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
International news review

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

**US economy boost**

The US economy is showing signs of turning around. The Federal Reserve says US factories, mines and power plants raked in 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 its Gaziantep-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 attackers attacked the 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 spring charges were freed on bail yesterday. They pledged to return to stand trial in Greece on reduced misdemeanour charges on bail of €1,463.71 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 $15,000. 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. Rani威尔拉姆斯在安卡拉担任总理。

**China joins World Trade Organisation**

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**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, 68.

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The Riviera Gazette

15 December 2001

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ISN winter fete hits a high note

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.

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 Pénétrante 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.

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National News

Chirac leads presidential race by 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% of votes in the first round whilst Jospin would have gained 22%.

Left-wing interior minister Jean-Pierre Chevenement is in third position with 12%. He is closely followed by the far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in fourth place.

Behind them, with an equal share of the poll, come the veteran far-left candidate Arlette Laguiller, Communist party chairman Robert Hue and Noel Mamere of the Green party, all with 8%.

Centrist Francois Bayrou follows with 4%. Free-marxist Alain Madelin of Liberal Democracy has 3% and Gaulist heavyweight Charles Pasqua has a 2% share.

Bruno Mestre 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 as French citizens.

60,000 Army veterans and a further 25,000 recipients of military invalidity benefits (PDI) 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.

The value of their pensions was frozen when their countries gained independence from France, but they will now seek back-pay.

French veterans receive a F2,800 a year pension top-up; military invalidity benefit averages F30,000 a year.

Afghan security force to include all EU member states

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 canvas 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 Valery Giscard d’Estaing is considered a favourite for the role.

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 partake 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 incorpo-rate 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 halt a guerrilla war”.

A small British military reconnaissance team will fly out to Kabul for an early scouting mission this week-end.

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 extra-judicial 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 to be born.

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

The decision confirms a landmark ruling last year, known as the Perrache 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 were 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 Perrache judgment was announced.

Torturer ‘to get fine not jail’

French prosecutors have called for a F15,245 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 80% share of the world’s 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 eco-nomic benefit to the region that is needed now 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 unilater-al basis, saying there was a risk to human health and there is a medical risk. If France does not now lift its ban, it will face further legal actions which could lead to substan-tial 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 Paris. Following his extradition in mid-November, Arce Montes, 51, has been held in ‘provision-al 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 monitors 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 €5,000, and collect three penalty points on their licence. In tunnels, the maximum fine rises to €24,600 – 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 charming taste of the nation’s drinkers is good news for Côtes de Provence. Of the 18,900 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 to and from 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 tunnel is now ‘no-slow’ and all 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.

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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.

Tourist complex boost for Ventimiglia

THE GREAT French jobs experiment is falling short of targets, is extremely costly, developers competitive- ness and does not tackle the fundamental prob- lem of long-term, struc- tural unemployment. Cuts must be made if France is to achieve its “zero-zone stability com- mitment of balancing the budget in 2004. That’s the conclusion reached by authors of a hard-hitting report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

It says that the country’s employment programme cost 130 billion francs last year, the 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 win- ning power, its employ- ment programme has had two main facets. The first is the reduction of the work- ing week from 39 hours to 35 hours. The second is a job creation scheme focused on the young.

The same polls are expected to remain central to the government’s mani- festo for its 2002 re-election campaign.

Whilst the government has had some success in reducing unemployment, the latest figures show that the figure has fallen from 12.6% in 1997 to around 9%, the OECD maintains that it has been greatly helped in this

THE ARSON trial of Bernard Bonnet, the for- mer 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 Prefet to face criminal charges since World War II.

He is accused of ordering police to burn down an ille- legally-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 toiasco 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. On trial are also the five gendarmes, his command- er Colonel Henri Mazères and Bonnet’s Cabinet Director Gerald Pardini. They have all admitted their role in the attack but claim they were acting under orders from the Governor. Bonnet denies the charges.

The Governor was appointed Prefet of Corsica after the murder of his predecessor Claude Fringin in February 1998.

In his first year he ordered the destruction of 50 jetty- built beach restaurants, known as ‘Paluotes’ 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 follow- ing month and the case finally came to trial in November this year. He faces a maximum penalty of ten years in jail.

The Fair 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 maki- ng 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.

War graves stand in way of third Paris airport

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

“Nothing will happen without Britain’s agreement,” said a French spokesman.

The announcement of the choice of Chalaisnes, 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 soldiers who were killed on a section of the Somme bat- tlefield lie in war cemeteries on or around the loca- tion of the planned airport.

For it to go ahead as cur- rently planned, sixty six of the Commonwealth sold- iers killed at the Somme during World War I would have to be exhumed.

