



Paris Branch

Newsletter

N° 18 - September 2023



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Chairman's introduction for the September 2023 Newsletter.

Welcome back from a summer break which I trust you have not had the misfortune to spend in any one of those many holiday destinations wracked this summer by fire or floods, sometimes both in quick succession.

In the relative calm of a Parisian August the Paris branch has nonetheless continued active, notably on the 4th August when we rekindled the flame at the tomb of the unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. This year New Zealand was chosen to preside and was represented by the Deputy to the Ambassador. It was followed up by a pleasant reception at the club house. See photos here and below and for more check out our Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/royalbritishlegionparis>

On Sunday 3rd September, again at the Arc, we welcomed the cyclists taking part in this year's Pedal to Paris. Again, it proved to be a very successful event. More on this too below, and, once again, on Facebook.

On Friday 15th this month we have "Battle of Britain ceremony" at the Arc de Triomphe. On Wednesday 20th His Majesty King Charles will be visiting France and will attend a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe. This replaces the visit which, you will recall, was cancelled some months ago.

Janet informs me that this year's poppies and various items for this year's Poppy Appeal have arrived. This year's version has been modified. It is now 100% paper. Also, to celebrate the world Rugby events which are taking part here in France, the Royal British Legion have produced Rugby Poppy badges. They represent England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Finally, on Thursday 21st the monthly lunches begin again. See the details, (a price change downwards for once) and the menu below. I look forward to seeing you there.

Best regards,



Richard Neave

Janet's September Quiz

1. If you were born in September, as well as Libra, what other star sign could you be?
2. What is different about September compared to every other calendar month?
3. Can you name one of the three birth flowers for September?
4. Who did the Romans believe looked after this month?
5. In September 1966, The Beatles won a Gold Record for which single?
6. Ol' Blue Eyes, Frank Sinatra released his 'September of my Years' album in what year?
7. Britain and France declared war on which country in September 1939?
8. A major battle took place in September 1940. What was it called?
9. Luna 2 was the first man-made object to reach the moon in September of what year?
10. On 17 September, Chubby Checker had a number one Hit. What was his song called?



Answers on last page

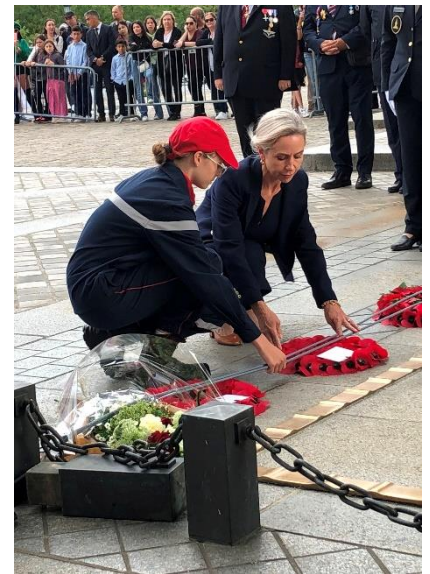
EVENTS

4 August 100 years

The Paris branch of the RBL has been privileged to rekindle the flame on the tomb of the unknown soldier every 4 August for, this year, 100 years. (Not quite 100 times however, as the tradition suffered an regrettable interruption between 1939 and 1945.)

A Commonwealth ambassador is invited to rekindle the flame and this year was the turn of New Zealand.

The ambassador herself being absent, the flame was rekindled by the New Zealand Chargé d’Affaires, Ms Nicola Reid. She was



accompanied by her husband Daniel Hudson and Frédérique Hupe, the ambassador's PA. As you can see from the attached photographs, Ms Reid brought a certain elegance to this year's ceremony and our thanks go to her and the ambassadorial staff for their generous participation.

