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Corsica Bullitinu

December 2008

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Dear Dermot,

It's almost Christmas! Yet it seems no time at all since we were all basking in warm sunshine on Corsica's beaches - and I for one can't wait to get back there.

However, I hear that there has been some truly awful weather in Corsica recently, with Bastia taking a particularly severe battering.

This edition of *Corsica Bullitinu* takes a peep into Corsica's future, in the first part of an important two-part series by visionary engineer and economist Jean Casta, who I first heard at the 6th Consulte in Pietranera earlier this year.

We also take a glimpse into the island's distant past. Dr Keith Wilkinson, one of the archaeologists managing an international team including the University of Corsica at Corte introduces us to the ancient landscapes of the Balagne.

But before that, we have included a few ideas for Christmas presents, especially designed for Corsophiles, and a short account of Corsica's participation in the London Wine Growers' Fair.

And finally, with the world's airlines in turmoil, I've added some suggestions on how to get to Corsica in 2009.

Enjoy the December Bullitinu!

Mac

Corsica's wines come to London

travel pages

6. Book a holiday with Corsican

Places

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-//-

Links to Corsican winegrowers featured in this issue:

Clos Fornelli

Domaine de Vaccelli

Clos Lucciardi

-//-

BEFORE YOU GO...

Renewing your travel insurance?

Buy Lonely Planet's Guide to Corsica

Corsica

Buy the new Granite Island edition



Over the weekend of 21-23 November this year, London had a gentle introduction to the wines of Corsica. The occasion was the French Wine Growers' Fair, and three Corsican wine growers braved the journey to London to ply their trade.

Hobnobbing with the best of

Bordeaux and Bourgogne were some of Corsica's finest, and visitors were able to sample wines made from Corsica's Vermentinu and Niellucciu grapes and above all Corsica's unique cépage, Sciacarellu in the grim environment of London's Barbican Exhibition Centre.

My picture shows (from the left) Gérard Courreges of [Domaine de Vaccelli](#), near Ajaccio, Fabrice Couloumère of [Clos Fornelli](#), from Corsica's East Coast near Aleria, and Mme. Josette Lucciardi of [Clos Lucciardi](#) from the same region. On the right is Mme. Dominique Trameni-Carnell, former President of London's *Association des Corses*, who had made the effort to come and welcome the growers in person.

The delegation did Corsica proud. Clos Lucciardi's smooth Niellucciu more than held its own amongst its better known neighbours; Clos Fornelli was showing off its spicy, spikey and exciting new Robe d'Ange - now almost exclusively Sciacarellu, and Domaine de Vaccelli was exhibiting its silver-medal winning red, carefully and expertly blended from Corsican and other grape varieties.

I left the grey concrete slab of the Barbican with a big grin on my face - what a great experience to taste and feel some Corsican sunshine on a grey London day in late autumn!

Christmas gifts for Corsophiles!



Model of wild boar, by Catherine d'Angeli



If your loved ones are just counting the days to when they can jump on an aeroplane and head back to Corsica, you should explore some of these Christmas gift ideas.

They range from affordable to luxurious, and from practical to downright indulgent.. All the suppliers have featured in recent issues of *Corsica Bullitinu*. Some of these links connect direct to the suppliers; others route you to our books or music page where you will find the appropriate link.

For Him

Drinks: A case of Corsica's famous beer, Pietra, from Beerhere.co.uk delivered to your door

Book: Corsica: [The Rough Guide](#)

A map of your favourite island: [Corsica \(AA Road Map France Series\)](#)

[Men's skin-care gift pack](#) from Crena Care, based in Corsica.

For Her

Cosmetics: [Anti-ageing gift pack](#) from Crena Care, Corsica's exciting new cosmetics company

Cosmetics: [Christmas skin care gift set](#) from Crena Care

Book: [Recipes from Corsica by Rolli Lucarotti](#)

Book: [The Rose Cafe: Love and War in Corsica by John Hansen Mitchell](#)

For Everyone!

