



Newsletter

N° 16 - June 2023



Paris Branch



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Chairman's message - June 2023 .

Richard, our Chairman, is out of commission at present - he has had a painful bout of pneumonia and been advised to rest for the moment. It thus falls to me, as Vice-Chairman, to write this introduction to the newsletter:

June is always rich in ceremonies and commemorations. 2023 deserves a special mention for the dinner dance we held on Thursday June 1st in the magnificent Rotonde Gabriel of the Ecole Militaire, in PARIS. Some of you will remember celebrating the RBL's 90th anniversary there and the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla was an opportunity to host another major event.

It was a most successful occasion, providing an opportunity to renew links, not only with members we see but rarely, but also with numerous other associations, both French and British. Notable guests present included Colonel Sean CUNNIF, Military Attaché to the British Embassy and President of the RBL PARIS Branch, accompanied by his wife, Colonel Xavier CHATILLON, Commander of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Republican Guard and his wife, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruno GAGNAIRE, Deputy Military Delegate for the Yvelines, and Major Laurent MARECHAL, Deputy Chief of the Mobile Gendarmerie Band, to mention but a few.

The evening was a substantial success, and many expressed their interest in holding another event of this type in the near future.

Soon after this celebration members of the Branch and committee set off for Normandy to mark the 79th anniversary of D-Day of which you will find details below. It was my honour to lead this delegation in the absence of our Chairman, who, as I have indicated, was unwell.

You will find more of these below under "Events".

All your committee wish Richard a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him back at the helm of the Branch.

I would also like take this opportunity to extend my warmest and most sincere thanks to Tim Lorkin for his masterly cooperation in organizing the dinner at the Ecole Militaire.

Pierre Quenot,
Vice-Chairman

JANET'S JUNE QUIZ



1. The Trooping the Colour is held in London annually on a Saturday in June. On which parade ground?
2. June has two zodiac signs, What are they?
3. What is celebrated in the UK on the third Sunday of June?
4. Which animated cartoon character has three triplet nieces named April, May and June?
5. What is June's birthstone?
6. In which year did June Brown first play the rôle of Dot Cotton, in Eastenders?
7. Which historical novel begins in 1815 and culminates with the 1832 June Rebellion in Paris?
8. The longest day of the year can occur on one of three dates in June, name any of the three.
9. In its own country it is commonly known as the June Fourth Incident ; where did this incident happen?
10. In 1968 June Whitfield began her long television partnership with which actor and comedian?
11. Which 1956 film adaptation of a Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical of the same name features the song 'June is Bustin' Out All Over' ?
12. The name June for baby girls in the UK dropped out of the top thousand in 1986, but in which 20th century decade did it peak?
13. What takes place near Pilton in the last week of June, each year?
14. What historical event happened on Tuesday, 6th June 1944?

Answers on last page

Events.

Coronation dinner dance of 1 June

This was particularly well attended with representatives from numerous associations from all over the Paris area. See introduction for more details.



Normandy

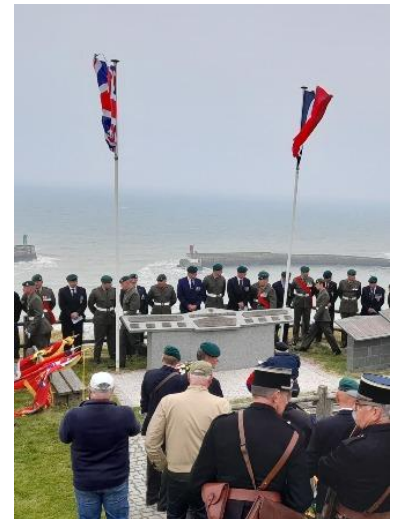
Once again, our Branch was present at the DDay Commemorations in Normandy on the 5th - 7th June. Members of our Committee participated in the Service of Remembrance organized on Monday June 5 at Bayeux Cathedral by the British Defense Staff, the RBL, local civil and military authorities, the Comité du débarquement and the Spirit of Normandy Trust.

On the 6 and 7th June, our Standard Bearers, representing our RBL Branch, the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy and SOE took part in several Remembrance Ceremonies. At the Bayeux War Cemetery, an international ceremony was attended by Mr. Theo Rycroft, HDM British Embassy, Mr. Jason Coward, National Chairman, the Reverend David Barret, Deputy Chaplain General. More events included the new British War Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer, Arromanches, and Port-en-Bessin. Our participation was greatly appreciated by many, including the Royal Marines Charity.

