

# OBITUARY – Benoît Mandelbrot 1924-2010

**B**enoît B Mandelbrot is the third great French scientist to die in as many weeks after Charpak and Allais. He has been described as a Franco-American but was born in Poland of Lithuanian Jewish parents. His father was a trader in clothing, his mother was a doctor. Fortunately for the family, his uncle was a professor at the Collège de France which enabled the family to emigrate from Poland in 1936 when he was 11 years old. He was a brilliant student and despite a clandestine life during World War II, he gained entry to the élite Polytechnique in 1945.

He earned his PhD at the University of Paris in Mathematical Science. He worked at the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique until 1958, when he joined the research staff at IBM in the United States. When IBM stopped pure research he left after 35 years with the company and took up an academic career. He was awarded his first tenured professorship aged 75 at Yale University.

He is most famous for inventing the expression ‘fractal geometry’ and his work on the subject which coincided with the development of computers and made it possible to see the beauty of what had previously been an abstraction reserved for higher mathematicians.

One of his earlier works, in 1967, was on the coastline of Britain and how long it really is if you take into account all the irregularities.

He defined a fractal as “a rough or fragmented geometrical shape that can be split into parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced-size copy of the whole”.

He was concerned with shapes outside the familiar spheres and triangles that we learn at school as Euclidian geometry. In a lifetime of research he is also known to the public for the Mandelbrot Set.

An idea of his versatility is his book written with Richard Hudson ‘The (Mis) Behavior of Markets: A Fractal View of Risk, Ruin, and Reward’, which was awarded the Best Business Book of the Year prize.

Mandelbrot was an original in every way. He added the initial B to his name although it did not stand for anything. President Sarkozy paid tribute to him, saying he had “a powerful, original mind that never shied away from innovating and shattering preconceived notions.

His work, developed entirely outside mainstream research, led to modern information theory.” Chris Anderson, founder of Future Publishing, called him “an icon who changed how we see the world”.

PHOTO: WOLFGANG BEYER

## The dark history of the Rivesaltes camp

**T**he Camp de Rivesaltes, near Perpignan (Pyrénées-Orientales), has been used for internment and deportations from the 1930s until 2007. An exhibition at the tourist office of Quillan (Aude), ‘Rivesaltes – paysage de trauma’, illustrates artists’ responses to the site. Jonathan Moss, a British artist and curator of the show, spoke with French Week:

**FW: How did this exhibition come about?**  
**JM:** I began my project about the camp at Rivesaltes in 2006 and didn’t know at the time that it would guide my work for four years and bring other artists to work with me on this theme.

**FW: How has the Rivesaltes site been used?**  
**JM:** Originally a military base, the Rivesaltes camp has a dark history. The refugees from Franco’s regime were put here, then the Jews and other ethnic groups chosen by the Nazi regime, then the Harkis (Algerian soldiers), who could not return to their country. Until 2007 immigrants without visas were being detained at the camp.

**FW: What is the site’s relevance to today?**  
**JM:** Some people might say “Whatever happened half a century ago during the occupation is in the past.” But now I see that my work is surprisingly relevant because the French government is repeating history, saying that we have arrived at the point where the Roma must be rounded up in accommodation centres or sent back from France to Romania.



**FW: Is there official recognition of its role in the Holocaust?**  
**JM:** The monument at the camp in memory of the Jews bears the following inscription: “From August to October 1942 more than 2,250 of them, including 110 children, were delivered to the Nazis in the zone occupied by the ‘Government of the French State’ ... Deported to the extermination camp of Auschwitz, almost all were killed there because they were born Jews. Let us never forget these victims of racial hatred and xenophobia.”

*MW*

*Rivesaltes – paysage de trauma  
25 October - 6 November, Office du Tourisme, Quillan, Aude  
Monday-Friday 9-12am and 2-6pm, Saturday 9am-1pm*

Peter Hackett’s

# French as she is spoke

Think someone is a bit potty ... off his rocker ... bats in the belfry?

*Il a une araignée au plafond.*

(He’s got a spider on the ceiling.)

# POLYMOT N° 14

## BILINGUAL CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

Across solutions are in English, down solutions in French

Across (solutions in English)

- Just make it by confusing her chaste group (6,7)
- Ancient fool discovered (3)
- Prison electrocuted Chinese cooking style (4,5)
- Sailor sure to become addict (6)
- Son holds kitty precisely (4,2)
- Goddess reversed rough reception point (1,1,1)
- Untidy insider blames system (5)
- Climber on drip, we hear (3)
- Put back tablet if stimulant required (6)
- Not quite square to love blog without direction (6)
- Climate change includes personal problem relating to organic process (9)
- Chat on and droop back (3)
- Sheepish response to burgle flat he’s trashed (5,4,4)

Down (solutions in French)

- Mixes are italic – be single (11)
- I have one deadly sin (2)
- See torn out sprain (7)
- Duchess up at stud (5)
- Belonging to us on cub (6)
- Scarecrow in love up at a jumble (11)
- Dare to behead Dorothy Perkins (3)
- Jacket not allowed in public rooms (7)
- Folding one in strand (6)
- Chosen from fifty within community (3)
- Lead its sign to take in Herbert (5)
- Conditional, you hear (2)

**Send your solution with your name and postal address to: French Week, BP1, 47330 Castillonnes or email it to [redac@french-week.com](mailto:redac@french-week.com) Solution and winner will appear in Issue 17 (November 19)**

A year’s subscription to French Week goes to the first correct solution opened on November 12, 2010

# BRIDGE

by Nick Cobbett

Answers to questions posed in issue 13 (22-29 October)

First, the Par contract on the North-South cards from the main hand from last week: Well, South should (most of the time) make nine tricks in No Trumps. E-W will have a devil of a time defending (after a presumed ♣Q lead) as their two hands have only one card of communication – in diamonds.

If West subsequently takes his three club winners and the ♦A, East will get squeezed in the majors; and if West gallantly refuses his club masters but wins the second round of diamonds, his hand can then be ignored and it’s not difficult to see that South can make 4 spades, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and the ♣K for nine tricks.

Next, the questions numbered 1) and 2) in fact came from the same hand: Several Easts managed a 5♥ reply:

W	N	E	S
2NT	3♣	5♥	

and some Wests continued to 6♥ (one inexplicably passing).

One or two North-Souths competed in spades after North showed a black 2-suiter. Since both sides were vulnerable, not many got to 6♠ – a good sacrifice against the cold 6♥, going just –2 played by South. One poor NS pair decided enough

♠ A 10 7 5 3	♥ -	♦ 8	♣ Q J 9 8 7 3 2
♠ K J 8	♥ A J	♦ A Q 10 3 2	♣ A 5 4
♠ Q 9 6 4 2	♥ K 2	♦ J 7 3 5 4	♣ 6

was enough and doubled 7♥ ... which made of course when East finessed South for the King!

Nadine Liégé from Champagne-Ardenne wins a year’s subscription to French Week

## Solution to POLYMOT 11 and MINIMOT 10

Across solutions are in English, down solutions in French

Across solutions: ACCENT, CALIGULA, IDPASS, MERERE, POOR, USAGE, WEIGHTS

Down solutions: FOREIGN, PRIME, TAUT, EYED, REELED, CENL, RELATION, LEXEMPT, ILL