



Aude and Ariège Newsletter

July 2026

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter - and summer has definitely arrived with the long, light evenings, but also the periods of intense heat, dried out gardens and land, and the associated risk of wildfires. Conditions which can be difficult for anybody, young or old, but particularly for anyone with health issues. It's especially important that we look out for family and friends who may not be coping well but may be reluctant to say so.

Remaining on the weather theme, the two major events during the spring were both fortunate to have good weather. There are reports and photos below from the Aude Ouest Plant and Produce Fair in April and the Aude Est Picnic in May. The other regular activities all continued to be well attended.

Things will be a bit quieter over the

summer, as many members and supporters may be away on holiday or entertaining visitors. Check the Diary Dates below for details of which regular events will continue to take place and which are having an August break.

The first major event after the summer will be the Aude Est Autumn Fair on Saturday 26 September – full details in Lesley's report. Unfortunately it hasn't been possible to proceed with the 'Dance for Life' event, as a band and caller could not be found – perhaps for the future.

I hope you enjoy this summer read, including the relaxing Poetry Corner - and keep cool. Your comments and/or contributions are always welcome.

Janice Pickering sud-janice@cancersupportfrance.org

Dates for Your Diary

Aude Ouest Coffee Breaks at Les Marguerites, 11580, Alet-les-Bains. Coffee, cake and conversation. Exchange of paperbacks in good condition. 10h00 - 12h00, first Wednesday of the month: **5 August, 2 September..** **Free massages offered:** Hand and Arm Massage with Margaret in August. Back & Neck massage with Joan in September. Book in on arrival.

Lower income retirees in France – possible financial help available. Kate Coughlan will be offering appointments to anyone who thinks they might benefit.

If you are aged 65 or over, single or in a couple, and on a basic UK state pension only, you may be eligible for some financial help from the French - ASPA, 'Allocation de Solidarité aux Personnes âgées'. Kate will be at the August Coffee Break.

Book Exchange at La Salle de Fête, 11240, Cailhau, 10h00 - 12h00. Bi-monthly, on the 4th Wednesday, **22 July, 23 September**.

Ariège Get-Togethers at the Green Bazar Café (formerly the Mad Hatter), 34 Place Maréchal Leclerc, 09500, Mirepoix. 2.00 - 4.00pm the last Thursday of the month: **30 July, 27 August**.

Ariège Book Events at the Covered Market, 09600, Bastide-sur-l'Hers, 11h00 - 13h00. 1st Saturday in the month: **1 August, 5 September**.

Aude Est Book Café at the Salle des Associations, next door to the Mairie, 11200, Argens-Minervois, 10h00 - 12h00, 2nd Wednesday in the month: **8 July, 9 September**, **No meeting in August**.

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday 26 September: Autumn Fair at the Salle des Trois Copains, 11200, Argens-Minervois.

News from Ariège

The Mirepoix Get-Togethers held in the Green Bazar café were well attended (double figures) in both April and May, considering we were experiencing a canicule in May. But it was pleasant sitting outside in the shade, with a little breeze. However the June Get-Together was subsequently cancelled due to the exceptional heat. It is anticipated that the Get-Togethers will continue throughout the summer months on the last Thursday of the month at the Green Bazar café. Any changes will be announced to the Ariège members via email, and on Facebook.

The Book Event in Bastide-sur-l'Hers recommenced in May, following the civil engineering works in April, which disrupted access to the covered market. It continues to attract many people, who can also enjoy a catch-up and coffee at the local café. In June we had healthy pepper plants, donated by a member.

The request for volunteers to assist Mac, Martin, Liz and Nikki was successful in attracting another couple who helped at the June event. The Book Events will be continuing on the first Saturday of the month throughout the summer.

Corinne Bryan, Departmental Rep, Ariège

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News from Aude Est

'Bring a Platter to Share' Picnic

Aude Est held its first picnic event at the end of May. It had originally been planned for early May but was postponed due to the potential bad weather. On the day it was sunny, but thankfully not as hot as it had been a few days earlier. However, it was pretty breezy down by the Lac des Aiguilles in Argens-Minervois, and the odd plate went flying. We all brought a plate or two to share, and the tables were laden with loads of lovely food.

Lesley brought the wine to say "thank you" to everyone. It was a time to sit and relax together, enjoy being out by the lake, and even spot some of the birds flying around, which was appreciated by some. We all agreed that it was very enjoyable and that we ought to do it again, which is always a good sign.

Sue Ackloo/ Lesley Wisson



Our Book Cafés, held in the Salle des Associations, next door to the Mairie in Argens-Minervois, continue to be successful with Wednesday 8 July being the last before our Summer break. We are having a break during the month of August but we will be back again on the 9th of September. We look forward to welcoming any of you over our way.



September also sees one of our big events of the year, our Autumn Fair. This will be held on Saturday 26 September in the Salle des Trois Copains in Argens-Minervois. We are opening our doors at 9.00 in the morning so come early to claim your bargain purchases. We will be full of artisan craft stalls, tombola and brocante and we have refreshments available all day. Fish and Chips are on offer.

