt Var polling stations during the national elections. Jugy says that if they don't get firm commitments from the presidential candidates they will not be opening their city halls to voters on election day. It's a threat that he feels morally bound to make as Jugy was elected on an anti-shale gas platform.

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Not everyone is against gas extraction in the Var and some see it as a way of bringing much needed investment and jobs to an area where unemployment, especially amongst the young, is particularly high.

Noble Energy, another Texas company, thinks that there may be oil and natural gas offshore not far from the protected Palagos Cetacean reserve less than 30km from the coast of Hyères. Noble Energy has asked permission to conduct initial exploratory work and not surprisingly, there are yet again supporters and detractors of the plan. Supporters point out the financial benefits of becoming more self reliant on energy in a country where 98% of natural gas comes from outside France. Detractors, which include the WWF and Greenpeace, once more worry about environmental risks.

The decision will be made in consort with the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry for the Environment after the May election.

VARIables:

Last issue we announced the end of the trendy Voile Rouge celebrity beach near St-Tropez. The Tomaselli family have since lost their final appeal and the beach has now been razed. But this may not be the end for the Tomasellis. They've asked for permission to open a similar establishment in a less contestable location further down the sandy strip.

There's been one "ultimate" decision in the case opposing the SNCF and those who do not want to see a new high-speed rail line cross the Var. The last word is that a new line will not be built, but that existing lines will be bolstered to accept higher-speed regional trains. So, faster than current trains but nowhere near the speeds of the TGV on dedicated lines from Paris to Marseille. Without the level of public protest demonstrated, it's safe to say that a new LGV line would already be a done deal. Whether the last "final" decision is indeed

"Les Girls" online:
Our recent piece about those girls who ply their trade on the road along the lake toward Montauroux has prompted comments on our online forum. If you have something to say about this, join the discussion at: forum.riviera-reporter.com

final, certainly nothing will be firm until after the presidential election in May.

The court in Draguignan has again delayed its decision concerning the case of "unfair dismissal" brought by a bilingual secretary working near Correns at Chateau Miraval, home to Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. The secretary is seeking €61,500 in damages. The case dates from February 2010 when a part-time employee of the SA Chateau Miraval was dismissed for repeated absences.

At no time during the hearing were the names of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie mentioned, nor did they appear at the proceedings. The couple settled in Correns in June 2008 in the 17th-century chateau which is currently undergoing renovation. The 35ha vineyard (see page 7) has 14 employees and three part-time administrative secretaries.

Harris Stobbs ■

BY MOLLY BROWN

If I could be a season of the year, I would choose spring; it is welcomed by everyone everywhere with flowers, smiles, music, Easter eggs and chocolates, and in Monaco with a salute to spring by *Les Ballets de Monte Carlo* (Apr 19-22), Opera Monte Carlo's new production of Verdi's *Macbeth* (Apr 20-28) and the 106th Monte Carlo Rolex Masters tennis tournament (Apr 14-22), where you can enjoy a week of superb tennis in a splendid setting. No Pimms or strawberries and cream, but lunch on the terrace on finals' day is a social occasion not to be missed. Rafael Nadal is defending his title again, hoping 7 is his lucky number, with Novak Djokovic a formidable contender. Tickets for the Sunday match were sold out in February, so there will also be a big screen on the Cour des Princes. Car parking is limited but SNCF provides a special stop near the club and there are free buses from Monaco to the Club. A special treat this year and a coup for the MCCC, as the club is in France the quarter finals of the Davis Cup between France and USA will be played on the club's central court 6 days earlier (Apr 6-8).

Although electric cars are environmentally friendly and quieter ... almost too quiet for unwary pedestrians glued to their cell phones ... power and speed are essential for that adrenalin rush to the racing car fanatics who flock to Monaco for the Monaco Grand Prix (May 24-27). Red Bull's Vettel has the fastest car, but Hamilton and Button are up front with Ferrari. This year there is also the Historic Grand Prix (monaco-historic-grand-prix.com) where we can get up close and fascinated by the legendary old racing cars on display on the port before they race around the circuit (May 12-13).

Tourists, taxis, trouble

Big sports events are lucrative, filling the hotels; and therein lies a problem: tourists need taxis, which



Photo: FFT

126,000

record number of tickets sold for last year's Monte Carlo Rolex Masters, which Rafael Nadal (above) won for the 6th time.

45 million

TV viewers worldwide watched the 2011 tournament.

700

number of workers employed for 90 days to transform MCCC into a sports arena for this year's 56 players.

€2.5 million

Monte Carlo Rolex Masters 2012 prize money.

are not easy to find. No yellow cabs tour the streets and cars registered in Monaco can only be legally driven by the owner, even the taxis, few of whom work at night. Seasonal permits for relief taxi drivers are being considered for the summer season to keep taxis on the road in the evenings and there is a *Bus de Soirée* (cam.mc) around town until midnight (later at weekends), but no information is available for late arrivals at the station.

April showers bring May flowers but also an army of workmen, who begin erecting a high wire cage around the whole Grand Prix circuit; huge seating stands replace the cafes on Port Hercule, which not only spoil the view but create huge traffic jams and disrupt the lives of the residents, who must carefully pick their way through mounds of tyres and huge rolls of metal fencing. Tourists arriving on a Mediterranean cruise crowd into the town centre to photograph the legendary casino and surrounding gardens to find them obscured by a high-seating stand replacing the fountain, a favourite viewing spot, and the spring tulips hidden behind a wire fence.

