



Newsletter

N° 6

July 2022



Paris Branch



Page

2 Chairman's message

3 Quiz

4 Members' Hobbies

6 Commemorations & Events: News from members

7 The Pay Corps' Contribution to D-Day: The Bank of Normandy

10 The Bennecourt project

11 The Garde Républicaine and the Commune de Paris

12 Editor's last word - Answers to the quiz

Chairman's introduction.

Welcome to this month's newsletter. July is proving to be busy.



*Thur 27 July
Monthly lunch
1215 for 1230
(menu p 4)*

*Thur 4 August
Reanimation de la
flamme at the
Arc de Triomphe
(Meet near Metro
entrance 17h45)*

*Sunday 4 Sept.
Pedal to Paris
arrival at the
Arc de Triomphe
[Click here for details](#)*

*Saturday 17 Sept
Bennecourt
Commemoration
See p 10*

As you may know Janet and Roger recently went down with the COVID virus. Both were up to date with their COVID prevention injections, which sadly goes to show that those of us who have had the injections can still catch it. Thanks, probably, to being vaccinated they did not suffer too badly and are recovering. Janet is still busily working on our behalf from home.

I had the pleasure of going with Pierre on the 1st of July to the memorial at Thiepval to commemorate the 106th anniversary of the battle of the Somme. There was an excellent turnout and we were made to feel very welcome by the Somme branch of the RBL. After a champagne and snack lunch, we went on to the ceremony at the Ulster memorial tower which was also well attended. This was my first visit to the region and I have to say, having watched various documentaries on Youtube about the battles of the Somme, and read a very good book entitled "Somme Into the Breach" by Hugh Sebag - Montefiore, I found the experience very moving. This is particularly so when you see the surrounding fields which 106 years ago were lined with trenches and then the cemeteries full of those who gave their lives for our freedom. As I heard someone say "It was nothing but a human meat grinder".



On the 6th I went to the British Embassy to attend the farewell of Air Commodore Tim Below who I am sure you know has been a very active supporter of our branch. Tim is retiring from the Royal Air Force having served for 36 years. You will wish to join me in wishing him all the best for the future. Brigadier General Al Veitch is taking over from Tim on the 18th July this year. Al has been a keen supporter of our branch and of our

Poppy Appeal, and last night he assured me that he will continue to be so. We also said goodbye to Dominic Hancock who is also retiring. Again, I am sure you will join me in wishing him a happy retirement. He too has supported us very well whilst he has been in post.

The monthly lunch. As announced further down, with details and the menu, the July edition will take place on the 21st and I am happy to say that Elaine will be preparing it. Last month's was excellent and well attended. Glad to have you back Elaine and 'Thank you' for your hard work.

Best regards to you all. I Look forward to seeing some of you at the lunch.

QUIZ

Homework for grown-ups

1. A person who is impartial in a particular matter could be described as :
a) Noninterested b) Disinterested c) Uninterested d) Deinterested
2. The kuna is the common currency in which country? :
a) Georgia b) Brazil c) Croatia d) Laos
3. Triceratops is a dinosaur from which of the following periods? :
a) Jurassic b) Cretaceous c) Devonian d) Cambrian
4. When was the death penalty abolished in the UK? :
a) 1808 b) 1908 c) 1949 d) 1998
5. According to Greek legend, who killed Paris (of Troy fame)? :
a) Achilles b) Diomedes c) Philoctetes d) Menetaus
6. In physics, what is Hooke's Law? :
a) A law of gravity b) A law of motion c) A law of thermodynamics d) A law of elasticity
7. What is the capital of Zambia? :
a) Lusaka b) Banjul c) Lilongwe d) Abidjan
8. On what day of the month does the US national holiday Juneteenth take place.? :
a) 10th June b) 17th June c) 19th June d) 28th June
9. What does the "M." stand for in the name of English painter J.M.W. Turner? :
a) Michael b) Mark c) Morgan d) Mallord
10. Complete the title of a seminal novel by Alice Walker – The Color
a) Of The World b) Of Love c) Purple d) Of Hate

(ANSWERS: see last page)



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

Thursday 21 July
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 21st July

Aperitif:

STARTER:

Endives and Crème de betterave

MAIN COURSE:

roast pork, roast potatoes and other veg

DESSERT:

