



ACIE
verdi

Pommes d'été
3,50€

Rosa
5,50

Rosa
2,50

Rosa
1,50

Abolito
2,50

Ouagan
2,50

Romane
Rosa
2,50

Romane
3,50

Romane
4,50



FESTIVAL GLORIANA – MUSIQUE DES CHAPELLES 1 – 14 May

Monday 1 May 16h : Chapelle Saint-Anne, Lorgues, Zarzuela ou l'opéra comique espagnol, Delphine Haidan, Pascal Polidori, Eric Courrèges

Thursday 4 May 19h - : Eglise Saint Sylvestre, Place du 8 mai 1945, Claviers, Zarzuela ou l'opéra comique espagnol Delphine Haidan, Pascal Polidori, Eric Courrèges –

Friday 5 May 20h30 : Chapelle Saint Ferréol, Lorgues, Zarzuela ou l'opéra comique espagnol Delphine Haidan, Pascal Polidori, Eric Courrèges

Saturday 6 May 20h30 : Chapelle Saint François de Paule, Bormes-les-Mimosas, Romantique Florent Bontron, flûte – Cécile Maudire, harpe

Sunday 7 May 16h : Chapelle Notre Dame de la Consolation, Gassin, Les Folies d'Espagne Stravaganza

Monday 8 May 15h Chapelle Sainte Christine, Solliès-Pont, Le Bel Canto dans la musique de chambre Philippe Depetris, Eric Courrèges, Pascal Polidori

Friday 12 May, 18h : Chapelle Saint Martin, Taradeau, Maîtrise des Bouches du Rhône

Saturday 13 May 18h Chapelle Sainte Roseline, Les Arcs, Intégrale des 6 suites pour violoncelle de Jean Sébastien Bach Florent Audibert, Frédéric Audibert, Eric Courrèges

Sunday 14 May 11h – 18h (possible Chapelle Ste Roseline – not listed) : [//festivalgloriana.fr/les-festivals/musique-des-chapelles.html](http://festivalgloriana.fr/les-festivals/musique-des-chapelles.html)

CONCERT L'INDEPENDANTE' LES ARCS - aturday 6 May – 20h30.

The Les Arcs sur Argens wind band "L'Indépendante" is holding its Spring concert on Saturday the 6th May at 20h30 in the auditorium Oiseau Lyre, Collège Jacques Prevert at Les Arcs. Musical Director Sébastien Maillot. Come and listen to this free concert of your favourite light music. This band of 30 musicians will delight you with their choice of music from Gershwin to Strauss and such favourites as Lord of the Dance and El Choclo. FREE CONCERT and EASY PARKING

Information in English: 04 94 67 12 51/04 94 47 99 05/
jones.sue@wanadoo.fr

CHATEAU DE MENTONE – ST ANTONIN – UPCOMING SEASON JAZZ APERO – FERME AUBERGE Thursday 4 May

Chateau de Mentone, wine domaine, just above St. Antonin village, starts its summer season with a series of **JAZZ APERO** evening events, once a month, at their Ferme Auberge, from 18h30 to 20h30.

The first event will be Thursday 4 May, with the Lizzie Gayle guitar trio. Buy a glass a wine, and get one free. The information does not state whether one has to eat at the Ferme Auberge, which is now open Tuesdays to Saturday night 11h – 15h, and 19h – 23h, Sundays from 8h30 to 14h30 where they offer a special assorted Brunch at €18TTC. Typical prices of meals are: Picnic Box €18TTC, Roast chicken (a la broche) €14TTC kilo, L' Aioli du Chef, for 2 people €22TTC, plat de jour €18TTC, tarte de jour, 6 parts, € 20TTC. Rservations recommended.

Future dates for the Jazz Apero events are: Thursday 1 June, Les Dealers of Swing, clarinette trio, 6 July, Les Acroche Notes, jazz manouche, 3 August, Les Dealers of Swing, 7 September, le Duo MO, and 5 October, Lizzie Gayle, guitar trio. In addition Chateau Mentone will host one of the free Jazz events of Jazz Verdon series, 14 July

www.chateaumentone.com



AT THE OPERA DE TOULON - SATURDAY 6 MAY – 20H30 «Enclave Español Compañía de Danza»

A wonderful Spanish Flamenco troupe hit the stage for just one night at the **Opera de Toulon, Saturday 6 May**. Excitement, wonderful music is guaranteed. Stylised Spanish at its best, they dance to music by Enrique Granados, Alberto Iglesias, and scores written for the Cirque du Soleil. Most are ensemble numbers, but a few solos are included.

Tickets: : 04 94 92 70 78



SYMPHONIQUE CONCERT – OPERA DE TOULON – FRIDAY 12 MAY 20H “Hollywood Music”

Raging, Rampant music from the big screen, popular works by Ennio Morricone (Cinema Paradiso), John Williams (Schindlers List, Jurassic Park, Indiana Jones) , Miklos Rosza (Ben Hur), Bernard Hermann (Vertigo). A great programme, full of cinematic excitement, by the Orchestre Symphonique de l’Opera de Toulon, under the direction of Wilson Hermanto. A fun concert.

Tickets : from €26.50 to €11 more details from

www.festivalmusiquetoulon.com



HARLEY DAVIDSON HOG FESTIVAL 11 -14 MAY - ST. TROPEZ – GRIMAUD – STE. MAXIME

Parades, events, concerts – Go to [www. http://harley-davidson-eurofestival.com/EUROFESTIVAL/](http://www.harley-davidson-eurofestival.com/EUROFESTIVAL/) - for details.

OTHER EVENTS :

16 – 18 – St. Tropez, Les Bravades, blunderbusses explode

17 – Lorgues, Book swap chez Shirley Massey, 10 – 12pm
contact Mim for details : mimi4opp@aol.com

19 – Grimaud – Concert Eglise St. Michel – String Quartet, 21h.
€25.

23 – St. Tropez – Concert Cinema, cello & piano, 18h30 €30

25 – 31 – St Tropez – Salon Antiquaires

28 – St. Tropez, Eglise Organ recital 17h. Free.



FETES DES PLANTES & DES ROSES – CHATEAU STE ROSELINE – Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 May – 10h – 18h00 - Entrance €4.

Chateau Ste. Roseline proposes another plant and rose salon in the grounds 13 & 14 May. The shows hosts over a dozen exhibitors, garden specialists, professionals. In addition there will be numerous activities for visitors, including children.