Save the Sporting d'Hiver

If this is disrupting, imagine the nightmare of the whole area between the Hotel de Paris and Hotel Hermitage becoming a building site for four whole years (2016-20) if the highly unpopular plan to tear down the 90-year-old landmark, the art deco Sporting d'Hiver goes ahead! (And who is going to stay in the hotels while that goes on?) However, shortly after Monaco's largest employer announced their plan to "change the look" of Monte Carlo with seven huge glass tower blocks, they discovered the coffers are empty; they have lost money for the last two years and are in financial trouble. (So who is going to pay for it?) The management declared that no employees will be made redundant but those retiring will not be replaced and "a plan to improve the service and desirability of its hotels and casinos is now top of the agenda". The best laid plans of mice and men sometimes go astray. ■

If you, too, are horrified by the plan to demolish the Sporting d'Hiver, please register your complaint, with name and address, and any comments on: patriminesportinghiver@hotmail.fr

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Nautical notes

Who cares who wins?



The history of the Antibes Raft Race dating back to 1977, and photos are on the *Reporter* website, search word RaftRace.



After a decade (needed to recover from the last edition), the Antibes Raft Race is back again and will take place on April 21st at the International Yacht Club d'Antibes in Port Vauban.

For a family spectacle it's hard to beat these magnificent men in their wonderful floating machines. Well, not only men (each team must have at least one female member) and not machines either (motorised rafts are forbidden); and some of the entries won't be wonderful (rafts must be scratch

constructed by the entrants). But you get the picture so remember to take your camera.

Fun, safety and charity are the watchwords. Life jackets are obligatory, ammunition must be harmless (no eggs) and a raft can't be bigger than 12m². A *Titanic* theme will mark the 100th anniversary of the historic sinking.

An entry fee of €100 per raft is payable with all profits going to three selected charities: The Antibes Lifeboat, Encompass and Les Restaurants du Coeur.

Not a yachting? You can enter a family, company or club team anyway by contacting the organising committee (info@raftace.net).

In the evening the *Titanic* Fancy Dress Party will take place at Rio's Banana Café on Port Camille-Rayon in Golfe-Juan with a bar, food, prize-giving, and live bands led by the legendary *Yachtbreakers*. And a disco with pirate DJ Mark Dezzani playing the hits from the year the *Titanic* went down, along with a few newer ones as well.

Can you imagine a group of whacky yachting in fancy dress floating on homemade contraptions hurling ammunition at each other? No, then you'd better go and see it for yourself in support of three very worthy charities. Event starts at noon. **RR ■**

For more see raftace.net. Registered as an Association loi 1901 (No: W061002809), Antibes Raft Race Association 8 avenue Mirabeau, 06600 Antibes. Donations can be made at raftace.net/bank_info.htm

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Photo: Cliff/Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear



While money is serious business when it comes to politics, Stephen Colbert shows the method of raising it doesn't have to be.

BY PJ HESLIN

Not so super Tuesday

Stephen Colbert, the American comedian starring as a conservative political pundit in *The Colbert Report*, created his own **Super PAC – The Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow**. As of January 31st, the Super PAC had raised **over \$1.02 million**. According to Colbert, the money will go towards, “normal administrative expenses, including but not limited to, luxury hotel stays and private jet travel.” The organization also created some very funny attack ads featuring “Mitt the Ripper” and “Corn Porn”.

Traditionally the Super Tuesday Primary is when a party's candidate for the presidential run is crowned. However, Tuesday March 6th, 2012 was not so super for the GOP candidates. Since half as many states and half as many delegates participated as compared to 2008, this took the “super” out of the Tuesday.

This means that even though Romney won the March 6th Primary, he still has yet to win the candidacy

Romney's biggest challenge however, may not be Obama or any other candidate but funds. Although he is leading his party in fundraising, he spent three times as much as he raised in January. Forty percent of his donors were from individuals who pledged \$2500 (the most an individual can donate by law), which means that he cannot go back to these donors. In other words, might his war chest dry up before he can even take on Obama?

I doubt it. Romney's been raising money since 2004 when he broke new ground by establishing both a federal account and several state committees all operating under the name Commonwealth Political Action Committee (PAC). Many of those state PACs allowed donors to contribute more than the federal maximum of \$5000 a year. With the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that led to super-PACs, Romney's donors gained new ground in donations without limits.

On the other side of the fence, Obama's campaign is raising a higher percentage of its contributions from small donors. According to the Huffington Post, the Obama reelection campaign committee, Obama for America, pulled in at least 45% of its contributions from donors giving less than \$200 during each of the fundraising quarters it was active in 2011.

Due to an email mailing list of 13 million plus supporters, built by the 2008 campaign, this list has been used to tap small donations – as little as \$3 at a time. While some scoffed at the gimmicky email approach that included winning a dinner with the Obama's and addressing donors with “Hey”, at least one of these tactics was able to raise \$2.5 million in only days.

While Republican Super PACs have been making headlines, where are the Democrats? By the end of January, it was reported that Priorities USA – a Super PAC organized to support Obama had raised \$4.2 million compared to \$36.8 million raised by Restore Our Future – Romney's Super PAC.

