

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
PARIS BRANCH
NEWSLETTER



FEBRUARY 2022



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

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Royal Patron :
Her Majesty The Queen

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Letter from your Chairman.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very pleased to inform you that this being Her Majesty the Queens Platinum Jubilee we are reintroducing the Paris Branch Monthly Newsletter .

Some of you who have been members of our branch for many years may remember that we used to have a monthly magazine, which then changed to a monthly Newsletter.

We still have copies of both, which I have found to contain very interesting articles and photos that were submitted by our members.

So now that life is beginning to return to normal after two years of restrictions on in-house and external events due to the COVID pandemic we, your committee, thought you might like our usual updates on forthcoming events to be presented in a new format with articles and contributions of a more general interest.

Please try to help us in this endeavor. We welcome your news items, interesting stories, funnies, anything that others members might appreciate.

Did you know that some of our members have interesting hobbies? Here are a couple of examples in this, our first Newsletter. If you have an interesting hobby, then share it with us.

We hope you will take an active part in this new venture. Our members are widespread geographically and for many opportunities to get together are rare. However we all share common interests which we need to preserve and encourage.

Please send your contributions and suggestions to Mark Yates at mfyates@gmail.com mentioning the Newsletter. Submission date each month being 22nd.

All best wishes,

Richard Neave. BA

Editor's note; Janet kicks off with a literary quiz on the next page.
I got 5/10. Can you beat me?

BOOK QUIZ

1. Harper Lee's 1960 novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*, set in Depression era Alabama, is now considered a literary classic. In the 1962 movie of the same name, who played the part of lawyer Atticus Finch ?
A - Burt Lancaster B - Robert Mitchum C - Gregory Peck
2. In F Scott Fitzgerald's Jazz Age novel *The Great Gatsby*, with whom is the wealthy Jay Gatsby passionately in love ?
A - Molly Bloom B - Daisy Buchanan C - May Welland
3. Which of these three books was Agatha Christie's first novel ?
A - *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* B - *Lord Edgware Dies* C - *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*
4. What is the name of the fictional leader of Oceania in George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* ?
A - Big Brother B - Mustapha Mand C - President Coriolanus Snow
5. *Beloved* is a 1987 novel that tells the story of a family of former slaves whose home is haunted by a malevolent spirit. The book's author is Toni Morrison - what is her nationality ?
A - Canadian B - American C - Jamaican
6. Which British author wrote *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Waves* ?
A - Katherine Mansfield B - Rosamond Lehmann C - Virginia Woolf
7. Alice Walker was the first black woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983. What was the title of her winning novel ?
A - *Gravity's Rainbow* B - *The Color Purple* C - *The Blue Sky*
8. *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell was a 1936 novel set in the American South that was later made into a hugely popular film. Which British actress played Scarlett O'Hara ?
A - Vivien Leigh B - Loretta Young C - Coral Browne
9. In which Douglas Adams comedy sci-fi series would you find the characters Arthur Dent, Waphod Beeblebrox and Marvin the Paranoid Android ?
A - *The Road to Mars* B - *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*
C - *Red Dwarf : Infinity Welcomes Careful Drivers*
10. What is the name of the William Golding novel in which a group of schoolboys, stranded on an uninhabited island disastrously attempt to govern themselves ?
A - *The Mosquito Coast* B - *Firefly Summer* C - *Lord of the Flies*

Answers on the last page

Hobbies:

TOYS BY JANET

I first got into making soft toys when my nephew, Christopher, was born. I wanted to buy him a teddy bear but all the good nice looking ones were very expensive and the others not very well made.

Having been keen on needlecraft and sewing for many years I looked around and found some patterns, faux fur fabric, joints, eyes, noses and stuffing. The first teddy made up very well and from then on I was hooked.

Animals I have made range from pandas, bears, monkeys, elephants, swans, foxes (dressed and in the buff) and a whole family of hippos. I once made a clown pyjama case for a friend's daughter – that was fun. There's a picture here of a golly too. Gollies are the most interesting to make as you can give them a definite character.

The bear in the gown and hat was made for my granddaughter for her graduation in 2019; it has several dresses to choose from.

If you are of my generation you will probably have had your own teddy



bear, panda and golly when a child and, especially if you have kids and grandkids, you might even feel like having a go at making a soft toy yourself. If you do, please note that all eyes, nose whiskers and stuffing have to be of safety tested materials.

Somewhat to my regret I have not had much time recently to devote to my hobby but I fully intend to get back to my sewing machine and make some more. It's fun and actually quite therapeutic to see your creation slowly come alive.

Janet Warby



Burns' Night

The recent Burns night festivities mentioned in one of Fiona's January RBL Newsletters remind me of the only time I ever celebrated Burns' Night.



