



MARDI GRAS

February is a great month of celebration in our region, with events dating back centuries and others more recent.

Mardi Gras

This is a French invention which was successfully exported to other parts of the world, including New Orleans in the USA. It originated in the Middle Ages and was originally a means of preparing Christians for the fasting and self-denial of Lent, and the festivities lasted from Epiphany (the coming of the Magi) to *Mardi Gras* itself – the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. However, the celebrations are now enjoyed by people of all religions and none, as traditions are handed down from one generation to the next.



Carnivals are part of the lead-up to *Mardi Gras* and there is a spectacular one organised every year in Nice, which is mentioned in reports dating back to 1294. Today the carnival lasts for 2 weeks and there are decorations and fairy tale lighting throughout the town, through which daily parades pass watched by thousands of visitors and locals. Each year there is a theme, which this year is "King of the Five Continents", and between 15 February and 6 March you can see the inventive and incredible costumes, the highly decorated floats, and take part in the "Battle of the Flowers". Tel: 08 92 70 74 07 www.nicecarnaval.com

For the day of *Mardi Gras*, there used to be a final celebration and feasting before Lent, which involved killing a fatted bull. It is also said that all rich food had to be used up on this day, and pancakes were made from the remaining eggs, milk, flour and sugar, a tradition which is still observed in many countries today.



80ème Fête du Citron – Menton

However, on the *Côte d'Azur* we have two other festivals at this time of year. One of these takes place in the centre of Menton, this year between 16 February and 6 March, where amazing sculptures are made from over 140 tonnes of oranges and lemons, which are fastened to frames with self-coloured elastic bands. Some of these are over 10 metres tall, and like the Nice Carnival, always follow a theme – "Around the World in 80 Days" for 2013. There are daily parades, but also a permanent exhibition of the floats in the *Jardins Biovès* in the town centre. Tel: 04 92 41 76 95 www.fete-du-citron.com



Mimosa Festival

This takes place in several towns and villages in the Var and Alpes Maritimes, with various events taking place between the end of January and the end of February between Bormes-les-Mimosas in the west and Grasse in the east. There are mimosa parades (*Corso fleur*) in several towns along the way: Sainte Maxime 2-3 February; Tanneron 3 February; Saint Raphaël 10-17 February; Mandelieu-La Napoule 15-17 February; Cavalaire 17 February; and Bormes-les-Mimosas on 23-24 February. More details in our What's On Guide, and from the various tourist offices.

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Forthcoming Events

for your diary

Committee Meeting

11 February

Coffee Morning and Book Sale

Friday 22 February - Cotignac

Guided Tour of Fréjus followed by
Provençal lunch at Les Micocouliers
restaurant

Wednesday 27 February

Barclays Bank Open Day

Wine Tasting

Thursday 7 March - Port Frejus

AGM

Wednesday 20 March – Les Arcs

Guided tour of Seillans and Lunch

at La Gloire de mon Père

Tuesday 23 April

Lunch at Trout fishing lake

Friday 10 May - Entrecasteaux/Carces

Bring & Share Lunch

Friday 24 May - Tavernes

Quiz

Saturday 1 June – Draguignan

Summer Soirée

Wednesday 5 June - La Motte

Guided tour of Fréjus and/or Lunch

Guided visit in English of ancient Fréjus,
including Roman remains, 10h00-12h00 starting
at the Tourist Office, 249 rue Jean Jaurès.

Wednesday 27 February

5€ per person

Provençal lunch at Les Micocouliers restaurant,
Place Paul-Albert Février, Fréjus (in cathedral
square).

18.50€ excluding drinks

Menu

Soupe de Poisson ou

Terrine de Lapin ou

Salade de Saint Marcelin

Brochette de Volaille Marinée ou

Daube de Boeuf ou

Filet de Dorade

Tarte Tatin aux pommes et glace vanille

Please complete the reservation slip and return
to Michael Wharton before 12 February. You
can opt for just the tour or lunch, or both.

