

July 2006

High summer has arrived in the Quercy. Little stone villages drowse in the heat, scarlet and pink geraniums foam from every windowsill, dogs pant in the shade and cats prowl through immaculate potagers.

A few days ago several of our local friends were to be seen pillaging the roadside walnut trees, baskets in hand. It was midsummer's day and midsummer magic was brewing all over Europe. In the Quercy we were collecting green walnuts to indulge in a little brewing of our own. It's time to concoct this year's ration of *Aperitif de Noix*, one of the highly desirable local liqueurs. It's a devilishly potent brew, consumed with much lip smacking by the older generation and not disdained by the young. There are hundreds of variations on the basic recipe, but all include green walnuts, pricked to make sure there's no shell, quartered – mind your fingers, they stain – and added to *Eau de Vie*, sugar and an innumerable selection of spices and other indigenous flavourings. Legend has it that the walnuts must be gathered on this one day and although it may not be true for the many whimsical reasons propounded, it's certainly true that only a week or so later the shells have started to form and the bitterness that gives the ripe nuts their distinctive flavour has started to strengthen unpalatably. I made my first batch two years ago and find it goes deliciously well with the dried fruits and nuts at Christmas.



Meanwhile in the villages and towns, markets have swollen rapidly to accommodate random tourists and seasonal traders laden with the characteristic sights of summer. Heaps of luscious tomatoes weighing half a kilo or more each and vast mounds of *haricots verts* which the ladies of Cahors will sedulously snap between their fingers to ensure absolute tenderness. If they encounter a less than perfect specimen they'll shake their heads sorrowfully at the apologetic stallholder before taking their custom elsewhere.

I like to begin at a little stall at the back – rather worryingly close to Leonidas, the chocolate geniuses – where I buy the most delectable courgettes, no bigger than my thumb and as fresh as the morning.

There are bunches of crimson radishes and vast red peppers, a small box of fiery chillies sits temptingly beside the herbs, and I generally order two enormous Batavia lettuces.

"Three for a euro", she encourages me, grabbing a handful of parsley for good measure.

Oh, why not then? They won't fit in the fridge, that's why not! But I buy them anyway and start to plan seriously salady lunches for the next day or so. I still have enough change from my crumpled five-euro note to buy a bag of huge, perfumed peaches from the stall next door. By the time I've added half a dozen sumptuous, ripe tomatoes to accompany the lettuces and joined in the snapping at the bean piles, my marketing basket is beginning to feel a trifle heavy.

I stagger through the throngs towards refreshment at the café and drop into my favourite chair with a thankful sigh. An iced Perrier-menthe restores my equilibrium in less than five minutes. It is mid-morning and already nearly thirty degrees, but the plangent, effervescent sound of the fountains seems to cool the air.

I sit back, sip enjoyably, listen to the cicadas in the tall plane trees and delight in the summery scene.



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## What's New on FrenchEntrée-LotandQuercy.com?



### The Historic Shrine of Rocamadour

An historic shrine perched on a limestone cliff, Rocamadour tells a story of religious belief and human endeavour. Looking out over the gorge of the River Alzou, this city devoted to the Virgin Mary has remained for over nine hundred years a symbol of faith and hope. It has also become a must-visit attraction for anyone holidaying in the area in the northern part of the Lot department.

[Read more...](#)



### The World Through a Wine Glass

Lot resident Patrick Kelly is the owner of *Le Courier du Vin*, a wine merchant in Maroux – here he gives us his impressions of the recent wine trade fair in London – where French producers are not shown in a good light...

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### Lot and Quercy Business Directory

Every day, hundreds of people view our pages searching for houses, holidays, local tradesmen and other service providers. If you have a Lot and Quercy related product or service you can add a basic listing to our Business Directory completely FREE. If you're looking for something, we already have more than 200 local businesses listed..

[Business Directory](#)



### Reiki Treatment and Training in South West France

Stress Solutions is a Complementary Health Practice based in the Lot and Quercy region and rapidly becoming the premiere site in South West France for Reiki training and treatment. Reiki is a completely safe, natural, holistic treatment, simple, non-invasive and extremely powerful.

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### An Introduction to French Wine - Challenging Times Ahead?

France is one of the oldest wine producing regions of Europe. It also produces the most wine by value in the world (although Italy rivals it by volume and Spain has more land under cultivation for wine grapes)...

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### Books and Company - An English Bookshop in Gourdon

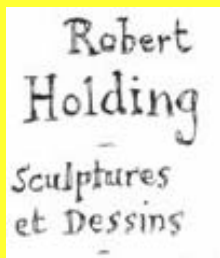
Books and Company is an English bookshop in the charming town of Gourdon in the Lot. Opened in November 2005 and stocking greeting cards as well as an extensive range of books, the shop has proved to be very popular with locals and tourists alike.

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### Holiday Accommodation - Including on line Availability Chart

More new properties added this month and still a few left with availability for this summer, but be quick! Find out which properties are still available by checking our [Availability Chart](#), or go straight to the [Holiday Accommodation Pages](#).



### Summer Exhibition of Sculpture in Montcabrier

Robert Holding has been living and working in Montcabrier in the Lot since 1989. He was born in Shropshire in 1933 and studied fine art in Liverpool and Camberwell. He was assistant to Henry Moore for some years and was principle lecturer in sculpture at Winchester School of Art.

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### Properties For Sale

Looking for a dream home in the Lot and Quercy? Start your search here for properties in the Lot, Lot et Garonne and Tarn et Garonne regions of France. Across this region the database contains over 250 properties and land for sale. With land prices starting at 15,000 euros and properties from 45,000, a place in the sun could be cheaper than you'd think.

[Property for Sale](#)



### Swimming Pools and Pool Security Systems from Piscine-Plus

Do you want an in-ground swimming pool that looks beautiful, can be installed quickly and doesn't cost the Earth? Piscine-Plus have the answer. A 37 square metre pool, fully installed in two weeks for only 14,150 euros!

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### Rey Immobilier - Property Sales in the Quercy

So, you've decided you want to buy – a permanent residence, a holiday home, a DIY project, somewhere you can relax with your friends and family, the dream house you've always wanted. You need look no further than Rey Immobilier to get you started.

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### Exchange Rate Comparison - Moneycorp can save you money

Buying euros for your property purchase in France? Save money by using a specialist foreign currency dealer. Moneycorp offers extremely competitive exchange rates, no commission charges and low transfer fees.

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### Featured Rental Properties - Available This Summer!



#### Beautiful Country House in the Lot Valley near Cahors (sleeps 9 +2)

A beautiful old vigneron's house nestling among vineyards and overlooking the river Lot in the south of France. Set in it's own grounds, with a heated 6 x 12 m pool, it is very private yet within walking distance (2.5Km) of a medieval village with market and all facilities. Full linen and maid service included.

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#### Superb Country House in the Lot (sleeps 6-14)

La Chave is an attractive, American owned house finished to a very high standard. The main house sleeps six in three bedrooms (plus a double pull out couch) and the converted barn sleeps a further six. The swimming pool (10m x 5m) has beautiful views down and across the valley.

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