



Paris Branch

Newsletter

N° 20 - November 2023



CONTENTS

Page

- 2 Chairman's message**
- 3 Janet's Quiz**
- 4 Events**
- 6 Coming Events & Theatre**
- 8 Correspondence**
- 8 Nan**
- 13 Photo of the Month**
- 15 A Word in Your Ear...**
- 15 The Last Laugh -.**
- 17 Quiz answers**



Chairman's introduction to the November 2023 Newsletter.

This month is proving somewhat proving. Getting Poppy Boxes into place is always a challenge. However Poppies are now available at W H Smith's, The Embassy, Kingsworth school, Border Force, and the Traveller's club.

On the 26th October we had an extremely successful coffee morning at the Embassy where we raised the sum of 1664.07 euros for this year's Poppy Appeal. An account of the occasion appears below.

On the 10th November Janet and I went to Gare du Nord where we joined members of the Defence staff and welcomed the two Chelsea Pensioners and their escort. We linked up with ONAC (the Office National des Combattants et des Victimes de Guerre who organise the sale of the "*bleuet*" – the cornflower - which is the French equivalent of the Poppy). We all proceeded to collect for our respective causes.

You will find an account of our service of remembrance at Saint Louis, Invalides below. It was good to see so many of you there. Our ambassador was in attendance, gave a reading and laid a wreath alongside Mr. Vijayen Valaydon the Ambassador of Mauritius. Ambassadors from Pakistan, Seychelles, New Zealand, Tanzania, Gambia, Slovakia and Poland, were also present.

We were honoured to have the Chaplain-in- Chief and Archdeacon for the Royal Air Force, the venerable Dr (Air Vice-Marshal) Giles Legood MBE KHC RAF who gave an impressive address. The



remembrance was given by Colonel Sean Cunniff, Military Attaché and Brigadier Al Veitch, Defence Attaché also did a reading.

I would like to mention that our poem readers did a fine job. One had even learnt his poem by heart so didn't need a script. He and his mother came back to the Embassy afterwards and he has expressed a keen desire to become involved with our branch and has already agreed to read a poem at next year's service.

At the Embassy after the service our ambassador gave a short speech at a pleasant reception which allowed those present, from many walks of life, to meet and discuss in a most convivial atmosphere. I took the opportunity to present a Certificate of Appreciation to Ben Newick, Butler at the Residence, and his staff for their kindness and support of The Royal British Legion

A reminder: On the 27th November it's our AGM. I look forward to welcoming you there.

Richard Neave

Janet's Quiz :

IT HAPPENED IN NOVEMBER

- 1. November was the month in which this British heroine was born. She famously rescued survivors from a shipwreck off Northumbria in 1838. Who was she?*
- 2. Lewis Carroll's novel Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was published in November 1865. What was the writer's real name?*
- 3. In November 1990 who became the first female President of Ireland?*



4. *One of the most popular board games ever devised was launched by Parker Brothers in 1935. What was it?*
5. *In 1940 which politician became the only US President to win a third term in office?*
6. *Which politician resigned as British Prime Minister in 1940 and died in November of the same year?*
7. *Who became King of Spain following the death of Franco in 1975?*
8. *In November of which year did Angela Merkel become the first female Chancellor of Germany?*
9. *In 1957 what was the name of the dog Russia launched into orbit around the earth?*
10. *In 1995 what was the name of the Israeli Prime Minister who was assassinated while at a peace rally?*

Answers on last page

EVENTS

26 October, Thursday – Poppy Appeal Coffee Morning

This went, as always, with a swing. Unfortunately, our ambassador was unable to attend in person (we understand that a competing event in the Middle East is currently absorbing much of her attention). However, the Embassy kitchen, as always, rose to the occasion, producing two gorgeously decorated Christmas cakes for the raffle. There was also a produce table selling marmalade, chutneys and cakes which sold out quickly.