New members

We welcome Barry & Dorothea Richardson of Le
Muy to membership of the BAV.

Coffee Morning and Book Sale

Friday 22 February

between 10h00 and 12h00

at the home of Billy and Jean Naisbitt

83570 Cotignac

Donations are welcome

A representative from Siddalls will be present to
give financial advice on a personal basis.

Contact Billy 04 *****

*****@gmail.com for directions

Important information concerning the AGM

The formal Notice of the AGM to be held on
Wednesday 20 March will be sent out on 1 March
together with the Agenda, Reports and Proxy Form.
If you are unable to attend you can choose to have
a proxy vote and that must be lodged with the
Secretary either by post or by e-mail 24 hours
before the AGM.

Nominations for Committee Members, with a
proposer and seconder from amongst the members,
must be lodged with the Secretary 28 days before
the meeting. There are 5 vacancies - please
consider serving the members in this way. Please
note that Committee Members must be fiscally
resident in France.

At the last AGM the Internal Rules and Regulations
were amended to clarify the matter of questions
and proposals. The papers for the AGM are sent out
beforehand and any question may be asked
concerning them but only in writing. Other matters
may be raised and proposals made but not voted
upon. The Committee will consult with the proposer
to see if an appropriate proposal may be made at
the 2014 AGM.

The reason for this procedure is to safeguard the
Association from passing illegal or unworkable
resolutions. Questions relating to the AGM papers
must be submitted to the secretary 7 days in
advance of the meeting.

Michael Wharton
Hon Secretary



Barclays Bank are pleased to invite the members of the BAV to an

Open Day

at their offices in Frejus Port
68 place Porte d'Hermès (parking opposite)

between 10h30 – 17h00

Thursday 7 March

Wines and snacks will be provided by La Cave de Marie, Frejus.

Feel free to just call in or contact

anna.crepin@barclays.fr to obtain more details



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Important AGM details

Wednesday 20 March

La Pinède

On the DN7 between Le Muy and Les Arcs. If you are coming from Le Muy direction, the large builder's merchants SO.SA.CA is on your right and approx 500m on the left is the venue. Sat Nav 43,460255 6,524983

Schedule for the morning

10h00 - 10h30 Registration

with coffee, orange juice and croissants available for members

10h30 AGM commences

AGM documents, which will be distributed 14 days prior to the meeting, will include the Agenda and proxy voting slips for members unable to attend.

Nominations for committee must be with the secretary by **18 February**.

Members who receive electronic Newsletters will receive their AGM documentation electronically and proxy voting slips will be attached in the same manner as event booking forms.

12h00 approx end of the meeting

Members can then stay for lunch if they wish. The venue is renowned for being the home of the best pizzas in France (if not the world!)

Please indicate on the reservation slip whether you are staying for lunch. Will members who do stay note that all meals and drinks after the AGM are their responsibility and the restaurant will provide individual bills. BAV is **not** responsible for any food or drink costs. For details of the venue and menus please view - www.pizzerialapinede.com

ALL MEMBERS must complete the Registration Form prior to the Meeting.

ONLY MEMBERS can attend and no membership subscription renewals or membership applications will be accepted on the morning of the AGM.

Bargain Basement

Sales and Wants printed free for members

Email your ads to newsletter@baofthevar.com

Wanted:

Circular slicing disc and stem that would fit a rather old (maybe 15 years) Moulinex Masterchef 20 food processor. 04 *****

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Edwin Cottey BA, NP, Solicitor & Estate Agent.
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Email: info@ejcfrenchproperty.com
www.ejcfrenchproperty.com

"What's On" Guide

1 Feb Sainte Maxime, Théâtre Le Carré. Swan Lake – ballet by Opera Tchaikovsky of Perm. 20h30. €32. 04 94 56 77 77

2 Feb Puget sur Argens, Espace Victor Hugo. Joey Welz – blues, country. 20h30. €11.80

2 Feb Les Arcs, Cellier des Archers, av des Laurons. Brocante. 8h00-17h00. 04 94 73 30 29

2-3 Feb Sainte Maxime. Fête du Mimosa – parade with decorated floats on Sunday 14h30. 0826 20 83 83