There will be a restaurant “Le Cabanon”, reservation sur place only, plus numerous Food trucks offering a wide variety of fast food. www.sainte-roseline.com

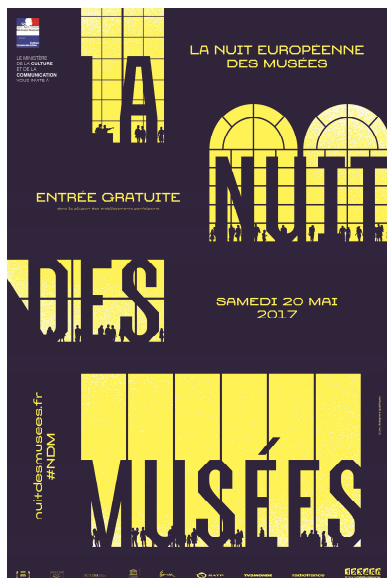


LE MOULIN DES ARTS – ENTRECASTEAUX – NEW PROGRAMME 2017 SATURDAY 20 & SUNDAY 21 May

Le Moulin des Arts kicked off their 2017 concert programme with a really exciting debut for the Jo Labita Quartet 15 April. Many VVV readers, jazz fans will have seen Jojo, as he is more commonly known, perform here on jazz accordeon, of which he is a master, and renowned through jazz circles. The concert was superb, combining loads of jazz standards, “Let’s Fall in Love” with classic jazz numbers, and his three collaborators worked perfectly ensemble – Stephen Chalk, guitar, Oliver Roux, bass, and Philippe Mejean, who has frequently played here, on drums. It was a really great evening of superb jazz, in a positively

intimate and friendly atmosphere. If you get a chance of hearing this quartet, don't miss out.

The next event happens Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 May with a piano recital for four hands, by the Duo Solot de Bruxelles, so make your reservations now, as space is limited.



NUITS DES MUSEES – SATURDAY 20 MAY Free entry most places!

CHOIR CONCERT – CAMERATA VOCALE
Saturday 20 May
At The Musee des Arts & Traditions, Draguignan.
17 h. Free,
Concert de Poche,

half an hour - plus drink – part of Nuits des Musees celebrations



CHOIR CONCERT LORGUES CAD VOCALE - "Misa Criolla"
Saturday 21 May Eglise, Flayosc 16h30



THEATRE AT MOUGINS – 25, 26 & 27 MAY - 20H.

Rada - the Riviera Amateur Dramatic Association – will be playing Ivan Menchell's comedy "THE CEMETERY CLUB", Thursday 25, Friday 26 and Saturday 27 May, at 20h, at the Mougins School. Tickets €10, which includes free drink, available via 07 83 53 76 20 or via email: radabookings@free.fr



FILMS IN VO – LORGUES

Sunday 7 May – American Honey, 18h -
Wednesday 10 May – Opera from Royal Opera House Covent Garden – Madame Butterfly – Barcelona Liceu Production 19h
Sunday 14 May – The Young Lady – 19h (lady Macbeth) with Florence Pugh, Christopher Fairbank, Cosmo Jarvis
Sunday 19 May – Fantassitic Birthday – with Bethany Whitmore, Harrison Feldman, Amber McMahon
Wednesday 24 May – Royal Opera House Covent Garden Ballet – Jewels, George Balanchine's choreography.
Sunday 28 May – Going in Style – with Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman, & Alan Arkin – not great revues, but a good romp.

Singer Véronique Souberbielle
WEM CARNOULES – THE PHOENIX RISES – JULY 17
WEP, WEEK-END POETIQUE
Fri 7- Sat 8 JULY 2017

Many VVV readers will remember with pleasure the Musical Events and Festival WEM that happened each year in July in the small village of Carnoules, former railway town which still celebrates its history with a display of a gigantic train engine, plus the tourist railway that runs from there to Brignoles. In 2011 WEM put together a musical comedy on the train, "The Lady (& Piano) Vanishes", a really rum do. After discontinuing the festival itself in 2011, Tartuga, the charity that organized it – under the leadership of local opera lover and translator Bernard Turle - are now working on their very rich archives and continuing the publication of books in limited edition, related to the festival and to the arts in general.

For the 20th anniversary of the WEM, Tartuga has a cd out, VERONIKA VOX, containing many songs written by Bernard



Turtle, the founder of the festival, with music composed and sung by Véronique Souberbielle. Piano by David Roblou, the English musician and conductor who performed many times at WEM. London Tenor John Upperton, also a Wemite, sings 2 songs on the cd, that involves quite a few musicians connected to the festival. Tartuga is also publishing a bilingual (French-English) book of poetry by renowned Indian poet SUDEEP SEN. The CD and book will be presented at the Poetry Weekend Friday 7 and Saturday 1 July. Poets taking part include: Christopher Reid, Sudeep Sen, Roisin Tierney, Marcel Mogazzi.

Look it all up at wem.free.fr



IT RESTS IN THE BALANCE By TRENCHMAN

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, when I was at school; we had a geography master known as 'Bags', a tribute to the wide legged trousers that he wore. He was a pale and gentle man, kindly and concerned and I suspect that he found us almost as difficult as his Japanese captors during the war. They had left their mark upon him and, in true schoolboy style, we showed him little respite; he never spoke about it and we never asked.

Apart from the thankless task of teaching geography to the new masters of the universe, he occasionally arranged outings, not in the current parlance but ones involving a coach and a vaguely educational content.

I suspect he never repeated the one to the Guinness Brewery, a wonderful insight as to the skills and traditions that came together to turn organic elements and water into black wine.

We all enjoyed the experience immensely, even Murphy Minor, who later claimed no memory of the event, his name, his address or even where he was born.

We were in high spirits when we returned to the school and extremely low ones the following morning.

A trip that even Murphy Minor did remember was to a travelling Circus, which had set up camp not far away and was prepared to take a bunch of 5th form schoolboys backstage, and allow them to understand and experience some of the skills that went into being a circus performer.

As it was quite close, no coach was required and we walked there, I suspect that 'Bags' quietly hoped that some of his charges would be taken by the romance of it and run away with the circus.

Of the new and exciting skills that we mainly eschewed, was that of tightrope walking, an offer to try it was greatly appreciated and unanimously turned down, except that is for Murphy Minor who thought that a spell in Matron's care at school might get him out of the upcoming exams. A mid term break he named it.

What we all did learn was that you could be taught to walk a tightrope, but only if you had the gift of balance.

It still holds good today, striking the right balance is key in so many jobs.

This was brought home to me a few weeks ago in Paris, where I was attending some art sales and was accompanied by she who must be cuddled and our number one son.

I had booked us a treat, a lunch at Pierre Gagnaire; a legendary chef with a three Michelin star restaurant.

Alas she who would have enjoyed it was down with the vapours and it was left to me, and my son (an ex restaurateur), to show the flag.

The restaurant is discreetly sited at 6 Rue Balzac, discreet on the outside and equally discreet on the inside: the restrained décor almost suggesting a high quality, expensive but boring lunch.

