



MY VILLAGE – LE VAL



Situated in a little valley that gives the village its name, closed in by two chains of hills wooded with pines and scrubland, Le Val is a lively and authentic small French mediaeval village that was first inhabited around 4,500 years ago. Just a few minutes up the road from busy, bustling Brignoles as well as junction 35 of the A8 autoroute, the village is unpretentious, charming and full of Provençal character.

The main square is the Place Gambetta which houses two very traditional village bars (say hello to Roberto at the Cafe des Sports) and a range of excellent small shops as well as the entrance to the beautiful Notre Dame church which was consecrated back in 1068 AD and has 18th century frescos, 19th century stained glass windows and an organ from 1861. The church tower has a magnificent 18th century campanile and behind the church are the narrow mediaeval streets which still hold some vestiges of the ancient ramparts. There is an interesting *Santons* museum and a kilometre outside the village is an impressive waterfall.

The Roman wash-house is still in existence and nearby is a more modern long *lavoir* that is still used by villagers. This is opposite a splendid garden theatre which is used to stage various events and supports many of the large number of fetes that the village puts on. The most famous and important of these is the *Foire à la Saucisse* – always the first weekend in September, so this year actually starting on Saturday 31st August. This Bacchanalian celebration has been in existence for centuries and people come from far and wide to see the

festivities, enjoy the bands and processions, join in the fun and sample the produce on sale from the many stalls.

The village has two very good restaurants – La Cremaillère and La Fontaine. La Cremaillère has a long-held reputation for first-class cuisine under its owner and master chef, Eric Bernoville. As well as the many fetes there is a large number of differing musical events, the village having a long established reputation for church, choral and classical music which has been expanded to include many pop, jazz and modern musical soirees. When they are in Europe the Hollywood actors Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt and their family, live at the Miraval vineyard and chateau a couple of kms outside the village, off the Chateauvert road. George Clooney has a villa a little further away, but fortunately the village does not seem to be beset by journalists, paparazzi or autograph-hunters.

From its imposing (and newly re-furbished) Hotel de Vins with striking murals at the entrance to the village, to its small Friday morning market, Le Val is a very traditional, independent and typical Provençal village. The villagers are very friendly and helpful as typified in the post office, the library or the tourist office, especially if you try to use your French, however limited. We and all our many visitors thoroughly enjoy and appreciate its ambience and charm, but don't tell anyone else about it as we don't want it spoilt!!

Blake Long

MY VILLAGE – this will be the last article in this popular series unless readers start sending me more village reports. Already covered: Villecroze, Cotignac, La Motte, Les Arcs, Claviers, Montauroux, Aups, Figanières, Puget-sur-Argens - so there are still plenty to go at. Tell the BAV Membership about your village.

Editor

Here we go again!

A BAV member has just become the victim of a computer hacker trying to get access to his files, so another warning is now necessary. If a pleasant-sounding Indian gentleman rings you saying he is from Windows and there is a fault on your computer, politely tell him to go away! Above all, do not give him any information such as ID codes, passwords, etc. Windows will never contact individuals in this way.

Musique Cordiale 2013

This wonderful annual music festival will take place between 6 and 17 August this year with concerts in villages in the Fayence area, mainly. The orchestra and choir are drawn from the UK and France, together with international soloists, and produce concerts of great variety and to a high standard, both classical and jazz. Some of the works included this year are: Stabat Mater - Dvorak, Symphony No. 29 – Mozart, Dixit Dominus – Handel. See website for full details: www.musique-cordiale.com

Ruby Stamp

We are sorry to report the end of an era, in that one of our founder members, Ruby Stamp, has moved to the UK. She and her late husband, Ronnie, moved to France in 1968 and started a business in Fréjus, later retiring to Bagnols-en-Forêt. They were active members of the BAV and Ruby was the first Welfare Coordinator. We will miss her at our events, and wish her well in her new life.

New map warns of mosquito bites

A new website alert system has been introduced which aims to give a department by department warning of where there is heavy mosquito infestation, using daily updates from 2,000 pharmacies across the country who report on customers with bites. So far, the site reports no danger of malaria from the anopheles mosquito – and, to date, there has been no reported infection in mainland France from the dengue fever and chikungunya fever that the tiger mosquito is known to pass on. The site gives information (in French) on what to do to sooth a bite and what measures to take to prevent mosquitos breeding – notably to avoid leaving standing water in old tyres or other locations. Get more information from the website vigilance-moustiques.com

Jellyfish arrive in big numbers

JELLYFISH have arrived in massive numbers with the arrival of summer weather and are already causing major problems for swimmers, especially along the Mediterranean coast from Marseille to Nice. The jellyfish are brought to the coast by northern currents on the Mediterranean and warm water helps them reproduce. Pollution, plus over-fishing of the traditional predators of tuna and sea turtles, have helped jellyfish numbers to increase over the past few years.

- If stung, the main danger is from drowning as the swimmer panics and people should get out of the water quickly. Rinse the affected area with seawater

– never freshwater as this sets off the stinging cells anew – and do not rub with sand as often suggested as this will set off the stinging cells.

- If there is still a portion of tentacle on the skin, pull it off with a gloved hand then gently scrape the skin with the flat of a knife or a bank card to get rid of the stinging cells.

- Finally, pour warm water over the wound as this eases the pain – but take care not to scald as the skin has been desensitised by the sting. Finally, take an anti-inflammatory.

Children's Activities booklet

There is a PDF version of this booklet available on the BAV website for those who might wish to consult it. It can be found in the section "Information Sheets" on www.baofthevar.com.

Foreign drivers must pay fines

FOREIGN drivers can no longer escape having to pay fines for speeding and other motoring offences in France – which could mean an income of €15million for the state. Senators have backed a move to bring France in line with an EU decree and it now goes for final parliamentary approval before coming into force for the start of summer.

Across France foreign drivers are to blame for one in four speeding offences – and half of all speeding offences in border zones. The situation gets worse in summer where foreign-registered vehicles are responsible for 50% of offences across the whole country, despite foreign vehicles making up just 4% of the traffic on French roads.

Now, European states have agreed to share information on vehicle registrations to get rid of an anomaly in the community's open-borders policy. However, drivers from the UK, Ireland and Denmark will escape the fines as these countries have not signed up to the EU decree. Now each participating country will set up a central data exchange point to ensure information is exchanged fairly, with drivers facing penalties for seven types of offences such as speeding, drink-driving, ignoring red lights or using a mobile telephone while driving.

As at present, drivers caught and stopped in speed controls will still pay on-the-spot fines – with no exceptions for Britons. French, Belgian, Swiss and Luxembourg drivers have been forced to pay motoring fines in each country since last July.