2-3 Feb Les Arcs, Salle polyvalente, av de la Gare. Salon du Modélisme. 10h00-18h00. €4. 04 94 47 58 66

2-3 Feb Tanneron. Fête de Mimosa. 04 93 60 71 73

3 Feb Flayosc, Eglise. Ensemble Choral de Lorgues – concert.

4-5 Feb St Aygulf, Etangs de Villepey. Guided nature walks around lake. 10h00-12h00, 14h00-16h30. www.ville-frejus.fr

5 Feb Draguignan, theatre. Le Choeur du Sud – musical comedy. 20h30. €28. 04 94 50 59 59

6 and 13 Feb Draguignan, Miellerie Mandard, 564 Ch St Michel. Visit to Honey Farm. 10h00. €2 inc. tasting. Reservation necessary through tourist office: 04 98 10 51 05

9 Feb Cogolin, town centre. Carnaval Provençal. 16h30. Free. 04 94 35 01 10

9 Feb Draguignan, Allées d'Azémar. Foire aux Plants. 9h00-18h00. 04 94 60 31 31

9-10 Feb Toulon. Tour Méditerranéen – cycle race ending in Var and Alpes Maritimes. See website for route: www.letourmed.fr. Details from Toulon tourist office: 04 94 18 53 00

10-17 Feb St Raphaël. Fête de Carnaval (Mimosa). 10 Feb: 15h00. 04 94 19 52 52

13 Feb Grimaud, Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires. Discovering St Valentine. 18h30. Free. 04 94 43 39 29

14 Feb Sainte Maxime, Cinema. Opera film. Faust - Gounod. 14h30 and 19h30. €18. 04 94 56 77 77

15 Feb St Raphaël, Théâtre Félix Martin. Aurore Voilque – jazz. 20h30. €13. 04 98 11 89 03

15 Feb La Motte, Hameau du Mitan. Jas du Mitan – guided visit of new winery. 10h00. €3 including tasting. Reservation necessary at tourist office: 04 94 45 12 79

16 Feb St Raphaël, Centre Culturel. Piano recital – Philippe Mabboux. 20h30. €10. 06 75 69 99 26

16 Feb Taradeau, Salle Edouard Soldani, rte de Lorgues. St Valentine Dinner Dance. 20h00. €30. 04 94 99 44 96

16 Feb Fréjus, cinema. Opera film. Rigoletto – Verdi. 18h55. €21. 04 94 40 14 54

16 Feb Montauroux, Maison pour Tous. Opera film. Rigoletto - Verdi. 18h55. €25. 04 94 50 40 30

16-17 Feb Les Arcs sur Argens, Château Ste Roseline. Dracénie et Vieilles Dentelles – antique linen and lace. 06 09 07 12 30

16-17 Feb Draguignan, and other Var areas. Tour du Haut Var – cycle race. See website for route: www.tourduhautvar.com. Details from Draguignan tourist office: 04 98 10 51 05

16 Feb – 17 Mar Ste Maxime, Théâtre de la Mer. Ice Rink. 14h00-18h30. €5. 0826 20 83 83

17 Feb Draguignan, Complexe St Exupéry. Bourse Numismatique – coin and medal collections. Free. 04 94 48 38 57

17 Feb Agay, Fête des Fleurs (Mimosa). 04 94 19 52 52

17 Feb Seillans, Salle Polyvalente, Rte de Bargemon. Thé Dansant. 15h00. €10.

17 Feb Cavalaire sur Mer. Corso du Mimosa. 14h00. 04 94 01 92 10

17 Feb Grimaud. Classical music concert. 18h00. 04 94 55 43 83

20 Feb Draguignan, Cinema. Opera film. Eugène Onégiune - Tchaikovsky. 20h00 €19

21 Feb Roquebrune sur Argens, Les Orchidées de Michel Vacherot, CD7. Guided visit to orchid farm. 10h00. €4. 04 94 45 48 59