We were greeted and seated and offered a cocktail; an array of menus were brought and we set about examining them in detail, my son for culinary delights and me for the prices.

We quickly reached an accord when I told our charming head-waiter that we would both have the set menu. I then set about the wine list and gleefully discovered some wines I could almost afford to drink.

A fine sauvignon blanc in our glasses, we toasted absent wives and mothers and discreetly observed our fellow diners.

Discreet is the word I would choose to describe them, the sort of clients I remembered from the equally discreet Stafford Hotel in London, from my 'exes' period.

Very quickly our table was decorated with 'les amuses bouches'

An assembly of unrecognisable edibles, that were carefully explained to us by our, ever attentive waiter. I probably remembered several before he left us looking at the table, then at each other and with an unseen agreement we ventured to eat, or do I mean nibble?

It took no more than a few seconds for us to exclaim in unison, "how did he do that?" The feast had been devised so that each taste was almost tiny, and yet each taste was a minor explosion of flavour. We were left with the indecision of rushing on to the next experience or just savouring the last.

I cannot remember the number of amusements we had before three kinds of house-made bread arrived, with of course, three kinds of butter; this moment signalled the start of the menu.

I have a copy of it now in front of me and I thought to reproduce here for your illumination, but if I did it might just be an expression of 'poncy, cheffy food', which no one would ever order, and yet every mouthful was a new experience, a new adventure.

More and more arrived all testing the palate but not over riding the appetite and all in balance, one with the next.

If I tell you that our main course was 'Whiting' a fish that my mother fed to the cats, and here it was not just perfectly fresh from the sea but deliciously flaky and full of flavour and assembled with a cast of supporting players which produced an amazing treat. No wonder the cats loved my mother!

Three or four times a year I like to experience the other end of cooking, an experience, which can be great or sometimes expensively disappointing. This was up there with great.

Even Murphy Minor, a chap who understands the importance of balance, would have loved it, but been unable to remember just what he had.

Pip, pip



UK GENERAL ELECTION JUNE 8

As Janet Daley commented: ""So she changed her mind. Get over it.""

""In her critical negotiations with the European Union, the idea of a leader fighting for the principle of national sovereignty and the democratic accountability of government who had not been elected to office by her own population would have been absurd. A large proportion of the people who are sure to vote will be those who want her to succeed in her talks and who have been exasperated beyond endurance by the delaying tactics of the irreconcilable Remain camp.""

Her position will be uniquely unassailable, facing other European heads of government some of whom will have emerged from bloody election contests to preside over destabilised, unhappy coalitions presumably still bedevilled by active neo-fascist parties. Their governing futures will depend on economic security and they will not wish to create additional unpleasantness over trade with the UK on which they depend. Unfortunately the latter statement does not really reflect some of the attitudes now to be found in the violently Federal pro EU block, utterly determined, no matter what, to punish as much as possible the – as they have referred to the UK for so many years, "Little Englanders" – whilst vetoing its vote in the EU so many years, in the UK's cheeky assumptions of democratic independence. So many of them, despite sensible arguments to the contrary, are totally determined to cut off their noses to spite their faces!

It becomes more and more apparent as every day passes, and more aggressive insults are made about the UK – ""Delusional"" ""in another Galaxy!"" that they, the EU negotiating team, are not wanting a fair and equitable negotiation at all, they are totally determined to get the most Punishing Brexit agreement they can impose, mainly to deter other member states from trying the same thing. Which raises the question why? If the EU is such a wonderful construct, why are they so afraid of it falling to bits, and member states

leaving. Pretty damn obvious. it needs radical overhaul and reconstruction, and most EU states do NOT want a superstate with Germany in charge.



FRENCH ELECTION – ROUND 1

"In the first round you vote for the person you want; in the second you vote against the person you fear...."

And so it will be!

Macron and Le Pen are through to the second round election playoff. Macron captured 23.8% of the vote, Le Pen 21.5%, and lagging behind Fillon who is urging his supporters to throw their votes behind Macron, got 19.9%, and the communist Melenchon 19.6%.

As Politico.eu points out "Populists"" – such a dirty word in the EU, ie anti EU voters – **took more than 40% of the vote**, or as much as 49% with all the fringe candidates.

In other words, 8.53 million French people voted for Macron, compared to 7.66 million for Le Pen.



All commentators now expect Macron to win the second round, with large support from Fillon supporters and others, ie people will not be voting so much for Macron, as **Against** Le Pen. Of course, shocks can happen, although it sounds unlikely that Melenchon supporters will vote for Le Pen, but who knows. And that would make for a formidable percentage. Interestingly figures show that for this region, the FN predominated:

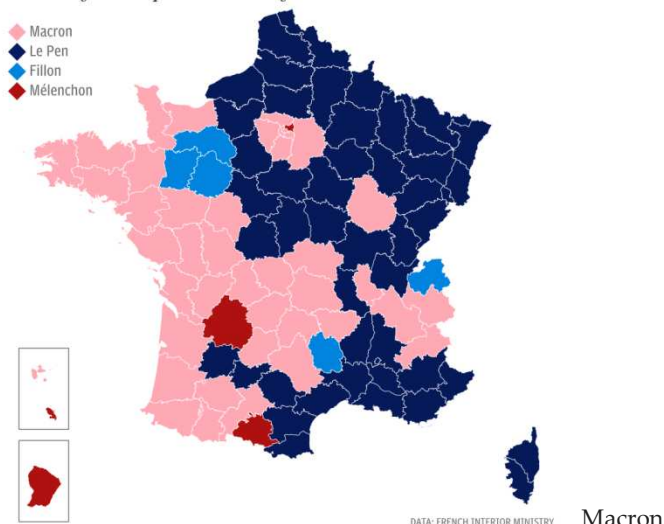
Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur: Le Pen : 28.7%
Fillon : 23.37% Macron : 18.94%.

But also the map below of how the votes divided between Macron and Le Pen, is also highly interesting. Le Pen voters concentrated in the north eastern former industrial - and now main centres of unemployment – heartland, and Macron, in the mainly agricultural west and south west, agriculture clinging onto the GAP, the EU subsidies and common agricultural policies that so many of them depend on, but also in the cities. Interesting.

So who knows, it is not quite the forgone conclusion that all the newspapers are claiming. As most commentariat have pointed

out, as a new independent party, En Marche! is far from guaranteed a majority in parliament, in the elections of June, in fact they might well have a hard fight to gain such support, without which it will be very difficult for President Macron to pass all, or any of the reforms he's got planned.