There is something special in a nation which honours and remembers its artists rather more than its warriors. The Walter Scott monument in Edinburgh is 200 feet tall and compares with Nelson's Column at a modest 169 feet and, if Robbie Burns memorials don't reach the literary height of 200 feet, there are nonetheless 26 major memorials dedicated to him in Scotland, not to

mention many more wherever Scots have settled in the world i.e. just about everywhere.

Although the most catching image from Burns' work is undoubtedly the "*Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie*", for whom "*The best-laid schemes o' Mice an' Men Gang aft a-gley*," The "*Address to the Haggis*" can't be far behind and, of course particularly relevant to Burns' Night (and where, I wonder in passing did those brave RBL celebrants in Alicante find their haggis?- now that even the pale imitation sold by Marks and Spencer has gone off the menu in Europe). Anyway the poem starts:

*Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place....*

After substantial praise for the dish over numerous verses comes the rather heartwarming swipe at a typical French dish (if my understanding of the Doric is not at fault) which I cannot resist quoting here:

*Is there that o'er his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,*



*Or fricassee wad make her spew
Wi' perfect scunner,
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner?*

As I was saying, all this puts me in mind of a Burns' Night quite a number of years ago when I had just returned from Portsoy with a particularly imposing haggis of the Banffshire breed.

Unrepentant Sassenach that I am, I was nonetheless determined that the coincidence of actually having a genuine haggis available on Burns' Night should not be wasted. This in spite of the fact that the only available audience I could muster in the Bray village where I hang out at weekends was composed of monolingual French friends with absolutely no consciousness of the solemnity of the ceremony I was about to impose upon them.

My guests arrived on the evening of 25 January. Having loosened them up with a few aperitifs I explained to them the importance of the event and distributed roles on a system designed to give a role to everyone; Michelle was entrusted with the whisky bottle, her husband, inconveniently named Michel was entrusted with the box of matches. This was important for inversing the roles could have resulted in a flood, a fire, or both. Helene was provided with my biggest knife and instructed to slice open the beastie's stomach generously, thus allowing Michelle to add a liberal dose of Red Label - I refuse to waste good malt on this sort of exercise and indeed only certain of the neighbours are entitled to malt. Once the blaze established and safety ensured my role was to read the Ode - well, not all of it - in as good an accent as I could muster. I knew, at least that my pronunciation, with this audience, would pass uncriticised. This all went very well and after a lot of oohs and aahs, and with some trepidation they attacked the stuffing and the neaps and tatties

To my surprise and gratification the celebration went very well and I am now able to claim that, in at least one small corner of la Belle France, the name of Robbie Burns is remembered with all the respect that a good meal can endow.



The cottage where Burns was born

Welcoming the Year of the Tiger

Last year we saw the year of the Ox, we are now in the year of the Tiger.

How is the Lunar New Year traditionally celebrated? It all begins about a week ahead of the new year.



On the 26th day of the last lunar month – January 28th this year – festive cakes and puddings are made. The word for cakes and puddings is «gao» in Mandarin or «go» in Cantonese, which sounds the same as the word for «tall» meaning eating them is believed to lead to improvements and

growth in the coming year.

Then, a big cleanup is done in the homes on the 28th day, which was January 30th this year. The aim here is to rid your home of any bad luck that's accumulated over the past year.

A big family reunion dinner is usually held on Lunar New Year's Eve, which falls on January 31st this year. The menu is carefully chosen to include dishes associated with luck, including fish (the Chinese word for it sounds like the word for «surplus»), puddings (symbolizes advancement) and foods that look like gold ingots (like dumplings). Though many Western nations refer to the Lunar New Year/Spring Festival holiday as Chinese New Year, bear in mind it's celebrated not just in Chinese communities but in other Asian countries, including Singapore, Vietnam and South Korea. Countries that observe Lunar New Year often offer three to seven days of public holidays but



celebrations aren't complete until the 15th day of the first lunar month, also known as the Lantern Festival.

People are expected to visit relatives and friends in the early days of new year – except for the

third day of the month. Day three of Lunar New Year (which falls on February 3rd this year) is named “chi kou,” or red mouth. It's believed that arguments are more likely to happen on this day, so people will visit temples and avoid social interactions.

There are plenty of other rules and superstitions attached to the Lunar New Year. For instance, don't wash or cut your hair on the first day of the new year. Why? The Chinese character for hair is the first character in the word for prosper. Therefore washing or cutting it off is seen as washing your fortune away. You'll also want to avoid purchasing footwear for the entire lunar month, as the term for shoes (haai) sounds like losing and sighing in Cantonese. Do, however, wear red. It's associated with luck and prosperity.