21-28 Feb Fréjus, Villa Aurélienne, av du Général Calliès. Guided tour of grounds. 14h00-16h00. €5. 06 37 67 73 73

22 Feb Les Arcs, Café de la Tour. Fish and chips lunch. 12h00. €10. Booking essential, by preceding Tuesday. 04 94 73 30 56

23-24 Feb Bormes les Mimosa. Corso Fleuri (Mimosa festival). 14h00-19h30, 10h00-16.30. €5. 04 94 01 38 38

24 Feb Rayol Canadel sur Mer, Domaine du Rayol. Fête du Printemps. 04 94 05 65 69

24 Feb Mazaugues, Musée de la Glace. 14eme Foire à la Glace. (ancient ice houses) All day. 04 94 86 39 24

24 Feb Lorgues, Espace F. Mitterrand. Thé Dansant. 15h00. €10. 04 94 73 35 39

24 Feb Montauroux, Place Clos. 19eme Ronde de Montauroux – cycle race. 13h30-16h30. 04 94 47 75 90

27 Feb Ampus. Guided visit (groups in English on request). 15h00. €2. 04 94 70 41 31

Zenith Oméga, Toulon:

www.zenith-omega-toulon.com 0892 700 840.

Opera House, Toulon:

www.operadetoulon.fr 04 94 93 03 76

Draguignan Theatre:

www.theatresendracenie.com 04 94 50 59 59.

Forum Theatre, Fréjus and Centre Culturel, St Raphaël: www.aggloscenes.com 04 94 95 55 55.



www.baofthevar.com

See Forthcoming Events and the Latest News on our BA website

events@baofthevar

We try to arrange events for members throughout the Var so far as possible and to suit all tastes and pockets.

Attendance numbers can be very erratic which makes the organisation of such events a challenge as some attract only 10 or so members whereas the ever popular *Vendange* lunch regularly attracts 120 members.

The Grand Christmas lunch on 15 December attracted around 40 members and we were grateful to receive some very positive comments following the lunch, including the following:-

"I can honestly say it was the very best meal I have ever had in France, the food was delicious and the ambiance amazing.

"The lunch on Saturday was one of the best BA lunches we've been to. The venue was a revelation to us and full of atmosphere, such fun lunching in a cave. The menu was a terrific choice and great value for money.

"With regard to the meal last Saturday, we thought that the menu was excellent, the food well-presented and each course was of high standing. Nobody could complain about the price, it was real value for money.

"We thought the meal, venue, service, value for money all excellent.

Hopefully such favourable comments will encourage members to try out some of the events that they might otherwise have not attended.

Chairman's Report

We are rapidly approaching yet another AGM which, at the time of writing, is proposed for **20 March** at Les Pinèdes restaurant, Les Arcs sur Argens as last year. We are pleased to announce that John Lloyd of Aups has been co-opted onto the Committee but regret that, following his illness, Ian Mackintosh will be stepping down at the AGM.

We have, for the last year, been a small Committee but I hope that we have been effective and that we have continued to act on behalf of the members. We would however like to see a couple more members on the Committee and, if you have any interest in this respect, then I should be grateful if you would make yourself

known. The position need not be too onerous but requires attendance at the monthly meetings where we discuss the finances, welfare cases and organisation of events, together with any other relevant matters. You need to be fiscally resident in France to serve on the Committee.

On the subject of events, I have organised another lunch at the trout fishing lake between Entrecasteaux and Carces for **Friday 10 May**. This was extremely well received last year and a delightful surprise to those who attended. The price is to be fixed but please make a diary note as places will be limited to 30.

