



Paris Branch

## Newsletter

N° 17 - July 2023



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## **Chairman's introduction for the July 2023 Newsletter.**

Dear fellow members of the Paris branch.

Some of us are enjoying, others hating, the current heatwave. It provides a good excuse for barbecues if you have a garden - but only if you are not surrounded by parched cornfields. Wildfires are becoming endemic across forested areas worldwide although, an interesting exception, France has been concentrating its incendiary activities to the major towns and cities in recent weeks.

I much regret that, in spite of the clement weather, a most unseasonal attack of pneumonia prevented me from participating in the Normandy D Day ceremonies although, as you may have seen in the previous edition of this newsletter, the Paris branch was well to the fore with those hardier souls of the branch doing a fine job as standard bearers.

Thus my attention has been monopolised with other problems in recent weeks and I fear I have been left with less time than usual to devote to RBL affairs. Rest assured that I shall very shortly catch up and I am already looking forward to sharing new projects, events and ideas with you after the summer break.

There remains, of course, one more event in the current year and I would remind you that our annual ceremony, the rekindling of the flame at the Arc de Triomphe, will take place, as always, on Friday 4th August. Early comers will meet at the metro entrance on the Champs Elysées. Do try to join us around 17h45 for the ceremony which is at 18h30. Drinks will be available afterwards at HQ - 28 rue des Acacias. All welcome including family and friends.

Mark reminds me that, with the summer break, there will be no August edition of this magazine and that normal service will be resumed in September.

Richard Neave

## Janet's July Quiz



1. The month of Quintilis was renamed July in honour of which historical figure ?
2. Delphinium is a genus of about 300 species of perennial flowering plants, which are toxic to humans and livestock – by what common name is this plant known ?
5. Bastille Day is celebrated in France on which date ?
6. On which British ship did Napoleon Bonaparte surrender to Captain Fredrick Lewis Maitland on the 15 July 1815 ?
7. In the poem, *The Garden Year*, in the line 'Hot July brings cooling showers, apricots, and gillyflowers', which modern day flower is a gillyflower ?
2. Fourth of July, is a slow ballad on which singer's Butterfly album ? (Hint : It was released in 1997)
7. St. Swithin's Day falls on which date every year ? And if it rains on St. Swithin's Day, for how many more days will it continually rain ?
8. Neil Armstrong became the first man to step onto the moon on July 21, in which year ?
9. Who was the astronaut who did not go on the first moon landing, waiting for his crew mates to rejoin him after they were on the moon.
10. What name is given to the hot, sultry days of summer that are said to begin in early July ?
11. The only men to sign the Declaration of Independence who later served as Presidents, both died on the same day, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1826 ; can you name them ?

12. Which rowing event, held annually on the River Thames, ends on the first weekend in July ?

13. Which battle took place on 1 July 1690 ?

14. A famous festival is held in Whitstable, Kent, each year for three days in July, celebrating which food ?

Answers on last page

9 rue Boulitte  
75014 Paris

28 June 2023

Mr Mark Yates  
Royal British Legion - Paris Branch  
28 rue des Acacias  
75017 Paris

Hi Mark,

Just a comment on the very impressive sporting event organised on 16 May by the General Gouverneur-Militaire de Paris aux Invalides: 10km road race, 4km race and marche, the cause being to raise funds for our sister association Le Bleuët de France.

The quality of the organisation of this first edition was, as you'd expect, impeccable - quite as impressive in my experience as that of the 10km de Monte Carlo or the 16km of the Paris-Versailles Classic.

Now aged 86, I could be dragged out of retirement from low-grade competition jogging ONLY by the 4km du Bleuët de France for one very last 'staggering' performance. Here (photo) I'm humbled by the applause of the athletes preparing for their later 10km race - because the General insisted on presenting me as 'Doyen de la Course'.

