

# Clients Cornered

When **David & Nydia Moss** ([www.moulin-a-huile.com](http://www.moulin-a-huile.com)) came to France fourteen years ago to buy a small place in Provence, they had no idea they would end up running a holiday rental business and producing their own olive oil!

That sunny, spring day in 1990, our dream was to buy a holiday home in Provence – but when we were shown an old olive oil mill (*moulin à huile*) with a stunning view over the Mediterranean, we had an instant *coup de cœur*!

Surrounded by centuries-old olive trees, the mill needed serious renovation work - the buildings and land had been abandoned in the 1950s when a disastrous frost destroyed most of the olive trees in Provence. The local economy was also decimated, as was the Marseille soap industry which needed the oil from the olives. Even today, pine trees have grown everywhere in place of olive trees and are the main reason that forest fires spread so quickly here.

Happily, our little olive grove survived and the photo shows the sort of trees we inherited. Although we were complete novices in the art of *oleiculture*, we cut the trees back to the trunks which then sprouted new branches. When we moved here permanently eight years ago, local friends started to pass on their traditional pruning skills to us.



Although the mill no longer has the machinery needed for producing oil, we still have a magnificent stone-crusher (*broyeur*). But to produce our oil, we take our olives to a nearby mill for pressing. We quickly learned that Extra Virgin oil has to have less than 1% acidity. To begin with, ours was way over this - but with the mill owners' guidance about pruning, feeding and irrigation, our oil has now reached this quality. We only have about twenty trees, but those produce far more oil than we can use ourselves, so our surplus is snapped up by our holiday clients who take it home to remind them of sunny Provence (along with lavender bags and other handmade gifts that Nydia makes, as pictured below).

It hasn't all been easy, though. It is said that it takes dynamite to kill an olive tree, but last year we found a chill mist from the sea on a May evening can ruin your entire olive crop by destroying the delicate, tiny blossoms, but fortunately this is a rare event.

The climate here is also a heaven for insects - particularly the *mouche d'olive*, which lays its eggs inside the growing fruit. With the skin punctured and a worm inside, the olives rot and then fall early. One solution is to spray the trees with insecticide throughout the summer, but we use a more ecological method: male olive fly hormone is used as bait to attract the female flies - only then do we resort to spraying (sex had to get into this somehow!).

November is the time when family and friends join us for the olive equivalent of the *vendange* - and it is a perfect excuse for climbing a few trees! You can use any method you like to get the black and shiny olives to fall into nets spread on the ground. Afterwards, you don't want to see or taste another olive ever again, but it all seems worthwhile when we return home with beautiful golden oil to accompany our "harvest home" Provençal feast.

Relaxing after the meal in the rosy glow from our local wine, we get a wonderful feeling of continuing what has been done here for centuries. And there are few sights more romantic than the shiny leaves of the ancient olive trees glistening and shimmering at dusk in the warm summer breeze.



# Letsites Newsletter

Issue N°5 September 2004



[www.letsites.com](http://www.letsites.com)

If you'd like to be "cornered" in a future issue, please contact [emma@letsites.com](mailto:emma@letsites.com)

## The LetSites Newsletter - September 2004

Welcome to the September Newsletter - and we hope that everyone's had a great summer season!

Following the excellent response to the LetSites Advertising Poll, we're delighted to detail plans for future surveys which we hope you'll all be keen to take part in. Below we list some important Diary Dates - we've also got the first in a series about all those annoying Little Devils who are trying to invade your computer. And on the back page, we've at last managed to "Corner" David & Nydia Moss from Provence.

If you'd like something featured in a future Newsletter, contact [emma@letsites.com](mailto:emma@letsites.com)

### Some dates for your diary...

The publication dates for the 2005 holiday brochures are currently:

*Chez Nous*: printed during October, available from 1 November

*Owners in France*: no dates as yet

*Bonnes Vacances*: printed early November

Don't forget to **update your tariff for the 2005 season** before the brochures come out. Just send us your new prices and the dates of each tariff band - as soon as we've added the tariff to your site, you can log in to update your 2005 Availability Chart.

By the way, if you already know dates and prices for your 2006 season, those can be added to the website whenever you like!

### Get yourself noticed!



Some of you may have read that *French Property News* is planning a new monthly feature about French houses with beautiful interiors.

They've asked readers with lovely houses to submit photos and information about themselves - and each month, a bottle of champagne will be sent to the reader whose photos are published. This seems like an absolutely perfect opportunity for LetSites clients to get themselves into the public eye!

If you would like to submit your property to the competition, contact us as soon as you can and we'll prepare your photos in the correct format for submission. We can also help you put together some relevant information about you, your property and your business. And whatever you do, don't forget to mention your **LetSites** website!

If you'd like to submit a more general article to *French Property News* - or to any other magazine or online newsletter - do let us know and we'll be very happy to help you prepare your text and photos for those, too.

Incidentally, if you ever get any publicity about your holiday business in your local press or in other magazines about France, do let us have a copy to put on the LetSites website for your fellow property owners to read. And if you discover any other interesting marketing initiatives, do let us know and we'll feature them in future Newsletters.



## LetSites Polls

The Advertising Poll in May was a great success and generated much lively comment - especially about the printed brochures! As we've already mentioned to



those who took part, there will be a follow-up poll towards the end of the year to find out where you finally decided to advertise for the 2005 season.

Early next year, we'll be running a poll based on an idea from Helene & Michael Coxhead ([www.domaine-de-la-briquerie.com](http://www.domaine-de-la-briquerie.com)) about whether those little extras (such as games rooms, catering, children's activities) are worth the extra hassle and/or cost.

If you have a good topic for a future poll, do get in touch. For every idea used, we'll install (or renew) webmail, e-postcards or a gadget free of charge.



### Those Little Devils



Ever wondered how all that spam finds you? Don't know the difference between a virus and a worm, let alone a Trojan horse? Over the next few issues, we'll explain what each of these Little Devils is about and suggest ways to avoid them - or at least to keep them under control. To start us off, here are some Golden Rules to keep you trouble-free:

- Avoid free software - it's likely to cause more problems than it cures. There are no free lunches on the internet (not even spam)! *NB: the two free programs mentioned below are rare exceptions and may be installed with confidence.*
- Install a well-known anti-virus program and keep it bang up to date. A good program will download the latest virus information from the internet at least once a week automatically, *but you need to keep paying the annual subscription!* We recommend Norton Anti-Virus: [www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com)
- Install a firewall to prevent unauthorised access to your computer via your internet connection (especially if you have broadband). Windows XP has a built-in firewall (but you do need to turn it on in the Network Connections part of your Control Panel), or you can download a good free firewall called Zone Alarm from [www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com). You can also upgrade Norton Anti-Virus to Norton Internet Security, which includes Norton Personal Firewall & Norton Anti-Spam.
- You can't stop people sending you spam, but an anti-spam program can identify it and get rid of it before you see it. You can get an excellent free program called K9 from [www.keir.net](http://www.keir.net), but you need to be a bit of a computer whizz to set it up. For a more user-friendly alternative, we recommend Norton Anti-Spam.

*Next issue: Spam - how does it find me & how can I avoid getting even more?*

### STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

Fresh from being "Cornered" in the last Newsletter, Gordon & Diane Thom appeared in the April issue of *French Property News*.

You can read their article on the LetSites website - just click on "what the press say". If you have an interesting story which you think might make a good press article, do please let us know.