While Obama has expressed a distaste for the Super PACs this doesn't mean he's not about to let personal morals stand in the way of raising tens of millions of dollars. On February 6th, the Obama campaign announced it would start supporting Priorities USA. Jim Messina, Obama's campaign manager, stated that the Obama campaign and White House officials would start appearing at Priorities USA functions but not directly soliciting contributions. I guess that's akin to me showing up at a friend's house at dinnertime but not asking for anything to eat. Is it likely I'll get fed? Yes. Did I go there knowing I would get fed? Absolutely.

If you boil it down to money and top contributors there's very little difference between the candidates. The top ten contributors to both Romney and Obama are all either major investment banks or multinational companies. The only real difference is that Obama can count the University of California and Harvard University on his side while Romney has no educational backers.

Come this fall though, Romney's supporters may be financially weary while Obama's forces have not yet begun to raise money.

This is also an election year in France so how do the French politicians raise money? Some say frequent visits to mansions in Neuilly-sur-Seine and picking up envelopes helps, but officially, the law states that political donations in France are limited to €4600 euro for individuals and cash contributions cannot exceed €150. In addition, presidential candidates cannot exceed a set ceiling; in 2007 that ceiling was €21.59 million in the second round of voting.

But, like their American counterparts, French politicians have found a way to circumvent these limits through the creation of “micro-parties”. In 1990 there were 28 political parties. Today there are almost 300 while the distribution of the political landscape has changed very little. The sole

reason for many of these micro-parties is to raise funds for “real” parties, thus bypassing the limit on donations.

Next issue, I’ll be speaking with William Beachner, Chair of the Riviera Chapter of Democrats Abroad France to discuss the challenges of the party and the overseas voting issue.

Millennials

A recent Pew Research study has shown that Millennials (Americans aged 18-29) are more ethnically and racially diverse than older American adults. They’re less religious, less likely to have served in the military and are on track to become the most educated generation in American history.

Although entry into the job force has been set back by the Great Recession, this demographic group are more upbeat than their elders about their economic state, as well as that of America in general.

Among some of overall statistics: 75% have a profile on a social networking site; one in four are unaffiliated with any religion making them the least religious of any American generation so far; they place parenthood and marriage above career; only 21% are married however, 34% percent are parents.

Millennials are set to become the most educated generation in American history, a trend driven largely by the demands of a modern knowledge based economy but also accelerated in recent years by the millions of twentysomethings enrolling in graduate schools or college because they can’t find a job.

Wine consumption is growing among American Millennials, says the Wine Market Council who note that the opposite is occurring with their French counterparts. According to *Winebusiness.com*, the younger French generation drink less wine, and for various reasons: wine is seen as traditional and old; good wine is expensive and wine is ... confusing. Not all is lost, however: most French aged 18 to 29 said that they never drink wine without food. I’m pretty sure the same can not be said for Generation Y Americans. ■

While most American schoolteachers are experiencing layoffs, the Buffalo, NY school system continues to cover all costs for cosmetic surgery for teachers, a benefit established in the 70s. The annual expense in recent years has jumped from \$5 million to \$9 million.

In other school news, many school marching bands in southern California are tuba-less these days and their music directors think they know why. They believe someone is breaking into the high schools and stealing them for a fast-growing black market for banda music. Banda has become the fastest growing genre of Latino music in the US and is particularly popular in LA with its large Latino population. For those not in the know, a tuba for a banda band is the equivalent of a lead guitar for a rock group.

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"My research on Brits living in France will involve much more than the Happiness survey. This is really just the beginning," says psychologist Christine Haworth-Staines.



Photo: Regular Daddy

Will he or won't he? After much speculation, David Beckham opts not to play for PSG in Paris.

News of Britain & the British

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON

Are we happy?

British expats in France, that is. Well, we may be on the way to getting an answer – that's if you look at the early results from a recent survey. Gers-based psychologist Christine Haworth-Staines is organising a nation-wide study of UK citizens living here aimed to measure their contentment. Early results, she says, indicate that expats are happier than those who've stayed at home. If you'd like to take part in her study you can do so at www.tinyurl.com/ExpatriateHappinessSurvey. We'll be talking to hedonometrist Haworth-Staines in a future issue (build your vocabulary with the *Reporter*, folks! You've learned the word for "a student of human happiness").

Before we diminish some readers' happiness here's good news for quite a few. The government has decided to continue to pay the Winter Fuel Allowance to those living abroad and not to tax it. Of course, objections were raised by some Westminster pols ... and, I admit, they've got a point when some WFA beneficiaries are shivering in such corners of France as Tahiti or Guadeloupe.

But now some tidings of no joy: HMRC has set up an Affluent Team using "sophisticated data mining techniques" (*oooh!*) to catch holiday-haven tax-dodgers. Put simply, they're after undeclared rental income and capital gains and once they start talking to you they'll want to know where the money came from in the first place to buy that holiday home in Juan-les-Pins.

Lost leader?

"Becks to be kingpin of the expats" announced a UK tabloid when it seemed very likely that the

great ball-bender would quit LA and Galaxy and move to Paris and PSG. In the end he opted to stay put in California. The reason seems to have been a reluctance to uproot his three older kids, all well settled into their American life. Some French commentators shifted their positions as the soccer star's intentions changed. At first they exclaimed at PSG's good fortune in attracting such a talent; more negative opinions were heard once it was clear he was staying in the US. As one writer put it in the sports daily *l'Equipe*, "Maybe he's come to realise that at 37 he may not be good enough for Ligue 1."

