



THE *English Library*

WHAT'S ON IN SEPTEMBER

Please double check that the event is still happening before you set out:-

EVENTS

Reopening of the English Library, **Tuesday September 2nd** in its new location opposite the Centre Sociale (at street level). To mark the occasion we are offering coffee and biscuits from 10.30am. Please note that the new opening hours are Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 10.00am to 12.00 noon.

Le Growing Groupe - the next meeting is on **Monday, 7th September** at Kathryn's house. Kathryn will talk to us about compost and composting. There is no longer a limit on numbers, but Kathryn would like to know how many people are coming. For more details email colandsuereeve@gmail.com or phone Anne Dyson on 05 65 81 47 67 or 068367878

Friday 11th September - Fish and Chips, Gare de Villefranche. As usual, pre-order with Cod en Bleu using their online ordering page at <http://www.cod-en-bleu.com/OrderOnline.aspx> then reserve your table in Le Césarée bar.

Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th September 2020 37th Journées Européennes du Patrimoine. journées-du-patrimoine.com

Penny Mackey's yoga classes restarting **September 15th**

VIDE GRENIERS

Sunday 6th September - Monteils

Sunday 12th September - Villefranche, foirail de la Madeleine

Sunday 12/13th September Fête de Vailhourles. Also Figeac & St Antonin.

Saturday 19th September - Varen

FÊTES/MARCHÉS

Sunday 6th September Marché Nocturne, Villefranche de Rouergue

Fête de Villeneuve **September 12 & 13th**



CINÉMAS

Rieuepeyroux festival starts **September 5th**. <https://www.rencontresalacampagne.org/destination/festival/>

Villefranche Accueil | Villefranche-de-Rouergue - CinéAzur - Le Vox

St Antonin Cinéma Le Querlys - Tourisme Saint-Antonin Noble Val (82)

Please let me know of any events you would like publicised in future issues
(annpatd@gmail.com)

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Well, we have made our move to the annex. It was an enormous task but with a team of willing volunteers and the assistance from some of the *équipe* from the Mairie it was achieved with good humour verging on hysteria, in the intense heat of last week. Many, many thanks to all who helped.

Our revised opening hours are 10—12 Tuesday and Thursday - the old Friday afternoon opening is no longer available.

We hope that you will pass on the two important words “no stairs” to anyone who is a potential member with the added bonus of a cup of coffee. We look forward to seeing droves of people from September 1st.

BEFORE



AFTER



GARDENING

Some rain (not nearly enough) and cooler temperatures have revived the garden. It is time to take a few cuttings - some of the more tender perennials which might not overwinter. Penstemons are easy and such good plants for any garden as they flower over such a long period. Last year they did overwinter, but I am always happy to have more plants. Non flowering shoots are best, about 5cm long. Keep them moist and out of direct sunlight and they root very quickly.



This year for the first time we have tree fruit and it seems the wasp and frelon population has expanded with the extra available fruit. We have plenty of apples to share, but I am reluctant to let them near my precious Bramley apples or my pears. Our pears are espalier trees so the fruit is easy to pick and to protect. I am going to try covering each individual fruit with a bag. They suggest old nylon tights, squares of muslin or even paper bags. I will use clothes pegs to attach the bag to the fruit and the tree so this should actually prevent them falling off the tree until I am ready to pick the fruit. This year I want to eat the perfect pear.

We have already picked kilos and kilos of apples, and I really don't know what to do with them all. I find them fairly tasteless, so I am not that keen to eat or cook them so hopefully they will make nice juice. We are now leaving the smallest and the damaged for the wasps. Regular winter pruning will help to produce bigger fruit and then in June we really should have reduced the amount of fruit on the tree. A tree carrying too much fruit is likely to have branches which break with the weight and then the following year the tree won't have any fruit at all. Much better to have bigger fruit every year rather than a glut of small stuff.

MG

BOOK REVIEWS

'Into thin air' by Jon Krakauer

It's not often I describe a book as harrowing but this one is.

It's an account of the ill-fated 1996 expedition to climb Everest by a group of paying clients led by Rob Hall. Rob was an experienced and successful NZ guide and Jon Krakauer, also an experience climber, joined this expedition commissioned by a magazine to write an article.

What is surprising is how commercialised the climbing of Everest had become by that time. People with insufficient experience can pay large sums to be guided, and sometimes almost towed, to the top. In that short spring season of 1996, 33 climbers were attempting the summit.

Given these numbers it could be tempting to assume that it was a straightforward feat, and other mountains are deemed more difficult. However, the mountain, altitude and weather can provide a deadly combination at any time and people die regularly.

