

# A Tale of Two Sprints

by Fran Stone



Military road to the forts.

*Due giorno delle alpi marittime / les deux jours de la mercantour 13 & 14 September 2014*

## Prologue

Many of you know that I have left the Lakes and now live in France. Well to be more precise, we live at the midpoint between our two nearest clubs, one in France and the other in Italy. This is an amazing situation because we can access the best races of both countries. The story starts in the autumn of 2013, when during a casual conversation with a member of our Italian club, we were asked if a sprint map existed of a quiet, unspoilt, medieval village in the mountains near to the Franco-Italian border, in the Alpes Maritimes. 'No,' we replied, 'we can make one, but we will have to wait until the spring when the weather is warmer.'

We then discovered that our friend had a family house in the village, so we felt obliged to make a map for him.

The making of the map was only the beginning. The project became a cross-border event, promoting Franco/Italian co-operation, that involved co-ordinating the orienteering calendars in both Italy and France, plus the community calendars of a small ski resort in southern Piedmont, called Limone Piemonte and the medieval village in the French Alpes Maritimes, called La Brigue.

The two venues are approximately twenty-five kilometres apart, on either side of the Col de Tende. They are linked by the Tende tunnel, the oldest working road tunnel between Italy and France.

So the project developed, the dates were set for mid-September, the race format to be bi-sprints on both days, with the total times of the four races to count. The two clubs, Oricuneo and Mougins Orientation, worked together to make an attractive week-end of racing, offering prizes for each individual day and also for the combined days. Age classes were

discussed and entry arrangements made so that orienteers in either country were able to enter through their normal system. It seemed to be working well, and the good September weather was forecast to continue.

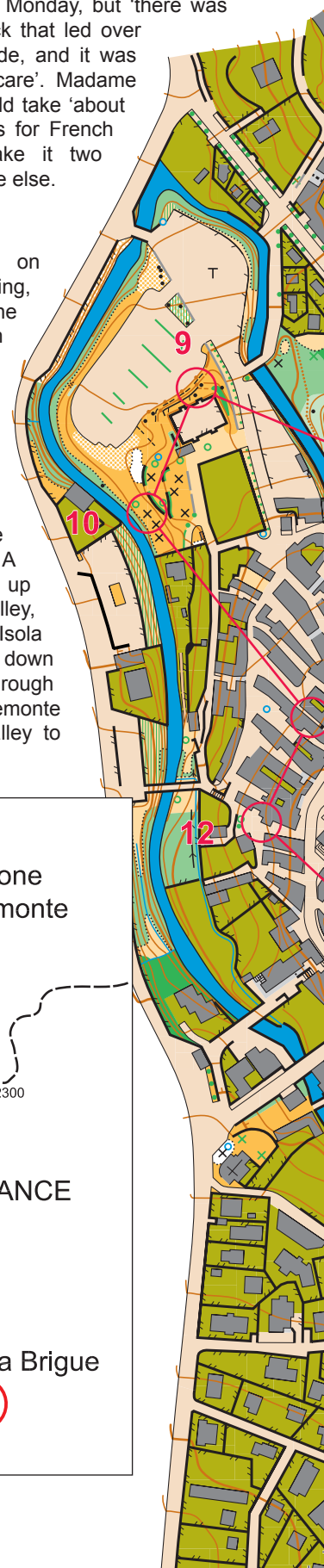
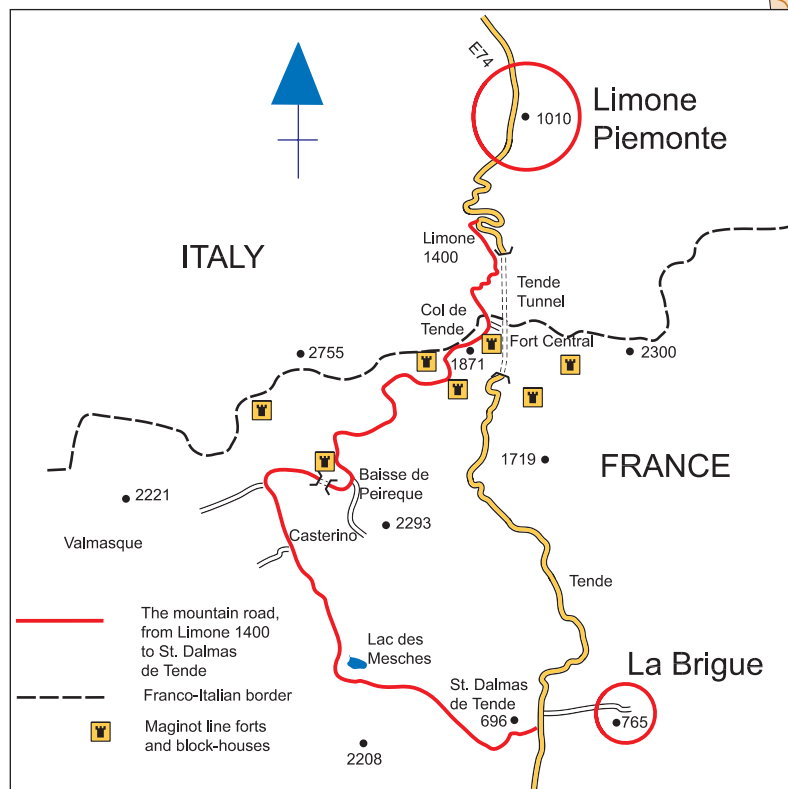
## Act One