His decision certainly wasn't a matter of money. He'd been offered a pay check of €800,000 a month – one third up on his Galaxy take-home and over double the salary of Argentinian Javier Pastore, PSG's current top earner. Eva Joly – what a dreary old soul she is! – described the pay offer as "scandalous ... at his age he should be selling T-shirts". Had he come how would he have made out as an expat in France? Already the Beckhams own a home in Bargemon (Var) but they visit rarely, maybe because as we noted last time, it's reputed to be haunted. As to the language, David seems to have no gift in that direction – in Madrid his habit of muttering "*si, si*" to any comment in Spanish led to some serious misunderstandings. All in all, it looks as if the couple have done well to stay put where they are.

"No leap into the light"... at least not yet

As you read this, we'll be preparing to put the clocks forward again. These days in France, apart from a handful of rather cranky folk, nobody seems to find this worth arguing about. In the UK, though, there are twice yearly moans from a chorus of those who claim that tinkering with the time upsets cows, kids and oldies. But this year the topic got more media coverage than usual as a group of MPs called for the country to be put permanently on European time (GMT +1). This would mean darker mornings

Surveys in Britain and the US show that people are no happier now than in the 1950s – despite massive economic growth.

In an experiment, individuals with a positive outlook were less likely to get the flu when exposed to the virus.

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and lighter evenings. David Cameron seemed to be all in favour as, polls indicate, are a large majority of the English, led by London's mayor Boris Johnson who calls for "a leap into the light" which, he argues, would mean a big boost for tourism and service industries.

A prominent dissenting voice has been that of the *Mail on Sunday* which has come out against any move to what it calls "Berlin time" (printed in that sinister-looking Gothic font). But the major opposition has come from the Scots who fear the advent of darkness well after porridge-time. Its likely imposition by Westminster could well influence voting in the coming referendum. So don't expect any move on the issue until that's all over.

"What a sauce!"

Last time we recorded how Twinings had changed the flavour of their Earl Grey tea and then, in the face of widespread objections from consumers, reverted to the original formula. As I write, Heinz is showing they are made of sterner stuff. In 2005 they took over the manufacture of HP Sauce and, to conform with government health recommendations, cut the salt content from 2.1g per 100g to 1.3g. Although other ingredients (including "secret spices") are unchanged, this has led to a flood of complaints. As one dedicated website put it, the new HP Sauce is "bland and sickly"; Michelin-starred chef Marco Pierre White has described it a "disgusting ... definitely dodgy". Our local consumers have not reacted with such vigour. Caroline from Britain's tells us that very few customers in the Valbonne shop have commented on the new taste.

A death in Draguignan

"I never knew he was here," one reader said when I mentioned that Ronald Searle had died just before Christmas at his home in Draguignan. He was 91 and seemed for many years past to have had a rather limited social life.

From his early years, he recalled in an interview, he had "an impulse to draw" and could "not remember ever wanting to be anything but an artist". He was a man of very varied talent, producing everything from covers for the *New Yorker* through cartoons for *Le Monde*, to pictorial travelogues. But he's remembered, especially by older Brits, for his creation of St Trinian's, a nightmarish girls' school which held a place in popular culture for decades and eventually made it to the cinema screen. Rather like Conan Doyle with Sherlock Holmes, he came to resent being seen as a one-trick pony and eventually had the school blown up by an atom bomb ... but was persuaded by insistent public demand to revive it. His original move was to Paris but he explained his decision to settle here partly by a need to escape the fans of St Trinian's. ■

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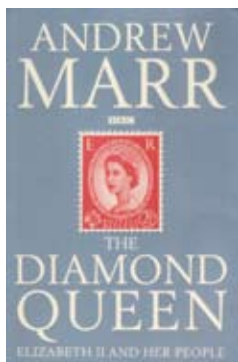
Graciousness, decency and protective silence

Andrew Marr's book about the Queen.



Photo: White House/Eric Draper

Elizabeth II and George W. Bush share a toast at the White House May 2007.



A few months ago a writer in *The Economist* remarked that for most of her subjects the Queen is as mysterious a being as a unicorn. That is true in that, largely by her own intent, little has been revealed to the public of her true personality, although court insiders assure enquirers that she's both kind and, in private, often very funny. Occasionally stories do emerge giving some clue to her character going beyond what little can be deduced from her many ritual appearances as a hieratic presence without much evident humanity. I recall a few years ago being told of a visit to the West Country

where she attended a reception given by the Bishop of Truro. She quickly noticed a rather forlorn figure standing apart from the mingling guests. This was Truro's brother (by blood, not simply by consecration), the former Bishop of Gloucester (and, incidentally, founder of an Anglican convent in the Var). He had been forced to resign after being cautioned by the police for inappropriate behaviour with "an apprentice monk" (as the *Sun* put it). In some quarters he had been treated with something less than Christian compassion. The Queen walked up to him, shook his hand, asked him how he was and spent some time chatting with him. This showed a woman of graciousness and decency, rarely on view as she carries out her often stupefying programme of official engagements.

