

The Riviera Gazette

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The Côte d'Azur's English-language newspaper

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Metropolitan Nice will swallow us up, say seven Riviera towns

WE'LL FIGHT TO THE BITTER END

By Riviera Gazette staff

THE CREATION of Nice Côte d'Azur — a new metropolitan authority covering 22 communes — got the go-ahead this week despite fierce opposition from seven Riviera towns.

The towns, including some of the area's most exclusive, say the shake-up will demote them to mere suburbs of Nice, leaving councillors powerless and higher taxes for residents.

They vow to fight the move in the highest courts.

Assistant mayor of Beaulieu Sylvio Vincenti told The Riviera Gazette, "What will happen the next time we want to buy a bus for the use of our local pensioners?"

"We will have only two votes, Nice will have 33. We will be powerless.

"We will fight this. Nothing will make us change our minds. We will fight to the bitter end."

The changes, approved on Monday by the Préfet of the Alpes-Maritimes, will come into force on January 1.

Alternatives

Towns in opposition are Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Villefranche-sur-Mer, St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, Coaraze to the North of Nice, Vence, Saint-Jeannet and La Gaude to the Northeast.

Residents in the seven were asked to vote for the scheme or one or more alternatives and between 89 and 97 per cent voted for an alternative.

In favour are Nice itself, Cagnes-sur-Mer, St-Laurent du Var and 12 towns in the Arrière Pays to the North of Nice.

They claim the change will work in their favour cutting welfare costs and boosting their economies as communities pool resources and share the costs for land and welfare programmes. The balance of power within the new

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No income tax, no VAT...

TV's Trotters head to Monaco

HIT TV comedy *Only Fools and Horses* makes a comeback this Christmas with the first of three new specials kicking off in Monaco. Del Boy and Co were last seen in

1996, dancing into the sunset with £6.2 million. But how will the high life in Monte Carlo compare to Peckham? Find out on BBC1, Christmas Day at 9.05pm GMT

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World News

International news review

A round-up of critical events in the world during the last 14 days...

● A JOINT Russia-Nato decision-making council will be set up next year. Topics to be addressed include arms control, terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation. Nato leaders emphasize that Russia will have no power of veto over alliance decisions.

● THE US is to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, President Bush announced this week. Mr Bush says the treaty is out of date now that Russia is not an enemy and stops the US developing defence systems to tackle "rogue states" like North Korea and Iran. Russian President Vladimir Putin says the move is a "mistake."

● ARGENTINA narrowly averted defaulting on a \$1.1 billion debt repayment yesterday, but only by using money it owes to private pension funds. Another \$1 billion repayment is due before January. The International Monetary Fund has turned down a request for help. Argentinian workers went on strike on Thursday and political infighting is widespread. Former President Carlos Menem, who favours scrapping the peso for the US dollar, says he will run for re-election in 2003.

● AN outbreak of the deadly Ebola fever is spreading "rapidly and unpredictably" in Gabon, the Red Cross warns. Efforts to track an infected



AFGHANISTAN... US Marines form up near Kandahar, before moving in to take control of the airfield

Hunt for bin Laden goes on

THE whereabouts of Osama bin Laden were still uncertain yesterday.

President Bush re-iterated that bin Laden would be taken "dead or alive" - as reports emerged that he may have left the area where he was believed to be hiding ten days ago.

In Tora Bora, Al-Qaeda fighters loyal to bin Laden came under the heaviest fire yet yesterday with intense

US bombing and attacks from Afghan forces.

In Kandahar, US marines and Australian SAS commandos began their most ambitious operation yet, to clear Kandahar airport of mines and booby traps.

Meanwhile, a videotape apparently showing bin Laden explaining his role in the September 11 attacks has been accepted as genuine in the US. Bin

Laden's family however say they are unsure if it is him. "It is preposterous for anybody to think this tape is doctored. That's just a feeble excuse to provide weak support for an incredibly evil man," said President Bush.

On the tape a chuckling bin Laden explains that the carnage in New York far exceeded his hopes.

He was "delighted" that the World Trade Center towers were destroyed.

woman who crossed into neighbouring Congo have failed. Of 14 confirmed cases, 11 victims have already died.

● GERMANY will phase out nuclear power over the next two decades, its parliament voted yesterday.

One deputy said it was the end of an "expensive and dangerous mistake" in energy policy. It will mean the closure of Germany's 19 nuclear power plants. The country's practice of shipping nuclear waste to reprocessing centres in

France and Britain will also be phased out.

● THE former Prime Minister of Rwanda, Jean Kambanda, is one of six prisoners who arrived to serve prison sentences in Mali this week. Found guilty of genocide in 1998,

Kambanda lost his appeal to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. He will serve his sentence at a specially modified prison in Mali. Nowhere in Rwanda is considered safe enough for him.

US economy boost

THE US economy is showing signs of turning around. The Federal Reserve says US factories, mines and power plants reined back production by a smaller-than-expected 0.3% in November, outperforming market fears of a 0.8% drop. Gross domestic product slid 1.1% in the July-September quarter. A further contraction is expected this quarter. But the economy is expected to accelerate next year.

India points finger at Pakistan

INDIA claims it has evidence that Pakistan-based militants were behind this week's attack on the national parliament. It demands that Islamabad arrests their leaders and freezes all assets. Twelve people were killed when suicide gunmen attacked the Indian parliament building in Delhi. No members of parliament were hurt.

Plane spotters freed on bail

FOURTEEN British and Dutch plane spotters arrested in Greece on spying charges were freed on bail yesterday. They pledged to return to stand trial in Greece on reduced misdemeanour charges on bail of €14,637 each.

Anthrax found in Vienna

WORKERS at the US Embassy in Vienna are remaining calm after a post bag sent from Washington in October was found to have contained anthrax.

Winona shoplift charges may drop

SHOPLIFTING and drug possession charges against actress Winona Ryder may be dropped, Los Angeles prosecutors said yesterday. The star allegedly attempted to steal clothes, hair accessories and a handbag worth over F35,000. Her lawyer says there has been a misunderstanding.

New leaders

THERE are new leaders in Denmark, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. In Denmark, Liberal leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen has formed a right-wing coalition government after ousting the incumbent Social Democrats. Ranil Wickramasinghe has taken office as Prime Minister in Sri Lanka. In Malaysia, there is a new King, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin. Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Tung Chee-hwa in Hong Kong have both announced they will stand for re-election.

China joins World Trade Organisation

CHINA joined the World Trade Organisation on Tuesday after 15 years of negotiations. It means major changes as restrictions on capital markets are lifted, market access for foreign companies is improved and China's state-owned industries are reformed. China is on track to overtake Japan as the largest exporter to the US.

Pisa to re-open after 11 years

THE Leaning Tower of Pisa is due to re-open today. The tower has been closed for 11 years for repair work.

Farewell

THE world said goodbye to ex-Beatle George Harrison, 58, New Zealand yachtsman Sir Peter Blake, 53, British broadcasting standards campaigner Mary Whitehouse, 91, and actress Charlotte Coleman, star of Four Weddings and a Funeral, 33.

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Israeli tanks 200 metres from Arafat

ISRAELI tanks remained just 200 metres from Yasser Arafat's offices on the West Bank yesterday.

The Palestinian leader has been under effective house arrest there for over ten days.

Pre-dawn army raids in the West Bank yesterday left six Palestinian policeman dead and netted up to 40 people, including several wanted Hamas militants.

Two other Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers in clashes in Hebron.

Hamas marked its 14th anniversary with a state-

ment saying it will not be intimidated by Israel and vowed to continue its operations. Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite fundamentalist group, gave its support to Hamas, urging it to "stay tough".

A senior Arafat aide accused Israel of carrying out a "massacre" in the West Bank and warned of a "catastrophe" if the escalation continued.

Yasser Arafat's position is now uncertain. The Palestinian Authority rounded up more than 180 Palestinian militants,

notably members of Hamas, following the group's December 1 and 2 suicide bombings which killed 26 civilians and injured more than 200 in Jerusalem and the northern Israeli town of Haifa.

The clampdown failed to stave off mass Israeli retaliatory strikes, however, which have been stepped up since Palestinian militants killed ten Israelis on a West Bank bus on Wednesday.

In reaction, Israel declared it would no longer deal with Arafat and launched its own hunt for militants in the

West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The US has urged European countries not to invite or host Arafat until he has taken steps to quell the violence. "We want him to stay put. The main idea is don't invite him to Europe, make him stay there (in the Middle East), help me keep his feet to the fire to do the kinds of things we all agreed he has to do," an official said.

US President George W. Bush's position is clear. "The world expects Chairman Arafat to lead, and so do I. And I continue to work

with our friends and allies to talk to Mr Arafat in very blunt terms," he said.

Turkey and the European Union continue to support Arafat, however. "The democratically elected Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and the Palestinian authorities are the only interlocutors in this conflict for Israel," Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel said at the EU summit in Laeken. In Ankara, Turkish presidential spokesman Tacan Ildem said: "For us Arafat remains the Palestinian leader."

ISN winter fete hits a high note

YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT...
Grade Ten students Pandora Todd, pictured, and Nancy Delaughter wowed parents with their performance of 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town'



WINTER WARMER... Grade One pupils perform a festive poem

The Christmas season got off to a tuneful start last Saturday when the International School of Nice held its annual winter fete.

Pupils of all ages, from four to 15, performed Christmas poems, plays and songs in front of a packed hall of parents.

After the show they joined their families to watch sports displays and enjoy an International Food fair, with cuisine from around the world, cooked by parents.

The day-long event has been held for several years and was hailed a great success. Directrice Mrs Dorothy Foster said "Once again we've shown we've got great kids, great parents and a great school."

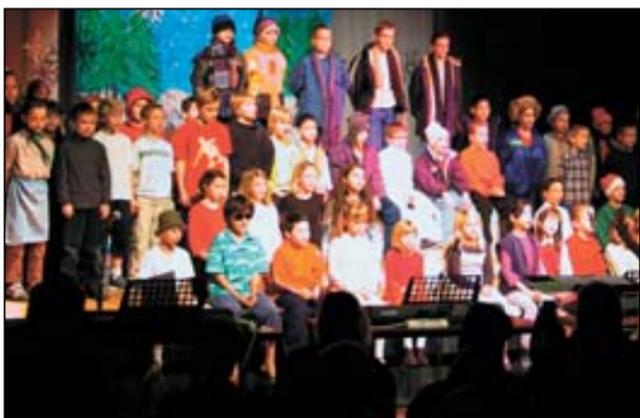
Money raised goes to the PTA and this year's day is thought to have been a bumper fund-raiser. The school's next performance is The Boyfriend on March 6, 7 and 8.



SNOW BUSINESS LIKE SHOWBUSINESS... Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten pupils, aged four and five, delight the audience by singing 'Blow Wind Blow' dressed as snow flakes



CONCENTRATION... Grade Seven and Eight pupils take a deep breath before launching into a song written by music teacher Janet Holroyd



GRAND FINALE... the enthusiastic junior choir raises the roof with a final number to round off its performance to rapturous applause



CHRISTMAS CALYPSO... Grade Two pupils sing a version of 'The Twelve days of Christmas' with an unconventional Caribbean theme complete with brightly coloured pictures

Ikea to decide soon on Cagnes

IKEA is to confirm this month whether it will press ahead with plans for a store on the outskirts of Cagnes-sur-Mer.

The Swedish furniture giant is looking at a site by the Pénérante in Sudalparc at the ZAC Saint-Jean, on the Vence side of the town.

Cagnes Mayor Louis Negre favours the scheme as long as it does not cause traffic build-up.

The design must also be approved by architects from the Bâtiments de France as the site is near the perimeter of the chateau of Villeneuve-Loubet.

The Riviera Gazette – our aim

TODAY sees the launch of the Riviera's first English language newspaper.

The Riviera Gazette has been created to address the needs of the local English-speaking population at a time when the region is attracting more and more people from all backgrounds and nationalities.

"The Riviera is no longer the exclusive preserve of the rich and famous. It is home to a diverse mix of people from around the world, of all

incomes and ages," said the Editor of The Riviera Gazette, Sarah Clark.

"It's a thriving community but it can be hard to break into and easy to feel sidelined.

"Our aim is to act as a bridge between new arrivals and the long-established, between the English-speaking and the French," she added.

Each edition will feature international, national and local news, from the big events to news from the many clubs, societies and schools that bind our community – and all for

just €3. There will also be information on events across the region, with easy-to-use diary listings, in-depth reviews, and features and guides on everything from sailing to where to buy kids' shoes.

And, of course, we've included horoscopes, crosswords, cartoons and sports news.

The Riviera Gazette welcomes readers' letters, comments and queries. We'll soon be out every two weeks but, for now, the next issue will be available in local newsagents on January 24th.

National News

Chirac leads presidential race by a nose

INCUMBENT President Jacques Chirac narrowly leads Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in the campaign for next April's presidential election.

According to an opinion poll taken by IPSOS, if the election was to take place now, Chirac would beat Jospin by 51% to 49%.

The French presidential election has two rounds. In the first, on April 21, anyone who can gather the signatures of 500 elected supporters can stand for election. The top two then go through to the second round, to be held on May 5. This round is a head-to-head battle. Whoever gets the most votes becomes the President.

The IPSOS poll showed that Chirac would have won 27% percent of votes in the first round whilst Jospin would have gained 22%.

Left-wing former interior minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement is in third position with 12%. He is closely followed by the far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen on 8%.

Behind them, with an equal share of the poll, come the veteran far-left candidate Arlette Laguiller, Communist party chairman Robert Hue and Noël Mamère of the Green party, all with 6%.

Centrist François Bayrou follows with 4%. Free-marketeer Alain Madelin of Liberal Democracy has 3% and Gaullist heavyweight Charles Pasqua has a 2% share.

Bruno Mégret of the National Republican Movement (MNR), a far-right party, has 1.5%.

Overseas veterans win pay rise

NATIONALS of France's former colonies who fought for France before independence are to receive the same pension rights as French citizens.

60,000 Army veterans and a further 25,000 recipients of military invalidity benefits (PMI) will be affected.

The move is a result of a court ruling which has found in favour of Senegalese ex-French Army Sergeant-Major Amadou

Diop, and will cost some 2-3 billion francs a year. The government may also have to pay out a further 10 billion francs in compensation to the veterans.

Currently, those who would have voted for Chevènement in round one are slightly more likely to choose Chirac than Jospin.

Voters for Le Pen prefer Chirac to Jospin by 64% to 17%. But voters for Laguiller, Hue and Mamère all prefer Jospin to Chirac by large majorities.

Just before the poll took place, a new candidate entered the fray. The Radical Left Party (PRG), a junior member of the Socialist-led coalition government, declared that the Guyanese deputy Christine Taubira would be its candidate for the presidential election.



RUNNING... Christine Taubira

Taubira is the first presidential candidate to be of mixed race and is also the first to come from one of France's overseas territories.

To date, a total of fourteen politicians have either officially declared themselves as candidates or are expected to announce their candidature soon.



EU SUMMIT ... European Union leaders meeting at Laeken, Brussels, pause for a group picture

Afghan security force to include all EU member states

By Sarah Clark

SWIFT agreement on a number of topics has been reached by European Union leaders meeting in Laeken, Belgium.

The highlight of the summit is to be a declaration today on the next phase of Europe's integration. This will announce the creation of a 62-member 'convention' to canvass views from across Europe and give recommendations on whether EU member states should give up more national powers to the cause of European unity.