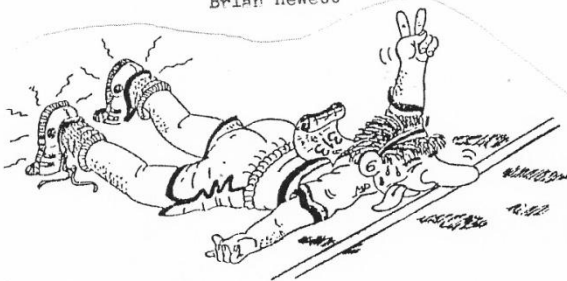
Enclosed is photocopy of the well-designed race-bib - and I wish the General and his team every success in future editions of their most worthy and inspiring event.

Oh Mark! Bienvenue au Club des Octos!

Bien sportivement



Brian Hewett



## Correspondance

Brian Hewett's geriatric sporting events have already figured in these columns.

His admirable but vain ambition of persuading us to engage in such healthful activities continue. He has been kind enough to send me the letter we reproduce here:

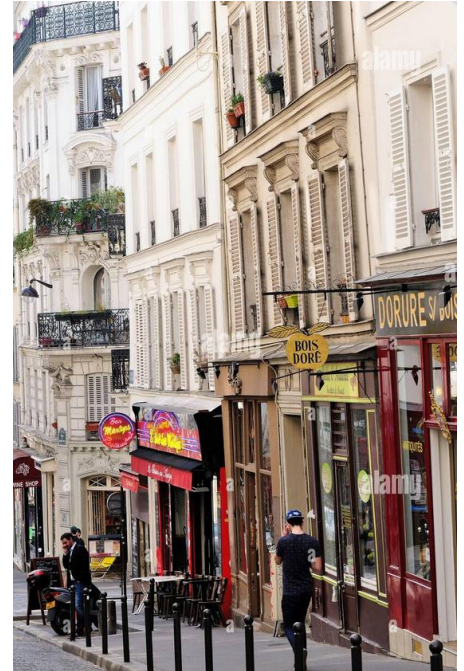
Connoisseurs will notice that his writing equipment must be of almost as venerable an age as he is.

Thank you Brian.

## Montmartre Memories - The Camera

Since 1968 I have lived successively in eight very different parts of Paris. Each has its memories and those of Montmartre are particularly rich - and eventful.

The butcher's shop on rue Lepic had a notice board for customers to use. Rarer now, these were common in local shops back in the 80's - long before e-bay and leboncoin. They were a useful way of finding dupes to adopt the cat's latest litter, proposing or requesting the services of a *femme de menage* and, of course, buying and selling second-hand goods. On the butcher's board it was the word "camera" which had attracted my attention because I needed one before the holidays. A few days previously our flat at the top end of the rue des Martyrs had been burgled and one of the things stolen was my Leica camera. And now there was an ad for, yes, a camera. How convenient! A Leica camera too! Well well! A closer examination of the ad revealed that there was an electronic flash for sale too. Better and better .... or was it? An electronic flash had been stolen with my camera. I tentatively approached the butcher for details, "Oh Yes. That's an ad from the son of the chap next door in the second hand bookshop. You'll probably find him there."



Next door the son in question, a burly character of some 20 years seemed to be in charge of the shop. "Saw your ad for the camera next door. Is it still going?"

"Yes. Are you interested?"

"Maybe. Can I see it?"

"Just a minute, I'll get my mate. It's his really. Bring the camera Henri." he shouted and another lad of similar age and burliness appeared carrying photographic equipment. A quick glance and there could be no mistake: It was all mine! "I say....", I started and then hesitated. What would happen if I claimed the material as mine? They could hardly hand it over; it was evidence of theft. They couldn't claim it was theirs either - it was too clearly identifiable. If I asked for it back I was pretty sure everything would disappear from sight in the blink of an eye and never be seen again... Henri broke what was becoming a longish silence, "Well, are you interested then?"

"Er, well, yes I am but I need to think about it and get the cash together. Can I phone you tomorrow and let you know?"

"OK. It's ... ". He gave me a phone number.

I left and wandered homewards mulling the situation over. What could I do? Stealing cameras was endemic in Montmartre - all those tourists waving their stuff around. If I phoned the police would they do anything? Get a search warrant? Hardly. They'd never find the stuff. Another boring and useless interview. Let the latest recruit have a chance to practice his interview technique...

