The family moved to Paris in 1858. Zola took on poorly paid clerical jobs, slowly making a reputation as a writer. He wrote for various newspapers, often criticising Napoleon III. His open letter to the President published on the front page of the newspaper *L'Aurore*, titled “J'Accuse”, accused the French Military of anti-semitism for convicting Alfred Dreyfus of treason and sentencing him to life imprisonment on Devil’s Island. The case divided liberal and traditional parts of French society. Zola was convicted for libel in 1898. Facing prison, he fled to England.

Between 1871 and 1893, he wrote a series of twenty novels known as Les Rougon-Macquart subtitled *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*. The novels dealt with social injustice. Other notable examples of his work are: *Therese Raquin, La Bête Humaine, Nana, L'Assomoir, Germinal* and *Les Mystères de Marseilles*.

In 1886, he wrote a novel called *L'Oeuvre* about an artist, which was a thinly-veiled portrait of Paul Cézanne. It upset Cézanne and they fell out as friends, never speaking again to each other.

Zola returned to France in 1899 and had his honours restored. Zola died in 1902, due to inhalation of fumes from a blocked chimney. Some claimed that the chimney had been blocked deliberately as retribution for his involvement in the Dreyfus Affair.

**ANTIBES/JUAN-LES-PINS (ALPES-MARITIMES)**

Originally called Anti-polis over 2000 years ago by the Greeks due to its position on the bay opposite Nice, it was a trading port for the Phocaeans in the 5th century BC. Later, as part of the Roman Empire, it was renamed Antiboul.

The old town was fortified to withstand the attacks of the Barbarians and Saracens in the Middle Ages and it became the staging post for the start of the first Crusade in the 11th century.

In 1385, the Grimaldi family took ownership of the small castle built into the ramparts of the old town (see above). In 1946 it became Picasso’s workshop by the sea and is now a museum.

In the 20th century, Juan-les-Pins and Cap d’Antibes became fashionable due to the wealthy society attracted by resident Americans such as Frank Jay Gould and Gerald and Sara Murphy who encouraged sunbathing and swimming in the sea.
**PLACES**

**Picasso Atelier Museum**, on the ramparts.

**Museum of Archaeology.**

**Museum Peynet**, works by Raymond Peynet and other cartoonists.

**Fort Carré**, 16th century fort on the Saint Roch peninsula, with a panoramic view.

**Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc** a luxury hotel where artists, writers, movie stars, royalty and heads of state have stayed (see Gerald Murphy below).

**Villa Eilenroc Gardens** A Belle Epoque villa surrounded by a verdant park of 27 acres at Cap D’Antibes now open to the public.

**FESTIVALS**

**International Jazz Festival**, July.

Established in 1960, it takes place in a pine grove where Ray Charles and Miles Davis made their European debuts.

www.antibes-juanlespins.co.uk

**PEOPLE**

**SIMONE DE BEAUVIOR (1908 – 1986)**

“One is not born a woman, but is made one.”

She was a French existentialist philosopher, writer and social theorist, and long-term partner of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Born on January 9th, 1908 into a Catholic household, she attended a girls’ Catholic school until she took her Baccalauréate. She formed a close friendship with Elizabeth Mabille (Zaza), until her untimely death in 1929. She met Jean-Paul Sartre while studying at the Ecole Normale Superiure and the two developed a close relationship until his death in 1980. The two never married but had an open relationship, allowing for de Beauvoir’s bisexuality.

Following the Occupation, de Beauvoir was dismissed from her teaching post in Rouen and wrote a novel *The Blood of Others* (1943) about the resistance followed by *The Mandarins* (1954) about moral ambiguity, which won the Prix Goncourt. She is best known for her exploration of women’s oppression in *The Second Sex* (1949), which established her as a leading light of the feminist movement in France.

From 1930, she often visited the French Riviera, mainly Antibes, frequently with Sartre or her adopted daughter, Sylvie Le Bon.

An atheist, she died of pneumonia, aged 78, and is buried next to Sartre at the Cimetière du Montparnasse in Paris.

