

THE RIVIERA REPORTER

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No 166 December 2014/January 2015



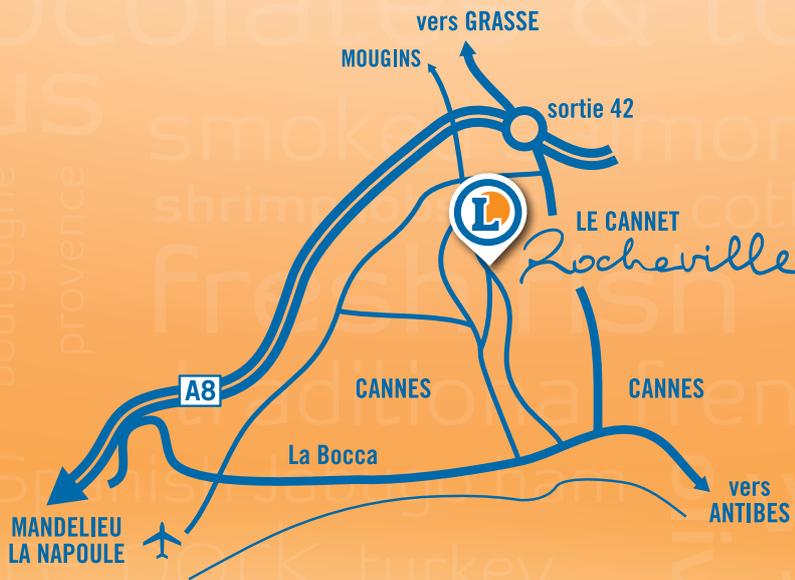
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In this issue ...

The Insider

I'VE never been a fan of Christmas, or at least, I should clarify, of Christmercialism. Even as a youngster, I couldn't grasp the idea of having to give a gift because it's what is expected of you. As soon as I was old enough, I spent many December 25ths volunteering at an old-age home, working a helpline or serving at a soup kitchen – anywhere to be able to give what every human is capable of, regardless of what your bank account says.

There was pleasure in the festive side, being with family and loved ones – and those less-familiar but who were on their own and so invited to our home – singing carols at church, watching the classics like "It's A Wonderful Life" ... but that so-called "magic" was lost on me.

So no one was more taken aback than yours truly when visiting Lapland six years ago to write a travel piece on Christmas at Santa's Arctic Village, that a run-of-the-mill interview with the man in the red suit turned my world upside down.

As soon as I sat on Santa's knee, my focus waivered; I was on the lap of a legend, the magnificent, white-bearded, jolly man (truth be told, he kind of looked like Saddam Hussein) who softly

deflected my journalistic inquisition by finding my child within. And that's when it happened: I refound hope, unjaded, that anything was possible, like a child who dreams.

I returned from my visit with St Nick and booked a flight to Canada to surprise my family by showing up on Christmas Day, our first holiday together in nearly a decade. The ease of a meal together with the extended family, friends dropping by impromptu (on foot!) and the silliness of nieces and nephews all playing together made me realise how hard it is to capture this as an expat; proximity is not in our favour.

I'm not complaining, I have a terrific life in France. But the luxury of Mum "dropping by" or university friends "popping over" for a post-digestive game of charades is not feasible.

What is possible, though, is giving back to the community. We may live in a time of "Isis, Crisis and Ebola, oh my" but during the holiday season give thought to the many local charities and associations, including various English-speaking ones mentioned throughout our Christmas edition. They are in need of support and volunteers of all ages. Santa would be proud. *Nancy Heslin, Editor*

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Cover photo: Ville de Menton Service Communication. Village top: MLV Drone

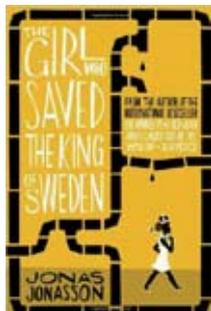


GOODWILL IN YOUR GIFT PG 18

riviera reportage

ANTIBES BOOKS

The Girl Who Saved The King of Sweden
Jonas Jonasson (Fourth Estate)



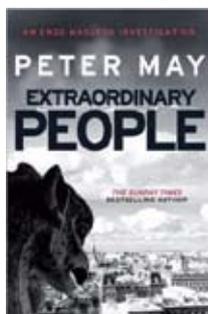
AS delightfully wry and witty as his bestselling debut, “The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared”, this is a tale of how one woman’s attempt to change her future

ended up changing everything. Nombeko Mayeki is on the run from the world’s most ruthless secret service – with three Chinese sisters, twins who are officially one person, and an elderly potato farmer. And the fate of the King of Sweden – and the world – rests on her shoulders. This is an entrancing tale of luck, love and international relations. *Heidi Lee*

After 25 years, Antibes Books will be closing its doors in the New Year. See “Heidi Bye” on page 14.

ENGLISH BOOK CENTRE VALBONNE

Extraordinary People: The Enzo Files
Peter May (Quercus)



ALTHOUGH originally published a while back, these books have only recently been released in the UK by Quercus. The first book of five, so far, in the series sees the dashing Professor Enzo Macleod

(Italian mother, Scottish father) lecturing in biology at a university in Toulouse, but of course with a background in forensics. The French settings for the crimes (a nasty wine critic drowned in a vat of wine, a famous chef murdered over a Michelin star) are at once glamorous and familiar, and the tales told with equal parts humour and horror. Once you’ve exhausted the Enzo series, there’s the consolation of dipping into May’s Lewis trilogy, as well as all his other excellent writings. Highly recommended for long, cold winter nights. *Lin Wolff*

CÔTE POETS+ 6TH EDITION



THE regional magazine of art and poetry returns for its 2015 Edition (€2), and also includes contributions from all points of the compass: South Africa, USA, Australia, Georgia (the

former Socialist Republic), Africa, Ireland and, of course, the UK.

The editor, Richard Ward, says: “The local element will always form the spinal column of the magazine, but welcoming writers from across the world gives added richness, as well as reflecting the truly international environment we live in here.”

Copies from Dec 11th available at the English Book Centre Valbonne, English Books Antibes, Mougins School Library, Britain’s Valbonne or by contacting Richard on cotepoets@hotmail.fr or 07 89 54 48 66. For more see cotepoets.fr

le FLASH



NOT VERY JOLLY FELLAS

IN October, a trio of French activists fed up with “sexism in French media, politics, and advertising” initiated *Macholand.fr*, a site that enables internet users to launch campaigns against chauvinistic ads, like with the dating company whose posters (pictured) compare women to cars:

“You don’t have to go to a car show to test new models.”

One of the founders, Clara Gonzales, told *The Local*, “It’s a tool for citizens to speak up against sexism and allows the voice of the people to be heard.”

In over a month, Clara along with co-creators Caroline De Haas and Elliot Lepers, have already had 16,200 “activists” jump onto their sexist *banwagon*. More impressively, the site has claimed six wins against their cause, including against Ariel, which saw France’s favourite laundry product change the word “moms” to “parents” in an advertisement.

Send your offensive ad to contact@macholand.fr



LE FAST-FOOD MIRACLE

ANTOINE Khoury runs *L'Arbre à Truffes* in Vence (arbreatruffe.com), a store he opened with his wife Virginia in 2003 that’s dedicated to everything truffle. Khoury keeps himself busy supplying restaurants with truffles but he recently decided to take his show on the road. You’ll now find his *L'Arbre à Truffes* truffle truck along the side of the *pénétrante* between Cagnes-sur-Mer and Vence, with a menu of paninis with truffles or foie gras and truffles starting at €6, or from €8 including a drink and truffle chips. See facebook.fr/truffetruckbylarbreatruffe

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FRANCE IN THE NEWS

TAXE D'HAB, TAX GRAB

Riviera mayors refuse 20% increase on second homes



Photo: Frantogian

NOTHING is certain but Hollande and taxes. First it was the preposterous 75% tax on incomes over €1 million that, as Peter Johnson notes on page 13, “will be quietly allowed to die” next year. Although in 2012, the newspaper *Les Echos*, citing Ministry of Finance data, reported that 8,000 French households paid 100% of their income in tax due to a 2011 “one-time levy”; 12,000 taxpayers paid 75% that same year.

So is anyone truly surprised that a desperate President calls for desperate measures in announcing a 20% surtax on *taxe d'habitation* in 2015 on secondary residences in highly populated regions

of the country? The state hopes to bring in an additional €150 million.

According to INSEE, in the Alpes-Maritimes secondary residences number around 330,000, including 35,000 houses.

Frédéric Pelou, President of FNAIM Côte d'Azur, stated this is “one more step towards the final blow to real estate.

“This new tax burden will add to the already long parade of fiscal constraints and red tape and, if elected officials decide to apply it, will continue to stagnate an already sluggish housing market.

“No one except the governing technocrats think raising taxes is the way to deal with the deficit, which can only be reduced by lowering state spending. Do they not imagine that people will sell their second homes?”

The good news is that it's up to officials in 28 *zones tendues* across France to individually decide whether they implement the 20% tax.

Christian Estrosi, mayor of Nice, declared: “The City of Nice refuses to apply this surtax ... we consider taxing second homes a total aberration! This is an unintelligent and ineffective tax, which will again weaken home owners in our country.”

Estrosi added that “the state must take responsibility” regarding housing by building and releasing state-owned land, rather than coming

up with unproductive taxes.

Meanwhile, in Cannes, Mayor David Lisnard (pictured) also is against enforcing this tax on secondary homes.

“This tax is optional,” said Marie Junk from his press service, “and the mayor does not want to apply it because he feels there are already too many taxes.

“Secondly, he's upset with a government that cuts back on subsidies to local authorities on one hand, while on the other, asks communities to somehow find income by increasing local taxes.” ■

.....
THINKING of leaving your tax worries behind? Then climb aboard the Riviera Route, Italy's new Thello train service starting Dec 15th from Marseille to Milan, with stops in Cannes, Antibes, Nice and Monaco. Second class fares for the 7h19 journey range from €30, if you book two weeks in advance, to €70 (prices reflect ticket flexibility).

The state-of-the-art train leaves Marseille at 15h30 (arr 22h50); departing Milan Central station at 15h10 (arr 22h29). Additional services are scheduled for April 2015.

Other options include Nice-Milan (4h41) and Nice-Genoa (2h55), both of which have fares starting at €15.

To reserve see italiarail.com

Naughty or Nice

TWO TALES OF ONE CITY



IN September 2001, Publishing Director Mike Meade was contacted by John McLaughlin, host of The McLaughlin Group, a long-running political commentary TV show in the US. McLaughlin and his wife were driving from Marseille airport towards Cap d'Ail when their rented Mercedes was ambushed in Nice north, their passports and jewellery taken.

McLaughlin told Mike Meade, "We were careful not to erase the fingerprints on the car door and to note the description of our attackers but the police weren't interested. I'll be telling my millions of American television viewers how lax security and police work is in Nice."

Well, that was the week of 9/11 and McLaughlin's story lost precedence. More than a decade on, these types of stories on the Riviera are not Breaking News, but how victims react can make a difference. Here are two accounts from readers.

A Scottish couple who, along with their three children, have been living in Nice for several years, were involved in a crime. Mum Liz (not her real name) picks up the story.

"Our son David was followed by two youths on his way back from school at 3:30 pm on a Monday afternoon in October, and was grabbed around the neck by a guy of between 16 to 18, who then took his phone. David, fortunately, wasn't hurt, but was shaken up. He doesn't go around expecting this sort of thing to happen to him, so it was a bit of a harsh lesson for him to learn.

"I went to the main *Commissariat* near blvd Dubouchage in Nice and they really couldn't have cared less. The man at reception asked me if I had a *numero de serie* for the stolen phone. I said that my concern wasn't about getting the phone back but that my 13-year-old son had been attacked in a residential area, on his way back from school, in broad daylight.

"I mentioned that there would be something on CCTV, as they had passed a few cameras en route, but he suggested I return the next day with, again, the *numero de serie*. I replied that I wasn't happy with that response and asked to speak to the boss ... inevitably a 'No'. Same answer when I requested the person's name. When I asked why not, I was told they didn't do that in France. *Hmm ...*

"When I left I got chatting to a female officer from the municipal police who told me I should go to St Augustin [chemin de la Digue des Français, Bâtiment 43] as, in her words, they were much better (shocking!). And she was right.

"Their response couldn't have been more different. As it was an aggression against a minor, they wanted to look into it although they did say it was very unlikely that the perpetrator would be caught. The captain said these guys work in gangs looking for vulnerable targets. He told us that the phone thieves steal about 10 phones per day and then sell them on for €100 each. It's lucrative work for them and there's not much likelihood of being caught and even less likelihood of being prosecuted.

"He did give David some general advice that would be useful to any readers with children (see box), although if you ever find yourself around a *collège* or *lycée* at start or end time, you should look at how many kids do the complete opposite of these suggestions!

"I also sent an email via the Nice.fr website to Mayor Estrosi, saying that I'd read about all this investment in CCTV cameras yet they weren't being used. And that it's a pretty serious situation if we can't guarantee that our kids can walk to and from school in safety. Also if the police have the sort of attitude that I witnessed initially, people won't even bother reporting the crime.

"I had a call from the Maire de Nice (*Assistance aux victimes*), who had

Kids & mobile phones: **STREETWISE**

- Don't have your phone out on display when you're on the street.
- Don't wear headphones if walking alone.
- If you do make a call, have your back to a wall so that you can get a good view all around you.
- Don't call your friend from the bus saying, "I'll be there in a sec" or "*J'arrive*", you could be followed.
- Girls should have any bags tucked under their arms.
- Don't try to be a hero over a phone. These guys won't hesitate to kick someone to the ground or knock someone's teeth out, boy or girl.



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FRANCE IN THE NEWS

received my email. Very pleasant and human actually, they said they had recommended increased patrols to the police around Parc Imperial, although I'm not sure how influential they are.

"I mentioned that some streetwise awareness workshops would be good for students and they seemed to think that was a good point as these are only done for older people and for primary kids at the moment. *On verra ...*"

Taking the bite out of bad apples

KAY O. lives in San Francisco, California, but visits Nice every year.

"I have been fortunate to have lived in many different places and travelled extensively throughout my life, which I thoroughly enjoy. It gives one a wonderful insight and awareness into the differences and similarities in people and places and what makes them memorable and unique.

"France in general has always been one of my favourite destinations and it has been my pleasure to spend five months each year for the past number of years in Nice and, over time, I have made many friends. I love the abundance of choices available and have taken full advantage of all. However, in latter times I have noticed a very unsettling trend which seems to be growing and is becoming a problem.

"Whereas I never had fears for my personal safety in the past, this is no longer the case. Unfortunately, robbery, violence and disorderly conduct have become all too familiar and occur at

all times of the day and night. In my particular case, the robbery and violence occurred on a Sunday morning at 10 am, when my friend and I were returning from the gym. As we were entering our building, in a lovely part of the city one block from the Promenade des Anglais, we were followed into the courtyard of the residence and attacked by a very brutal man who tried to rob us. Robbery is one type of assault but coupled with violence it is the most terrifying experience imaginable. In addition, my French friend is almost blind so she had an even more upsetting experience as she heard and felt everything without the benefit of being able to see to defend herself.

"Fortunately, a man who was coming out of the parking lot nearby heard the commotion, which was now on the street, and saw what was happening. He retrieved my purse after a scuffle and then chased our assailant down the street, unbeknownst to him, while speaking to the police on his cell phone and directed them to a location where they caught and arrested him.

"The undercover police came to our building in the afternoon and asked if we would go to identify him, which we did. They told us this individual had been arrested many times but always managed to get back on the street, which was very frustrating for them. They asked if we would voluntarily go to court the following day and testify at his trial. We agreed. We listened to this man whine and cry and talk about *ma mère* to the judge, which was the best acting I have seen in

a long time. The prosecutor presented her case and this time it was successful. He was sentenced to one year and the plan was to deport him as he was illegal and had about ten different aliases.

"I will admit we were concerned that he might be released and felt we would be in physical danger, as he knew where we lived, but our decision to identify and testify against him was based on two very important facts. When we spoke to that very kind man who chased our assailant, he said, 'I did my duty and no thanks necessary.' What a very simple, powerful and impressive statement. The second was an appreciation for the hard and difficult work the police and prosecutor do every day. They were courteous, efficient and professional in every respect and 'did their duty' ... so we felt it was 'our duty' to do the right thing also.

"The most important aspect of this story is that there was one bad apple that created a lot of trouble for many people for a long time. People working together by doing the right thing stopped the rot. It is not enough to keep things looking pretty, it is important to work together to keep things safe. I am looking forward to returning to Nice again this year and enjoying all the pleasures but I will be vigilant because you never know when you can meet that 'bad apple.' ■

Police in the A-M have launched a "Call 17" campaign. Anyone reporting a break-in, even if just looks suspicious, should call "17" instead of 112 or the local police.

MANN WITH A MISSION

Heartfelt thanks to Mougins School from Prey Veng pupils.



John Mann with Hilary Lemaire, and talking to students at Mougins School (below).



THIS year Mougins School has played a big part in education worlds away from the comforts of the South of France.