Peter Dowding, former Premier of Western Australia (mentioned in last month's edition), was present, signing his book about his uncle, Bruce, who joined M19 and was part of the Pap line in Southern France. He was betrayed, like so many, to the Nazis and executed by guillotine in Dresden. (details here: <https://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2023/09/australian-hero-of-the-resistance/>)

11 November, Saturday – Armistice Day Commemoration at St Louis des Invalides.



The Paris Branch annual Armistice Day ceremony, the first of which took place 99 years ago, was held at St Louis des Invalides. This has been the case since its usual venue, Notre Dame, was damaged by fire in 2019. It was an impressive occasion, rendered the more picturesque by the presence of two Chelsea Pensioners in their distinctive uniform, a kilted Murdoch McLeod



as piper, and an imposing display of standards including, for the first time, that of the Polish Special Forces. Several church leaders participated, and John Crothers organised an admirable musical accompaniment.



It has always seemed to me ironic and either appropriate or inappropriate, that the shadow of the baldachin of Napoleon's tomb, in the other part of the edifice, hovers in the background through a glass partition at this ceremony.



Our ambassador, Dame Menna Rawlings, was kind enough to offer a reception after the ceremony at the Embassy

residence. Accompanied by our Honorary president, Colonel Sean Cunniff and committee members she expressed her thanks to all those who had made this event a success.



I find I can't finish this brief account of what was indeed an exceptional occasion without a slightly irreverent afterthought; this picture, also at the embassy, of the Venerable Giles Legood, Chaplain in Chief of the RAF and a visiting Chelsea pensioner, clearly comparing their sense of fashion.

COMING EVENTS

23 November Thursday - November lunch



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

**Thursday 23 November
1215 for 1230
Only €18 - Pay on the day
(in cash please)**

Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or
richard.neave05@gmail.com

*Reserve early to be sure of a place.
(Cancellations up to 48h before)*



LUNCH MENU 23rd November

Aperitif

*STARTER-
Quiche*

*MAIN COURSE-
Goulash*

*DESSERT-
Pears*

*Wine served with the meal
Coffee or tea*

27 November Monday – Annual General Meeting

18h30

Paris HQ: 28 rue des Acacias, 75017 Paris

Members please try to attend.

THEATRE

Our member Les Clack of the Dear Conjunction Theatre Company is currently putting on an excellent one-man show which I had the pleasure of seeing last Friday. "**Scaramouche Jones**" by **Justin Butcher** is a curiously ironic commentary on events and aspects of the 20th century seen through the tragicomic eyes of a clown, who accidentally survives a century of potentially fatal tribulations. It can still be seen if you hurry. **today, 15/11, tomorrow 16/11 (at 21h) and on Friday 17/11 (at 19h).**

This show will be followed on 29th and 30th November and 1st December by "**More Lives Than One - Oscar Wilde and the Black Douglas**", to commemorate the death of Oscar Wilde in Paris on 30th November 1900.

Both these take place at the Theatre de Nesle, a very Parisian locale – a theatre in a cellar with stone vaulted ceilings which has been home to many Dear Conjunction productions over the years.

Reserve by phone: details here:



Dear Conjunction Theatre Company, Paris Téléphone: +33 1 42 85 09 57 / +33 6 31 32 47 84
Email : dearconjunction@wanadoo.fr Website : www.dearconjunction-paris-theatre.com
Blog : dearconjunction.blogspot.com

Spectacle en Anglais

CORRESPONDENCE

Member Geoff Williams writes from Brittany:



Clohars Carnoet is a small town, inland from the south Finistère coast near the better-known seaside town of Le Pouldu, famous for Gauguin and other painters, which is, in fact, only a resort and has neither town hall nor cemetery.