The leaders will also decide who will head the convention. Former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing is considered favourite for the job.

What role Europe can play in Afghanistan's post-Taliban security and reconstruction was first on the agenda Friday morning.

EU leaders announced

that every one of the member states will take part in a UN-mandated peacekeeping force that could deploy in Afghanistan within the next ten days.

Britain will "probably, very likely" lead the force, which could also incorporate soldiers from non-EU countries, said Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy chief. The European troops will not, however, go into combat alongside US forces to track down Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network.

Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel said that he expected the complete force to number 3,000 to 4,000 troops, "to hazard a guess."

A small British military reconnaissance team will fly out to Kabul for an early scouting mission this weekend. It will report back with

details of what is required on the ground, a European source close to the talks said.

Any deployment is, however, out of the question without UN Security Council authority and the express approval of the Afghans, the source added.

Yasser Arafat's position has also been under discussion. The EU leaders issued a statement yesterday confirming their support for him, but with a caveat. The Palestinian Authority must push efforts to dismantle the extremist groups Islamic Jihad and Hamas, and Arafat must issue "a public appeal... for an end to the armed intifada", said the statement. The EU also called on Israel to honour its own commitment to withdraw from the occupied territories, "stop extrajudicial executions," and lift all restrictions imposed on the Palestinians.

Down's boy payout for birth

THE HIGH COURT of appeal has confirmed that handicapped children have the right not to be born.

The court agreed that a six year old born with Down's Syndrome would have been aborted had doctors not failed to detect his disability. They ordered the boy to be paid an unspecified amount in compensation.

The decision confirms a landmark ruling last year, known as the Perruche judgment, in which a severely handicapped 17 year-old boy was awarded compensation because doctors failed to identify that his mother had contracted rubella during pregnancy.

Campaigners for the rights of the handicapped are outraged. "Certain judges in the high court of appeal still think it is better to

be dead than handicapped," said Xavier Mirabel of the Collective to Stop Discrimination against the Disabled (CCH).

Doctors, concerned that the ruling will encourage gynaecologists to recommend abortions whenever there is even the slightest hint of disability, are also alarmed by the decision.

A statement from the National Order of Doctors (ONM) says that gynaecologists are likely to "cease to recommend tests on pregnant women that are not obligatory. Most often, they will suggest at the smallest doubt the termination of the pregnancy".

Insurance premiums for foetal specialists have gone up ten-fold since the Perruche judgment was announced.

Torturer 'to get fine not jail'

French prosecutors have called for a €15,245 fine but no prison sentence in the case of Paul Aussaresses, the 83 year old retired French army general who described in a book how he tortured and killed prisoners during the Algerian war of independence. Aussaresses was counter-intelligence chief in Algiers in the 1950s. In his memoirs, *Special Services, Algeria 1955-57*, he describes how he tortured and killed 24 Algerian prisoners as part of the army's attempt to stop bomb attacks and shootings being carried out by the National Liberation Front. Aussaresses is unrepentant, saying that torture was a widely accepted instrument, fully sanctioned by the government. His book, he says, merely puts on record a historical fact.

Going, going, gone...

The 450 year-old monopoly held by state-registered auctioneers ended late last month when a sale of rare books took place at Sotheby's in Paris. The firm has been campaigning for ten years to end the monopoly, part of the guild system originally introduced by King Henry II in 1556 to protect the legitimate merchants of post-medieval France from street hawkers. The opening up of the market should halt the decline in Paris' art sales; after World War II, Paris had a 90% share of the world's art sales market. Today Paris handles only 5% of the art sales market. "The competition is going to be more fierce, but on the other hand the customers coming here are going to be more important. In fact we are going to benefit," said Dominique Ribeyre, president of the Company of Commissaires-Priseurs in Paris.

Green light for Nice-Turin TGV

The go-ahead has been given to the concept of building a TGV train link between Nice and Turin - at least at the technical level. If built, the new line will shave two hours off the existing Nice-Paris journey time. With a total journey time of only three and a half hours, the new Nice-Turin-Paris route would provide a sensible alternative to flying and is seen as being of major economic benefit to the region. All that is needed now is for the money to be raised - F30 billion in all, shared between France, Italy and the EU.

French beef ban illegal

The French ban on British beef is illegal, the European Court of Justice ruled this week. The EU-wide ban on British beef, imposed during the BSE crisis, was lifted in 1999. But France continued to ban imports on a unilateral basis, saying that its scientific experts believe there is a medical risk. If France does not now lift its ban, it will face further legal actions which could lead to substantial daily fines.

Caroline suspect appeal

Francisco Arce Montes, the Spaniard accused of the murder of 13 year-old British schoolgirl Caroline Dickenson in a Brittany youth hostel in July 1996, is appealing against his extradition from the United States to face trial in France. Following his extradition in mid-November, Arce Montes, 51, has been held in 'provisional detention' in Rennes, Brittany. He was arrested in Florida last March after breaking into a woman's house and allegedly committing a lewd act.

Livingstone learns from Paris

London mayor Ken Livingstone visited Paris late last month on a fact-finding trip in search of new ideas for solving London's transport problems. Accompanied by Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoë, Livingstone visited the computer centre that controls Paris traffic, investigated new bus lanes being installed along the city's arterial routes and visited the Metro. Livingstone's impressions? "During the ten minutes we stood on the platform I saw more trains than in one hour in a London station".

Troubled carrier sets sail

France's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, has finally set sail from Toulon for the Indian Ocean and its first mission since it came into service in May. The carrier has been plagued by technical troubles ever since it was delivered to the French Navy. It will be engaged in surveillance and support missions to forces in Afghanistan.

Two second gap or a fine

A new law means that drivers not keeping a two second gap between themselves and the vehicle ahead can be fined up to F5,000 and collect three penalty points on their licence. And, in tunnels, the maximum fine rises to F24,600 – plus a three year driving ban.

The new rule, effective from the beginning of December, is designed to reduce the number of accidents caused by drivers crashing into the back of the car in front. This type of accident was the cause of 23.2% of motorway deaths in France last year. The 'two second rule' equates to a gap between vehicles of 73 metres at 130km/h, 50 metres at 90km/h and 28 metres at 50km/h.

Cocaine seized at La Turbie

A heavily pregnant Venezuelan woman has been placed in custody after 4.6 kilos of cocaine, worth 2.7 million francs, was found in her suitcase as she crossed the péage at La Turbie. The drugs were hidden in eight large cosmetics containers. They came to light when customs officers conducted a search of a Euro-Lines bus travelling from Barcelona to Rome. Before boarding the bus, the woman had flown into Madrid airport on a flight from Venezuela via Cuba.

Customs officers have seized 38.5 kilos of cocaine, three tonnes of cannabis and 16,000 sachets of anabolic steroids in the Alpes-Maritimes since January.

The future is rosé

Sales of Côtes de Provence wine are up 23.9% this year, fuelled by an increasing taste for Rosé amongst French wine lovers. Whilst sales of both red and white wines have been falling over the last decade, sales of Rosé have doubled.

The changing taste of the nation's drinkers is good news for Côtes de Provence. Of the 19,300 hectares given over to the cultivation of grapes for wine production in the Var, Alpes-Maritimes and Bouches-du-Rhône, 80% are used to make Rosé.

Cash lift for Nice Airport

At the same time as the third Paris airport announcement, the government also announced a five billion franc development package for the country's regional airports.

The money will be shared between Nice Côte d'Azur and nine other airports including Bordeaux, Lille, Marseille, Montpellier, Mulhouse-Bâle, Nantes, Strasbourg and Toulouse. The aim is to increase the number of international flights serving the regional airports and to modernise airport and ground services. How the funding is to be allotted has yet to be decided.

Alpine tunnels re-opening

The Gotthard tunnel will be open again on December 21, and the Mont Blanc tunnel opens the following day.

The Mont Blanc tunnel was closed in 1999 after a fire in which 39 people were killed. To improve safety, Mont Blanc will now only handle one-way traffic. Vehicles travelling in the other direction will be routed via the more southerly Frejus tunnel. Every so often the directions of the two tunnels will be reversed, but the decision on how frequently this will happen has yet to be taken.

Army Major guilty of spying

A major in the French Army was found guilty this week of handing military secrets to the Serbs. Pierre-Henri Bunel gave details of NATO bombing plans to the Serbs as the military campaign in Kosovo was getting under way, a court found. Bunel, who was stationed at NATO in Brussels at the time, admitted that he passed on the information, but says that it was part of a misinformation campaign and that he was ordered to do it by French intelligence services. He was jailed for two years with three further years suspended.

Snow excuse

Auron, Isola 2000 and Valberg, the three largest ski resorts in the Alpes-Maritimes, are now open following fresh snow falls overnight on Thursday. The other twelve nearby ski resorts are scheduled to open in time for local residents' traditional New Year skiing trips.

War graves stand in way of third Paris airport

FRANCE has agreed to consult Britain before taking any decision to disturb World War I graves in order to build the third Paris airport at Chaulnes, near the site of the Somme battlefield.

"Nothing will happen without Britain's agreement," said a French spokesman.

The announcement of the choice of Chaulnes, 115 kilometres from the capital, as the site for the third Paris airport has caused an international uproar.

Some 30,000 German, French, British and other troops who were killed on a section of the Somme battlefield lie in war cemeteries on or around the location of the planned airport.

For it to go ahead as currently planned, sixty six of the Commonwealth soldiers killed at the Somme during World War I would have to be exhumed.



CEMETERIES... 66 graves need to be moved

Twenty-five of them are British.

In London, junior defence minister Lewis Moonie said "the Commonwealth War Graves Commission will firmly resist any plans to disturb the war dead".

British objections could scupper the airport plan.

Technically, France does not own the land these graves are sited on. Commonwealth graveyards from World War I,

which litter the countryside in this region, were ceded in perpetuity to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission by the French government as a mark of respect for the Commonwealth soldiers killed during the war.

Local residents also object to the plan. But the French government says that a third Paris airport is essential to ease pressure on Orly and Charles-de-Gaulle.

Straw huts affair: verdict due

THE arson trial of Bernard Bonnet, the former Governor of Corsica, closed on December 7th with the judge setting January 11th as the date for delivering the verdict.

In an affair which has caused huge embarrassment to the French government, Bonnet is the first French Préfet to face criminal charges since World War II.

He is accused of ordering police to burn down an illegally-constructed beach restaurant in April 1999 as part of a 'zero-tolerance' campaign against the island's long tradition of mafia-style criminality.

The night-time operation turned to fiasco when one of the gendarmes was badly burned.

In their hurry to flee the

scene, the five-man squad left behind identifiable communications equipment and a knife.

Also on trial are the five gendarmes, their commander Colonel Henri Mazeret and Bonnet's Cabinet Director Gerard Pardini.

They have all admitted their role in the attack but claim they were acting under orders from the Governor. Bonnet denies the charges.

Bonnet was appointed Préfet of Corsica after the murder of his predecessor Claude Erignac in February 1998.

In his first year he ordered the destruction of 50 jerry-built beach restaurants, known as 'Paillotes' or Straw Huts. But in April 1999 he was forced to suspend the demolitions after

the intervention of local politicians.

Ten days later came the botched operation at the Chez Francis restaurant.

Bonnet was relieved of his responsibilities the following month and the case finally came to trial in November this year. He faces a maximum penalty of ten years in jail.

The affair is believed to be a contributing factor in the government's move to give more autonomy to Corsica. A bill currently going through parliament will grant the Corsican Assembly limited law making powers and extend the teaching of the Corsican language in return for a cessation of the separatist violence that has afflicted the island for 25 years.

Employment programme 'off target'

THE GREAT French jobs experiment is falling short of targets, is extremely costly, weakens competitiveness and does not tackle the fundamental problem of long-term, structural unemployment.

Cuts must be made if France is to achieve its euro-zone stability commitment of balancing the budget in 2004.

That's the conclusion reached by authors of a hard-hitting report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

It says that the country's employment programme cost 130 billion francs last year, equivalent to two-thirds of France's budget deficit.

In the 1997 election, the government came to power with a commitment to reduce unemployment forming a central plank of its manifesto. Since winning power, its employment programme has had two main facets. The first is the reduction of the working week from 39 hours to 35 hours. The second is a job creation scheme focussed on the young.

The same policies are expected to remain central to the government's manifesto for its 2002 re-election campaign.

Whilst the government has had some success in reducing unemployment, now down from 12.6% in 1997 to around 9%, the OECD maintains that it has been greatly helped in this

by growth outside France, the discipline of the euro launch, ten years of wage moderation in France and tax cuts.

The report says that the changeover to the 35-hour week "is proving to be costly for the government and the sources of future financing are not fully identified" whilst the government's plans for job creation are falling short of target.

In 1998, the government announced plans to create 700,000 jobs. This is now expected to be closer to 500,000, mostly in the public sector, and the OECD says that even this figure is on the high side.

The government's use of early retirement schemes, expensive in terms of both money and lost skills, to open up job opportunities for the young is particularly strongly criticised by the OECD.

Although many employers are having difficulty recruiting workers for low-skilled jobs, getting unemployment below 9% is going to prove difficult, says the report. It identifies "the high level of corporate and personal income taxation and the complexity of regulation, as in the case of labour regulation" as the two main constraints.

The average French worker puts in fewer than 1,500 hours a year; one of the lowest levels amongst the developed countries. French labour productivity, however, is one of the highest in the world.

Tourist complex boost for Ventimiglia

TWO new projects just across the Italian border look set to give the economy of Ventimiglia a major boost.

The first project will create Ventimiglia's first luxury tourist complex. The plans include an 80 bedroom hotel and 60 holiday properties, linked by a lift to their own private beach below and all built in the style of a typical Ligurian

village. Located just a few steps from the French border, on the edge of the Hanbury Botanic Gardens, the complex is to be built on part of a 24 hectare tranche of land owned by Monaco's Grimaldi family for the last 800 years.

The development project has been approved by Liguria's environment commission but has yet to be officially submitted to

Ventimiglia's own planning authorities.

Gaining full planning permission for the project is not expected to present much of a problem though; Ventimiglia's town council, keen to widen the town's economic base, is welcoming it with open arms.

Yard sale

The second project is led by Ferrovie Statali, the Italian state railway company. It is

selling 140 hectares of land previously used to conduct border controls on freight cars travelling between France and Italy.

This area used to process 150 freight wagons a day – and as many as 500 a day in the late 1980s. Now, it stands empty and all but abandoned.

Ferrovie Statali is soon to be privatised and is said to be looking for a quick sale

for the land. Buyers are not expected to be hard to find. The land's location, just inside Italy but within very easy reach of the Côte d'Azur, its size and its likely price (expected to reflect Italian rather than French land prices) adds up to a winning combination for land-starved local companies wanting to benefit from a great location at lower than usual prices.

Local News

Everybody Out

New wave of strikes and protests hits France

THE introduction of the euro and the 35-hour week, plus an early jostling for position and show of strength prior to the elections in April next year, has led to a wave of strikes, demonstrations and go-slows across France.