Ups and downs

This year, of course, we are being treated to a flood of books, articles and broadcasts as Elizabeth II moves through the sixtieth year of her reign. Some approaches will be obsequious, others snide (isn't Kitty Kelley's take on the way?). Andrew Marr, best known for his Sunday morning current affairs show on BBC Television, has offered something genuinely useful. In his *The Diamond Queen: Elizabeth II and Her People* (UK: Macmillan), he begins by setting the monarchy in its recent historical context. George V – often remembered as a bullying parent (*The King's Speech*) or simply as a dim bore preoccupied with stamp hinges and the niceties of military dress, made a huge contribution to the preservation of the British monarchy from the fate that befell others (think Austro-Hungary, Russia

and Germany). A much more direct influence over Elizabeth was exercised by her father George VI who combined that public dutifulness and private decency that, whatever some other royals may have got up to, has enabled the Windsors to survive the twentieth century.

Anyone who has followed the Queen's career through serious media will find little to surprise here, but Marr retells the story with admirable lucidity and, it seems, fairness. He follows Elizabeth's life from her early years of minimal formal education (no disadvantage, it appears) and on to marriage, succession and the recurrent ups and downs of the following decades with controversies over money, republicanism, the Commonwealth, and the antics of her sons. For most of this time, come what may, she's been well served by her unyielding public discretion (with the notable exception of her muted response to Diana's death).

She's had some troublesome moments over recent times but has reached her Diamond Jubilee while enjoying great public respect. As Marr concedes, it appears unlikely that Prince Charles, such a motormouth and with so little useful to say, has learned from his mother's protective public silence. The book ends on a note of doubt concerning the survival of the monarchy after Elizabeth.

Those dogs aren't all corgis

As well as providing an excellent overview of the reign, Marr does drop in some tit-bits of information which may be new to many readers. Those seven dogs that gambol around the Queen's feet aren't all corgis: three are "dorgis" – that is corgi-dachshund crosses; at Christmas the Windsor pooches get personalised gift packs which HM puts together herself. When she married in 1947 four of her in-laws – Philip's sisters – were the wives or widows of Nazi officers; her favourite Prime Minister so far has been Harold Wilson (quite right, too Ma'am; he had the right attitude to dogs). We learn little of royal antipathies except that she can't bear "slow eaters". Marr offers reasoned criticism of the Windsors but veers into near-hagiography when he tells us that for rumours of a younger Philip's sexual adventures "there isn't a shred of hard evidence". Serious journalists I've met have had a different view. Finally, the book is a pleasure to read and has been well edited. One howler got through, though: the Duke (and our own Michael Healy) will surely groan when they find the Royal Naval College relocated to Dartford. Oddly, too, Marr chooses to correct George VI's well known (if ungrammatical) description of his immediate family as "us four" to "we four". Anyway, if you want to read up on the Queen you likely couldn't do better than Marr. **P.M. ■**

One down, two to go

Attitudes to Friday the thirteenth.

Back in January we had a Friday the 13th; in 2012 there are two more to come, in April and July. Three is the maximum number of days with that date possible in a single year; but every year has at least one. Of course, you may simply shrug this away as of little interest and of no importance. There are other people, though, who will admit, even if rather sheepishly, that they do harbour a feeling that on those Fridays bad things can happen. On the other hand, some French believe that they're a moment which can bring good luck. This contradiction of an ancient superstitious belief seems to have originated a couple of decades ago when the gaming organisation *la Française des Jeux*, followed later by the PMU, France's off-course betting system (see box), decided to offer especially tempting financial rewards every *vendredi 13*. Inevitably, some people got lucky and this set a trend among gamblers. It's now a day when casinos do very good business. But what's so special about Friday and Thirteen? To reverse the order, the usual explanation is that in ancient times twelve was the perfect number – twelve months, twelve gods on Olympus, twelve signs of the Zodiac and so on – and the following number thirteen was seen as destroying a natural harmony and so as having a negative connotation. This notion of an unlucky number

is a remarkable cultural survivor. A few examples: some airlines, including Ryanair, and this on the direct order of its Jesuit-educated boss Michael O'Leary, have no row 13 in their cabins; Heathrow Terminal 5 has no Gate 13; some buildings (the Empire State is a case in point) have no 13th floor; some hotels have no room 13; in F1 no car bears that number; and several French rugby players have refused to wear a shirt so marked.

But where does Friday come in – why not Monday or Thursday? In ancient Rome Friday acquired a dark reputation as the preferred day for executions (as later in England, by the way) and, especially significant, it was the day of Christ's crucifixion. The conjunction of a particular day and a particular number has, for some people, a continuing malignant charge. According to one study, 18 million Americans experience real apprehension every time Friday the 13th comes round. They've even been given a name by psychiatrists: *paraskevidekatriaphobics* (that's just Greek for Friday the thirteenth fearfuls). If that's you, what can you do about it? Well, living here there's an easy solution. Oddly, the Italians don't go for the 13th. For them, *il giorno maladetto* is Friday the 17th. So this year on April 13th and July 13th just hop over the frontier for 24 hours and nothing bad will happen to you. **C.v.Z.-P. ■**

What the heck is PMU?

You see the signs everywhere. *Pari Mutuel Urbain (pmu.fr)* was founded in 1930 as a racing authority for horse betting in France. Bets can be made at one of their 10,400 sales outlets in France, by telephone, online or by mobile phone. PMU is the largest pari-mutuel horse racing operator in Europe and ranked number two worldwide (€9.3 billion in turnover and €731.4 million in net profit repaid to racing authorities). Since 2010, PMU also manages sports betting and online poker.