**GUY DE MAUPASSANT (1850 – 1893)**

“The past attracts me, the present frightens me, because the future is death.”

He was a popular 19th century French writer, considered one of the greatest short story writers. Born in a chateau in Dieppe on August 5th, 1850, he studied law in Paris initially, before signing up for the army, aged 20.

Many of his stories are set during the 1870s Franco-Prussian War and explore the futility of war.

A protegé of Flaubert, he published what is considered his masterpiece, *Boule de Suif* (1880) which was an instant hit.

In 1881, he published his first volume of short stories *La Maison Tellier* which was reprinted twelve times in two years. In 1883, his first novel, *Une Vie* was published followed by *Bel-Ami*, (1885); both were great successes.

He wrote over 300 short stories and six novels including: *Le Horla* (1887) and *Pierre et Jean* (1888). He
travelled widely to England, Italy, Algeria, with each trip inspiring
a new story. He liked to cruise the Mediterranean on his yacht Bel-
Ami, and lived in both Antibes and Cannes.

He suffered from syphilis which led to a slow mental decline,
an obsession with self-preservation and a terrible fear of death.

On January 2nd, 1892, Maupassant tried to commit suicide by
cutting his throat. He was committed to an asylum in Paris, where
he died over a year later, on July 6th, 1893.

NICOLAS DE STAEL (1914 – 1955)
“I am not a photographer, writer or painter. I am an impaler of
things that life offers to me as it passes by.”
A Russian-born painter whose work was influential in the post-
war period. Born on January 5th, 1914, in Saint Petersburg into
the nobility, he was the son of Lieutenant General Baron Vladimir
Stael von Holstein.

Due to the Bolshevik revolution, the family fled to Poland in
1919 where his parents died, and in 1922, de Stael and his sister
Marina, were fostered by a Russian family in Brussels.

He studied at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts (1932–4)
then travelled to Paris, Spain, Italy, Morocco and Algeria, returning
to France from 1938 where he studied briefly under Léger.

He joined the Foreign Legion in 1939 and met his partner
Jeanine in Morocco. In 1940, in Nice, he met Jean Arp, Sonia and
Robert Delaunay and began to experiment with abstract painting
— his ‘Compositions’. In 1943, he met Braque in Paris but De Stael
and his wife were poor, hungry and cold; Jeanine fell ill and died.

In 1944, during the German Occupation,
the Jean Bucher Gallery
gave him his first
exhibition which helped
his reputation.

In 1953, he bought a
chateau in Menerbes and
the next year he moved
into a studio in Antibes

with a sea view and produced over 300 paintings moving away
from pure abstracts to still lifes, landscapes and figures, creating
blocks of intense colour in a fluid style, using a palette knife.

Trying to finish a large work called ‘The Concert’, he became
mentally exhausted and committed suicide on March 16th, 1955.

EDWARD VIII, THE DUKE
OF WINDSOR (1894 – 1972)
Edward VIII created a scandal by
abdicating as king of the United
Kingdom and Emperor of India to
marry American divorcée, Wallis
Simpson.

Born on June 23rd, 1894 in Rich-
mond, Surrey, the eldest child of the
Duke of York, he was called David by
his family. He attended naval colleges
at Osborne and Dartmouth and studied
at Magdalen College, Oxford but was a
poor student. In 1910, when his father
became King George V, Edward became the Prince of Wales.

In World War I, he joined the Grenadier Guards but saw no
active service. He trained as a pilot against his father’s wishes and
then he was sent off on foreign tours, on behalf of the king. His
visits to slum areas in Britain in the 1930s, increased his popularity.

Attracted to married women, he had a number of affairs before
falling under the spell of American socialite, Wallis Simpson.

Although the foreign press reported their affair, the British press
were forced to keep silent on the subject.

When King George V died in 1936, Edward became king but he
was often late for meetings and failed to deal with his paperwork
and keep up with his administrative duties.

Edward found security in Wallis Simpson’s ability to deal with
his foibles; they shared the same sense of humour, loved to gossip,
play cards and were fond of dogs, shopping and kitsch. Wallis
enjoyed entertaining and tried hard to lift Edward’s sulks and
depression. The two became inseperable. Despite the advice of
to install them as the puppet King and Queen of Great Britain, if Germany won the war.