Not all are having the serious effect that the air traffic controllers, who brought French air travel to a near standstill last week, managed to achieve. But, together, they add up to a worrying total that observers say is only likely to get worse as the election draws closer. Sectors affected recently include:

BANKS Five of France's largest unions have called for a one-day stoppage by employees across the entire French banking sector on January 2nd, the first 'working' day after the introduction of the euro. Unions have been demanding negotiations with management on salaries, staffing levels and security in connection with the changeover from the franc to the euro. The French Banking Association (AFB) has so far refused to hold talks with the unions over the proposed strike, saying that the union demands "have no link to the euro" and that their move to hire 50,000 young people to help during the changeover process (mid-Dec to mid-April) should be enough.

POST Parisien postal workers staged a one-day strike over pay, staffing and security yesterday – the day that starter kits of euro coins went on sale in Post Offices.

MINT A two week strike

by workers at the French mint in Pessac, SW France, was broken at the end of November when French officials, backed by around 100 riot officers, seized millions of euro coins and the master-stamps used to mint euros so that a sufficient supply of euros could be assured for the January 1 launch.

POLICE A month-long series of demonstrations by police has helped them win a €60.98 million funding package to improve pay and increase compensation payments. Now the gendarmes are protesting too – they want the police deal to be extended to include them as well.

TRAINS Rail traffic was severely disrupted across the country when signalmen, demanding an increase in basic pay, went on a series of strikes.

SHIPPING Workers blockaded the port of Marseille, France's largest industrial port, during a 13-day strike over working hours. All returned to normal when unions agreed to a new working week of 32 hours and 54 minutes.

HOSPITAL INTERNS A series of night-time and one-day strikes has been organised by the Interns' unions, who want to see shorter working hours introduced. Interns work an average 80 hour week.

COLLÈGES AND LYCÉES SNES-FSU, the leading lecturers' union, has called a series of strikes aimed at re-opening negotiations on a reduction of working hours and better working conditions.

FISHERMEN Two hun-

dred anchovy fishermen gathered on the seafront in Saint-Nazaire to protest against the presence of Spanish fishermen in the Gulf of Gascony. The incensed fishermen burned tyres and wooden palettes and overturned several tonnes of anchovies in the streets – and in the offices of the local maritime affairs officials.

DOCTORS General practitioners in many areas are refusing to make night-time house calls in an indefinite strike aimed at re-opening negotiations for better pay. They want their standard consultation fee increased from F115 to F131.20 and the fee for home visits to be raised from F135 to F197.

BAKERS Hundreds of bakers demonstrated in Paris on November 26th against the national 35-hour week. They say it threatens their livelihoods and product quality. "Making quality bread takes time. Serving clients early in the morning and late in the evening is an unavoidable reality for our profession" said the French bakers' confederation in a statement. Since 1982, French bakers have worked under specific legislation that allows up to 329 hours of overtime a year, and they want to keep that special status.

UNEMPLOYED The government has agreed to reinstate the traditional "prime de Noël" Christmas bonus for those on low incomes after 350 unemployed took to the streets of Marseille in late November to protest against its loss.

A black year for truffles



TRUFFLE TROUBLE... dry weather means prices are rocketing

THE PRICE of truffles is set to rocket this season.

In a good year, France produces forty tonnes of truffles. This year, insiders say that we'll be lucky to get fifteen tonnes.

At the root of the problem, they say, is the dry weather this year that affected the French truffle growing regions (the Vaucluse, the Gard, the Drome and the Périgord as well as the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence). At the first of the season's

truffle markets at Aups in the Var, even the professional buyers were having to pay F1,500 to F1,700 a kilo.

In the run up to Christmas, prices are expected to rise far higher still – to the point where there is a real risk that truffles will disappear from many menus. Smaller restaurateurs, worried that their customers won't pay the prices they will need to charge, may simply leave them off the menu.

First AOC olives arrive

THE long-awaited harvesting of the first crop of olives to receive the prestigious "AOC Olive de Nice" label has begun and the first bottles of olive oil are now arriving in the shops.

Like wine, the presence of an AOC label on prepared olives, bottles of olive oil and other products will ensure that buyers are getting a top quality local product. But not everyone who grows olives in the

Nice area will qualify for the label.

To gain an AOC label for their products, producers must submit samples to a jury of specialists who will check both olives and olive oil for their appearance, smell and taste.

Smoothness

For olives, the judges examine their smell, the suppleness of the skin and their crunchiness. For olive oil, the judges will be test-

ing smoothness and texture and making sure that there is no sediment – or a residual taste of sediment.

The first picking date is also strictly stipulated. Harvesting must not begin until after November 15th.

"Niçois olive oil has a unique taste, a combination of hazelnuts, almonds and artichokes. But you don't get the full flavour from the fruit that ripens first. That starts coming through in

December and the very best taste comes from fruit picked in February and March," explained Daniel Rosenfelder of the Balade de Provence delicatessen, located in Old Antibes' Marché Provençal.

High quality comes with a price, however. AOC olive oil is expected to sell at between F75 and F95 for a one litre bottle. A quarter litre carton of olives will be between F15 and F25.

Billionaire's Var domaine

Two eighteen hole golf courses, a 115 room four-star hotel and a selection of luxury villas will make up the Domaine de Terre Blanche, due to open at Tourrettes near Fayence in the Var in the Spring of 2003. Building work on the Four Seasons hotel began this week when the first stone was laid by Dietmar Hopp, the German billionaire who is the lead investor in the project.

Environmental activists have protested against the building of the complex on a site of natural beauty but the project, which will bring 400 jobs, has the full support of local councils. Thirty of the one hundred luxury building plots have been sold. One buyer has purchased three adjacent plots and will be building a 900 square metre villa at a total estimated cost of 35 million francs.

Music's golden age

Retired professional musicians living on the Riviera are to get their own orchestra. The Orchestra du Grand Sud will be made up of both French and international residents of the area under the honorary presidency of Philippe Bender, director of the regional orchestra in Cannes. Auditions are being organised by Sophie Dupont, on 04 93 64 84 18.

15% poverty in Cagnes

Fifteen percent of the population of Cagnes-sur-Mer is living below the poverty line. Up to 6,500 residents of the town have insufficient income for necessities, reveals a new report by CAMS, the agency monitoring social welfare in the Alpes-Maritimes.

New English pub in Cannes

A new English pub opened its doors in Cannes on Tuesday. The Station Tavern, opposite the town's railway station, offers traditional English grub and beer.

Owner Leslie Azoulay, who was born in England but has lived in France for the past 25 years, said: "It's going well. We offer traditional food like Shepherd's Pie and Ploughman's with a warm welcome." Wife Brenda and daughter Tracy work with him.

The pub, on the site of the Old Chelsea Bar, also plans to screen live football matches.

Not so sharp...

A father whose son was told off in class stormed into the school brandishing a Samurai sword. The 45-year-old was arrested after a school caretaker chased him away from the Lycée de Firminy in the Loire. He appeared before a tribunal in Saint Étienne earlier this month.

TGV death mystery

The identity of a woman killed when she was hit by a TGV train near Cannes railway station last Sunday has yet to be discovered. An empty black handbag was found near the scene but gave no clues. The authorities suspect suicide.

Barricade for drains

A 630-metre long, four metre high barricade has appeared in Nice, on the beach near the Negresco, mar- rying the sea view and blocking beach access. The barricade is part of a 66 million franc public works project for a new drainage system to stop sewage overflowing into the Baie des Anges during heavy rain. The project should be completed in June.

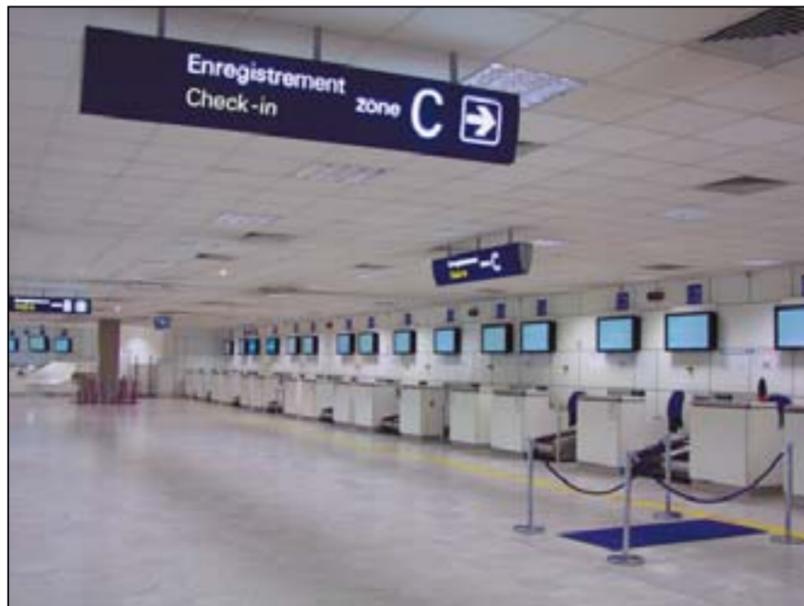
Monaco extradites Russian

A Russian suspected of money laundering and drug trafficking has been extradited from Monaco to Moscow. Vadim Petrov was driven to Nice airport under heavy escort last Sunday for a flight to Russia. He was suspected of money laundering in the principality and is also the subject of an international arrest warrant for drug trafficking in Russia.

Academy Open

The new Academy of Arts in La Colle sur Loup is doing well after opening its doors in October. The 250 square metre building offers more than 30 subjects including languages, musical instrument tuition and computing to adults and children aged seven and over.

Sculpting, photography and painting classes are also held. Lessons are given by professional teachers, musicians and artists. The academy, on the route du Pont de Pierre, is open six days a week.



NO FLY ZONE... a 36-hour strike by Air Traffic Controllers over December 5/6 meant hundreds of cancelled flights and rows of empty check-in desks at Nice Côte d'Azur airport.

Got any spare change, guv?

Train to collect tonnes of centimes for charity



COMMON CENTS... Mme Chirac and David Douillet collecting change earlier this year

AS WE contemplate the imminent switch from the Franc to the Euro, smart thinking and the loan of a train have produced a solution to a perpetual question for many — what to use

fully do with all those soon-to-be-history centime coins that rapidly accumulate in the nation's purses and pockets?

On 27th January 2002, a special TGV train called

the "Pièces Jaunes" will pull into Nice railway station.

On board will be Bernadette Chirac, president of the Fondation des Hôpitaux de France and wife of the French President Jacques Chirac, and David Douillet, the

judo heavyweight Olympic Champion and France's most feted sportsman.

The reason for their visit?
To collect 'pièces jaunes' — five, ten and twenty centimes coins — in aid of children in need.

It is the first time that this famous train, which collected 65 million francs in 'shrapnel' in 2000, has visited Nice and local charities and fund raisers are taking the task of collecting as many pièces jaunes as possible very seriously.

Schools, associations, sports clubs and other groups are all gearing up for a major fundraising exercise designed to show the generosity of the Côte d'Azur and Nice is planning a special carnival from January 14 to 27. The target is to collect three and a half tonnes of coins.

To make it easy for people to donate their coins, boxes are being placed at six thousand collection points across the region, mostly in schools and on association premises. Clubs, schools, societies and associations interested in joining in the fund raising by becoming a collection point or organising a fund raising event should contact Nice-Présence on 04 93 85 38 50 or visit the charity's website at www.piecesjaunes.com

Better stations, more trains and new line coming

ANTIBES railway station is the fifth station in the region to be re-opened with a new look and improved station services.

The work is part of a major upgrade programme for the region's train services, designed to persuade people to leave their cars at home and use the trains instead.

The two most important projects are the re-opening of the old Cannes-Grasse railway line, due to come into service in late 2003/early 2004, and the addition of a third track to the coast line to allow the TER train service to be increased to one



UPGRADED... Antibes railway station

train every ten minutes. The regional transport authority expects this major project to be completed in 2007.

In all, 47 local stations are being renovated. They include Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Menton, Cagnes-sur-Mer, Juan-les-Pins and Villeneuve-Loubet.

Tired of golf? Retired executives sought to help in local businesses

ENGLISH-speaking retired executives are being sought by AGIR, an association of retired French executives.

Members donate their expertise to small local businesses who have a project that they need help with.

The existing members of the local group are drawn from backgrounds including marketing, accountancy, project management and business development.

Currently, they are nearly all French. "But many of the small businesses we work with are looking to export. We would really welcome new English speaking members with direct experience of other markets who could give their advice to these businesses", AGIR told The Riviera Gazette.

"One small business owner we're working with has just begun exporting his goat's cheese to the UK.

But how best to exploit this opportunity? Does he need to adapt his packaging, his pricing, his terms of business? Someone who knows the business landscape in the UK could really help."

The group's members work on an entirely voluntary basis and ask only that volunteers have business experience and speak some French. Contact them on 04 92 91 11 65 or visit www.agir.medit.free.fr

So long M&S, hello Virgin

THE NICE branch of Marks & Spencer closes its doors for the last time on December 22nd, victim of the troubled British company's decision to pull out of Europe.

Marks & Spencer stores in France are being taken over by French department store chain Galeries Lafayette, in partnership with FNAC, Virgin and H&M.

In Nice, the avenue Jean-Médecin store will undergo a major facelift before re-opening in 2003. Thirty percent of the floor space will be used by Galeries Lafayette itself. The bulk of the building will be taken over by entertainment superstore specialist FNAC.

At one stage, however, it looked as though the sale might not go through.

Galeries Lafayette and its partners made their offer contingent upon the approval of Marks and Spencer's management and workers. Although Galeries Lafayette said 1,500 workers would be retained, stores were temporarily



WINDING DOWN... Marks & Spencer to close this week

closed when staff went on strike to demand improved redundancy packages from M&S.

A deal giving 1.3 months' wages for each year worked was finally approved by unions on November 29th and the purchase of the stores should now go ahead smoothly.

Valerie Delpuch, manager of Marks & Spencer's Nice

branch, told The Riviera Gazette "all our staff have been offered positions with either FNAC or Galeries Lafayette".

Not all the staff, however, have been offered the same work that they had at M&S — or the same rate of pay.

Mme Delpuch explained that, as part of the deal, these staff "will be compensated for three years" by

having their wage packets made up to their current M&S pay levels.

For FNAC, the chance to take over the bulk of the old Marks and Spencer building is very timely.

It has held a virtual monopoly in Nice in the books, music and consumer electronics sector for over twenty years, but the arrival of Extrapole this week has changed all that.

With 2,400 square metres of floor space on the corner of avenue Jean-Médecin and rue Marechal-Joffre, the new Extrapole is larger than the existing FNAC store.

It is part of the chain that took over Virgin's French outlets last summer. It took on Jean-Nöel Reinhardt, head of Virgin France, as its new chief executive at the same time.

Although branded as an Extrapole store for the moment, it is expected to offer more than a little Virgin pizzazz alongside its mix of music, games, DVDs and multimedia.

Extrapole will open today, December 15.

PLANS TO extend the port of Nice met yet more heated opposition during the sixth public debate on the subject last week.

Local residents, who contest that the port is already too noisy, that it causes traffic jams and that Nice has enough pollution already without having more boats coming in and out of a large

er port, are well organised and well coordinated.

"Build it in Toulon", say the residents.

In favour of the scheme are the port's users and the local development agencies. They say that the extension is a requirement rather than an option for what remains a working port, not just a tourist attraction. The port

"is not a pleasure garden", they say.

Concessions to local residents are now beginning to win opponents round.

The latest ideas include a plan to ease congestion around the port by building a 1,200 metre road tunnel through the hillside between the port and the bay of Villefranche.