Committee Members

Chairman - Rob Flanagan

chairman@baofthevar.com

Secretary - Michael Wharton

secretary@baofthevar.com

Treasurer - Lesley Honeywell

treasurer@baofthevar.com

Welfare Officer - Ann Mitchem

welfare@baofthevar.com

Events Secretary - vacancy

events@baofthevar.com

Publicity - vacancy

publicity@baofthevar.com

newsletter@baofthevar.com

webmaster@baofthevar.com

Members –

John Collingwood

john@baofthevar.com

Ian (Angus) Mackintosh

*****@wanadoo.fr

Digital parking tickets

Parking tickets pinned to windscreens is soon to become a thing of the past, as new technology begins to take over the region. Police carry a little digital box known as a PDA, or 'Personal Digital Assistant', and speak into the device giving details including car registration number and location of the offence. The digital entry goes straight to central administration in Rennes where it is processed. Finally, a letter is sent to the postbox of the offender.

The new system does away with an average of up to 6,000 parking tickets per year in France. The verbal records will also go through the stolen car database with much more speed. The process was developed in May 2012 and introduced to several French towns including Fréjus and Saint Raphaël. The new age technology is expected to go nationwide this summer.



Barclays has been present in France since 1917 and provides retail banking services and investment management services for more than 170,000 customers, including 70,000 Premier Banking clients.

Barclays France also offers mutual fund and asset management expertise to our own clients, external individual investors and institutions via Wealth & Investment Management.

Our objective is to be the "Go-To" bank for customers in the Premier Banking sector by providing a distinctive relationship based value proposition and focusing on investment solutions. To do this, we have three distribution channels: Branch, present in City locations throughout France, Premier Clubs, present in Town locations throughout France, and Barclays Patrimoine, a mobile sales force.

For more information, please contact:

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Mike Lorimer - Orias No. 07032481

Storage needed

The BAV needs storage facilities for its equipment, including tables and chairs – **can you help please?** Requirements: Garage space, room or dry outbuilding 15m² with access for a box van. Please reply to the Newsletter - newsletter@baofthevar.com

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Welfare Coordinator
Ann Mitchem**
04 ***** or 06 43 86 49 01
welfare@baofthevar.com

British celebrations

St George's Day, 23 April, is the date chosen for the April event organised by the BAV – more details soon – so we would like to display any English flags at the venue (red cross on white background). Has anyone any of these to lend us please?

However, we are very much aware of the fact the we are a British organisation, not an English one, so we are looking for Welsh, Scots and Irish members willing to host a themed coffee morning or drinks party on their saint's day: St David – 1 March, St Andrew – 30 November and St Patrick - 17 March, with appropriate decorations, food and drink. Please reply to newsletter@baofthevar.com.

**Desperate to Stop?
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08 20 20 02 57 aa-riviera.org

NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORKS

New St. Maximin la Ste Baume, Tourves, Brignoles, Neoules, Mazaugues, Meounes, Pourrieres, Pourcieux, Ollieres, Brue Auriac, Seillon Source d'Argens ...
and anywhere else in the far Var

We plan our first Neighbourhood Network meeting for **Thursday, 14 February** at 10h30 in the Café Cercle Philharmonique, Place Malherbe (the main square of St. Maximin). There is plenty of parking within easy walking distance. St Max is an interesting medieval town with a fine Basilica, and a selection of reasonably priced restaurants, including the Couvent Royal where the restaurant is housed in the original convent buildings. Do join us – the idea is to spread our neighbourhood wings, and get to know a few more people living nearby.

Diana Andre de la Porte

04 ***** *****@wanadoo.fr

Cabasse, Carces, Correns, Cotignac, and Le Val

We are meeting on **Friday 22 February** at the at home of Billy and Jean Naisbitt, Cotignac. Please see details on p2.

Michael Wharton

07 ***** *****@cam.ac.uk

Draguignan, Les Arcs, Le Luc, Taradeau and Vidauban

We meet on the **2nd Friday** of the month at the Café de la Tour, Les Arcs at 10h30. As there is no Neighbourhood Network in **Draguignan** at present, some members from there have been attending the one in Les Arcs and we extend a welcome to anyone else who would like to come.