4 Sept. Pedal to Paris



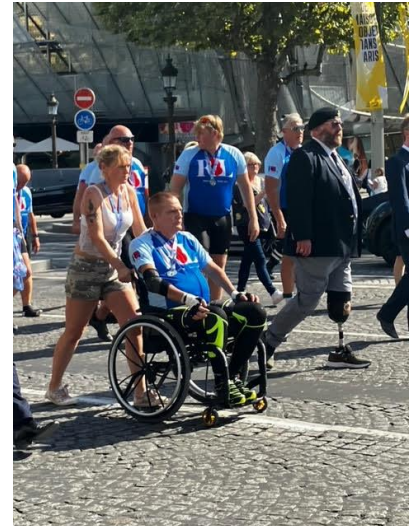
On Sunday 4 September, around a hundred cyclists took part in the official fund-raising event – and another 40 or so cyclists who tagged on for the

ride. In all some £200,000 was raised.



Participants came in all shapes, sizes and ages – and even degrees of handicap - one of the most courageous of the latter being this participant who “pedalled” his specially constructed device using his hands. In the prevailing sunshine he suffered from the heat and effort and finished with a kindly donated block of ice to cool him down.

A smart parade, six abreast across the avenue, to the Arc de Triomphe was followed by a moving ceremony of remembrance in both English and French.



To see a one-minute overview go to:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=pedal+to+paris+arrival#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:51ab96af,vid:zWtmF39BHl4>



Montmartre Memories - 2 - The rear-view mirror

Montmartre has always clung to its special identity, distinct from Paris even after its incorporation into the capital in 1860. Certainly, when I lived there around 2000 it still had its own unofficial mayor and even a gamekeeper. The latter could occasionally be observed enforcing the game shooting laws on his rounds at the Place de la Contrescarpe. It once occurred to me that a suitably ludicrous extension of the phantom municipality might be to twin Montmartre, most improbably, with a small town on the Moray Firth in the north of

Scotland where a friend was a local councilor. I set up a meeting with the "mayor" of the time. He liked the idea of connecting two totally different communities. It seemed to have something which fitted the eccentricity of the Montmartre mentality and perhaps a certain rugged individuality common to both communities. We had a pleasant evening consuming Scotch whisky, discussing the project and inventing ancient traditions that could be held to show that the two metropolises were joined at the hip. Unfortunately, Montmartre has no official recognition by the Paris administration and therefore no budget and the Scottish town also turned out to be Scottishly impecunious, so the project went no further.



A typical local initiative was *le Rallie de Montmartre* an annual rally on foot which stretched the participants' knowledge of Montmartre events, history and curiosities. It cost ten francs for a ticket and every competitor won a prize and was invited to a big communal dinner in one of

the restaurants on the "Butte". This event was enabled only by the remarkable generosity of the *Montmartrois* - and particularly the many shopkeepers and tradesmen who contributed the prizes. One of the most generous benefactors was Michou, in his later years a great supporter of the LGTB movement, and owner of "Chez Michou" a famous (or notorious for the less tolerant of the time) drag cabaret a hundred yards down from our place on the rue des Martyrs. Michou was much concerned in all aspects of local life and always contributed tickets to his cabaret as prizes of the Rally.

Oddly enough it was Céline, my daughter, who was best acquainted with "*le prince de Montmartre*" (Michou's nickname). Céline spent a lot of time being looked after by a lady who had been a childhood friend of Michou who, in his private moments, had a taste for domestic simplicity and who called in for tea with her several afternoons a week. Apparently, he was heard to say, as they took tea together, that Céline was the only female he had ever loved. As Céline was only about three years old at the time however, and the lady was the *nounou* who looked after her when Isabel, my wife, was at work, she probably didn't appreciate this distinction. I, however, feel a certain satisfaction in being able to claim that a member of the family has even a fleeting position in the history of Montmartre.