Churchill was concerned about this and helped them to leave Europe in 1940 by offering Edward the job of Governor of the Bahamas. While his wife became involved in the Red Cross and charity work, Edward became embroiled in a nasty murder investigation on the island. They left as soon as the war was over, returning to Paris, where a number of European ex-royals resided due to favourable tax conditions.

After the war, they wrote their autobiographies. Edward had *A King’s Story* published in 1951 while Wallis’s book *The Heart has its Reasons*, appeared in 1956. Both were bestsellers.

Due to prolonged bad feeling with his relatives, Edward made only a few short visits to England to attend the funerals of family members.

**PAUL GALlico (1897 – 1976)**

An American author and journalist who was born in New York to an Austrian mother and an Italian father. He went to Columbia University in 1916 but his service in the navy during World War I delayed completion of his science degree until 1921.

As a sports writer, he interviewed, sparred with and was knocked out by boxing champion Jack Dempsey. This led to his own newspaper column. He also founded an amateur boxing competition, The Golden Gloves. Apart from his sports articles he also wrote fiction and his book, *Lou Gehrig: Pride of the Yankees* (1942) was made into a movie. He wrote over forty novels and twelve film scripts.

During World War II, he worked for three years as a war correspondent but after the war, he became famous due to the success of his novel, *The Snow Goose*, (1941), the tale of a recluse who takes part in the Dunkirk evacuation. The novel was made into a movie as was his novel, *The Poseidon Adventure* (1969).
Both The Zoo Gang (1971) and The Adventures of Hiram Holliday (1939) were adapted for TV.

Married four times with numerous children, he lived with his wife Virginia in Monaco briefly before moving to Antibes where he spent his remaining years. He died there in 1976, aged 78.

FRANK JAY GOULD (1877 – 1956)
An American businessman and philanthropist, who financed the building of casinos and hotels on the French Riviera.

Born on December 4th, 1877, the son of financier and railroad developer Jay Gould, he inherited a large fortune.

At 23, he married Helen Kelly, with whom he had twin daughters. In 1908, they divorced and he founded the Virginia Rail and Power Company then married Edith Kelly but this marriage was not to last either, due to his problem with alcohol.

He was said to be fond of his pets – St Bernard dogs. He met and married the San Franciscan opera singer, Florence LaCaze in 1923. They moved into the Villa Semiramis in Cannes where they collected art by Impressionist painters.

Gould enjoyed dancing and Florence enjoyed gambling and drinking champagne. She introduced water-skiing to the Riviera as well as the fashion for baccarat pyjamas, with wide pockets for her gambling chips. For over thirty years they entertained guests such as Charlie Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor, Nelson Rockefeller, Paul Getty and Orson Welles. But they preferred to stay at Villa La Vigie in Juan-les-Pins.

Gould built the Art Deco Casino in Nice, the Palais de la Mediterranée, at a cost of $5 million. In 1926, he rebuilt the casino in Juan-les-Pins and added a cabaret. He then renovated the large Hotel Provençal which became a fashionable place to stay on the Riviera in the 20s and 30s. He also restored La Pinède where the jazz festival now takes place.

After World War II, Gould built a new house next to La Vigie and let the old one out. One of the tenants was Picasso who painted frescoes on the walls, but when he left, Gould had them painted over.

He died in 1956 in Juan-les-Pins and Florence remained in Cannes where she continued to entertain and set up a number of arts and literary prizes.

GRAHAM GREENE (1904 – 1991)
He was an English novelist and playwright who began his career in journalism.

Born October 2nd, 1904, he grew up in a school where his father was headmaster, before going to Oxford. He was related to the wealthy family who owned the Greene King Brewery.

He converted to Catholicism in 1926, despite his lack of faith, to marry Vivien Dayrell-Browning with whom he had two children. He became a heavy drinker and a serial adulterer and was said to suffer from bi-polar disorder. The couple separated in 1948 but never divorced. That year he won the James Tait Black Memorial prize for The Heart of the Matter.

