



To benefit the Village Dans l'intérêt du Village

November 2012

2012

A poor season

President's word

Our season can be roughly divided into three parts.

April, May and June attract mature visitors, especially from Scandinavia - but there are a lot from Britain as well.

July and August are the French months. It seems as though the whole world descends on the Midi. It is school holiday time, and all self-respecting French families pack up and come away for up to a month.

September and October are the months for the northern European 'snow geese' or 'wrinklies'. Normally they flock down anxious to get the best out of the sunshine without the bedlam of the main season.

But this year it didn't happen.

Overall we estimate that there was a shortfall in visitor numbers of about 20%.

Early in the season the port restaurants were struggling - only a third full on a good day. Things picked up when the French arrived, but there were no delays in getting a table. One restaurant, the Delices d'Oc actually went out of business in the last week of June!

The late season extended this year thanks to some very welcome sunshine, and bad weather 'up north'.

Overall we suffered along with the seasonal traders, but MH is not a profit making entity on which a family depends. It does mean, however that our annual donation to help the less well off in the village has had to be cut. This year we shall present our cheque for only 300€.

Better than nothing!

Patricia

The Boulevard Hotel & Restaurant - and Cafe



We have lost the Boulevard restaurant for at least six months, and the Hotel for ever! The cafe is continuing for the time being at least.

So what is going on?

Actually for the price of doing without for a whole winter we shall end up with a sparkling new Boulevard Restaurant, hopefully in mid-April.

Three main factors have contributed to the decisions.

The hotel had to close because new regulations required the installation of fire escapes and a lift.

This cleared space, we believe, for two letting apartments, which would also create a builders' mess that would permeate the whole building.

Thus the restaurant would need a face lift - so an opportunity to re-design.

Thirdly the freehold was bought by someone who wanted to ensure that there would continue to be a restaurant in the village centre. S/he gave new leases to the two occupants of the cafe and restaurant/hotel.

The cafe has not closed, but presumably will require little more than a redecoration. Time will tell.

Web Manager Wanted

Can anyone take on the job of managing our web site? Or does anyone know somebody we could approach? There is little to do - basically all we need is somebody to upload our Newsletters three time a year. Help!

MH Results

The year was not a good one, as Patricia has explained, and so we saw a fall in overall results. Inevitable because we rely on the Village to attract visitors.

The absence of many can be explained by the activity that was fully covered on TV. The Jubilee, the Euro Football, the Olympics and the Paralympics - plus the financial situation must have encouraged many to holiday at home.

Nevertheless we have managed to achieve respectable results: nearly a thousand visited our Centre, another 785 took our village tour, we mounted 35 tours (a record) and our sponsors and membership remained consistent at 17 and 32.

We sold 41 books and exchanged 191. Our internet usage fell with the number of WiFi sites that are now available - although we did well with the printing of boarding passes. (We undercut the airport by 75%!)

Our arrangement with the hotel barge Athos continued and we took over 100 of their guests on 11 village tours.

In the end, however, we have been able to donate 300€ to charity, so altogether a satisfactory year in the circumstances.

Trees on the Canal du Midi

Work is now proceeding apace on the felling of the lovely plane trees that line the banks of the Canal du Midi.

Contrary to belief these only date to the beginning of the 20th century - but they will be sadly missed.

They will be replaced, of course - their roots help to stabilise the banks - but the plan is to plant different reaches with different trees to provide some variety.

The whole process is expected to take over 20 years, however, but the World Heritage recognition is being maintained despite fears it would be lost.

The felling process uses some massive machinery. The trees are felled in eight foot lengths by a machine that reaches high and clamps onto the trunk. Then a circular saw makes short work of the trunk and the cut lengths are placed in a lorry and taken away for burning.

The New Roundabout

The new roundabout is six months old and one wonders at the competence of whoever designed it. The roundabout occupies a disproportionate amount of the space available resulting in carriageways that are too narrow for the big traffic that has to transverse the village.

The photo shows how vehicles that exit avenue Chassefière have a very tight swing and how the traffic has knocked down the fence posts that are supposed to protect pedestrians. (Two sets have been demolished - but they must be replaced for safety.)

No signposts have been provided and no pedestrian crossings! As an afterthought some silver studs were put across the roads but these are virtually invisible to drivers and so are useless.

The kerbs are some seven inches high and the dropped parts are two inches proud of the road surface. Mothers and the hand-capped have a very hard time when they want to cross the road!



Taxis fined for Spanish pick-ups

Taxi drivers in Perpignan have threatened to form a blockade at the Franco-Spanish border after drivers were fined heavily for picking up passengers in Spain.

An estimated 60 taxi drivers have demonstrated in Perpignan against fines of more than 1,000€ which have been levied by the Spanish authorities against two drivers who took passengers into Spain and then collected them later for their return to France.

The taxi drivers maintain that cross-border fares are legal under European law - especially for prior bookings. They have asked for more clarity on the issue from the Catalan and French authorities.

VAT

There are also problems with the Value Added Taxes levied by Spain and France.

With France charging a far higher rate than Spain's 4.1% for some projects Spanish builders have been crossing the border and working many kilometres inside France.

Talks are taking place to reconcile the issues raised by the taxi drivers and builders. It is hard to understand why this matter was not settled by the E.U. as a whole long ago. Surely the same problem(s) must occur at many borders?

Breathalyzer

The law brought in by the last government requiring all motorists, including tractors (!) to carry breathalyzers is likely to be scrapped.

The equipment is still not available and so the start date has had to be extended from 1st November to 1st March - but it seems likely that the law then won't exist.

MP's have argued that the law is foolish because only the law-abiding will either use the breathalyzers, or take any notice of what they reveal. And most drunken drivers are at three times the limit anyway.

Further, they claim that the equipment has a limited life and will begin to give false readings within a very short time, so that users will then not be able to rely on them.

And tractors have nowhere to carry one anyway!

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