Pierre Quenot led this delegation in the absence of our Chairman, who was unwell. The highlight of the occasion was perhaps the carrying of the Branch Standard at the ceremony in Bayeux

cemetery behind the two National Standards and in the presence of those of the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy, SOE and other French and British associations.

Caroline Clopet & Pierre Quenot



More photos on our facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/royalbritishlegionparis>

Correspondence

Some memories from Peter Huggins:

Dear all,

Since I live about 1000km. from Paris, I cannot get to the many interesting RBL events you describe. I am, then, perhaps even more than most, always pleased to see the Newsletter. It seems to get even better by the issue.

The Coronation is a dramatic reminder of the passage of time. About five years older than yourself, I had the great good luck to have a 'plum job' in the 1953 Coronation. As a King's Scout, I was assigned to be an usher at a VIP stand flanking Buckingham Palace. My job was to see the generals, ambassadors, ministers and the like to their seats, provide them with a VIP programme with golden sash and attend to whatever needs they might have during the long wait and the ceremony.

When I had nothing better to do, I was able to occupy an unclaimed seat and enjoy the endless procession. There has been a conspiracy of silence about the huge size of the 1953 procession compared with this year's already impressive show. There were roughly five times more servicemen involved in the 1953 procession which had a much longer route. As I remember, several foreign heads of state took part in the procession in carriages. The delightful Queen of Tonga was the crowd's favourite. The crowd along the long route was huge. Memories of the role of the royal family in WWII were fresh.

My own memories of WWII were vivid. I was too young to be evacuated and spent the war on Shooters Hill, above Woolwich and Greenwich, which is surrounded by a huge concentration of bombing targets - the Royal Arsenal, the Royal Artillery HQ, the Woolwich Military Academy, Matchless/AJS motor bike factory, Greenwich Naval Academy, the RMC HQ and much else thus ensuring that we had more than our share of attention from the Luftwaffe. I recall that we attended Mass at the wonderful Herbert Hospital which catered mainly for the British military but also for German prisoners, some of them having been shot down and injured in and around Woolwich. I have tried with a certain success to transmit to my children and grandchildren an account of this period and of the importance that George VI and his family played in WWII. After the horrors of war and the endless period of austerity under the Atlee government. the 1953 Coronation marked a new beginning. The whole country seemed to sigh with relief and anticipation.

Now, once again, King Charles' Coronation has provided the occasion to reflect on the history of the UK and Europe in its historical context, notably the encouragement and model behaviour provided by the King and his family in 'Britain's Finest Hour'. In a period where the future of the UK seems to be somewhat inauspicious, it has been good to have an opportunity to recall a period of great difficulty but when Britain got most things right. People were not well off in 1953 but, particularly at the moment of that Coronation, I remember them as being happy and optimistic.

Good luck to you and the very special RBL group in Paris. I'm sure that your Coronation dinner and ball will be a huge success,

Peter Huggins

The Hoax

I was once a member of a sub-aqua club of which the main interest was really indicated by its nickname "*Plouf et Bouffe*", (a quick splash round the pool and then off to a restaurant). The annual general meeting was always something of a trial. There was one garrulous member, Hubert, who, at each AGM would suddenly interrupt and insist on inflicting a slide show on the rest of us (slide shows at the time were effected with a projector of 35mm slides and a long way removed from the powerpoint of today). Usually his shots consisted of fish tails disappearing off screen accompanied by a comment along the lines of, "and I very nearly got a great shot of a cod there." Thus it was unsurprising that , at a preparatory committee meeting, someone remarked " I wish we could stop that idiot Hubert from horning in with his ghastly slide shows."

"Why don't we do our own slide show instead?" said someone. "We could get it in first."

"That would be just as boring."

"Not if we set up a really impressive one." added some bright spark.

"Huh. It's not as if we could go to the Seychelles!"

"But we don't have to go. Just make it look as if we went."

Intrigued by this concept five of us decided that a convincing scenario would have to include the following themes:

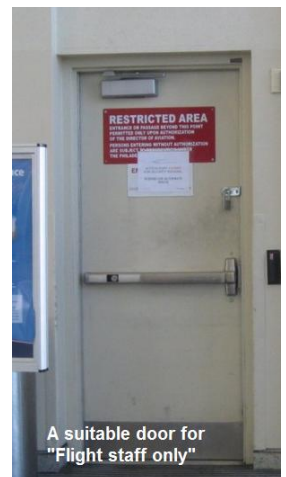
Airport scenes.