1 lemon cake and ice cream

*Wine served with the meal
Coffee or tea*

More Hobbies: From birds' eggs to squirrels

It may seem totally unacceptable in this day and age but, back in the early '50s a substantial collection of birds' eggs was a must in the world of the pre-teen social climber. Having a good collection of eggs was also evidence that you were real climber too and an ability to reach a rook's nest was a sure-fire route to popularity. Having procured an egg, one had to blow it by making a hole in each end or use a cunningly shaped blower made from a bit of glass tube to do the job through a single hole. If there was an embryo in the egg it didn't work. Anyway, I cheated and used to buy some of my eggs from a little shop in Scarborough that catered for all kinds of collectors from tin soldiers to postage stamps. I got a guillemot's egg there, a huge pointed thing (they are pointed so that they will roll in a circle and not fall off the tiny cliff ledges where the birds breed) but the local kids were not that daft and I never had the nerve to claim that I had been clambering up remote Scottish cliffs attacked by defending sea fowl.



I was about twelve when egg collecting was made illegal - it may have been a little later before the news penetrated to our gang in a north-eastern back alley. In any event I rather lost interest as a competing attraction took over. I discovered that you could collect animals. Not cats or dogs. My parents wouldn't go down that route but anything of smaller size was, as it were, fair game. There was a tortoise of course. He (you can tell the sex of a tortoise by the concave or convex underside) didn't last long. Come the autumn, he disappeared and was believed to have dug himself into hibernation in the garden. Subsequent excavation, however, failed to reveal him, spring sprang with no reappearance and it became evident that he had either dug himself into an early grave or fallen victim to the other gang, a predatory bunch inhabiting the other end of our back lane.

Then there was the guinea pig. It was supposed to be a male but turned out not to be by giving birth to unmistakable evidence. However when it ate its babies we all went off it a bit and I can't remember what

happened to it. That reminds me, I was once the guest of a girl in Switzerland who had a guinea pig with offspring. "Where's the father?" I enquired. "Here", she replied, lifting a large white rabbit out of a corner. "Don't be silly." I said. "They are different species!"

"True she answered, "but they're also different sexes - Watch.". She put the guinea pig on the table and then the rabbit. The latter immediately shagged the former (who didn't seem to mind) with enthusiasm. "See?" she said. There didn't seem to be much to add. Guinea pigs don't seem to be very fussy about anything to do with reproduction.

Which reminds me of another rabbit we had. A Dutch one, black and white. It was the most ferocious creature I've ever seen and bit anyone who got in range. It would even run across the yard to attack you and I remember my father, who had been delegated to feed it, waving a chair in its direction to fight it off like a lion tamer in training while he put out the lettuce. Eventually we went on holiday and left it with Aunty Kitty who was wise enough to let it escape into the street and have it run over.

At one point I had a hedgehog too. A nice quiet creature, it would sit on my lap for ages, snuggling up with its spines all flattened down. They eat an enormous quantity of worms though and I got sick of having to dig them up every day and eventually set it loose by a wood.

The snake was perhaps the most dramatic pet I had. It was a grass snake, quite a big one. People are funny about snakes though and it was unpopular with the rest of the family. One day I thought to turn the popular dislike of serpents to my advantage. If the snake itself inspired suspicion, distrust and disgust I, as its owner and master, was clearly an intrepid personage of great courage. How could I demonstrate that? Opposite our house there was a primary school and at four o'clock innumerable children were released onto the streets (there wasn't a parent or a guardian in sight of course. They had better things to do in those days.) The kids would all, I was sure, be impressed by my new pet so, at four o'clock I went out into the front garden with Sid the snake wrapped around my arm. I walked nonchalantly up to the fence (my father had recently erected a three foot wooden fence on top of the low garden wall, a beautifully painted piece of amateur carpentry of which he was inordinately proud) trying to look as much like Tarzan of the Jungle as possible. Sure enough a couple of boys caught sight of me and my scaly arm-piece and came for a closer look. They climbed up onto the wall, hanging onto the fence. Two girls came by and joined them. They screamed. That attracted more and suddenly there I was, the nearest I ever got to pop-star attention with a long line of admirers hanging on the fence. I continued to walk up and down but there's not much you can do with a snake apart from that. You can hardly get it to jump through a hoop for example and I was at a bit of a loss as to what to do next. In the absence of anything more original I thought, "at least I can frighten them more." and approached the crowd, now all perched on the top of the garden wall and clinging to the fence. Suddenly I made a quick gesture with the snake, waving it about in the faces of the most impressionable spectators - the girls. There was a scream of horror and they all leaned backwards into the street, still hanging onto my father's fence. This had never been designed for such a strain. It broke clean off the wall and fell. Some of the kids leapt to safety, others were deposited roughly on the ground. I stared horrified as they limped and stumbled away and started to wonder how I was going to explain the destruction of his masterpiece to my father. Subsequently, Sid was reluctantly (on my part) released on the banks of a pond.