Friday, September twelfth. Giles and I had gone to Mougins to collect the club equipment for the races. On our way back we noticed a display on the autoroute, saying that the Tende Tunnel was closed. No it was a mistake, surely work in the tunnel only takes place at night? But we were proved wrong. The Tende Tunnel had been closed for an indefinite period due to a flood inside the tunnel, it certainly would not re-open during the weekend.

Research on the train times between La Brigue and Limone confirmed that the timetable was to change to the winter one this very weekend, so it would not be possible to hop on a train, at a convenient time, between the two villages. Alternative routes were now four hour drives, either via Nice and over the Col de Lombarde, or on the autopista via Cuneo and Savona. We phoned the tourist office in Tende, hoping that they would have better news about the tunnel. No, it would not be open before Monday, but 'there was a mountain track that led over the Col de Tende, and it was driveable with care'. Madame also said it would take 'about an hour', that is for French driving, so make it two hours for anyone else.

## Act Two

At six o'clock on Saturday morning, a drive in the dark over an unknown mountain track did not seem like a good idea, so we chose the route over the Col de Lombarde. A wonderful drive up the Tinée valley, up through Isola 2000 and then down into Italy and through Vinadio and Demonte in the Stura valley to Limone.



Two races on the Limone Piemonte map, 1:4000 and 2m contours. The map had been made in 2009 for the Italian Sprint Championship, and is still very good.

Our Italian friends were delighted that we had made the races. The next problem was to get to La Brigue for the races on Sunday. Fortunately Valter, one of the Oricuneo club members, had worked as a ski patrol at Limone, and confirmed that the track over the mountains was good.

A discussion followed and local maps were produced. Eventually five cars were commandeered for the journey, taking the trestles, the timing equipment, computer and some very game club members.

kilometres more of hairpins to reach the Roya valley.

Sunday morning dawned bright, with two sprint races on the new map of La Brigue. Map scale 1:4000, contour interval 2.5 metres, surveyed and drawn 2014, using orthophotos and xyz files, together with a ground survey.

The medieval layout of the village was a complete contrast to the ski village of the previous day, the courses were unforgiving, and many foundered in the intricate pattern of narrow alleyways.

Our thanks go to all of Oricuneo who made the journey, and to the members of Mougins Orientation who made a long journey to help on the Sunday. Extra thanks to the Mairie of La Brigue and the Sindaco of Limone Piemonte who gave their permission for the races to take place.

The two days of racing proved to be very popular with those who made the adventurous journey, and the French, who were robbed of the first day, enjoyed a new map and a new area.

We look forward to another Franco/Italian event, but perhaps it will not have such an exciting content. Perhaps we will also check that the train timetable has not changed for our weekend.

The results are at [www.oricuneo.it/2014\\_alpimaritime.html](http://www.oricuneo.it/2014_alpimaritime.html)

