



Paris
Branch

Newsletter

April 2022



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Message from your Chairman.

Welcome to this month's Newsletter.

March winds and April showers and all that. As we wait in the gloom for the promised May sunshine here is something to brighten your day - we hope - whatever the weather.

The Paris branch's first lunch of the year was held in March. Not everyone who had put their names down to attend could do so because of the ravages of Covid and last minute obstacles. All those who made it, however, enjoyed the occasion, liked the menu and appreciated the opportunity to meet up with friends whom they had not seen for weeks or months.

Another convivial event was a most enjoyable cocktail party on the evening of the 7th April held to thank all those who supported us in last year's Poppy Appeal and also to welcome some of our new members. The occasion was enlivened by the drawing of the tombola for which many of you had bought tickets. Always a popular event, there were some very good prizes, many donated by members of our committee. You will find the list of winners further down.



On the evening of the 5th April Bill Beauclerk welcomed members of the Special Forces Club (French section) to a talk given by Général Philippe Landicheff (AAE, ancient COM BFSa) which was attended by thirty eight people including some British Embassy staff. It proved a successful evening and some members of both the FSC and the Embassy staff expressed their intention to join the RBL Paris branch. They have plans to hold more talks and evenings over the year at the club house, The, next evening event for their club which will be held in our club house is on the 5th May so keep an eye out for further information about that.

As you can see here our HQ is now fully equipped with a screen and projection facilities should members wish to avail themselves of it.



*This month's
lunch*

Thur 27/4

1215 for 1230

*See below for
menu*

Janet, our honorary secretary celebrated her birthday on the 29th March and reports that it all went well with lots of flowers and that Roger remembered not to forget the date.

On Sunday the 24th April I shall be attending my first official engagement as your new Chairman in Ville de Maisons-Laffitte. It is the 80th anniversary of the shooting down of an RAF plane and the death of all the crew, in WW2.

Yes, we shall be having a lunch this month on the 27th. (See menu on p 4).

This will also be an opportunity to examine in more detail some of the models of which you have already had a preview if you read the the March Newsletter. Pierre Quenot, our Vice Chairman has agreed to bring along a selection of his work and his remarkably detailed figurines are well worth seeing.

RBL SPRING TOMBOLA Results

We held the draw for the Spring Tombola on Thursday evening 31st March at the Legion during the Thank You Cocktail for New Members, Poppy Collectors and Standard Bearers.

Here are the results .

Bryan McNeil	Champagne
Edith Wilkinson	Champagne
Roger Warby	Wine
June Worth	Clock Radio
Ann Alric	Bateau Mouche Tickets
Sandra Cheyne	Gin
Ann Morley	Wine
Carsten Duke	Hamper
Elizabeth Hallows	Diffuser
René Cretel	Raclette

Many thanks to all who took part in this, our first tombola since Covid intervened.

RBL Quiz

Answers on last page.

1. How many permanent teeth does a dog have?
 2. What is the full postcode of the Houses of Parliament?
 3. How many chukkers are there in a polo match?
 4. Which country in the world is believed to have the most miles of motorway?
 5. Who won 2019's Sports Personality of the year?
 6. What are the five colours of the Olympic rings?
 7. What was the name of the tower block where Del Boy and Rodney Trotter lived in Only Fools and Horses?
 8. Name the first actor to play Dumbledore in the Harry Potter films?
 9. A screwdriver cocktail is orange juice, ice and which spirit?
 10. Which soft drink is commonly associated with Scotland?
-



Don't forget to book in for this month's lunch.

Wednesday 27 April
1215 for 1230
Only €23 - Pay on the day (in cash please)

Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or
richard.neave05@gmail.com

*Book soon to be sure of a place.
(Cancellations up to 48h before)*



LUNCH MENU 27th APRIL
Aperitif
STARTER
Shrimp cocktail cucumber bites

MAIN COURSE
Shepherd's pie

DESSERT
Fruit cocktail and Vanilla ice cream

*Wine served with the meal
Coffee or tea*

Members' Hobbies:

Francis Jolivet has now left the Paris region but we are more than happy to have him still as a member of the RBL Paris Branch. He shares with us here an account of his unusual hobby, a collection which has expanded to the point of becoming a real museum.