The international school, celebrating its 50th anniversary, has raised awareness as well as significant sums for the charity Educating Cambodia.

The charity is run by the quietly dynamic John Mann, 68, English by birth and an actor by trade. Based in Australia for many years, he played parts in “Home and Away” and “Return to the Blue Lagoon”. He stumbled across his mission in life by accident when travelling in Cambodia.

“I visited poor countries because they were cheap,” said John. “In Cambodia in 2005 a tuk-tuk driver invited me to his wedding. It was at Prey Veng, about as far off the tourist trail you could get. There was no electricity, no clean water, no toilet.

“When I gave a camera as a gift, the response was ‘thank-you, but can you give us a school?’

“I became inspired, and set about raising funds. I never had a formal plan, or signed a document, but gradually it started to come together.

“Today we have a school teaching 1080 kids from 12 villages.”

So many pupils and limited space mean operating the school under a two-shift

system. “Holidays” for the children of Prey Veng are timed so they can help their parents with the rice harvest.

Although boys and girls get an equal education, John says it is by the success of the girls’ schooling that Educating Cambodia should be judged.

“In the beginning the most widely-held belief was that girls were there to become wives and so didn’t need an education. But the fate of a Cambodian girl with no education was often horrible. Thanks to the school, not one girl has been lost to sex slavery in the past seven years.”

John thanks his long-time friend Hilary Lemaire, the Riviera’s queen of theatre, for her valuable support.

“Hilary’s fund-raising productions have been so important for us. It was she who made the introduction to Mougins School.” Not for nothing is the teachers’ house at Prey Veng named *Chez Hilary*.

John was speaking on the eve of a performance of “The Picture of Dorian Gray” produced by Hilary in the school’s new theatre space, an evening that raised nearly €3,000 for Educating Cambodia.

“This is my second visit to the school, and I have talked about the project to groups of five year olds as well as the older students. The reactions, the

understanding, has been so heartening.”

Back in Prey Veng, a guesthouse is being built in traditional Khmer style to accommodate volunteers who have offered their hands-on assistance.

“At least once a month I receive offers of help – those volunteering to teach English or to nurse. It would be fantastic to say yes, but there is nowhere to stay. This part of Cambodia is heavily populated but never visited by tourists, so there is no accommodation with beds, clean water, electricity ... Having a guesthouse for our visitors will be a huge development for us.”

Backing up education with proper medical care has become a priority for John. “We are looking to pay for an ambulance – if we get one the government will provide two doctors.”

Donors to Educating Cambodia can be assured that their money will not be eaten up in admin costs, which are zero – John does all the office work on his “bamboo laptop”. And he has this message for those who feel moved to contribute: “I want people to feel part of our villages, learn what is needed, and to know that what they are giving is precisely targeted.” ■

Learn more about Educating Cambodia at educatingcambodia.com



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The other expats

JUST when the anti-EU, anti-immigration UKIP party (whose leader has a French name and a German wife) is starting to matter in the polls, a few pesky truths are creeping in to spoil the momentum

According to a report by the Migration Research Unit at University College London, new immigrants from the EU paid some £25 billion more in taxes than they received in benefits over the 10-year period between 2001 and 2011. The tendency is expected to continue. Recent immigrants from the EEA are 45% less likely to receive benefits than British-born residents, tend not to live in social housing, probably have a degree and participate in the labour market.

The story isn't quite the same for non-EU immigrants because they often have larger families. Since 1995 they have claimed more in benefits than they have contributed in taxes.

Professor Christian Dustmann, who co-penned the report, says, "Our research shows that in contrast with most other European countries, the UK attracts highly-educated and skilled immigrants from within the EEA."

Former Conservative Prime Minister Sir John Major has made his stance forcefully, "We wouldn't have a National Health Service or a transport system without immigrants."

Dustmann's conclusion is equally

clear: "Given the evidence, claims about 'benefit tourism' by EEA immigrants seem to be disconnected from reality."

It's unlikely however that Farage & Co will let such a simple fact get in the way of the anti-EU rhetoric they are still so effectively selling to voters.

Be British but hire French

JONATHAN Wolf, who's as British as they come, probably would agree with the UCL report. Based in London, he's Chief Product Officer for Criteo, a global technology firm listed on NASDAQ, with over a thousand employees.

When it comes to entrenched British preconceptions about French attitudes to work, Wolf swims very much against the stream with his "hire French" attitude. He admits it's uncommon but answers his own "How could I say something so crazy?" with implacable logic. The French score highly on his list of three essential criteria when hiring for an IT company.

Firstly, their analytical skills are honed by the rigorous French higher education system and its emphasis on mathematics and engineering. Secondly, French engineers are more creative because of their scepticism. "They are always ready to ask 'Why?' and are very keen to come up with a better solution than yours," Wolf maintains. "A French engineer will definitely challenge you." Lastly, French graduates tend to be very good at getting along in multinational companies

BRIEFS

because France is a mixture of northern and southern traits, which combine a quantitative culture with "Latin charm".

Wolf regrets that French engineers are "often unhappy" because of the demands they put on themselves. But from a more laid-back Anglo-Saxon standpoint, that commitment is a quality that can only be good news for any British company that hires them. ■

The santon scene

SANTONNIERS head to Mousans-Sartoux to sell figurines at the oldest and biggest santon fair in the department, from Nov 4th to Dec 24th, 14h-18h.

A little further away in Aix-en-Provence, Santons Fouque (santons-fouque.fr) is celebrating its 80th anniversary. Visit their collection of 2,000 figurines, all 100% handmade in Provence by four generations of Fouques. Open daily in Dec from 10h-19h (except the 25th). See pg 48 for more.



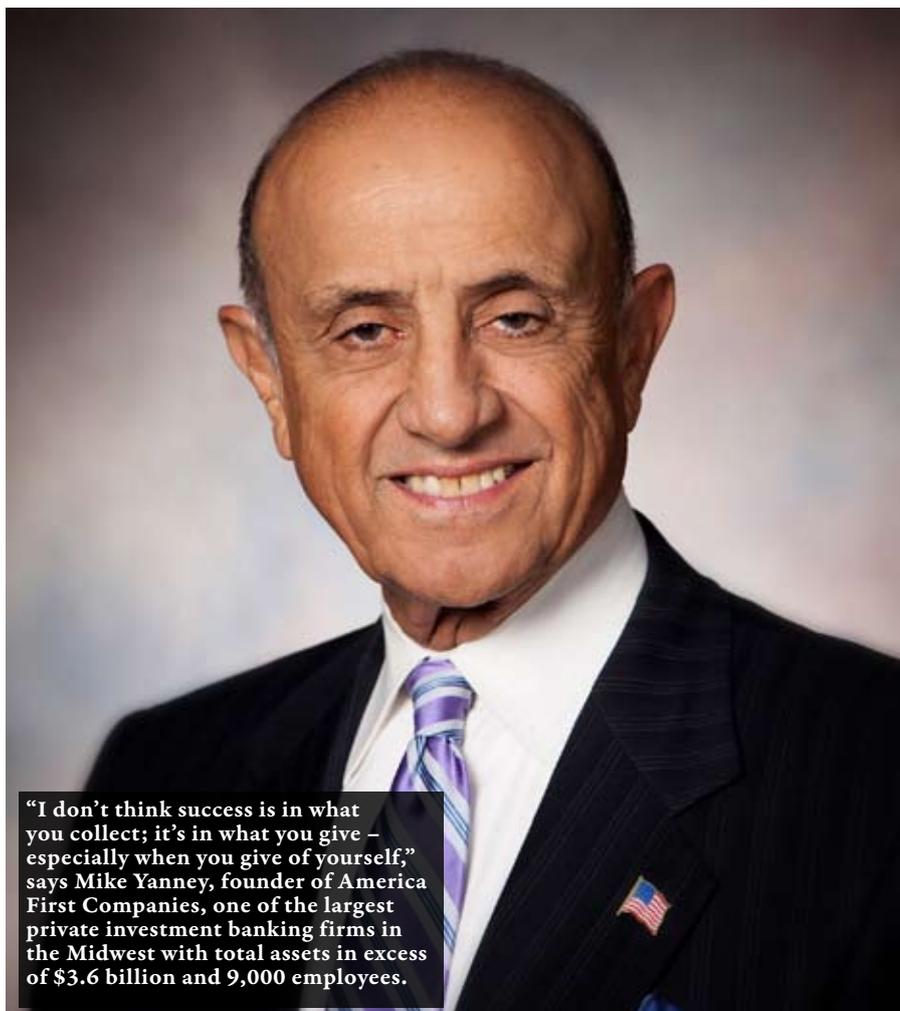
Mireille Fouque painting santon in Aix.

Photo © Creation Santons Fouque / Thierry Lopez

“Guns and bombs won’t make the kinds of changes we need”

A public peace process from the Monaco US Business Roundtable

BY PJ HESLIN



“I don’t think success is in what you collect; it’s in what you give – especially when you give of yourself,” says Mike Yanney, founder of America First Companies, one of the largest private investment banking firms in the Midwest with total assets in excess of \$3.6 billion and 9,000 employees.

WHEN Susan Feaster, cofounder along with Mike Powers of the Monaco US Business Roundtable, approached Mike Yanney about the initiative, his interest was immediate. With an extensive background in business, specifically banking and education, he knew he could make a significant contribution.

Mr Yanney also understands that such forums are imperative in today’s political climate. “Dialogue has shrunk back to what it was before the Cold War and, as we’ve seen recently, guns and bombs are not going to make the kinds of changes we need. It’s not just about peace. The world is developing quickly with new opportunities appearing but these opportunities don’t

work well if we’re shooting at one another.”

Mr Yanney’s commitment to improving education and philanthropy in general is nothing new, and he tells me that he believes that businesses have a responsibility to contribute back to society. Presently his number one charitable undertaking is improving his community of Omaha. In addition to sitting on several boards and forums for the betterment of his home state of Nebraska, in 2006 he founded the Building Bright Futures program (bbfomaha.org). The goal of Building Bright Futures is to see that every Omaha-area student graduates from high school. To date the organization has provided tutoring and health care

to those less advantaged and is presently focusing on improving early childhood education to areas most in need.

Education is something Mr Yanney is passionate about, and strives for its improvement. “I consider the upper twenty five per cent of our students as the best in the world. The bottom twenty five percent make up the worst we have ever seen and that’s what we need to work on.” Scholarships are part of the answer but he says so is listening to the youth of the country. “When I sit down and talk with students, I learn a lot from them. These forums are important not just for the students but for people like myself to learn.”

Mr Yanney’s educational drive stems from his mother, a Lebanese immigrant with only an eighth grade education. In high school, he was busy not only academically but with extra-curricular activities as well. He played football, was captain of the track team and was elected Nebraska’s No 1 Teen Leader. Part-time jobs like detasseling corn and selling minnows to a bait shop also kept him busy.

“I thought a lot about my future,” he reflects. “I was committed to my education and wanted to go to college. My mother was clear about that soon after my father died, when I was 11. She sat me down and told me not to worry because someday I would go to college. She always told me no one could ever take education away from me. I spent a lot of time with her and my family. I loved being with them.”

Mike Yanney heeded his mother’s advice and went to Kearney State Teachers College, which has since become part of the University of Nebraska. He worked his way through college while at the same time serving on the student council, president of his fraternity and staying on the honor roll. He graduated in 1955 with a degree in business and then went into the army to serve during the Korean War. His unit was sent to Korea but Mr Yanney was sent to Heidelberg, Germany. “I don’t know what happened there. I suppose I was lucky but

to be honest, I felt bad, as I had trained with those guys for all that time and for some reason I was sent elsewhere. It was an amazing opportunity for me, though, to see the rebuilding efforts of Germany. It gave me a more global aspect of the world and deeply influenced my life.

"I was also able to travel all over Europe and it was the only time I've ever lived outside of Nebraska."

With an eye on what he was going to do once out of the service, while in Germany Mr Yanney took correspondence courses through the American Institute of Banking. In 1960, he went to work for the National Bank of Omaha. Seventeen years later he began his own bank, then "three banks later", in 1984, he founded America First Companies, which has become one of the largest private investment banks in the Midwest with over \$3.6 billion in total assets. It has since become Burlington Capital Group and now at the age of 81, he still serves as chairman emeritus.

Under the High Patronage of H.S.H. Prince Albert, the Monaco US Business Roundtable Forum next June will discuss "The Importance of Sustained Dialogue between the Western and Eastern Worlds: A Public Peace Process". Mike Yanney feels that veteran businessmen like himself and others participating can provide a unique insight to students.

"I used to be on the Board

of Level 3, one the largest fibre optic companies worldwide. To think, in one second our voice can travel five or six times around the globe.

"The world is an extremely small place and there is no way of stopping the global economy. This means there are great prospects for young people today and I'm interested in forums like the US Monaco Business Roundtable which help young people develop these opportunities."

Despite the problems with the American economy, Mike Yanney recognizes that American businessmen can offer insight to the next generation of entrepreneurs. "America is still the world's strongest economy. Our democracy works well. We have control on corruption and our court system is fundamentally sound. We have a lot to offer and what better place to have the roundtable than in Monaco."

Speaking by phone with Mr Yanney, he mentions he almost wasn't able to make it into work today because of the black ice on the road. I ask him if that wasn't a good enough excuse for taking the day off work. "No. It's the challenges that are fun. Once you become a couch potato you might as well draw the curtains." ■

The Monaco US Business Roundtable Forum will run June 9th-11th, 2015 in Monaco. For more information, contact President Susan Feaster at MonacoUS.BRT@gmail.com

IN the three years since we wrote about the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), the measure has had inadvertent repercussions on American expats "to lose banking access, having their account closed, blocking access to credit and canceling mortgages".

American Citizens Abroad (ACA; americansabroad.org) have been tracking the events

and put out an educational FATCA video. "ACA supports the US Government's efforts to combat tax evasion, but the FATCA legislation did not take into account the needs of the community of Americans working overseas to access basic banking services," says ACA Executive Director, Marylouise Serrato.

See ACA's YouTube video: <http://goo.gl/wGIMZ5>



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THE PAVILLIONS HAVE LANDED



“The preservation of gardens and trees is one of Société des Bains de Mer’s priorities, which preserves an important expanse of green spaces and flora. Accordingly, landscape architect Jean Mus successfully integrated the Pavillons Monte-Carlo in Monaco’s urban landscape by designing a lush botanical universe, merging with the Jardins de la Petite Afrique ...” SBM

BY MOLLY BROWN

WHILE the Hotel du Cap in Antibes and Nice’s Hotel Negresco nurture their historic past, Monaco’s Société des Bains de Mer insist they must move with the times and cater to the tastes of today’s wealthy clientele. Hence, turmoil and change in the town square. Hidden behind a green fence all summer, SBM’s €17 million Pavillons des Merveilles in the Jardins des Boulingrins were officially opened by HSH Prince Albert in October: innovative, recyclable, on schedule, but too large, and, at €100,000/m² rent (plus €5,000/m² construction charge), too expensive for Chanel and the LVMH group. The original idea ... to put smaller temporary shops opposite Hermès on the casino terraces ... was abandoned, as the area was “too small”, but it would have saved the fountains and gardens, a million (or three) euros, 50 trees ... and the spectacular view of the casino.

Demolition, deconstruction, delusion ...

MONTE Carlo’s Casino is the Mecca of every tourist visiting Monaco. They gather there, cameras clicking, all day long. A €10 visit to the casino’s growing collection of slot machines, selfies with their cell phones in front of everything ... parked Ferraris, the Café de Paris, Cartier and the elegant boutiques on the avenue des Beaux Arts. Now the Carré d’Or is all fenced off ... even the Allée Sergei Diaghilev, so how to get to the Hotel Hermitage? Well, you could walk through the Sporting d’Hiver.

No, it is NOT going to be demolished! SBM have officially stated: “It is not a demolition, but a deconstruction.” Are you sure? A change of heart? Perhaps an error in translation? Sadly no, dear reader, I discover that *deconstruction* is a term dating from the 1980s, used by architects as a clever way of circumventing the issue! Deconstruction of the interior has already begun. So, beware the midnight hour. That was when the trees were “deconstructed”.

The cranes and bulldozers hover nearby because at a cost of €40 million, 400 more parking spaces are to be constructed underground, alongside the famous wine cellars of the Hotel de Paris, which partially re-opens on December 15th, but with only 40 rooms, the Salle Empire and the American Bar available during four years of major refurbishment of the hotel. However, we can “acquire a piece of its 150-year history” at a sale of 3000 items from 130 suites and rooms, to be auctioned in the hotel at the end of January. It promises to be the social event of the New Year, particularly as it includes items from Winston Churchill’s suite, which will also be renovated ... and “embellished” with the creation of a duplex villa with its own pool. What would Winnie have thought of that?

The good news is that it is almost Christmas ... traditionally a happy time of the year, with treats galore for the children at the Christmas village on Port Hercule and skating on the frozen swimming pool. On December 6th, the lights on Monaco’s Christmas tree in the Place du Casino will

be officially switched on and the festivities begin in the Metropole shopping centre with music, snowmen and a post box for the children’s letters to Santa Claus.

Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo celebrate the end of an eventful year by bringing dancers from around the world to the Monaco Dance Forum from December 12th at the Grimaldi Forum and the first of over 100 events in a year-long celebration of Russian culture and tradition in Monaco, home of the legendary Ballets Russes, will be “The Taming of the Shrew”, especially choreographed by Jean-Christophe Maillot for the dancers of Moscow’s Bolshoi Ballet (Dec 20-21). Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo will end the Dance Forum with director Jean-Christophe Maillot’s new ballet, “Faust” over New Year (Dec 28-31).

At the Auditorium Rainier III, the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra is celebrating a Russian Christmas with music by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev (Dec 7 & 14) and the Marlborough Gallery is presenting the works of Russian painter and sculptor, Grisha Bruskin, winner of the prestigious Kandinsky prize in 2012, in an exhibition entitled “H Hour” (Dec 18-Feb 13).

In spite of all this entertainment, I am escaping the chilly winter weather and spending a family Christmas in sunny Miami, where 250 of the world’s leading galleries are taking part in one of the biggest art fairs, “Art Basel”, in Miami Beach, which has miles of sandy beaches dotted with classic art deco architecture ... all carefully preserved. ■



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O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

BUSINESS

BY PETER JOHNSON



France's Minister of Economy, Emmanuel Marcon, who turns 37 in December, is one of the youngest people ever to hold a cabinet position. Photo: Gouvernement français

WE'RE fast approaching the end of the year, which brings with it the usual festive noises of a religious tone, but I shall also be celebrating the countdown to the end of the calamitous reign of President Hollande in a little over 2 years.

On Hollande's watch, overall tax has gone up from 43.7% of GDP to 46% (in his first year alone he increased tax by €30 billion), annual income growth has nudged up by only 0.4%, unemployment has gone to over 10%.

Prime Minister Valls, and the new Economy Minister, Emmanuel Macron, are trying to reverse the ship by making overtures to business and *entreprises*. In 2015 a reduction in social security charges paid by employers will come on-stream, savings of €21 billion will be squeezed out

of the over-generous social security system, and – most symbolically – the 75% top tax rate will be quietly allowed to die.

"The last time we heard such pro-business discourse was in 1995 under Alain Madelin," reported *The Economist*, quoting Bruno Cavalier from Oddo Securities, but for many it's too little, too late. It certainly won't save Mr Hollande, but it may promote the political futures for Valls and Macron. (And Madelin? "He lasted only three months.")

Next year's Finance Budget sees various tax changes that will affect all of us, again too little, too late!

- The bottom tranche of income tax at 5.5% will disappear, meaning that those earning less than €9690 per annum will be spared any tax.

- The Duflot incentive to buy new houses will be replaced by that of the new minister, Pinel, whereby for property investments up to €300,000 there will be tax reductions of 12%, 18% or 21% depending on whether you rent out the property for 6, 9 or 12 years respectively. The property can also be rented out to one's children, unlike the Duflot regime.

- A new raft of ecological tax credits will be introduced, giving a reduction of 30% across the board, with far more devices being allowable, from heating to insulation. The upper ceiling for the credit remains, however, at €8,000 per person.

- The sale of land for building will attract less capital gains tax. At present it takes a full 30 years to lose the Capital Gains Tax of 34.5%; now the period of detention of the land drops to 20 years in order to be free of Capital Gains Tax at 19%, although the social tax at 15.5% only disappears after 30.

- If you give a plot of land to someone who builds a new house within 4 years

there is an exemption of €100,000 on the value for the calculation of Capital Gains Tax; so if the eventual property is worth €300,000, only €200,000 will be subject to tax.

Elsewhere, a fairer system of calculating

family benefits (*Allocations familiales*) will come into effect, so those earning over €6,000 a month will no longer be eligible. This will save a sizeable chunk of money and seems a very fair measure.

Happy New Year! ■

STOP PRESS

A newly proposed **20% Taxe d'habitation of secondary homes** in "strained" cities (those with housing shortages) could mean people with holiday homes in Antibes, Cannes, Nice, Mougins and the rest could get quite a shock in the New Year. The measure is expected to yield €150 million. See page 5 for details.

HEIDI BYE!

An Antibes institution turns the page



LEAFING THROUGH: Photos right, from top: Heidi and Suzie Dean, who worked at Antibes Books for 12 years, at the 20th anniversary party; Heidi with Dame Vera Lynn in 2009; Henning Mankell at a 2013 book signing.



THE story starts in a cupboard in the Old Town of Antibes.

Heidi Lee, children's author and one-time actress, had discovered this particularly attractive part of the South of France with her husband, Brian Loughran. What it seemed to lack was a place to browse and buy books in English, so the pair set to work with hammer and nail and transformed 12 square metres into the first Antibes Books. It took off.

Today, as Heidi prepares to close this chapter in her life, she looks back on almost 25 years of bookselling.

"It's been a very happy time," says Heidi, chatting in the literary labyrinth that is Antibes Books today, 200m² of prime commercial property at the foot of the rue d'Auberson, lined with lived-in looking shelves that the owner admits have the air of being stuck together with chewing gum and string.

Heidi, she of the long dark hair and distinctive smile, looks back with particular affection on the early days at

the current site. "We had an art gallery in the basement and used to put on theatre productions, one had more energy than ... also times were easier, people had money to spend on books, the business was growing.

"Christmas was a real joy with Brian as Santa Claus and a brass band of computer consultants from Sophia Antipolis playing carols outside the shop.

"These days, like every other bookshop, one feels the adverse effect of the internet and Kindle, added to which the French economy is dire and the rules for running a French business have become more and more Draconian. It wasn't just those things that made me think it was time to retire, though.

"I'm coming up to a 'big birthday' and life is too short to waste so I decided to put the shop on the market and see what happened. I was amazed and somewhat shocked when the first offer made was one I simply couldn't refuse."

Certainly no bookshop could afford the site these days, but that doesn't

necessarily mean the end of the line for English books in Antibes. A member of Heidi's staff is keen to open up elsewhere in the town. If that does come to pass, one hopes that Heidi's philosophy of stocking a large range of books will still apply.

"The range was very important to me. The boaties of Antibes were excellent customers and appreciated my keeping the Beat Poets, esoteric books and 'sex, drugs and rock and roll' as well as literary fiction and the latest best sellers."

Author signings have been many and varied, Heidi's fondest memories reserved for those of Dame Vera Lynn, Wallander author Henning Mankell and *Merde!* man Stephen Clarke.

Surprisingly, she has less happy souvenirs of Harry Potter releases, normally bonanza time for a bookshop.

"We always seemed to have problems getting the stock in time. The publisher put a strict embargo on the release of copies, so there was no way of getting the books in advance. We were at the mercy

of the delivery people.”

One particular un-wizard morning sticks in Heidi’s mind. “We were promised the books by opening time – they hadn’t arrived, they were probably in Timbuktu. We had a crowd of excited children waiting outside the shop. It was awful having to open the doors empty-handed. Luckily on that occasion the books did eventually show up. Another time we had to go and buy copies at Carrefour to fulfil our orders.

“People say I am an Antibes institution; at times like those I felt as if I should be in one.”

On the plus side, Heidi still gets a kick out of seeing a customer who was but a bump in the maternity frock of one of her first patrons turn up in the bookshop

with their own children.

“When people like these hear we’re closing, their first reaction is ‘Oh my God! You can’t!’ But after a bit of reflection they say they can understand my reasoning.”

Heidi intends to stay on in Antibes, her house with the walled garden in the heart of Old Town is a haven and after 30 years, home is definitely in France. However, her release from a business that stays open 363 days a year means she is thinking of returning to writing and travel is high on the agenda for 2015.

“I’m off to Mardi Gras in New Orleans in February, and revisiting Australia, where I lived for ten years, is a possibility.

“Oh, and I have an invitation to learn the tango in Argentina.” ■

Nice Assets

ALAN Watson started life in a small southern UK town, Swindon. “Not at all exciting,” he tells the *Reporter*, “unless you like trains, car factories and real ale pubs.”

A sales director position in a London advertising agency took Alan to every European capital and most of the Middle East; at age 33, he trained as a money manager: “The investment world was still in the grey old days of offshore banking, no questions asked. Clients seriously gave a handful of cash to be invested, and the bank took it without questions. Dull under-performing funds and the euro were far-off prospects.”

Some 25 years later, with a Dutch wife and two teenage sons, Alan now runs his business from his home in the Savoy region of France. It’s no coincidence then that Alan’s thriller “Hidden Assets” (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform), about

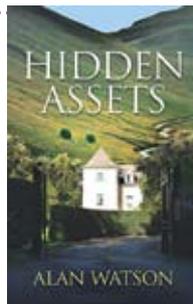
a group of wealthy expats living in a chateau, who are being targeted as tax dodgers by the French *fisc*, takes place near the French Alps.

“Yes, the international characters, the chateau, location and even the nasty bits have been experienced,” he explains, “but it’s a hot topic, something readers can immediately relate to.”

Working through the 252 pages, I kept asking myself: “What do I want to happen to these characters? Should I feel sympathetic towards these guys who, like so many others, are playing the system?”

Surely that’s the sign of an ample storyteller, when the plot outcome consumes the reader’s thoughts outside of reading time.

Look for the sequel, available spring 2015. *N.H.*



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With grateful thanks to my customers for allowing me 24 Happy Years of Bookselling



Experience, strength ... and hope

The message of Alcoholics Anonymous in the South of France



LIFE in the South of France – the sun and the sea, and thoughts of chilled Provençal rosé wine, lovely but not for me. I am an alcoholic.

My drinking career started aged 14 when I discovered the feeling of love and warmth my friend alcohol gave me. My drinking career ended just over 40 years later when alcohol had become my own worst enemy.

It was first suggested to me I was an alcoholic at the age of 17, and repeatedly until May 2002, I spent a month in rehab in London, only to drink on the way home from the hospital. I continually refused to accept that I had a problem with alcohol.

An English expatriate friend, living in Paris from June 2010, soon asked, “Do you think you have a problem with alcohol?” He gave me a list of English-speaking meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous in Paris, of which there were more than 30 a week. I went to my first AA meeting in February 2011, and was sober and not sober over the next fifteen months. I had periods of sobriety, well to be honest, I had periods of not drinking; I was never sober in the true meaning of the word. These dry periods ranged from a few days to a month, and once three months. I lied. I cheated. I denied I was an alcoholic. I was, I am, a classic example of denial. Me? No. I don’t have a problem with alcohol. I could not admit it, only deny it.

Early in 2012, the chance to move from

Paris to Nice arose, to do the job I was already doing and the job I loved. The date was set for June 1st, 2012. I went on a drinking spree on May 21st. That spree was to cost me my job. I was on my knees. Alcohol, King Alcohol, was in control of me.

I had no reason to stay in Paris and took the decision to move to Nice as planned, although jobless. The contract was signed on an apartment. I was going to share with

the Paris friend who had given me the information on Alcoholics Anonymous. I had an AA sponsor (another woman alcoholic who acts as a trusted friend and guide), who agreed to help me when I was 2 days sober, and who still is my sponsor. I had a list of AA meetings on the Côte d’Azur. It was time to stop the denial.

My first meeting in Nice was Tuesday June 12th, 2012. I was 18 days sober. I felt humiliated. I was frightened. I cried openly. I was ashamed of myself. I didn’t listen or pay attention in Paris. I didn’t want to. I wasn’t an alcoholic. Now I was an alcoholic and I had to listen. This was the beginning of the rest of my life. One day at a time. A phrase that is vital to my sobriety. The idea of not ever having an alcoholic drink again is easier today to accept and that is key to how AA works, One Day at a Time.

As I write I am now 20 months and some days sober. There’ve been laughter and tears, there’ve been highs and lows, there still are laughter and tears, there still are highs and lows; however, I am sober and it is amazing. People told me “keep coming back” and I have done so. I continue to do so. For me, the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous is one of hope. People have shared their experience (what brought them to AA), their strength (what keeps them coming back to AA) and their hope (what lies ahead so long as we do not take that first drink). By meeting and talking with another sober alcoholic it is possible to stay sober.

There are 13 English-speaking meetings weekly in Nice alone. That’s two per day except on Monday. There are a total of 32 meetings per week along the Côte d’Azur ranging from Monaco in the east to Aix-en-Provence and Montpellier in the west. There is a 24-hour a day helpline. There are numbers of members to call on the AA Meeting List. There is a website with all this information on it. There is a wealth of literature available. Above all there are people who understand and anyone with a desire to stop drinking has every opportunity to do so.

The variety of people in Alcoholics

Anonymous is enormous – all nationalities, businessmen and women, people who came for a holiday and stayed, writers and artists attracted by the beauty of the South of France, housewives and hoteliers,

the unemployed making a living as they can and many others. Alcoholism is an illness for which there is no known cure at the moment. It is a disease that has been likened to an allergy. It is a disease that sets off “the phenomenon of craving” and like any disease it can affect anyone.

Today I don’t need to drink thanks to the wonderful programme of Alcoholics Anonymous that exists here on the Côte d’Azur. To those of us afflicted with alcoholism, sobriety is a gift and it has been suggested I “pass it on”. I am very happy to do so. **AA member, South of France** ■

For the full article, see RivieraReporter.com

To contact English-speaking Alcoholics Anonymous South of France call 0820 200 257 or see aa-riviera.org

Church & Choir Services **Christmas 2014**

AIX★EN★PROVENCE: ICCP INT'L CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF PROVENCE

Cathedrale St Sauveur ★ 34 place Martyrs Resistance
06 28 59 65 76 ★ iccpaix.org ★ Pastor Timothy Arlen

Sun Dec 7, 15h30: Annual Christmas Carol Concert in English. Doors open at 15h. The concert is free so get there early for a good seat. Come celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with us!

BEAULIEU★SUR★MER: ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

11 chemin des Myrtes ★ 04 93 01 45 61
stmichaelsbeaulieusurmer.org
Rev Phillip Robinson

Sun Dec 21, 10h: Service of Nine Lessons, and Carols with the Eucharist.

Mon Dec 22, 18h30: Joint Service of Carols and Readings with the Paroisse Catholique de Notre Dame de l'Esperance.

Wed Dec 24, 19h: Christmas Eve Eucharist.
Thurs Dec 25, 10h: Christmas Day Eucharist.

CAGNES★SUR★MER: SWEDISH CHURCH

40 ave de Verdun ★ 04 93 20 40 64
svenskakyrkan.se/sodrafrankrike

Dec 7, Dec 14 and Dec 21, 11h: Advent mass.
Fri Dec 12, 18h: Ste Lucia concert with Swedish Church choir at Château Eglise Ste Pierre, in Haut de Cagnes. Glögg" served at Swedish Church afterwards. Take free shuttle No 44 from Square Bourdet to stop outside the Château. Free entry.

Sat Dec 13, 17h: In Place Massena, Nice, Ste Lucia procession after Swedish jazz concert in old town. Vin chaud will be served at Café L'F (6 place Charles Felix, Cours Saleya) at 19h. Entry: €10-15. Concert venue TBC. Please email for info & to book your ticket: swingitalice@consulate-suede.fr

Wed Dec 24, 14h: Christmas Eve Prayer. Christmas porridge to be enjoyed after service.

Wed Dec 31, 16h: New Years Eve Prayer. Champagne and foie gras served after service.

CANNES: HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Ave Branly ★ 04 93 94 54 61
holyltrinitycannes.org ★ Rev Giles Williams

Sun Dec 21, 19h30: Carol Service.
Wed Dec 24, 16h: Children's Carol Service.
Wed Dec 24, 23h30: Midnight Communion.
Thurs Dec 25, 9h: Early Communion.
Thurs Dec 25, 10h30: Family Service with Communion. All welcome.

ENSEMBLE VOCAL RISTRETTO ristrettovoices.com

Sat Dec 13, 20h30: Christmas concert directed by Errol Girdlestone at Chateaufneuf de Grasse church (Eglise St-Martin in the village). Extracts from Handel's Messiah and Christmas songs by various composers including Britten and Rutter. Entrance free.

INT'L BAPTIST CHURCH

06 64 96 94 22 ★ ibcfrance.org
Pastor James Arnold

NICE: 13 rue Vernier

Sat Dec 13, 20h: Traditional English Christmas Carol Concert in Nice at Sacre Coeur Cathedral (22 Rue de France).

ST PAUL DE VENICE: Commercial Centre St Claire "0"
Thurs Dec 24, 19h: Christmas Eve Service.

MARSEILLE: ALL SAINTS' ANGLICAN CHURCH

4 rue de Belloi ★ 06 82 48 04 58
anglican-marseille.org ★ Canon David Pickering

Sun Dec 14, 17h30: Carol Service.
Thurs Dec 25, 10h: Christmas Day Service.

MENTON: ST JOHN'S CHURCH

Chapelle St Roch, Place St Roch (while St John's is closed for repairs) ★ 04 93 57 20 25
anglicanchurchmenton.com ★ Rev Dr David HartTSSF

Sun Dec 21, 10h30: Christmas Eucharist with Carols.
Thurs Dec 25, 10h30: Christmas Day Eucharist.