RN 98 to get storm protection

AMONGST numerous road closures during the storms last month, the RN98 'Bord de mer' between the Marina Baie des Anges in Villeneuve Loubet and Antibes was again the worst hit.

The road had to be closed twice during one week, bringing traffic misery as drivers sought alternative routes.

Bottlenecks on roads leading to the RN7 and the A8 meant the displaced traffic created long tailbacks, delaying frustrated drivers for up to an hour.

One lane of the RN98 near the Marina Baie des Anges is still closed after rocks and large volumes of water washed onto the road with enough force to



TRAFFIC CHAOS... the Bord de Mer, often closed by bad weather

destroy large parts of the road surface.

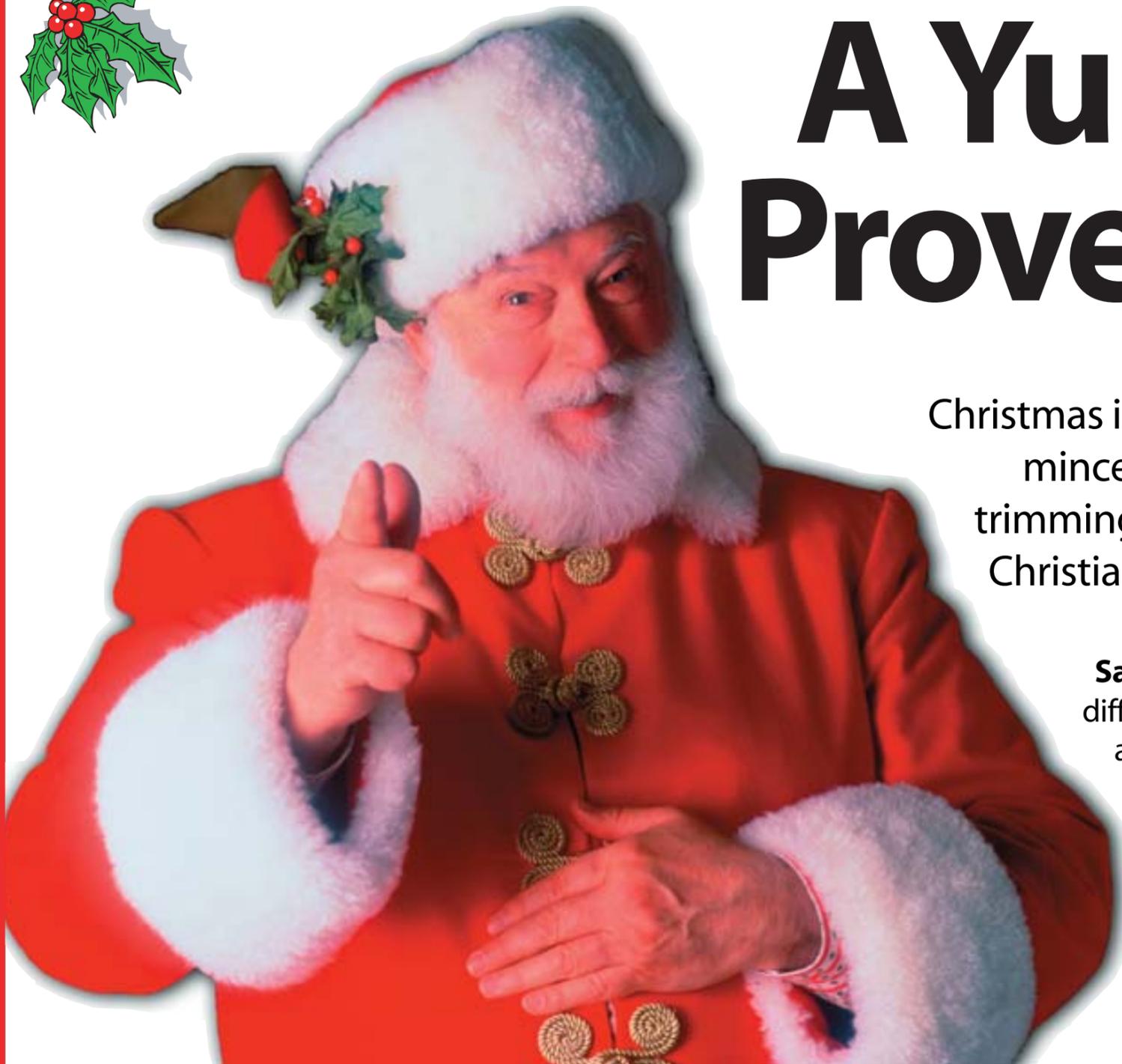
A long-standing plan to upgrade the RN98 is now being given top priority.

Local councillors want to see the road widened to give a cycle lane and two traffic lanes in each direction, and for better storm

protection to be built next to the road.

Permission to unlock four million francs of funding for a feasibility study is now being sought at regional level, with the goal of implementing a major road improvement programme in 2003.

Like so many things, Christmas is celebra



A Yule in Provence

Christmas is Christmas, with mince pies, turkey and trimmings, all around the Christian world – or is it?

Sarah Clark looks at the different traditions in this area and learns that, so typically French, the 13 desserts are just as important as the Christmas tree...

DECEMBER on the Cote d'Azur is a month of festivals, processions, displays and markets.

Local towns take Christmas very seriously and vie for the best displays and activities.

Funds given by town councils for celebrations can be quite substantial. Vallauris alone has a budget of F597,000 whilst Nice is spending a staggering F5.5 million.

Wonderland

Christmas festivities in Monaco are always grand. This year, the port will again be transformed into a winter wonderland. An added attraction is a giant Nativity scene on Quai Albert 1er with the largest crèche in the region. Covering 3,000 square metres, it is a re-creation of Bethlehem at the time of the Nativity, including animated scenes of daily life.

'Crèches vivante,' where locals dress as nativity figures are popular. One

takes place in Cap d'Ail today, Nice from the 22nd to the 27th, Tourrettes sur Loup on the 22nd and Le Rouret and Cagnes-sur-Mer on the 24th.

Le Cannet's Christmas village opens tomorrow until December 22 and is themed around igloos.

Feast

In Menton, seasonal festivities take a Viennese theme and involve the transformation of the Bioves gardens in the town centre into a huge toy factory complete with Father Christmas' sleigh filled with presents and a forest of Christmas trees, snowmen and reindeers. The festivities begin today.

In Vence Father Christmas' village is open and a series of festive events in Cagnes-sur-Mer, the Christmas Village in Nice and the Christmas Crèche in Mougins are ready for visitors. Antibes' 'Fetes de fin d'année' celebrations have also kicked off with the opening of the ice rink in Place DeGaulle. And, in Valbonne, this afternoon sees a range of children's activities in the old village, accompanied by mulled wine for the adults.

There is also a children's day in Villeneuve Loubet on the 22nd.

For adults, fans of traditional music will enjoy the Midnight Mass and Oratoria de Noel at the Eglise St Francois-de-Paule, opposite the Opera, in Nice on December 21. It is performed by the Société de Musique Ancienne, the Ensemble Pange Lingua (Provençal language) and the Ensemble Vocal de Nice. For a really

traditional Christmas Eve in old Provence style, Mouans Sartoux is the place on Christmas Eve. A Midnight Mass is being held at 11:30pm at Église Saint André and it is followed by a serving of the 13 desserts at the Chateau.

You can also try the 13 desserts in Le Bar sur Loup on the 24th at the Veillée de Noel Provençal, where you'll get to hear tra-

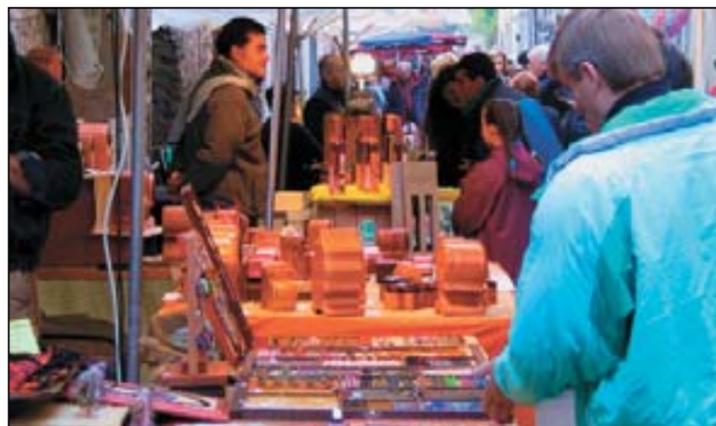
ditional songs and stories in the old Provençal language.

Shopping for Christmas presents and festive fare, including all the ingredients for a traditional local feast, is easy with a wide range of Christmas markets across the region.

Villeneuve Loubet, Puget-Theniers and Peymeinade have Christmas markets tomorrow. Tourrettes sur Loup on Monday and Le Cannet on the 23rd.

The Christmas Market in Valbonne, open into the early evening on December 22, 23 and 24, is a favourite with the old village packed with stalls selling decorations, Christmas fare, gift ideas and warming food and beverages.

If you want to buy santons, there are several specialist markets. There is a one day market at Opio tomorrow whilst the Foire des Santons in Mouans Sartoux is open every day until December 27.



UNIQUE GIFTS... artisans offer hand-made products at Christmas markets

For full details of all events see Riviera Diary, Page 14

ted a little differently on the Côte d'Azur



THE Christmas season in Provence starts early on December 4, St Barbe's Day, with the traditional sowing indoors of wheat, corn or lentils on cotton wool soaked in water.

The idea is that these will have sprouted shoots by Christmas indicating a good harvest for the following year.

The shoots are then displayed on the Christmas table as a sign of a prosperous year ahead.

Decorating the home is a serious matter with pride of place given to the crèche. Peopled with santons, 'little saints', the Provençal crèche incorporates the traditional Nativity figures as well as Provençal figures such as the fisherman, the baker and the blacksmith along with local animals like sheep, donkeys and cows.

Legend claims St Francis of Assisi came up with the idea of the crèche back in 1223, whilst the santons themselves arrived in the 17th century.

Santon making, using wood or clay, is a specialist art with figures from the leading makers commanding serious money.

Santons, however, are not supposed to be great works of art but simple figures, usually between three and five centimetres high, that each family would traditionally have made themselves.

Most families start with a crèche and five or six of the key figures (baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary and the three wise men) and then add a new santon every year letting children choose which one.

The Christmas tree, 'sapin' in French, has become quite common but is by no means an essential part of celebrations.

If there is a tree it will be placed near the fireplace as part of the display of

presents that are traditionally set out around the chimney on Christmas Eve, ready for opening on Christmas morning.

Celebrations really start to swing on Christmas Eve, when the head of the family welcomes all other family members to his home to celebrate 'Réveillon,' an evening of reminiscences coupled, of course, with a huge feast, and, traditionally but no longer

including at least an entrée of mussels and oysters and a salted cod dish.

Traditions may be slipping but no less than 13 desserts still retain their central role in closing the meal.

The 13, representing Christ and the 12 apostles, are made from simple foods found in the traditional mid-winter store cupboard. Almonds, figs, raisins and hazelnuts, which represent the four beggars (the four religious

itself. As such it is a fulfilling event even for non-frequent churchgoers.

Réveillon itself follows the Midnight Mass and involves a light meal accompanied by aperitifs, chocolates, liqueurs and Bûche de Noel, a sponge cake in the shape of a log.

In France, Père Noel has a sidekick, Père Fouettard. The two travel together from house to house on Christmas Eve with Père Noel leaving gifts by the chimney for good children and Père Fouettard (Father Whip) administering punishment to those who have been naughty.

Christmas Day is celebrated with more feasting, again involving the whole family. Turkey is the most popular main course and the meal will include a Yule log.

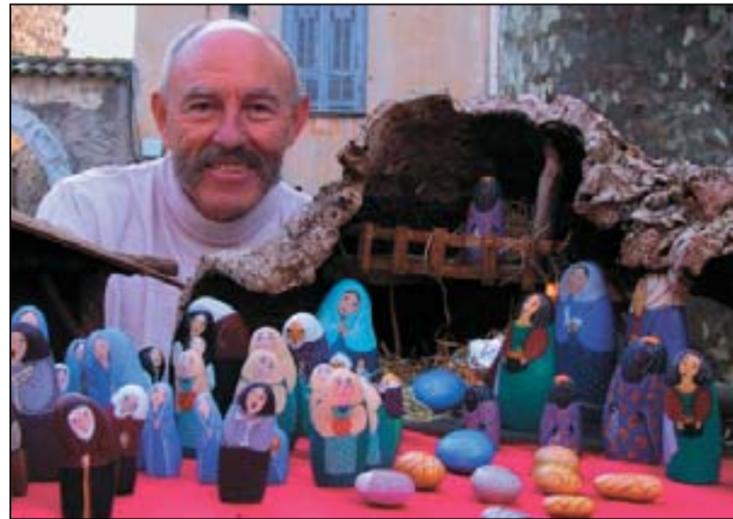
New Year in Provence involves, of course, yet more eating. Traditional fare includes a roast, a stuffed cock, representing the year ahead, 12 partridges, for each of the 12 months, 30 black truffles for the nights and 30 white eggs for the days.

This time, the feast is more likely to be eaten in a restaurant with New Year's Eve one of the most important nights of the year for restaurateurs.

Most provide a festive menu of seven or more courses designed to show off culinary skills and usually incorporating some of the elements of a traditional St Sylvestre board of fare.

Towns across the region mark midnight and the start of the New Year with a firework display.

Epiphany, representing the arrival of the Three Wise Men in Bethlehem, closes the season and is celebrated with almonds, marrons glacé and other sweets, especially the local speciality of Calissons d'Aix, as well as a brioche garnished with crystallized fruit and in which a bean is hidden. The tradition is that whoever finds the bean pays for the cake...



STABLE WORK ... Roger Legrand of *La Vie en Douce, Tourrettes-sur-Loup*, does brisk business with wife Martine's hand-painted 'pebble' santons at the local Christmas Markets

always maintained, a family visit to Midnight Mass.

Before the meal, a new fire, the 'cachefio,' is lit to symbolize a new year. The old fire is put out and replaced with the new made of cherry or olive logs. When the new fire catches light a traditional verse in the old Provençal tongue is chanted.

The Christmas Eve feast, known as the "gros souper," strictly involves seven meat-free courses laid out on three white tablecloths with three large white candles, representing the Holy Trinity, as the centre piece. But, in modern Provence, it is more likely to be simpler, although still

orders of the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustins and the Carmelites), and 'pompe à l'huile,' the traditional Christmas cake, are the most important. Apples, pears, dates, plums, dried fruits, black and white nougat, quince jelly, crystallized fruits, citrus fruits and fondants are also common. There may even be more than 13 desserts, depending on the hostess.

Midnight mass gets a traditional theme at many of the local Catholic churches. Several services at parish churches include traditional Provençal language hymns, sung by local music groups accompanied by traditional instruments, as well as the better known French hymns and the mass



Feeling cold turkey for a British Christmas?

IF you are hankering for traditional British food this Christmas we have the answer.

The wide range of English-speaking businesses and communities on the Côte d'Azur means Christmas here can offer the best of both worlds, letting you enjoy the best of Provençal traditions without missing out on the things that make Christmas special back home.

For the British contingent, a traditional Christmas with all the trimmings is easy to arrange. There are Christmas carol services, shops stocking crackers, mince pies and Christmas pudding and even a pantomime...