The GUARDS' HOUSE STORY

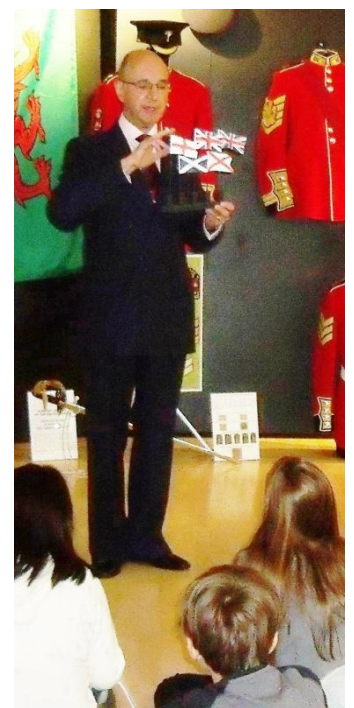
It was in 2004 that Queen Elizabeth II made her fourth visit to Paris, a three day visit celebrating the centenary celebrations of the *Entente Cordiale*, the agreement that sealed the rapprochement between France and Britain after a long period of rivalry and misunderstanding. The Queen was accompanied on her visit by a detachment of the Household Division.



At the time I was a serving soldier in the logistics office on the staff of the military governor of Paris which commands the Ile de France region. and in that capacity I had the honour of looking after the logistics of the detachment of the Household Division.

I was fascinated by the parade uniforms and, soon after the visit, through friendships made with our British comrades during their stay, started my collection of uniforms and all the associated artifacts. Subsequently I discovered and developed a network of collectors in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the United States. Over the years my collection of current Royal Guard parade outfits has

expanded and now consists of 20 mannequins and a lot of accessories. Certain of these are very difficult to obtain and, for example, it was from Australia that I finally managed



to obtain an officer's bearskin. Curiously, being for an officer, this is made from the skin of a female bear - other ranks only have bearskins made from male bears.

After my retirement I put on various exhibitions, each lasting a week, for schools, town halls and associations. Developing my presentations was an interesting and enjoyable experience and was as educational for me as it was for my varied audiences.

It was two years ago that I decided to return to the land of my ancestors and found, in St. Gervais d'Auvergne, what was, for me, the ideal house with a ground floor where I was able to fulfill a long-held ambition; to create a small museum. I first added the panel and flags (top) to the front of the building but had quickly to add an explanatory plaque (underneath) when I realised passing British visitors - and others - were taking my residence for some sort of consulate!



Now the project is up and running and one of the subjects I still present to visitors in this new context is the construction of the United Kingdom as represented by the superimposition of the cross of St Andrew upon the cross of St George in 1707 and then that of St. Patrick in 1800 – the result being, of course, the Union Flag - a remarkable analogy I have always thought. (see photo). This often leads to an explanation of the British political system; the role of the monarch, parliament, and prime minister. It is into this framework that the story and the history of the Guards and its regiments finds its place.



The spectacular aspect of the exhibits is always a success with young visitors and children love to try on the genuine headpieces and various parts of the uniform.

This then is "The Guards' House" which first appeared in my village on 1 March 2021, an unusual addition to the attractions of St. Gervais. It is, of course, open to visitors and I should be particularly happy to welcome members of the Royal British Legion who find themselves in this lovely area of the Auvergne.

Francis Jolivet



Concert
Laurence David-Grant brings this event to our attention.

It was to take place some time ago but covid broke out among the choir.



The Falklands

We have been fortunate in persuading Lord Ashcroft to give us an overview of his perception of the spirit of the Falklanders in the 1982 conflict. To find out more on this fascinating subject we would refer you to his book, mentioned at the end of this piece.

The brave resistance of the islanders during the Falklands War

While researching my latest bravery book, *Falklands War Heroes*, I naturally came across numerous stories of bravery enacted by British soldiers, sailors, airmen and support staff. However, I also heard some accounts of a less well-known valour – that displayed by islanders whose remote British Overseas Territory had been invaded by a huge Argentine force on April 2, 1982.