Cemeteries...60 graves need to be moved

Twenty-five of them are in London, junior defence minister Lewis Moosnie 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 grave- yards from World War I

The Riveria Gazette 15 December 2001

Employment programme ‘off target’

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Everybody Out

New wave of strikes and protests hits France

The introduction of the euro and the 35-hour week, plus an earlyASTERisking for position and show of strength prior to the elections in April next year, has led to a wave of strikes, demonstrations and go-slow 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:

BAKERS 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 euro to the franc. 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 “have no link to the euro” talks with the unions over changeover from the franc into negotiations with manufacturers’ union, has called a strike.

POLICE A month-long series of demonstrations by police has helped them win a 690-98 million funding package to improve pay and increase compensation payments.

Now the garnedmers 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 signals, demanding an in basic pay, went on a series of strikes.

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

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

COLLEGES AND LYCEES 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 hundred and draped anchovy fishermen gathered on the seafront in Saint-Nazaire to protest against the presence of Spanish fishermen in the Gulf of Gascogne. The incensed fishermen burned tyres and wooden palettes and overturned several tonne anchors 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 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 32 hours of overtime a year, and they want to keep that special status.

UNEMPLOYED The government has agreed to re-instate the traditional “prime de Noël” Christmas bonus for those on low incomes after 350 unemploy- ed took to the streets of Marseille in late November to protest against its loss.

TRUFFLE TROUBLE . . . dry weather means prices are rocketing

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 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 testing its smoothness and texture and making sure that there is no sediment – or a resid- ual of sediment.

The first picking date is also strictly stipulated. Harvesting must not begin until after November 15th. “Nicous 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 comes from fruit picked in February and March.”

AOC olive oil is expected to sell at between F75 and F95 for a litre bottle, with carton of olive oil will be between F15 and F25.

First AOC olives arrive

A black year for truffles

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 will be lucky to get fifteen tonnes.

At the root of the problem, they say, is the dry weather this year that affect- ed 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, 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. Small restaurateurs, worried that their customers won’t pay the prices they will need to charge, may simply leave them off the menu.

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 Fayneve 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 hotel project, which will bring 400 jobs, has the full sup- port of local councils. Thirty of the one hundred luxury building plots have been sold. One buyer has purchased three adjacent plots and will build 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 Orchestre 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 6,300 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 Fish & Chips 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 Etienne 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. The body 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- ring the sea view and blocking beach access. The barricade is part of a move to prevent the river Tille because of a 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 police 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 language, art, computing and teaching to adults and children aged seven and over.

Sculpting, photography and painting classes are also held. Lessons are given by professional teachers, musi- cians and artists. The academy, on the route du Pont de Pierre, is open six days a week.
Got any spare change, guv?

Train to collect tonnes of centimes for charity

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 usefully 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.

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 euros as possible very seriously.

Schools, associations, sports clubs and other groups are 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 organisng a fund raising event should contact Nice-Présence on 04 93 85 38 50 or visit the charity’s website at www.piecesjaunes.com.

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-Médécin 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 on the approval of Marks and Spencer’s management and workers. Although Galeries Lafayette said 1,500 workers would be retained, stores were temporarily 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.

Valérie Delpech, 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 Delpech 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 Extrapolé this week has changed all that.

With 2,400 square metres of floor space on the corner of avenue Jean-Médécin and rue Marechal-Joffre, the new store 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-Noël Reinhardt, head of Virgin France, as its new chief executive at the start of the year.

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

Extrapolé will open today, December 15.

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 new line to allow the TER train service to be increased to one 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 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.”

Port extension: “Build it in Toulon”

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 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.

Bottle-necks on roads leading to the RN7 and the A8 meant the displaced traffic created long tail-backs, 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 coast line with enough force to 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.
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 F$97,000 whilst Nice is spending a staggering F$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 criche 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.

’Criches vivantes,’ 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 reindeer. 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 Criche in Mougins are ready for visitors. Antibes’ Fetes de fin d’année celebrates have also kicked off with the opening of the ice rink in Place De Gaulle. 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 Oratorio de Noel at the Eglise St Francois-de-Paule, opposite the Opera, in Nice on December 23. 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 Eglise 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 traditional songs and stories in the old Provençal language.

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…
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 Provencal 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 service 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 in Vence has its carol service on December 20 and there is a Children’s Carol Service at 5pm at St Paul’s, Monaco.

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 traditional 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.

Fear not, we know just where to find your old favourites.
Commen sting local couple

An elderly Cannes couple were tricked out of 340,000 francs by a con artist pretending to be art experts, it was revealed this week. The couple, both 75, could not 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 exhibition at Cannes palace. The next day an amateur collector called at their home and, during chat, said he needed a value for some small jade statues.

They called the elderly 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 had been held by customs at Gatwick 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 after 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 winter is getting wetter – and it is official. Long spells of heavy winter rain are now more frequent, according to 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.