ST PAUL'S CHURCH MONTE CARLO

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

Sun Dec 14, 10h30: Children's Nativity Play.
Sun Dec 14, 19h: Annual Carol Service.
Wed Dec 24, 17h: Children's Christingle Service.
Wed Dec 24, 23h: Christmas Eve Midnight Mass.
Thurs Dec 25, 10h30: Family Christmas Communion.
Sun Dec 28, 10h30: First Sunday of Christmas.

MONACO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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

Sat Dec 14: Christmas concert (time TBC). Please see website for details. All welcome.

NICE: HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH

11 rue de la Buffa ★ 04 93 87 19 83
anglican-nice.com ★ Rev Peter Jackson

Sun Dec 14, 12h: Christmas community lunch.
Tues Dec 16, 18h: Carol Service (St Hugh's Vence).
Sun Dec 21, 18:30: Carol Service; mulled wine in hall.
Wed Dec 24, 17h: Crib Service & Eucharist (TBC).
Wed Dec 24, 23h: Midnight Mass.
Thurs Dec 25, 11h: Christmas Day Eucharist

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Thurs Dec 11, 20h, Fri Dec 12, 20h, & Sat Dec 13, 18h: Get into the spirit of Christmas with RIS' Christmas concert with a wonderful variety of classical and traditional Christmas songs and carols at St Blaise Church in Valbonne. Come and sing along with us and have a cup of mulled wine after the concert. All benefits go to charity. Tickets: Adults €10 (wine incl); children under-12: €5.

VAR: ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

04 94 60 87 05 ★ sjevar.com ★ Rev Keith Bretel

GRIMAUD VILLAGE: St Michel's Church
Fri Dec 19, 19h: Traditional English Carol Service followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

ST RAPHAEL: St John's ★ 117 ave Paul Doumer

Sun Dec 14, 10h30: Carol Service as part of morning worship.
Thurs Dec 25, 10h30: Christmas Day Communion Service.

FOR MORE
CHRISTMAS EVENTS
SEE PAGE 47 &
RIVIERAREPORTER.COM



The most wonderful time of the year?



THE Riviera sun, sea and lifestyle don't always compensate for the considerable distances from family and friends many resident expats experience. Day to day life can be particularly challenging over the holidays, which can stretch into a long and solitary season. Here are English-speaking associations whose support can make all the difference – and not just at Christmas.

THE Bereavement Support Network of the Var (BSN; bsnvar.org) was launched over ten years ago to allow those going through difficult and painful times the chance to talk about the loved one they've lost with someone who's been through the same experience, a trained person who can offer useful advice.

Mim Kay, president of the BSN, says, "This organisation exists to support not only the bereaved but also those who are terminally ill, and their families and friends."

If you, or someone you know, could benefit from their confidential, free support, then contact Sandra on 04 94 84 64 89 or 06 32 35 31 24.

AT Christmas many people support their favourite charities financially but it's equally important to remember those elderly people living on their own, either

at home or in a retirement home.

Anyone interested in visiting the Victoria Retirement Home at Mouans-Sartoux would be welcome to join the daily English tea, or to attend the Christmas Party that **Sunny Bank** (sunny-bank.org) organise for residents, both anglos and French.

"Christmas can be a very lonely time for those without close family or friends," Alison Lion, who leads Sunny Bank's Welfare activities, reminds us, "and spending a couple of hours talking to residents can be mutually rewarding."

Contact Helen Leiser at Sunny Bank on 04 93 47 94 20 or email admin@sunny-bank.org if you'd like to help.

Helen can also provide you with information about "Albert", a Senior Residents facility scheduled to open early 2016 in Mouans-Sartoux. The 33 luxury apartment units are "for people who can still lead independent lives but seek the peace of mind of having ready access to services that are adapted to their needs".

Sunny Bank's goal is to fill half of the available accommodation with English speakers, which they believe will enhance the quality of life among residents.

ALICE Rolfe, 12, has a "diaversary" approaching in December. During a family visit family to the UK last Christmas,

Alice was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes (when the body produces no insulin) after a trip to the emergency room. She was given injection pens, a blood glucose check kit and enough insulin to last her until the family returned home to Monaco. "We realised our lives would never be the same again," her father Ben says.

Ben has done his best to raise awareness and money for the cause through his running (see his blog pussyfootingaround.net), but as there were no local help groups for kids with Type 1 Diabetes, the Rolfes were relying on support from Diabetes UK.

Since then, Ben and his wife Sally have been working together with other families in similar situations and have now pooled their resources with the association **KidiDiabete** (kidi diabete.fr).

"It's predominantly French-speaking," Ben explains, "but we are trying to increase awareness amongst expats."

The group is hosting a pre-Christmas *gouter* for families on Sunday December 14th, with the Kidi mascot and R2D2 from "Star Wars". See page 48 for details.

For more on KidiDiabete, call Elodie Brun on 06 67 44 38 75 or in English, email mcbunsky@hotmail.co.uk

FOUNDED in May 2012, **SOS Cancer du Sein** is a nonprofit association based in Nice, which offers support to women with breast cancer or gynaecological cancer, and to their families.

In addition to helping patients adjust to living with the disease and raising awareness, president Barbara Prot tells the *Reporter*, "SOS believes the benefits of good physical and mental health improve the effectiveness of related treatments and fight against relapse. We organise sport, wellness and personal development activities in the region, like *Les Régates 'ROSE'* in Antibes last October during Cancer Awareness Month."

We'd point out to readers that Barbara lived in New York, Chicago and London for years and speaks English very well. There are two other English-speaking volunteers on the helpline, that's 0811 069 04 34.

See soscancerdusein.org (in French) or their Facebook page. To volunteer, email: barbara@soscancerdusein.org ■

HOLIDAYS

PICK OF THE LITTER

TANIA Burrows from *Chiens Ici Ailleurs* (CIA) wants to inform *Reporter* readers that the association has many furry friends looking for a home.

“Sadly, we have noticed that the number of abandoned dogs and cats is increasing every year,” she tells us, “and many people looking to take in a pet, decide to buy from pet shops or puppy mills instead of adopting.

“Too many times, dogs and cats are taken in just for a short period of time, and very easily dumped for reasons such as moving to another country, divorce, newborn babies, allergies ... We can’t rescue them all, many end up being euthanized, or abandoned many times over in their lives.”

But Tania is adamant: “Pets are not toys, they are not temporary companions, they are not here to fill in a blank at

some point in a life nor should they be victims of tantrums.

They have feelings, they have needs, and they live for 15 years approximately. They require time, energy, money and are simply living creatures like us.”

Nothing brightens up a Christmas morning like a wagging tail. If you feel you can offer a permanent home, and would be a “responsible pet carer”, then contact English-speaking Tania at adoption@chiensiciailleurs.com or see a list of dogs and cats for adoption on their website: chiensiciailleurs.com

“If we do not have the right pet for you,” she adds “we will surely re-direct you to another NGO or refuge – there are so many in our region.”



CARDIO FOR CANCER

AS we mention on page 18, the Nice-based association *SOS Cancer du Sein* has English-speaking volunteers on their helpline to offer support to those with breast cancer and their families.

Another local resource is Vanessa Reid, a breast cancer exercise trainer and cancer supporter. Vanessa has worked with the Livestrong Foundation since 2009 as part of their volunteer global grassroots team, who advocate and use their skills



on behalf of the cancer community. She’s given talks on Lymphoedema and fitness, and designed exercise programs for breast cancer survivors.

“Primary goals of a breast cancer recovery exercise program include maintaining and improving endurance and cardio fitness, and reducing the risk of Lymphoedema, osteoporosis, and shoulder problems,” Vanessa tells us. “English-speaking readers living through a breast cancer diagnosis who’d like more information about exercise and Lymphoedema, can email me at reidv@tcd.ie.”

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WHAT GIVES

The Reporter's annual gift guide



Take a seat

AUTHENTIC Furniture, based in Derbyshire, offers a range of handcrafted furniture made without compromise. Using the very best materials and craftsmen their range includes stunning Authentic Chesterfield Sofas, characterful reclaimed timber tables, and their own twist on the traditional wingback chairs: the Tufted Glove Chair (above) could quite simply be the most comfortable chair we've ever sat on! You can view their range online at authenticfurniture.co.uk. Delivery is available throughout mainland Europe.

Sniff out a bargain

THE Arthes perfume factory in Grasse pumps out 120,000 bottles daily of quality fragrances at very affordable prices.

For the festive season, try Jeanne Arthes gift sets. For her, the "Amore Mio Dolce Paloma" perfume and body lotion combo offers "a message of love, hope and life", with its sweet mixture of mandarin and blackcurrant with captivating flowers (jasmine, rose, orange blossom). For the manly men, the "Golden Goal" cologne and shampoo duo is a blend of cardamom and cumin seeds, scented with hints of lavender and vetiver.

Some 3000 outlets in France carry Jeanne Arthes perfumes, including the new boutique in St Paul de Vence.

The family tree

LES Pastras organic extra virgin olive oils make a fab gift for anyone who enjoys cooking, loves eating, or is either visiting or living in France. Truffle oil: €16/25cl (infused with real black winter truffles) and olive oil: €9/25cl. Fifty percent of the profits go to the One Family Orphanage in Haiti, and yes, they ship internationally.



If you're looking for a more deeply-rooted idea, look into their "Adopt a Tree"

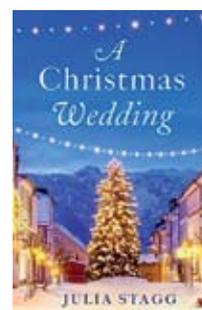


package, which includes pictures of your tree with engraved nameplate, certificate of ownership, and GPS coordinates. For each tree adopted, a fruit tree is purchased for the children at the One Family Orphanage. Adopt a Truffle Tree: €150 first year for 100gr black winter truffles, then €75/year (plus shipping) or Adopt an Olive Tree: €135 a year for 4 litres of olive oil (shipping included). More details at lespastras.com

Easy reader

FOR cosy fireside afternoons, a couple of holiday-themed book suggestions. *Sunday Times Top Ten* bestseller author Jenny Colgan (jennycolgan.com) divides her time between Antibes and London. Her latest release, in hardcover, "The Christmas Surprise" (UK: Sphere), is part of the series "Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams", winner of the *RNA Romantic Novel of the Year Award 2013*.

Julia Stagg's semi-autobiographical *Fogas* series (UK: Hodder & Stoughton) chronicles a British couple who buy an auberge in the Ariège-Pyrénées. Her fifth instalment, "A Christmas Wedding", is exceptionally a novella, available only as an eBook (€0.99) but a must-read before the sequel in spring 2015. See jstagg.com



And a wedding in the New Year alters the life of Sarah Tyler in "Mothers, Fathers & Lovers" (UK: Hookline Books), the eBook by Anglo-US author Ruby Soames (rubyssoames.com), who resides in Nice. Available in Kindle Edition at Amazon or from any online bookstore.

Don't forget that a subscription to the *Riviera Reporter* makes a mindful gift (€25 France or €35 Europe delivery). For details, and articles on the above authors, see RivieraReporter.com

Shape mates

DANISH-born British businessman Hans-Peter Franklin made his mark in Hong Kong with a chain of fitness clubs based on the American model, and then saw the opportunity to revolutionise *les salles de sport* in France. He opened the first Fitlane ten years ago in Mandelieu and now operates the largest chain in the country with seven additional clubs from Cannes to Nice.

"A gym has to be simple to join," Hans Peter told us (see *Reporter 155*), "and shouldn't be located more than 15 minutes from where you live or work."

At fitlane.com you'll find flexible memberships that will help the whole family stick to that New Year's resolution.

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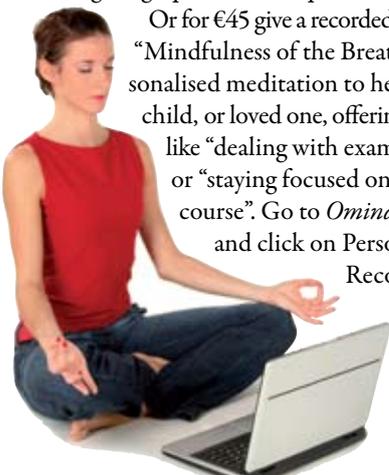



With you in mind

IN a recent *Telegraph* article on locally-based Alison Prideaux of *OMindfulness.com*, the journo, an admitted sceptic, wrote: “My introduction to meditation and mindfulness was profoundly relaxing. Practice at home is the next challenge, with Alison’s videocasts to help.”

For the holidays, Alison is offering a 1-hour introductory online session of Mindfulness meditation (€60). Using Skype, Google Hangout or by phone, Alison will discuss how Mindfulness can help you, before guiding a meditation and giving tips on how to practice alone.

Or for €45 give a recorded 20-minute “Mindfulness of the Breath”, a personalised meditation to help a friend, child, or loved one, offering support like “dealing with exam nerves” or “staying focused on the golf course”. Go to *Omindfulness.com* and click on Personalised Recordings.



www.rivierareporter.com

HOLIDAYS

Stroke saver

A GOLFER in the family will feel chipper with a gift from the Essentiel Golf Academy (*essentielgolfacademy.com*), run by François Morel, a brilliant instructor. €70 buys a 50-minute lesson with a top-class pro at either Claux Amic golf club above Grasse or Château de Taulane on the way to Castellane, €130 buys a tutored nine holes. Contact François on 06 10 93 13 77.

Looking for local Christmas markets?
See pg 47

The whiz kit

AND for those who have everything, there’s EzyPeezy (€20). Ever been stuck in traffic and had “to go”? Or what about on the beach, with no public toilets in sight? The EzyPeezy kit could be the answer. It includes a dumpy duffel bag, a midi-apron with deep pockets and a small jerrycan. Ask for brochure or send payment to 985 chemin des Garniers, Quartier Mouillaud, 83600, Les Adrets. Tel: 06 22 38 47 83. ■

Red noses in Monaco

LES Enfants de Frankie (*frankiemonaco.org*) have helped over 100,000 needy children in Monaco and the PACA Region. Its annual *Journée Monégasque des Nez Rouge* falls on Dec 6th, with all proceeds from the €2 “noses” (red balls for your car) going to the charity, which is always looking for volunteers, members and donations.

Father’s helping hands

VOLUNTEERS are needed at St Paul’s Church Monte Carlo. “We’re heading into possibly the busiest time of the year, with lots to do. The more helping out – if only for a single hour – the lighter the work for everyone concerned,” says Father Walter.

Contact humphreys@monaco.mc to assist in the week leading up to the Dec 6th Annual Ecumenical Kermesse (see pg 48) or to help decorate the church Dec 8th, assist with the Dec 14th carol service or the Dec 24th and 25th services, contact walter@monaco.mc or +377 93 30 71 06.

Toy exchange

ON Dec 7th, the 22nd Bourse aux Jouets de la St Nicolas in Ste-Maxime (next to the tourist office) runs from 8h-18h. Kids can sell or exchange old or new toys, and see St Nicolas. For more call 06 83 38 72.

CHEER DELIGHT

BY ALEXANDER IGNATIEFF



THE season is upon us! Sun seeking bathers have abandoned the beaches to storm chasing surfers. The loungers are swapped for extra layers and ski kit. Gourmet salads are now just sides for more hearty fare and the obligatory glass of rosé stays in its bottle leaving the stage to the rest of the wine rainbow.

From a wine drinkers' perspective the lid is definitely off the tin of Quality Streets and all flavours are on the menu! Time to share celebrate and just enjoy a year well spent, not to mention getting ready to kick off the next one in style.

At L'Emporium du Vin we've put together a few thoughts to help you get the most out of this wonderful time of year.

Top of the list of essentials is a good bottle of bubbly. Especially this time of year, when your fizz can handle a bit more complexity and weight, nothing competes with Champagne. Hopefully your favourite house is one of ours and included in our festive offers. For value that's hard to beat try something less well known, our house Fizz, Champagne Fourtin, has a bit of history. It's blended for us by the team that made the own label Champagne for me when I was the Wine Buyer at Harvey Nichols. The blend is dominated by Pinot Meunier, about 60%, which brings a soft creamy character and red berry fruit. A judicious addition of Chardonnay adds nuttiness and a steely edge. Pinot Noir

brings more berries and fuller flavour. The Meunier matures more quickly than both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay adding more complexity to a wine that still has beautifully fresh, clean creaminess to it, too. It goes down very well.

What would the season be without far too much to eat? And this is when we work hardest finding wines to match – it's a challenge we relish. I've highlighted a couple of crisp Sauvignon Blancs, particularly good with the plethora of oysters and other delights in shells abound.

Pezat is a stylish twist on the traditional. From vines grown just outside the boundaries of St Emilion, it is a new offering from Jonathan Maltus, the brains behind the world-conquering Le Dome and the rest of the global Château Teyssier stable. Vinified to produce an immediately recognisable and appealing style, pull the cork and enjoy the crisp Sauvignon character.

From the other side of the globe we've rekindled relations with another old friend – Kevin Judd of Greywacke Vineyards in Marlborough, New Zealand. Kevin was the winemaker that put Cloudy Bay on the map and quite simply his Greywacke is the best New Zealand Sauvignon I have ever tasted. The wine marries the expected spectrum of fruit with some impressive minerality, terroir indeed! The signature is incredible purity, length of focus and perfect balance. We like it.