If you want to enjoy the Fish and Chips you will need to reserve them on csfautumnfair@gmail.com

This event has always been popular but only by having lots of people coming to buy from the stalls can we ensure continued success.

I can also give you advance warning of our extremely popular Christmas Quiz in December. Watch this space and Facebook for further details.

Lesley Wisson, Departmental Representative Aude Est

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News from Aude Ouest

Plant and Produce Fair

Saturday 25th April saw the third annual Plant and Produce Fair at Les Marguerites in Alet-les-Bains. The weather was fine with some sun and no expected rain – unlike last year when we had to hastily re-arrange tables and chairs as the heavens opened. Our team of helpers had already erected the marquee so we were able to get the tables prepared during the morning without too much stress.

The Plant tables were groaning with the large number of carefully prepared and labelled specimens. Special mention is needed to Hilary and David Brown who supplied almost half of the plants and who are already potting up seedlings for 2027. Aside from the decorative plants we had a good selection of young trees, herbs and young tomato plants. There were some plants left over at the end of the afternoon and they were donated to the Open Gardens Day at Montclar and the monies donated for them went to a children's charity.



The Produce tables were well stocked with a wonderful selection of yummy cakes and biscuits and these disappeared rapidly. There was a large selection of fresh vegetables and organic lettuces and eggs. Plus the team had carefully bundled a variety of cut herbs. There were also jars of jams, marmalades and pickles.

Please think of us when you are making any of these in the months to come for next year's fair. The date is set for the **24th April 2027**. Plenty of advance notice to prepare goodies, especially jams, pickles and chutneys from this year's harvest. If you're using recycled jars please ensure that these are sterilised and have the old labels removed and are re-labelled - we can all forget what we made a few months later. Also lids from pickles, etc can deteriorate or even become rusty so please check them and avoid using if this is the case.



Visitors arrived promptly as the gates opened and trade was brisk at all the stalls including the Raffle for a hamper of produce. There were also some gardening and cookery books available, the latter proving very popular.



Visitors could also buy tea, coffee and cakes prepared by Antoinette and her team, and it was lovely to see so many people enjoying them in the garden.

A huge thank you to Antoinette Fairhurst for making the day possible by allowing us yet again to use her garden and marquee. Also without the help of our great volunteers we would not be able to run this event, so Thank You!

And by no means least, a big thank you to all those who attended and generously donated, helping to raise just over €1300 for CSF funds to support the important work done by Active Listeners.



The 'Team' relaxing after the Fair

Steve Fray & Charles Dones

Cailhau Book Exchange

Our last Book Exchange was held on 20 May and provided a number of unexpected challenges. On arrival to set up, we found ourselves confronted by a bunch of workmen, preparing to repair the ceiling in the Salle de Fête. The Mairie were less surprised than we were, so had made available a small room opposite that we could use to lay out some books, but certainly not our acclaimed 1000+ books. Fortunately the weather was good, so consequently, we started to set up tables for books outside, to the right of the Salle, only then to be approached by a 'white van' couple who explained that they needed to access a large house at the rear of the outside tables for a house clearance! Finally, we managed to access one half of the kitchen so that our usual hot drinks and cakes could be dispensed, through the side window!



Due to the resilience and ingenuity of our volunteers staffing the event, an almost 'normal' amount of donations, of over €400, was received. This was helped by both the ceiling workmen and the house clearance team, both using our drinks and cake service, in exchange for generous donations.

We expect to be back to normal for our next monster Book Exchange at Cailhau, on Wednesday 22 July, from 10h00 to 12h00 for your summer reading.

Venez nombreux !

Phil Mercer.

Poetry Corner

Remind Me How Often

By Frank Ormsby

Remind me, if you can, how often
I lost my thread today,
stopping in the silence
after what I had said
and before what I intended.
My memory is a needle's eye.
Too much to ask that it recover
the day's lost connections.
How much of what I knew
has been deflected already
into the darkness
from which it will not return?
I hoard what I have
and coax what I can
of a language that disappears daily.
I am loath to let it go,
quick to locate its absence
on the tip of my tongue.
I strive to make sense
around emptying spaces
and your extravagant gestures.
So remind me if you can how often
I lost my thread today.
Start me with half a sentence,
Draw the thread through.

This poem written 7 years ago by Emily Cullen, about her son Lee, turned up on his Junior Cycle English exam (the Irish equivalent of GCSE) this year – to the amazement of them both.

Envoi in Chalk

By Emily Cullen

I'm calling my son from the end of the
estate
When my eye snags on green pastel
words.
He has chalked on the pavement:
The world is great.

Earthmonk

If you're an early riser, try not to
reach for your phone straight away.

Open the curtains. Step outside
if you can.

Listen to the birdsong and their
dawn chorus. Notice the
changing light in the sky and
the way the world slowly begins
to wake.

Those quiet moments before
the noise of the day takes over
are sacred. Take this time to
listen to the whispers of your
soul instead of the demands of
the world.

This is just the line I need to read;
my mother in hospital, my shoulder
inflamed,
our financial future uncertain.
Earth eyeballing Armageddon.

Yet how right, his perception.
He bolts up on his yellow scooter,
eight year-old fringe quiffed with gel,
on the cusp of the age of cool.

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