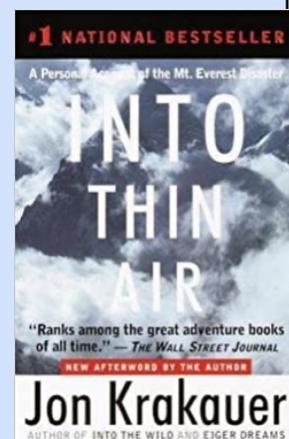
It is also evident from the book and from internet photos that there are log jams of people queuing to use the ropes and squeezing round each other in certain places. Everest is no longer a majestic place where people climb in isolation: it takes a team and climbing is a race against time. Usually expeditions set out for the final push at midnight in order to reach the summit and turn around by 1 or 2pm at the latest. Many fatalities happen during the descent when people have exhausted themselves by pushing for the top.

In this account there were 3 major expeditions on the mountain: a New Zealand one, a Taiwanese and an American. There was also a South African one led by a Briton who refused to help or co-operate with anyone. The personalities of the clients and the guides are described in some detail. In the interests of veracity the author lists everyone who was involved in any capacity but this adds little to the narrative and the number of names can get confusing.

Overall it is a gripping account of a tragedy in which 8 people died. It was a catalogue of human folly and error added to the difficulties the climb presents.

Initiatives are in place to remove some of the rubbish that has accumulated on the mountain but dead bodies are left where they fell so encountering one is not a rare experience. Some 297 bodies are up there.

Another grim fact is that quite often a climber passing someone who is in trouble will leave them there as they press on. Rescuing someone is almost impossible and the survival instinct is strong but as Hillary said "One has to try."



BOOK REVIEWS *cont.*

'The Mitford girls, the biography of an extraordinary family' by Mary S Lovell

Having read much about the Mitfords over the years, including the excellent "Letters between 6 sisters" I didn't think there could be much that was new to write about. However when I saw Mary Lovell's book in the library I picked it up. Lovell is a good biographer who does her research and writes well even if she does have a tendency to fall in love with her subjects. This is excusable given the time she has to spend on research and it would be hard to write a long book about someone you hated.

The Mitford family, aristocratic and eccentric, continues to fascinate and some of them remain enigmatic. Whatever views they held, they espoused them passionately and loyally sometimes at great cost.

The eldest, Nancy, became a writer with a witty and cruel style. She denounced her sister, Diana, a Fascist, to the Government of the time and this added to the case against Diana who was separated from her four young children and put in Holloway prison for the duration of the war.

The youngest daughter, Deborah, married the man who became the Duke of Devonshire and embarked on a successful career as the chatelaine of Chatsworth.

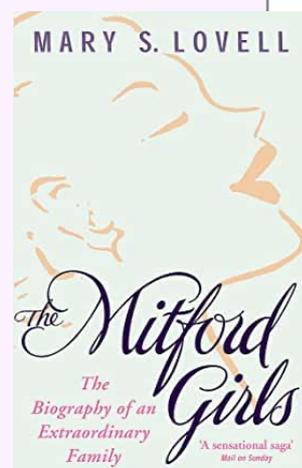
Jessica ran away with her cousin Esmond and became a Communist. Later this mellowed into socialism and human rights activities. She was also a very successful author.

Famously, Unity and Diana were admirers of Hitler. The author highlights the fact that Diana's few meetings with him were in order to obtain a German airwave so that her husband, Oswald Mosley, could transmit his Fascist views. Unity idolised Hitler and he appeared to enjoy her company. He may have felt that these two women, who had family links to Churchill, would help his appeasement cause in GB. Their stated aim was to avoid war. However they turned a blind eye, or excused, the more extreme actions of the Nazi regime and were thus reviled in England.

Pam lived a life of domestic contentment and their brother, Tom, was killed at the end of the war. Jessica remained in America.

Without meeting these people it can be hard to assess their enormous charm and wit. The author did meet most of them and she quotes extensively from their writings which helps us somewhat to understand.

Nancy's books remain popular and a new TV series based on "Love in a cold climate" and "The pursuit of love" will shortly appear. She used the family as raw material, exaggerating their traits to make good anecdotes. I recommend this biography as well as the works of Jessica and Nancy.



EM

RECIPE

September already and thoughts of autumn. I love this time of year when the garden is offering so many delights that it's hard to choose seasonal recipes, there are just so many. The following recipes would make a lovely early autumn meal with a middle eastern theme, though of course you don't need to present all three at the same meal.