In the meantime my egg collection had been gathering dust but up the street lived John who was still climbing trees regularly and coming back sometimes with rarities which I hesitate now to mention. One day he came back with a new find - a young grey squirrel he had found in a nest. I wanted it. We entered negotiations and finally I

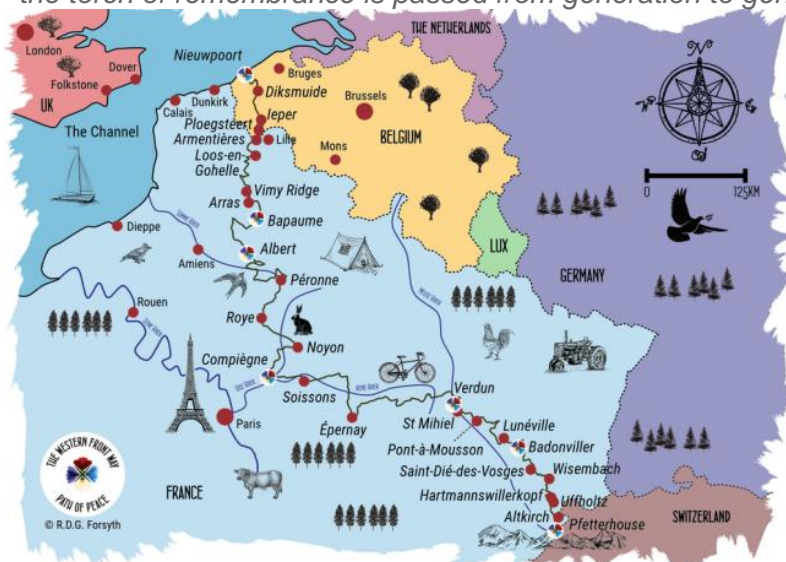
swopped my egg collection for the squirrel which moved into my bedroom. It seemed fairly happy there and spent much of its time nibbling away at the bindings of my book collection. I do believe I have one or two tomes which still carry the scars. Sam the squirrel wasn't easy to tame however, but eventually we got to the point where he would sit on my shoulder for a couple of minutes before leaping off in search of another volume. My grandmother came round for tea and I proudly introduced Sam to her. "Aargh" she said "Take it away". I remonstrated with her "It's perfectly safe. Don't worry. Have a closer look. He's lovely. Look, I can even put him on your shoulder for a moment..." and I did. Grandma shrugged violently. The squirrel took a nasty bite out of her ear and things got a bit hairy until somebody took grandma home. I tried to make the case that it was grandma's fault. Why couldn't she just have kept still? But I hardly need to add that Sam, like many of his predecessors was returned to the wild.

Mark Yates

Commemorations & Events: News from members

Howard Wilkinson, our Military Attaché and honorary president of the RBL Paris branch sends us a brief account of the Western Front Way, Europe's newest hiking and biking route, 1000km of paths along the WWI trench lines from the Belgian coast to the Franco-Swiss border at Kilometre Zero. This project enjoys support from many quarters; Menna Rawlings, the British ambassador to France says

'It is more vital than ever that we remember our common history, and the sacrifices our countries have made together in defence of the values we share. Such projects as the Western Front Way help to bring that memory alive, and to make commemoration active and engaging, ensuring that the torch of remembrance is passed from generation to generation.'



I note, in passing, that Sir Michael Morpurgo, author of "War Horse" is also a fan - many of our members will recall his visit to the Paris branch a couple of years ago. The route already well under way but a substantial sum is required to complete it. Here is a link to a very complete website, well worth browsing, devoted to the project: [Western Front Way](#). Your help in completing the Western Front Way will be much appreciated and here is a direct link to a [crowdfunding site](#).



Douvres-la-Délivrande

Rosemary Rudland sends us some photos of the unveiling of a plaque devoted to the memory of the Royal Army Pay Corps at Douvres-la-Délivrande on Friday, 17 June.