For a pair of reds, I've pulled our favourite local and a comparable import. The Triennes estate just by Brignoles was revamped by two great men of Burgundy, Jacques Seysses and Aubert de Villaine of Domaine Dujac and Domaine de la Romanée-Conti respectively. They have lent their considerable talents to developing the vineyards and tweaking the winemaking. The Cuvée St Auguste is their top red and blended from the best vats of Syrah, Cabernet and Merlot. Oak aged in barrels seasoned at Domaine Dujac, the wine is an intense expression of the power and subtlety that can be found in our local vineyards. We've been lucky enough to secure a stock of 2009 in magnums, wonderfully aged and in the perfect sized bottle, does it get better?

Clonakilla was established in the hills just outside Canberra by a wine-loving Irish scientist, John Kirk. Their Hilltops Shiraz comes from fruit grown near Young. Rich deep black fruit thrive but perhaps from a more restrained, refined side of winemaking Down Under.

And all that is just to get the ball rolling, we have sweet wines for foie gras, Roquefort and puddings, ports for your Stilton, Bourgogne for your *boeuf*, claret for your lamb, Puligny for your veal, salmon or lobster and many, many more which we would be happy to share.

Contact us on 04 93 49 27 01 or visit emporiumduvin.com. We look forward to helping make this your favourite time of year too. ■

Bang in the New Year

FIREWORKS at midnight New Year's Eve at Quai Albert 1er in Monaco (along with a DJ from 21h30) and in Cannes, where this year's theme is "James Bond" (20 mins). Also, Jan 1st at Baie de Juan-Les-Pins, 18h.

Nippy dippies

ON Sun Dec 21 at 11h30, Nice's annual Christmas swim takes place at Plage Ruhl, (by the Meridian hotel). Register beforehand on site for free with FSGT Alpes-Maritimes (that's the *Fédération sportive et gymnique du travail*).

The popular New Year's Day swim (*Bain du jour de l'an*) is at 11h30, at Plage Salis in Antibes. Contact "Finishers d'Antibes" on 06 12 44 27 86.



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Have yourself a Merry little ... Noël

BY ELODIE PEYRANO

LA TRADITION



WHILE living in France you'll soon discover that Christmas is THE holiday so there are a few things you should know if you want to be prepared.

First of all, Christmas is not in December. Well of course the celebration, like in the rest of the world, falls on the 25th of December, but Christmas is in the minds of the French right after All Saints' Day (*Toussaint*) on November 1st ... and for some, even before.

While Americans are shopping for Halloween candies in October, the *centres commerciaux* in France are already selling Christmas chocolates and decorations while cities across the country are preparing to "light up" their squares months in advance.

Christmas storefronts are now popping up earlier and earlier. Take Printemps Haussmann in Paris, where supermodels Cara Delevingne and Kate Moss unveiled Burberry's interactive holiday window ... on November 6th.

All of this to help get the French in the spirit, and it works. Last year, more

than half picked up a Christmas present during the first week of November and 50% admitted they had bought all their gifts before the month's end. Yet as the 25th approaches, the less the French want to hear about it.

More than being a spiritual holiday, Christmas is a time for family for 95% of the French (compared to 71% of Brits). Only thirty years ago religious holidays were still widely celebrated in this country, now they're just a reason for time off work. More recently, displays of nativity scenes and the famous *crèche* Provençale have disappeared little by little.

But like many aspects of French society, this holiday has been Americanised, thanks to Hollywood movies. For the French, Santa Claus comes out on top way before Jesus. And this is when the whole fun starts.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, there's only one Santa Claus, also called St Nicholas, who comes by December 25th to offer gifts to the nice boy and girls. In France they are two different people (not that poor Father Christmas suffers from any form of schizophrenia) and usually in northern regions of the country, as in other parts of Europe, children receive presents and chocolate from St Nicholas on his name day, December 6th.

And don't even try to talk to the French about Charles Dickens. Sure, he's fairly well known for "Oliver Twist" or "David Copperfield", but mention "A Christmas Carol" and you'll be faced with a very

puzzled look. Ebenezer Scrooge is absent from French culture, yet "traditional" movies like "Home Alone" or "Love Actually" are aired every single Christmas and are very popular among the younger generations. As are English Christmas carols, as I'm sure you've heard with Mariah Carey singing "All I Want for Christmas" in every *magasin* you enter.

There is one thing that hasn't changed through the years: food. Not surprising in a country where gastronomy and cooking are national symbols. (See page 37.)

Let me tell you a personal Christmas carol. As a young French girl who grew up watching tons of American movies, I was eager to learn about other customs. The year I lived in London, I came upon British traditions like Christmas Puddings and Mince Pies. Thinking it would be great to share these awesome discoveries, I brought some to our family Christmas meal for dessert instead of the traditional *bûche*.

The faces of my family and friends were ... bewildered. And this is when I learned: don't touch the *bûche*. Even if the majority of French admit they don't even eat the Yule log because they are too full, just knowing they can have a piece is comforting.

Don't worry, though: you won't get charcoal in your stocking for ignoring French traditions. ■

Elodie Peyrano is a graduate of Nice's École du Journalisme and writes for <http://linfotoutcourt.com>

NOW YOU CAN TAP IN TO THAT DREAM



WHAT'S your vision of the perfect bathroom? Elegance and efficiency come at the top of most people's list, but here's a new concept for the wish list: individuality.

Up until now there have been limits on how much of our own personality we could put into how a bathroom looks and feels, limits set by the ranges on display or in the catalogues of the bathroom specialists in the high street and on the trading estate.

Yes, you'll usually end up with a smart new bathroom, but there may be half-a-dozen just like it down your *rue*.

Now Home Store have launched an initiative to change all that. Their aim is to make the *salle de bain* a room for self-expression.

Using the very latest products from top manufacturers Burgbad and Hansgrohe, they are able to provide customers with truly made-to-measure bathrooms, tapping into the fantastic new colours and designs.

Normally a bathroom is planned; with the new "Conceptwall" approach

it seems better to describe it as being "composed", a domestic work of art that reflects the imagination of the creator.

This new generation of dream bathrooms enables you to mix different combinations of surfacing materials, light and colour to a stunning effect. Storage solutions abound; although the trend is towards shallower units – to maximise the impression of space – the mix and match wall units can vary in depth to suit the wall and the room.

So now a bathroom can be fitted with cupboards that blend into – rather than loom out of – the bathroom design, but also give you the shelf space you need, and are easy to clean and maintain.

One of the most eye-catching concepts involves the use of over-sink units that appear to "float" due to the lightness and cleverness of the design.

The surface options available in today's bathroom are quite simply stunning. Brilliant acrylics made from a new

generation of eco-friendly paint materials. Cool ceramics that have graduated from sinks to facings. The latest ways with wood. Bring on the latest colours and you'll be truly spoiled for choice.

With all this emphasis on design, it's good to know that details on the inside have not been neglected. The drawers of the low units are fitted with non-slip surfaces, and include a moveable and extendable interior division. In the upper units, electric sockets are integral, as are holders for hair-dryers and cups.

These days the shower has conclusively won against the tub in the battle of the bathroom. The size of some walk-in showers obviously means that in a normal-sized bathroom there isn't room for the two. A great deal of design ingenuity has gone into the super-chic shower floor. Subtle engineering means that the shower floor seems to be flat, with no unsightly ridges and rims, but a gentle slope takes the water away. Even in a smaller "shower



cabin”, what used used to be called a “shower tray”, where you stepped up into something like a footbath, the flat floor is making for smooth lines and banishing the danger of stubbing your toe.

In the brave new bathroom built for the individual you wouldn't expect to find just

any ordinary old taps. One of the star performers from the Axor range from Hansgrohe has been designed by Phillippe Starck – it's the smoothest way to run water you could possibly imagine. This, like all the Axor taps, showerheads (including the remarkable “LampShower”, below) and accessories, is

available in polished or brushed metal in six metallic shades from gold to black chrome – more delightful choices to be made.

Also available from Axor is a tap with a very select form of personal expression: your coat of arms mounted at the centre.

Can't get a more individualised bathroom than that. ■

For more see homestore.fr



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YOUR RUN OF THE MILL



The Moulin de Vaissel in La Garde Freinet is part of a dual property on 2 hectares of land. The large living and dining areas open on to a south-facing terrace.



THE mayor of La Garde Freinet was looking grim as his gaze swept the council chamber. He had summoned 31 family heads to an emergency meeting. It was the second of April, 1775, and the hour was grave.

There were gasps from the assembly as he revealed the contents of a letter recently received from the *chargé d'affaires* of the Count of Grimaud. A document had been discovered in the Count's archives which clearly showed that the town's grain mill – the Moulin de Vaissel – was in fact the property of the noble lord and had been leased to the town in return for six loads of wheat and several florins per year, a tithe that seemed never to have been paid. The lease dated

from 1553, the Count was demanding more than 200 years' worth of dues.

Fortunately, furious searching in the council archives unearthed a document that proved the contrary. No nasty surprises lie in store for a prospective buyer of this historic watermill now on the market.

The mill is part of a dual property on 2 hectares of land sitting between the Maures hills and the Med, with St Tropez and its beaches within easy reach. Along with it comes a modern house in the Provençal style.

The mill has been charmingly renovated. Highlights include a large living and dining area opening on to a south-facing terrace. A wine cellar sits beneath the fully-

equipped kitchen. Upstairs, the master bedroom comes with its own terrace.

Stroll across a lovely olive grove and you will find the Pool Lodge, all of its windows overlooking the large mosaic-tiled pool in the centre of a Provençal-style lodge. The beauty of this property is the way old and new combine seamlessly. Price: €2,100,000. Contact Marcella McCracken of Leggett Immobilier on 06 78 83 01 30.

FANCY going clubbing but can't be bothered with the journey into town? No problem with this luxurious property in Mougins, just call your mates round, pop downstairs and get the party started.

A personal nightclub in the basement



The 650m² 6-bedroom main house (above) near Royal Mougins Golf Club, comes with two self-contained guesthouses, along with large pool and extensive terracing and its own nightclub.

is one of the many alluring features of this villa, which features 650m² of living space on grounds of 3,000m². The six-bedroom main house, which lies close to Royal Mougins Golf Club, comes with two self-contained guesthouses, along with large pool and extensive terracing.

In the two-storey main house, the use of glass on garden-facing walls floods the rooms with light. The lobby opens into a large open-plan living space featuring zones for dining, lounging and TV watching. Sliding glass doors on one wall open to the garden and pool terrace.

A side wing of the property houses a room of around 80m², previously used as a study but easily convertible into a fabulous bedroom suite. The ground floor also features a sauna and shower room.

On the first floor lies the master bedroom suite with dressing room, separate

adjoining bedroom, luxury en-suite with spa bath. There are four guest bedrooms, all with en-suite.

The basement houses a gym, laundry room, wine cellar and a big surprise. A door at the end of the corridor opens to reveal a fully operational discotheque with a bar, dance-floor and professional sound and lighting system, along with seating for guests. Windows set in to the back wall look underwater into the swimming pool – think Hollywood!

Behind the main villa are two self-contained mini-houses for guests. One is a small villa of 55m², with open plan lounge/kitchen, feature fireplace and double bedroom, private terrace and BBQ area. The second is a studio of 45m² with fitted kitchen and terrace. Price: €2,700,000.

For more details contact Tim Clark of Leggett Immobilier on 06 76 59 25 88. ■

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DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

The reality of the Riviera property market



**BY TIM CLARK,
LEGGETT IMMOBILIER**

WELL what a year that was. As 2014 draws to a close I would like to reflect on how things have gone in the real estate business on the Côte d'Azur during these relatively tough times.

The year started quite positively with some excellent business levels across the board, however it quickly became clear that buyers were presented with so much to choose from that the hardest thing was getting them to stop looking and to make a decision on a particular property.

My colleagues and I are still in contact with dozens of potential buyers who still haven't made a choice. It seems would-be house hunters are playing a waiting game, to see what happens with the French economy, French taxes, property prices and, of course, François Hollande!

Let's look at these one by one: the economy can only get better, right? French taxes, well that's an article in itself, but we've been promised no more tax increases before the 2017 general election, so that probably answers the Hollande question, too.

That leaves property prices. I run the risk

.....
**For an update on the proposed
taxe d'habitation on secondary
homes in 2015, see pg 5.**

of sounding like a stuck record but this is the one area where buyers will absolutely take care before making a decision. There'll always be speculative buyers who try it on with a ridiculous offer, but they're always outweighed by sensible buyers who are prepared to pay a fair price and are savvy enough to carry out some research to know what they should be paying in any given area.

Over the last few weeks I've heard agents telling vendors not to reduce their asking price because there aren't any buyers; I've heard agents telling vendors the market is terrible and there are simply no enquiries; I've had vendors telling me they read somewhere the market was improving and prices were going up; and I've had buyers telling me they read somewhere that every vendor in France would accept offers 30% under their asking price.

I'd like to categorically state here and now, these are all untrue on most levels.

There are buying clients, but, as mentioned above, they are both informed on what they should pay and nervous about committing to the French market with its current economic uncertainty. So while tough, the property market is not as terrible as some would have you believe.

I'd add that it's wishful thinking to believe the market is rising and prices are going up. This has not been the case for 18 months and it's unlikely to change anytime soon.

And for buyers expecting to get 30%

off an asking price, this is generally not the case either. Experience tells me that if you managed to negotiate 30% off the asking price, it was because the property was 25% overpriced in the first place.

So where does this leave us? The signs are good for an increase in transactions in 2015. Our recent property exhibition results brought us a record number of enquiries from genuine buyers in the UK, Paris and Brussels. Many of these buyers are currently planning early spring viewing trips.

If you're selling, talk with your agent about the real market value of your home: if he or she is being honest it's unlikely to be the figure you were expecting, but it will represent the current world-selling price. I'm not suggesting people give away their properties, but if you haven't sold within a year, then one of the most obvious reasons will be price. Unless, of course, your agent lives in the dark ages and hasn't heard of the internet.

Another point, don't fall into the trap of taking your property off the market for winter and bringing it back in the late spring. You'll have missed all of the buying clients who search at this time of year to plan early spring trips. And any buyers that come in January and February are serious about buying, not holidaymakers who fancy a day house-hunting.

If you're buying, then by all means do your research. With such enormous choice, be clear on your expectations and requirements, be prepared to listen and trust your agent to know his/her portfolio, and understand that an agent is there to try and find you that dream home. So if a suggestion is made, run with it.

Most of all, it would be folly to say properties aren't negotiable, but most vendors will try and price correctly for the market and a fair and sensible negotiation is always looked on more favourably by those who are serious about selling.

It leaves me to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a very happy and prosperous 2015. And thank you for your support throughout 2014. ■

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

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THE EYES IN THE SKY

NOT long ago the words “aerial drone” conjured up visions of espionage and secretive military attacks in war zones. These days, drones have many other more peaceful uses. Shop-bought models have become common and – perhaps more dangerously – are often seen as toys. Toys which in the wrong hands can be illegal, dangerous and invasive. A group protesting private drones recently landed one near German Chancellor Angela Merkel “so she would know how unpleasant it is to be spied upon” by these ubiquitous eyes in the sky.

Recent and mysterious drone activity around French nuclear sites is not the first time irresponsible use of drones has landed amateur operators in trouble. A 22-year-old was arrested and fined for flying a drone near the Eiffel Tower last year, and an Israeli tourist suffered the same fate for flying one near Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris last February. In May, a drone crashed and burned

onto the beach in Nice; the three people who were using the unauthorised drone for filming were arrested and charged.

Most professional or private drones are a spider-like design with a central core and four or more arms holding electric motors that drive fast spinning propellers. Modern technology such as GPS and gyros help with stability and navigation but in some ways drones are like remote-controlled miniature lawn mowers. In untrained hands they can be just as dangerous. It’s not surprising then, that most countries have legislation outlining what can and can’t be done (See *RivieraReporter.com* for details).

Drones nevertheless have a growing list of exciting and beneficial uses – video filming, still photography, agriculture, archaeology, surveying, thermal imaging, inspection and surveillance. Inevitably the first “drone-porn” video has been released. (If you really can’t resist, Google it). Amazon claims it will soon be testing drones as (an unlikely

and potentially unsafe) parcel delivery method. Industrial engineer Alec Momont’s “Ambulance Drone” (<http://alecmomont.com>) for flying defibrillators quickly to heart attack victims seems far more likely and beneficial.

In order to use a drone professionally in France you must follow a training course, pass a theoretical test or hold at least a private pilot or microlight (ULM) licence, obtain official permission and use only authorised equipment. That’s where MLV Drone comes in.

This Chateaufort-based company is part of the Techni Drone network, which flies professional drones for professional and commercial uses. MLV can fly your mission for you or train you to use a drone professionally. The company CEO Stéphane Vinuesa (pictured) knows that drones are here to stay and offer new career and business opportunities but also that commercial use cannot be left to amateurs.

We asked this amiable IT engineer



whether he is in fact not training his future competitors. "I suppose I am to some extent, but the market is growing so fast with new professional uses coming along so there'll always be room for those who qualify."