Pottery and sculpture: High-class [Corsican artisanal sculpture](#) from Catherine d'Angeli

Book: [Lonely Planet - Corsica Guide](#)

Book: [Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica \(Penguin Classics\) by Dorothy Carrington](#)

Music CD: [Alma by Corsica's best known group I Muvrini](#)

What's the future for Corsica in the Mediterranean region? Part I



By Jean Casta *President of the Association Euro-Méditerranéa**

It may be a particularly dangerous exercise at the moment, but it's tempting to look into the future from the period we're now living in - a period when everything's changing, when we're going through an unprecedented period of break-down, uncertainty and transition. So I'm limiting this article to some observations made several years ago by *L'association corse euro-méditerranéa*, in which we've mixed bits of history, geography, economics and Corsican culture - all taken in the context of Europe and its Mediterranean neighbourhood.

Firstly, in the 1980s, geographers described a zone - in the shape of a

banana - extending from Lancashire in the UK to the Po valley in Italy. The region (see map below) corresponds historically with intensive interactions which had developed between the big centres of activity to the south of the North Sea and to the north of the Mediterranean. In this zone - the backbone of Europe - there was a massive concentration of exchanges of wealth and activity. It's here that we found the highest number of towns and the densest population in Europe, the highest production of value-added goods and services and the heaviest traffic.

The second observation concerns two major events that happened over the past 15-20 years: in 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and some years later the enlargement of the EU towards the countries to the east. This fundamental restructuring of European space towards the east seemed to indicate at the time a displacement of Europe's backbone, plans for new infrastructure (e.g. the Lyon-Turin rail link, considered the "missing link" of a great east-west axis connecting Lisbon to Budapest and Kiev) and in a word the affirmation of a southern European arc going from Spain and Portugal to Hungary, bypassing the coastal regions of southern Europe.

With the result that during these last few years, by the will of the European Union, we have seen what I think of as the marginalisation of the south. Between 2000 and 2006, the EU has assigned 50 billion euros to European eastward enlargement and just five billion euros towards the countries of its southern coast. Since then, we can say without exaggeration that Europe has turned its back on the Mediterranean. Such is (in our opinion) apart from other, historic elements, the first facet of the problem of Corsica's future.

Corsica's unique problems

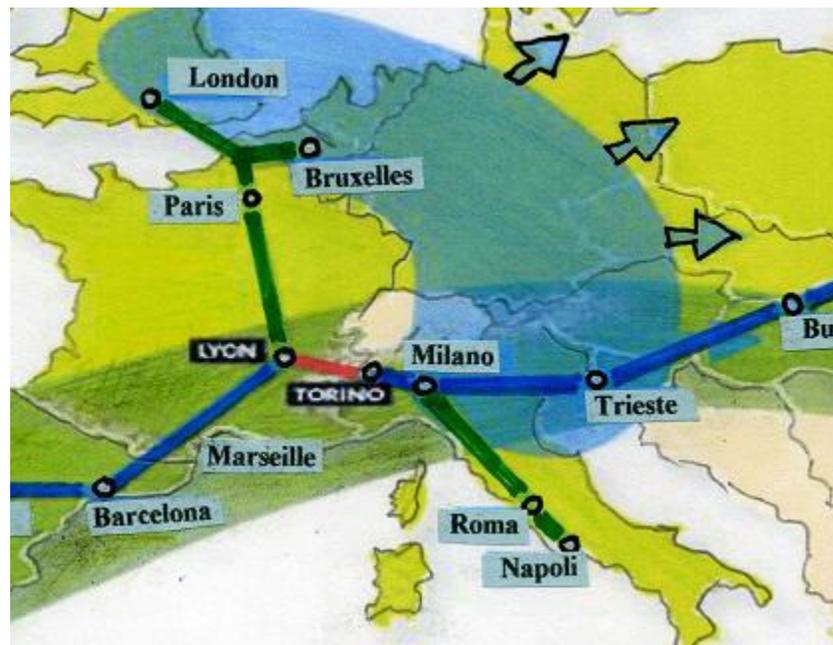
The second part of the problem concerns Corsica itself. For about the past three decades, the profound changes that have taken place in our contemporary world have deeply affected insular society, which, for multiple historical, geographical and political reasons, wasn't prepared either economically, or technically or from a humane perspective to face up to them and develop its own resources.