But maybe another approach?

After due reflection I did call the police. A rather bored voice took down details of the equipment. "We'll send someone around to talk to him."

"But, if you do that we'll never see the camera again. Can I make a suggestion?"

"What?"

"I have a phone number and, if I say I want the camera they might be prepared to deliver it. And if they turn up with the goods you could....". The voice on the phone suddenly sounded rather interested.

The next day I called the number I had been given and after a little discussion over the price I agreed to buy the camera and flash and asked them to bring them round and pick up the cash. "How about Saturday, 10am? I would be at home then." Another call to the police officer I had spoken to earlier. He was definitely more interested now, "Yes, we could, why not...".

On Saturday around the appointed time there was an anonymous looking car parked opposite (yes it was possible in the 80s to park at Montmartre) with two people talking in it. The two characters I had met at the shop turned the corner from the rue des Abbesses one carrying a likely-looking bag. They approached the door of our building. I waved to the car opposite and, as the door was closing behind the pair, two policemen crashed in behind them, crushing them against the inside door. They didn't stand a chance - particularly as a third policeman was standing in the hall ready to intervene if necessary.

I ran down the stairs to witness this highly satisfactory conclusion. One of the two delinquents, caught red-handed and now handcuffed, nodded at me and said, "But he said he was going to buy it!" - an irrelevance at this point as he was already being bundled into the car with his mate. "And what about my camera?" I shouted to a policeman who was hanging onto the bag. "Evidence." he shouted back. "See about it later."

So I did and got the stuff back. Eventually.

Mark Yates

## A FAMILY DISCOVERY - Thomas James Frederick Warby



I first came across Thomas JF Warby's name whilst browsing the British Normandy Memorial archives online. That enabled me to get in touch with other members of his - and what appear to be our extended family; Thomas Warby's son - also Tom - and his niece Rosie with whom I have now been in contact for some time.

A recent RBL Paris branch participation in the memorial events at Bayeux and Arromanches provided an opportunity for Roger and I to trace our recently rediscovered relative. His remains lie in Ranville war cemetery some 30k from the BNM. However, in the BNM grounds in Vers sur Mer we discovered a bench inscribed to Thomas Warby's memory and, of course, his name on one of the commemorative pillars of this remarkable monument. I laid a small poppy posy and some poppy crosses on behalf of our side of the Warby family, as well as that of Tom and Rosie's.

Tom has recorded what he knows of his father. He writes:

I was born at University College Hospital in London during a period of heavy bombing. Life as a baby involved a lot of time spent deep beneath Angel Underground Station, which was one of the local air raid shelters. I understand I was about 12 months old when my father last held me in his arms before returning in April 1944 to his Regiment, presumably to prepare for the D-Day Landings.

We know that, as an artillery gunner Thomas was already involved in heavy fighting off the D-Day beaches before landing and taking part in the liberation of Ranville village. He was then involved throughout the successful liberation of Caen. He was, however, killed on 27 July 1944 in an intensive battle with the German front line at Herouville during the Battle of Normandy. He was eventually buried with military honours in Ranville, the village he had helped liberate.

Back at home, due to the intense bombing in London, we had only just temporarily relocated to Leicester to live with relatives of my Dad when my Mum first received news about Dad. Her mother, still in London, had received a War Office telegram had arrived, advising her that my father was missing. Soon afterwards it was confirmed that Dad had been killed.