MLV can quote for a specific operation by Stéphane and his team but if you want to fly your own drone, their training courses are essential. From start to finish, count about a month before you are qualified to fly commercially.

For those who do not already have a pilot's licence, the microlight theoretical course takes 8 days and

costs €794. The obligatory practical 10-day course *DNC - Déclaration de niveau de compétence* will set you back €2425 and there is a €209 fee for sitting the obligatory half-day test.

MLV Drone offers additional courses in the techniques of filming or to qualify as an instructor. They can also train you to formulate your obligatory MAP (*Manuel d'Activité Particulière*) requests to the DGAC (*Direction générale de l'aviation civile*). **M.M** ■

For more contact Stéphane on 04 83 59 80 08 or see mlvdrone.fr/English

GENDARMES can arrest you and confiscate your drone for illicit use. Filming private property or people without permission is covered by privacy laws, which can mean up to a year in prison and a €45,000 fine. For overflying sensitive areas (see aip-drones.fr) such as power plants or military installations, the fine can be as much as €75,000. You're financially responsible for any damage you cause, including provoking an accident. See *RivieraReporter.com* (keyword "drone") for a complete list of restrictions and legal references.

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TIS THE SEASON

... for low maintenance grass

BY JAMES BASSON,
SCAPE DESIGN MONACO

LAST issue we spoke about rain gardens and it feels as if it hasn't stopped raining since! This time I'd like to look at a subject that doesn't get the attention it deserves: winter gardens.

When designing gardens there is a tendency to focus on how the garden will look in the spring and summer months – when people are outside using their green spaces as extended living areas – with the emphasis being on colour. However, we shouldn't forget that in autumn and winter usually our principal view from the warmth of inside our living space is of our garden. And that we are also lucky enough to live in a climate where lurching outside throughout the cooler months is a distinct possibility.

So what plants can we incorporate into a design that not only look great in the active months but that also provide winter interest? The word architecture has to feature heavily, not in terms of hard materials but in use of plants.

One of the most important choices is grass. We rarely consider grass in a garden other than for the obvious lawn, but the so-called “ornamental grasses” are fantastic at this time of year as they provide architectural elements to the garden adding contrast and background texture.

In nature a high percentage of vegetative cover is grass. This is because this mainly herbaceous plant is very effective at eradicating competition from undesirable growth as it pushes through, bullying out even the toughest perennial weeds – so hard to get rid of – making it equally a great choice in the garden to keep maintenance low.

Most grasses are summer flowering and then proceed to hold their heads up all winter. Mix this with the dried seed heads of other architectural plants such as alliums, gaura, achillea, acanthus and even the lavenders and you can achieve a variety of tone and texture which when touched with frost can look truly spectacular.

On the larger specimens, obviously berries can give a splash of colour,

and winter fruit such as the Kaki tree (otherwise known as the Persimmon or Sharon fruit tree) – whenever I see these bright orange fruit on the otherwise bare tree it always makes me think of a tree creating its own Christmas baubles! Trees that have what is known as exfoliating bark such as lagerstroemia, which has an array of amazingly beautiful warm colours that range from cream to warm beige to cinnamon and on to bright red, are sure to enhance any landscape.

So when designing grounds remember winter – the forgotten fourth season in the garden; seed heads, berries and fruits also attract birds throughout the winter to add a different sort of magnetism. Add the lower winter sun that backlights the golden ornamental grasses and the morning frosts and you can have a dramatic, warm effect that is every bit as charming as the Christmas cards that will soon be appearing through the letterbox! ■

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"Eclipse" (Bermuda flag), owned by Roman Abramovich. Photo: Pontificalibus

BY MICHAEL HEALY

PEACEFUL times in the Riviera ports, except for occasional violent weather that has, over the centuries, sunk many ships and craft on our Coasts; yet not far away, conflict rages in Syria, Libya and Iraq.

One day, Britain will be caught up in some unpredicted war and, as usual, we shall be unprepared. Notably we are critically short of warships; the British Merchant Navy continues to shrink. On the other hand, the megayachts, which we see here, are multiplying in numbers and size like rabbits. Admiralty planners in the Ministry of Defence are certainly keeping an eye on them although they rarely visit UK waters. The Admiralty Requisitioning

Officer Monte-Carlo (self-appointed) was busy in 1982 seeking British-registered yachts suitable to help the Royal Navy in the short war (Operation Corporate) to regain the Falkland Islands invaded by Argentine forces. It was feared at the time that Spain

and Italy would support their kinsmen in Argentina, which would have been uncomfortable for us living between them.

In the event, Britain won without needing to employ any large yachts; but the fleet used no less than 52 Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT), including the cruise liners *QE2* and *Canberra* for troop carrying. In the Gulf Wars of the 90s, Britain had to charter 105 foreign ships to transport British forces and their material.

Since 1982 the fleet of Red Ensign yachts (including Cayman Islands, BVI, Bermuda, etc) has quadrupled, and their capabilities are now amazing: speed, range, endurance (fuel tankage, water-makers and freezers), accommodation, boat capacity,

helicopter facilities, communications, catering and crew – often British or ex-Dominions. These ships, up to 557 feet long, could be hugely useful in future conflicts, as they have in the past; governments since King Alfred (849-899) have always requisitioned private vessels for military purposes when needed, as in the Crimean War and both World Wars, and will continue to do so. Guns, minesweeping gear and military electronics are easily added. Members of the Royal Yacht Squadron are expected to offer their yachts for government service if a state of emergency is declared, and the four White Ensign megayachts usually on our coasts would certainly comply. For less privileged yachts, the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act would be re-enacted to allow requisition of assets both ashore and afloat.

Is your big yacht ready and willing? If not, better re-flag to Belize, Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands or Malta. Owners tend to consider just the fiscal advantages of possible registries (no annual tax for yachts registered in UK). But defending the peace is more important than avoiding taxes. ■

The screenshot shows the Côte d'Azur website interface. At the top, it says "Côte d'Azur" and "Toute la côte d'azur de Menton à St Tropez". Below this is a navigation menu with options like "Skip", "Discover", "Free time", "Convenient", "Share", and "News". The main content area features several sections: "A LA UNE" with a featured article "SÉJOUR AU COÛR DE TENDRÈS" and "HOTEL COEUR COEUR"; "METRO" with a "RECETTE" section; "CE WEEK-END" with a "CINEMA" section; and a "News" section. On the right side, there is a "COTE.AZUR.FR COUPS DE COEUR" section with a "October 2014" calendar. At the bottom, there is a "STAY IN TOUCH!" section with "With Côte d'Azur newsletters" and a "SERVICE PROVIDED BY WEBSTORE" logo. A QR code is also present in the bottom right corner.

WHOEVER SAID MONEY CAN'T BUY HAPPINESS

... “simply didn’t know where to go shopping”

BY CAREN TRAFFORD



A FEW times a year, a huge game of musical chairs takes place in the antiquing world. It goes by the name of *Le Grand Déballage* ... which translates to The Great Unpacking. One of the venues for this great unpacking is Avignon – and it’s a sight not to be missed.

The maxim “the early bird catches the worm” comes to mind when trying to describe this event. If you’re not there and on your starting block by 8 am, you will miss the best items. This is the place where thousands of antique dealers, from all over the country, unload their antiques in eight or so grand pavilions, and for traders who can’t get a spot inside, the unpacking continues outside, on the courtyards between the great halls.

When I first saw the phrase *Le Grand Déballage*, it was in the weekly French magazine *Paris Match*. My thumbs pricked with excitement. “Finally,” I thought, “antiquing has turned trendy.” But alas, I was mistaken. *Le Grand Déballage* also means the airing of

dirty laundry, as was the case when Valerie Trierweiler, France’s former First Girlfriend, told the publication in great detail of the eighteen months she spent at Elysée Palace, from the election of President Holland to their break up.

But do not be deterred.

This great unpacking is far more interesting – even if doesn’t make the pages of *Paris Match* – as it’s the pinnacle event for buyers and sellers in the antiquing world of France. This is where antiques are brought, bought, sold and then delivered to all the different regions in country, and where pre-loved items have a great chance in the ensuing chaos, to find new homes. It is here that antiquing becomes a game of musical chairs.

The fair starts at 8 am. But the queuing starts much earlier. By 7:30, all the trucks of the transporters are lined up, waiting to gain entry. As the doors swing back, the engines of huge trucks rumble in unison and then follow each other, bumper to bumper, to their allotted spot in the gravel

car park. Parking side by side, with barely enough space for the drivers and packers to get out of their vans, they swing open the back doors to set up. The teams of movers and packers, all clutching their phones and purchase-order books, await the first calls from their clients in the exhibitions halls.

Avignon’s next Grand Déballage is Nov 26th (moved from Dec 1st), and then in Feb. Take the A7 motorway to Avignon Exit No 24 (Avignon Sud). Follow the signs to the Parc des Expositions (near Châteaublanc-Aéroport).

At the other end of the fair, the front gates open and in race the buyers; like charging bulls at Pamplona, each one hoping to be the first person to snap up any bargains that might be had. The phones begin to ring as the buyers alight on their prey and the game of musical chairs has begun. Over the course of the

next few hours, the packers will run with their trolleys, and collect the sold pieces.

By 9 am the hawks have devoured their antique prey, and the rest of us can begin to sift through the amazing selection that remains. The items are things that cannot be found in every day high street shops. Moving around the exhibition halls, you feel as if you are in a museum, without the glass to stop you touching the *chef d'oeuvre*. Souvenirs from history surround you: zinc horses' heads, old farm-yard furniture, a wrought-iron, rusty staircase from a torn-down bastide, 19th-century jewellery and an amazing selection of chandeliers that might have formerly lit up a château.

Items too heavy or large to move are displayed from the back of trucks and many vendors come with their own cranes (below) with which to lift the weightier items out onto the tarmac. (The term *Le Grand Déballage* also refers to the back of the lorries from which all the goods are displayed.)

Nosing around the choices on sale is furious and fast. There isn't much time to consider as the great unpacking is all done and dusted by around 11 am and, by noon, the trucks are beginning to

roll away, taking the sold items to their new homes.

My phone rings. Oliver, my antique-dealing friend, is calling me. He wants me to see his latest acquisition. "It's perfect," he says. "Now it's a question of getting it home."

I walk to his location. Sure enough, there is his treasure, complete with an orange sticker on it that says VENDU.

Only a minor detail mars the moment. It is hanging half way in and half way out of the back of Oliver's truck. Next to it stands Oliver with its previous owner. They are arguing logistics.

"Let's start again."

"No, if we move it to the right ..."

"Just push this side a little more."

A crowd begins to form. Everyone has a different opinion. What is, exactly, the best way of getting a large sideboard into the back of the truck?

I move away. There'll be plenty of time for a coffee. These folks obviously haven't been to a supermarket recently and have forgotten to take an extra shopping bag. ■

Caren Trafford writes environmental books for kids – see planetkids.biz – and lives in Provence. She is happy to find architectural pieces of interest for you in Provence.



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Hair's the best way to beat the boars

BY JAMIE IVEY



I RECENTLY made a resolution to become more involved in the local community. I thought I might join the *boules* club, or pull on some Lycra with the weekend *peloton* boys. Instead, by chance, I've become part of a secret fraternity that gathers at dusk. We swap stories, hand over our black bags and depart with our contraband.

The story of my twilight habit begins with some wild-boar-induced carnage in my back garden. For three nights in a row the lawn was ripped to pieces. It was as if an international rugby match followed by a polo chukka had been played out while I slept.

I went to see Bruno, our *garagiste*. He's a giant of a man from Corsica. When he's not repairing cars he's out with his dogs and guns wreaking havoc. I explained the problem. A few ripe expletives followed which expressed Bruno's hearty dislike of wild boar.

The clientele in the garage at the

time, agricultural men seeking spares for tractors and threshers, treated me to some homespun solutions.

"You must spend the afternoon drinking, and every time you need to *faire pipi*, go down to your lawn. Boars can put up with the scent of dogs and cats, but humans, they can't abide."

"Chlorine powder, sprinkle it all over the lawn," said another.

Bruno shook his head and rolled his eyes, making it all too clear I'd be wasting my time.

Even so, with no other solution, I spent the afternoon keeping company with a bottle of pastis and urinating on the grass. Then before bed I threw handfuls of pool chlorine onto the lawn. Once again, come morning, the garden was shredded (see picture).

I went back to see Bruno, who'd already prepared for my return. Overnight he'd fashioned Stage 1 of his anti-porcine strategy. Opening the

boot of my car he inserted five poles linked by a fine wire. On top of the last pole a stopwatch was mounted.

"Plant the poles in the ground. When the boar cross the wire, they'll trip the timer and ..."

"Boom," I said demonstratively, wrongly assuming that all Corsicans had a natural affinity for explosives.

"Not quite," said Bruno. "No the watch will stop and you'll know the precise time the boars come every night."

"Then what?"

"Set your alarm and shoot them."

"They come back at the same time every night?"

"Like clockwork," confirmed Bruno.

"But I don't have a gun," I protested, feeling as self-conscious as a banker without an iPhone 6.

"I'll give you mine."

So it was all planned. I'd set the trap and return the next day for a revolver and the ammunition (several packs of cartridges in case I missed). At the time the chain of events seemed perfectly normal. We'd moved from problem to solution. It wasn't until I got home that I started to think about the dangers of having a firearm in a house with three small children and the realities of actually pulling a trigger and killing a live animal. However it had become a matter of survival – the boar or my garden.

Thankfully my wife intervened with a solution before I had time to injure anyone. Late that afternoon she was sitting in the hairdressers and noticed a queue of people at the back door. Every time the hairdresser finished a cut, the floor was swept clean



Boars love to wreak havoc in Jamie's garden.

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"Rest reassured, we know what service means"

and the hair deposited into a black bag proffered by one of the waiting men.

"What's going on?" my wife asked her hairdresser.

"Sssh, some of the clients don't like it ... you spread the chopped-off hair around the garden, it shoots up the boars' noses, and before you know it they are too busy sneezing to look for grubs. It's the only thing that actually works."

Half an hour later I was in the same line, baseball cap pulled low over my eyes, shuffling forward for my handout,

like a tramp in a food queue.

"Went right through the electric fence as if it didn't exist," said the man in front.

"They push the babies under with their noses."

"Strong sense of family, the boar."

Soon the conversation was bubbling away.

"I tried peeing and chlorine," I volunteered just as one of my children's school teachers walked passed with a rigid new coif.

That night rather than setting Bruno's

time trap I sowed human hair across my lawn and eureka the next morning there was no sign of boar damage.

As for my vow to get more involved in the local community, I've yet to take up cycling or *boules*, but there's the nightly meeting to pick up more hair, and what better way to get up close and personal with the inhabitants of the village than spreading their DNA on my lawn? ■

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

AU CONTRAIRE

WE'VE all heard the claims about the Mediterranean diet. The fresh produce, the fish, olive oil and red wine are all strengthening our arteries, lowering our



bad cholesterol and prolonging our lives, making residents of the South of France some of the world's healthiest eaters.

Hold on a second, though. Didn't the French drive two hours and wait in endless lines the day Burger King opened at the Marseille airport? The Riviera's pilgrimage for a Whopper may have made the evening news but the country's love for *le fast-food* is no breaking story.

McDonald's is more popular in France than any other nation outside of the US. In 2013, total sales for the Golden Arches in France reached €4.46 billion, and while franchises worldwide experienced a

decline in sales over the first half of this year, revenues in France grew 4.8%.

In "Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France", author Mike Steinberger claims that France's gastronomic

empire is on the decline and cites testimony from powerhouses like Paul Bocuse and Alain Ducasse, who say that keeping the country's culinary traditions alive is an uphill battle.

So where does the truth lie? Are the people who brought us "Babette's Feast" and Proust's madeleine destined to sink into *la malbouffe* or does their cuisine merit its "world intangible heritage" rating on UNESCO's World Heritage List?

As is typical of this complicated culture, the truth is somewhere in between. While it can't be ignored that the average Frenchman may indulge in *le Big Mac*

from time to time, the South of France still enjoys higher rates of longevity than elsewhere in Europe.

Small changes to culinary tradition are tolerated, such as the trendy salted caramel added to the classic *bûche de Noël* at Christmas dinner (see pg 23). Yet the South of France's famed 13 desserts (pictured), representing Jesus and his 12 apostles, used to be set on the table on Christmas Eve and left for three days. Not many still follow this rule to the letter, but suggest skipping the obligatory courses of oysters, smoked salmon or foie gras, and the heels quickly dig in.

According to a survey of European embassies published in the *Daily Mail*, the French Christmas dinner is the healthiest in all of Europe with second place going to the Czech Republic, whose traditional holiday fare includes a cringe-worthy combination of fish soup, cold potato salad and sour cabbage. That would shrivel the holiday spirit of even the least discerning French palate. **Lisa Pepin, lespastras.com**

LEADING THE WAY TO BETTER GOLF

The world's top coach drops in to Terre Blanche



The tall figure of David Leadbetter oversees a practice session. Inset: the teaching team with the favoured pupils.

A SPECIAL bird of passage had dropped in to the Albatros Golf Performance Centre.

