



**Paris
Branch**

Newsletter

November 2022



Page

- 2 Chairman's message**
- 3 Quiz**
- 4 RBL Centenary - Bennecourt Rose Garden**
- 5 Theatre**
- 6 The R101**
- 7 Napoleon's other inventions.**
- 9 The Dieppe Raid**
- 11 Humour**
- 12 Quiz answers**



Christmas lunch
See p 12 for dates

Chairman's introduction

Welcome to this month's Newsletter.

As you know towards the end of last month we held the coffee morning at the Ambassadors Residence, which proved to be both enjoyable and profitable for this



year's Poppy Appeal. We raised just over 1300 Euros. My thanks to all who attended and contributed to the raising of funds. I especially thank Janet Warby for her hard work on the day along with our Poppy ladies, our new member Alexander Lake who did a splendid job of work, Leslie Clack for his poetry readings, the Ambassador's husband Mark and Colonel Howard Wilkinson for helping with the Raffle. All our thanks are also due to our Ambassador and the Embassy staff for their generous support.

On the 5th of this month I and a number of our members went to Bennecourt to attend the inaugurations of the Royal British Legion memorial bench and rose garden in celebration of our 100th year. We were welcomed by the Mayor Didier Dumont, who is also a member of our Committee. I and Didier were pleased to welcome our Ambassador along with the President of the Senate M. Gérard Larger,



M.J.L. Hamat, Sous-Préfet, In attendance also were members of the Coldstream guards who had come over from the UK. Bennecourt being twinned with Coldstream. The band of the Republican Guard, young members of the Pompiers and Colonel Howard Wilkinson. There was a formal ceremony and laying of wreaths after which our Ambassador and myself unveiled the bench. This was followed by a reception in the town hall where I signed the new agreement between Royal British Legion Paris branch and Souvenir-Francais. On display was a large and magnificent chocolate Lion

which had been made by a very talented local young man. All in all, a very interesting celebration. You will find a link to more photos and videos of the event attached to the account below

On the 10th the day of the transport strike I was at Gare de Nord with our Ambassador to greet the two Chelsea Pensioners. We were joined by some of our Poppy ladies, *bleuet* (cornflower) sellers and members of the Defence staff from our Embassy. Sadly, we weren't able to spend as much time with them as we would have liked due to the arrival from England of Mr Cleaverly the Defence minister for talks with President Macron.

On the 11th many of our members attended the service of remembrance at Saint-Louis Cathedral at Invalides. We were joined by our Ambassador along with the



Ambassador from Kenya who jointly laid a wreath at the altar. The two Chelsea Pensioners mentioned above participated as did our piper Murdoch Macleod. There were a good number of our Embassy staff and representatives from other Embassies in attendance. Two students read poems, a senior student from Kingsworth International school and the head boy from the BSP senior school.

After the service some of us went to the Ambassador's residence where we had a welcome cup of tea, followed by a few glasses of Champagne.

I wish to thank all those who made this year's service possible, and again our wonderful Poppy ladies who stood out in the cold before the service selling poppies.

[More photos of St Louis des Invalides here](#)

Finally, an important reminder on the 28th at 18h30 we have our AGM. Please try to attend.

Remembrance Quiz

1. Who designed the Cenotaph in London
2. There were two ladies who were responsible for the poppy being used for Remembrance. Who were they and what nationality were they.
3. What is the Hôtel de Charost known as now.
4. The Duke of Wellington used this as his residence in 1814. Who owned and lived in it before him
5. What is the time between October 14th and November 14th known as by the Royal British Legion.

3. What is the home for ex-Servicemen and now women, called in UK.
4. What is its equivalent in France.
5. Who was President of the British Legion in 1921
6. What is the correct way to wear a poppy.
7. Who inspired an American War Secretary to buy 12 poppies and give to her friends for donations to help ex-Servicemen, by writing a poem.