My book, published in November, concentrated solely on gallantry medal groups from my own collection awarded to servicemen – and one woman – during the



war. However, more recently I researched the defiance and bravery of the islanders, speaking to several who experienced the events of 40 years ago. At times, the courage of many of the 1,820 islanders brought back memories of *La Résistance*, the famous organisations who fought the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War. Like the brave French men and women eight decades ago, some Falkland islanders risked, at best, their freedom and, at worst, their lives by secretly plotting against the Argentine aggressors. This article provides an insight into their courage from four decades ago. When a large Argentine force descended on the Falkland Islands in the early hours of April 2 1982, the

main island, with just a small presence of Royal Marines, put up a short but spirited defence until everyone was ordered to surrender by their Governor Rex Hunt. The islanders then debated in private what they should do: most opted, in the face of overwhelming odds, to build a working relationship with the invaders but to fall short of total cooperation. Some bided their time waiting for the best moment to take up arms.

However, throughout the occupation many took significant risks by forming a loose resistance group that sabotaged the communications and other operations of the Argentine invaders, whilst also passing on vital information, including the locations of enemy troops, to the British. The men of the Public Works Department, who ran the electricity and water supplies under armed guard, considered trying to sabotage both services, but they realised that the islanders would suffer as much as the invaders if this was done.

One man whom the Argentines disregarded as a threat was Steve Whitley, the island vet, who was allowed to tour the islands tending to farm stock and pets. Phil Middleton, a teacher, helped Whitley secure the homes of Government officials who had left the Falklands after April 2. Middleton later recalled, “Steve



had his 'magic scissors', a gelding tool that he used to cut the army telephone wires." Whitley had managed to hold on to camera equipment too which he used to good effect during so-called house clearing missions, photographing various enemy positions and the like for the UK Task Force to use at some point. Speaking from his home on the Falklands, Middleton told me: "At the time, we [Steve Whitley and himself] were fundamentally angry that someone had come to take over our island, our homes and were telling us what to do."

Soon some of the braver amateur ham operators were also seeking to pass on intelligence, including Reg Silvey, who at the time had lived on the Falklands for 13 years. After the invasion, he handed in his "rig" at the Town Hall, making sure it was signed for, but he then managed to get hold of a radio and transmitter that had been secretly hidden by another islander. He then managed to pass on key information to the British with this equipment.

Perhaps the bravest islander of all was Terry Peck, the former police chief turned councillor, who wandered around with a camera and telephoto lens concealed in a drainpipe. His images of anti-aircraft missiles and other weapons were smuggled to the British forces. Fearing arrest, Peck, who was in his early 40s in 1982, fled Port Stanley, the capital, on a motorbike, armed with a semi-automatic pistol and ammunition hidden earlier in his spare tyre. For the next few weeks, Peck, who had good waterproof clothing, hid out, sometimes sleeping rough and at other times seeking help from islanders who fed him and allowed him to sleep in their outbuildings and use their bathrooms. Peck, who had the codename of "Rubber Duck", was determined to meet up with members of the British Armed Forces once they arrived on East Falkland from the UK 8,000 miles away – and he did just that. After the men of 3 PARA and Royal Marines landed at Port San Carlos on East Falkland, Peck got a radio message to them that he was riding to meet them on his motorbike and they should not fire on him.

Peck later described to local journalist Graham Bound riding through the men, sporting their red and green berets. "I was frantically waving to everybody and they were waving at me." Over the next few days, he was debriefed by intelligence officers. Over a two-way civilian radio, he made contact with Trudi Morrison (now Trudi McPhee) urging her to get "as many drivers and vehicles together as you can" and meet them as soon as possible.

Morrison, then aged 29, was farming the land where she still lives with her then partner. During the occupation, she had shielded up to 16 people, including women and children, in her two-bedroom farmhouse and neighbouring caravan. Once she had her request for help from Peck, Morrison wasted no time in getting several volunteers with Land Rovers, tractors and other supplies to join her cross-country convoy. "I am a pretty strong-willed character. There was no way I was going to miss out. I wanted to get rid of those bloody Argies," she told me. At 4am on May 31, much to her parents' concern, Morrison and her group of some 22 islanders drove through the Para lines and on to nearby Estancia with enemy soldiers all around the mountains. Soon the volunteers were taking 300 Paras and their kit up Estancia Mountain. As the battle loomed, both Peck and Morrison stayed with the British forces. At one point, Morrison led a military convoy sporting a pair of white gloves so they could be seen easily as she pointed out the best directions in the gloom. Morrison said she was not really scared, even when she came under enemy fire. "I just felt so damn cross that these people [the enemy] had done this to us and I wanted to do all I could to help," she said.