Jim North

04 ***** *****@wanadoo.fr

Entrecasteaux, Salernes, Tourtour, and Villecroze

We are meeting on **Friday 22 February** at the at home of Billy and Jean Naisbitt, Cotignac. Please see details on p2.

Ann & Maurice Mitchem

04 ***** *****@hotmail.com

La Motte and Le Muy

We celebrated our first meeting of the New Year in true French tradition with a *Galette des Rois*, although our lucky *féve*-finder refused the crown! We normally meet on the **second Tuesday of each month** at the Bar des Cascades in the centre of La Motte but exceptionally this month the next date is **5 February at 10h00**. All are very welcome to join our group for coffee and conversation.

Alexandra Lewis-Smith

04 ***** *****@bbox.fr

Les Issambres

We meet **every other Tuesday** at 11h00 at L'Arpillon café next to Casino.

Richard Tolaini

04 ***** or 06 ***** *****@aol.com



Siddalls France has been providing independent financial advice in France for over fifteen years and has a network of regional advisers across the country, providing support and expert advice on many issues affecting personal finances.

All Siddalls' advisers are fully conversant with both the French and UK fiscal systems and will be able to identify any problem areas that need to be addressed and suggest solutions in accordance with your personal requirements.

Siddalls France is authorised and regulated by the French authorities. Their bilingual staff are there to provide up to date information and deliver British standards of trust, loyalty and a supportive on-going service. All advisers are salaried members of staff and receive regular training to ensure they keep up to date with the ever changing rules and regulations. All advice is in English, as technically difficult subject matter is usually best understood when it is presented in the language you are most comfortable with. Also, as Siddalls' advisers are all British citizens resident in France, they understand the cultural issues you face, as well as the financial ones.

Siddalls' representative in South East France is Simon Eveleigh, who lives in St Maximin la Ste Baume and is a member of the BAV. Simon can provide you with assistance on:

- Taxation – helping to ensure that your affairs are structured to help minimise your taxes
- The French inheritance system – strict French inheritance laws can be a nasty shock if proper advice is not sought
- Pensions advice and managing money for your retirement
- Savings and investments

Simon understands that discussing your finances can sometimes be difficult and the range of services and products on offer can make the whole thing very daunting. He therefore does his utmost to explain complicated matters in plain English and would welcome enquiries from members.

MEMBERS' GROUPS

Painting Group

Our next painting day is on **Wednesday 20 February** at the home of Stella Reynolds in Montauroux. If you are coming **please contact:**

Stella 04 *****
*****@yahoo.co.uk

Happy Boules

For details about our meeting times and venues **please contact:**

Rob Flanagan 06 *****
*****@hotmail.com

Digital Photography Group

Having enjoyed a Christmas of good festive cheer and food we needed to walk off the excess, so a theme of "Christmas 2012" was chosen. For all of us that did not go down with the dreaded bug, photos were taken in Nice, Le Cannet, Mougins, Montauroux, St Raphael and Prague.

We also discussed the opportunity that we have been offered by the Riviera Reporter to produce a photo or two for their front cover and the location of our next trip. **We would be grateful for any ideas from any BAV members of a good photographic place they may know.**

Sandie Docherty

For details about the group **please contact:**

Mike Harper
*****@yahoo.co.uk

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Please Note: We appreciate the support of our advertisers and encourage members to consider using their services; however, BAV cannot take responsibility for the quality of goods and services.

Before taking action in response to articles about law and finance in the Newsletter, please take advice from a suitable qualified person.

The ARK, LORGUES

L'Oasis Christian Fellowship

Every 2nd Sunday at 11h45 at
Arc-en-Provence, 1801 Chemin des Pailles
and every 4th Sunday at 11h45 at
Notre Dames des Anges Maison de Retraite
We have a Bring and Share lunch afterwards.
For details or directions **please contact**
Rev Peter or Shirley Massey 04 94 73 93 37 or
06 87 94 04 83 www.arc-en-provence.com/oasis

The Var Tuesday Club

meets every 3rd Tuesday
see www.vartuesdayclub.org for details

CALLIAN

Le Pradon Anglican Church

Fellowship of the Ascension
You are very welcome to join us in
our new church home at

Le Pradon Maison de Retraite Callian.