Drinking exotic cocktails under tropical plants.

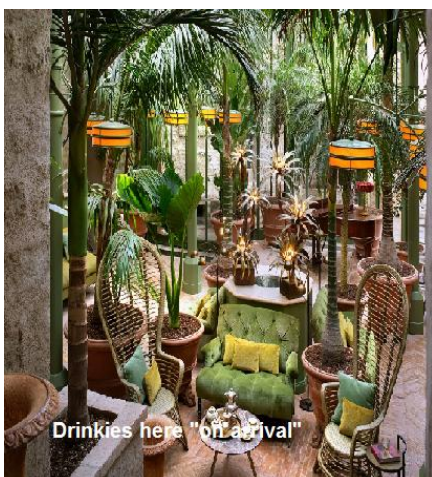
Scenes in a boat with equipment and harpooned fish.

Beach scenes with diving equipment.

It suddenly seemed plausible so decided to go ahead and moved on to the first step: the airport. "That looks like a good background." said Dédé. "It'll look as if we're accompanying crew members to the plane." We were at Charles de Gaulle airport carrying some diving equipment. The door was marked "Flight Staff Only". Dressed in unseasonal summer clothing we took photos of each other going into and out of the door carrying bits of diving gear. Mission one accomplished.



The second theme turned out to be easy. The CDG area is littered with hotels and the more upmarket of them all have a corner somewhere near the bar with lots of exotic plants designed,



one supposes, to evoke for their clients thoughts of glamorous destinations. All we had to do was install ourselves with the right background and a collection of suitably colourful drinks. This was helped along by one of our number who had managed to chat up Inge, a remarkably attractive blonde from Sweden who, when we explained the project, agreed to sit on Jean-Pierre's knee. This made for some very nice shots and she even agreed to come along the next day for some more photos where her presence in the shots, would, we reckoned, distract attention from any details we got wrong. We now had

material for theme two.

On to theme three: the next day's "shoot" took place at the Bois de Vincennes where you can rent boats on the lake. We rented two and I rowed Inge over to the other side where the others were waiting with an impressive collection of diving equipment. (We thought it might attract too much attention if we tried to load the gear into the boat in sight of the office.) The unusual appearance of a group dressed in swimming gear and wet suits getting in and out of boats started to attract some puzzled glances from passers-by.

"Round to the other side of the island." I said. There, I knew, was a small artificial and usefully anonymous cliff and it was towards this that we now rowed in convoy. Photos were gleefully taken showing diving gear but only anonymous bits of boat and equally anonymous backgrounds of rocks which could have been ... anywhere.



"Sea cliffs" at the Bois de Vincennes

"What's that bag?" someone asked. "That," said Francis, "is the most expensive part of this operation!" He upended a bag and out toppled some of the oddest looking fish he had been able to purchase on the market stall that morning. "Cost a fortune but we could hardly use cod!". The "catch" was impaled on harpoons and displayed proudly by their captors for photos, many with Inge looking on in admiration.

The passers-by mentioned earlier were now more than puzzled and a crowd gathered to observe the unusual sight of divers apparently harpooning fish in the park lake. One small boy was heard to cry, "Why can't we do that dad? All we get to do is row around!". We didn't bother to disembark the diving gear before returning the boats to the dock and unloaded it before the eyes of one of the boatmen. Unsatisfied with explanations of, "where all that stuff had come from?" it took the gift of a fish to satisfy his curiosity. Thus terminated Scenario three.

Part four was planned to take place in the "Jardin des Plantes" which has huge Crystal Palace inspired greenhouses, filled with enormous tropical trees, sandy soil and an artificial stream and waterfall. Perfect to get shots "on a tropical beach" but perhaps a bit more delicate to obtain. I went to the ticket office first accompanied only by Inge. "Can you take photographs inside?" I



A suitable background: Jardin des Plantes Greenhouses

asked the ticket lady.

"Yes, of course you can." came a gruff reply.

"Good. I'll have six tickets please. The others will be along in a moment". Once I had safely got the tickets the others, who had been hanging back out of sight, suddenly crowded past,

strangely dressed and carrying some very odd equipment. Quickly, for we did not know how long it would take for someone to start objecting, trousers were removed to reveal swimming trunks. Diving gear was once more placed in evidence shots were taken, apparently on a sandy beach with amazing trees in the background - as was Inge, whose blonde presence was thought likely to distract attention from any suspicious details. We had got a few shots but not exhausted all the possibilities when, as expected, an official appeared. He immediately reminded me of the park-keeper who used to stop us from playing cricket in the park when I was a lad. The cry, "The parky's coming!" was enough to send us running off in all directions - until the threat disappeared into his hut. Inevitably this one, his French clone, announced, "You can't do that there here!"