Carols

Traditional family carol services are being held in the area's English-speaking churches. St John's in Menton holds a carol service today. Holy Trinity Church, Cannes, has carols tomorrow. The Parish Church in Grimaud is also holding an Ecumenical ser-

Fear not, we know just where to find your old favourites

vice in English with carols, mince pies and mulled wine tomorrow. Also tomorrow is an Ecumenical Service of Lessons and Carols at St Paul's Anglican Church in Monaco at 7pm. St Hugh's in Vence has its carol service on December 20 and there is a Children's Carol Service at 5pm at St Paul's, Monaco, the same day.

Holy Trinity Church in Nice is holding a carol service on December 21 whilst Cornerstone Christian Fellowship has its service on December 23. This service includes a children's presentation, a brief message and refreshments. Also on the 23rd are the carol services of St John the Evangelist in Saint Raphael and of St Michael's in Beaulieu-sur-Mer.

There is also a carol concert for you to sit back and enjoy. A Christmas Cantata with Rico Pipit and the International Baptist Church Singers at the International Baptist

Church in Nice takes place tomorrow. The essential Christmas pantomime is again provided this year by the very professional Drama Group of Monaco.

This year's production, directed by Ann Batt, is "Treasure Island" and includes six dogs, various children on roller-skates and, of course, a pantomime horse. Performances take place at the Salle des Variétés in Monaco on December 21st, 22nd and 23rd.

Chains

And if you are wondering where to buy traditional British food? Several of the larger French supermarket chains stock essentials for international residents. Carrefour in Antibes, Super 3000 at the Cap 3000 shopping complex and Champion in Valbonne are all worth a try.

And, of course, the specialist international supermarkets all promise a full range of Christmas fare.



POPULAR ... many local English churches host carol services

News

Conmen sting local couple

AN elderly Cannes couple were tricked out of 340,000 francs by conmen pretending to be art experts, it was revealed this week. The couple, both 75, could have lost up to 2.4 million francs if they had fallen for the whole ruse.

The sting started last month when they exchanged business cards with a supposed art expert at an exposition at Cannes palace. The next day an amateur collector called at their home and, during chat, said he needed a valuer for some small jade statues.

They called the earlier expert for him who said he would visit and look at the works at their home. He claimed the statues were extremely rare and valued them at 2.4 million francs. He said he knew a collector in Dubai who would buy them.

Days later the statues' owner called the couple asking for cash claiming the expert was being held by customs at Orly as he returned from Dubai. The couple agreed to advance 340,000 francs believing it would soon be repaid. But the owner called back asking for more and they became suspicious and called police.

The statues' owner – found to be a 38-year-old living in La Bocca – was later caught in a mock 'hand-over' of more cash. The 'expert' is still at large. The statues were found to be false and valueless. The money has not been recovered.

Great Brit-rain

BRITISH winters are getting wetter – and it is official. Long spells of heavy winter rain are now more frequent, say scientists analysing weather patterns between 1961 and 2000. The total number of rainy days during winter has not increased but the intensity and the number of consecutive days of rain have. The UK is now 50-60 per cent more likely to get five or more days of rain in a row than in 1960.

Babs is top of the puppets

DAME Barbara Cartland beat John Major and Madonna hands down at an auction of puppets from the cult TV series Spitting Image. A puppet of the romantic novelist raised £3,290 for victims of September 11 and Afghan refugees. John Major's puppet went for £2,702 whilst Madonna fetched only £1,292.

Six months of fish

TWO fishermen survived six months lost at sea in a small aluminium boat after getting caught in a strong current following an accident. The men, from Samoa, lived on fish, birds and rain water in the Pacific Ocean. They were found off the coast of Papua New Guinea, thin but OK.

Cops' go-slow over speeding fines

US policemen are refusing to drive fast to 911 calls because they keep having to fork out for speeding fines. They now have to pay out of their own pockets when caught on speed cameras, even on official business, in Washington, DC.

Swiss sizzle the best

THE Swiss are the best barbecue chefs in the world. They won first, second and third place at the World Barbecue Championships in Cape Town, South Africa.

World's most useless number

THE title of the world's most useless number has been awarded to 1.8015446 x 10¹². It is the speed of light in furlongs per fortnight.

Fire in Arson Street

FIRE destroyed a shop on Monday afternoon – in aptly named Arson Street, Nice. The blaze, whose cause is as yet unknown, swept through the sound effect specialists Sono Light.

The hanging beer gardens of Babylon

BEER was popular as far back as Babylonian times, archeologists have discovered. A set of 3,800 year old tablets give instructions for brewing beer and show production, stock holding and distribution statistics.

A tip for Christmas

WHEN the postman brings you a calendar, he's asking for his Christmas tip. 50F is normal. The dustbin men and firemen will ring your bell; they expect 100F.

Extra French letter....

THE plural of Euro in every language is Euro – apart from in French. Here it is to be called Euros.

Commune row

Continued from front page

authority is the main cause of concern.

Seats are allocated on a sliding scale ranging from one seat per 999 residents to one seat per 10,500 residents for larger communes. This reduces the dominance of Nice itself but still means the city gets 33 seats whilst most towns get only two.

The new authority will be responsible for setting the level of tax professionnelle and deciding how it is spent – sparking fears of tax hikes.

"Here in Beaulieu the rate is only 10%. In Nice, it is 22.59%," says M. Vincenti. "Nice says it will lower its rate, but it's unlikely that it will be as low as ours."

Loss

Also at issue is the loss of the existing grouping of towns to which Villefranche, Beaulieu and Cap-Ferrat already belong. All existing groupings will cease when the new "agglomerations" come into force.

For the last 30 years, Beaulieu, Villefranche and St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat have been working with Cap d'Ail, Eze, La Turbie and Peille, in a grouping known as SIVOM. With the introduction of the new law, they wanted to make their

Composition of the Nice Côte d'Azur Council		
	Seats	Population
Nice	33	345,892
Cagnes-sur-Mer	9	44,207
Saint-Laurent du Var	7	27,252
Vence	5	17,184
La Trinité	3	10,091
Villefranche-sur-Mer	2	6,877
La Gaude	2	6,217
Tourrette-Levens	2	4,139
Saint-André de la Roche	2	4,137
Levens	2	3,712
Beaulieu-sur-Mer	2	3,701
Saint-Jeannet	2	3,647
Colomars	2	2,885
Saint-Martin du Var	2	2,210
Saint-Jean Cap Ferrat	2	1,907
Aspremont	2	1,869
Falicon	2	1,652
Castagniers	2	1,362
Saint-Blaise	1	897
La Roquette-sur-Var	1	659
Coaraze	1	659
Duranus	1	156

Goals

The Préfecture says the matter is now closed. "The law says that if two thirds of councillors of the towns involved say yes and they represent over 50% of the population, then the plan is passed," said M. Doumerg, the Préfecture director in charge of introducing the new structures.

"The towns which have voted against do not have a choice, they are obliged to join in.

"They worry that they will be swallowed up by Nice, but the communes

are not disappearing. Rather they are getting a new opportunity to co-operate with each other, to share competencies and strategies."

Fight

But when The Riviera Gazette broke the news to M. Vincenti that the final approval had been given to the move – and that all 22 communes had been included – he said the fight would go on.

"The loi Chevènement was introduced to allow towns with shared interests, shared history and shared goals to work together. We do not share these things with Nice and we will seek recourse in the courts.

"We are being told to make a marriage with Nice. But it takes two willing parties to make a marriage work and we are already happily married."

A series of demonstrations against the shake-up, starting in Menton today, is



NEW LINKS... left to right, how the Sophia-Antipolis, Nice Côte d'Azur and Menton agglomerations will look from January 1

Why the changes?

The shake-up follows a change in French law giving new legal structures for towns to band together, agree joint development policies, share costs and implement joint strategies. The law, known as the loi Chevènement, was passed in July 1999. It aims to replace a confusing array of structures that French communes currently use to work together on projects with one clear legal structure, known as an EPCI, that everyone can use and understand. To ease a smooth changeover, the law allowed a two-and-a-half year period during which the new 'agglomerations' could be formed and the old structures co-exist. That period ends on December 31st.

planned. The first meeting of the new council of Nice Côte d'Azur will take place on January 21. It is not known how many of the dissenting towns will take up places on the council.

● Two additional urban groupings also come into force on January 1. They are the new, enlarged Sophia-Antipolis, now with 14 member towns, and the Riviera Française, a new conglomeration made up of Menton, Roquebrune Cap-Martin, Beausoleil and the towns of the

Menton hinterland. In the Menton area, only Sospel strongly opposed the plans. In Sophia-Antipolis, all towns voted in favour. But the allocation of seats on the central council has led to friction.

Vallauris claims the make-up of the new council allows a majority to be formed by only three member towns. Antibes, Valbonne and Biot or Villeneuve-Loubet alone have enough seats to form a majority, causing worries that smaller towns will be overshadowed.

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RIVIERA PEOPLE

McNice!

NICE took on a Scottish feel last month as the Auld Alliance celebrated St Andrew's Night at a local restaurant.

Bagpipes were flown in from Kent specially for the night.

Society president Brian McDowell, pictured right, centre back, said the society celebrates historical links between Scotland and France with members from both. Its next event is Burns' Night in January.



Princes' Thanksgiving lunch

HSH Prince Rainier III and HSH Crown Prince Albert of Monaco, above, attended a Thanksgiving lunch at the Monte Carlo Grand Hotel last month. The event was hosted by the fund-raising charity Monaco-USA, whose committee member Peter Murphy is pictured with the princes.

The stars and stripes were also proudly on display for a Thanksgiving lunch at the Hôtel de Paris in Monaco. The event, pictured left, was organised by the American Club of the Riviera. Invited guests included US Navy servicemen.

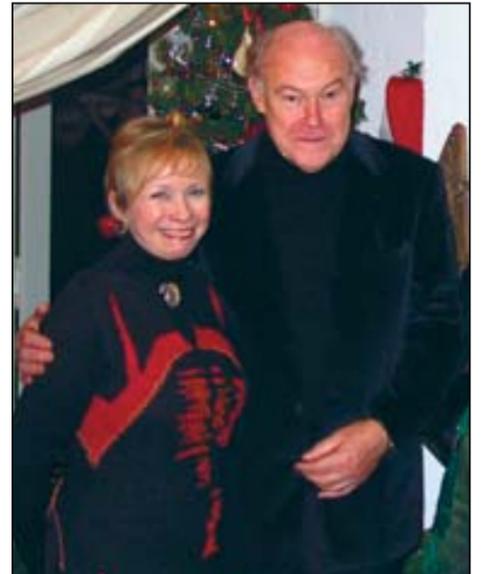
Stars shine at the Antibeia



OPERA singer Sally Bradshaw, pictured left, and RSC actor Timothy West appeared in Antibes earlier this month for a touring show entitled A Thousand Years of Christmas.

The show was put on by the Red Pear production company under producer Hilary King, pictured below right with Timothy West, at the Antibeia Theatre in the old town.

The next production is a one-man show "Sherlock Holmes - The Last Act" with Roger Llewellyn on February 1 and 2.



Beryl Arnould Choir kicks off carol season

THE Beryl Arnould Choir, pictured left, filled Saint Blaise church, Valbonne, with its regular annual carol concerts earlier this month.

The audience was treated to the choir's version of many popular carols, and was then invited to join in a singalong of Christmas songs. Mulled wine rounded off the evening's entertainment on December 6 and 7.

All proceeds from the event will go to charity. The choir will hold another concert in the Spring.



CHEERS ... Members of the Alpes-Maritimes International Aperitif Club (above) raise a glass to celebrate Christmas at their annual festive lunch at the Negresco, Nice, earlier this month. The club, with about 150 members from 20 countries, has lunch and aperitifs at a different venue each month.



TINSEL, CARDS AND ENGLISH FAYRE

DECORATIONS, cards, gifts and food were on sale last month at the Var Village Voice's annual Christmas Fair at the Maison des Vins in Les Arcs. The proceeds went to the British Association of the Var, Queen Alexandra Benevolent Fund, UNICEF and other charities.



ANGELS OF THE SOUTH ... Choir mistress Jo Rudd gathered Mougins School's Primary Choir in front of the school's scale model of The Angel of the North to celebrate the release of their Christmas song, "A Gift for Christmas". Penned by nine year-old T.J. Newcombe Bilham (inset), the seasonal song has been recorded by the choir of mostly eight and nine year-old pupils. Copies are available on CD for F30 by visiting the school or calling 04 93 90 15 47 before December 21. All profits go to the Téléthon appeal.

Coffee Time



STARS

with John Garland

December 2001

AQUARIUS

20 January–18 February

Not everyone will share your confidence. What matters is that you avoid any in-fighting at work. Partners and colleagues will be eager to help, provided you welcome their ideas. As another year fades, you will realise that it is time to broaden your horizons. Enjoy the festive swirl and make the most of your social scene between the 7th and 18th. You will be delighted by what's on offer.

PISCES

19 February–20 March

Pisces are among the most sensitive of signs, but try not to misread whatever others say, because they are only trying to help. You will only discover who is on your side, if you're honest and reveal your true emotions. Golden choices are in the wind, especially with exciting Mars and money-making Jupiter highlighting your wishes. For whatever reasons, the seasonal celebrations will strengthen your hopes.

ARIES

21 March–20 April

Your power-packed ruler Mars will speed up any personal or creative projects. Whatever else you do over the Christmas period, you will begin to pep up your ambitions. Luckily, your emotional and relationship outlook will get a strengthening boost from loving Venus. Your goals will be clearly signposted by whatever stirs you around the 7th and 24th. The solution will be in your hands.

TAURUS

21 April–20 May

Whatever delays or personal tensions arise, the final days of this year spotlight important discussions and decisions. Your social and financial worlds are on an upward curve. You stand to gain from career, money and romantic affections. Expect to benefit from specific efforts between the 7th and 12th. As the old year vanishes, ring in 2002 with the same determination that has recently reinforced your luck.

GEMINI

21 May–20 June

Refuse to spread yourself too thinly by doing too much. This is good advice, because being a Gemini, you love action and variety. Although the festivities will sparkle with fun and unexpected events, ensure there is no room for confusion where money's concerned. Circle the 8th or 15th for mixing and mingling. Go all-out for special meetings, leisure links or travel between the 7th and 15th.

CANCER

21 June–20 July

Close relationships, new romance and your artistic flair are wonderfully starred during Christmas. Even the year's end promises some event of special significance. Otherwise, if you watch your everyday expenses, your overall cashflow should slowly stabilise. All of these situations are heralding a time of major and minor changes. The world will become your oyster, if only you have the courage to concentrate on a single goal.

LEO

21 July–21 August

New directions will open up, but only if you set the wheels in motion. Naturally, your Leo pride won't tolerate any intrusion into your personal plans. On the other hand, you could gain from listening to the advice of more than one person. Happily, affairs of the heart and mind are favourably starred between the 8th and 15th. If you want results, push your skills and talents.

VIRGO

22 August–22 September

Ring out the old year and ring in the new! Even so, you'll have to work a lot harder, but it will prove very worthwhile. Events taking shape will focus on caring for loved ones and even the possibility of helping someone in need. The main emphasis is on career, property and romance. Be upfront, because the impression you create will determine whether you win or lose.

LIBRA

23 September–22 October

Be adventurous and do all you can to enrich your lifestyle. This is not a month to take any health risks, so pamper yourself! Fortunately, you won't be doing all the giving, but you still need to guard against saying yes to everyone's needs and demands. Travel is well aspected and if you're single, romantic encounters are likely around the 7th, 18th and 19th!

