



The English Library

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS FOR OCTOBER

VIDE GRENIERS:

Sunday 2nd Balaguier d'olt

Sunday 9th Montbazens

CINEMAS WITH VERSION ORIGINAL AT:

Villefranche - <https://www.cineazur.fr/villefranche-de-rouergue/horaires/>

Caussade - <https://cinemacaussade.com/les-films/>

St Antonin - https://www.allocine.fr/seance/salle_gen_csalle=W0114.html

Rodez - <https://www.cgrcinemas.fr/rodez/>

James Bond movie "no time to die" opens October 6th in France



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

We had a very enjoyable evening on 17th. The Third Treasure Hunt in Villefranche took place in perfect weather for strolling in town and after negotiating fiendish clues (thank you again Donald). We basked in the sun around tables of reviving apéros at Les Fleurines and felt that lockdown really had gone away, hooray!

Festilitt 2021.15/16/17 October

For those of you who have been awaiting the details of this splendid event they are as follows:

The French events are as planned but the English language ones will be on Zoom as although the travelling restrictions will have been lifted by then, there was not enough time for appropriate arrangements to be made.

The book sale will be held in the Mairie in Parisot on Saturday 16th October when there will be bargains to be had. Any contributions of recently published books in very good condition may be left at the Médiathèque in the village.

Our next event is on Friday 22nd October at Les Fleurines when the 1st quiz night for two years will take place at 6 p.m. If you wish to take part in a team of no more than six people, please contact David and Lesley Sharrock with your name or the members of your team: lesley.sharrock@gmail.com.

On 13th October the Social Centre will be having their Open Day when we will be manning the Hoop La stall and hoping for a sunny day!

Continue to revel in our new found freedom, long may it last!



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READING

LOYALTY

The Abstainer by Ian McGuire

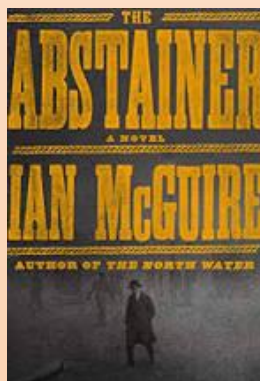
The Abstainer is set in Manchester in 1867 and is the story of Irish Loyalists, policemen and their informers. In particular its main character is an Irish policeman who is loved by neither side but who tries to be true to his principles and to abstain from alcohol.

After 3 men are hanged for the accidental killing of a policeman the atmosphere in the city is tense. O'Connor seeks information and learns that a violent ex-soldier has been sent from the US bent on revenge.

The story becomes a gripping one of cat and mouse as O'Connor tracks Doyle and tries to foil whatever plot is afoot. Doyle is a merciless killer and adept at escape. In this he resembles Drax who appears in McGuire's other novel "The North Water". As events turn out Doyle does kill and escape and O'Connor finds himself under suspicion. It's hard not to identify with him in his struggles and to condemn the unfair and prejudiced way in which he is treated by his English colleagues. This historic prejudice is well portrayed and it occurs again in "The North Water" whose hero is an Irish surgeon, also the victim of a conniving Englishman.

Unfortunately the author takes the chase to the US and here the story rather falls apart, particularly at the end. Having invested emotionally in the hero the end of the story is hard to comprehend. Did the author lose interest, run out of ideas? What? I know life is not always kind but this is no way to treat loyal readers!

McGuire is terrific at terse dialogue and at creating atmosphere and his prose is excellent. Worth reading if you can cope with the violence.



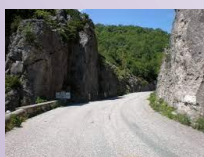
THE ROAD WELL TRAVELLED

Many of you will have driven the A75 autoroute between Beziers and Millau on your way to and from the south (the south, south I mean). It's one of the most spectacular driving routes in France and even Europe, taking traffic from the Massif Central down to the cities on the coast. It starts from where autoroute A71 Paris – Clermont Ferrand ends, traversing the river Tarn at the Millau bridge and continuing over the Causse du Larzac before dropping down through scenic valleys sprinkled with vines towards Lodeve in L'Herault *département*.

It runs largely on the traces of the old Route Nationale 9, one of the pre-revolutionary 'Routes Royales', and is itself a tributary of the legendary RN7 which was made famous by generations of car-bound holidaymakers and by Charles Trenet's celebrated song (You Tube it). I have recollections of exhausting car journeys in the 1960s, exhausting that is for my father who had to pilot us through towns clogged by smoky 'camions' and Renault Dauphines carrying whole families, their luggage, picnics and red wine (to be consumed by the roadside). Restricted by the £50 currency allowance the Guide Michelin was rarely a practical proposition for us and I envied M. Dupont pulling into a restaurant car park in his Peugeot 404 with an air of smug anticipation.

