SAINT BLAZE

Kids playing with matches blamed as fire rips through St Blaise conservation area

Two children playing with matches have been blamed for starting a fire that destroyed 130 hectares – 320 acres – of a conservation area at St Blaise last weekend.

Although the main blaze has been brought under control, small fires are still breaking out in the tinder-dry undergrowth.

St Blaise resident Brian McDowell told The Gazette: "We were terrified – we’d been out for the afternoon and left our dog in the house. We rushed back and saw the fire was raging only 50 metres away. The firemen told us we’d have to leave the house and 12 families nearby were evacuated.

"The valley below the house used to be spectacular, but it’s now just a black charred scar. The pompies are still here keeping the smaller fires under control."

By JENNY PAUL

“All week the water bombers have been flying at what feels like about ten feet above our house. It has all been very upsetting.”

The forest had been deemed a conservation area as it was home to many rare insects and plants. The area was in the news earlier this year as activists campaigned against plans to route a fast road link between Nice and Digne through it. The proposal, backed by the prefecture and the government, was scrapped as a result of residents’ protests that the road would destroy the local environment. It remains to be seen if the plans are revisited now that the site has been razed to the ground.

Six hectares of forest also went up in smoke between Frejus and Mandelieu last week. 180 fire fighters with 50 vehicles battled the blaze for more than four hours, hampered by a strong wind. The Var, hit hard by the current drought, is on high alert for forest fires, and many rural roads are closed.

19,000 copies this week – and 585,000 since The Gazette went weekly. Look for the next issue on Thursday July 17

In Cannes and Nice on July 14, 15, 16 and 17

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150 shops packed with huge savings on famous name brands await you just 225 kilometres from Nice.

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FRANCE WOOS USA

Nation tries to patch up war ‘misunderstanding’

FRANCE went on a national charm offensive on Friday as Fourth of July celebrations took place across the country in a bid to cement the French ready to do them, and tense US-Mexico relations go back after the war.

Mike Myers, former US Secretary of State, has been keen to do his bit to rebuild bridges at an official Independence Day reception at the Palace. His Majesty, held for Philip Jones, Louisiana’s Minister of Culture, Leisure and Tourism. ‘Today is the 4th of July and there is between the US and France a misunderstanding. French people really love America and now everybody wants to put this behind them and continue our good relations,’ he told The Riviera Gazette.

Philip Myers, also quick to dismiss talk of a long-term problem, said: ‘Americans are reluctant to travel at the moment for lots of reasons. The economy, the aftermath of 9/11 and the strong euro have all combined to keep more Americans at home,’ he explained.

Independence Day has always had a special meaning for me. My family fought in the Civil War and my family goes back – they arrived in America in the early 17th century, with Sir Walter Raleigh in search of gold,’ said Mr Jones. ‘We love America and our country could have a ‘presence’ in post-war Iraq despite the strain in relations caused by Paris’ opposition to the US-led war against Baghdad. ‘Speaking in an interview published Tuesday in La Provence, ambassador Howard Leach said Washington wanted an international presence in Iraq to keep the peace. ‘Independence day has always had a special meaning for me. My family fought in the Civil War and my family goes back – they arrived in America in the early 17th century, with Sir Walter Raleigh in search of gold,’ said Mr Jones. ‘We love America and our country could have a ‘presence’ in post-war Iraq despite the strain in relations caused by Paris’ opposition to the US-led war against Baghdad. ‘Speaking in an interview published Tuesday in La Provence, ambassador Howard Leach said Washington wanted an international presence in Iraq to keep the peace.

French may go to Iraq

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Birthdays

In Monaco, those with US connections spent the evening flitting between two glittering parties. Sports bar Stars’n’Bars, an American home from home on the Riviera, threw a huge party to celebrate its tenth birthday, while Nevada USA – a club for Americans and ‘Friends of America’ – had its Fourth of July bash at Cap d’Ail.

Reception . . . Philip Jones, left, and Jacques Peyrat, centre, were upbeat about the Franco-American relationship.

JEDI SPOTTED IN CAFE

STAR WARS actor Liam Neeson was spotted relaxing in St Tropez with his family last week. The Ulsterman was seen at Club 55 on Pampelonne beach and in La Claire Fontaine cafe in the La Garde Freinet. Jerry Hall could also be seen strolling along the beach as she enjoyed a sunshine break in the town to celebrate her 47th birthday. The Texan model has always loved the area as she was first talent-spotted there over 20 years ago.

FEELING GROOVY . . . Stars’n’Bars boss Kate Powers partied the night away with hundreds of guests to mark the restaurant’s tenth birthday.