His prodigious novel and short story output was combined with a job as a spy for MI6 where his superior was Kim Philby. He also wrote screenplays including: The Third Man, The Fallen Idol. Many of his novels were made into films too: The Fugitive (from The Power and The Glory), Brighton Rock, The Quiet American, The Honorary Consul, Our Man in Havana, The Orient Express (from The Stamboul Train) and The End of the Affair.

As a result of a financial scam, he had a problem with paying tax to the Inland Revenue but they were unwilling to prosecute him (due to secret payments from MI6), so in 1965 he moved to...
Antibes, to be with his mistress Yvonne Cloetta, staying at the Residence des Fleurs. *Chagrin in Three Parts* and *May We Borrow Your Husband* are both set in Antibes.

In 1982, he published *J’Accuse – the Dark Side of Nice*, accusing the mayor Jacques Medecin and the police of corruption. He lost a libel case over the affair (the mayor was subsequently convicted of corruption in 1994). Despite numerous threats, Greene continued to live and write in Antibes for several years.

He was awarded the French Companion of Honour (1966) and the Order of Merit (1986). In 1990, he went to Vevey for treatment for leukemia, and died in hospital in Switzerland in 1991.

**VICTOR HUGO (1802 – 1885)**

A French writer of poetry, novels and plays, artist, statesman and a leading figure in the Romantic Movement in France.

Born in Besancon in 1802, the son of an army officer, who became a general, Hugo’s family often moved due to his father’s military postings. When his mother tired of this, the couple separated and she moved to Paris with her children.

From 1815, Hugo attended the Lycée Louis-le-Grand where he began writing poetry and winning awards.

He waited until his mother died before marrying Adèle Foucher in 1822, with whom he had five children.

In 1830, his play *Hernani* caused controversy but it was his novel *Notre Dame de Paris (The Hunchback of Notre Dame)* which led to overnight success.

He met the actress Juliette Drouet while staging one of his plays and they developed a relationship that lasted over fifty years.

In 1841, he was finally elected to the Academie Française, and became more involved with social and political issues. Two years later, he was devastated to learn that his beloved daughter Léopoldine and her husband had been drowned in a boating accident at Villequier in Normandy.

Initially, he had supported Louis Bonaparte but he became disillusioned, remarking, “We’ve had Napoleon the Great, now we have Napoleon the Small”. After the coup d’État by Napoleon III in 1851, he fled to Brussels, then went into exile, finally settling in Guernsey and buying Hauteville House.

In 1870, he returned to Paris and was elected to the National Assembly. He was a frequent visitor for short holidays, both before and after his exile, to Antibes and the Arrières-Pays.

Regarded as one of the greatest French poets, *Les Contemplations* and *La Légende des Siècles* are still widely admired today. His best-known works are the novels *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris (The Hunchback of Notre Dame)* which have both been adapted for stage and film many times.

He died in Paris in 1885. His death led to a period of national mourning and despite his wish to have a small funeral ceremony, he was buried in the Pantheon.

**NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS (1883 – 1957)**

He was born in Heraklion in Crete (where the airport is named after him) and was a Greek writer and philosopher who only became well-known abroad when his novel *Zorba the Greek* was made into a film in 1964, after his death.

Born in 1883, he studied Law in Athens (1902) then philosophy in Paris (1907). He fought as a volunteer in the Greek Army during the Balkan Wars then travelled widely, publishing travelogues.

He tried to integrate the teachings of Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism in his philosophy, expounded in *Askitiki* (1927). In 1938, he published an epic poem *Odyssey: A modern sequel*, taking up Ulysses’ story from the end of Homer’s epic.

Other novels include: *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1955), later filmed by Martin Scorsese in 1988; *The Greek Passion* and *Freedom or Death*.

He served as a left-wing Minister in the Greek Government
in 1945 and also worked for UNESCO in Paris until 1948, when he bought a villa in Antibes and moved there.

He narrowly missed out on The Nobel Prize for Literature, losing by one vote to Albert Camus in 1957.