SCORPIO

23 October–22 November

A combination of planets could tempt you to force personal or financial issues out into the open. Wait for a calmer moment to put your persuasive magic to work! You are now in an exciting phase as far as your career, family and social plans are concerned. Although 2001 has been a challenging year, be optimistic, because fate still has some intriguing surprises in store.

SAGITTARIUS

23 November–20 December

If you are single, you should widen your social scene, because flirtatious Venus can only increase your chances of meeting someone special. You will also become more aware of your own potential for expanding your career or meeting work-related targets. Meanwhile, it is only logical that if you budget, you'll have all the money you'll need. However, don't allow anyone to take advantage of your generosity.

CAPRICORN

21 December–19 January

Why is it that you are called a cool Capricorn? It's because you are ruled by cautious Saturn. Right now, with so much festivity and action in the air, you don't have to worry about what you say or think. Go-ahead Mercury is glowing with vitality, so despite sudden obstacles and other out-of-the-blue hassles, do as you please and pleasure will be yours.

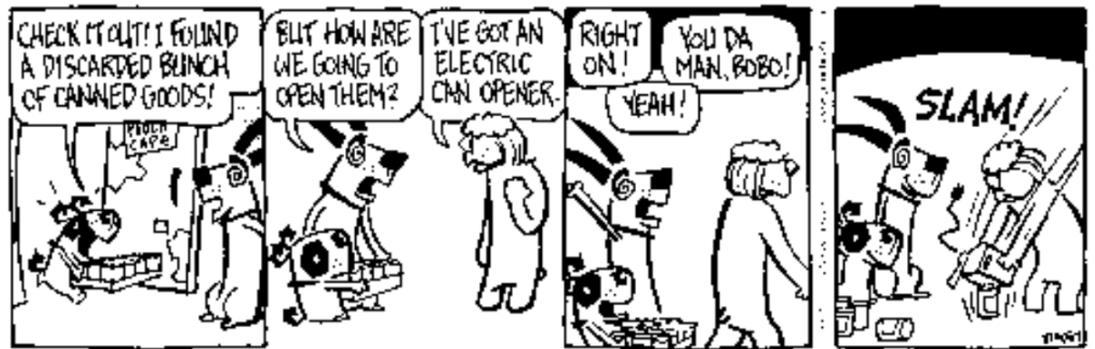
Hagar the Horrible

by Chris Browne



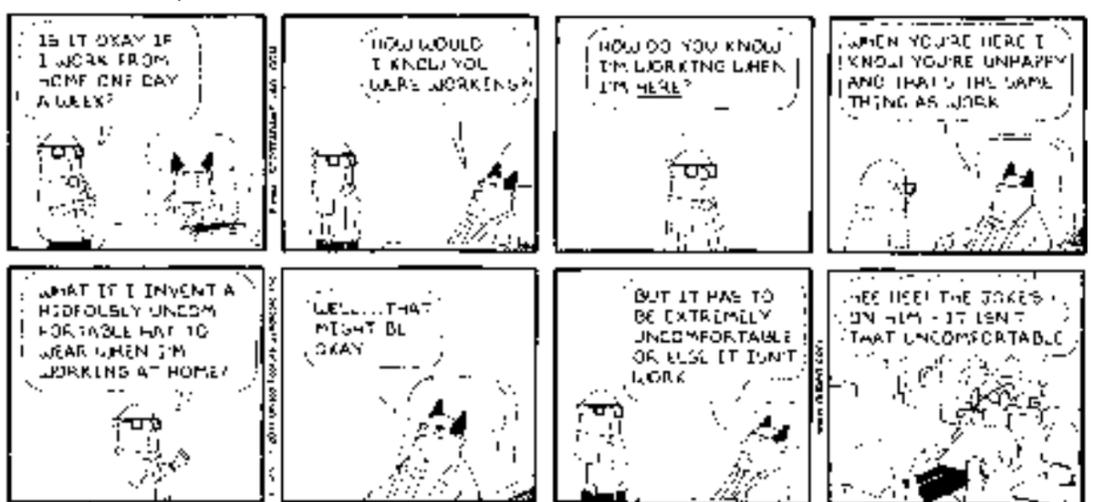
Pooch Café

by Paul Gilligan



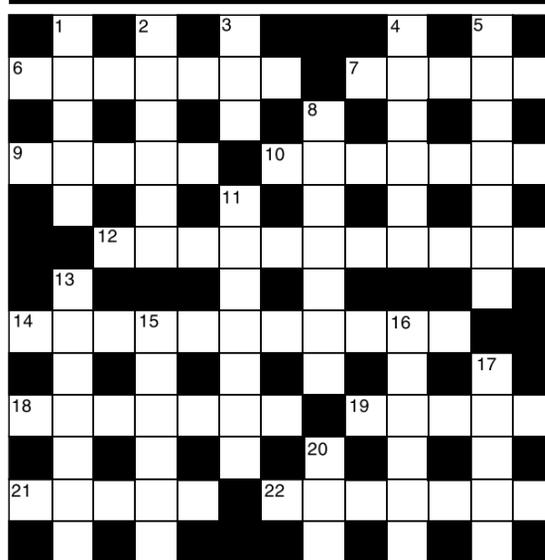
Dilbert

by Scott Adams



DOUBLE CROSSWORD

No 10,000



CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- 6. The first of the turncoats with cause for serious crime (7)
- 7. Conscientious people are taking after these (5)
- 9. Take off for southern excursion (5)
- 10. Injunction X is recorded (7)
- 12, 21, 22 & 4 Dn. A stupid man quickly loses his balance, we're told (1,4,3,3,5,3,4,6)
- 14. Natural tendency for Sid to return to a certain place (11)
- 18. Putting one and one together (7)
- 19. The head of the boat-builders equips the sailing ships (5)
- 21. See 12 Across
- 22. See 12 Across

DOWN

- 1. Place for a fire that sounds splendid (5)
- 2. This gives the rate for endless traffic in confusion (6)
- 3 & 20. Post Office section producing modern painting (3,3)
- 4. See 12 Across
- 5. A sort of cinema which appears lifeless (7)
- 8. The Bard can show liberality of mind (7)
- 11. See 17 Down
- 13. Select an entrance, we hear, for the Spanish fighter (7)
- 15. To negotiate, speak in French before the end of the day (6)
- 16. Attack could take hours round the north. (6)
- 17 & 11. Time to say yes? (3,2,7)
- 20. See 3 Down

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE

The grids are the same, but the answers are different. Have fun!

The solution to Double Crossword No. 10,000 will be found in the next issue.

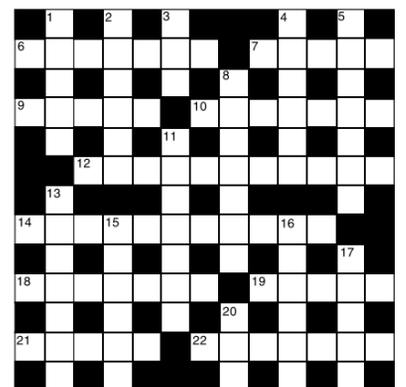
QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- 6. Unfold (7)
- 7. Postpone (5)
- 9. Discard (5)
- 10. Performer (7)
- 12. January 1st (3,5,3)
- 14. Lineage expert (11)
- 18. Gift (7)
- 19. Woo (5)
- 21. Antic (5)
- 22. Usual (7)

DOWN

- 1. Long seat (5)
- 2. Narrate (6)
- 3. Apex (3)
- 4. Starts (6)
- 5. Biased (7)
- 8. Dispose (7)
- 11. Tornado (7)
- 13. Rumour (7)
- 15. Christian festival (6)
- 16. Stocks (6)
- 17. Fracture (5)
- 20. Charge (3)



Weekend highlights how much there is for kids to do on the Riviera



WHEELY GREAT DAY OUT... many made the most of the weekend to get their first taste of the thrills and spills of motor racing



KARATE KIDS... little ones practise basic martial arts moves in the sports hall

Abracadabra

Thousands of kids appear at Magic Festival

By SARAH CLARK

MAGIC came to Le Cannet recently with a weekend of fun filled activity for children of all ages.

Forty stands in the main hall at the La Palestre complex, crowded with excited youngsters, were dedicated to giving the region's kids the chance to experiment with arts and crafts, music, drama and dance.

Face painting, chocolate decorating, perfume making, theatre workshops, tile decorating, painting, pottery, music making, chess and computer games — the Magic Festival had it all.

Circus

Displays of skill and entertainment enthralled the audience every half an hour with judo, dancing, theatre,

music and circus demonstrations, all by local groups and clubs, amongst the highlights.

In the adjoining sports hall, youngsters worked off some of their excitement by trying out martial arts classes, trampoline lessons, basketball sessions, circus workshops and even slot car racing — again all arranged by local clubs.

Raspberries

Outside, a motor racing circuit gave children the chance to try out go-karting and quad biking and even the very young could have a go at mountain climbing (whilst very securely roped to the teacher, of course).

The Riviera Gazette asked young visitors what they liked best. "It was great," said Savannah, six, from Roquefort-les-Pins. "I made perfume. Its pink and it smells of raspberries." Her brother

Max, four, preferred the face painting. "I love looking like Spiderman. And it was really fun painting the chocolates," he added.

Others liked the sports, like Ben, five, from La Colle-sur-Loup, who particularly enjoyed trampolining, while some loved trying out the musical instruments. Friends Louis, five, and Tom, four, also from La Colle, said "we like making a big noise best".

Louis' mum Alison added, "The children were so excited, I thought I'd never be able to get them into bed — but we'd only just made it out of the car park before they were fast asleep".

Tears

Planning for next year's event is already underway. Florence Cuny-Duverge of event organisers Promogolf told The Riviera Gazette that the Magic Festival is a labour of love.

"Usually we organise golf events and they're great fun. But the Magic Festival is something special, it just grew from an idea that someone in the office had one day. It's very different for us," said Florence. "When we saw how many people had come this year and how happy the children were, we had real tears in our eyes".

Top of the agenda for 2002? "More of the same — and, we hope, a separate activity area for babies and toddlers so that even the very little ones can have just as much fun as their bigger brothers and sisters".



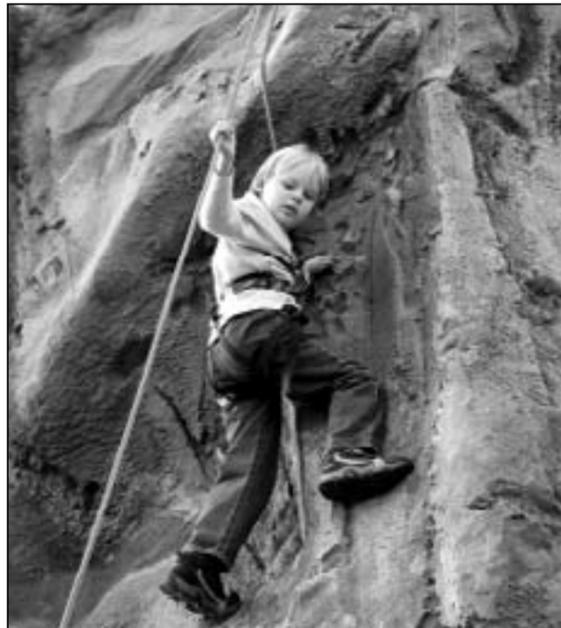
STICKY MOMENT... kids take the hands-on approach to craft



PRETTY IN PINK... a face-painter adds a touch of sparkle



BIG HIT... one happy fan couldn't resist trying out the drums



HIGH JINKS... getting to grips with mountain climbing



TIME OUT... relaxing with some of the calmer activities on offer



ACE FACES... Ben, Louis, Max, Savannah and Tom show off a new look

Riviera Diary

Pick of the month

Plenty happens on the Riviera, but how often have you only heard about something *after* the event? You need never miss out again with The Riviera Gazette's comprehensive diary listings...

■ The long-awaited **Harry Potter** movie has arrived – in English. The book and film phenomenon opened its English language season at the Cinema Sporting in Monte-Carlo last week and is expected to arrive in the region's other regular VO (version originale) movie houses over the Christmas holiday period. **The Lord of the Rings** is set to follow soon after.

■ Nice Opera is putting on a new production of **Don Giovanni** next month. There are five performances in all, beginning on January 18.

■ It's **circus season** on the Riviera. The only problem is which of the three major circus events to choose from. Arriving first is the **St Petersburg Circus on Ice**. They will spend four nights at Le Palestre in Le Cannet. Next to arrive is the **Moscow Circus** on 28 December for a four night run at the Salle Nikaïa in Nice. Finally, the 26th **Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo** opens on 17 January for a one week run. Leading circus performers from around the world compete in the festival. The programme includes a weekend matinee show and a special performance by the festival's award winners.

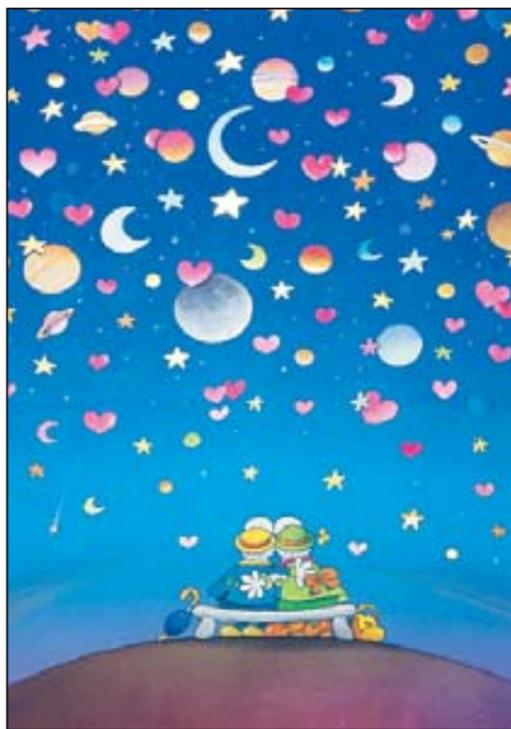
■ An exhibition of paintings by Royal Academician **Sir Terry Frost** has just opened for a short run at the Maison des Arts in La Colle sur Loup. Recognised as a world leading abstract artist, Frost's work is renowned for its use of vibrant colours and a spirited sense of 'joie de vivre'. Tel: 04 93 32 32 50

■ The 6th annual **Marché de la Truffe** takes place on January 12 at the Bastide Saint Antoine, the pays grassois base of the famous chef Jacques Chibois. Traders are expected to make some fifty kilos of truffles available to visitors, all at wholesale prices. There will also be demonstrations by trained truffle-hunting dogs and stands marketing a variety of local wines and produce. Tel: 04 93 70 94 94

■ Open air **ice skating** rinks are now open in five Riviera towns. In Monaco, the rink is built on top of the public swimming pool in Port Hercule and is open until March 11. The rinks at Antibes' Place De-Gaulle, Menton's Esplanade Bastion and St-Raphaël's Place Couillet are all open until January 6. In Nice, you'll find the ice skating at Place Massena in the city centre. It is open until December 31.