French presidential election 2017
Winner of each department in the first round



Macron and his En Marche! movement have overcome the first hurdle but there are many more hurdles he will have to negotiate in the weeks and indeed years ahead. And he and they made a rather bad misstep just after the results came in, celebrating a bit too soon with a meal a la Rotonde, in Montparnasse. Something which all the media seized on, likening it to Bling Bling Sarkozy's victory dinner some years ago at Fouquets. Dear oh Dear! In addition to which Le Pen got cracking on her fight, whilst Macron and allies huddled over the parliamentary elections, she took the fight to the centre of Macron's seat, Amiens, where one of the main local employer Whirlpool washing machines is about to close, and move the plant to Poland. Le Pen seized the initiative, after a dawn meet at Rungis wholesale market, she went to meet and talk with striking workers at the Whirlpool factory, whilst Macron huddled with Union representatives just a few miles away, the conflict then being portrayed very vividly on TV. Le Pen saying she would protect the workers, Macron, saying globalisation is inevitable, we have to accept it. All of which got a thorough airing in the media.

So who knows.



BLOOMBERG REPORTS

Two weeks prior to the first round of the Election Bloomberg Financial paper published some interesting reports from France's heartland, and labour worker concentrations.

"At the Relais des Hayons in northern France, 180 truck drivers are enjoying the calf heads, blood sausage and other delicacies in

their four-course meal deal with wine before retiring to the ranks of rigs parked outside.

With their own red Michelin-style guide, the Relais Routiers stops are an unmistakably French institution. Yet behind the nostalgia and the gruff bonhomie of the drivers — all male, all white and mostly middle-aged — lies a festering reality: France's estimated 350,000 hauliers are a mobile army of discontent, a sign that Europe's struggles with populism will continue no matter what happens in the French elections starting this month.

Laurent Radier, a 54-year-old driver and former parachutist in an elite unit of the French army, had a word for politicians in Paris and Brussels. "They're all liars," he said, standing up to leave rather than watch the presidential debate about to begin on the TV screens. Nobody turned up the volume to listen.

Haulage companies rely on the open borders and seamless trade that the European Union created. But in France and other wealthier EU states, the drivers they employ are also at the mercy of the low-cost competition from the former communist east that comes with it. Polish trucks alone now account for a quarter of all international road transportation business in the EU. That's driving down delivery prices for consumers, and also the salaries of an unhappy workforce with few other career options. Barring a major shock, National Front leader Marine Le Pen looks likely to lose to the pro-European centrist and former banker Emmanuel Macron in the second round on May 7. But the anger that opinion polls suggest will give her about 40 percent of the vote, doubling her father's score in 2002, is here to stay.

"Beating the populist vote is not enough to tackle the very real problems we have," said Guntram Wolff, director of Bruegel, a Brussels-based economic think tank. **"There is too much complacency, a sense of business as usual."**

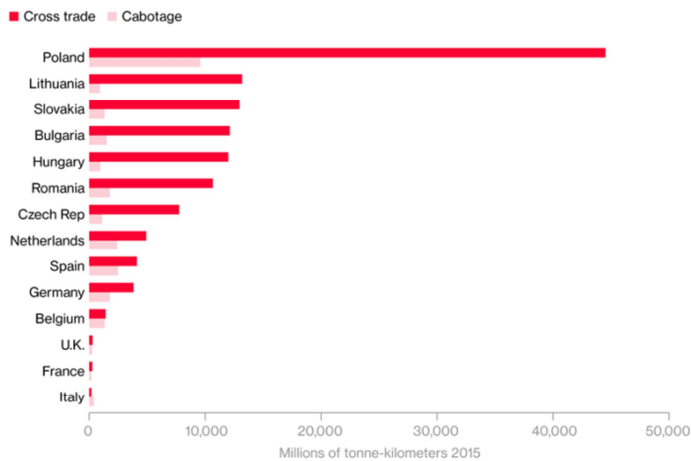
But there's little sign yet that EU officials and national governments have suddenly found the answers to income inequality, the combined social impact of rapid technological change and a globalized economy, the structural weakness of the euro, or of increased immigration. Driverless truck technology is already on the horizon and, while a growing robotics industry may create high-end jobs, drivers will not be among the winners."



"Who thinks France should leave the EU?" Franck Bosval, 50, asked a group of about a dozen French truckers just off the cross channel ferry from Normandy to deliver goods across the U.K., which last week triggered two years of Brexit talks. All but one agreed. "For us," said Bosval, "the EU does nothing anymore."

Truck Wars

Cross trade and cabotage by selected EU countries



Note: Cross trade = deliveries between two countries, carried out by a vehicle from a third country.
Cabotage = domestic deliveries conducted by a foreign carrier.

Source: European Commission

Bloomberg

Interviews with dozens of French truck drivers at Relais Routiers over three days showed the overwhelming concern is pay. Salaries are, at roughly 2,700 to 3,000 euros (\$2,900 to \$3,230) per month, worth less today than they were in the 1990s when adjusted for the cost of living. That was before the euro and EU enlargement to absorb the former eastern bloc, bringing in drivers for sometimes less than a third of the money.

According to the Comite National Routier, a transport think-tank funded by the French state, the total cost of a driver to employers ranges from 16,000 euros per year for a Bulgarian to 56,000 euros for a Belgian.

Under EU rules, a driver making an international delivery can also make a limited number within France before loading up to return home, what's known as "cabotage." The European Commission says that accounts for as little as 3 percent of the transport market. However, abuse of the restrictions is difficult to monitor in a borderless Europe. The true scale of the practice is much higher, at about 22 percent of the market, according to an Austrian study.

Priced Out

Cost per international driving hour in 2016, by nationality of company



Source: Comite National Routier

Bloomberg

France last year passed a law developed by Macron when he was economy minister requiring any EU truck company to pay its drivers the French minimum wage while delivering in the country. Germany, Italy, Belgium and Austria have passed or proposed similar laws. The EU objects and says that eventually all restrictions to free movement should be lifted.

Dozens of trucks with east European plates were pulled up in the parking lots outside the Relais du Pole 45 near Orleans, 80 miles south of Paris. Only western European drivers were eating inside, paying between 9 and 14 euros for a meal.

"They're modern slaves," said Dominique Morel, a former National Front adviser on road transportation who stopped in Orleans on his way back from a delivery to Belgium. He didn't blame drivers from the east for trying to improve their earnings, but rather the French carriers chasing lower costs to boost profit as well as the "globalists" in Brussels. Together, they are "vampirizing" the French transport market, he said.

Ideally, salary, fuel, taxes and welfare costs should be equalized upwards across the EU, according to the truckers. Indeed, their first choice would be for a fully harmonized Europe, rather than its break up. But they've given up on that happening.