See last page for answers

BENNECOURT - 5 November

Inauguration of the commemorative rose garden
100th anniversary of the Royal British Legion

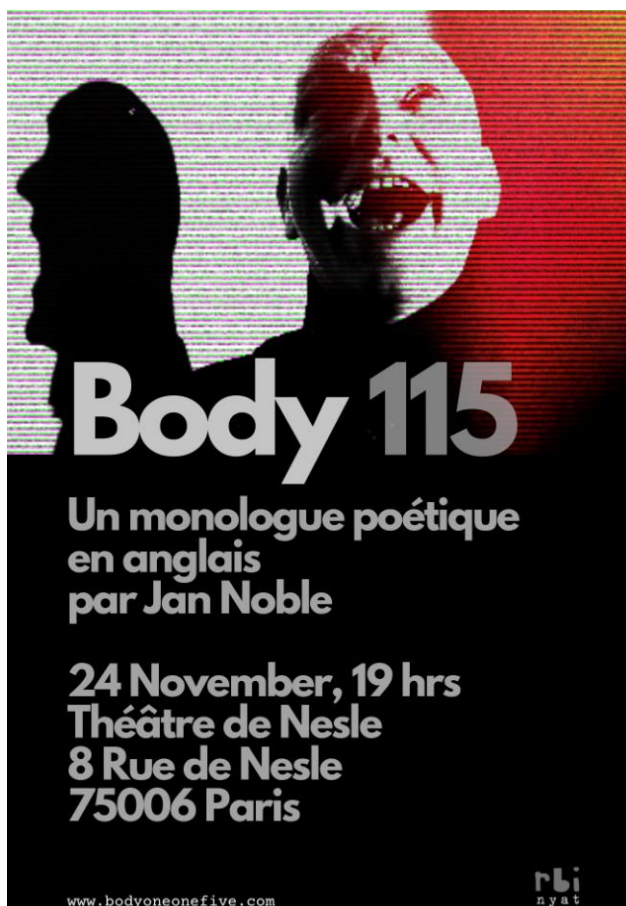


Didier Dumont, Mayor of this riverside village near Mantes organised and headed this remarkable event with some 300 official guests including the British Ambassador, Menna Rawlings, the président of the Senate, Gérard Larcher, the sous-préfet, Jean-Louis Amat and many others. Didier, those mentioned and Richard Neave, our Chairman addressed a substantial crowd of onlookers. Numerous wreaths were laid at the foot of the Monument aux morts, the band of the Garde Républicain played the British and French national anthems and the Last Post was played on the cornet and a lament on the bagpipes. It was, in all, a splendid and solemn occasion with, nonetheless its lighter moments - as when Jean-Louis Amat remarked somewhat mischievously to Menna Rawlings as she cut the red white and blue tape to mark the opening of the garden, something to the effect that it must give her a certain satisfaction to chop through the French colours! - but there, they're the same as the British colours - we do have that much in common. The ceremony terminated at the village hall where a very adequate supply of refreshments ensured that the occasion terminated with the appreciation of all.

[Click here for more photos](#)

Our member Les Clack of the Dear Conjunction Theatre company sends this:

Dear Conjunction, are very pleased to be bringing to Paris for **one night only**, 24th November 2022 at 19h, "Body 115" performed by the author Jan Noble and adapted for the stage by Justin Butcher, author of "Scaramouche Jones. Seating capacity is limited in the small theatre at the Théâtre de Nesle so reserve early. **(01 46 34 61 04)**. The performance lasts an hour.



See you there to support Jan Noble, coming all the way from London for a single performance!

On the 18th November, 1987 a fire broke out at King's Cross Underground station in London. 31 people died. One unidentified victim, burned beyond recognition, was known, for over 20 years, as 'Body 115'

King's Cross with its cafes, piazzas and boulevards masks a seedy and often squalid history... and from its rain-washed, subterranean underworld 'Body 115' emerges, a Virgil like figure, in a miniature epic - a tale of inner and outer journeys in explicit homage to Dante's Divine Comedy.

Special reduced price of 10€

"Fantastic!" BBC

"Intense and chilling" The Guardian

"Sophisticated urban narratives" NME

R101 -suite

Reader Anne Chateau has a personal observation on the airship disaster which figured in our October edition:

Your article on the R101 disaster took me back to my mother's childhood memoirs which she recorded in school notebooks. She mentioned a night in 1930 when she lived with her parents and sisters at 80 rue d'Amiens, not far from the Beauvais-Tillé airfield. From my mother's diary:

"Tillé was often swept by a cold and violent wind. 5/6th October 1930 was a particularly stormy night and we woke up, alerted by an unusual engine noise that seemed to come from above the house. Leaning out of the window, we saw a huge mass hovering over us, and then painfully moving away. My father said: "That's the R 101 and it seems to be in trouble". It was and, fighting against the wind, the airship was so low that we could see the shadows of panicked figures behind the windows. It drifted out of sight and we were about to go back to bed when suddenly a tremendous flash lit up the sky as if it were daylight. That was all.