Intrigued by this story and thanks to Rosemary we have been able to obtain further information on this curious and little-known episode of WWII from Captain Simon Lash of the SSP (Staff and Personnel Support) and our main article this month (see below) tells the story and gives, at the end, a link to his original and yet more informative account.

The Pay Corps' Contribution to D-Day: The Bank of Normandy

Much is written of military actions and the fighting is often described in great detail. Little, attention however, is paid to the organisation that must go into the preparation and support of all such operations. Sometimes these are curious and can become torturously complicated. The following is an example: sending approximately 156,000 troops to Normandy on D-Day involved thousands of auxiliary services. One was the problem every tourist going abroad is aware of: how to make sure you have some money when you get to your destination. This was the dilemma the Royal Army Pay Corps was faced with in the Normandy campaign.

Providing soldiers with a (small) advance of pay in the local currency was an excellent means of maintaining morale. This was the first time it had been done, and the advance was issued in French Francs. Each officer and soldier was paid a flat sum of 200 Francs which avoided the need to issue or exchange cash in the first days of the invasion. They could also pay any sterling they had into their pay accounts. The rate of the exchange at the time was 200 Francs to £1.00

That was just the beginning however. Money is and has always been a vital instrument of war and in Normandy there would need to be lots of it. Further, there was great concern that the Germans in defeat would destroy French currency and there would not be enough Francs in reserve to supply the invasion. One of the



AMC French Franc

problems of paper money, after all, is that it is eminently destructible. An unusual solution to one of the problems involved was the use of the Douvres Radar Station as the 'Bank of Normandy'.

In anticipation of D-Day a currency known as the Allied Military Currency (AMC) was adopted. It was printed in the USA and the British were allocated 2,899,500,000 Francs all of which was allocated to 21st Army Group, safekeeping devolving to the RAPC. Currency was printed not only in French Francs. There were others. Their codenames were: 'TOMCAT' for French Francs, 'FRIABLE' for Belgian Francs, 'LILITH' for Dutch Guilders, 'DUO-DENO' for Danish Kroner and 'WILD DOG' for German Marks.

Charles De Gaulle, incidentally, was not happy with this currency circulating in France and soon after Normandy this emergency currency expired. Once Paris fell, the mint came back into operation and notes from the Central Bank of France were used.

However, in the meantime, the first elements of RAPC started to land in Normandy from D+2 and on D+13 the Base cashier disembarked on the Mulberry harbour with 5½ tons of currency totalling 335,440,000 Francs - a sterling equivalent of £16,77,200.00.

The first problem was where to put this enormous quantity of cash and the first place used was the cellars of Chateau De Courseulles-Sur-Mer. The Pay Corps then occupied the Societe Generale bank in Bayeux, sharing the vaults and the counters with the local bank staff. The Bayeux bank, however, wasn't big enough to house all that liquid cash and a lot of it remained at Chateau De Courseulles-Sur-Mer. It should be noted that during the deployment not a single Franc was unaccounted for.

As previously mentioned all officers and soldiers had been issued with 200 Francs prior to deployment. With around 156,000 troops on D-Day that meant there were 31,200,000 Francs in the pockets of soldiers waiting to be spent. Now, some of this was gambled away in the holding areas prior to embarkation, but most of it certainly made it to Normandy. By the 20th of July the first 'Nobby bar' had opened in Caen and an additional eighteen mobile canteens were established. The level of luxury this brought to the average client was nonetheless limited, one diary entry from the time reading:

"The only pleasure resort was 'Nobby's Bar', where men could buy chocolate, soap, tooth paste etc., nothing very exciting".

By July 26th further reinforcements, around 44,000 of them, had landed in Normandy and the NAAFI appeared on the scene. This, a civilian organisation, needed banking facilities somewhere. So did the Regimental Institutes (PRI) which used non-public funds. A third need was a large influx of cash from prisoners of war. This was unexpected but some prisoners had cash holdings of up to 15,000 Francs and there were around 12000 of them. They were allowed to keep their possessions until they reached their respective camps where their cash also entered the banking system. By the end of June 44 the cellars of the Chateau De Courseulles-Sur-Mer were stuffed full and incapable of handling yet more incoming currency even with the addition of the bank strongroom at Bayeux; A new facility was required.



