



# British Association of the Var

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Association Loi 1901 No: W831001750

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**Newsletter Supplement**

## Voting in France

All EU citizens living as residents in France are entitled to vote in the following French elections: Local Municipal Elections and European Parliamentary Elections - and you need to register separately for each. You can be registered to vote in municipal elections in more than one EU country at a time, but this does not apply to European elections. The next elections for both these categories will be in 2014.

### How to register

You must be at least 18 years old by the end of February of election year and not have been banned from voting in another EU state. You must have registered by the last working day in December of the year preceding elections. Ask for a voter registration form at your *Mairie*, complete this and take it back together with: proof of identity (passport), proof of nationality (passport or driver's licence with photo), proof of address (rent receipt, tax return, water or electricity bill). Your voter registration card will be sent to you.

### How to vote

Go to the appropriate polling station taking your voter registration card and proof of identity. In communes of less than 3500 people you will be given an envelope and the ballot papers of all the candidates. Go into the polling booth and vote – this is done on an individual basis in that you can choose those candidates you want and delete the names of those you do not want. Place the ballot papers in the envelope. On exiting the booth, before posting the vote, show your identity document and present your registration card for stamping. Sign the register of voters and put the vote in the ballot box. In communes of more than 3500 you are not allowed to alter the ballot paper (as above) and voting may be by machine where you select and validate your choice on screen. You then sign the register of voters and your registration card will be stamped.

### Why vote?

As the decisions taken by these candidates will affect your life in France at some time or other, it is important to have a say in choosing the right people for the job. Read the literature they send out before the elections and go to the meetings

where they put forward their views and promises. Ask your neighbours, who may well have known the candidates for many years, especially in smaller villages, but beware of local feuds and political contests which may colour their judgment.

## Car Insurance for UK

One of our members brought a situation to our notice that concerned using their French-registered car in the UK for short periods. Their French insurance broker, AXA, advised them that it would be necessary to pay an extra €80 to be registered with the Motor Insurance Bureau (MIB). The reason given was that there is a new DVLA-MIB plate recognition system in use in the UK which automatically picks up your car registration number and sends demands for fines directly to the car owner. Obviously a French registration plate would not be recognised, so it was implied that there would be possible repercussions in the UK, including court procedures, as a result of this, but if the car owner was registered with the MIB there would be no problem. The language used in the letter was persuasive and disguised the fact that this registration is optional, not mandatory.

On checking with DVLA and MIB, we were told that no such requirement exists. The spokesperson at AXA was unsure of the situation and promised to ask someone else to call back, which never happened. So we took advice from one of the advertisers in the BAV Newsletter, Luc de Bardonneche at Aviva, who has double checked the situation and confirms that no such MIB registration is necessary – it is entirely optional. Therefore if you receive a similar demand from your car insurer, the choice is yours.

## Car Tyres

As a result of a coach crash about a year ago due to a 20 year old tyre there has been a lot of publicity in the UK about the age of tyres. Apparently tyres degrade after about 7 or 8 years and, as a result, a tyre of over that age can blow out without prior notice. Whilst most cars' tyres are usually changed every 3 or 4 years, this is potentially a problem for trailers and caravans

where use is limited and tyres are not changed nearly as frequently. The Caravan Club apparently recommends changing tyres before 8 years.

It is possible to check on the date of your tyre as there is a 4-digit code on the wall of the tyre with the first two digits being the week of manufacture and the second two being the year. Please therefore drive safely and if your car, trailer or caravan has tyres of more than 8 years then change them even if they do not appear to be worn.

## New French driving licences

A NEW French driving licence was introduced in September which gets rid of the old paper format and brings in the Euro-style card to beat forgeries. It is thought that 5-10% of the driving licences in France are counterfeit and the new plastic credit-card style is aimed to stop this. The card licence contains an electronic chip which contains basic identity details of the holder, but not, so far, digital fingerprints or other biometric details. It also contains new categories of licence to match European norms.

People who pass their driving test from now on will receive the new-style cards, as will those who have lost their original documents or had them stolen. The new cards are free and drivers who passed their test this year will be sent it next year. Others will receive their new licences progressively from 2015 until 2033, the final expiry date for paper-style licences. In all, around 38 million licences will be replaced. Foreign residents who exchange their own country's licence for a French one will also receive the new-style card. However, this is not compulsory and European Union citizens can continue to drive on their own country's licence while they are in France. The only requirement to exchange for a French licence comes if an offence is committed.

## WALK –TRANS-EN-PROVENCE *Le Puits Aérien*

Circular walk on tarmac paths, 5km, 1h40, 100m climb. Map IGN 3544 OT

### Car access:

*Turn off the dual carriageway that skirts Trans-en-Provence at the former railway station which now sells wine, and park there.*

Taking the former railway track, follow the dual carriageway south to the roundabout *Notre Dame* (with fountain) then take the Les Arcs road as far as the *Chemin de la Croix*. Ascend the *Chemin de la Croix* to the top where there are recycling bins. Carry straight on following the *Chemin de Suous* to the end, ignoring a left turn to *Petit Chemin de Suous* and a right turn to *Chemin des Torrents*. Turn right onto the *Chemin des Puits* and follow it to the end of the descent to *Les Escombes*, ignoring a left turn to *Chemin de Puits de l'Angouisse*.

Turn left into the *Les Escombes* housing estate then turn right by a signpost to *Le Puits Aérien* onto a footpath, then turn left to follow the road above and parallel to the dual carriageway. At the next signpost to *Le Puits Aérien* carry straight on then bear left up the hill on the *Monté de la Cotte* to find the *puits aérien\** on the left, which you can enter. Retrace your steps down the hill and bear left at the No Entry sign to rejoin the railway track and return to the station.

### Puits aérien\*

The "*puits aérien*" is a strange building erected in 1928 by a Belgian engineer and resembles a huge dovecote. The aim was to save water by collecting the dew that forms between night and day temperatures. It took 18 months to build but never worked properly as the temperature differences were not sufficient.



### Extra visit

Cross the road to visit the centre of Trans. The Nartuby river runs through the village forming waterfalls and strange holes in the rocks, ending up in a flat area under a narrow bridge previously used for fish farming. There is a restaurant on the far side of the river which is carved from a cave – *Auberge du Grand Moulin*.