On the same street, on the other side of the boulevard, is the Lycée which was attended by my son Frank. It was around 8pm on an autumn evening that I was waiting in the car for the coach to arrive with pupils returning from some sort of school holiday trip. I was not alone, there were several cars parked one behind the other opposite the school, each with a parent awaiting



his offspring. The bus was late, so I was happy to have brought a book. One by one the cars disappeared as the children turned up. Frank was one of the last off the coach and only one other car remained, the one just behind me... This car suddenly pulled out and shot past me, smashing my rear-view mirror. My reading interrupted, I looked up expecting the car to stop and the driver, at least, to apologise. It didn't stop. Indeed, it accelerated and shot round a corner. Not being in a position to take up the chase in the best traditions of American series, I managed, nonetheless, to take the number of the car. "The swine," I thought, I'll report this, and he'll get his come-uppance." I shoved the car into gear and headed for home where it was my intention to make a phone call. However, I reflected on route: what was the outcome really likely to be if I called the police? Some overloaded underling who would ask me to come in and make a report the next day: Then all that waiting in a queue, the filling in of multiple pieces of paper. And what would they do with them? File them of course! Other things must have happened in Montmartre that evening; the priority of my little event would be relegated to the bottom of the list to yellow away, and I would have wasted half a day.

If it had been more serious, of course, that would have made a difference. Aha, I reflected. Couldn't it be made more serious...? It was all a question of context. I phoned my old friend Francis. He had a contact in the police and I had an idea. I explained the situation and asked him if he could come up with a piece of information. He could and did! His friend and occasional accomplice, the *commissaire* who had already proved useful on various occasions had provided a name and address for the owner of the vehicle which had ripped off my mirror. The telephone directory provided a corresponding number. It also provided the address of the commissariat of the *arrondissement*. Francis came round in spite of the lateness of the hour, and we discussed the details of a phone call I wanted him to make: Why him and not me? There was no way that, with my accent I could pass for French and anyway Francis was a master when it came to reproducing all the circumlocutions typical of French *officialise*. We discussed tactics and - it was now around 12h30 that night. Late - but so much the better. A late-night call always carries a small burden of apprehension. Francis picked up the telephone and dialed the number of - let us term him M. Duval.

"Hello?"

"M. Duval?"

"Yes?"

"This is the commissariat. It has reached our attention that you were parked, illegally, in the rue des Martyrs this evening. Is that the case?"

"Er, well, yes but it was only for a few moments, and I was just there to pick up..."

"And at 8h15 you left abruptly and, passing the car in front, you broke the rear view mirror of the vehicle in question."

"Er Maybe... I'm not sure..."

"Well, according to the driver and the observer in that car you certainly did break it. Why

didn't you stop?"

"I didn't really notice that it had happened but if the driver is sure and that really is the case then I'll be glad to..."

"You were parked some short distance from the café on the corner, right?"

"Er... I suppose so, yes."

"And are you aware that the vehicle that you damaged in passing was a police surveillance vehicle, that an substantial purchase of heroin was to take place at that very moment, and that your 'fortuitous' intervention resulted in the escape of the three criminal characters who were effecting the exchange?"

Silence

"In the circumstances I can only request that you present yourself at the commissariat to explain the matter in further detail. Please do so. The address is and someone will be waiting for you."

"Er, Perhaps, tomorrow?"



"No M. Dupont. The commissaire himself is on the premises now and is extremely concerned at the outcome of this affair. Please present yourself at the commissariat within half an hour ... If that is a problem we can send a car."

"Er No, please don't bother. I'll come as soon as I can."

"Good. You will be expected."

And that was all. We never, of course, learned what the outcome was of this affair. We did, however, take considerable pleasure in envisaging the discomfiture of the driver of the car and how his search for the drug squad team responsible for the "surveillance" might have terminated at the commissariat. In any event I am pretty sure that the next time "M. Dupont" had a minor driving accident he would be somewhat more considerate in his attitude towards the other driver.