Between Bayeux and Ouistreham in Calvados is the small commune of Douvres, an idyllic location these days. Just south of it was a German radar station split into two sites, a small site to the north-west that housed the main Wasserman radar and a larger site to the South housing the other radar and most of the 240 men who occupied the well-defended site. It was known by the Allies to be a major asset for the Luftwaffe and was already on the eve of D-Day subjected to an intensive jamming

campaign to block its radar signals. An intensive bombing campaign by naval artillery had destroyed the main radar tower but the short range radars were still operational. Its elimination was a matter of importance and confided to the Canadian 3rd Division which had landed at Juno beach. By D+11 the site had still not been taken. There were exceptionally strong defences and the large open field around the site offered no protection for assaulting troops. It was almost impregnable and even Typhoon bomber aircraft with their rockets could not penetrate the bunkers or the gun encasement that provided protection for the men. The Luftwaffe managed to resupply the radar station with much needed food, water and ammunition, hoping that the 21st Panzer Division would come to the rescue, and the German occupiers kept up their resistance. Completely encircled, the station continued to relay Allied positions to German Artillery units, becoming an intolerable nuisance. A direct order came from HQ 2nd British Army for a major assault to be conducted. It took 41 Commando Brigade supported by 22nd Dragoons and Armoured Vehicles Royal Engineer (AVRE) from 74th Division to finally break through. The commandos were finally able to assault the bunkers and took the surrender of 200 prisoners. The 22nd Dragoons wrote in their War Diary of the 17 Jun 44:

“At 1815 hours prisoners with their hands raised can be seen emerging from their hideouts. Altogether about 200 were captured as well as radar-location apparatus”

The day after the assault the location was visited by Frank Gillard a journalist with the BBC. He reported:



“You have heard of the colossal strong-point just along the coast at Douvres where getting on for 200 Germans held out until last night. That’s a place to see. Somebody this morning called it an inverted skyscraper. That’s not an unreasonable description. Fifty feet and more into the ground it goes - four stories deep. On the surface you barely notice it. The top’s almost flush with the ground. But going down those narrow concrete stairways you think you are going into the vaults of the Bank of England. And the Germans did themselves well down below there – central heating, electric light, hot water, air conditioning, radios telephones, comfortable well-furnished rooms and offices, well equipped workshops and ample supplies of food and ammunition. The Germans who were standing here on the ground fourteen days ago certainly must have thought that they had little to fear, and yet what a change now.”

“... the vaults of the Bank of England ...” - Gillard had unwittingly anticipated the ‘Bank of Normandy’.

Almost immediately No 3 Forward (Base) Cash Office was authorised to relocate their Base Cashier to the bunkers of Douvres. Vast amounts of cash from the Chateau De Courseulles-Sur-Mer were quick to follow. Five vaults were established deep in the bunker complex, one for each of the five currencies involved.

Each currency was given a code name which in turn was used to name the vaults. The codenames for the currencies were: ‘TOMCAT’ for French Francs, ‘FRIABLE’ for Belgian Francs, ‘LILITH’ for Dutch Guilders, ‘DUO-DENO’ for Danish Kroners and ‘WILD DOG’ for German Marks.

At any one time up to £30,000,000 was stored in the vaults; the equivalent of £1,220,823,000.00 today.

For obvious reasons the existence of the site seems to have been unadvertised, to say the least. Few are the mentions of it apart from the occasional diary entry of those there at the time. Obviously the Pay Corps was not equipped to ensure a deposit comparable only to that in Fort Knox and elements of 1 Corps are believed to have provided protection for the money and personnel.



The task was perhaps less onerous than it might at first appear. After all, the German defence of the site had already demonstrated it to be almost impregnable. It could withstand a barrage of artillery and air strikes and was completely self-sufficient - even comfortable.

This use of the radar site as "The Bank of Normandy" seems to have escaped attention throughout the post-war years and even the Radar Museum 1944 at Douvres-la-Delivrande was unaware of this aspect of its history until recently. The Royal Army Pay Corps does not usually attract a lot of attention and there are probably few memorials to its contribution to wartime actions but, on the 75th Anniversary of D-Day in 2019, an RAPC shield was presented to the Douvres-la-Delivrande and it is hoped that this will be followed by a more permanent symbol of the Corps' service in support of the liberation of Europe.