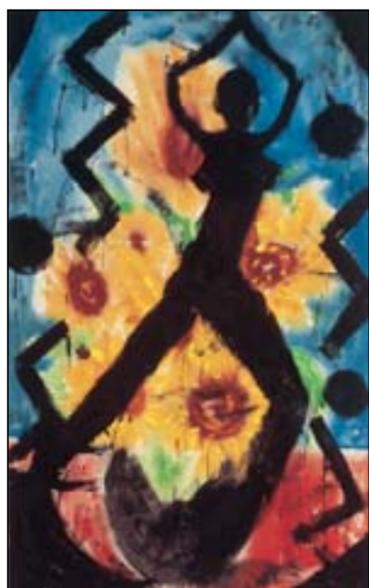
■ January holds a series of feasts for the region's rally fans. First off, beginning on January 13 is the 70th **Monte-Carlo Automobile Rally**, also the first round of the 2002 World Rally Championship. The following week, for the 5th **Monte-Carlo Historic Rally**, come the rather slower but wonderful to watch veteran

Mordillo chez Peynet is an exhibition of the work of Argentinean cartoonist Guillermo Mordillo at the Musée Peynet, Place National in Vieil Antibes. Guaranteed to put a smile on every visitor's face, the exhibition displays a substantial body of Mordillo's work. It includes the originals of many of his most famous drawings. For several of the cartoons, all the original sketches that Mordillo made whilst working on their final composition are on display too, showing the meticulous care that the artist takes with every cartoon. The exhibition runs until 7 January. Don't miss the video showing a selection of Mordillo's short films.



cars of a bygone era. Further information on both rallies can be obtained from the Automobile Club of Monaco, Tel: +377 93 15 26 00

■ Giving the kids a chance to work off their excess energy over the holidays is a series of **sports courses** at various sports halls in Nice. On the menu are basketball, tennis, hockey, football, table tennis and Aikido. The courses are open to children aged between eight and twelve years old and are free.



'Luxe, calme et volupté... où la joie de vivre' is an exhibition of ceramics and large format paintings by German artist Stefan Szczesny. Now on at La Malmaison, on the Croisette in Cannes, it is the first official exhibition of Szczesny's work to be held in France. A leading light in the Jungen Wilden avant-garde movement that reached its apogee in the 1980s as Germany moved towards reunification, Szczesny's work also has strong Mediterranean influences gained from an affinity with the region that he has had since childhood. The exhibition runs until 27 January.

■ Some of the world's premier **chess** players will be in Nice from 26 December for the 17th Nice Open International Chess Tournament. Grand masters, masters and local players will compete for the prestigious title at the Radisson Hotel on the Promenade des Anglais. Echiquier Niçois, the Nice Chess club that is organising the tournament, is one of the leading teams in the country with two of its young players being chosen to compete in the World Youth Championship in 2000. The French national sides recently won the Ladies' European Championship and were runners-up in the Mens'. Both teams include local players. Echiquier Niçois has a 'drop in and play' centre on Avenue Jean-Médecin and runs regular courses for both experienced players and beginners of all ages.

■ Europe's largest **indoor amusement park** has opened for its regular Christmas season at the Palais des Expositions, Nice. Luna Park offers 23 rides. One day passes are available at F99 for adults, including 14 rides, and F49 for children, including 9 rides. Luna Park is open until January 6.

■ The Baie des Anges will be filled with thirty to forty Star class **yachts** from 26 December as they gather in Nice from around the world to compete in the 45th International Star Regatta, one of the most important events in the French yachting calendar.

■ Fête en Hiver is an exhibition of paintings with a Christmas and winter theme at **naïve art** specialists Galerie d'Art in Vieil Antibes. The exhibition comprises paintings by fifteen artists and promises fascinating new finds alongside some of France's most established practitioners of Naïve Art.

What's on

Your two-week guide to events on the Riviera

Listings

Info for readers ...

◆ before a day shows the event's final day.
■ after a listing signifies the last day of an event.

Info for contributors ...

Please submit listings in writing by 10 days before publication. Please include dates, prices, times and a contact phone number. Listings can be sent by post or fax (04 93 09 66 53) or by email to diary@therivieragazette.com. Listings appear free of charge, but inclusion is at the sole discretion of the listings editor.

December

15 Saturday

Antiques Market Bric-a-brac and antiques market in Haut-de-Cagnes. Tel: 04 93 73 98 41
1er Salon de l'Art Gourmand Food festival plus craft market, farm animals and cooking demonstrations at Place Pasteur, La Trinité from 9:00 to 18:00. Tel: 04 93 27 64 23
Carol Service At St John's, avenue Carnot, Menton at 17:30. Tel: 04 93 57 20 25
Fête de Noël des Enfants Children's festival with a visit from Father Christmas, at Cours Honoré Cresp, Grasse. Tel: 04 93 36 66 66 ◆ Dec 16
Fête de l'Artisanat Craft market in Saint-Laurent-du-Var. Demonstrations including ice sculptures and pottery in Place Médecin from 10:00 to 17:00, folk singers and distribution of chocolates to children at Place de la Gare 10:00 to 12:00.
Fête de Noël Christmas festival, with distribution of toys and sweets, in the centre of Roquebrune Cap Martin. Tel: 04 93 35 62 87
Fête de Noël Christmas festival including a 'crèche vivante' created by the town's children, at Square Beaverbrook in Cap d'Ail. Tel: 04 92 10 59 50
Marché de Noël Christmas market with second hand toy sale in Breil-sur-Roya town centre, morning only. Tel: 04 93 04 99 76
Marché de Noël des Villes Jumelées At the Palais des Congrès, Grasse Tel: 04 93 36 66 66 ◆ Dec 18
Marché de Noël In Square Nabonnand on the RN7 in Golfe-Juan, 10:00 to 19:00 Tel: 04 93 63 82 58
Marché de Noël Christmas market, with procession and visit from Father Christmas in Cabris town centre. Tel: 04 93 60 55 63
Marché de Noël Christmas market, activities and festivities in Contes town centre. Wednesdays and weekends ◆ Dec 23
Marché de Noël Christmas market with Billy le Clown in Falicon town centre from 10:00 to 19:00.
Marché de Noël In place de Rocheville, Le Cannet. Tel: 04 93 46 03 47
Marché de Noël Christmas market in Stade de la Villette, Cagnes-sur-Mer from 10:00 to 18:30 Tel: 04 93 20 61 64
Marché de Noël Christmas market, in Peymeinade town centre. Tel: 04 93 66 19 19
Noël Provençal Children's entertainment with jugglers and fire-eaters at Place des Arcades in Valbonne old town. From 14:00. Tel: 04 93 12 34 50
Village des Noël du Monde Crafts market and food fair, with free tastings of food from around the world, in front of Château-Musée Picasso, Vallauris. Also music and dance from around the world in Place de l'Homme au Mouton, 14:30 to 17:30. Tel: 04 93 63 82 58 ◆ Dec 16
La Psalette Children's choir performs European Christmas songs and carols in Place des Martyrs de la Résistance, Antibes at 15:00. Tel: 04 93 34 50 96
Ensemble Baroque de Nice Period music at the Salle des Variétés, Nice at 20:30 on the 15th

and 16:00 on the 16th. Tel: 04 93 80 08 74 ◆ Dec 16

La Banda dou Cigaloun Christmas concert at Église St Jacques le Majeur, Le Bar sur Loup. Tel: 04 93 42 72 21

Concert Emma Classical music at the Salle des Fêtes, Valbonne at 20:30. Tel: 04 93 12 32 20

South African Club Christmas Dinner Member's event; for details tel: 04 93 65 07 01

International Hockey Tournament At the Parc des Sports, Villeneuve Loubet. Tel: 04 92 02 76 11 ◆ Dec 16

Cabaret At the Salle des Fêtes, Peymeinade at 14:00. Tel: 04 93 66 19 19

Art Johnson Quartet The Oscar music winner plays at the Bar-en-Blais, 600 Première Avenue, Antibes at 20:30 Tel: 04 93 74 10 98

Guitar Concert At Salle des Jasmins, Monaco, 18:00 and 22:00. Tel: 04 93 45 24 65

St Petersburg Circus on Ice At La Palestre, Le Cannet at 17:00 on Dec 15 and 16, 14:30 on Dec 18. Tickets cost F130 for adults, F80 for children. Tel: 04 93 46 48 88 ◆ Dec 18

Squash: National 2 level matches Monaco v Marseille at 11:00, Monaco v Montpellier at 17:00. At Salle Omnisports Gaston Médecin, Stade Louis II, Monaco. Tel: +377 92 05 42 22

Volleyball: Nice v Montpellier Pro A league match at 20:30, Salle Palmeira, Nice. Tel: 04 93 87 63 77

16 Sunday

57th Bain de Noël The annual Nice Christmas swim takes place on the beach at Ruhl Plage in front of Jardin Albert 1er. Swimming races and competitions at 11:00, the public join in at 11:30. Around 100 people usually participate and everyone gets a memento of their bravery. Preceded by fishing and cycling competitions from 8:00 plus a mass parachute drop at 10:30
Antiques Market In Place du Château and Place Grimaldi, Haut-de-Cagnes. Tel: 04 93 73 98 41
Christmas Carols At Holy Trinity Church, 4 avenue General Ferrier, Cannes at 18.30. Tel: 04 93 94 54 61

Christmas Cantata Concert with Rico Pipit and the International Baptist Church Singers at the International Baptist Church, 13 rue Vernier, Nice at 18:30. Followed by a hot buffet. Bring a dish! Tel: 04 93 24 92 61

Ecumenical Service of Lessons and Carols At St Paul's Anglican Church, 22 ave Grande Bretagne, Monaco at 19:00. Tel: +377 93 30 71 06

Carol Service Followed by mince pies and mulled wines at the Parish Church, Grimaud Village at 18.30. Tel: 04 94 51 16 98

Fête de Noël des Enfants See Dec 15
Children's Christmas Party for members of the South African Club. Includes a show and a visit from Santa Claus. Biot, 15:30. Tel: 04 93 65 07 01

Marché de Noël Various market stalls and a living crèche in Puget-Théniers town centre, 9:00 to 13:00 Tel: 04 93 05 05 05

Marché de Noël Contes. See Dec 15
Marché de Noël des Villes Jumelées See Dec 15
Marché de Noël Christmas market in Peymeinade. Tel: 04 93 66 19 19

Tourettes-sur-Loup Vocal Ensemble Christmas concert at the Église St Grégoire, Tourettes-sur-Loup, 16:00 and 20:00 Tel: 04 93 24 18 93

Santon Market In Opio from 14:00. Tel: 04 93 77 70 11

Marché de Noël Craft and Christmas market in Villeneuve Loubet, 10:00 to 18:30. Tel: 04 93 73 18 13

Cannes PACA Regional Orchestra Performance of works by Xenakis, Mendelssohn, Bartholdy, Tchaikowski and Beethoven at the Palais des Festivals, Cannes at 16:30. Tel: 04 92 98 62 77

Philharmonic Orchestra of Monte-Carlo Matinée performance of works by Haydn, Reicha and Mozart at the Musée Océanographique, Monaco at 11:00. Tel: +377 92 16 22 99

Ensemble Baroque de Nice See Dec 15

Les Musicales de Cagnes Classical music concert. Tel: 04 93 22 19 25

Bel Canto Operatic concert including works by Puccini, Mozart, Rossini, Offenbach and Gounod in the Saint Exupéry Room, Menton. Tel: 04 92 41 76 76

International Hockey Tournament See Dec 15 ■

Marché de Noël In rue Saint-Sauveur, Vieux-Cannet. Tel: 04 93 46 03 47

St Petersburg Circus on Ice See Dec 15

Village des Noëls du Monde See Dec 15 ■

17 Monday

Marché de Noël At Place de la Libération, Tourrettes-sur-Loup. Tel: 04 93 59 30 11

Marché de Noël des Villes Jumelées See Dec 15

Concerts Syrinx, Bach, Finzi At the cathedral in Vence at 20:00. Tel: 04 93 58 14 26

18 Tuesday

Grand Spectacle de Noël Christmas fundraising event arranged by the Association Les Enfants de Frankie for disadvantaged children. At Espace Fontvieille, Monaco at 18:30. Tel: +377 93 30 08 00

Marché de Noël des Villes Jumelées See Dec 15 ■

St Petersburg Circus on Ice See Dec 15 ■

19 Wednesday

Christmas at the Shepherd and Dog With the Saltmine Theatre Company. Holy Trinity Church, Cannes, 12:30. See Dec 16

Concert Jeunes Interprètes Young musicians perform Bach, Grieg and Gounod at the Opera, Nice. Tel: 04 92 17 40 40

Marché de Noël Contes. See Dec 15

British Association of Monaco Christmas Lunch at the Columbus Hotel, Fontvieille, Monaco. Tel: +377 93 50 19 52

Cinderella CIV school production Tel: 04 92 96 52 24

Yoga Open Day With Danièle Arnould, in Mougins. Tel: 04 93 45 24 65

Noël Provençal Christmas fête in Garbejaire, Sophia-Antipolis. Childrens' craft workshops and face painting, puppet show, clowns and a visit from Father Christmas. 14:00 to 18:00. Tel: 04 93 12 34 50

Concert Exceptionnel 2 Music by Grieg and Mendelssohn at the Nice Opera House. Tel: 04 93 92 30 53

Football: Nice v Strasbourg League Division 2 match at Stade du Ray, Nice at 20:00. Tel: 04 93 84 18 55

20 Thursday

Carol Service At St Hugh's Anglican Church, Avenue de la Résistance, Vence at 18:30. Tel: 04 93 87 19 83

Carol Services Crib Service for infants at 10:30 and Childrens' Carol service at 17:00 at St Paul's Anglican Church, Monaco. See Dec 16

De Palmas Concert at Salle Nikaïa at 20:30

Central booking office, tel: 08 20 02 04 06

Riviera Radio's Charity Auction In aid of Afghan Children's charities, at Stars'n'Bars, Quai Antoine 1er, Monaco. Starts at 19:00. Tel: +377 97 97 94 94

21 Friday

Carol Service At Holy Trinity Church, 11 rue de la Buffa, Nice at 18:30. Tel: 04 93 87 19 83

Christmas Oratoria Concert and Midnight Mass. Performed by the Société de Musique Ancienne de Nice and the Ensemble Pange Lingua de Nice at the Église St François de Paule, opposite the Nice Opera House at 20:30. Tickets cost 70F and 100F. Tel: 04 93 92 30 53

Christmas Festival Including grand parade and the arrival of Father Christmas by helicopter on Dec 22. At Esplanade du Levant, Saint-Laurent-du-Var ■ Dec 24

Right Spirit Gospel music concert in Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Villeneuve-Loubet. Tel: 04 92 02 60 50

Vocal Blues Gospel Music at Église de Vallauris, entry free. Starts at 19:00. Tel: 04 93 63 82 58

Eddy Gaulein-Stef leads a jam session at the Bar-en-Blais, Antibes. See Dec 15

Marie-Paule Belle Sings Barbara at the Palais de l'Europe, Menton at 21:00. Tel: 04 92 41 76 76

Treasure Island The annual Pantomime from the Drama Group of Monaco, written and directed by Ann Batt. At the Salle des Variétés, Monaco. Dec 21 at 20:00, Dec 22 at 15:00 and 20:00, Dec 23 at 15:00. Tel: 06 07 93 80 39 ■ Dec 23



MEMBERS of the Monte-Carlo Ballet in rehearsal for their new production of *La Belle*, which opens on December 27. This new ballet was conceived and choreographed by the company's director, Jean-Christophe Maillot. It is based on the story of *Sleeping Beauty*, but is an adult-orientated version that concentrates on what happens after the Prince wakes her up from her one hundred year sleep. Nice Opera ballet company also has a new production. Their *Romeo and Juliet* opens on December 25 and runs until December 29.