Throughout the 15 day festival, hosts usually prepare candy boxes and snacks for their guests. Married couples are expected to hand out red packets – Hongbao - filled with money to children and unmarried adults to wish them luck.

As they say in Singapore “Gong Xi Fa Cai”



- and News

We are pleased to announce that branch activities are starting up again. The BCWA and TOCH groups restarted their meetings and lunches at the club house.

On the 16th and 17th the club house is booked all day for a wedding reception.

Sadly, this month once again we have not been able to hold an RBL lunch. Elaine, who has been cooking for us, is out of action and due to have a hip replacement in March. We wish her a speedy recovery.

We are seeking volunteer cooks, so don't hesitate to contact our Janet or Richard if you are willing to have a go yourself or if you know someone who is prepared to take on the challenge.

However, we do plan to have a lunch in March, and the good news is that more people will be able to attend thanks to the lifting of restrictions. We will keep you posted. It will be nice for us to meet up again.

A large screen has now been installed in the club house and the facility is now available for talks and meetings which can include use of the screen and projector. Spread the word and let's see if we can attract outside people who wish to use our facilities. They can contact Richard or Janet to book.

We have had an invitation from the Scots Kirk; a speaker will give a talk about Donald Caskie 'The Tartan Pimpernel'. You may remember that some of us attended the unveiling of a plaque in his memory at the Scots Kirk last year, which was very interesting as we got to see some of the items that he used during WW2. (See the next page for a poster with details).

We plan to have a thank you cocktail evening in either March or April to which we will invite those who supported us in last year's Poppy Appeal. Again, we will keep you posted.

We would like to start having coffee mornings and afternoon tea sessions at the branch. These will give us all an opportunity to come in, have a chat and meet with other members. Let us know if you would be interested in attending.

Also, we would like to start book exchange days in the branch along with bring and buy sales days where we invite you to donate things that you would like to get rid of or bring in cakes, jams et. It could prove to be interesting. Money raised from the bring and buy sales days will be split between the Poppy Appeal and the general fund. Again, let us know if you would be interested.

Lastly does anyone like a game of scrabble, if so let Janet or Richard know because Richard is a keen scrabble player, and would like to get a group started. We could have matches with the BCWA and other Scrabble groups who have some keen scrabble players also.

To contact us about any of the above, Janet's email is janetwarby@yahoo.com and Richard's is richard.neave05@gmail.com



We are pleased to welcome new members:

Rosemary Rudland Barbieri
Elizabeth Sagar Tomlinson
Christophe Grive

Paul O'Reilly
Julien Sabouret
Lucie Claire Easton

THE SCOTS KIRK PARIS

After hosting John Hughes' Play 'The Tartan Pimpernel' in February 2020, The Scots Kirk Paris has the great pleasure to welcome Richard (Dick) Hallam for a Conference Debate



"Donald Caskie, Faith in the Resistance"

**Donald
Caskie**

1902-1983



A fascinating **Conference Debate**, retracing Reverend Caskie's footsteps during World War II, step back in time and discover the people he encountered, their roles and unsung acts of heroism.



Richard (Dick) HALLAM is a veteran soldier, an amateur historian for the last 30 years. Like many of us, he researched family members who were called to arms in both world wars.

Dick's drive is to perpetuate the memory of those who have paid the ultimate price. "We will remember them" should not be just names etched in stone. To remember someone properly, you have to know something about them. This is what Dick will present, an inspiring and captivating research of Rev. Caskie's selfless commitment, his Faith in the Resistance.

**Saturday, 5th of March 2022
at 10.30 am & 2.30pm**

@ Scots Kirk Paris – 17 rue Bayard – 75008 Paris

Metro (M) 1 (M) 13 Champs Elysées – Clémenceau
(M) 1 (M) 9 Franklin Roosevelt

To reserve your seats:

Scots Kirk Paris
@scotskirkparis



ScotsKirkParis
@ScotsKirkFrance

☎ 01 48 78 47 94
✉ scotskirkparis@orange.fr



Obituaries:

Saturday 18/12/2021 - **BARBRA GARDNER**

Barbra Gardner's daughter Carole, informs us that her mother died on 19th December aged 91. Barbra was Janet Warby's predecessor as Secretary of the RBL, a position she held in the late 80s to early 90s. John, her husband, was Chairman of the branch and died whilst in post. Barbra was also a Committee member of the BCWA .

We extend all our sympathy to Barbra's daughter and all her family.