We meet on the **1st and 3rd Sundays** of
the month at **10h30** for Family Communion
or Morning Prayer.

We also have a Bring and Share lunch afterwards.

Please ring Hilary 04 94 47 70 67 for details
or visit our website
www.lepradonanglican.org

St John's for the Var

St John the Evangelist
Ave Paul Doumer, St Raphaël

Rev Keith Bretel

Holy Communion is held **every Sunday at 10h30**
followed by refreshments
and a monthly lunch.

Grimaud Village Church

1st Thursday of each month at 11h00

Please ring 04 94 60 87 05 for details
www.sjevar.com

For next month's Newsletter

Please let us have your advertisements,
articles and reports for the March issue by

Friday 15 February

All contributions to:

newsletter@baofthevar.com

or to Shirley Rowson, *****,
83920 La Motte.

The Bereavement Support Network of the Var (BSN)

This organisation exists to support not only the bereaved but also those who are terminally ill, and their families and friends. If you, or someone you know, could benefit from our confidential, free support, then please contact:

Sandra - 04 94 84 64 89 or 06 32 35 31 24

info@bsnvar.org or www.bsnvar.org

for further information.



British Association of the Var

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February 2013

Newsletter Supplement

My Village – Claviers

New Eurostar service to Provence

On the edge of the Haut Var, nestling between Draguignan and Fayence, you will find the small, medieval, hilltop village of Claviers which, in fact, is situated in a valley. This unique position gives the village its own climate which means that although we are around 400m above sea-level, plants such as bougainvillea flourish here.



We are well supplied with facilities which include two restaurants, a pizza café and a tea-house. A Proxy shop, post office, a bakery which still uses wood-fired ovens, are all much in demand, as is the *Cercle de la Fraternité*, which is in effect the local pub. We also have our own doctor.

The oldest building is an 11th century chapel, used continuously in the summer for exhibitions and social functions. The 13th century parish church is worth a visit for its beautiful interior.

The olive industry played a very important part in the life of the village, and at the end of the 19th century there were some 24,000 olive trees in the area, and the remains of many of the old olive-mills can be found in the surrounding countryside. Today there are still hundreds of the trees here, and many residents, including ourselves, are able to pick and have their olives pressed, thereby producing their own olive oil.

Despite a small permanent population of just under 600, Claviers has more social life than many other villages. There are three very active groups who organise all the events, together with a village choir which sings all over the Var, and has two big concerts in Claviers in the summer and at Christmas. There is something happening every week in the summer, and also many winter activities, so life here is never boring.

I think we were very lucky when we chose to buy a house in Claviers. We are not swamped with ex-pats, and the local French are so friendly and welcoming, so because of the small population we quickly became known to most villagers.

Richard Alexander

Eurostar is launching a trial service between Aix en Provence and London, via Avignon and Lyon, every Saturday between 4 May and 29 Jun 2013, with a view of establishing a permanent service by 2015. Tickets will cost as little as 115 euros and are now available for purchase.

With a total travel time of six hours and 15 minutes from London to Aix en Provence, the new Eurostar service offers a Standard Premier class for passengers who desire some extra comfort. Seats in these superior carriages will start at 310 euros, while the cost of Standard class tickets will be from 115 euros. The decision was spurred on by the huge success of the service from London to Avignon, which was launched in 2002 and will continue in 2013 during the summer period of 6th July to 7th September.

Poisonous fish in the Nartuby

Since 11 October 2012 it has been forbidden to eat or sell fish caught in the lower reaches of the Nartuby river, or any lakes into which it flows. After testing fish caught just above the Saut de Capelan waterfall in La Motte, it was found they contained unacceptable levels of dioxine and PCB (PolyChloroBipheny). This is a potential health risk, particularly if contaminated fish are eaten regularly.