The Battle for Mount Longdon was won on June 11/12. On June 14, Port Stanley

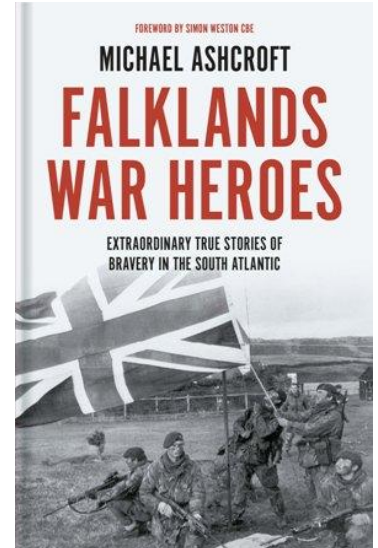


was captured and the enemy surrendered. Sadly, during the fighting on June 11, three civilians, all women and including Sue Whitley, 30, the vet's wife, were killed - but their fight to help regain their homes and their freedoms had been won. Terry Peck, who actually fought with the Paras, was awarded the MBE for his bravery and other islanders were recognised for their courage too. Today, at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, England, there is a memorial tribute to the bravery of the islanders who resisted their invaders and oppressors. However, the willow upland goose, designed to represent the islanders' freedom and erected in 2010, is falling into disrepair.

I have made a contribution to the £50,000 appeal to construct a more permanent memorial made from metal for I believe the courage of these islanders 40 years ago must never be forgotten.

Lord Ashcroft

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is a businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. For information on his work, visit www.lordashcroft.com. Follow him on Twitter and/or Facebook @LordAshcroft. For details on his new book, visit www.falklandswarheroes.com. All author's royalties are being donated to military charities.



Old Bill

This 1934 cover of the "British Legion Journal" shows "Old Bill", a fictional character created in 1914–15 by cartoonist [Bruce Bairnsfather](#). Old Bill was depicted as an elderly, pipe-smoking British "tommy" - or here an ex-tommy - with a walrus moustache.

His classic cartoon "Well if you knows of a better 'ole... go to it!" is the frontispiece of his book "Fragments from France" which is available - free - on Gutenberg.org (I would recommend the Gutenberg project to any of you who read on e-readers. Thousands of free books which are out of copyright are available) [Click here to see "Fragments"](#) and more pictures.

Interesting things in this 1917 cartoon are, firstly, the use of the variant on the expression above which was still a byword in the post-WW1 years. Here it becomes, *"If you knows of a better badge... get it."* and secondly the BL badge in the cartoon which does not include the word "Royal", an honour bestowed on the charity only on its 50th anniversary in 1971.



And finally - Just for Fun

A perfectionist walked into a bar....apparently, the bar wasn't set high enough.

Don't interrupt someone working intently on a puzzle. Chances are, you'll hear some crosswords.

I'm a big fan of whiteboards. I find them quite re-markable.

Q. Why was King Arthur's army too tired to fight? A. It had too many sleepless Knights.

Did you hear about the auto body shop that just opened? It comes highly wreck-a-mended.

Two windmills are standing in a wind farm. One asks, "What's your favourite kind of music?" The other says, "I'm a big metal fan".

When I lost my rifle, the army charged me 80 pounds. That's why in the Navy, the captain goes down with the ship.

Did you hear about the racing snail who got rid of his shell?

He thought it would make him faster, but it just made him sluggish.

When does a joke become a "dad joke?" When it becomes apparent.

What do you call a hippie's wife?

Mississippi.

Did you hear the bankrupt poet who ode everyone?

What happens when it rains cats and dogs?

You have to be careful not to step in a poodle.

Did you hear about the cheese factory that exploded in France? There was Da brie everywhere.

Answers to the Quiz :

1. 42.
 2. SW1A OAA.
 3. 6.
 4. China.
 5. Ben Stoker.
 6. Blue, Yellow, Black, Green and Red.
 7. Nelson Mandela House.
 8. Richard Harris.
 9. Vodka.
 10. Irn-Bru.
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