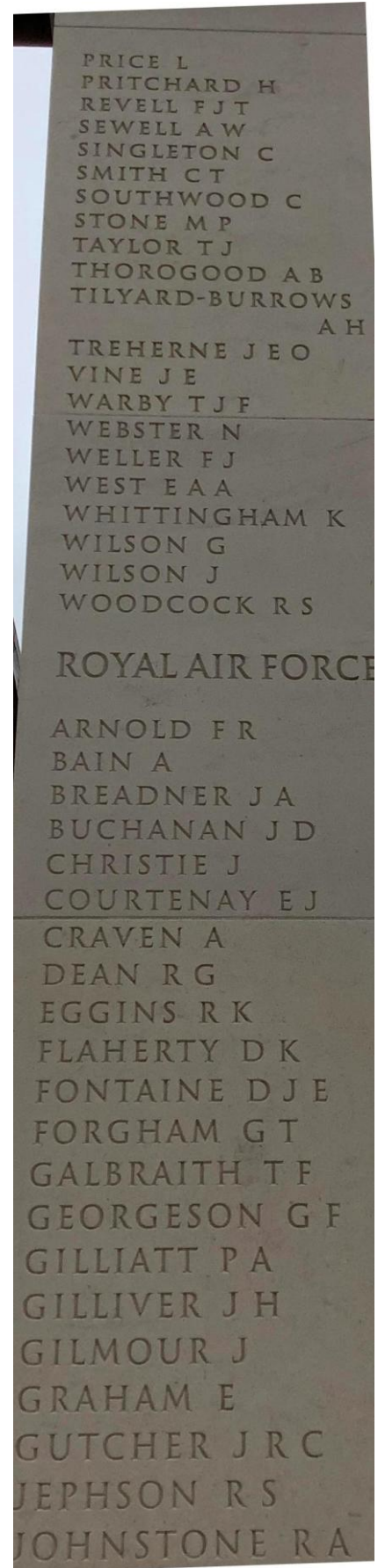
Later in 1944, my Mum received a letter explaining how my father lost his life. My mother, myself and all the family have always appreciated the care and sensitivity of the letter from Dad's Commanding Major. We hope that he and all Dad's comrades survived and returned home safely to the UK. The family felt his loss very deeply and continue to do so, but we are proud that Dad and those of his comrades who also fell are remembered on the British Normandy Memorial, along with the many others who made the ultimate sacrifice in their effort to restore peace, democracy, freedom and liberty for all.

Here is the letter sent to Tom's Mother.

*Dear Mrs Warby,*

*I have just had a letter from the War Office which seems to show that my letter to you in August was never delivered. May I therefore say again how much I regret your husband's death. The battery deeply sympathises with you in your loss.*

*As no doubt you know from your husband's letters, the battery arrived in France on D+4, that is the 10<sup>th</sup> June. Your husband drove through all the battles of the beach head.*





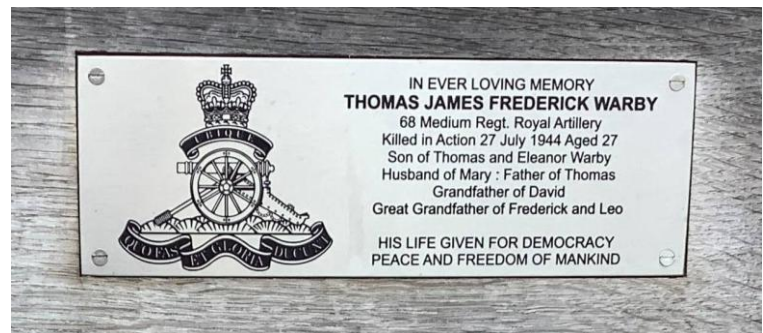
*He was always cheerful and brave and willing. In the final thrust which carried the British army through Caen we took part in the crossing of the Orne. The gun position at Herouvillette was one of the hottest the battery was ever in. There was heaving shelling and bombing for several days. Through these days your husband was never more than half a mile from the enemy. The enemy did not dare to appear in the air by day – but came over every night. On the night of 27<sup>th</sup> July there was a raid on our lines. Your husband's truck and another were destroyed by fire and two ammunition lorries exploded. I regret to say that your husband was killed instantly by a splinter from a bomb which fell about ten yards from him. Four other men of ours were wounded.*