"It's gone down!", my father said. It had indeed and crashed into the hill at Alonne. It was a miracle that it had avoided the town of Beauvais and its suburbs. The airship burned all night and the next day, when we went to the site, its carcass was still smoking. There were only a few survivors and they were badly injured. They were evacuated shortly afterwards to England by plane. I saw their departure and remember the badly burned victims, wrapped in bandages so that all you could see were their eyes. To my 9 year old eyes they looked like the "Michelin Man" in the tyre adverts. I will always remember one of them who, less injured than the others, took me in his arms and kissed me.

I wonder who he had lost."



Napoleon's other inventions

Having, in previous issues, explored Napoleon's futuristic adventures into the domains of submarine and aerial warfare it seems appropriate to look at one or two other inventions for which he was really responsible. The following examples, unlike his airship, actually got off the ground. Napoleon was, of course responsible for many undoubted "firsts" in fields as different as education, (the baccalauréat), law, (the code civil), architecture (the Arc de Triomphe), public health (garbage collection and the Fire Service) - and somewhat more obscurely and probably just for fun - driving on the wrong side of the road.

However war encourages innovation and in a strictly practical field there are three simple things which Napoleon brought about and are perhaps less well known...

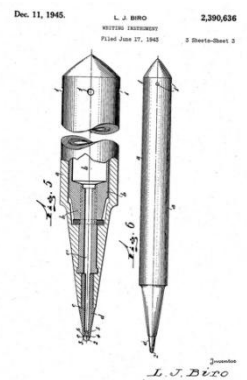
There's a story about American technology which has it that the NASA spent \$10,000 developing a ball point pen which wouldn't leak when carried into space by astronauts.

"Really?" somebody said, "And what did the Russians do?"

"Oh," came the reply. "They used pencils."

Which brings us to invention number 1: The pencil.

Writing simple notes was not an easy matter a few hundred years ago; Once you had located that rare product, a piece of paper, a goose quill and a pot of octopus ink you



just had to avoid making blots as you wrote out your battle report for HQ while your tent was being shaken by nearby cannon shots. The invention of the pencil - hardy, portable and oh so convenient, was thus a major event.

The modern "lead-free" lead pencil first appeared sometime in the 1500s, in Borrowdale, in Cumberland where a large tree was blown down and the locals noticed some black stuff on its roots. It wouldn't burn, so it wasn't coal as they had hoped. At first they used it for marking sheep but then found it could make marks anywhere, even on paper. The material was graphite but they thought it was some sort of lead which is why we have had "lead" in our pencils ever since.



Thus this extremely convenient writing device was invented and Borrowdale graphite became so important that in 1752, the House of Commons passed "*An Act for the More Effectual Securing Mines of Black Lead from Theft and Robbery*" which made theft of the substance a felony, punishable by hard labour and/or transportation to the colonies.

When war broke out in Europe, the export of graphite was forbidden and Napoleon, we can assume, must have found himself highly frustrated by getting blurred notes from his acolytes scribbled with a bit of burned stick. He was suddenly deprived of a major means of communication! He charged his

"Organizer of Victory" Lazare Carnot with finding a solution to the problem and Carnot directed Nicolas-Jacques Conté to look into the matter. Napoleon's encouragement spurred Conté into inventing, in 1795, a substitute for the unique, and now unobtainable British graphite. He ground low-quality graphite into a fine powder, mixed it with clay, fired the mixture at a high temperature, and then inserted rods of the material into thin wooden cases. He was granted a patent and founded the company *Conté à Paris* which still exists today. His name can still be found among the contents of every school satchel in the country.

2. Food Preservation

At the end of the 18th century the only food preservation processes were cold, smoke, salt, alcohol, vinegar, fat and sugar. They were only partially effective.

Food supplies are a matter of priority in time of war. Feeding an army can be difficult and a Navy even more so given long periods at sea with aging - and rotting - provisions. In 1795 Napoleon offered a prize of 12,000 francs to whoever could improve upon food preservation methods.

The battle of Trafalgar (1805) had somewhat reduced the requirements of the French navy but in 1809 confectioner Nicolas François Appert claimed the prize. The method he had come up with involved boiling and then sealing food in airtight glass jars. This is essentially the same as that used in canned food to this day.