"But I asked before we came in and they said it was perfectly all right to take photos inside."

"That's just for ordinary photos. Not professional ones."

"But they're not professional..."

"Don't tell me that. You'll have to stop!" Then I remembered something. I knew the name of the director of the Jardin des Plantes. "Oh dear, when I mentioned this to professor X he said it would be all right. I should have asked him to call you."

"Ah. You know Monsieur le directeur?". A vaguely positive nod of the head.

The man went to consult the ticket lady who was now watching the scene avid for action and anxious to see us evicted. We continued at an accelerated pace to get the shots we wanted.

Then the man came back. He had a big key in his hand. "Would you like to take photographs in the orchid house Normally it is closed to the public but I can make an exception..."

We were thus obliged to take photographs of some splendid orchids - which, unfortunately would hardly fit into our scenario - however it did ensure that we got all the shots we did want, afterwards.

We now had all the basic scenario but there was what, on reflection seemed to be a glaring gap which might be noticed by the more perceptive members of Plouf et Bouf despite the dazzling effect of Inge. There were no boats on the beach and no "natives".

Something had to bridge the gap between the boats and the palm trees - suspiciously separate in our collection so far. We could hardly have smuggled a Zodiac into the Jardin des Plantes without attracting attention. How to fill the gap? We repaired to the that now embarrassing institution created in 1931 as the *Musée des Colonies* and which has creakily followed the route of the politically correct ever since, having been successively renamed the *Musée de la France d'Outre-mer*, then the *Musée des Arts africains et océaniens*, and then the *Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie* until finally attaining its current relatively innocuous title the *Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* at the Porte Dorée The museum shop displayed a vast collection of slides of the substantial list of French and ex-French territories from which we made a judicious selection of various tropical venues for sale including many shots of native people pushing out fishing boats in locations which might well have been the Seychelles. It remained only to mix these in with our photos from the lake and the greenhouses to create a final montage.

Our expedition to the Seychelles was thus carefully documented; Photos of the airport departure (through "Flight Staff only" access), arrival in the Seychelles, hotel cocktails with tropical veg.,

carefully mixed scenes of boats and canoes, diving gear well in evidence, dead fish held up triumphantly, palm shadowed beaches and finally return to Paris through the "staff only" door.

The day of the AGM arrived - and so did an old friend of mine, Max, from the UK. He was given a key role and woven into the plot. He was to be a pilot.

The meeting progressed as usual until, business terminated, Hubert the indefatigable projectionist started shuffling to his feet with an ominously large wheel of transparencies which he obviously intended to foist upon us. Francis, the president, however cut in. "We have something special for you this evening, a report on what is certainly the best club outing of the year." Silence fell.

"Thanks to a remarkable opportunity those of you I was able to contact were able to participate in a free visit to the Seychelles." General consternation, questions and nodding "yes's" from those in the know scattered through the meeting. Francis continued. "Unfortunately, as it was vacation time the only members I could get hold of were ..." He named those who were supposed to have taken part. "We have invited Mark's friend here to thank him for this exceptional opportunity. I'll let Mark explain."

"Well", I announced, "My old friend Max here happens to be a commercial pilot and he phoned me to tell me had an unusual job to do. Max, you can explain better than I". Max, whose French is pretty good, picked up the story, "One of my company's planes was held up in the Seychelles with a mechanical dysfunction and I was asked to fly out a replacement plane and, when the plane with a problem was back in working order, fly it back to Paris."

"And", I intervened "he was kind enough to phone me and say, since there were 95 empty seats on the plane and another 95 on the plane being ferried back probably a week later, if I liked I could come along - 'bring some friends', he said 'there's plenty of room.'" The silence was now one of bated breath. "So I called Francis and invited him along and he phoned as many of you as possible to pass on the invitation ..."

"Mutters of, "We didn't get a call", "I wasn't away", and so on were heard.

"However we did manage to get five of you. Everything worked out and we had a fantastic trip! For those of you who couldn't come we have some photos to show you." (Hubert, by this time had realised that his usual intervention was doomed and sat down.)