David Leadbetter, the World's No 1 golf coach, was paying his yearly visit to the remarkable teaching facility at Terre Blanche, the five-star golf resort near Fayence.

It is here that Leadbetter has based one of his famed teaching academies – there are now 28 spread across 13 countries – and where a privileged few were getting the undoubted benefit of a hands-on instruction session from the great man.

Leadbetter has coached a courseful of champion golfers, including Nick Faldo, Greg Norman and Ernie Els, more recently the likes of Ian Poulter, Michelle Wie and Trevor Immelman. His experience and instinct have lead him to avoid sticking

to a rigid method; flexibility and the right approach are his watchwords.

The Terre Blanche pupils had breakfasted with Leadbetter before heading for the five-star practice facility. After a warm-up the tuition team got to work. Alain Alberti, Director of the Leadbetter Academy and coach to Raphael Jacquelin, and Jean-Jacques Rivet, head of the science of “biomechanics” on the European Tour, were assisting Leadbetter. Swings were videoed, technical exercises worked through.

After lunch, more work on the swing plus instruction on chipping and putting, then a debriefing session. Personalised technical advice plus a workout programme would be sent though later.

Once lessons were over Leadbetter talked about the latest target for his

teaching – the Common (not very good) Golfer.

“My philosophy has evolved since writing my first book, ‘The Golf Swing’, 30 years ago. I wanted to try and find an easier way to teach the game.

“In most countries golf is stagnating at best, in the US more courses are closing than opening. Many people are put off taking up the game because they think it takes a long time to learn how to become a competent golfer.

“That’s why I’ve written my first instruction book in 10 years – it’s called the ‘A-Swing’. In it, I aim at simplicity, overall an easier way to teach and to learn.

“It’s obvious that the better you play the more you enjoy the game. With my new approach I am confident I can get new golfers to a better standard in less time.” ■



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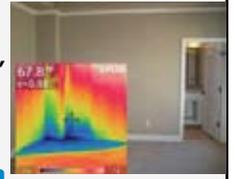
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Cook d'Azur

FOOD

Slow-roast shoulder of pork with black pudding, stuffed apples & roast potatoes



As the weather turns cooler, Katie Bills prepares a cosy winter meal for a lazy Sunday indoors to enjoy with family and friends. Serves 6.

INGREDIENTS

2 kg pork shoulder, scored skin
500 ml dry cider
Sea salt and black pepper
Sharp green apples
200 g black pudding
6 medium roasting potatoes

Green winter vegetable selection (broccoli, kale, spinach...)
50 g butter
1 apple for sauce
5 shallots
Olive oil
6 sage leaves

Cooking pork is very simple. With a hand towel make sure the meat is dry, then rub it with sea salt and pepper. Place into a deep baking tray, pouring cider around the pork. Cover with foil and cook on low heat (120°C / gas mark 3) for 6 hours. For the last hour, remove the foil and add the potatoes straight into the cider. Cook on the top shelf, putting the heat up to 180° C / gas mark 5.

For apples, remove core and slash skin with a sharp knife so they don't split when cooked. Stuff black pudding into core, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. On a separate baking sheet, place

apples and cook at the bottom of the oven for the last 40 minutes while cooking pork.

When pork has 20 minutes left to cook, finely dice shallots and fry lightly in olive oil with well-chopped sage. Add one roughly chopped apple and butter. When lightly brown, add drained cider and juices from pork. Bring to boil and reduce until glossy, just coating the back of a spoon. Season to taste.

Finally, steam vegetables over water for 3 minutes, drain, and add a knob of butter to finish. Serve the melt-in-the-mouth pork with the apples, vegetables and potatoes and drizzle with sauce. Enjoy!

Truffle, mushroom & barley risotto à la Pastras



Lisa Pepin of LesPastras.com adds a twist to a "Joy of Cooking" truffle classic, adiosing the competing garlic to let the flavour shine!

INGREDIENTS

40 g fresh truffle
1 tsp truffle oil
4-6 tbsp butter
1 1/3 cups onion, finely chopped
225 g Shiitake mushrooms (diced)
1 cup pearl barley
2/3 cup white wine
1/2 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp black pepper
6 cups chicken stock

Store your truffle(s) and barley in a sealed container in the refrigerator overnight. This will infuse the barley with the truffle aroma. Heat butter in deep skillet until melted and

foam subsides. Sauté onions in butter until translucent but not browned (about 7 minutes). Stir in mushrooms and cook until softened. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add barley and stir to coat with butter. Add salt, pepper, and wine, stirring until liquid is absorbed.

Meanwhile, warm stock in a saucepan. Add 2 cups stock to barley, simmering and stirring until liquid is almost completely absorbed. Add the remaining stock 1/2 a cup at a time in the same fashion. Barley needs to cook 45-60 minutes to become tender. If you run out of stock before barley is cooked, finish cooking with hot water.

Stir in the truffle oil and plate the risotto. Shave truffle with a mandolin slicer and serve on top of risotto.

50 WAYS TO CLOSE YOUR SHUTTERS

BY PHILIPPA CAMPSIE, PARISIAN FIELDS



The two most common styles of shutters: exterior wooden louvred shutters above and folding metal shutters below. Utterly ordinary, and yet remarkable.



Many Paris façades do not get attention to keep them looking this tidy.



ON our last visit to Paris in June, we did most of our travelling by bus, which meant time spent waiting at bus stops and journeys on which we gazed out the window at the streets, instead of hurtling through a darkened tunnel on the Metro. And that meant studying Paris façades, ever familiar and ever new, noting details and differences.

This time it was shutters. I started to notice all the different forms and styles and began to photograph them. When I tried to figure out the correct terms in French, I found myself in a thicket of words – *volets*, *persiennes*, *contrevents*, *jalousies*, *stores*, *couvre-fenêtres*, *grilles de défense* – plus a host of variations. *Volets roulants*, *valenciennes*, *persiennes à l'abbattant relevé*, *store cassette* ...

For no particular reason (other than what else are you going to do while waiting at a bus stop?), I decided to create a typology of shutters.

First off, those wooden shutters are called *volets* (or to be more precise, *volets battants*, to distinguish them from *volets roulants*, or roll-down shutters).

Most, but not all, shutters have louvres in them to let through light or air. The term *jalousie* (literally, “jealousy”) was coined for shutters that allow the person inside to look out without being seen.



The ones on the right, above, with large and obvious hinges seem to be a very traditional design for what appear to be fairly modern security shutters.

Inside the shutters, there are other details, all with specific terms, such as *lame* (slide) and *gond* (hinge). These come from a helpful website called *Lexique du volet*, by a shutter manufacturer.

But I wanted to find the word to describe something we have seen from time to time – the little fixtures on the exterior wall used to hold the shutter

and prevent it from swinging back and forth in the wind. Some are plain, but some have faces or other decorations on them. Norman Ball photographed this one above in the Marais a few years ago.

Look closely at the next photo, and you'll see them holding back the shutters. (This is quite a complicated window, with its security grill and frosted glass privacy screen.)



I found that they are called *arrêts de volet* (shutter stops) or *arrêts de vent* (wind stops), and they come in many forms and colours. You can still buy ones with faces on them: *arrêts bergère*, suggesting that the face with the hat and long hair is that of a shepherdess. Isn't French hardware wonderful?

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Commercial premises sometimes have wooden shutters that fold right into the wall and don't need an *arrêt de volet*. In the picture below, I like the way everything, including the hinges, are flush with the wall. (I am also fascinated by the various metal openings near the ground, but any investigation of them will have to wait for another article.)



Modern shutters tend to be the roll-down kind (*volets roulants*), also very dull-looking, but practical. Some are electric and roll down at the push of a button, others have a hand-crank. Many are used as security shutters on commercial premises, and they tend to attract graffiti.



Then there are *persiennes* (above). The term is used for a variety of louvered shutters, but it seems to be the common term for those folding metal exterior shutters that we have wrestled with in various rented apartments. They always seem to be slightly bent, so it is hard to get the closing to engage. Years ago, when I was a student and au pair in Paris, I used to help an elderly lady downstairs with her *persiennes* in the evenings. She was in her eighties and very bent and frail. She seemed able to open them on her own, but struggled with closing them.

Persiennes of this type have the advantage of tucking neatly into the window embrasure, so when they are open, they do not clutter the façade or obstruct the view. But closed, they are not particularly attractive.



Fabric awnings and blinds are known as *stores*, and the window awnings that stand at an angle to the window seem to

be called *stores à l'italienne*. (*Stores* also can mean interior blinds, as in *stores vénétiens* or Venetian blinds.) I noticed awnings on quite a few institutional buildings. Pictured is the Port Royal maternity hospital. (Note also the interesting half-shutters just under the eaves.)

Of all the words I discovered in my typology of windows, the most exotic is *moucharabieh*. This is a word from North Africa for the filigreed window coverings, usually carved wood, on Moroccan buildings. The most outstanding Parisian version is found at the Institut du Monde Arabe (below), where the openings are designed to respond to changes in the light by opening and closing.



My typology is hardly exhaustive, and the possibilities are endless. One could compile a further list just of modern window coverings, quite a few of them one-off architectural features.

Next time you are standing at a Paris bus stop, you can pass the time by counting the number of types of shutters and window closings you can see. Chances are, even a single façade will have more than one type. ■

For the full article with illustrations, see parisianfields.wordpress.com. Photos ©Philippa Campsie and Norman Ball.

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EU FALLACIES

THERE are many misconstrued ideas about the EU and EU law. It seems that every time a politician or administration wants to shy away from an unpopular decision his (or her) catch-phrase becomes, "We have no choice because it's European law." Sorry EU-sceptics, but often it isn't. One case in point is the European Arrest Warrant. EU countries (and others) are free to extradite and request extradition to and from cooperating nations under current ECHR rulings. From all the recent debate you'd think that EU law forbids this but it doesn't. The lavish benefits enjoyed by immigrants to the UK are another exaggerated EU "right". France and Germany don't hand out free housing and cash to foreigners who have never contributed a penny in tax, so why does Britain? Apparently it's because of "EU law". Rubbish.

E. K. Woodman, Theoule

... AND PHALLICIES

THINKING back to when Dominique Strauss-Kahn was the most likely French president-in-waiting, before he disgraced himself by piggish behaviour which made him unelectable, I do wonder whether the budgetary leadership of this brilliant international economist would have saved France from the consequences of Hollande's catastrophic presidency. If unemployment and taxes were less, the French people would surely have forgiven DSK's disgusting sexual escapade by now, *non*?

Deborah Cullins, Biot

SPEAKING OF FRENCH MEN ...

EEZYPEEZY or no EezyPeezy, [ad in issue 165 pg 33] I've never got used to the fact that French men just pee almost anywhere. Where I come from you can get arrested for that. In any case, it's disgusting!

Gert Henken, Cannes

FAST FIGURES

WE still know some lovely, traditional family-run restaurants that are very good value but what are we to think of your statement that France is only second to America for fast food? The figures for Alpes-Maritimes and Var were in the *Nice-Matin* the other day – 48 McDonald's, 16 Quick, 22 Subways and 4 KFC. Sad.

Kathy & Len Falkurk, Opio

In the first half of 2014, McDonald's saw a worldwide decline in sales except for one country: France, where revenues grew 4.8%. See Au Contraire on page 37. N.H.

A (NOT SO) REAL PISTOL

IF your reader "D.M." [issue 164 pg 46] thinks he had a hard time at Heathrow security, I had a worse one at Luton. To be perfectly fair, it was no one's fault but my own. When the security guy asked me if I had anything forbidden in my cabin bag I joked that I only had some exploding toothpaste and a toy gun that fired real bullets. Within a couple of seconds my bag was whisked away and I was escorted off under armed guard for 3 hours of questioning. I missed my flight and was told that there might be prosecution.

I will never again be so stupid. I don't drink so I don't even have the excuse of being drunk!

Mark Brothers, Villefranche

LET THEM DROWN!

AS an addendum to your article about Mediterranean boat people and MOAS [issue 165 pg 16] it is worth noting that Italy has since rolled back its emergency rescue operation and David Cameron has decided that the British attitude should now be to defy maritime law by not rescuing boat people. In other words, to let these desperate emigrants drown. Foreign Office Minister Lady Anelay scandalously said [in October]

CARDLY DIFFICULT

I COMPLETELY sympathise with the plight of Mr Head [issue 165 pg 3]. Nice has become a more dangerous place than it was when I first arrived over 20 years ago but I believe there are many little changes that could be made to make us all safer. For instance, most "hole-in-the-wall" ATM card scams would become much more difficult if the layout of the ATM machine was changed. The card slot could be turned 180 degrees horizontally so that the number and other details face down instead of up, where they can more easily be seen or filmed as the card is inserted. It would also help if the slot were lower so there is no space under it to hide a hidden device that can read the details. A cover to shade the keypad to protect it from unwanted eyes would also be a good idea.

It's not rocket science, is it?

Pete Putman, Nice

**Star
letter**

that Britain "does not support search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean" and that such rescues only encourage ever more dangerous attempts at crossing. The EU has since launched "Operation Triton" but this is a surveillance mission rather than a rescue operation.

Should we not consider that these poor souls are not benefit-scrouring exploiters of our hospitality with any decent choices on offer? They are so desperate to escape their lives of pestilence, famine, conflict and other miserable conditions that they are willing to risk their own and their children's lives to flee the horrors of their existence. To abandon them to die at sea is a most uncharitable and unchristian attitude and Prime Minister Cameron must know that.

At this time of the year especially, Christians would do well to remember the message of the Bible – that "it is

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more blessed to give than to receive”. Compared to these wretches we are indeed wealthy and the Gospel of Mark is clear: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” We are rich enough to help and we should, but for those who choose to ignore this there will be eternal damnation perhaps?

Matthew Fuller-Smith, Seillans

GHOST SERVICE

THE French do strike a lot but my French mate told me about a website to at least know when and where: cestlagreve.fr. Only in France!

Dave P. Coggins, by email

GHOST TRAINS

ENGLAND might be losing its way but it hasn't lost its legendary sense of humour. A friend sent me this, which he snapped in the London underground on his mobile. Too funny!

Gerry Hansfield, by email



SERVICE “INACCEPTABLE”

I WONDER why anyone would want to live on the Riviera when you see the appalling customer service you receive. I have a friend who has bought a car from a dealership in Antibes. Her car has broken down and if you hear the catastrophic and disgraceful way she is being treated by the staff in the showroom, you would not believe they could do any business at all.

I know that France is not renowned for customer service but to lie, be rude, unhelpful and lazy – these are the characteristics for which the French are renowned, but do they have to live up to it?

It is about time someone wrote an exposé about the fact that when you buy something in France you are not doing the seller a favour by gracing him with your presence. Or did I get it wrong and we should just accept the belligerent French attitude and buy all our stuff online from other countries?

Paul Cooper, by email

In most countries, it's called customer service. In France, they say service commerciale, which in no way refers to the client: they are just doing “a job”. N.H.

PART EXCHANGE

RE “Driving lessons in English” – Oct-Nov issue. It is incorrectly stated that one cannot exchange a US drivers license for a French one. There is no such thing as a “US” drivers license as all drivers licenses are issued by states. There are actually at least 18 states that have reciprocal exchange agreements with France. I was happy to exchange my New Hampshire

LETTERS

license for a French one—no trouble.

Bob McGrail, by email

The article was clearly referring to Monaco and is therefore accurate. N.H.

NOT GOT THE RIGHT?

I'M within the 15-year cut off but still can't vote [issue 165 pg 8]. I have registered online but then the ballot papers are sent by snail mail and arrive too late for me to vote, and using a proxy is not viable. Until they get their act together regarding posting to countries outside the EU we are still disenfranchised. Then I was stupid enough to think I would spend my retirement years with my family in Canada only to find my state pension frozen at the amount of the first payment once here, if my family had settled in the USA I would get annual cost of living increases. So I'm denied my right to vote and discriminated against, but still a taxpayer. So much for the UK's reputation for fairness and justice!

“protempore”, RivieraReporter.com

THE approach of a delicately balanced election could have been anticipated by any even half-intelligent party leader and the desirability of gaining their “appreciation” vote to whichever party gave them back their vote pretty obvious, especially in the case of the Conservative party as expatriates are possibly mainly of Conservative beliefs.

Graham & Valerie Neal, St Cyprien ➤

A REAL GALE FORCE

CHRIS Gale was born and bred on the Riviera. The 25-year-old is taking part in two fundraising car rallies over the coming months, and is looking for contributions in the form of school supplies and charitable donations.

First, the Africa Eco Race (africarace.com) where Chris will be the official English-speaker for evening briefs, translating FIA and FIM reports from French to English.

The race's 7th edition leaves St Cyprien, in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques region of France, on Dec 28th to arrive at Lac Rose in Senegal, near Dakar, on Jan 12th, 2015.