As the mother of a friend is buried in Clohars, I went to visit the grave by setting Waze to locate the cemetery and found to my surprise that it contained war graves. The plate is in fact on the old entrance, so I hadn't noticed it. With the CWG app, we managed to locate the grave which differs from others purely by its headstone and carries the inscription "Known unto God". The Commission can only tell me that he was washed ashore, probably I guess on the beaches of Le Pouldu, on 20th March 1942. There was no identity other than his

being "A Sailor of 1939-1945 War, Royal Navy". It is a simple grave and obviously little visited apart from a cleaning of the headstone.

"We will remember them". And he will be remembered. His grave is now visited weekly and has been flowered for All Hallows. On the 11th November at 11 am, we planted an RBL cross and poppies. I shall endeavour to find more from municipal records, now stored in the archives in Quimper, but most importantly, 'Mister Sailor' has found friends from the Royal British Legion.

Nan



North Cliff, Scarborough

Auntie Nan (short for Noreen) was a remarkable lady. I have already mentioned her in our December 2022 edition, should you care to look it up on the website. Widowed in the war, she ran a boarding house (as small hotels used to be called) perched on the heights of the North Cliff of

Scarborough, and exposed to the north wind in winter as it soared up the cliff face and beat against the heavy front door with a strength that made it preferable to use the back entrance between November and March.

Invariably good humoured, even when overworked at the height of the summer season, she would walk into the drawing room, filled with gloomy visitors watching the rain through the



*Anything stronger than a "sun shower" was "bracing".
This is bracing weather.*

window. "It's only a sun-shower" she would announce, all but shooing them out. One day she was particularly insistent, but the "sun-shower" proved indomitable, and she came back down to the kitchen complaining "They won't move! I'll have to borrow a pound from next door to buy the fish." This seeming non-sequitur turned out to be the

result of her hiding the housekeeping money under the drawing room carpet

and her not wanting to be seen fishing it out.

Nan never locked the door when she went out. She had a series of dogs, all as daft as each other and had a blind confidence in their quality as guard dogs. One day my father, whose work sometimes took him to Scarborough, turned up unexpectedly. Nan was out so, the door being open as usual, he just walked in, made himself a cup of tea and sat down for a nap. Half an hour later Nan blew in through the door with a greeting. "Where's the dog then?" asked my father, "isn't he with you?"

"No", said Nan "He's here somewhere." At that point the dog crept out from its refuge under the sofa, barked wildly and ran over to Nan for protection. So much for her guard dogs.

For us, the children of Nan's sisters and cousins, a substantial collection of boys and girls of all ages, a visit to Scarborough was always a huge pleasure.

Nan died 19 years ago now but we have a sort of family gathering every year in Scarborough.



The tradition was interrupted by covid but has recommenced this year and indeed I am just back from the last one which explains why I'm trying to entertain you with this account. As always, we spent a day together doing silly things:

Doing silly things ...

reminiscing over a bag of shrimps, playing mini-golf in the rain, getting candy floss out of your hair, filling the slot machines in an amusement arcade ... and of course we visited Nan's grave for a moment of silence.

The reference to slot machines brings back another memory. We kids wandered about Scarborough with a freedom that children these days have lost. This led to all sorts of adventures, most of mine being connected to fishing, something of a life-long obsession with me. However, an exception occurred down by the amusement arcades when, one day, I met a boy who had a little kitten perched on his shoulder. I showed a friendly interest and we chatted for a bit about the advantages of a kitten over a hedgehog, my current pet of the moment back home in Darlington. I had to admit that one could not conveniently carry a hedgehog around on one's shoulder and recognised that it must be nice not to have to dig worms every day to feed a kitten. The boy's name, I found, was Tom. We turned our attention to the slot machines in the nearby arcade. "Got any money?" asked my new friend. "Only a sixpenny bit. That's one go on a sixpenny machine... Or we could change it." "Give me the sixpence and I'll ask someone to change it." I handed it over and he went up to



How cute can you get?

a passing young couple. "Excuse me. Can you change this for pennies please," he asked, "Me and my friend want to go on the slot machines." The girl stroked the kitten, went "Aaaah" and started to get out her purse. No, let me.", intervened her chivalrous companion and took from his pocket a handful of change. He ostentatiously handed over sixpence worth of coppers and, when Tom proffered the sixpenny piece, shook his head grandly, "Keep it lad. That's all right." His lady friend pressed his arm in appreciative affection.