ASSASSIN CAUGHT

The suspected killer of Corissan prefect Claude Erginac, gunned down in 1998, was arrested last week in a remote farm-house in Corsica by police disguised as ramblers. Yvan Colonna, who had been on the run for four years, has been charged with murder.

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Wot a generous LOT, part II

So many of you entered last month’s competition that our friends at LOT Polish Airlines have come up with another pair of tickets to Warsaw to give away to a lucky Gazette reader...

Hyatt Regency in Warsaw, 19th Night Notre Dame, Coca 47, 00300 Rapport

Do in-be with a chance of winning a pair of return tickets to Warsaw, simply answer the following question: If you were flying to Warsaw this week, would it be more appropriate to pack shorts and a tee shirt or a thick overcoat and gloves? Email your answer and your name and address to层新inatix.wwwwww.com, or post it ‘A fancy weekend in Warsaw’. The Riviera Gazette, 73 Rue Notre Dame, Cds 47, 00300 Rapport

For a pair to arrive by July 22, when the first correct entry out of the editor’s commodious cramp box will win.

Your breast bet

HORSE racing commentators in Britain are staking themselves for controversy if a French horse called ‘Big Tish’ ever competes in the UK.

The three-year-old filly made her racing debut in the Prix des Favourites at Longchamps last week.

Police in France have charged two men with English names who are connected with the British Jockey Club and vice versa – a procedure to ensure that no rude or embarrassing names get approved by either authority. However, Big Tish somehow slipped through unnoticed.

As the mare has already run in France, it seems unlikely that the Jockey Club will do anything about her unusual name if a decision was made to run her in the UK.

IRISH MEN JAILED

INTERPOL are being prepared for three Belfast men who have been imprisoned for six months in Lille after a fight outside a nightclub involving supporters of French right-wing politician Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The men were part of a party from the Somme Association who travelled to France last week for the Battle of the Somme commemorations.

Belfast city councillor Billy Hutchinson, who was also in France for the commemorations said: ‘These men were in the wrong place at the wrong time. It is an absolute nightmare.’

French may go to Iraq

The US ambassador to France has suggested the country could have a ‘presence’ in post-war Iraq despite the strain in relations caused by Paris’ opposition to the US-led war against Baghdad.

Speaking in an interview published Tuesday in La Provence, ambassador Howard Leach said Washington wanted an international presence in Iraq to keep the peace.

Happy birthday

THEI first test-tube baby to be born outside Paris celebrated his 20th birthday last week.

Nice-born Nicolas Trevisi was the tenth in vitro baby to be born in France.

News
French experts are afraid that the language is being left behind as English takes over as the primary tongue in Europe.

And within EU affairs there are signs of this happening. In June, French army generals leading the multi-national EU peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo had no hesitation in naming English as the working language of their Paris-based headquarters.

English has long been the language of international trade and business and the trend is being reinforced by the fact that it dominates some 80 per cent of the internet.

“The survival of our culture is at stake. It is a life or death matter,” Jacques Viot, head of the Alliance Francaise agency which promotes French abroad, told a public debate in Paris last week after a US senator referred to French as a “near-forgotten language.”

While French and English are the only two world languages with solid roots on five continents, the economic and political might of the US has played a major role as the most desirable language to have as a second tongue.

The British American Tobacco firm the Magna-Cours circuit, the venue for the 90th Tour de France on Monday. Gazette reader Cooke, pictured above, won the second stage of the race.

NICE People, the Nice-based studios robbed whilst the show was still on air. The show, which uses cameras to constantly monitor contestants while they sleep, eat and shower was robbed of hi-fi and video equipment.

In a bizarre twist the studio’s security cameras were not plugged in, allowing the thieves to sneak in and out unnoticed. The crooks didn’t get into the ‘house’ where the contestants were living, but the team managed to overturn the order before the race. However, BAR’s two drivers, Jacques Villeneuve and Jenson Button, were forced to miss Friday morning’s opening practice session.

The move will affect tourists from non-European countries who will now have to apply for their visas at their local French consulate or embassy. The law will come into force at the end of the year.

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BAR cars grabbed

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Non-EU nationals will have to apply in person for their visas at their local French consulate or embassy. The law will not affect EU citizens and American or Japanese passport holders.

Applicants’ fingerprints will be held in a databank in Paris, allowing officials to easily identify overstayers and those without legal papers.