The profession meanwhile has become unattractive to the next generation with the average age of a driver now at about 50 and shortages across the continent. Relais Routiers have been closing. "We used to be respected and now people look at us like dogs," said Jean-Phillippe Cavarho, 59, as he nursed a beer at the Relais de Bourges, further south on the highway from Paris to the Mediterranean coast.

Most of the drivers said they either wouldn't vote or would cast blank ballots to express their disgust. Of those who did select a candidate, virtually all picked Le Pen, citing her pledges to leave the euro and the EU, as well as her opposition to "globalism." They are in the minority. Opinion polls suggest that about 70 percent of French voters want to keep the euro. However, there is no shortage of potential crises that could turn the populist tide again.

Despite a pick-up in the euro area's economy, the French unemployment rate remains almost 10 percent. Islamist terror attacks continue. Bailout negotiations with Greece are news again, Italy is triggering renewed concern as a potential source of instability for the euro area and a deal with Turkey to control refugee flows from the Middle East looks increasingly fragile. Morel, a former marine, said the backlash is yet to come. He was kicked out of the National Front in 2

ST NAZAIRE SHIPYARD

Earlier Bloomberg reported from the St. Nazaire shipyard, which builds the huge monolithic new cruise liners.

Local politicians lamented that since 2014 local elections saw the Front, known by its French initials of FN, take 13 percent and win city council seats for the first time. The party's score rose to 18 percent in the 2015 regional elections, while its national tally was 28 percent.

"Industrially, our town has never done better," said Saint-Nazaire mayor David Samzun, a Socialist like every one of his elected predecessors going back to the 1920s. "But sadly, the FN has risen in every election and I expect them to do better again this time. They feed on fears, on the general malaise in this country."

He attributed Le Pen's rise to her message that France shouldn't be dictated to by the European Union. In Saint-Nazaire, that translates to concern over workers from EU countries at the STX shipyard. Mostly from eastern Europe, they labor under short-term contracts that allow them to be paid what they would get back home, far below French wage levels. Le Pen wants a clause added to the constitution giving preference to French citizens in jobs and welfare protection. She's also called for a surtax on companies that hire non-French workers, imposition of import duties and withdrawal from free-trade pacts — including the EU. Polls show she'll easily take one of the top two spots in the April 23 first round of voting, but will lose the May 7 runoff to

independent Emmanuel Macron, who favors EU membership and free trade.

The Saint-Nazaire area, which has about 220,000 inhabitants, has been the French center for passenger-boat construction since the 19th century. The town was totally rebuilt after World War II, when allied aviation pummeled it in attempts to destroy a German submarine base at the port.

After brushes with near collapse in the 1970s and 1980s, the shipyard was reborn as one of only six in the world — all of them in Europe — that make cruise ships. An adjacent Airbus SE factory employs 2,800 people to assemble airplane fuselages that are then sent off to other Airbus factories in France and Germany, which themselves have a 10-year backlog.

Blanchard, a former welder at the shipyard, began his political career as a Trotskyist before shifting to the far right. Crime and Islamic terrorism, major national subjects for Le Pen, aren't issues in Saint-Nazaire. The town doesn't have a crime problem and the town's three mosques blend in with the local community, he said.

But in addition to the concern over foreign workers, the shipyard's majority owner, Korea's STX Offshore & Shipbuilding, is in bankruptcy and being forced to sell. The FN has responded by calling for the nationalization of the shipyard, whereas the government is negotiating with the only bidder that's emerged, rival Fincantieri SpA of Italy.

Blanchard says as many as 40 percent of the 7,000 employees at the shipyard are foreigners working on so-called detached contracts. STX says between 15 and 30 percent of the shipyard's employees work under that status.

There are an estimated 300,000 detached workers in France, and all five major candidates in the presidential election say they favor tightening the rules to make sure they don't undercut French wages and standards. The minimum wage in France is about 1,480 euros (\$1,582) a month. In Poland, it's about 450 euros.

"The FN is going to get a good score at the election, that's for sure," says Chantal Nuyauet, tending bar at Le Bresil, a cafe across from the shipyard's entrance. "All the time I hear the complaint that foreign workers are holding down salaries for the French."

Pedro, a 43-year-old pipefitter from northern Portugal having an after-work drink with three French colleagues, said he's worked at refineries, shipyards and dairies in France, Germany and the U.K. over the past five years. He says he's never felt hostility from his French colleagues, unlike in Britain, but knows there are tensions. The minimum wage in Portugal is 650 euros a month. Samuel, a 36-year-old French colleague, says he has nothing against the detached workers, but resents the fact that the subcontractor they work for seeks cheap labor from across Europe. He says he'd never vote FN, but hears other workers say they will. Both declined to allow their family names to be used because otherwise they couldn't speak freely about their employer.

Hiring only French workers might make sense if France produced enough people with the right skills, said Christophe Morel, a 54-year-old delegate of the CFDT labor union. "The FN is rising here because they've abused the issue of detached workers to scare people," he said. "But the problem is that successive French authorities have devalued manual work."

On Avenue Penhoet leading to the entrance to the shipyards, six interim work agencies all have notices in their windows stamped

"Urgent." They are seeking electricians, industrial painters, welders, pipefitters and boilermakers.

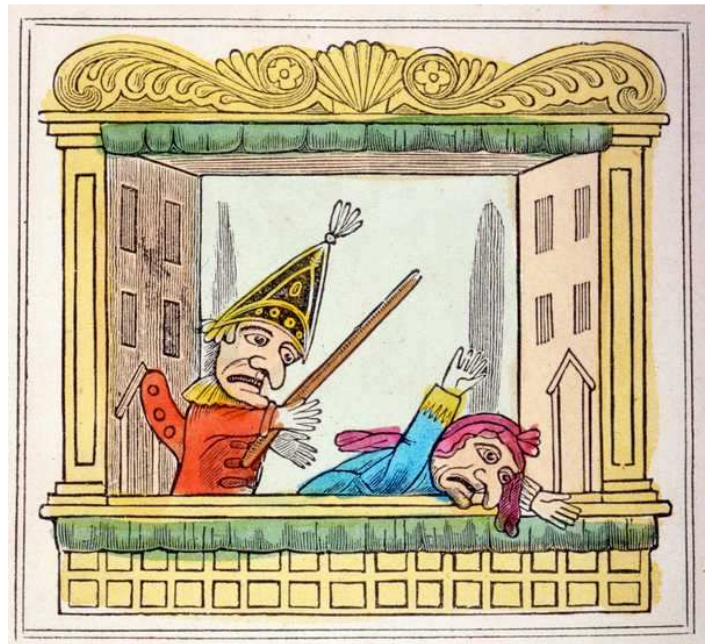
"It's not an easy problem to fix," said Pascal Saget, the 56-year-old manager of the local office of Axelis, a Lyon-based temporary-employment firm. "Factories here could never survive without importing workers, but that doesn't create much of an incentive for a French kid to take up one of those professions."