Today, faced by the difficulties suffered by many strata of France's citizenry, Corsican society adds its own deficiencies, past and present. As the region which is the most under-populated in France, it must face desertification of its interior, aggravated by constraints associated with the absence (despite recent improvements) of an extensive, high-performance transport network, road or rail, thus dividing the territory into little isolated regions. Moreover, the island hasn't taken advantage either of its proximity to other countries or its central position in the western Mediterranean.

All these factors have driven Corsica to remain enclosed, compartmentalised and isolated, a prisoner of a closed vision regarding the organisation of its land which has prevented it from becoming a link in the geopolitical and commercial strategy of France, and even more so of Europe as a whole.

In the next issue I will suggest how Corsica can exploit its unique geography to tackle some of these problems.

**The Association euro-Méditerranéa is a member of the non-Governmental Organisation Euromed, and the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures.*



Corsica is being marginalised, according to Jean Casta. Already left out of the intensive development and commercial interactions associated with the "blue banana" of Europe's traditional heartland, it's being further isolated by recent developments like the fall of the Berlin Wall and the EU's eastern expansion.

An interesting PS about ER Whitwell...

Following Robert Sharp's review of ER Whitwell's book *Through Corsica with a paintbrush* in September, I received this interesting PS from reader John Theakstone:

As the later compiler of the Corsica bibliography (and author of the biographical bibliography of Victorian and Edwardian women travellers, published in USA by Martino in 2006, in which a brief biography of Mrs Whitwell and a description of her book on Corsica appear) I was interested in Robert Sharp's article about Mrs Whitwell's book.

He did not mention a couple of comments made by Mrs Whitwell, which I think both reflect her character and show why the style of her book makes it so readable.

At Piana she had to turn out of her bedroom so that fifty-five members of a French cycling club could lunch there; they had no cycles. At Vizzavona, the highest point where there was an inn in Corsica, it was very cold. Mrs Whitwell found there some English ladies being "braced up," as they called it, before their return to England. Perhaps, she wrote, high altitudes with a good deal of rain and damp were considered bracing, but she preferred fresh air and plenty of sunshine as her tonic.

Readers of the bulletin may be interested to know that Mrs Whitwell exhibited at the Society of Women Artists in 1922-1923.

John Theakstone

Rediscovering Corsica's ancient landscapes



By Keith Wilkinson

*A group of
archaeologists walking
a transect in the
Balagne*

This time last year Corsica Bulltinu readers were introduced to La Balagne Landscape Project (LBLP) in an article written by Mac McKeone. I aim to update you on the work we have undertaken in 2008 in the short contribution that follows. As you may remember from the previous article, LBLP is an archaeological survey of an area of north-west Corsica between the Fangu and Ostriconi rivers.

We are not only interested in finding new archaeological sites, but we also seek to reconstruct the environment in which past human activity in La Balagne took place. The Project is directed by Dr Marcos Llobera (University of Washington, Seattle, USA), Prof M.C. Weiss (Groupe de Recherches Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques, Université di Corsica Pasquale Paoli) in Corte and myself, Dr Keith Wilkinson (University of Winchester, UK). It has been running since 2005. Each summer we spend a month in Corsica (usually in June and July), carrying out fieldwork, while we use the time between field seasons to analyse data. By 'we' I mean the project directors, technical staff, graduate and undergraduate students from all three universities, together with other students from US universities who take part in the University of Washington Field School.