Mark Yates

 <p>Don't forget to book for this month's lunch.</p> <p>Thursday 21 September. 1215 for 1230</p> <p>Only €18 - Pay on the day (in cash please)</p> <p>Reserve through Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com</p> <p><i>Book soon to be sure of a place. (Cancellations up to 48h before)</i></p>	 <p>LUNCH MENU 21 September</p> <p>APERITIF</p> <p>MAIN</p> <p><i>A buffet-style lunch with quiches, salads, coronation chicken and probably a tart to finish.</i></p> <p>WINE SERVED WITH THE MEAL</p> <p>COFFEE OR TEA</p>
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Eight Important Dates in The Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain was a decisive air campaign fought over southern England in the summer and autumn of 1940. It was one of Britain's most important victories in the Second World War because it demonstrated that Germany could be defeated. It allowed Britain to carry on fighting the war, and ultimately ensured that the Allies had a base from which to launch the liberation of Europe on D-Day in June 1944.

The timeline of the Battle of Britain can be divided into several stages, beginning with the Luftwaffe attacks in the Channel before moving inland to focus on the RAF airfields.

Churchill said in his speech in the House of Commons

“What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin”.

Here are 8 important dates from the Battle of Britain.

12 August 1940



On 12 August 1940 the Luftwaffe began a systematic assault on RAF Fighter Command's forward airfields and radar stations, striking at Manston, Lympne and Hawkinge aerodromes in the south-east, and radar installations in Kent, Sussex and on the Isle of Wight. This was their first major attack on Fighter

Command's ground organisation. The airfields suffered different degrees of damage but were all serviceable by the next morning. Most of the radar stations were also quickly back on air, except Ventnor on the Isle of Wight which was seriously damaged. These attacks displayed features which would characterise the fighting in the days ahead. There were several major raids, involving hundreds of aircraft, and attacks were timed to coincide with or closely follow one another, often on widely dispersed targets. Bombers, which included the Junkers 87 (the infamous 'Stuka' dive bomber) were heavily escorted by fighters.

13 August

For the Germans, 13 August 1940 marked the start of their Battle of Britain. They called it 'Adlertag' (Eagle Day). Waves of heavy attacks over a ten-hour period were launched against targets in Essex, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire. On 'Eagle Day' the Luftwaffe mounted a total of 1,485 sorties (missions) with Fighter Command flying 727 sorties in response. The German intention was to probe British defences to see if they could effectively and

simultaneously attack a widely dispersed range of targets. They saw only moderate success. Southampton experienced some damage and the only airfields to suffer, Eastchurch and Detling, were Coastal Command stations which left British Fighter defences unimpaired. Three main Luftwaffe objectives – Odiham, Farnborough and Rochford – were completely missed. However, the day's operations also demonstrated the difficulty British defences had in meeting the Germans with forces large enough to inflict significant losses.

16 August

The Luftwaffe made another massive effort with three assaults over Kent and the Thames Estuary, Sussex and Hampshire, and at four different points between Harwich and the Isle of Wight. The pattern of raids was very similar to 15 August with the strongest German activity directed against Fighter Command. The Luftwaffe's intelligence shortcomings meant that only three of the eight airfields attacked, Manston, West Malling and Tangmere were fighter bases. During an action near Southampton on 16 August, Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson was wounded when his Hurricane was attacked by a Messerschmitt Bf 110. Despite his cockpit being on fire, he attacked and shot down another German fighter, suffering serious burns before bailing out. For his actions he became Fighter Command's only recipient of the Victoria Cross during the Second World War.

18 August



After their major efforts on 15 and 16 August, the Germans paused to recover before returning in force on 18 August. Flying 750 sorties, the Germans attacked airfields at Biggin Hill, Kenley, Croydon and West Malling. The raid on RAF Kenley caused severe damage. All ten of its hangars and several aircraft – mostly Hurricanes – were destroyed. The Germans also bombed the Isle of Wight, destroying an

important radar station. Another large-scale attack fell on Kent in the late afternoon. The Germans suffered for their efforts. The losses of Junkers 87 'Stuka' dive bombers were so severe that this aircraft was largely withdrawn from the main battle.