The lack of qualified workers means Saint-Nazaire's unemployment rate of about 8.5 percent, compared with 10 percent nationally, isn't as low as it should be given all the activity, Samzun, the mayor said. He's started working with local job centers to provide training, but it takes about four years to produce a qualified worker in most fields.

"Poles, Lithuanians, Romanians, they all come from countries with a serious shipbuilding tradition," said Morel. "But that's a point lost on FN voters."

That was before the 1st Round of the Election – who knows how, or if, they will vote 7 May. Although what possible purpose mass obstentions, as many are promising, can achieve is just beyond comprehension.

And it is not just France that is complaining about workers from Eastern Europe taking jobs at half salaries. Now Austria wants to make it possible to offer jobs preferentially to native Austrians, rather than finding jobs are being occupied by Hungarians, willing to work for half pay. But the EU unelect, totally ignore all these problems.



AND THE EU CONTINUES ITS MERRY ROUND OF VINDICTIVE INVECTIVE, BLAME, & BLACKMAIL AGAINST NAUGHTY UK!

And this is How you Do it, a la Punch & Judy – Bash Bash Bash!

Journalist Juliet Samuels commented: "Recently, EU president Jean-Claude Juncker made an odd and revealing remark.

Addressing the European Parliament on the topic of Brexit, he declared: "*The choice of the British people, however respectable it may be, does not fit into the march of history, not European history and not global history.*"(i.e).....true Brussels believers

cling to a central article of faith: whatever happens, history is on our side. If something should derail the EU project, it is not part of history, but an aberration from its natural order. This mindset goes a long way towards explaining why the EU is in such a dysfunctional mess.....”

““The EU’s leaders have been relying instead on a philosophical fantasy. What they will see, when Britain votes in a strengthened Tory government, is that a good leader knows when to fight and when to retreat and, in doing so, slays the populist dragon.”” Basically, as far as Juncker et al are concerned, no matter how many EU voters express their dissatisfaction with the hegemony of the EU and particularly of the Commission, they will be ignored.

But it is not all going their way, in the past few weeks, spokesmen for several EU countries, members, and their memberships are very diverse, are expressing their concern at the way the EC, most certainly under Juncker’s leadership, is conducting the Brexit negotiations.

NORTHERN EU TRIO - Don’t let minutiae hijack Brexit talks - Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands want to avoid any delay to trade talks.

In the past week, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte invited the Danish and Irish Prime Ministers to the Hague, for talks on Brexit, a bold action which will not have best pleased Juncker et al, displaying a flagrant disregard that all 27 EU members hang together in not allowing the UK to “Cherry pick”!



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (C) receives Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (R) and Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny (L) at the Catshuis in The Hague, The Netherlands on April 21

In a statement from the Hague: The leaders of Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands made a joint appeal to the EU not to let minor issues “hijack” the Brexit talks so negotiations can move onto trade as soon as possible.

“It’s not about that we fear that someone could hijack the negotiations, it’s about making sure that we avoid something like that,” said Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen at a mini-summit among the three countries in The Hague. The three stressed that, due to their close trade ties with the UK, they would have much to lose the longer businesses are uncertain over what rules will govern trade with Britain after it leaves. Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenny said: “If the prime minister [Theresa May] says that what she wants for Britain is as close a relationship with the European Union as possible, we support that, and the less implications there are for tariffs, and obstructions and administrative bureaucracy the better for everyone.”

Before the future relationship can be sketched out, the European Council must determine that sufficient progress has been made on the first stage of the talks, on Britain’s bill for leaving the EU and the rights of citizens. “We very much agreed that we will make sure that a decision [on progress] will be taken, that we prevent that some very small issue that might come up that could hijack the discussion,” Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said.

“We don’t want to wait for too long.” The three hope their position will be reflected in negotiating guidelines set to be agreed at a European Council meeting in eight days.

Approval is needed from all 27 countries.

The leaders are opposed to the proposed Brexit-settlement, thought to be as high as £50bn, as Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands’ economy could be badly affected, the Irish Times reports.

Minister of State for European Affairs Dara Murphy claimed Ireland was not seeking to build “formal alliances”, but was hoping to make its stance clear through a “collective” voice. Meanwhile, Ireland’s Minister for Agriculture Michael Creed said the government hopes to secure a deal which would decrease the risk of job losses on the isle after Brexit.

Trade unions have pushed for the Irish government to seek funding from the European Union to protect the 167,000 food industry jobs that could come under threat if divorce talks turn sour and a hard border is created between the UK and the rest of Europe. Almost 10 per cent of the Republic’s jobs is sustained by food and agriculture sector, 40 per cent of which is exported to the UK.

Speaking to the Express.co.uk, a Danish MEP, who has previously hammered Brussels for threatening to punish the UK for leaving the bloc, warned any such measures aimed at Britain, would also affect Ireland.

“But let’s be honest, the member states know that we are dependent on each other in security matters, and also in trade matters. “From a Danish point of view, we would lose one of our biggest trading parties, same thing for Germany, same thing for the Netherlands and Belgium.

“Especially Ireland I think will be a moderating factor here because every time you punish Britain, you punish Ireland also.

“Ireland is still a member of the European Union and when people think twice about this they’ll [realise] it would not be very wise to push Ireland towards also leaving the European Union.”

Interesting statements considering they fly in the face of those made by Juncker and Barnier.

ICELAND, SWEDEN WHO ELSE APPROVES?

And it is not just these three countries, Holland, Ireland and Denmark, who are champing at the bit at the thought of repercussions on their export markets.

Iceland, Sweden and others are all venting on the subject.

As the Icelandic foreign minister Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson said Europe should give Britain a trade deal that closely replicates current EU-UK trading relations and not seek to punish the UK after Brexit by erecting trade barriers, the Icelandic foreign minister has told the Telegraph.

He continued it was in the interests of both sides to have unfettered trade in Europe “as it was before” Brexit, and that European attempts to punish Britain would rebound badly on the 27 remaining member states.

"What does erecting trade barriers mean?" he added, "It simply means that the politicians in the remaining 27 EU countries will have to explain to the people who could lose their jobs, that they are doing it because they are so 'tough' on the Brits." BREXIT has sparked a new European order, with smaller nations plotting to rise up and form a coalition against the dominant Franco-German alliance. Officials from Denmark have met with their counterparts from Austria, Portugal and the Czech Republic in a bid to establish a new power base in post-Brexit Europe. There are fears France and Germany, who have a long-standing alliance, can simply run roughshod across Europe now Britain has left the Brussels bloc. Denmark's foreign minister, Anders Samuelsen, said: "The German-French alliance is well-known. "Upcoming elections may influence it, but nonetheless, without the weight of the UK, the balance of power will change." Denmark and Britain had a solid working relationship within the EU, enjoying a likeminded approach to life within the so-called "ever closer union".