As the autoroute sweeps past La Cavalerie and La Couvertorade, settlements founded by the Knights Templars and later run by the Hospitaliers of Jerusalem, it leaves the Grands Causses and starts its descent via tunnels, escarpments and breathtaking bends. One of the tunnels, the entrance of which is crowned by what looks like a yellow golf ball, was created to carry traffic under the Pas de L'Escalette pass which was a major bottleneck on the old RN9. Quite literally two piers of rock with the road running between, it and the abandoned road stretching several kilometres south are now part of a *randonnée* walkers path. Stunning scenery abounds.

Yet further downhill, Lodeve was a major textile-producing town that made uniforms and other finery for the military and subsequently welcomed Algerian Harkis who fought for the French but had to flee after independence in 1962. They were the lucky ones, able to support their families with forestry jobs locally while many of their comrades were shot by the new regime back home. Millau where our journey starts was and still is a renowned glove-making town. The *causse* is a ragged chaos of rocks that supports herds of hardy sheep. Further south, the steep terraced vineyards produce an excellent red wine, Terrasses de Larzac. It's a fascinating part of the world and if you haven't done so, do go and visit.



PLEASE SHARE YOUR FRENCH TRAVEL EXPERIENCES, BY ROAD, RAIL, BICYCLE OR ON FOOT. WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

CLOCKING ON

While I'll have a go at most things, repairing mechanical clocks isn't one of them. Having watched Steve Fletcher weave his magic on *The Repair Shop*, I just don't have the skills or the kit.

Fortunately, modern timepieces sport quartz movements, but, as I discovered, they're not all plain sailing.

Our much-loved replica ship's clock ground to a halt after 25 years, so I dismantled the dial, eased off the hands and tried to remove the motor. It seemed to be glued on and some gentle probing with a sharp knife revealed a sticky pad rather like double-sided tape. Then I hit the web. One supplier showed with photos the critical elements of a movement; the length of the shaft from tip to movement face and the type of shaft. The latter are either roundshafts with three concentric shafts or Euroshafts, which feature two small flats on the end of the minute shaft. The length can be critical, as one too long can make the second hand foul the glass. They range from 7mm up to about 30mm.

My shaft seemed to be a roundshaft, and further surfing demonstrated that movements are standard for short hands and high-torque for long ones. Search as I might, I couldn't identify a replacement motor. Then I struck gold with Matthew at NG Clocks on the IOW, clearly an expert with first-class customer service. He specified a replacement, but its shaft was overlength, cured with some spacers to insert between the movement and the clock face. He was convinced I needed a Euroshaft and when I re-examined my old unit with magnifying specs, I spotted the two little flats. The whole shebang delivered cost £25 and it took 15 minutes to insert the motor and refit the hands.

A fortnight later, a second clock of the same vintage died. It proved to be a bit of a handful. The clock was mounted in a circular cherrywood plinth and the movement fitted tightly into a round aperture in the wood. I prised it out to find the motor secured on three tiny metal plinths like pimples. Thinking it was glued on, I tried cutting through with a Stanley knife, but nothing moved. Through gritted teeth, I had to cut the movement casing to pieces with wire cutters, finding that each plinth had been screwed on to the case, then the pimples superglued to the back of the face. Matthew came up trumps again, with a new motor, sticky pads as spacers and new hands as my old ones would no longer fit. The replacement movement was the same width as the old one but longer; it took quite a while to enlarge the aperture suitably. I simply cut off the protruding sections of the screws to give a flat surface. Total cost £24.

Because quartz movements are long-lasting, when it comes to renewal, it's odds-on your original will have ceased production and you'll need a Matthew to guide you. **NW**



GARDENING

October, time to plant some bulbs. Hopefully the ground is soft enough, but it is always nice to plant up a pot to give you a cheerful welcome by the house. Over the years we have tried many varieties and some have done really well. If you can't buy from England, try Promesse de Fleurs as they have a really good choice.

Cammasia, both the white and blue have multiplied to the point that they have now had to move to the bank by the gully. A few in the flower beds were fine, but the dying foliage isn't very pretty.

Alliums are just spectacular. I have tried a few varieties but I still prefer Christophii. The dry flower heads continue to add interest to the planting, long after the colour has faded. I tie them to bamboo canes and insert them amongst other plants. They have now seeded themselves all over the garden and the bulbs are now big enough to flower. Next spring, when the leaves come through I transplant the bigger seedlings.

Tulips don't usually last more than 1 or 2 seasons. However the Ballerina tulips I bought from England 13 years ago are still going strong and have gradually increased. Species tulips are meant to do better, but I have gradually lost them all.