French dying out

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**Byebye ITV?**

RIVERA residents who use ‘free to view’ or FTV cards to watch UK satellite broadcasts may soon find themselves completely locked out after BSkyB, the company that controls the Sky network, is issuing new access cards to its seven million subscribers and all old cards – including FTV cards – will stop working. Replacement FTV cards will not be issued, leaving viewers high and dry. The cost of issuing FTV cards has so far been met by the BBC, but from today all the BBC’s channels will broadcast ‘in the clear’ so no card will be needed. The side effect for FTV card users is that as the BBC is no longer paying for them, they will be discontinued. It is likely that Channel 4 and Five will follow the BBC’s lead and broadcast ‘in the clear’ from next year. Five renewed its broadcast agreement with BSkyB, and the company is issuing new access cards to its seven million subscribers and all old cards – including FTV cards – will stop working.

A RARE blue tree frog was found in a garden at Beaulieu-sur-Mer last weekend, writes Jenny Paul. The normally bright green frog’s skin turned blue due to a genetic abnormality, experts believe. "Tree-frogs are found all over the planet in a variety of vivid colours, although blue does seem rather unusual. But if you spot one in your garden don’t touch it – they have a delicate but toxic skin," Brian Roberts of the London Natural History Museum’s amphibian section told The Riviera Gazette.

"An interesting characteristic of tree-frogs is their ability to change colour, a mechanism that, as with lizards, is more a function of temperature and mood than camouflage. The usual green can become grey, brown or yellow, and spots may even appear." There are five European sub-species. Malees can be distinguished by their darker throats, usually smoky grey or yellow-brown. Adults live in trees, bushes or tall grass, having sticky pads at the ends of their digits to help them cling on. They are often found some distance from water, even in deep water. However, John Kershaw of Marineland told The Riviera Gazette that it may not have been such a good idea. "Dolphins often get washed up for a reason. They are usually ill. People think they are babies when they are just a smaller species of dolphin that is sick. Dolphins know all about abnormality, experts believe. "It’s a tricky area so the best thing is to contact the fire service who will get in touch with a dolphin expert. They can then come out and help out."

**TOXIC FROG SYNDROME... don’t kiss this frog – he won’t turn into a handsome prince**

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For more information on this or other tax planning and asset protection matters, please contact us.

The information provided in this article does not constitute advice and no responsibility will be accepted for any loss occasioned directly or indirectly as a result of actions, or refraining from acting, wholly or partially in reliance upon it.

**FRENCH PROPERTY: MAXIMISE YOUR INVESTMENT**

According to a recent survey, half a million Britons own property in France. The overseas property market is thriving and the Côte d’Azur’s average price of property is now €460,000 – an increase of 50 per cent over the past two years. Stock market uncertainties have made property an attractive option. But the way in which you purchase your property can have long lasting financial implications, so thoroughly research your options before you buy. Purchasing property overseas may increase your liability to capital gains tax, inheritance tax or both, leaving you with an unexpectedly high tax bill.

To maximise your investment, using a legal expert to purchase high value properties could reduce or even avoid these tax pitfalls. The correct ownership may also provide other benefits including savings on legal fees, transfer taxes, value added taxes and stamp duties on any future sales.

**Capitaux gains tax**

Unless you have owned the property for over 22 years, French capital gains tax is payable regardless of your country of residence and is charged for direct ownership or the sale of shares in a property based entity at up to 23.3 per cent less relief after two years.

To put this into perspective, a property on the Côte d’Azur purchased two years ago for €250,000 may well now be worth over €500,000. If you sell the property this would yield a profit of €250,000 but also a capital gains tax bill of approximately €138,000.

**Buying through a structure, however, may mean you can avoid paying capital gains. Under a legal French entity held in a Luxembourg SARL (a special type of company combining the commercial and holding benefits of Luxembourg’s tax treaties), the property is said through the transfer of shares. This means the capital gain is in Luxembourg where there is currently no tax.**

**Inheritance tax**

Inheritance tax in France is charged at up to 60 per cent, depending on the relationship between the deceased and the beneficiary. This is payable regardless of the residency of the owner of the property.

As a company never dies, this tax can normally be avoided with the correct legal entity ownership structure. This may also provide additional planning opportunities for the eventual transfer of the ownership – through a discretionary trust, for example.

**Petititional tax**

This is an annual three per cent tax applicable to French and foreign companies owning real estate in France, where there is no tax treaty and the appropriate declarations have not been made. The charge means that more traditional property holding structures using offshore companies are not recommended, Luxembourg, however, has signed a tax treaty with France permitting an exemption from this charge. So purchasing property through the Luxembourg SARL structure detailed above will avoid this charge.

**Get advice**

Be aware of the tax implications of purchasing property overseas and get advice if you would like more information on this or other tax planning and asset protection matters, please contact us.