EDF bills

Those of you who pay your EDF electricity bills monthly may have received a letter from EDF increasing your monthly payments, often by a substantial amount, and justifying this by stating that your consumption has increased. If you check and note your consumption every month you will know whether this is true. In most cases it is not true and there is no basis for EDF to demand more money, nor is there any obligation for you to accept these new monthly amounts.

It is necessary to ring the customer service number on your bill and firmly insist that you do not agree with the increased payments and want to stay with the existing amount. They will then check your consumption and probably tell you it has increased slightly, to justify this demand for

more money, but will cancel the increase, making sure you know that any deficit at the end of the year must be paid promptly.

This appears to be an exercise to swell the coffers of EDF at the customer's expense, giving them a huge sum of money to play with, and gain interest from, until it is time to refund the poor customer at the end of the year. Don't let them get away with it!

New Air France low fares

Air France has launched a new series of low-cost tickets called "Mini" in the face of competition from rivals such as Ryanair and easyJet. Tickets starting at 49€ one way will be available for 58 destinations in France, Europe and north Africa with departures from Paris Orly airport, Marseille, Nice or Toulouse starting on 6 February. Air France said the same level of service would be offered to passengers - including free newspapers - but hold baggage would cost extra.

Reduced price offers

Auberge du Cigalon, Flayosc - Janine and Roberto at this popular fine dining restaurant in Flayosc are offering a complimentary coffee to members of the British Association of the Var, as are the owners of Lei Cigales in Villecroze.

Walks

Over the next few months we will be including some short walks for those who are unable to manage longer walks but still like to enjoy the great outdoors in the Var. As this guide is intended for your own use, you are responsible for your own safety.

Please take sensible precautions: have your mobile phone charged, with the international emergency number in the memory (112); wear strong footwear and suitable protection against the weather; take a bottle of water especially in the summer. Respect the countryside – no smoking or camp fires, close gates, don't damage crops. Distances and times are approximate and are for guidance.

Sentier de la Castellane, Grimaud

3km, 1h00, way marked in green stripes on telephone poles, all on tarmac roads, some climbing at the end.

Car access: Approach from the south-east on the D558, follow this road around the bottom of the village (don't take right turn to "Centre ville") and

look out for La Poste and Police Municipal on the left. Turn left into underground free car park opposite Tourist Office.



Call in the Tourist Office to get a map, and brochures about the Chateau and the Folk Museum if you are intending to visit these. There is also a "Circuit Historique" of the village centre which could be added to your trip (1h00) – brochure from Tourist Office.

Carry on along the D558 past the Museum and turn left into a road sloping downwards at the gateway to *Domaine de l'Enclos*. After 300m take the first right, looking out for the green stripes on the poles to confirm your route, then soon after take the first left. At 500m turn left again by a concrete pole and post-box number 152. Follow this road through the area of *La Réparade* to a junction where you turn right (1.2m) – there is a bus stop called *La Mignone* and a sign to *La Vicairie*. Carry on until you reach another junction where you turn left into *Chemin de Mignonne* (1.8m). There are meadows with horses to the right. Follow this road back to the village (some climbing here), where it joins the main road at *Immeuble Beausoleil*. Turn left to go back to the car park.

Information

The Museum is open Monday-Saturday: May-September 14h30-18h00, and October to April 14h00-17h30. Entrance free. (Tuesday-Saturday in July/August.) The ruined Chateau is open all the time, but is accessed by a steep climb as it is on a hill-top.

The area of *La Castellane* dates from the Middle Ages and means "Lord of the Manor". The *Immeuble Beausoleil* was formerly a hotel – the first in Grimaud – and dates from 1875.

(If you prefer longer, guided walks, Jim North organises one every month, weather permitting. Please contact him for details: 04 ***** *****@wanadoo.fr)