The eco-friendly race promotes economic and sustainable development in the African countries that make

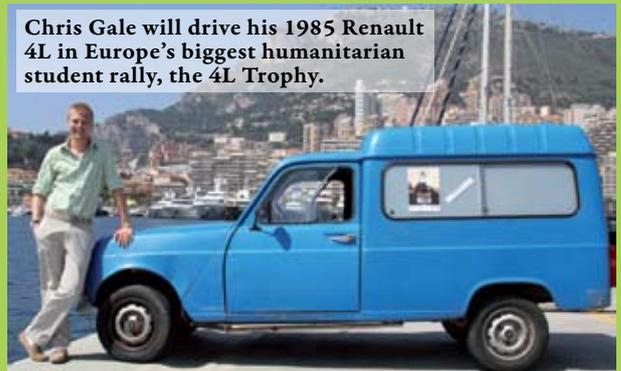
up the course route, and collaborates with nonprofit associations to collect donations.

Second is the 4L Trophy (4ltrophy.com), the largest humanitarian student rally in Europe, organised by the ESC Rennes Business School to help open classrooms in the Moroccan outback.

This 18th edition kicks off from Biarritz, also in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, on Feb 19th, 2015, crossing the finish line in Marrakech, Morocco on March 1st.

Each of the 1,500 cars participating has a team of two students (male or female, ages 18 to 28) who must bring a financial donation *and* some

Chris Gale will drive his 1985 Renault 4L in Europe's biggest humanitarian student rally, the 4L Trophy.



school supplies (files, paper, large and small notebooks, pens, bags, pencils, pencil cases, rules, calculators ...) either new or in very good condition (this is not a bin for old material!).

To learn more about how you can help support these causes, email Chris at chris@chrisgale.com

LETTERS CONT FROM PG 45

I AM still affected by decisions made in the UK even though I live abroad. I have paid in so will get a UK pension, which will attract UK tax. I should have a voice in decisions affecting these.

Jane Akshar, RivieraReporter.com

CHRIS Grayling's comments are merely his fear that the errors of the Conservative party will be "outed" to the media and he will have to face the inevitable questions about decisions which are unjust, unethical and discriminating against a selected group of British citizens. Those choices are extending to wider and wider groups of

pensioners because the government has been allowed to get away with freezing the pensions of "certain" people, who retire overseas to be near their family for their final years – mostly to Commonwealth countries. And yes, the discrimination is clear, retire to the government-preferred Israel or Turkey or a few other countries and get the annual increase; but retire to most of the rest of the world and have your pensions (and now benefits such as Winter Fuel Allowance) frozen on very spurious grounds. Now we have the option to register to vote in the next election – see parity-warrior.com – and to influence our friends and relatives who are undecided about the look-same political parties to

vote with us, that is for the party and candidates that commit to treating all pensioners the same, irrespective of where they choose to live in this global world.

Brian Brown, RivieraReporter.com

AS someone who has no choice in the matter but by law has to have tax deducted in the UK I feel I should have the right to voice my opinion through the ballot box on how that money is spent.

As far as the comment by Grayling is concerned he really needs to just stop and think. I am not an outsider. I am a British subject and an unpaid ambassador for my country and for this privilege I pay tax for which

I get nothing in return. If Grayling was a paid up member of, for example, a golf club but parliamentary business prevented him from using it, would he support the view that he had no right to speak on how the club was being run?

To my mind I believe that everybody that is within the 15-year qualification period should register to vote and that everybody regardless of the length of absence should sign the petition to extend voting rights for life. Even if you think Grayling is right still support the campaign – you are helping other expats who feel it is their right and you can always abstain when an election comes around.

And remember too, that being on the

electoral register and voting may well become vital to the eventual unfreezing of the state retirement pension to some 550,000 expats – some are not getting the £113.10 they should but, without index linking, are having to try and survive on about £30 per week (which was the full pension when they retired).

Andy Robertson-Fox, RivieraReporter.com

IT'S the unfairness that gets many expats riled. Britain used to be seen by other nations as at least fair, despite its many quirks. The loss of the vote is unforgivable; the pressure now on the tax-free allowance because we have exercised our right to live elsewhere, often within the EU, is just nasty. The government has made all of this a political issue and has allied itself to the xenophobic "foreigners out" mentality of many UK voters. Expats rights are being bundled up and discarded in a shameful display of political greed. I applaud the work the Graham Richards, Harry Shindler, Brian Cave and their supporters are doing. It is essential that Britain not only is once again fair, but is seen to be fair.

Paul Rees, RivieraReporter.com

See "Voting Rights and Wrongs for British Expats" at RivieraReporter.com

One mot time

Darnagas

Signifying a person who has a tendency to be narrow-minded and always in the right. Not an insult, but a friendly term indicating a fault in someone's character.

december



RED NOSES IN MONACO

Running up to Sat Dec 6: The association "Les Enfants de Frankie" has helped over 100,000 needy children in Monaco and the PACA Region. Its annual *Journée Monégasque des Nez Rouge* is Dec 6, but the €2 spongy red ball for your car can be bought at tobacconists, post offices, some chemists and newspaper shops from the beginning of the month. All proceeds go to the charity, which is always looking for volunteers, members and donations. See frankiemonaco.org

For Church and Choir seasonal events see pg 17



SANTON FAIR

Until Dec 24, 14h-18h: Santonniers come to Mouans-Sartoux to sell thousands of figurines at the oldest and biggest santon fair in the department. Wed also 10h-12h. Info on 04 92 92 47 24.

FRANCE- ETATS-UNIS NICE

Mon Dec 1, Dec 15 & Jan 6, Jan 20, 16h30-18h: English conversation with Jacquie at La Canne à Sucre, 11 Promenade des Anglais (all attendees must purchase a drink). jacquie.berben@wanadoo.fr

POLITICAL WINE

Wed Dec 3 & Wed Jan 7, 18h30-20h: With Riviera Chapter of Democrats Abroad at La Canne à Sucre, 11 Promenade des Anglais, Nice. All Americans are invited to join us for a brief presentation, by one of our members, and engage in thoughtful discussions. Free but we ask that you support La Canne by ordering at least one drink during the event. Please RSVP (even "maybe") to dafrance.riviera@gmail.com if you would like to join us.

Christmas Markets



Photo: Ste-Maxime Tourism

cannes

Fri Nov 28 to Sun Jan 4

The Christmas markets at Allées de la Liberté in Cannes and Dec 17-26 in Cannes la Bocca (Marché Provençal, 7 rue du Docteur Baloux). Get your free photo with Santa Dec 20-24. The Christmas Fair with rides and attractions takes over the Esplanade Pantiero from Dec 5 to Jan 4. cannes-destination.fr

menton

Sat Dec 6 to Sun Jan 4

The market's 25 stands will be open, from 10h-19h30. Discover toys, high-tech accessories, mom & kid creations, jewellery, olive wood objects, musical instruments, essential oils and candles, and then of course chocolates, nougat, sweets, foie gras, waffles, mentonnaises specialties and Christmas trees ... selling finds its usual place along the Esplanade Francis Palmero; This year's themed "Christmas Circus Show" celebrates the circus and on Dec 13, 20, 21 & 27, floats, clowns and acrobats will bring the streets to life with parades. At the Palais de l'Europe, free workshops and storytelling should keep everyone happy. The Biovès gardens will delight with seven colourful scenes and children can post their letters here at Santa's mailbox – guaranteed response. tourisme-menton.fr

monaco

Fri Dec 5 to Sun Jan 4

This year's theme "Christmas Over the Rooftops" at Quai Albert 1er. Chalets selling regional specialties for the gourmet, a skating rink for kids of all ages and lots of entertainment. Market is open daily from 11h-21h and until 22h on Fri and Sat. Dec 24 it closes at 19h30 but it's open on Christmas and New Year's Day from 14h30-22h. mairie.mc

mouans sartoux

Sat Dec 6 to Dec 7 & Dec 24

The Fête de la lumière on Sat, and on Sun the Christmas market (both in village). Wed Dec 24: Christmas Eve mass followed by 13 desserts (on the Esplanade, in front of cinema). mouans-sartoux.com

nice

Sat Dec 6 to Sun Jan 4

Daily 11h-20h (21h Fri & Sat) at Place Masséna. The 19th edition incorporates 60 chalets, selling a wide range of handicrafts mainly Christmas products, a signature Ferris Wheel, amusement park and skating rink with 1-hour sessions from 11h (bring gloves and ID; €5). Place Masséna and Place Garibaldi will have free concerts for younger audiences on weekends and school holidays. All shapes and sizes of real Christmas trees for sale on the Prom the week before Dec 25th.

en.nicetourisme.com

sainte- maxime

Sat Dec 13 to Sun Jan 4

Visit Santa in his magical village under a 700m² heated tent (free entry). Take a ride on the Petit Train or take part in one of the many activities in Santa's games park – the Parc à Jeux du Père Noël. Kids can post letters to Santa and take part in animated workshops. Open daily from 11h-18h30, except Christmas and New Year's day (14h-18h30). sainte-maxime.com

valbonne

Wed Dec 17 to Wed Dec 24

With more than 80 exhibitors (daily from 9h) offering a thousand and one local gift ideas for the holidays. Performances, workshops and activities for children, a petting zoo, photos with Santa Claus. At Place des Arcades and in village streets. Free admission. tourisme-valbonne.com

vence

Fri Dec 12 to Sun Dec 14

Place du Grand Jardin showcases local producers and artisans selling figurines, pottery, jewellery, paintings, hats etc. Entertainment and performances will continue throughout the month. vence-tourisme.com

INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONALS NETWORK NICE

Wed Dec 3: Boscola Exedra Hotel.
Tues Dec 16: Hi Hotel. Albatross members €10; non €18.

Wed Jan 7: Ellington Hotel, Albatross members €8; others €16. Above events are from 19h30-23h30 and incl. welcome drink & small tapas. See internations.org

"LA PRÉSENCE FRANÇAISE À PHILADELPHIE ..."

Thurs Dec 4, 15h30: France-Grande-Bretagne Nice Presentation in French by Danièle Easton at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11bis rue de la Buffa. 04 93 81 76 74 or see fgb-nice.com

SUNNY BANK

Dec 4 & Jan 8, 10h-15h: Posh Paraphernalia and light lunch.
Dec 20 & Jan 17, 10h-15h: Open House at the Grange with lunch. 815 chem Gourettes, Mouans-Sartoux. Tel: 04 93 47 94 20. See sunny-bank.org

AMIAIC

Fri Dec 5: Christmas Lunch at The Carlton Cannes. Reservation form (obligatory) from Doug Attwood on 04 92 97 50 72. See our new website: amiac.org

BA NICE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Sat Dec 6, 18h: At Holy Trinity Nice (set up in hall begins at 16h). For more email: secretary.nice@britishassociation.info

ANNUAL KERMESSE

Sat Dec 6, 10h-18h: in the Circus Tent, Fontvieille, Monaco. Free entry. Tons of bargains: men's, women's and children's clothing, shoes, handbags, DVDs, CDs, English books, jewellery, gifts, kitchenware. Snack and bar open all day. Call 06 78 63 28 01 for info. Volunteers are needed the week before (see pg 21): contact humphreys@monaco.mc

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF THE VAR & VIAC

Sat Dec 6: Joint Grand Christmas lunch with VIAC in St Aygulf. See baofthevar.com or viac.fr

UNICEF NEEDS VOLUNTEERS



UNICEF needs local volunteers for their shops and special holiday stands in Cannes: Palais des

Festivals from Dec 1st to Jan 10th 14h30-17h, except Fri & Sun.

Nice: The shop is situated 17 rue Assalit and open from 10h-12h and 14h-17h30 Mon to Fri. Call 04 93 80 89 39 for dates of stands at Monoprix and CAL Leisure

Centres and elsewhere in Nice. Vence: Christmas market Dec

12th-14th, Place du Grand Jardin. UNICEF Christmas cards and gifts are sold at the above as well as in Antibes, Cagnes-sur-Mer and Mouans Sartoux, but they are always looking for businesses and stores willing to stock cards.

Interested parties can contact Dianne Brothwell directly on 04 93 55 67 65 or email dianne.brothwell1@aliceadsl.fr

SANTON SCENE



Mireille Fouque painting santon in Aix.

In Aix-en-Provence, Santons Fouque is celebrating its 80th anniversary. Visit their collection of 2,000 figurines from 2 to 70cm, all 100% handmade in Provence by four generations of Fouques. Open daily in Dec from 10h-19h (closed the 25th), with private parking; some English spoken. For more see santons-fouque.fr

TOY EXCHANGE

Sun Dec 7, 8h-18h, 22nd Bourse aux Jouets in Ste-Maxime (Prom. A Simon-Lorière, next to Tourist Office). Kids can sell or exchange old or new toys & see Santa arrive. Info: 06 83 38 72 45.

BA CANNES CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Tues Dec 9: At Le Clos Causette, Vallauris. Cost €30 ex wine. For reservations and directions call 04 92 99 22 28.

FGB-NICE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Thurs Dec 11: Christmas Lunch in a restaurant in Nice. Please contact for details. 04 93 81 76 74 or see fgb-nice.com

PYA CHRISTMAS BALL

Fri Dec 12: at the Carlton InterContinental Hotel, Cannes. Featuring band Brightlights and DJ Peter Mackley. Full details at pya.org or email info@pya.org

KIDIDIABETE

Sun Dec 14, from 14h: The Ass'n KidiDiabete invites all families with a child with Type 1 Diabetes to come & share a *gouter* with "Kidi", our mascot, and his buddy R2D2 from "Star Wars". There will be a number of games and surprises through the afternoon. At CAL Les Combes in Nice (768 blvd du Mercantour, RM 6202). Please rsvp before Dec 7 to kidievent@orange.fr. Mélanie Jupin 06 83 13 72 77 or Elodie Brun 06 67 44 38 75. See also pg 18 and Kididiabete.fr

WHISKY TASTING

Sun Dec 14, 18h: Provence Etats-Unis conference tasting of several whisky types and comparison with bourbon at the Salle des Fêtes in Bras (Place des Allées). Light lunch: *association vins et mets*. €12/per; limited to 12 places. Please note this is not an incitement to drink, alcohol is dangerous for your health. By reservation only Mlle Sibille: 06 18 80 75 73. See provencetatsunis.com

WINTER SWIMS

Sat Dec 21, 11h30: Christmas swim at Plage Ruhl, Nice. Register beforehand for free on site.

Thurs Jan 1, 11h30: New Year's Day swim (*Bain du jour de l'an*) in Antibes (at plage de la Salis). Contact "Finishers d'Antibes" on 06 12 44 27 86.

january

NEW YEAR'S FIREWORKS

Wed Dec 31: at midnight New Year's Eve at Quai Albert 1er in Monaco (along with a DJ from 21h30-3h) and in Cannes, this year's theme is "James Bond" (20 mins). Thurs Jan 1: At the Baie de Juan-Les-Pins, 18h.

39TH INT'L CIRCUS FESTIVAL MONTE-CARLO

Thurs Jan 15 to Sun Jan 25: See The Flick Flak Flyers and, from Sweden & the Netherlands, Troop Balagan. See montecarlofestival.mc

VIAC

Mon Jan 19: Hostellerie de Cotignac at Cotignac. See viac.fr

AMIAIC

Thurs Jan 22: Grande Bastide Golf Club Opio. To reserve please contact Doug Attwood on 04 92 97 50 72. See our new website: amiac.org

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Sat Jan 24: Meet your friends, and make new ones, at ACR's first event of 2015 – lunch and Assemblée Générale at the glorious Negresco Hotel on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, preceded by a private guided visit of the nearby Musée Massena. For further info contact the President, Mr Burton Gintell, BGintell@aol.com or on 06 20 40 11 28. See americanclubriviera.com

TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN MUSIC

Sun Jan 25, 18h: Provence Etats-Unis invites you to celebrate the New Year with the Meyer Trio at the Salle des Fêtes in Bras (Place des Allées). €10/pers. Free under-16. Contact Mlle Sibille 06 18 80 75 73. See provencetatsunis.com

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MISC

THE FRANCE-GRANDE-BRETAGNE ASSOCIATION in Cannes holds French and English classes from beginners to advanced including conversation every Saturday from 4th October 2014 from 2pm to 5pm followed by tea and biscuits. We also organise a social event every month. We are on the first floor of the Maison des Association Cannes, 9 rue Louis Braille, in Cannes (behind the train station off rue d'Alsace). Cannes. Parking free and available. More info: **Tel Iris on 04 93 97 86 32 or Odette on 04 93 49 37 01**

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEA

Nice-based food writer Rosa Jackson offers market tours and hands-on cooking classes in English for visitors and residents. Courses range from one to five days; discounts are available for residents who sign up for several classes. For more see:
See www.petitsfarcis.com

English literature workshops at the English Book Centre in Valbonne. Ideal for 6th form/lycée students preparing for GCSEs, A-Levels, OIB. Increase comprehension, develop critical thinking, improve writing skills. Drop-in sessions every Tues from 17h-18h, €10. Fun with English (on Wed) and one-to-one tuition in English. For any of the above, contact the EBC: 04 93 12 21 42 - www.englishbookcentre.com

English American Library, 12 rue de France, Nice. Open 10-11 & 3-5 Tues to Sat. Closed Sun & Mon. 20,000 volumes of fiction, non-fiction, video & press in English. Memberships from €6/week for tourists or €26/yr. Contact Judith at 06 16 56 50 35. www.nice-english-library.org

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