The Riviera Gazette

Thursday 10 July 2003

**TAXING ISSUES**

Since the Rth, Sovereign has helped thousands of individuals and companies to protect and maximise their assets and reduce their tax exposure. In a rapidly changing world you need the resources and support of a global organisation to ensure you receive the highest returns possible.

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**UPDATE**

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A RARE blue tree frog was found in a garden at Beaulieu-sur-Mer last weekend, writes Jenny Paul. The normally bright green frog’s skin turned blue due to a genetic abnormality, experts believe. "Tree-frogs are found all over the planet in a variety of vivid colours, although blue does seem rather unusual. But if you spot one in your garden don’t touch it – they have a delicate but toxic skin," Brian Roberts of the London Natural History Museum’s amphibian section told The Riviera Gazette.

"An interesting characteristic of tree-frogs is their ability to change colour, a mechanism that, as with lizards, is more a function of temperature and mood than camouflage. The usual green can become grey, brown or yellow, and spots may even appear."

There are five European sub-species. Malees can be distinguished by their darker throats, usually smoky grey or yellow-brown. Adults live in trees, bushes or tall grass, having sticky pads at the ends of their digits to help them cling on. They are often found some distance from water, even in deep water. However, John Kershaw of Marineland told The Riviera Gazette that it may not have been such a good idea. "Dolphins often get washed up for a reason. They are usually ill. People think they are babies when they are just a smaller species of dolphin that is sick. Dolphins know all about abnormality, experts believe. "It’s a tricky area so the best thing is to contact the fire service who will get in touch with a dolphin expert. They can then come out and help out."

For more information on this or other tax planning and asset protection matters, please contact us.
I was an airline pilot 35 years ago when I first went to work for St Tropez. As I was flying in I was struck by the beautiful scenes, and later in the day by the fine wine and cool music. So I said to my self one day, I will come and live on the Côte d’Azur.

In the meantime I’d always loved yachts — when I was a teenager I captained a yacht all the way from Hamble in the UK to the Caribbean.

In 1969 I started building boats by converting a MFV, a fishing boat with a motor. People liked it but wanted it to be built out of more modern materials, so it quickly became less of a hobby and more of a large business concern.

Eventually I employed 240 people and won the Queen’s Award for Export.

I resigned completely from flying and concentrated on the business until 1980, when I came to live in the south of France to start a new life.

I began by captaining a 75 foot motor yacht with my wife and his crew. We eventually ended up with a fleet of eight vessels and 60 crew and on the odd occasion I was able to take one of the yachts to St Tropez and realise my old dream.

In 1989 I started building boats by concentrating on the business until 5 years ago when we became the official Feretti importer for France.

The business developed in the 80s and 90s and moved more into yachting and management, then later into brokerage, until five years ago when we became the official Feretti importer for France.

We are soon opening an office in London, the official Feretti importer for France.

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Charles Cermolacce's sculptures go on display today at Vallonnet's Tourrettes-sur-Loup. The exhibition is open between 15:30 and 19:00, except on Mondays, when it is closed. T el: 04 93 12 32 30.

An exhibition of photographs by Lucien Clergue starts today at the Espace Malmaison in Cannes, and runs until September 28. Opening hours are 11:00 to 20:00 Monday to Saturday. T el: 04 97 04 64 40.

The annual light and music show over the Festival offire Loup at the Clos de la Garoupe (Sainte Luc de la Guerre) in Gourdon starts today until August 19. This year's theme is gypsy music and fireworks competition runs from today until August 27. T el: 04 97 06 44 90.

The Institute of antiques fair goes on display today in La Ribaute. The exhibition lasts all summer and includes a number of portraits and nudes of his family and friends. Opening hours are 11:00 to 20:00 Monday and entrance is €4. T el: 04 97 04 64 40.

The first international accordion festival is being held in the village of St Jeannet in the Place du Théâtre. There will be concerts every evening at 19:30 until Saturday. T el: 04 99 99 68 88 after 15:00.

The Haut de Cagnes antiques fair will be open each day until Monday in the town's main square. T el: 04 93 22 19 24.

The Running Birds is performing at Monaco's Grimaldi Forum at 21:00 in place de la Batterie. T el: 04 93 01 02 21.

The closing of photos of Picasso by Lucien Clergue starts today at the Espace Malmaison in Cannes, and runs until September 28. Entrance is €4. Opening hours are 11:00 to 20:00 daily except Mondays. T el: 04 97 04 64 40.

The opening of the Cannes Malmaison Picasso - Travels in Friendship exhibition is at 19:00. The show goes on until September 28 and includes a number of portraits of his family and friends. Opening hours are 11:00 to 20:00 Monday and entrance is €4. T el: 04 97 04 64 40.

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