Suffering from leukemia, he fell ill on his return flight from China and Japan and was taken to Freiburg, Germany, where he died on October 26th, 1957. He is buried near the Chania Gate in Heraklion because the Orthodox Church prevented his burial in a cemetery. The epitaph on his tomb reads: “I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free”.

There is now a Nikos Kazantzakis Museum in Crete.

GERALD MURPHY (1888 – 1964)

He was an American socialite who became the centre of a fashionable artistic and literary circle on the French Riviera.

Born in Boston into a wealthy Irish-American family which made luxury leather goods, as a young man he was more interested in the arts than his studies or business. In 1913, he met Cole Porter at Yale, which was the beginning of a lifetime friendship. Sara Wiborg was a friend from an early age in East Hampton, where the wealthy Wiborg family had a large house and even a beach named after them. The pair married in 1915, despite the disapproval of both their families, and moved to New York where they had three children.

In 1921, they sailed to Paris where artist friends inspired Gerald to take up painting. He began by painting scenery at the Ballets Russes, then his work took on a cubist style, influenced by French artists he met there, and prefiguring American pop art.

“The Murphys were among the first Americans I ever met and they gave me the most agreeable impression of the United States.” Ivor Stravinsky said of them.

In 1923, the Murphys visited their friend Cole Porter in the South of France and persuaded the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc to stay open in the summer. They became the centre of a group of artists and writers who collected together there including Picasso, Cocteau, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Cole Porter and Dorothy Parker. Picasso painted Sara several times.

They bought a house nearby which they named “Villa America” creating an atmosphere of joie de vivre, sunbathing and picnicking on the beach at La Garoupe. They were said to be the inspiration for Nicole and Dick Driver in Fitzgerald’s Tender is the Night as well as for the couple in Hemingway’s The Garden of Eden.

In 1929, their son Patrick was diagnosed with TB and Gerald took him to a Swiss clinic. He set aside his painting forever.

With the financial collapse on Wall Street, the family business selling luxury leather goods fell into crisis so in 1934 Gerald Murphy returned to the US. His son Baoth died suddenly from meningitis and then a year later his other son Patrick succumbed to TB, aged only 16.

In 1937, they returned to Sara’s family home, a huge mansion called The Dunes in East Hampton but it was too expensive to run and so they had it demolished. Gerald wrote to Fitzgerald, “Only the invented part of our life – the unreal part – has had any scheme or beauty.”

He later refused to talk about his painting or the death of his sons. The couple drifted apart, with rumours of Gerald’s bisexuality. He died on October 17th, 1964, in East Hampton.

Sara died in 1975 in Arlington, Virginia.
CLAUDE MONET (1840 – 1926)
A French painter who was a leader of the Impressionist movement. He was born Oscar-Claude Monet, on November 14th, 1840, in Paris. His father was a grocer and his mother was a singer. The family moved to Le Havre, in Normandy when he was 5 and Monet earned money by selling charcoal sketches.

At 16 he went to live with his aunt, when his mother died. At 21, he joined the army but contracted typhoid fever and his aunt paid for him to leave the service. He then went to art school and met Renoir, Sisley and Bazille who were also experimenting with colour and technique. In 1865, his first paintings were accepted by the Paris Salon for exhibition.

In 1870, he married his model Camille Doncieux, three years after the birth of their son, Jean. As the Franco-Prussian War unfolded, they moved to London, where Monet found an art dealer. In 1874, Monet’s picture titled ‘Impression, Sunrise’ (1872), of Le Havre in the fog, caused a stir and led to the adoption of the name ‘Impressionism’ for work that sought to capture the essence of a scene and broke with classical tradition.

Camille died in 1978, after the birth of their second son Michel. From 1883 Monet lived in Giverny with Alice Hoschedé, the wife of a friend, and their combined families. He bought a house and created a garden with lily ponds which he painted obsessively from 1889 onwards, creating his most well-known works.

In 1888, he spent the winter in Antibes, where he painted many landscapes, including the bay and the Chateau Grimaldi.

He died on December 5th, 1926, at his home in Giverny.

WALLIS SIMPSON (1896 – 1986)
“You have no idea how hard it is to live out a great romance.”