### Act Three

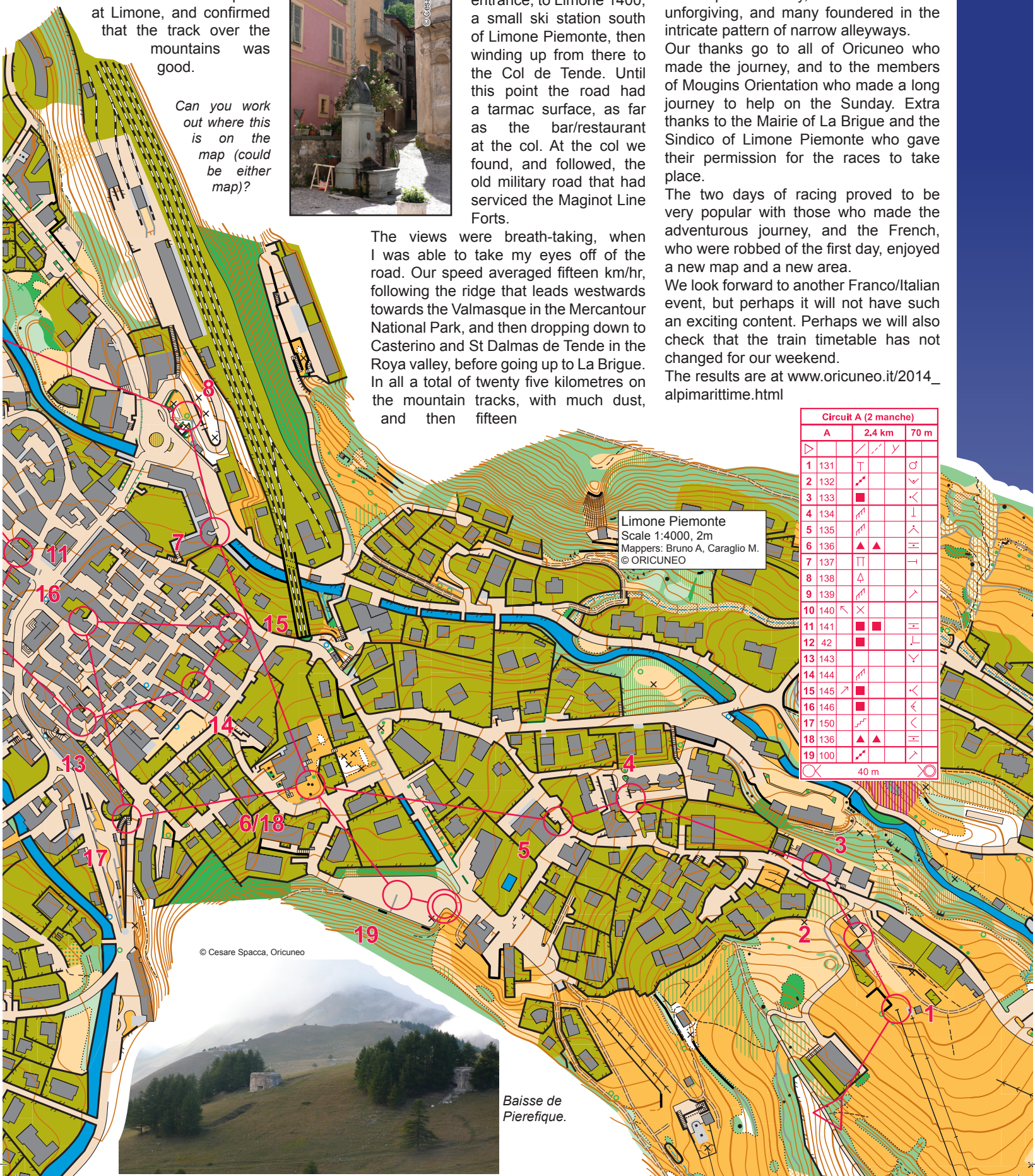
The journey started by leaving the main road at the blocked Tende Tunnel entrance, to Limone 1400, a small ski station south of Limone Piemonte, then winding up from there to the Col de Tende. Until this point the road had a tarmac surface, as far as the bar/restaurant at the col. At the col we found, and followed, the old military road that had serviced the Maginot Line Forts.

The views were breath-taking, when I was able to take my eyes off of the road. Our speed averaged fifteen km/hr, following the ridge that leads westwards towards the Valmasque in the Mercantour National Park, and then dropping down to Casterino and St Dalmas de Tende in the Roya valley, before going up to La Brigue. In all a total of twenty five kilometres on the mountain tracks, with much dust, and then fifteen



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Can you work out where this is on the map (could be either map)?



Limone Piemonte  
Scale 1:4000, 2m  
Mappers: Bruno A, Caraglio M.  
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Circuit A (2 manche)			
	A	2.4 km	70 m
▶		↗ ↘	↘
1	131	⊥	♂
2	132	↗	↘
3	133	■	<
4	134	↗	⊥
5	135	■	↗
6	136	▲ ▲	⊥
7	137	⊥	↗
8	138	△	↗
9	139	↗	↘
10	140	↖ ×	⊥
11	141	■	⊥
12	42	■	⊥
13	143	■	↘
14	144	↗	↘
15	145	■	<
16	146	■	<
17	150	↗	<
18	136	▲ ▲	⊥
19	100	↗	↘

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Baisse de Pierrefique.