The two nations agreed on issues such as defence and free trade, and both countries opted out of joining the catastrophic single currency and turned down calls for greater cooperation when it came to justice and spending. Indeed, Denmark was Britain's third closest ally in EU council votes between 2009 and 2015 behind Sweden and the Netherlands, siding with the UK 88 per cent of the time, according to British-based researcher VoteWatch Europe. Mr Samuelsen said: "Our goal is to create a lean and strong EU that's focused on peace, freedom and trade."

"So we're looking across Europe, to see who we might do well to align with once the British disappear from the equation." The Scandinavian nation is taking a more inward-looking approach than the EU would like, choosing to cut its European budget and promote the role of small and medium-sized member states. Mr Samuelsen added: "This is about taking care of Danish interests."

"And the way to do that is to work with countries we usually work with but also to boost cooperation with countries we used to work with less."

SWEDISH MINISTER ECHOES COMPLAINTS

Mattias Karlsson, the group leader of the Sweden Democrats in the Swedish Parliament, hammered Brussels for refusing to reform the 'undemocratic' bloc.

Speaking exclusively to Express.co.uk, Mr Karlsson suggested it was only a matter of time before the EU crumbled completely.

"We've seen an increase in resistance against the European Union and its undemocratic structure in central Europe, in France, in Scandinavia and many other countries," he said. "I think the European Union is like a zombie, it's actually dead but still walking. But in the end, it will show that this kind of structure is not sustainable. I think it will fall."

Mr Karlsson said Europe needs to cooperate in areas such as trade and security, but the fine print should be agreed between sovereign nations - not unelected officials. "We need to have close cooperation on many issues in Europe," he said.

"We have a common interest in fighting organised crime, terrorism, environmental threats and we also have a common interest in trading with each other."

"The rules surrounding that should be made up between the countries and democratically elected governments."

The damning assessment came after the Sweden Democrat politician also took a swipe at eurocrats for threatening the stick

the UK with a bad deal if Theresa May did not meet their Brexit demands.

Adding Brussels should respect democracy and honour the will of the British people, Mr Karlsson said: "It's disgusting actually. I think we need Britain - all the European countries need Britain."

"We are cousins in a cultural sense, we have a lot of common interests and the British people have democratically chosen this path to leave the European Union."

"We should respect that and we should make the negotiations as smooth and friendly as possible. The signals that are now coming from the European Union, the leadership there, are just appalling. "Threatening Britain and making remarks that are not respectful to the British people, I think it's just sad."

The right-wing politician, who's party is currently leading in the Swedish opinion polls, said the Sweden Democrats want to secure a good trade deal with Britain once it leaves the bloc. Mr Karlsson added it was difficult to lay out the specifics, but said cooperation across as many platforms as possible would benefit both nations.

He said: "I want us to cooperate in as many areas as possible."

"It's hard for me to sit here now and [outline] a deal but we want to have trade deals with Britain, we need the British people and the British people need us."

Quizzed on whether he believed the EU was willing to sacrifice a potential trade deal with the UK to punish Britain for Brexit, Mr Karlsson said he believed a bad deal was a strong possibility.

Mr Karlsson said: "Yes, unfortunately, it looks like that. It just stresses the fact that we have to get rid of the current leadership of the European Union."

"They are unworthy, they are not acting in the interest of European citizens and the respective nations."

"We should not have these kinds of negotiations, it would be much better if every country had negotiations with Britain rather than now being forced to obey the rules and the terms of the European Union."

Mr Karlsson added Brexit had opened the door for Sweden to follow it out of the bloc, the British people have shown it is possible to leave Brussels. "I think the eurosceptic movement will increase and I think that Brexit had a very big impact on this," the right-wing politician said. "People are starting to believe it is really possible to leave the European Union."

Mr Karlsson added: "**The position of my party is we want a Swexit as soon as possible because we feel our membership of the European Union is hurting us.**"

Fighting words indeed. But will Brussels Listen?

"A critical flaw within the EU is the pretence all EU countries are exactly the same. In the absurd belief all EU countries have the same culture, history and political views. But they are not - and they do not!"

"Since the turn of this century the EU has enlarged at a rate of knots, including countries which have totally different ideological views than the original members. As a result, the EU has split into different factions, constantly arguing about the EU and its future. "It is clear, however, the EU currently does far too much. Perhaps if it abandoned its plans for a European 'superstate' and transformed to a simple trading relationship, the countries of Europe would get along far better in the future."

TALES OF THE REGION – IT HAPPENED IN SEBORG!

By ROBERT TURNBULL

Determined to escape the inanities of the French primary last weekend, I joined a group of friends for an election rally that held out the promise of much more fun. It took place in the tiny hilltop town of Seborga, just across the border into Italy, which earned some notoriety in the early 1960s when Giorgio Carbone, then head of the local flower-growers co-operative, pronounced the town independent from Italy. Carbone discovered that there is no mention of Seborga in the Act of Unification for the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, so that in his view the town had a perfect right to declare itself a principality. A referendum on the issue in 1963 passed with a large majority, followed, by the declaration of a monarchy. Carbone wasted no time in crowning himself Giorgio I, Prince of Seborga, without so much a squeak from the European Union who were far too preoccupied with Brussels butter mountains to take much notice.

Giorgio I's 200 or so subjects were so moved by this turn of events they honoured him with the title Sua Tremendita - the Tremendous One. When he died in 1992 the state funeral was an especially solemn occasion as he had left no heir, so it was decided to take the unusual step of electing a new Prince, which duly happened when Marcello Menegatto, a hosiery heir, assumed the title of Marcello 1 the following year. It was his bid for reelection after seven years that brought me and my mates to Seborga last month. Rather than support the incumbent, however, we were rooting for his challenger, Mark Dezzani, a DJ and radio host from Crawley in West Sussex who, having installed himself in Seborga many years ago aimed to ennoble the place with some old-fashioned pageantry. One plan was to turn a local restaurant into a Royal Palace complete with throne room, guards in uniform, the return of Seborga's own currency and other quaint medievalism much loved by tourists. A charming, shy man and certainly not a natural despot, Dezzani needed all the support could get, especially since in the event only 42 of the electorate ended up voting for him.