Her father, a flour merchant, died when she was a child. Her mother had to seek financial aid from uncle Solomon Warfield, founder of the Continental Trust Company, and from aunt Bessie Merryman.

Wallis’s first marriage to navy pilot Win Spencer ended in divorce due to his abuse and drinking problems. She then travelled to China for a year by herself. In 1934, married to Ernest Simpson, she moved to London and was introduced to Edward, Prince of Wales at a country house party. She became his mistress, going on frequent holidays with the Prince. By the time Edward became king, they were inseparable. The Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, was opposed to their marriage so Edward abdicated in 1936, saying that he was unable to live without her.

They finally married after the coronation of Edward’s younger brother Albert, spending their honeymoon in Italy and Austria.

In 1937, they went to Germany and met Hitler, raising concerns of nazi affiliation. When World War II began, they helped in the war effort but when Paris was invaded they retreated to Antibes.

“Since I can’t be pretty, I try to look sophisticated,” Wallis told Vogue in 1943 but once Italy came into the war on the side of the Germans, the couple fled to Spain and then Portugal where they were asked to spy for Germany. There were reports of Wallis passing secrets to her friend Joachim von Ribbentrop (later hanged for war crimes).

Churchill arranged for them to go to the Bahamas in 1940, where Edward became governor until the war ended.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the couple were based in Paris, but travelled a good deal, living a kind of early retirement.

After the Duke’s death in 1972, Wallis started suffering from dementia and she withdrew from public life.

She died on April 24th, 1986, aged 89, at her home in Paris. She was buried next to Edward in the royal burial ground at Frogmore. She left her estate to the Pasteur Institute. The sale of her jewels alone fetched $45 million.
ARLES (BOUCHES-DU-RHONE)

Important since Roman times (and only second to Rome for the extent of its well-preserved Roman sites), Arles was given UNESCO World Heritage status in 1981 for its Roman amphitheatre (the arena opposite), the ancient theatre, the Cryptoporticus, Constantine’s Roman Baths, the remains of the Roman circus, St Trophime Monastery, St Trophime gate and the Alyscamps, which marks the point of departure of the Via Tolosana, a Catholic pilgrimage route leading to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

PLACES

The Museum of Ancient Arles from the Neolithic era to late antiquity.
The Réattu Museum, modern artists and photography.
The Arlaten Museum, exhibits objects, costumes, furniture of 19th century Provençal life.
The Langlois Bridge painted by Van Gogh.

VISIT

Les Baux de Provence (above), ancient village, castle and former quarry with multi-media shows (see www.carrieres-lumieres.com/fr)
The Camargue – salt marshes, wildlife reserve in the river delta, pink flamingoes, bird watching, horse riding.
The Saint-Paul Asylum, where Van Gogh stayed at Saint-Remy.

FESTIVALS

Salon International des Santonniers, November - January.
Les Suds a Arles, Music, concerts, July.
Feria Corridas, Easter to September, bull-fighting in the arena.
Saintes-Maries-de-la Mer Gypsy Festival, May.

www.arlestourisme.com

www.carrieres-lumieres.com/fr
PEOPLE

PAUL GAUGIN (1848 – 1903)

“Art is either plagiarism or revolution.”

A leading French post-Impressionist artist who inspired the movement for Primitivism in art, influencing Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. Born in Paris on June 7th, 1848, to journalist Clovis Gauguin and Alina Maria Chazal, the family moved to Peru a few years later but his father died on the journey.

In 1855, his family returned to Orléans and a few years later he was sent away to a Catholic boarding school, which he disliked. He joined the merchant navy aged 17 then at 20, the French Navy, travelling widely for two years. In 1871, Gauguin returned to Paris where he became a successful stockbroker for a decade. In 1873, he married a Danish woman, Mette-Sophie Gad, and began to paint in his spare time. He met Pissarro and Cezanne, and eventually exhibited his work with the Impressionists in 1881.

He fathered five children and the family moved briefly to Copenhagen, Denmark in 1884, but with language and money problems, the marriage foundered and Gauguin returned to Paris in 1885, alone.