Prior to the 2008 field season we had surveyed five communes (Aregno, Calenzana, Calvi, Galeria and Lavatoggio), carried out borehole surveys of two coastal lagoons (Piana di l'Olmù and Etang de Crovani) and mapped the geomorphology of the Fangu, Marsolinu and Figarella valleys.

Our objectives in the June-July 2008 field season were to survey the coastal commune of Corbara and the upper Fangu valley in the Commune de Mansu, as well as investigate the mouth of the Ostriconi valley and l'Etang de Cannuta (also in the Ostriconi valley). This sounds relatively straightforward on paper, but in practice archaeological survey in La Balagne is very difficult. We have to walk transects (see illustration) across terrain that is covered by prickly maquis vegetation, all the time looking down at our feet to make sure that we do not miss any artefacts. Navigation is also tricky even with the aid of the latest in differential GPS technology, as the maquis is invasive and renders maps and aerial photographs misleading.

The limitations of our university vacation time mean that we have to work in the high summer and consequently there is the intense heat which makes survey work in the afternoon extremely unpleasant - so we work between 6:00 and 14:00 hrs in the field and 17:00-20:00 hrs in the laboratory. Nevertheless, despite the discomforts of vicious vegetation, early mornings and late nights, for me at least, the four weeks of fieldwork in Corsica are the most enjoyable part of my job!

LBLP has recovered finds dating from the Neolithic (c4000 BC) until the post-Medieval period, including burial grounds (both open air and in caves), stone tool production sites, settlements and features linked to subsistence. It is clear that transhumance of sheep has played a key roll in Balanine economies for at least 4000 years as a large proportion of our finds are located along historically known routes from the mountains (summer pasture) to the coastal lowlands (winter grazing grounds).

Corsica was a latecomer to arable farming

From the Medieval and post-Medieval periods we find bergeries and sheep pens, while prehistoric stone tools cluster along ridge top routes. Although arable agriculture was reasonably intense in the river valleys in the 19th century, it seems to have been relatively limited in earlier times. We have found threshing circles and grain storage buildings of Medieval and Post-medieval date, but our only evidence for earlier cultivation are grinding stones made from local volcanic rocks. These may have been used from the Neolithic period onwards for obtaining flour from cereal grains on a very small scale. Indeed, data collected from the Piana di l'Olmù in the 1970s by Maurice Reille, who analysed fossil pollen, suggests that cultivation was only significant in the Roman and post-Medieval periods and in other periods there were few openings in the forest.

Nevertheless, even though people did not intensively exploit their landscape to grow crops prior to the prehistoric period, our borehole survey of the Etang de Crovani demonstrates that Neolithic people knew how to exploit fire to clear a landscape of vegetation in order to promote grazing. At least three burning episodes have been recognised in cores from this site dating between 2000 and 5000 BC. Borehole data collected from the coastal lagoons and the Ostriconi valley also suggest that the coastline has altered significantly over the past 7000 years and that Crovani and Ostriconi in prehistory would have looked completely different to the present day.

Constantly changing coastline

The Plage d'Ostriconi is arguably the best beach in La Balagne and presently supports a holiday camp. However, as recently as 2000 years ago there would have been no beach. Rather, Ostriconi would have been an estuary of grey intertidal mud extending at least 2km inland from the present shoreline. The situation would have been quite different at Crovani where the sea has eaten away at the land since 5000 BC. In later prehistory the Etang would have extended seaward of its present location and would have been much larger than the present feature.

The time in between field seasons on any archaeological project is a time for less glamorous laboratory and library-based studies that follow on from fieldwork. It is also a time of nervous anticipation as the results of the latest grant applications are awaited. LBLP is no exception. We will run another field season in 2009, but the scale will be determined by success or otherwise of funding bids. We hope to survey another two or three communes and complete our borehole studies in the Ostriconi valley, while ultimately, in three or four years time, we will publish the project as a book and a web resource.

I shall report more on LBLP during 2009, but in the mean time if you want to learn more about the project, access our websites at:

<http://www2.winchester.ac.uk/archaeology/Balagne.htm> or <http://depts.washington.edu/digarlab/balagne/labalagne.html>.