Francis took over again and showed slides of our group apparently going through the "flight staff only" door at the airport; "We had to go through as staff members with Max because we weren't on the official flight list... Oh yes, I forgot to mention that Max had said there was a friend of his he wanted us to meet, a French chap, Henri Vaude, who was involved in a new project. He wasn't sure but... let me move on. We met this chap Vaude at the airport, a great bloke, very friendly. It turned out that he was involved in setting up a brand new centre for the Club Med in the Seychelles and he thought that, since diving is the great attraction there and they were opening soon, it might be good publicity... Well, to cut a long story short he offered us free accommodation in the new club centre - on condition that we see an interviewer to write up the visit later this week. By the way, the Club has a great setup there and I recommend it to any of you thinking of visiting the Seychelles... a bit expensive but well worth it. So here are a few shots of the cocktail bar at the Club. Oh, look, there's Inge. She was an assistant of Henri and sort of attached herself to our group".

There followed a mixed series of photos of beaches, boats, members of the "cast" with bottles -

both wine and air filled, but not simultaneously. The silence was broken by someone's comment, "That fish looks like a hake." - which it was, but the remark sank without trace.


At the end there was a long silence until Francis suddenly came up with a non-scripted addition. "And since everything turned out to be free except the drinks bill it only seemed reasonable that that, at least, should come out of club funds." That's when it exploded, exclamations, insults, recriminations, hollow explanations - Eventually Francis had to scream "Shut up!" to reduce the tumult and we came clean and explained that it had all been a joke.

Strangely, some seemed reluctant to accept that the story was all a well-meaning hoax. Maybe it was the concluding admission which wasn't true. Had we really been to the Seychelles? - Or not? Later, while I was leaving, a lady member said to me in the lift "I don't see how Pierre's wife would let him go on his own, especially with that Inge there..."

"But it was all made up!" I insisted. She sniffed, doubtfully.

Some stories can take on a life of their own.

Mark Yates

 <p>This month's lunch.</p>	<p>Regretfully we have to announce the cancellation of the June lunch. We need an assistant to help with the cooking and serving - if anyone has any suggestions?</p>
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A Word in your Ear...

Gone for a Burton

One of the most popular beers in prewar England was Burton beer, produced in Burton on Trent. If someone was unaccountably absent, the question "Where's Henry?" or anything similar was heard and, if the whereabouts of the missing Henry was unknown, the most likely explanation was undoubtedly that he was "down the pub". Such was the prevalence of Burton's popular beverage that this would attract the inevitable reply that the absent Henry had "gone for a Burton,"

It became a slang term in the RAF in World War II for pilots who were killed in action. RAF aircrew was noted for being extraordinarily superstitious and, in particular, it was regarded as bad luck to say flatly that a man had died or was

missing in action. The euphemism most widely used was that he'd "gone for a Burton"

Maxine Arnoult

The Last Laugh: Is this seat free?



Fan 1: Hi. Great game isn't it?

Fan 2: Sure is. Look at that tackle!

Fan 1: I say, I'm sorry to bother you but I was in my seat back there and I happened to notice there was nobody sitting next to you. Is this seat free by any chance?

Fan 2: Well, it's my seat I guess. I got it for my wife. We have both come to the FA Cup match every year for - oh, at least 10 years.

Fan 1: Well, back there I'm sitting just behind a guy the size of a garden shed. I can't see a thing. Er, is your wife coming later? If she's not coming for some reason I was wondering if...

Fan 2: Well, no she's definitely not coming. She's dead. She was killed in an accident.

Fan 1: Oh dear. I'm so sorry to hear that. - So you've bought a seat for her as a mark of respect? That's a very touching gesture and I can understand why you must want to leave the seat free. I guess I'll leave you to it.

Fan 2: Well, no, you can have it. Actually I offered the seat to all my friends but I couldn't get anyone to come.

Fan 1: Thanks a lot. That's incredible! None of your friends wanted to come to the FA Cup match? Tickets are like hen's teeth! Why didn't they grab your offer?

Fan 2: They've all gone to the funeral.

Mark Yates

Janet's June Quiz: Answers :



1. Horse Guards Parade
2. Gemini (until June 20) and Cancer from June 21 onwards)
3. Father's Day
4. Daisy Duck
5. Pearl or Alexandrite or Moonstone (it seems to have three!)
6. 1985
7. Les Miserables
8. 20th or 21st or 22nd
9. Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China (1989)
10. Terry Scott
11. Carousel
12. 1920s
13. Glastonbury Festival
14. Normandy beach landings

**Comments & contributions to mfyates@gmail.com
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