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Association Niçoise Chine Horizon in Nice offers courses from learning Mandarin to making sushi, as pictured.

There's always the Commonwealth Club

Once again a reader – this time an Australian – has enquired about whether his compatriots have a club here. Well, they used to but it folded well over a year ago along with the much-mourned Kookaburra restaurant, home of VB, authentic wedgies and much else. As before we referred such an enquirer to the Commonwealth Club of the Riviera. We spoke to the club secretary who told us that at the moment they have just half a dozen Australian members, adding “we’d certainly welcome more. Aussies are convivial and get on well with everyone.”

Incidentally, for exiles from Oz and others interested there’s a mass of information about Australia at australia.gov.au

Fancy a week or so in Southampton or Brighton?

The Nice branch of the British Association has now a well-established link with the Franco-British Society in Southampton. More recently they’ve entered into a similar agreement with the FBS in Brighton. They would like to hear from any readers who

would be interested in exchanging homes later this year for a short period or simply offering hospitality for a few days to visitors from across the Channel. For more on this call Roger Massoni. Southampton, of course, was the birthplace of Benny Hill, so much admired in France.

Take a look, by the way, at our British column (page 34) where we draw attention to an ongoing France-wide study of how happy British expats are in France. Do join in with this, even if you’re not too happy here. When the investigation is complete we’ll publish the results.

And a serious note: charitable associations in France – a category which includes the British Association (it’s not just a “lunch club” but has a primary aim of offering welfare services to UK citizens here) – are in growing difficulty. As needs grow so funds dwindle. It’s crucial that members pay their subscriptions, and think of giving extra when they can afford it. The BA does a lot of good work and wants to continue doing so.

Has anyone here seen Kelly?

The other day we were looking over the last decade or so of

Ensemble Vocal Syrinx (ensemblevocalsyrinx.com) is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The international choir is planning this year Haydn’s *Seven Last Words* and Handel’s *Messiah* – in English, of course. If you (preferably) have some experience of choral singing, share a passion for choral music and can commit to weekly rehearsals, then contact Kate Cobb (see page 46 for details) about joining.

this column and realised how some clubs have done well – the revived American Club, for example, and the International Club.

Others have continued to struggle or have gone down. A case in point is the Riviera Irish Association, set up by a handful of enthusiasts just over three years ago. In fact, across the lifetime of this magazine there have been several previous attempts to get an Irish club going, all of which eventually died the death. There seems to be a curious reluctance on the part of the Irish here to get together. The kind of comments we’ve heard have included “Why should I pay a subscription to have a drink?” to “I didn’t come here to hang out over a Guinness with a tree surgeon from Sneem.” Happily, not everyone takes that view. The Irish Association (pacairish.com) is still going and at their recent AGM made an appeal for “new members and new ideas”. Over to Cathal and Ciara! But Irish voices are not wholly unheard here. There’s the Monaco-Ireland Arts Society which will be offering an evening of “the sayings and works of Brendan Behan, with some Irish dancing thrown in”. Then there’s the Antibes-Kinsale Association, energetically run by Wolf Burg, which put on a good show for St Patrick’s Day (in



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fact, a few days after) with guests from Kinsale, including dancers.

"I'll have No 7 ... and a knife and fork, please."

That sums up some people's encounter with Chinese culture: having a pre-cinema meal in a cheapo restaurant. But there's a growing interest in the country and its huge population. Governments, including the French, are anxious to gain the good opinion of Beijing as was shown during President Hu Jintao's visit to France in 2010 when he was made a great fuss of on the Côte d'Azur.

Savvy parents from Manhattan to Monaco are signing up their kids for

Mandarin courses. When the Chinese speak of their country as *Zhong Guo* – usually translated as "middle kingdom" – they mean that not only is it the centre of the world but their culture, however transformed, is superior to all others. Given their economic growth, where will they be in thirty years? It makes sense to get to know them and to introduce children to the country and its culture. That's where the *Association Niçoise Chine Horizon* comes in. Based in Nice, it offers a range of courses from calligraphy to cookery, and Mandarin for adults and children. Says organiser Ling Tsu, "It's a great pleasure to see how many people want to learn about China today." Contact Lin about the group's two-

week trip to China in September.

Curtain up! But where's the furniture?

The new South of France English Theatre (SET) was slow to include us in their extensive PR operation. We realised why when we learned that among its leading lights was a certain lady (and her mum, dad and son!), better known to us and to some of our readers for a different reason. We gave coverage some while ago to her non-theatrical activities – mainly in the removals business (see *Reporter* 119) – and a number of readers sent in their tributes. As one former client put it, "She's a real mover and shaker – she

moves you and then has you shaking with rage." Anyone wanting a word with her should show up at a SET performance.

Church times: Mass in Monaco

Last time we mentioned two places in the Var where British Roman Catholic priests officiate (Grimaud and St Tropez). Note, though, that normally they use French at the altar. A reminder that at St Charles in Monaco – the No. 100 Nice-Menton bus passes the door on Avenue des Moulins – mass is celebrated in English every Sunday at noon. More on St Charles and its clergy (native English speakers) in our next issue. ■

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MONACO-IRELAND ARTS SOCIETY

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

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

april

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Thurs Apr 5, 15h30: "Return to Cranford". Presentation of final episode at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11bis rue de la Buffa, Nice.