Some travel notes for 2009

It's not been the best few months for the travel industry, and when you plan your next trip to Corsica, you are going to have fewer options. Sadly, it will not be possible to fly direct from Bristol to Corsica this summer, but the news is not all bad.

The demise of Excel Airways means that there are fewer airlines providing direct flights between the UK and our favourite island. This situation has been compounded by the reduction in the number of planned flights by Thomson.

This in turn means that people visiting Corsica this summer who like to fly direct from Britain or break their journey in London and who can't find a flight would be well advised to look at alternative routes.

Direct flights - Britain to Corsica

Let's start by summarising the airlines and tour operators who will sell you a flight between the UK and Corsica this summer.

They are:

EasyJet (London Gatwick to Ajaccio and Bastia);

Thomson (London Gatwick to Bastia and Figari, Manchester to Figari);

Corsican Places (London Gatwick to Calvi and Figari, Birmingham to Bastia, Manchester to Calvi and Figari, and Edinburgh to Bastia);

Holiday Options (London Gatwick to Bastia Calvi & Figari, Birmingham to Bastia, Manchester to Bastia and Figari, Edinburgh to Bastia).

As usual, all these flights go on Sundays, with some of them starting in May and ending as late as early October. Full details on [Corsicaholiday.com's "Getting There" page](#)

Flights from France

So what are the alternatives, and what happens if you are flying in from the USA, Ireland, France or elsewhere? Well there's much better news on this front.

If you are flying from or breaking your journey in France, there is now an exciting new possibility opened up by easyJet's recently approved daily route between Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport and Bastia. The good thing about this - apart from the fact that it's daily - is that most international flights from the USA, the Far East and Australia land at Paris CDG and the new easyJet route means you don't have to take the navette around the p erif erique to Paris's other airport, Orly, to get your onward flight.

This will introduce healthy competition for Air France who have had a monopoly of France-Corsica flights until this year, and who continue to provide an excellent service to the island from airports all over France.

Other options

We can't give all the possibilities for travel to Corsica from all over Europe, but I would suggest that you take a look at [Corsica Isula's Travel pages](#). These look at the inward flights and also provides a matrix of ferry options.

The above is not a complete list of all the options, but it's a start. If you know any other ways of getting to Corsica that we should publicise, please let me know!

And that's all for this year. I hope you enjoyed reading *Corsica Bulltinu*.

Before I close, we have a new page on Corsicaholiday.com devoted to [travel insurance and holiday spending money](#) in Corsica - a bit of a boring subject, I know, but we always renew ours at around this time of year and you never know when you are going to need the former!

As always if you have any ideas for future articles, pictures or poems to include in the next edition, just drop me a line. Talking of which, we haven't had anything recently from the far-flung Corsicans of the diaspora for a while, so if you are sitting on a good idea about the doings of Corsicans in the Americas or the Caribbean, do share it with us.

Correction

And finally, I must correct a misconception in September's *Bulltinu*. In the article about Corsica's wines last issue, I indicated that there were nine separate AOC regions in Corsica. In fact there are just four, namely AOC Ajaccio, AOC Patrimonio, AOC Muscat de Cap Corse and AOC Corse. The other appellations which I promoted to AOC regions in my article are all subdivisions of AOC Corse. Many thanks to Josée Vanucci of [Clos Fornelli](#) for pointing this out.

PS. I promised Catherine d'Angeli that I would tell you all the dates of her new pottery courses, the first of which will be held between 21st and 30th April 2009. It's a five day course covering clay modelling (21st-23rd) then some raku firing, smoking, cleaning, theory etc (29th-30th) after a break of five days. More details from Catherine herself at catherine.d-angeli@orange.fr.

All that remains now is for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Brilliant New Year. See you all in March!

Mac McKeone
Corsica Bulltinu

email: mac@corsicaholiday.com
web: <http://www.corsicaholiday.com>

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