Noël Provençal Christmas festival with market at Chapelle St Esprit, St Vallier de Thiey. Father Christmas visits on Dec 22. Tel: 04 93 42 78 00 ■ Dec 24

22 Saturday

Basketball: Antibes v Dijon in the French national championship. At Espace Jean Bunoz, Antibes at 20:00. Tel: 04 93 34 96 85

Basketball: Monaco v Isère Savoie at Salle Omnisports Gaston Médecin, Stade Louis II, Monaco at 20:00. Tel: +377 93 30 25 65

10th Festival de Chants & Musiques de Noël The first concert in Valdeblore's 10th annual festival of Christmas songs and music. Today's performance is by the Ensemble Vocal de Nice and Pange Lingua & Musique Ancienne de Nice at Église Ste Croix, Valdeblore. Tel: 04 93 23 25 90 ■ Dec 29

Journée Noël des Enfants Day of Christmas activities and festivities for children in Villeneuve Loubet. Tel: 04 92 02 60 50

Crèche Vivante At Église St Grégoire, Tourrettes-sur-Loup. Tel: 04 93 59 31 22

Fête de Noël Christmas Festival at the Salle Rose de Mai, La Colle sur Loup. Father Christmas will be taking children for a train ride through the town, refreshments will be on hand for parents whilst they wait. From 14:00 to 18:00. Tel: 04 93 32 68 36

Marché de Noël Christmas market in Place du Village, St Cezaire sur Siagne from 9:00 to 14:00. Tel: 04 93 60 84 40

Christmas Festival Saint-Laurent-du-Var. See Dec 21

Marché de Noël Contes. See Dec 15

La Chine au pays de Noël Christmas festivities with a Chinese theme at Parc Floral Phoenix, Nice.

Classical Music New Year Concert from the Strauss Festival Orchestra at the Nice Acropolis Tel: 04 93 92 83 00

Football: Monaco v Rennes Premier Division match, Stade Louis II, Monaco at 20:00. Tel: +377 92 05 37 54

The Rémi Abram Quartet At the Bar-en-Blais, Antibes at 20:30. See Dec 15

Noël Provençal Christmas festival with market, entertainment and events in Valbonne old town. Christmas decoration making workshop for kids 10:00 to 12:00 in Place des Arcades, 15:00 to 17:00 at Vallis Bona. Free concert performances by the music school at Vallis Bona at 11:00 and the Place des Arcades at 11:30. Puppet show at 15:30 at Salle Saint-Esprit. Various entertainments, including clowns and jugglers, in the village and Vallis Bona from 14:00 to 21:00. Wine and hot chocolate offered to all at 19:00 in Place des Arcades. Market open 09:00 to 21:00. Tel: 04 93 12 34 50 ■ Dec 24

Grande Parade Multicolore Festivities in Golfe-Juan with musicians and dancers in the streets from 15:00 to 17:00, childrens' procession at 17:00, Father Christmas' procession on his sleigh and mulled wine. In the streets of the town. Tel: 04 93 63 82 58

Noël Provençal St Vallier de Thiey. See Dec 21

Treasure Island See Dec 21

23 Sunday

Carol Service Childrens' presentation, brief message, carols and refreshments at 9:30am at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, The Picard Building, 3030 Chemin de St Bernard, Sophia Antipolis. Tel: 04 92 38 98 91

Carol Service At St John the Evangelist, Avenue Paul Doumer, St Raphael at 18:00. Tel: 04 94 51 16 98

Carol Service Eucharist and bi-lingual carol service at St Michael's Church, 11 Chemin des Myrtes, Beaulieu-sur-Mer at 18:00. Tel: 04 93 01 45 61

Christmas Vigil Service of Light At St Paul's Anglican Church, Monaco at 19:00. See Dec 16

Christmas Candlelight Service At the International Baptist Church, Espace St Clair Commercial Centre, St Paul de Vence at 10:45. Tel: 04 93 77 31 45

Accordion Concert At the church in Biot. Tel: 04 93 65 61 59

Marché de Noël In Place Bellevue, Le Cannet. Tel: 04 93 46 03 47

Marché de Noël Contes. See Dec 15 ■

Noël Provençal Valbonne. Magic workshop for children at 10:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 17:00. Puppet show at 11:00 at Salle Saint-Esprit.

Various entertainments, including clowns and a magician, in the village and Vallis Bona from 14:00. Live band at 16:00. Magic show at 17:00 in Vallis Bona, 18:00 in Place des Arcades. Wine and hot chocolate offered to all at 18:00 in Place des Arcades. Market open 09:00 to 19:00. See Dec 22

Noël Provençal St Vallier de Thiey. See Dec 21

10th Festival de Chants & Musiques de Noël See Dec 22

Christmas Festival Saint-Laurent-du-Var. See Dec 21

Treasure Island See Dec 21 ■

24 Monday

Veillée de Noël Provençal Traditional Provençal evening event with songs, mulled wine and the 13 desserts in Le Bar sur Loup. Tel: 04 93 42 72 21

Crèche Vivante In the square in front of Le Rouret church at 18:30. Tel: 04 93 77 20 02

Crèche Vivante de Noël At Église St-Pierre and Église St-Paul, Cagnes-sur-Mer Tel: 04 93 73 17 32

Spectacle d'Eau & de Lumière Plus a Crèche Vivante, in Haut-de-Cagnes Tel: 04 93 20 61 64

Father Christmas visits Auron. Tel: 04 93 23 02 66

Noël au Pays d'Isola Christmas festival and fireworks at Isola 2000. Tel: 04 93 23 15 15

Noël dans les Rues du Village Christmas Festival in the streets of Breil-sur-Roya, morning only. Tel: 04 93 04 99 76

Vigil Eucharist of the Nativity At St Paul's Anglican Church, Monaco at 23:00. See Dec 16

Midnight Communion At Holy Trinity Church, Cannes at 23:30. See Dec 16

Midnight Mass At Église Saint André, Mougins-Sartoux followed by mulled wine and a chance to taste the 13 desserts in the château. Starts at 11:30

Midnight Mass at Holy Trinity Church, Nice at 23:00. See Dec 21

Noël Provençal Valbonne. Face painting workshop for children at 10:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 17:00. Puppet show at 15:30 at Salle Saint-Esprit. Various entertainments, including clowns and a magician, in the village from 10:00 to 19:00. Prize giving for the best displays of Christmas lights in the old town with wine and hot chocolate offered to all at 17:00 in Place des Arcades. Market open 09:00 to 19:00. See Dec 22

Noël Provençal St Vallier de Thiey. See Dec 21

10th Festival de Chants & Musiques de Noël See Dec 22

Christmas Festival Saint-Laurent-du-Var. See Dec 21 ■

25 Tuesday

Romeo and Juliet Ballet performed by the Nice Opera ballet company. The music, by Prokofiev, is performed by the Nice Philharmonic Orchestra. At the Nice Opera House at 16:00 and at 20:00 on Dec 26-29. Tel: 04 92 17 40 40 ■ Dec 29

Magic and Illusion Show at the Palais des Festivals, Cannes. Tel: 04 92 98 62 77

Morning Eucharist At St Hugh's, Vence at 09:00. See Dec 20

Eucharist At St Michael's Church, Beaulieu-sur-Mer at 10:00. See Dec 23

Morning Eucharist of the Nativity At St Paul's Anglican Church, Monaco at 10:30. See Dec 16

Family Service At Holy Trinity Church, Cannes at 10:30. See Dec 16

Eucharist At St John the Evangelist, Saint Raphael at 10:30. See Dec 23

Sung Eucharist at St John's, Menton at 10:30. See Dec 15

Eucharist At Holy Trinity Church, Nice at 11:00. See Dec 16

10th Festival de Chants & Musiques de Noël See Dec 22

26 Wednesday

17th Nice Open International Chess Tournament at the Radisson Hotel, Nice Tel: 04 93 88 00 01 ■ Dec 30

45th International Star Regatta Baie des Anges, Nice. Tel: 04 93 89 39 78 ■ Dec 30

10th Festival de Chants & Musiques de Noël See Dec 22

Romeo and Juliet See Dec 25

Moscow Circus At Salle Nikaïa, Rte de Grenoble, Nice at 20:30. Tickets from central booking office, www.ticketnet.fr, tel: 08 20 02 04 06 ■ Jan 1

45th International Star Regatta See Dec 26

10th Festival de Chants & Musiques de Noël See Dec 22 ■

17th Nice Open International Chess Tournament See Dec 26

Romeo and Juliet See Dec 25 ■

La Belle See Dec 27

30 Sunday

La Belle See Dec 27

Swing Parade South Jazz concert in Allées de la Liberté, Cannes at 14:30

Récit des Tribus Oméga Dance show with

Castafiore Company at the Palais des Festivals, Cannes at 16:00, plus Dec 31 at 20:30 Tel: 04 92 98 62 77 ■ Dec 31

Moscow Circus See Dec 29

45th International Star Regatta See Dec 26 ■

17th Nice Open International Chess Tournament See Dec 26 ■

17th Nice Open International Chess Tournament See Dec 26 ■

17th Nice Open International Chess Tournament See Dec 26 ■

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riviera sport



The Riviera Gazette

MARATHON MAN... Kenya's Wilson Kibet celebrates as he reaches the finish at Monaco's Stade Louis II, where he set a winning time of 2h 13'54"

Marathon Effort Kenyan takes honours as runners visit three countries

November 25 – On a bright Sunday morning, close to 3,000 runners gathered in the Casino Gardens in Monaco, eager to tackle the only marathon in the World that passes through three different countries.

Most were there to raise money for charity and to face up to a personal challenge. But the world's leading marathon runners were there in force too, motivated by the serious goal of winning a major international race.

The good weather came as an enormous relief to both organisers and runners alike. Bad weather saw last year's event cancelled at the eleventh hour. But this year the sun shone down on a perfect Mediterranean winter's day, giving extra encouragement to the thousands lined up to face over 42 kilometres of hilly running.

From the start at the Casino gardens, the runners headed through the streets of Monaco towards Roquebrune, Menton and the Italian border. On the return, they faced a steep 1,200m climb up Cap Martin before heading back into Monaco along the seafront,

through the road tunnel under the Grand Hotel, around the port, through the tunnel to Fontvieille and, finally, into Stade Louis II for the finish.

In a day that belonged to the Kenyans, Wilson Kibet took the tape in 2h 13'54" and six more of his countrymen made it into the top ten. Hungarian athlete Judith Nagy won the ladies' event in 2h 38'23".

The men's marathon world record is held by Moroccan athlete Khalid Khannouchi, who finished the 1999 Chicago marathon in 2h 5'42".

For this event, a five and a half hour time limit was set for the amateurs. Many didn't make it — but for them, it wasn't the winning but the taking part that counted.



IN THE LONG RUN... after the elite competitors leave, the amateurs race to get under way

WORLD CUP: ENGLAND IN 'GROUP OF DEATH'

No easy ride for England

The England national football team's luck has deserted it. In next summer's 2002 FIFA World Cup, England has yet again drawn a tough group.

Dubbed the 'Group of Death', Group F sees England pitted against Nigeria, Sweden and old nemesis Argentina. Only two teams will go through to the next round.

England-Argentina World Cup matches are never dull. Back in the glory days of English football, 1962 saw England help knock Argentina out in the first round. In 1966, the teams met in the semi-final in a game full of emotion. The match saw Argentina commit numerous fouls and, when the referee sent off captain Antonio Rattin, it took ten minutes and the involvement of FIFA officials to persuade him to leave the pitch. England, of course, came out on top and went on to win the cup.

But the eighties and nineties saw the boot firmly on the other foot.

The 1986 quarter-final clash in Mexico City saw Argentina's Diego Maradona punch the ball past England keeper Peter Shilton to score the infamous 'hand of God' goal. Minutes later, Maradona scored again with one of the most impressive goals the World Cup has ever seen — and England was out.

1998's World Cup saw the teams go into battle again, this time in the second round. Argentina went ahead with a penalty in the fourth minute. Alan Shearer equalized minutes later, again with a penalty. Michael Owen scored next, with the stunning goal that made him an instant international star. Then,

on the stroke of half-time, Argentina scored again to bring the teams level.

The second half saw the early departure of David Beckham. Fouled by Argentine midfielder Diego Simeone, he lost his temper, kicked out and was promptly sent off the field. England's remaining ten-man side could then do no more than hold the score at 2-2 to force a penalty shoot-out. Both sides missed once and then David Batty kicked a weak ball that was easily saved. Argentina's last penalty went in — and England went out.



HAND OF GOD... Argentina's Maradona put England out of the 1986 World Cup

With the inclusion of England coach Sven Goran Eriksson's home country Sweden to the Group F mix, the 'Group of Death' will be the centre of attention when the World Cup Finals kick off on 31st May next year. "We're in the most difficult group. No doubt about that" was Eriksson's stoic response to the news. However, England fans can breathe a little easier – Diego Maradona won't be there. He played his last match just last month, retiring in typical Maradona style by scoring two goals.

2002 FIFA World Cup Draw

Group A France Senegal Uruguay Denmark	Group B Spain Slovenia Paraguay South Africa	Group C Brazil Turkey China Costa Rica	Group D South Korea Poland United States Portugal
Group E Germany Saudi Arabia Ireland Cameroon	Group F Argentina Nigeria England Sweden	Group G Italy Ecuador Croatia Mexico	Group H Japan Belgium Russia Tunisia



TRIUMPHANT... Guy Forget

FRANCE TAKES DAVIS CUP AS ESCUDE HITS TOP FORM

France has avenged its defeat in Nice by Australia in the Davis Cup final of 1999 with a 3-2 win over Australia in Melbourne to lift the Davis Cup for the ninth time.

In a close fought final, it was the form of Frenchman Nicolas Escude and the perennial fitness problems of Patrick Rafter that became the deciding factors.

Day one saw Escude beat Lleyton

Hewitt, the world number one, in five sets, and Rafter putting the teams level again with a three set win over Sebastian Grosjean.

But a re-occurrence of Rafter's old shoulder troubles meant that the Australians had to re-think their plans for day two.

Seeing that Rafter would be unable to get through his scheduled singles match against Escude on day three, Australian captain John Fitzgerald

decided to play him and Hewitt in day two's doubles match rather than using the experienced doubles partnership of Todd Woodbridge and Wayne Arthurs. After storming through the first set, however, their lack of practice together began to show and the star Australian duo lost the match to Cedric Pioline and Fabrice Santoro 2-6 6-3 7-6 6-1.

Australia evened things up again in the first match of day three with a

straight sets win for Lleyton Hewitt over Sebastian Grosjean.

But Wayne Arthurs, no match for the on-form Nicolas Escude, could not fill Rafter's shoes and France took the trophy with a final four set win.

Captain Guy Forget was ecstatic: "When you play in a big match like the one we played in Nice two years ago, you dream about winning and doing well before your family and friends, and in the end you lose.

"Two years later you're back in Australia probably against an even better team on grass and you know your chances are even smaller and in the end you pull off a win, so it's very exciting and very special.

"We lost on clay, now they have lost on grass".

● Rafter announced this week that he would be unable to play in the Australian Open, blaming his continuing fitness problems.