Appert preserving jar

Montalivet, the Minister of the Interior, informed of the discovery, replied giving Appert a choice: he could either be granted a patent or he could make his idea available to one and all, receiving a prize on condition that he publish his discoveries. To his honour Nicolas Appert opted for the second, humanist, solution.

3 Beet Sugar



During the Napoleonic Wars, the English blockade of continental Europe cut off cane sugar supplies from the West Indies. This led to Napoleon's playing a decisive role in the production of beet sugar. In 1806, he imposed a continental blockade on the English, who in retaliation prevented merchant ships from entering French ports. France was therefore faced with a shortage of sugar because it could no longer import it.

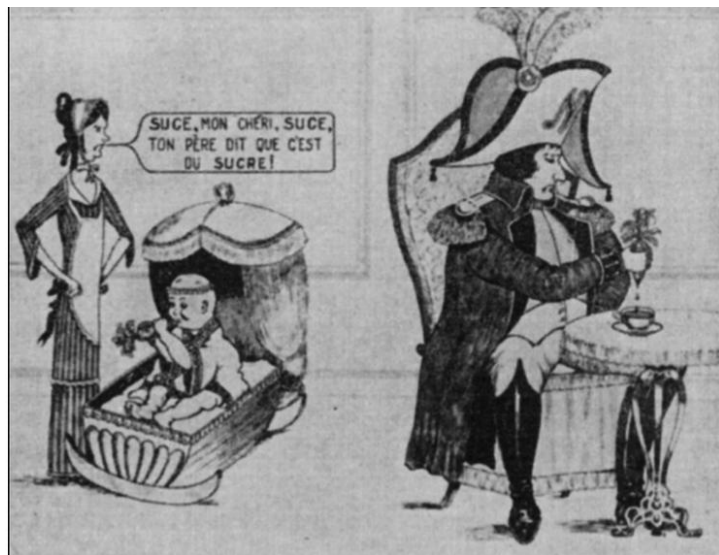
Hence, Napoleon encouraged researchers to find another sugar producing plant which would grow in France.

Now, in 1789 a certain Franz Karl Achard started planting various sugar-bearing plants on his manor in Kaulsdorf near Berlin. The fact that beets contained

some sugar had been observed already in 1747 and, concentrating on this plant, Achard selectively bred beets and devised a process to extract the sugar. In 1801 he opened the world's first sugar beet factory. The sugar content of those first factory beets was 4%. Modern beets contain 15% to 20%.

Some years later, in 1812, Benjamin Delessert, who had perfected the process and brought it to France presented Napoleon with the first two loaves of beet sugar "as white as cane sugar". An enthusiastic Napoleon decreed that 32,000 hectares of beet should be planted forthwith.

As can be seen in the last illustration, the French public apparently remained to be convinced.



Cartoon satirizing Napoleon's beet sugar initiative (Coons 1949, 152). Napoleon tries to squeeze sugar from a beet, while a woman tells a child to nurse on a beet. "Suck, my dear, suck, your father says that it's sugar!"

The Dieppe Raid

There is something poignant about military actions which, because they did not result in immediate and glorious success, have been, to some extent pushed under the carpet by a fickle public impatient of the more hesitant steps which, nonetheless, pave the eventual way to victory.

Operation Jubilee - the Dieppe raid is one of those and as for us Parisians, Dieppe is, well, just down the road, it seems appropriate to remember it in this, the year of its 80th anniversary. It seems that a mysterious flag, an old ensign, was carried through the Dieppe action, recuperated, but subsequently mislaid, coming to light again only recently. It's reappearance has served to focus considerable interest in Operation Jubilee in Canada and may well be of interest to RBL members in France. Here it is:



The bones of this article are taken from the website of our sister organisation the Royal Canadian Legion whose interest in Dieppe is considerable given that Canadian troops made up three quarters of the troops in this action. The RCL has been able to confirm that the flag dates back to the period between 1870 and 1873, after Manitoba joined Confederation but before British Columbia.

It seems that when Canadian troops stormed ashore under a hail of German gunfire at Dieppe in August 1942, one of the hundreds who eventually died in the attack was carrying an old flag.

Exactly what happened remains a mystery but now, 80 years later, the flag will play a central role in commemorating the doomed raid on Dieppe during this year's national Remembrance Day ceremony — thanks to three Americans.