Anemone Blanda have mainly reverted to the blue/mauve, but they have seeded themselves all over the garden. The bulbs are very small and deep so haven't proved to be a problem when weeding.

The Dutch Iris have also over the years multiplied, so the clumps have been split, but I frequently find I accidentally dig them up. Iris Reticulata are long-lived and do gradually increase. A good bulb to plant in a pot and then onto a sunny bank to cheer you up each February.

Daffodils are a must, but I prefer the smaller ones as they don't fall over and the dying foliage is easier to hide. Every year we buy a few more for the pots and then next spring, after they have flowered, they get moved into the garden. I tend to plant them under deciduous shrubs. The daffodils in the meadow are increasing, a species we bought to naturalise in grass.

The crocuses in the grass haven't really worked, but those in the flower beds have gradually increased. Many other bulbs are there for a few years then gradually dwindle in numbers. Fritillaries were a disaster; I just didn't realise how attractive they were to lily beetles. My main failure are the fox tail lilies, not really a bulb, but generally planted at this time of year. Very expensive and to date, not one single flower.

A little bit of money and effort and you will be well rewarded next spring and for many years to come.



CULINARY DISASTERS

Hot Cross Buns

Last Easter the Chaplain of the Anglican community to which I belong thought it would be a good idea, as we could not meet, to have a competition for the best hot cross buns, to be judged from a photograph. This is how it went for me.

Maundy Thursday

We were in lockdown so played safe and sent son to health food shop which has extensive range of flours for all occasions. Surveyed choice, puzzled; didn't understand much French let alone culinary vocabulary and no cook. Used common sense [Huh!], came back with wholemeal.

Sighed, shrugged - decided might have novelty value. Turned to recipe in faithful old Good Housekeeping book, circa 1957, a tactful present from my mother when I got married. Marriage did not last but cookbook, greasy, torn, hard cover now leading separate independent life, is still my go to for unadventurous, every day recipes. Worked way through instructions to where it said add yeast to some of flour, should froth up a bit, did that. Nothing much happened. Had used ancient but never-opened tin of dried yeast. After a while idly read information on tin: "Must be activated first in water". Doomed from then on. But soldiered on, even sacrificed some bio sultanas, made large heavy ball. "Should double in bulk in one and a half hours". Had lunch, cleared up, went for a walk.

Some hours later it had risen about half an inch. Gave it hell, knocked it back, kneaded the living daylights out of it, formed the buns. Placed on tray, leaving plenty of space for rising [Huh!]. Used millimetre ruler to measure them. Cleared up, went for walk, told son evening meal was down to him.

Mixed flour and water for the crosses - too thin. Attempted crosses with arthritic hands and edge of knife, wouldn't stay where they were put, wandered all over the place, disappeared down ravines, went round mountains. One formed itself into a recognisable map of the very Hexagon itself. But buns just sat there, looking stupid. Measured them again, they had risen a good 3mm. Exhausted. Gave up, shoved them in the oven, they rose about 4mm. But did have fun glazing them several times over with a great deal of syrup to compensate.

Good Friday

Offered tray to son. Sidelong glance: "Oh. Yes. I will have one. Later." Husband could not wriggle out from under my thumb so easily, dutifully masticated away, luckily still has some teeth left.

Saturated with butter until they wouldn't absorb any more they were edible - just. And their bottoms were nice and syrupy.

Saturday

Got son to take photo. He did not take bun.

Easter Sunday

Four down, eight to go. Looked up my mum's recipe for bread pudding.

But by Easter Monday they were rock hard, suitable only for boules - or hardcore. In fading hope of retrieving situation from total disaster put one in bird feeder - but even woodpecker with impressive beak could not penetrate, flew off with his jeering call.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Ben Naismith, Arborist. Tree and hedge cutting at competitive rates. Tree pruning, reductions, felling, trimming and logging. Contact bennaismith@outlook.com or T: 0786807434

Nicholas Powell - Maçon du Bâti Ancien Marin 12260 Sainte Croix. Contact: 06 20 55 10 40

Alan G. W. Mackay - Civil Funeral Célébrant, English Speaking. Dignified, personal, respectful, memories. Contact: 05 65 29 88 54 / 06 89 33 82 45 or anglocelebrant@orange.fr

The Writing Desk can swiftly turn your ideas into sharp, punchy script. As an author and experienced freelance journalist I have spent many years creating features for business and lifestyle magazines. For great words and a fast service, contact Nigel on: 05 65 65 81 53 nigelwild@hotmail.co.uk

Learn French in a friendly, fun atmosphere at **So'Happy School** in Villefranche. All levels/all ages. Qualified, motivated teacher with excellent OFSTED reports and 15 years experience. Small groups: 18 Euros/1h30 lessons; individual lessons: 22 euros/hour. Contact Sophie on 07963050236 or sohappyschool@gmail.com