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Sat Apr 7: Boat Race Day/spring lunch at Ermitage du Riou (26 ave Henry Clews, Mandelieu). Race at 14h15 GMT (15h15 CET), and for once we should be able to watch the race easily at O'Sullivan's pub nearby the Ermitage du Riou, where the lunch will be held. You may each bring a guest. Cost €55/pp; menu form and payment to submit beforehand.

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04 92 90 59 15 - antibesyachtshow.com

Thurs Apr 12-Sun Apr 15: Antibes Yacht Show is the only brokerage, charter and refit show in spring in the Mediterranean. Over the last 5 years AYS has had exhibitors from 14 different countries and has featured yachts from 15 to 70m. It has reached the position of being a key event in the yachting industry. There is free parking and free bus and boat shuttles to take the visitors to the show.

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04 93 72 11 89 - internationalclub.fr

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BRITAIN'S QUIZ NIGHT

John 04 93 12 03 97

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Sat Apr 14-Sun Apr 22: The world's best tennis players gather at Monte Carlo Country Club. See page 30.

AMIAc

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Thurs Apr 19: Lunch at restaurant Pierre Rouge, Valbonne. Please ring to reserve.

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Thurs Apr 19-Sun Apr 22, 10h30-20h (21h30 on Sat): Luxury car and boat show at Grimaldi Forum. Entry: €50/day, €25 children 4-12 and free for babies 3 and under (prams are not allowed at the weekend).

VIAC

viac.fr

Thurs Apr 19: Boules competition for members and their guests in Callas. See website for more information and booking details.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB

06 21 20 60 10 - internationalclub.fr

Thurs Apr 19: Spotlight Charity Cocktails.

MACBETH

+377 98 06 28 28 - opera.mc

Fri Apr 20-Sat Apr 28: Verdi's opera with Lado Ataneli, Giacomo Prestia and Maria Guleghina at the Grimaldi Forum, Salle des Princes. Apr 20 Gala, 25 & 28 at 20h and 22 at 15h.

MONTE-CARLO BEACH VOLLEY

+377 98 97 10 98 - federation-volleyball.mc

Fri Apr 20-Sat Apr 21: Beach Village, Radio Monaco broadcasting from place du Larvotto and a DJ eco-beach soirée. Entry is free.

ANTIBES RAFT RACE

info@rafttrace.net - rafttrace.net

Sat Apr 21, noon: You don't have to be a yachting to turn up for some family fun and contribute to some well-deserved charities. The race with its wacky crafts starts at the International Yacht Club d'Antibes, Port Vauban. The party continues in the evening at Rio's Banana Café on Port Camille-Rayon in Golfe-Juan with the 'TITANIC' Fancy Dress Party. We are registered as a non-profit making Association registered at Grasse under the Law of 1st July, 1901 - No: W061002809. Donations can be made at rafttrace.net/bank_info.htm. For more on the race see <http://www.rivierareporter.com/yachting-and-boating/281-the-antibes-raft-race-in-history>

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

BGintell@aol.com - 06 20 40 11 28

Sat Apr 21: Private visit to the beautifully restored 16th Century Château Montfort in La Colle sur Loup, followed by lunch at nearby Douceur restaurant.

BITCH & STITCH

04 93 12 21 42 - englishbookcentre.com

Workshops are the last Thurs of each month, 15h15-17h15, with drop-in sessions at the same time each Thurs in between. All levels of any type of needlework are welcome. English Book Centre Valbonne, 12 Rue Alexis Julien.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB'S FIESTA LATINA

04 93 72 11 89 - internationalclub.fr

Sat Apr 28: At the Grange in Mouans Sartoux.

NICE SEMI-MARATHON

nicesemimarathon.com

Sun Apr 29: 10km & 21.1km run

SWEDISH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

04 92 13 15 34 - Rivieraklubben@wanadoo.fr

Sun Apr 29, 17h: Blues concert with famous Swedish singer Ms Louise Hoffsten at Espace Miramar in Cannes. Price €60 incl. a glass of champagne. Non-members are welcome. Please contact to reserve.

may

POSH PARAPHERNALIA AT THE GRANGE

04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org

Thurs May 3, 10h-15h. Quality second-hand clothes & accessories at the Grange (815 ch des Gourettes, Mouans Sartoux).

INTERNATIONAL GOLF CLUB MAY OUTING

04 93 72 11 89 - internationalclub.fr

Thurs May 10: At La Provençal Golf Club, Sophia Antipolis.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB OF THE VAR

www.iwc-var.org

Fri May 11, 11h-18h30 and Sat May 12, 10h-14h: Annual Book Fair at La Salle la Renaissance, Fayence. Books of all languages, refreshments available. All proceeds go to charity.

AMIAc

Doug Attwood 04 92 97 50 72

Wed May 16: The AMIAc Coach trip to Alassio and Albenga Italy. Guided tour in English at both towns and lunch with *al volante* wine. Price: €70. All welcome. To obtain reservation form please contact Doug Attwood.

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

festival-cannes.fr

May 16-27.

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

BGintell@aol.com - 06 20 40 11 28

Sat May 19: Lunch on the beach in Cannes during the Film Festival at the Belle Plage restaurant.

VIAC

viac.fr

Sat May 19: gourmet meal served at intervals during a 6km stroll through a vineyard near Pierrefeu. See website for more information and booking details.