The 150-year-old flag first turned up at a garage sale in Columbus, Neb., in 1965. Charles Lowry found the old Red Ensign in the hands of an American veteran. "It was an old flag and he was just going to throw it away," says Charles's son Mike Lowry. "And Dad said: 'What's the story with the flag?'"

The veteran told Charles he had been a guard at a prisoner-of-war camp at the end of the Second World War in 1945. He noticed a German prisoner hiding what he presumed to be a Nazi flag but which turned out to be a Red Ensign. The Red Ensign served as Canada's de facto national flag from 1892 to 1965, when it was replaced by the Maple Leaf. The design featured a Union Jack and different coats of arms, depending on the provinces that were part of Confederation at the time.

The American veteran knew only what the German soldier had told him: The flag had been taken from one of the 916 Canadian soldiers who had died three years earlier during the ill-fated raid at Dieppe.

In the early morning hours of Aug. 19, 1942, nearly 5,000 Canadian soldiers, along with 1,100 British and American troops, waded ashore at the Nazi-held French port with orders to take and hold as much ground as possible before withdrawing. The purpose was to test the German's defences and the feasibility of launching an amphibious Allied assault on Europe but the results were disastrous: 2,400 Canadians were wounded or captured in addition to the hundreds who were killed.



"The German claimed he wasn't involved in the fighting but had been on a burial detail. He found the flag on a dead Canadian and basically took it as a souvenir," Mike says. "They took it away from him, needless to say, and the plan was to give it to some Canadian unit." The flag instead travelled back to Nebraska and into the hands of Charles, who set about trying to identify it with Mike, who was in high



school at the time. They had little success and when Charles died in 2003 at the age of 93, the Red Ensign was passed on to Mike, who had largely, by this time, forgotten about it. But remembering his father's desire to get it back to its rightful home, he started the search anew.

He eventually confirmed its Canadian heritage, at which point he contacted the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. He got a lukewarm response there, so contacted the Royal Canadian Legion about five years ago. The Legion received it enthusiastically and the Red Ensign visited Dieppe with a delegation of veterans in 2019. This year RCL spokeswoman Nujma Bond says it will be given a place of honour in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Remembrance Day to commemorate the battle.

The Dieppe Flag, as it has come to be known, is now on display at The Royal Canadian Legion National Headquarters. From the efforts of so many, its journey has crossed generations, through friend and foe and great distances, over several countries and two continents, to return home.

Canada's Global TV produced a highly informative short documentary about the Raid at Dieppe on its 70th anniversary. If you want to know more, click on this link...

<https://legion.ca/news/articles/2022/11/01/the-dieppe-flag-a-journey-home>

 <p>Don't forget to book for Christmas lunch.</p> <p>Two dates: Thursday 8 Dec. AND Monday 12 Dec. 1215 for 1230</p> <p>Price to be announced - Pay on the day (in cash please) Reserve through Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com <i>Book soon to be sure of a place. (Cancellations up to 48h before)</i></p>	
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Tony Bennet has had sent to him from a member of our armed forces a somewhat unexpected example of our late Queen's sense of humour. It seems a good note to finish with:



I was on Guard of Honour, waiting for the King of Saudi Arabia, on Horseguards.

On the right flank; Scots Guard (100 guardsmen) a gap, HM The Queen, mounted in uniform; alongside her the CO Colonel Gerald, another gap, then on the left flank, the Queen's Company Grenadier Guards (100 guardsmen).

We're stood at ease waiting.

Suddenly the silence was broken by Colonel Gerald's charger erupting with horse farts at full volume.

Embarrassed and staring straight ahead Colonel Gerald says, "Sorry about that your Majesty!"

She replies, in a wonderful voice, "That's alright Gerald, . . . I thought it was your horse!"

200 guardsmen silently cried with laughter, and tapped their rifle butts on the gravel.

From that moment, every man there adored her!

Answers to the quiz

1. Sir Edwin Lutyens,
 2. Anna Guerin, French and Moina Michael, American
 3. Residence of the British Ambassador to France
 4. Pauline Borghese, sister of Napoleon Bonaparte
 5. The Closed Period
 6. The Royal Hospital Chelsea for the Chelsea Pensioners
 7. l'Hôtel National des Invalides
 8. Field Marshal, Earl Haig
 9. There is no correct way. The best way is to wear it with pride.
 10. Lt. Col. John McCrae, he wrote 'In Flanders Fields' on the back of his ambulance during a lull in fighting during the First World War.
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