English - French translations of documents and interpreting during meetings. Help with French administration and/or with official French letters. Also one to one French lessons or French conversation, contact Jacynth Crozier, Tel. 06 30 31 13 00 contact@crozier-traductions.com <http://www.crozier-traductions.com>

Creative design including web sites, logos, and graphics. Websites fully hosted and monitored including ecommerce, blogging, gîte/rental bookings integration & email. Contact will@outrighthosting.net

SOCIAL

Iyengar Yoga. Tuesday afternoons 2.30 - 4.00 and Thursday mornings 10.15 to 11.45 in Villefranche de Rouergue. Qualified Yoga teacher. First lesson free. Contact: Penny Mackey on 05 65 81 74 58 or penny.mackey@orange.fr

FripAffaires, a charity shop based in Parisot (82) raises funds for Médecin sans Frontières and Restos du Cœur. Situated at the Pole Medical, next door to the pharmacy, open Tuesday & Wednesday 2-6pm and Friday & Saturday 10am to 12.30pm. Donations always gratefully received

DOMESTIC SERVICES

Gardener and/or cleaner available. Contact Ruth Patterson on 05 65 34 37 88 or 07 80 45 50 46

Domestic services - based near La Fouillade we, an English couple, offer a range of domestic services including garden maintenance, cleaning and gîte changeovers. If we can help, contact us via email at kevinandcherylpower@gmail.com or phone us on 0784599553

Experienced gardener specialising in natural organic design and maintenance. Affordable and flexible - References available. Contact: Kathryn: 05 65 65 78 01 or montagnac@hotmail.co.uk

Does your house, holiday home or gîte need finishing? All kinds of interior and exterior work undertaken e.g. skirting boards, wood trims, tiling, painting, decorating etc. Contact: Tim Fortune on 05 65 45 48 14 or mail.f.design@outlook.fr

Creative design including web sites, logos, and graphics. Websites fully hosted and monitored including ecommerce, blogging, gîte/rental bookings integration & email. Contact will@outrighthosting.net

LETTINGS

Mon Plaisir Chambres d'Hôtes. Tranquil, rural but easy access to Villefranche de Rouergue. 3 en suite rooms, €69-79 per night, inc breakfast for 2. Splash pool, river view decking, free wifi. Full info on: www.monplaisirfrance.com. Book now! Phone: 05 65 57 18 43 or email: monplaisir@hotmail.co.uk

Holiday apartment to rent in beautiful Nerja, Andalucía, Spain. A modern, 2 double bedroom, ground floor apartment with terrace and spectacular sea and mountain views. A superb location with a choice of bars and restaurants and only a short walk to the old town centre. For details contact: Lynne Harding 06 65 50 95 37 or lafage.harding@gmail.com

ITEMS FREE to a GOOD HOME

Ancient Threshing Machine Wood seems to be in good condition . Metal parts are a bit rusty. Contact 05 65 29 36 82

Old Metal Irons +Other bits Tel 05 65 29 36 82

ITEMS for SALE

Manure For Sale Contact Bridget Blunsdon 05 65 65 78 60

Contemporary Sculptural Mirrors. Go to www.fortunedesigns.co.uk for details. Free delivery and fitting within 20km of Villefranche de Rouergue. Ideal for a special gift. Contact: 05 65 45 48 14 or email f.design@outlook.fr

Cooling Box. Halfords T35 DC 12v portable hot and cold electric cooling box, 34 litres. Comes with 12v cigarette lighter plug and 12v to 3pin converter so can be used in car or home. Keep takeaways warm our beers cold. **30€.** For more info contact Pat Dickinson at annpatd@gmail.com



VW Golf Estate 2008, RHD, French reg, 150,000 Miles. New CT. **2500€.**ono. Tel: 06 06 43 75 77 for info.



Spa. Cost €360 and apart from being set up once it is unused. Would like @ € 200 for it.
Contact: jane.tasker38@gmail.com

ITEMS for SALE

Dresser with carvings Base is 151 x 50cm, height is 100cm. Top is 142 x39, height is 80cm
85€. Tel 06 24 17 03 85



Breakfast Bar + 2 high stools. Made from Ikea worktop. Ikea metal leg support. Height 94cm, Depth to wall from longest point of curve 99cm, width 120cm. Two Ikea stools included in the price. **70€.** Tel 06 24 17 03 85



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If you have any comments or questions, complimentary or critical please don't hesitate to contact us at englishlibrarybaf@gmail.com

STOP PRESS

Does anyone have a substantial car or van to sell? It must have a tow bar.

bennaismith@outlook.com or 07 86 80 74 34