Aubergine with yoghurt, serves 4

2 or 3 aubergine depending on size

Olive oil

150gm Greek yoghurt

1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

Pinch cayenne pepper

Half teaspoon ground cumin

1 tablespoon tahini

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Small bunch coriander

1 pomegranate (optional)

Cut the aubergine lengthwise into 1cm thick slices, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Brush with olive oil on both sides and grill or fry in a ridged frying pan (the ridges give a good presentation with their lovely dark brown stripes). Fry the onion and garlic in olive oil until golden brown. Now mix the yoghurt with the spices and onion/garlic. Taste and adjust seasoning. Place the aubergine slices on a platter and spread the yoghurt mixture over. Scatter the coarsely chopped coriander and the pomegranate seeds over. You can use chopped mint in place of coriander. Enjoy this cold, hot or room temperature. (The very cold yoghurt with hot aubergine is lovely)

Quince and lamb tagine

500g lamb, I use shoulder, cut into bite size pieces

Olive oil

1 onion, skinned and coarsely chopped

2 cloves garlic finely chopped

2 teaspoon ras al hanout spice (or to taste)

1 preserved lemon

2 quince peeled and coarsely chopped

2 tomatoes, coarsely chopped

8 dates coarsely chopped

25g plump raisins

200ml veal or light beef stock, or water

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Small bunch coriander or mint coarsely chopped.



Set your oven at 140C. In a flame proof casserole place 1tablespoon olive oil and fry the onion until golden brown, add the garlic and cook a few moments more. Remove from the casserole and set aside. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil to the casserole dish followed by the lamb pieces, a few at a time, cook until the lamb is well browned. Now tip the onion, garlic, meat, ras al hanout, preserved lemon cut into small pieces, the dates and the raisins into the casserole, cook for a few minutes then add the quince and tomatoes. Add salt and a good grinding of black pepper. Now pour in the stock or water and bring slowly to the boil. Place in the pre-heated oven for around 2 hours. The meat should be very tender and almost falling apart.

Scatter with the coriander or mint and serve with couscous.

Figs and marscapone

1 ripe fig per person

2 teaspoons Armagnac per person

2 tablespoons marscapone per person

2 teaspoons dark brown sugar per person

Set your oven at 190C.

Make two vertical cuts like a cross in the figs so that they open out like a flower, don't cut right through or they will fall apart. Place the figs in an ovenproof dish so they can stand upright and pull them slightly apart. Into the 'flower' put the Armagnac, the marscapone and sprinkle with the sugar. Place in the oven for around 30 minutes. Eat cold, hot or at room temperature.

AD

STAND AND DELIVER

When Robert Louis Stevenson commented that to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, he might have been thinking about French postcodes. For a country obsessed with dotting i's and crossing t's, I'm baffled why France tolerates a system patently not up to the mark. Doubtless it works in towns with street names and house numbers; outside conurbations, it doesn't.

Our code encompasses several villages and about 35 square miles. The government fuelled the problem three years ago by amalgamating communes. Our official address changed from 12240 Vabre Tizac to 12240 Le Bas Ségala – Vabre Tizac, San Salvadou five miles south and Bastide l'Évêque 10 miles west. We take care to include our village name in any delivery address. La Poste take all this in their stride and new posties ride shotgun with experienced hands to learn the routes.

For couriers and delivery drivers, many from out of area, I have enormous sympathy. They struggle daily to find some remote dwelling without a house sign down some unmarked meander. Happily, most simply ring the customer for directions.



Not our local Chronopost man. He'd ring to announce a parcel, refuse to listen to directions and insist on meeting at the football stadium in the village. I'd tell him I'd be there in five minutes, leave at once and invariably, he'd ring again just after my departure to ask when I'd arrive. I tried to explain how to find our road, called Le Puech, but he didn't want to know. It all got rather tedious and I determined that if he did it again, I'd complain.

Then fate took a miraculous hand. He rang and demanded the stadium routine once more. After I'd signed for my parcel, he showed me his load sheet with an address on Le Puech and asked for directions. Gleefully, I told him to follow me and when I turned into my drive, to carry straight on. Thus I led him direct to my front door! You couldn't make it up. Later that day, Chronopost emailed an evaluation survey for the driver and I expressed clear views. Would events coalesce into a silver bullet?

I didn't have to wait long. Next day, I was outside when a van stopped at the drive entrance. It was Chronopost man with another package.

Somewhere, there is a god.

NW

The deadline for the October/November newsletter is 20th September. Please send items to the editor Pat Dickinson at annpatd@gmail.com

MYSTERY SHOPPER

Are we emerging from Covid and if so in what state? Many countries are seeing an upsurge in cases. Whether this constitutes a second wave is a matter of definition: the economic (and mental health) pressures are such that reverting to full-scale lockdown would be very hazardous indeed. Probably the most important event in prospect is the American election in November. I'm convinced that the credibility of western democracy is on the line this time – Trump is Forrest Gump without the niceness. The Republican Convention speech by the vice-President spoke of the risk of electing Joe Biden – a stalking horse for the extreme left so it seems. America's history of interference in South American politics to unseat leftists should have proved the worthlessness of this sort of panic-mongering: it nearly always leads to disaster and projects the very worst image of the Land of the Free. Pence would probably make a better president than Trump as at least he has brains and can articulate ideas (not mine), but short of The Donald choking on a burger this seems unlikely.