Simon Lash

With thanks to WO2 Simon Lash's much fuller article on the subject can be consulted [here](#)

The Bennecourt project - British Legion centenary

Our committee member Didier Dumont also rejoices in the position of Mayor of Bennecourt, a riverside town of some 2000 inhabitants on the Seine, not far from Giverny, of Monet fame, and La Roche Guyon that remarkable castle, partly hacked out of the rock, which served as HQ for Rommel in the war years.



The town of Bennecourt is twinned with Coldstream, birthplace of the regiment of that name. The latter's sister regiment is the Garde républicaine's 2ème régiment d'infanterie.

The Paris branch of the RBL would like to support the mayor in an admirable project, originally planned to take place on the centennial of the creation of the British Legion (the RBL became "Royal" in 1971), to commemorate the arrival of Allied troops and the liberation of the region from German occupation. The event is now taking place a year late because of the Covid crisis.



In this commemoration a rose garden is planned on the banks of the Seine. The Black Baccara rose has been chosen (see picture) in reference to the blood of those who lost their lives during WW1 and WW2

A bench of decorative wrought iron will carry the phrase "LEST WE FORGET", and will include figures of soldiers on a battlefield, poppies and the French equivalent of the poppy, the "*bleuet*" - the cornflower.

The official inauguration of the garden will take place on **17 September and is currently planned for 14h00**. The UK Embassy, le Souvenir Français, 100 young firemen , many Veterans, Gérard Larcher (Chairman of the Senate), la Garde Républicaine and its band - all these and more will take part and the Coldstream Guards is to send a detachment from London.

We hope that as many of our members as possible will be present and if there are changes to the timetable we will keep you posted.



The Garde Républicaine and the Commune de Paris

It is not always realised that the Garde Républicain is a part of the Gendarmerie Nationale. And I know that I am not the only expatriate to have remained unaware even of the fact that the gendarmerie is a part of the Army - and not of the police - for a long time.

Our Parade Marshal and Vice-Chairman Pierre Quenot spent his professional life swimming in these confusing waters and has been kind enough to outline the distinctions for me. He adds this account of his experience in the Garde Républicain and a short expedition into the world of the cinema...

MY

When I finished my National Service in the Engineer Corps in 1984 I joined the Gendarmerie National. At the end of my training to become a gendarmerie non-commissioned officer, I was posted to the 2nd infantry regiment of the Garde Républicain. I remained there, becoming warrant Officer, until 2004. Then I spent 5 years in the national gendarmerie (2004-2009). Then, on promotion I went back to the 2nd infantry as lieutenant (2009-2013). Then, again promoted, this time to captain, I left to supervise teenagers at the military high school of Saint Cyr l'école (2013-2017), before returning to the national gendarmerie administration until my retirement two years ago.



All of these posts were interesting, each in its own way. A career in the Gendarmerie Nationale can involve odd experiences and lead one into undertaking surprising tasks. The Garde Républicaine, however was, for me, a bit special. I am, as those of you who have read my article on military modelling in an earlier edition may recall, something of an amateur historian, especially as far as the history of 19th century France and the fate of Paris in those tumultuous times is concerned.



The Garde Républicaine is heir to the corps that was, and is, responsible for the security of the most senior figures of State. It has also been involved in various conflicts and is thus frequently called upon, with its picturesque uniforms and horses, by the film industry to recreate scenes of Paris life in previous times.

Sometimes I needed authorisation to leave the country to take part in commemorations of major events or battles such as Leipzig, Moscow and Austerlitz. It was my interest in history and my participation in a historical re-enactment group, retracing the epic actions of the troops of the Grande Armée from 1804 to 1815 which came to the attention of my hierarchy and led to my being involved in some of the dramatic (in the theatrical sense) activities of the Garde Républicain.

I happened to have some knowledge of a specific period of French military history and was asked to provide technical advice before and during shoots. I was thus lucky enough to participate in the production of short and feature films recreating historical events with the cavalry regiment and its military band. One, notably, was an epic series on the life of General Bonaparte. On a good day I might even get to don a uniform and get in the picture.

In 1993, I was contacted by a film crew for a film set during the 1871 Paris Commune, a particularly dark episode in the history of France, particularly for the city of Paris. A period of panic and confusion, Napoleon III had been captured by the Prussians, the army had capitulated, Paris was under siege, the government had taken refuge in Versailles. The Parisians refused to surrender the city, firstly to the Prussians, even under a deluge of artillery, and then to the troops sent by the French government to restore order and peace.