Hearing that passions were running high, we dutifully turned up at the piazza expecting a scene out of Cecil B de Mille, the patriotic fervor of farmers shaking their fists for democracy and justice perhaps, or monarchists with unflattering effigies of Angela Merkel. The reality was somewhat different. In a scene of desolation straight out of a 1960s Antonioni movie, a few shadows cast over a newly-paved square that we first mistook for a car park but which actually served as the town's only public space. What made our arrival worse was the fact that the local bar and the only place to get a pastis at a 10 am had literally collapsed a few days earlier, the result of a trucker who had allowed his adolescent son to take the wheel once they entered the piazza for a bit of joyriding.

Sadly the boy missed the glass and concrete 'visitors centre' the mayor had installed to many people's horror a few months before and which has since become the favourite place for dogs to relieve themselves. It seems that this once picturesque square has been sacrificed to some mindless attempt at modernism, the embodiment of which in this case was the mayor's latest squeeze. But where were the villagers? We caught sight of an old woman dragging her groceries up the steep hill but the only people

demonstratively 'present' on the election eve party were a gaggle of 50-something Londoners and a Salade Nicoise of washed up cote d'azur types

It wasn't until people finally began to arrive that we were informed there was a celebrity in our midst. I might have recognized Justin Hayward had the lead singer /former pretty boy of the 60s band The Moody Blues been wearing his trademark purple and highly revealing loons pants from Kensington Market rather than a heavy winter coat. Some superannuated Belgian groupies did however. Rediscovering the teenager in themselves, they accosted the ageing rocker brandishing I-phones with the prospect Facebook "likes" lighting up their eyes. The ballad Nights in White Satin was played in honor of the star guest, written at a time when such highly combustible materials were all the rage. I gather it has since been banned by the EU on account of its effect on the ozone layer above Brighton, and rightfully so.

The concert had begun. A diva with a vibrato that made Maria Callas sound like a choirboy and set the dogs off. The band then launched into one of those reggae songs that invokes a kind of nostalgia in the over 50s, prompting those who remembered how to dance to started moving one leg after another. But the merriment was short-lived. The last remnants of rose had been squeezed from the bag-in- box – a sure sign that it's time to call it a night.

The morning broke to a search party in desperate pursuit of 'the hair of the dog.' A large bottle of Pernot had been sighted on a kitchen table the night before but the question was where. The election result wouldn't be called until 5pm so we had a few hours to arrive prepared in case of the peaceful handover of power might not happen as expected and things could only settled by John Wayne-style fisticuffs. Mark had campaigned with a Utopia platform to make the town 'nicer' and more tourist friendly while Marcello promised a grand hotel with Saudi money. But there were rumours that as the villagers hid in their homes, unwilling to anger the mayor who considered the Monarchy a challenge to his own power, voting cards had been handed out to anyone who had been passing through.

One wealthy supporter of Marcello 1, who runs a cult called The Madonna di Alvenia, has alarmed residents by buying up the town's houses in order to turn Seborga into something like an Italian Lourdes. When the Frenchman's wife died he left her body on the couch for three days until rumbled by an olfactorily sensitive dog. The man's explanation? He had been waiting for his wife to resurrect, a miracle that would have rendered a call to the police futile. As they say in most places outside Seborga, you couldn't make it up.

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TOULON STILL IN THE HUNT FOR END OF SEASON HONOURS

By **SIMON EVELEIGH**

The month of April was a relatively quiet one on the field of play, but the action that did take place was of great significance to Toulon and their end of season aspirations.

The month began with defeat at Clermont in the quarter-finals of the European Champions Cup, a result which all but the most one-eyed Toulon supporters probably expected. Clermont are the perennial runners-up of French rugby, having reached the final of the championship 12 times and only winning once. In Europe's main competition too, they have enhanced their reputation as nearly men, having reached two finals and losing both (to Toulon on each occasion), although they have won the second tier European cup twice.

Despite this unenviable record in finals, Clermont have consistently been amongst the best teams in Europe for the last few seasons and are particularly formidable at home. Toulon's form this season has been patchy and away from home they have only won three times, with the last victory being at Sale on 21st October. So, a 29-9 defeat at Clermont came as no surprise to anyone.

With the "distraction" of European competition removed, Toulon had four Top 14 games left to rescue their season and, fortunately, only one of these is away.

La Rochelle, Montpellier and Clermont have already sewn up the first three places and Toulon are the best placed of the 8 teams competing for the remaining three places. Home victories over Toulouse and Castres in the first of those four matches mean that Toulon are currently in fourth place, a position which would give them a home play-off.

By the time you read this, we will know if Toulon have broken their hoodoo à l'extérieur, as they play Bordeaux-Bègles (UBB) on 29th April. UBB are one of the other teams hoping to finish in the top six, but will need to win both of their remaining games to do so. Victory in Bordeaux would guarantee Toulon a top 6 finish. However, irrespective of the result of that match, the last game of the regular season at home to Pau is almost certain to determine whether Toulon play at home or away in the play-offs.

That match against Pau is at 8.45 pm on Saturday 6th May and with all the matches kicking off at the same time and so many teams in competition for the last few places, it promises to be a tense evening of rugby.

If Toulon should manage to finish in the top four and get a home play-off, despite their rather uninspiring season, it would be dangerous to bet against them getting to the final, as the semi-finals will be played at Marseille, where Toulon will obviously get huge support and where they have already played home games.

Those semi-finals are on Friday 26th and Saturday 27th May and tickets are still available.

JUNIOR RUGBY AT ST MAXIMUM – COME & WATCH

The Top 14 final will be at the Stade de France on Sunday 4th June, but if you fancy watching rugby at both ends of the spectrum in the same day, why not come along to St Maximin. Our club's annual tournament will see children aged from 5 to 12 playing and for them it will be every bit as important as any international or cup final. Please do feel free to come along and see the next generation of Michalak.

All the players that these children look up to started at their local club aiming to emulate their own heroes one day. Rugby has only been a professional sport for just over 20 years, but at the top end it is a business where the difference between winning and losing can have huge financial implications. However, money must never be allowed to be such a dominant factor that we forget why we picked up a ball for the very first time.

Sport is fun and good for you in so many ways, although the heartache when your team loses (be it as a 10 year old or a player at the elite level) can sometimes make you question why you do it.

At grassroots level clubs are run by groups of volunteers who give up so much of their precious spare time to ensure that others can play sport. These people do it because they love their sport and the reward for them is seeing youngsters smiling and enjoying themselves. That is enough in itself, but there is also always the thought that the next Gareth Edwards, Brian O'Driscoll or Martin Johnson may be hiding somewhere in your Under 8s!

In other rugby news, Toulon's Leigh Halfpenny has been included in the British & Irish Lions squad for the tour to New Zealand in June.

More on that subject, as well as news of the closing stages of Toulon's season, next time.

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