*You may wish to know that we buried him with military honours at the Military Cemetery at Ranville. He lies there with some of the finest soldiers our country has produced. It was around Ranville that the airborne troops landed and where some of the fiercest battles of the invasion were fought. Your husband's grave was marked by us with a white cross on which was painted his name, rank, number and regiment. He lies only a few paces from his battery commander, Major Jack Sinclair who was killed in another raid only a few days before. In all the months of fighting we have done, your husband and Major Sinclair are the only members of the battery who have been killed in action. That is a very fortunate record but we feel their loss all the more keenly and personally.*

*It was by their sacrifice that we succeeded in landing in France and breaking the power of the German army.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Major R.A. Commanding 234 MED. BTY. R.A.*



**Janet Warby**



**This  
month's  
lunch.**

Lunches have been discontinued over the summer break. They will hopefully be resumed in September. We need volunteers to cook and help for these pleasant events so, if you feel like a go, or indeed if you know anyone who might be interested please contact Richard at [richard.neave05@gmail.com](mailto:richard.neave05@gmail.com) or 06 45 10 47 70



**A Word in your Ear...**

**To spruce up**

"We haven't redecorated for ten years. It's time we **spruced up** the house."

"**Spruce**" is a variant of "**Pruce**" which was one of the 14th century English names for **Prussia**, the historic Baltic Sea state which disappeared with the unification of Germany. It was a region well known for several products (excluding its predilection for naked aggression): canvas, ochre, timber, iron, and leather all having, at different times, borne the designation "**Spruce**": The term "Prussian blue", the pigment thought to have been invented in Berlin will leap to the mind of the more artistically inclined, but that is a relatively recent creation. Long before that **Spruce leather**, in particular, was used in a style of jerkin popular among the well-to-do and fashionable. By the end of the 1500s and the association between Prussia and fashion was such that the word "**Spruce**" came to be used to describe anyone who was fashionable or smart in appearance and then, as a verb, to render someone, or something, neat and/or fashionable.

What, you might inquire, about all those spruce trees we see hanging about at Christmas? Were they considered fashionable as well? No: although it is now termed the Norway spruce, that too was originally, but incorrectly, thought to have originated in "**Spruce**" - Prussia.

Maxine Arnoult



## The Last Laugh: What a hoot!

Mrs. A. - Thank you for letting Mary bring me along to your coffee morning.

Mrs. B. - Oh, any friend of hers is a friend of mine. Tell me, have you lived in the area long?

Mrs. A. - Oh, a couple of years now. It's a wonder we haven't already run into one another. After all we're only a couple of streets away. We're in Elm Grove.

Mrs. B. - Then it's only about 150 yards as the crow flies.

Mrs. A. - Yes, and talking of crows, birds are one of the reasons we moved here. My husband is a keen ornithologist. We have lots of trees and he's always out in the garden identifying some tweet or other. He's got the place positively littered with nesting boxes.

Mrs. B. - How odd! Bird watching is my husband's hobby too. Even at night! Would you believe it if I told you he has trained a local owl? I think he said it's a barn owl - no, that's the one that screeches. It's a tawny owl and it hoots.

Mrs. A. - Really! But what do you mean, he's trained it?

Mrs. B. - Well, when he hears the owl hoot he goes out into the garden, even if it's the middle of the night and he hoots back at it. And the owl answers. Sometimes he just goes out and hoots on the off-chance and the owl nearly always calls back. They can keep up the conversation for hours.

Mrs. A. - I can't believe it! That's an amazing coincidence!

Mrs. B. - What do you mean?

Mrs. A. - Well, believe it or not, my husband does exactly the same thing!

Mark Yates

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### Janet's July Quiz: Answers :

1. *Julius Caesar*
2. *Larkspur (the birth flowers of July are the Larkspur and the Water Lily)*
3. *14<sup>th</sup> July*
4. *HMS Bellerophon*
5. *Carnation*



6. Mariah Carey
7. 15<sup>th</sup> July. 40 days (Note : St. Swithin was bishop of Winchester in the 9<sup>th</sup> century)
8. 1969
9. Michael Collins, he was the Command Module Pilot
10. Dog Days
11. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson (Coincidentally, both died on the same day which was also the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence)
12. Henley Royal Regatta
13. Battle of the Boyne
14. Oysters

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