

Auberon Waugh in The New Statesman 9/22/75

Something from *The New Statesman* by Auberon Waugh (1975):

Not far from where I live in Southern France there runs a small canal called *La Rigole*. It is a tributary of the great *Canal du Midi* linking the Atlantic with the Mediterranean, and its pine fringed towpaths make an ideal place to ride on a *mobilette* or French autocycle when one has nothing better to do. Phuttering along it last week I noticed for the first time a public notice on its banks:

INTERDICTION FORMELLE DE JETER DANS LA RIGOLE ET SUR SES
DEPENDANCES DES ANIMAUX MORTS (Volailles comprises) ET DES
ORDURES – Decret du 6-2-32 ART. 56

It had never occurred to me before that it might be fun to throw dead animals into the water but this notice, advertising a formal interdiction, could only be interpreted as an open invitation to join in what was presumably a traditional French sport. It was beyond reasonable hope that I would find a dead chicken or a duck but I remembered seeing a dead hedgehog on the road some miles back. Unfortunately, it proved inseparable from the tarmac of which it had already begun to form a part, and it was while I was trying to run over a huge green lizard, the size of a small crocodile, that I fell off my *mobilette* and suffered the sort of injuries which would cause any self-respecting British worker to draw sick benefit for a year, if not for the rest of his life.