Now free to paint full time he was influenced by the Cloisonnist style as well as African and Asian art and began to paint with bold colours, using symbolism. He visited Panama and Martinique in 1887, then in 1888 he spent nine weeks in Arles staying with Vincent van Gogh during which time van Gogh was hospitalised.

In 1891, Gauguin sailed to French Polynesia and settled in Tahiti where he had relationships with a number of young teenage girls, fathering more children. He moved to Punaauia in 1897, where he created one of his finest paintings: *Where Do We Come From*, then moved to the Marquesas Islands, where he sided with the natives against the French government in a dispute. This led to a fine of five hundred francs and a short prison sentence.

Suffering from syphilis and lacking the funds to pay the fine, he took an overdose of morphine. He died on May 8th, 1903, aged 54. He was buried in the Cimetière Calvaire in Atuona, Marquesas Islands, where there is now a Cultural Centre dedicated to his work. His life has since inspired music, opera, films and novels.

VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853 – 1890)

A Dutch post-Impressionist painter whose work had a significant influence on 20th century art. He was born in the south of Holland on March 30th, 1853 into a religious family. His father was a church minister.

He began drawing as a child, and aged 11 was sent to boarding school, but missed his family. His first job, aged 20, was as an art dealer and he travelled to London where he fell in love with Eugenie Loyer, the daughter of his landlady. When she rejected him, he turned to religion, and the study of theology in Amsterdam in 1877, where he failed the exam. He worked as a missionary in a mining town in Belgium and decided to become an artist.

He then returned home to Etten and proposed marriage to a cousin but she rejected him too so he left for The Hague. There he began painting with oils and set up home with a prostitute and her child, contracting gonorrhoea. He left her in 1883, and almost married his cousin Margot Begemann in 1884, but was prevented by both his family and hers. She took an overdose of strychnine but Van Gogh managed to get her to hospital before she died.

He studied fine arts in 1886 in Antwerp then moved to Paris to live with his brother Theo, also an art dealer. Influenced by the Impressionists, he began to use vivid colours. He met Toulouse
Lautrec and Paul Gauguin and they organised an exhibition of their work in a restaurant in Montmartre.

Exhausted from smoking, drinking absinthe, eating little and painting over 200 works, Van Gogh moved to Arles in February 1888, with dreams of starting an artists’ colony. Inspired by the light and the local landscape, he experimented with brighter colours. He painted many works in Arles, such as Van Gogh’s Chair, Bedroom in Arles, Starry Night Over the Rhone, Still Life: Vase with Twelve Sunflowers. Eventually, he persuaded Paul Gauguin to join him there.

Gauguin arrived in October 1888, and the two worked together for two months with Gauguin painting Van Gogh’s portrait. But they argued continually and the stress was unbearable for Van Gogh, who feared that Gauguin would soon desert him. With Christmas approaching, they had a terrible quarrel and Van Gogh ran off, taking refuge in a nearby brothel. There, he cut off part of his left ear, handing it to one of the prostitutes.

Gauguin left and contacted Theo who arranged for his brother to be hospitalised. The artist Paul Signac visited Van Gogh in hospital and Van Gogh was allowed home in his company but only a few months later in May 1889 he entered the Saint-Paul asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence voluntarily.

Located in a monastery, surrounded by vineyards, cornfields and olive groves, Van Gogh responded to the routine, painting in the garden and the grounds in the swirling style which became his unique trademark. While there, he painted ‘The Irises’ which was exhibited with ‘Starry Night over the Rhone’ at the Paris Salon in September 1889, and in January, 1890 several of his paintings were exhibited in Brussels. By May, Van Gogh felt well enough to leave: “I feel quite calm and I don’t think that a mental upset could easily happen to me in my present state.”

He moved north to Auvers-sur-Oise outside Paris to be near to Dr. Paul Gachet, who treated many artists and was recommended by Camille Pissarro. But Van Gogh’s depression became more severe. In some reports he shot himself, in others he was shot by local youths. He survived, despite his wounds, for two days and Theo arrived in time to be with him in his final hours.

He died on July 29th, 1890 and was buried in the local cemetery.