



To benefit the Village Dans l'intérêt du Village

August 2013

2013 A slow season

President's word

To describe the season as "slow" is to understate the case. It has been dreadfully quiet throughout, and of course there is only one reason - the recession.

Plus the excellent summer enjoyed, in part, in the UK and Ireland.

Whatever, there have been very few speaking English in the village this summer. Even the holiday homes haven't been occupied as one has come to expect.

The Scandinavians set the trend. They come in numbers in April/May, but not this year. Then the early British and Irish didn't show, and the trend continued.

The influx of French occurred, but at about 70% of normal. RV spaces and camping grounds were available in July and August - an unheard of situation.

Our Visitors' Centre and Walking Tours are running at very low figures. It is hardly worth opening the Centre, and the tours are of 4 or 5 instead of 7 or 8.

So, regrettably, our donation to the Secours Catholique to benefit the village may be lower than usual.

In short, everybody in Marseillan and MP is suffering.

Our one bright spot is that sponsorship increased this year, whilst costs fell slightly. So we may be able to make a reasonable donation after all. Let us hope so.

To finish on a brighter note - we have had specular weather. Scorching hot with the occasional thunderstorm to break the heaviness. Now it is hot but the humidity is gone. Vendange soon !

With all the best.

Patricia

Summer Activities

The most spectacular and interesting of the summer activities was organised by an association concerned with the history of Marseillan families.

They invited a Napoleonic Society to spend a weekend in Marseillan - and it proved to be a stroke of genius.

The Society take things seriously. They have sections of infantry, calvary, artillery, a fife and drum band - and they camp under canvas.

So we had exhibitions of marching, calvary charges and cannons were fired out to sea.

They also organised two lunches and dinners of food that would have been served to soldiers of the period. Pork and beans, with an apple tart and cheese to follow. All the wine one could drink.

Over 1,000 people paid to attend a meal. Accompanying the meals were the fife and drum and also the local firefighters' band

Typically French there was no system to collect one's food. Just a free-for-all - but that just added to the enjoyment of the evening as far as we were concerned.

Unfortunately it decided to bucket down with rain as they were striking camp ! The worst possible time for rain.

They are expected back next year as they were very pleased with the support.

We can hardly wait.



The three usual corsos (carnival processions) took place, but they are now a shadow of what they used to be. Just five large floats (the slaving wolf with moving jaws, green eyes and a sheep trapped under his paw is marvellous!). But the others are a bit ordinary.

And there were only five bands and most of the dancing groups were not Marseillanais. Such a pity.

The most popular Region

Languedoc Roussillon has the largest population growth of any Region in France. Some 20,000 are opting to move to L.R. each month, with the Hérault the most popular département. At the end of 2011 the region had over 2,600,00 residents (the latest census data). This trend is expected to accelerate,

Marseillan

The latest news from the village:

Boulevard

Good news at last... it looks as though the October re-opening will happen to time. We expected April, hoped for July, but things have now really started to happen. The new foundations are in. Internal walls have been built, a new floor laid. So one hopes that with nine weeks to go the fitting out can be completed.

Bernard is certainly confident, as is Christine who - incidentally - is looking extremely fit and well. Very cheerful, also.

Art shop

A new art shop has opened in the tiny triangular shop near the covered market.

At first it was going to be a grocers but it has undergone a metamorphosis. The door across the corner has gone, and been placed in the side.

We can't see it being successful... blank white walls with just a single painting on each is city not village style. We shall see.

Greengrocer

Another greengrocer has opened ! As if we need three plus Spar and Carrefour ! Next door to the butchers was for a time an estate agents, but that did not last. It has been replaced by a spartan greengrocer.

Pizza

In Boulevard Lamartine, almost opposite our house has opened a pizza place.

It replaces the scruffy restaurant that opened there last season, but such a difference ! This place is clean, fresh, inviting.

It's menu is excellent, including hamburgers, paninis, sandwiches and salads, and the prices are reasonable.

It has tables on the pavement and is doing excellent business. No music, not a nuisance in any way. An asset in fact.

Roundabout

Just to report that having lost two rows of fence posts on the corner the brain boxes in charge have now added a third, bigger and heavier, row of posts.

Bet they are not bigger and tougher than a sixteen tonner !

Thirteen million flashes a year

France's busiest speed camera was installed in 2011 and in ten months out-flashed all the other cameras.

Just a few hundred yards from the Swiss border it flashed 155,582 times to catch 462 drivers each day according to the motoring magazine AutoPlus.

The second and third most active cameras flashed 364 and 323 drivers.

AutoPlus say that 2,000 radars across the country caught 13 million drivers - up by a million on 2010 - and the top 100 caught 40% of them.

The radars are reported to have brought in some 630 million Euros with the busiest responsible for 22 million.

Traffic light cameras showed an increase of 75% over 2010, with the only machine in Paris catching 97 drivers a day.

The penalty is 4 points from the licence and a fine of 135 Euros.

We are promised a thousand such cameras across France by the end of 2012 and panels warning drivers of cameras are being taken down

In their place are promised signs warning drivers of their speeds.

(We had one in Marseillan for a couple of weeks - it didn't work and has been removed - temporarily ?)

It is, incidentally, reported that 35% of drivers regularly ignore road signs.

Mademoiselle Farewell

All adult females in France are now to be referred to as Madame. Only little girls will continue to be mademoiselle - at least as far as officialdom is concerned.

All official documents now ask if a person is Mr. or Mme. - most people, especially women - regard this as a vital step towards female equality - and who can argue ?

Cricket...

... is to be taught in French primary schools. Starting this autumn the game will be introduced.

It will be taught in English and international competition will be encouraged.

It is hoped that other cultures will be explored

Pétanque or Boules ?

No they are not the same. Similar but different.

The game of pétanque developed from boules when, so it is said, a boules player became too aged to take the steps necessary before launching the boule and was allowed to play from his wheelchair.

To even things out his compatriots began to play from a stationary position, and so the game was born.

It is far from a game for the aged, however. The current World Champion is 21-year-old Dylan Rocher who, like all players has to fit the game into his work schedule.

There are no professional players but prize money of up to 2,000 Euros is available. As Dylan says however "most of that goes on travel and accommodation expenses".

The World Championship is held every two years and Dylan came out top of 13,000 players in Marseille last year.

The next Championship will be in Tahiti and Dylan is already making plans to defend his title.

The sport is dominated by men, but there are some good female players and some excellent womens' teams.

Everybody is welcome to play, and to join the Federation Francaise de Pétanque - young people especially as the sport is largely played by the middle aged and older.

Dragooned

The term comes from the 17th century conflict between the Catholics and Protestants in the Languedoc. Dragoons, mounted soldiers, were billeted upon households, who were dragoonned into taking them.

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