30 August

On 30 August during a period of direct assaults against RAF sector stations across the south-east, Fighter Command flew 1,054 sorties – its largest daily number yet. Twenty-two fighter squadrons saw action, most at least twice and some up to four times. The Germans flew 1,345 sorties, their biggest daylight effort for a fortnight. The tempo of combat was increasing daily and, for the British, 30 August was the heaviest day of fighting experienced so far. The first main raid, flying in across Kent and Sussex, began at 10.30am. At 1.30pm

successive waves of German bombers came in over southern Kent and the third and largest raid began around 4.00pm. Biggin Hill suffered severe damage – one of the last remaining hangars was destroyed and most telephone lines, gas, electricity and water mains were cut. Attacks on the Vauxhall factory at Luton also caused substantial damage, although those on the Handley Page Halifax bomber production line at Radlett did not.

31 August

On 31 August the Germans mounted an even larger operation. It was costly for both sides and Fighter Command's losses were the heaviest of the whole of the Battle of Britain – 39 aircraft shot down and 14 pilots killed. Early waves of attacks came in over Kent and the Thames Estuary, targeting the airfields at North Weald, Debden, Duxford and Eastchurch. The next attack focused on RAF Croydon, Biggin Hill and Hornchurch, with the latter two attacked again later in the afternoon. Both airfields were serviceable by the following day, but the cumulative damage at Biggin Hill meant two of the three squadrons based there were put under the control of nearby sectors. Biggin Hill was also attacked on 1 September, Sergeant Joan Mortimer, Corporal Elspeth Henderson and Sergeant Helen Turner of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) stayed at their posts during the raid and Sergeant Mortimer also marked unexploded bombs with flags. All three were awarded the Military Medal for gallantry. This was Biggin Hill's sixth raid in three days. It was bombed again on 5 September.

7 September

On 7 September, after a fortnight of assaulting vitally important RAF sector stations in the south-east with considerable success, the Germans suddenly changed their tactics and launched an all-out attack on London. Germany felt that the sector stations had suffered sufficient damage and that, with time running out in which to launch a successful invasion of Britain, the most rapid conclusion to the Battle of Britain could be reached by focusing effort on the capital. Fighter Command would be certain to defend the capital in the greatest possible strength, so targeting London offered a unique opportunity to stage a huge and decisive air battle. German fighters provided close escort support for the bombers and the sheer size of the German force meant many of the raids were successful in hitting targets in the capital. Large areas of the London docks were laid to waste, as were Woolwich Arsenal, Beckton gasworks, West Ham power station and the oil storage tanks at Thameshaven. A second wave hit Millwall, the commercial docks at Tilbury and Thameshaven and the heavily populated streets of the East End. The fires from the burning buildings were perfect markers for the bombers which continued to come throughout the night and for the next nine months – what became known as the 'Blitz'. The damage was enormous but the raids on London shifted the focus of attacks away from RAF targets. This was a strategic error of such importance that it was arguably the turning point of the Battle of Britain.

15 September

A week after their change of tactics, the Germans launched another massive assault on 15 September, which they believed would finally shatter Fighter Command's resistance and open the way for a successful invasion. However, since 7 September Britain's defences had recovered, fighter production continued and operational pilot strength was the highest it had been since the start of the Battle of Britain. The German offensive came in two distinct waves, giving British aircraft time to refuel and rearm. Also, the usual diversionary manoeuvres were not employed so the British were able to deploy as many as 17 squadrons – in good positions – to meet the threat.

German bomber formations were smashed, making accurate bombing impossible.

Although bombs were dropped on London, Portland and Southampton, little damage was done. Some of the fighting in the skies was visible from the ground. It was a day of heavy and sustained fighting, and the Germans



suffered their highest losses since 18 August. It was obvious to both sides that German tactics had failed and the Luftwaffe had not gained the air supremacy needed for an invasion. Fighting continued for another few weeks, but the action on 15 September was seen as an overwhelming and decisive defeat for the Luftwaffe. For this reason, this date is commemorated in the United Kingdom as “Battle of Britain Day”.