A word about this period seems appropriate here.

The "Paris Commune" which began in March 1871 and came to an end with the "Semaine Sanglante" - "Bloody Week" 21 to 28 May 1871 when suppression of the communards left around 10,000 dead. Total casualties for the entire duration of the events approaching 30,000. In addition twenty convoys of boats exiled an estimated 3,800 to New Caledonia. A further 5,000 to 6,000 "communards" managed to escape their sentences, self-exiling to Switzerland, Belgium, the United Kingdom or the United States.

Although harsh, these retributions followed some appalling executions of hostages committed by the communards, including that of the archbishop of Paris as well as the firing and destruction of buildings, monuments and archives.

Some places in Paris still bear the scars of this tragedy. Fragments of "*murs des fusillés*" (walls of the shot) have been preserved, in Paris and in the Paris region. Some are still the subject of commemorative ceremonies. In the Luxembourg Gardens, bullet holes from the firing squads are still visible where insurgents were executed after mock trials in the nearby Senate building.

My job, in the depiction of all this, was to give the extras the basics of how to wear a uniform properly, march properly, and to demonstrate the basic handling of the weapons of the period.

The task quickly proved difficult, as the extras selected by the production team were mainly chosen to correspond to the "communards", the workers from Paris and the surrounding suburbs who had risen up against the authorities. In the end, there were only a dozen men picked, whereas at least twice as many should have been foreseen.

Fortunately, the production team gave me carte blanche to make the best of it and I was able to establish a sequence of shoots designed to concentrate the groups of military extras in the right place and at the right time, avoiding too many trips between the various locations and saving money, time and effort. The participation of uniformed extras was spread out over a week, instead of the three days initially planned. It is hard to imagine the misery and physical state of the "communards" after three months of siege and famine. However, for the film everything took place in the best possible conditions. Even the weather helped, stormy showers contributing to the credibility of certain scenes, appropriately muddying the ground and soaking the clothes of the actors, reducing the extras to a suitable state of exhaustion, their tired faces perfectly rendering the "hopelessness" of these tragic moments in the History of France and of Paris.



"A Day in Luxembourg" is the title of this short film and it's making was a very enriching moment for me. I learnt a lot, historically speaking, and had to examine in detail the conditions prevailing at the time in order to be able to supervise and train extras in uniform or dressed as communards. It is not easy to get an amateur actor to 'take on' a character, especially when he has to express total despair, intense hatred or ferocious cruelty. I experienced this first hand as the production offered me a minor role in the film thank me for my work.(see photo)

This, my first real contact with the world of cinema was to lead to others, all to my great pleasure and I would encourage you, if you want to experience something really out of the ordinary, to apply for a role as an extra in a film. It's a great way to get behind the scenes....



Pierre Quenot

[Editor's last word] Please note that there will be no magazine issue in August and no monthly lunch.

Normal service will be resumed in September.

To wish you all a happy holiday and to leave you with a laugh appropriate to the season here's a holiday-maker's story:



Just sunbathing?

Game Warden - Ahoy there!

Lady in boat - Hi. Nice boat you have there?

GW - I'm the game warden madam. May I see your license?

Lady - My license? What kind of license?

GW - Your fishing license madam. You're in a natural park and you need a license to fish.

Lady - Well that lets me out. I don't need a license to sunbathe, do I? I'm just out here to lie in the sun and get a nice tan.

GW - So you say madam but isn't that a rod and a reel I see in the stern of your boat.

Lady - I guess so. My husband's crazy on fishing. I took his boat when he wasn't looking.

GW - But the fishing gear is in the boat.

Lady - Oh dear. He'll be mad when I get back!

GW - But you have the boat now so it's you who gets a ticket for fishing without a license.

Lady - But you can see I'm not fishing, can't you? I don't even know how to fish!

GW - The evidence says otherwise madam. You have all the equipment with you.

Lady - That's ridiculous! If you dare to give me a ticket fishing I'll take you to court and accuse you of indecent assault!

GW - What? You can't do that madam. I haven't even touched you!

Lady - Maybe officer. But you have all the equipment with you.

Answers to quiz: 1 B; 2 C; 3 B; 4 D; 5 C; 6 D; 7 A; 8 C; 9 D; 10 C.