Turning to UK matters, I was struck by a recent heading from the Economist:

In Britain we ask how to bring prosperity to the country's poorest regions. One reason Boris Johnson talks so much about "levelling up" is that, having won lots of seats in the Midlands and north of England in last year's election, the Conservative Party needs to hold on to them. The other is that regional inequality really is a blight. Take the 10% of small regions with the highest GDP per head and the 10% with the lowest. In Britain the ratio between the two is 4.3 to 1 – higher than in any other rich country. Even at the best of times, Mr Johnson struggles to give substance to a slogan and, under the shadow of covid-19, these are not the best of times. If he is to bring relief, the prime minister needs to make big cities and their hinterlands more productive by upgrading their infrastructure.

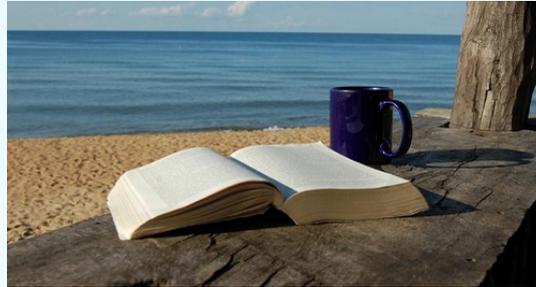
It's long been my view that despite Britain's pro-business bluster, the real state of the country's road, rail, housing and general population distribution leaves a lot to be desired. There's a big question mark over aviation, the big idea for car-only roads is to re-brand the (inadequate) motorway system as 'smart' by re-engineering emergency lanes, and have you been on a UK train recently? Here in France there is a policy called *desenclavement* which has done a lot to help rural areas. This has no doubt been financed by debt, but Covid has proved if nothing else that tax receipts won't cover the reconstruction vitally needed over the next few years. It's going to be borrow, borrow, borrow. It's a pity that the financial crisis of ten years ago crippled interest rates – if we could buy government debt at 5% it would make getting a return on savings so much simpler and safer.

This need to make a decent return brings me to the private landlord, a phenomenon that began with the introduction of assured shorthold tenancies in 1988 but grew exponentially when mortgage providers freed up borrowing restrictions and introduced dedicated products. Back in the noughties you could get 10% and more but rents themselves haven't seen huge growth and the price of property has. There are still landlords entering the market: fine if you're from Surrey and want university accommodation for your student offspring but not so good if you've bought a cheap flat in a tired seaside resort and are wondering why the place is falling apart and you're not getting tenants. France has slightly different problems stemming from inheritance laws which is why Macron is now taxing large property fortunes rather than liquid assets. Either way the rental market is veering towards the corporate landlord and even the state again – these operators should know what they're doing but only time will tell.

On reflection let's forget the US election and enjoy some sport at last. Barring last minute glitches the Tour de France starts in Nice on 29 August and finishes on 20 September. Neither Geraint Thomas nor Chris Froome will be there so the chance of a British winner is slim. I hope to goodness it comes off; if it does it'll be a great 3 weeks!

DESERT ISLAND BOOKS

If cast away on the proverbial desert island or confined to barracks during a lockdown which books would we choose to have with us?.....



1. The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer , for a laugh
2. Private Eye Annual for another laugh
3. Saturday by Ian McEwan - to be grateful that you haven't had one like that!
4. A really well illustrated ,new Gardening book , relaxing but inspiring
5. (10 year old) Famous Five series

We would love it if you would send in your desert island books for future issues of the newsletter. Just five books which might be useful, inspiring or which you have always meant to read or want to reread. Please send you lists to annpatd@gmail.com

FACEBOOK PAGE

If you are a Facebook user please join our English library, Villefranche de Rouergue page for in-between events and info www.facebook.com/groups/1374046415990276/

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SERVICES

Ben Naismith, Arborist. Tree and hedge cutting at competitive rates. Tree pruning, reductions, felling, trimming and logging. Contact bennaismith@outlook.com or T: 0565 81 95 34.

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, the shop is open Tuesdays and Wednesday's 2-6pm and Fridays and Saturdays 10am to 12.30pm. Donations always gratefully received.

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: T: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

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

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>

Mon Plaisir Chambres d'Hotes. 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.monplaisir-france.com. Book now! Phone: 05 65 57 18 43 or email: monplaisir@hotmail.co.uk

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

SERVICES continued

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 email: penny.mackey@orange.fr

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

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

Holiday apartment to rent in beautiful Nerja, Andalusia, 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 email: lafage.harding@gmail.com

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

Alan G. W. Mackay - Civil Funeral Célébrant, English Speaking. Dignified, personal, respectful, memories. Tel. 0565298854 / 0689338245. Mail. anglocelebrant@orange.fr

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. T: 05 65 45 48 14 or email f.design@outlook.fr

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