Wednesday 26.01/22 - **BERYL JONES**

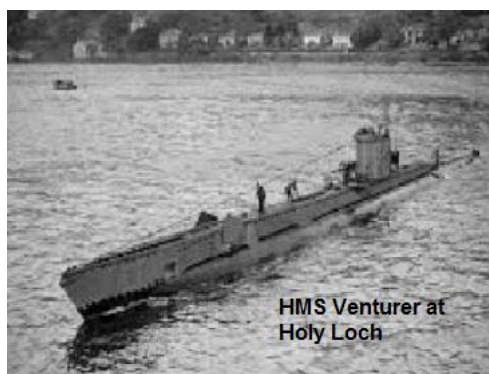
The sad news of Beryl's death reaches us by way of the BCWA.

Until recently a member of the RBL Paris branch, Beryl was also an active member of BCWA and served on their committee.

The RBL Paris branch wish to associate our own condolences with those of the BCWA to Beryl's family and friends,

HMS Venturer vs U-863

This month we commemorate an action which took place on 9th February 1945. The British submarine HMS Venturer (see photo), under the command of 25 yr old LT Jimmy Launders, sank the German U-864 submarine in the Fedje area of Norway. All 73 men died. This was the first time in the history of naval warfare that one submarine intentionally sank another while both were submerged.



It was HMS Venturer's eleventh patrol out of the British submarine base at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands. Sent to the Fedje area, Venturer was then ordered on the basis of Enigma decrypts to seek, intercept and destroy U-864 which was in the area. U-864 was carrying a cargo of 65 tonnes of mercury as well as Junkers Jumo 004B jet engine parts (used in the Messerschmitt Me 262) to Japan, a mission code-named Operation Caesar.

On 6 February 1945, U-864 passed through the Fedje area without being detected, but on 9 February Venturer heard U-864's engine noise. Launders had decided not to use ASDIC since it would betray his position but spotted



the U-boat's periscope as her captain looked for his escort. In an unusually long engagement for a submarine, and in a situation for which neither crew had been trained, Launders waited 45 minutes after first contact before going to action stations. Launders was waiting for U-864 to surface and thus present an easier target. Upon realising they were being followed by the British submarine and that their escort had still not arrived, U-864 zig-zagged underwater in attempted evasive manoeuvres, with each submarine occasionally risking raising her periscope.

Venturer had only eight torpedoes as opposed to the 22 carried by U-864. After three hours Launders decided to make a prediction of U-864's zig-zag and released a spread of his torpedoes into its predicted course. This manual computation of a firing solution against a three-dimensionally manoeuvring target was the first occasion on which such a technique was used and subsequently became the basis of modern computer-based torpedo targeting systems. Prior to this attack, no target had been sunk by torpedo where the firing ship had had to consider the target's position in three-dimensional terms, where the depth of the target was a variable and not a fixed value. The computation thus differs fundamentally from those performed by analogue torpedo fire-control computers which regarded the target in strictly 2D terms with a constant depth determined by the target's draught.



Lt Jimmy Launders

The torpedoes were released at 17-second intervals beginning at 12:12, each taking four minutes to reach its target. Launders then dived Venturer suddenly to evade retaliation. U-864 heard the torpedoes coming, dived deeper, and turned away to avoid them. The first three torpedoes were avoided, but U-864 unknowingly steered into the path of the fourth. Exploding, U-864 split in two, and sank with all hands coming to rest more than 150 metres (490 ft) below the surface. Launders was awarded a bar to his DSO for this action.

Unfortunately, the German submarine U-864 has been leaking toxic Mercury since it was sunk but on discovery of the wreck (and the leak) in 2018. The Norwegian government undertook a £25 million project to bury the submarine, now a war grave, in sand. The project was completed in 2020.



U-863 as discovered

Caroline Clopet

(Adapted from RBL Paris facebook page [facebook.com/royalbritishlegionparis](https://www.facebook.com/royalbritishlegionparis))

Just for fun.

Fun Facts.

There are more English speakers in China than in the United States.

Rats cannot vomit, and neither can Horses.

620 million years ago, an Earth day was only 21.9 hours long. It is extended a little every year.

Funny Riddles.

Question: I see an ocean but no water. Where am I?

Answer: In front of a world map.

Question: What's the first thing a garden plants in his garden at the beginning of the year?

Answer: His foot.

Question: When do you go through one hole and come out through two holes at the same time?

Answer: When you're putting on your trousers.

Question: What's got many keys-but is unable to open any door?

Answer: The keyboard.

Puns

What do you call a seagull that flies over the bay?

A bagel.

Vegans believe meat eaters and butchers are gross.

But those who sell fruits and vegetables are grocer.

Which country's capital is the fastest growing?

Ireland's. Every year it's Dublin.

I googled How to start a wildfire.

I got 48,500 matches.

R.N.

Answers to Book Quiz : 1. c. 2. b. 3. c. 4. a. 5. b. 6. c. 7. b. 8. a. 9. b. 10. c.