EBICA OPEN DAY

04 93 64 32 84 - ebicaschool.com

Wed May 23, 9h-4h: We are currently taking registration for the 2012-2013 school year for preschool, primary and secondary bilingual French-English education. Come and visit and see our new campus.

MONACO GRAND PRIX

monaco-grand-prix.com

May 24-27.

INTERNATIONAL CLUB'S JUBILEE STREET PARTY

04 93 72 11 89 - internationalclub.fr

Sat May 26: At the Grange in Mouans Sartoux.

MD Consultants TAX ADVICE

The tax system in France can seem complicated and confusing for newly arrived expats.

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- Visits to municipal museums

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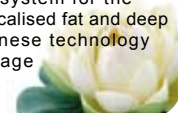
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Informations
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The Business Finder ...
Does that business you once heard about still exist? Is there an English-speaking business offering a service you need now? If it's in the Reporter or listed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

ACCOMMODATION, HOTELS, B&B

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

BUSINESS SERVICES & SUPPLIES

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

CONSTRUCTION

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

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

INTERNET, COMPUTING

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

LEISURE, SPORT, HEALTH, RECREATION

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

MOTORING & TRAVEL

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

MOVING, STORAGE & TRANSPORT

Delahaye Moving info@delahayemoving.com
Shurgard Self-Storage www.shurgard.fr

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

PUBS & RESTAURANTS

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Quay's Pub Quai St Pierre, Cannes
Zucchini Blossom Best Burgers 1283 Ave de la Plaine, Mougins

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Cabinet Martin, Private Detectives www.cabinetmartin.info/
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Creatif Flowers Galerie du Port, Antibes
Linda Alaniz Photography www.alaniz-photo.com/
Monte Carlo Weddings +377 93 50 35 95
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If your business would like to appear here email: theFinder@rivierareporter.com

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Doctors On Call (Nice)	04 93 52 42 42
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ASSOCIATIONS, HELPLINES & SUPPORT (Some in French)

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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 48 46 93 21 - www.bsnvar.org
BRITISH ASSOCIATION CANNES	06 65 38 05 29
BRITISH ASSOCIATION MENTON	06 31 18 89 57
BRITISH ASSOCIATION MONACO	+377 93 50 19 52 - www.bam-monaco.org
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BRITISH ASSOCIATION VAR Secretary	04 94 72 37 42
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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 ...

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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)

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.....	CANNES 20 bd Carnot 04 97 06 66 06 - NICE 20 bd Carabacel 0820 422 222
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DANISH LUTHERAN CHURCH 89 Bld Napoleon III, Nice	04 93 21 07 02

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LES ARCADES, CANNES 77 rue Felix Faures Recorded info	0892 892 892
LA COUPOLE, LA GAUDE Centre Culturel, Recorded info	0892 680 471
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CINEMA RIALTO, NICE 4, rue de Rivoli, Recorded info	0892 680 041
SALLE DES FÊTES, VALBONNE Esp. de la Vignasse, Recorded info	0892 892 892

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AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA	06 20 40 11 28 - bgintell@aol.com
AMERICAN SQUARE DANCING (Cagnes Sur Mer)	06 85 11 73 75
AMERICAN SQUARE DANCING (Vallauris/Sophia Antipolis).....	06 60 50 89 45
AMIAC (Alpes Martimes International Aperitif Club)	04 92 50 57 72
BASEBALL Cavigal Nice Sport	04 93 65 77 55
BEACH VOLLEYBALL (ASPTT)	06 49 42 74 32 - beach@aspttnice-volley.com
BOXING - NICE AZUR BOXE	04 93 89 68 17 - www.niceazurboxe.fr
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DANISH BOOK CLUB	04 93 66 59 00
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DUTCH CLUB	04 94 47 62 83
ENSEMBLE VOCAL SYRINX (Choir)	04 93 20 68 94
EUROPEAN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK NICE-CÔTE D'AZUR	info@europeanpwn-nice.net - www.europeanpwn-nice.net
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FOOTBALL Mouans Sartoux Women's F.C. ..	04 93 75 58 19 (Fr) - katepg@tele2.fr
FRANCE-ÉTATS-UNIS Nice	09 60 11 92 49 - 06 08 36 67 58
FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE Cannes	04 93 97 86 32
FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE Nice	04 93 81 76 74 - www.fgb-nice.com
FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE Toulon	04 94 30 69 77 - www.afgb-toulon.net
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HASH HOUSE HARRIERS (RIVIERA)	www.rivierahhh.com
INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF THE RIVIERA 04 93 72 11 89 - info@internationalclub.fr	
INTERNATIONAL LUNCH CLUB (VAR) ..	06 45 99 45 76 - barry.kalish@orange.fr
INT'L WOMEN'S CLUB - PROVENCE 04 94 73 63 93 - kirstenogpalle@gmail.com	
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THE ODD GROUP (Painting)	04 93 35 48 33 - +377 97 70 79 46
OXBRIDGE SET	06 62 64 54 05 - halfordoxbridge@yahoo.co.uk
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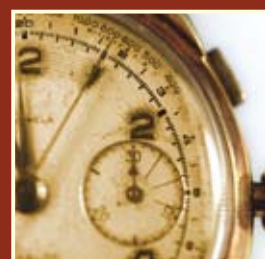
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