“Never was so much owed by so many to so few”

Winston Spencer Churchill

Taken from the Imperial War Museum archives.

Janet Warby



Rugby Fans...

As Richard mentions above, we have received some Poppy Rugby Ball Pins for the Rugby World Cup that started on 8 September in Paris. There are 4 models, one each for the four Nations of the UK. (The blue one could be held to represent France as well as Scotland - just in case your friends include French Rugby fans). They are priced at €5 each. Cheques payable to TRBL as per usual.

A Word in your Ear...

A flea in your ear . (Une puce à l'oreille)

This expression goes back a long way. It appeared in English for the first time about 1430 and was a translation of a work in French of about a century earlier by the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Deguileville.

Intriguingly, the French expression then had a different sense, of provoking or having amorous desire, though de Deguileville used it figuratively for a spiritual emotion that was evoked by the contemplation of great wonders. The amorous sense was still in the French language when Jean de la Fontaine wrote in the seventeenth century:
A longing girl

With thoughts of sweetheart in her head,
In bed all night will sleepless twirl.
A flea is in her ear, 'tis said.

In modern French, to have a flea put in your ear is that somebody is putting a suspicion into your head.

The same expression occurs, with much the same sense, in other European languages, including German, Italian and Greek. In Dutch, it's a way to say that you're fidgety or restless. In English it principally refers to a stinging reproof, though to send a person away with a flea in their ear can mean to snub them or angrily refuse a request.

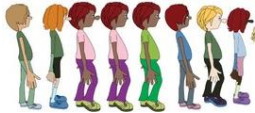
The root association must surely be the result of getting a literal flea in one's ear, something that wasn't so rare in earlier times when hygiene was poor and houses — and their occupants — were often infested with fleas. A flea entering one's ear would jump about in its attempts to get out and bite in frustration. It's hard to imagine anything more vexatious or frustrating — it's known to have driven some people almost mad (the old remedy was to pour oil into the ear, which drowned the flea).

It's curious how so many different implications have been drawn from one simple circumstance. A flea moves fast, so it may have suggested something desirable but unattainable, or a thing that's excitable and uncontrollable like a sudden passion. A flea may have been thought to be an external influence that whispered messages of distrust or ardour into the ear. English speakers may have judged that the physical and emotional discomfort



aroused by a flea in the ear resembled severe criticism or rebuke. It may be that several of these ideas fused in various language versions of the expression.

Maxine Arnoult



The Last Laugh:

In the Queue at the Theme Park.

Mary: How long have we been queuing now?

Jane: Goodness knows. 20 minutes maybe?

Mary: Well, we must be getting to the entrance soon: Look we're coming up to a corner... Oh no!

Jane : Yes, The queue keeps going round corners. This is just another section with 20 yards more queue to the next corner.

Mary: And how many corners are there? Is it worth while waiting?

Jane : Oh it must be. The Terror Tower is supposed to be the most thrilling ride in American theme parks.

Mary: To tell you the truth, I'm not that sure I really want to go on it. Did you see that sign up at the beginning of the queue saying it wasn't recommended for pregnant women?

Jane : Yes I did. But don't let that put you off. You're not pregnant and anyway I'm sure it's only there to make people think it's even more exciting.

Mary: Well... Here's another corner: Let's hope it's the last. How long is that we've been queuing?

Jane : 35 minutes now I think. And, no, it's **not** the last corner! It's another section. There's another sign at the end. I've not got my glasses. What does it say?

Mary : It says the same thing as the one at the beginning. "This ride is not suitable for pregnant women."

Jane: Again? ah, well! That's for the women who've got pregnant since they started to queue!



Mark Yates

Janet's July Quiz: Answers :

1. Virgo
2. It is the only month to be spelt with the same number of letters as its calendar month : 9.
3. Aster, Morning Glory, Forget-me-Not.
4. The God of Fire.
5. Yellow Submarine.
6. 1965.
7. Germany.
8. The Battle of Britain.
9. 1959.
10. The Twist.



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