As winter rain has increased, the number of days with a temperature of below zero has fallen by 20%. The overall amount of rain has increased by 20%.

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 former 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 even on official business. US policemen are refusing to drive fast to 911 calls — sparking fears of tax hikes.

“Here in Beauleieu the rate is only 10%. In Nice, it is 22.59%,” said M. Vincenti, mayor of Nice. “In Beauleieu the rate will be lower than that, 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 ‘agglomérations’ 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 existing agreement formal. It would have been known as the "Payes des Trois Corniches". Instead, half will join Nice and the others will join one of several groupings for rural areas that, along with a possible new conurbation including Cannes and Grasse, will eventually cover all communes of the Alpes-Maritimes.

Goals

The Préfecture says the matter is now closed. “The law says that if two thirds of the councilors of the towns involved say yes they represent over 50% of the population, then the plan is passed,” said M. Duoumey, 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 cooperate with each other, to share competencies and strategies.

Fight

But when The Riviera Gazette broke the news to M. Vintcenti that the final approval had been given 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 and we are already happily married.”

A series of demonstrations against the shake-up, starting in Menton today, is 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 over 14 member towns, and the Riviera Française, a new conglomeration made up of Menton, Roquebrune Cap-Martin, Beaulieu and the towns of 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.

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

Growing Pains

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.

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.

Stars shine at the Antibea

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 Antibea 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.

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 €30 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

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 spirit and make the most of your social scene between the 7th and 18th. You will be delighted by what's on offer.

Beguiling 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 true emotions. Golden choices are in the wind, especially with exciting Mars and money-making Jupiter highlighting your wishes. For seven reasons, the seasonal celebrations will strengthen your hopes.

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CAPRICORN

21 December–19 January

If you are single, you should widen your social scene, because A combination of planets could tempt you to force personal or romantic encounters are likely around the 7th, 15th and 18th. If you want results, push your skills and talents. The solution to Quick Crossword No. 10,000 will be found in the next issue.

SOLUCTIONS TO PUZZLE

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

PISCES

20 January–18 February

December 2001

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CANCER

19 February–20 March

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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. It’s 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”.

Thousands of kids appear at Magic Festival

WHEELY GREAT DAY OUT … many made the most of the weekend to get their first taste of the thrills and spills of motor racing
The long-awaited Harry Potter movie has arrived – in English. The book and film phenomenon opened its English language season at the Cinéma Sporting in Monte-Carlo last week and is expected to arrive in the region's other major VO (version originale) movie houses over the Christmas holiday period. "The Rings of the North" 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.

In 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 in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Nice. Next to arrive is the Moscow Circus on 28 December for a four day run at the Salle Nikita in Nice. Finally, the 26th International Festival of 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 Sainte-Catherine. The place of honour goes to the famous chef Jacques Chibois. Traders are expected to make some fifty kiosks 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-Raphael's Place Coulet 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 festivities for the region’s fans. First off, beginning on January 13 is the 7th Monte-Carlo Auto Racing Rally. It is also the second 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 cars of a bygone era. Further information on both rallies can be obtained from the Automobile Club de 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 sport courses at various schools in the Nice area. 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.

Some of the world's premier chess players will be in Nice from 22 December for the 17th Nice Open International Chess Tournamnet. Grand masters and local players will compete for the prestigious title at the Radisson Hotel on the Promenade des Anglais. Echiquier Nice, the 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 side recently won the Ladies' European Championship and were runners-up in the Men's. Both teams include local players. Echiquier Nice 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 opens 23 December. 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.

The Riviera Gazette’s comprehensive diary listings... You need never miss out again with The Riviera Gazette’s comprehensive diary listings... you have only heard about something after the event?... What’s on the month

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...
MEMBERS of the Monte-Carlo Ballet in rehearsal for their performance 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, first written by Charles Perrault, and was first performed by Lily Gaspard in 1820.


declined to perform. The other children will be heard from in the next issue. 

Charlotte and is performed by the Nice Philharmonic Orchestra. A. Ouvertures performed by the nice Philharmonic Orchestra at the Opéra Nice on 18:00 at 20:00. Tel: 03 18 13 90 23. See Dec 27. 

15 Thursday Carol Services at St Hugh’s Anglican Church, Monaco at 19:00. See Dec 16. 

16 Friday Concert at the Salle des Variétés, Monaco. Tel: 02 14 09 90 40. See Dec 19. 

30 Sunday Champagne Gala performance by the Ballet of the Opéra de Nice at the Opera House at 19:00. Tel: 04 93 17 47 40. See Dec 26. 

31 Monday Riviera Gospel Choir, Monaco from 21:00 to 24:00. See Dec 26. 

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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 winners miss the time limit for the amateurs. Many didn’t make it — but for them, it wasn’t the winning but the taking part that counted.

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.

The Riviera Gazette