"Oooh." One of us said – I can't remember which. "Do you think we could do it again?". This time it was my turn to perch the cat on my shoulder. I approached an old lady who looked like a cat-lover. "Excuse me, could you..." I went into my spiel. She stroked the kitten, said "Here you are love." and handed over the pennies - but took the sixpence. I went back to Tom. We now had 12 pennies. "So now what shall we do? The sixpence is gone?" "Not a problem. There are sixpenny machines too. Let's ask someone to change six pennies for a sixpenny piece."

"Oh, yes. And hang on a minute. Did you see the way that girl looked at her bloke when he said, 'Keep the sixpence'?"

"Yeah. He really felt big." There was a silence as we mulled over our conclusions.

From that point on we picked only amorous looking couples for our operations, honing up our presentation with sweet smiles, blinks, and meaningful glances at the wee kitten which, if truth be told, was getting a bit bored with the perpetual transfers from Tom's shoulder to mine then back again. It never failed, however, to elicit appreciative squeaks of delight from the female half of the currently targeted couple, and a somewhat condescending tolerance from the male half who usually realised the potential future advantages of this occasion to

demonstrate his delightful generosity – and cheap at the price. We “changed” sixpenny bits into pennies and then back again into sixpences all afternoon and, at the end, forgot the slot machines entirely, split the cash and made our respective ways home with jingling pockets and a promise to meet the next day. Tom never turned up the next day though. Of course, he might well have been in jail by then.

I see I have wandered away from Auntie Nan but, there again, that’s what we did, wandered all over Scarborough, homing in, when bored, hungry or unhappy, to take unfair advantage of her unfailing good humour and generosity. Ah yes, her generosity.... The “guests” in her boarding house had a cooked breakfast every morning and I had the right to any fried eggs whose yolk broke in the frying pan. There was a big pantry in the old building, with marble shelves to keep food fresh in the days before refrigeration. I discovered a crate of tinned sardines in there. Dozens of tins of them. And sardines, back in those post-war years were a Sunday tea exclusive. Timidly I asked if I could perhaps open a tin. “Help yourself, Mark, we’ll never use them all up.” I took her at her word and for two days lived on tin after tin of sardines in oil. The result was that, eventually I realised I didn’t like them as much as before and for the following thirty years or so couldn’t stand the things.



Nan’s grave has a military headstone. She elected to have her ashes buried with him.

As I have mentioned, Nan was a “war widow”. Jim (James S Roberts), her husband was a sergeant in the RAF. They married during the war, saw each other on the rare occasions he could get leave, and it was only a few months later that the dreadful telegram came announcing his death. It didn’t say how he had died, and it was only after a lot of research that Nan learned he had died piloting a glider, possibly in anticipation of the “Tonga” operation, best

known for its capture of the Pegasus bridge. Jim died, however in a crash during an exercise, not in combat.

One result of this was that his name did not appear on the Oliver’s Mount war memorial – a tall column on a hill visible from all over Scarborough. Only members of the forces who died in actual combat had the distinction of having their names on war memorials. It was one of those iniquitous rules similar to that which forbade women from receiving military honours. Pippa Latour, who was a radio operator in France for the SOE and who died earlier



A late addition

this month at the remarkable age of 102 was a victim of the latter when she was awarded an MBE instead of a richly deserved military decoration. Happily, both these prejudicial distinctions have now been abandoned along with other outdated traditions. In the case of my uncle Jim, years later his name was added to the monument along with those from other Scarborough families who had been similarly neglected.



Nan, Jim, and the inevitable dog

At some time, Nan had mentioned to me that Jim, whilst still her fiancé, had written some poems but, with the fatuous insensitivity of youth, I had never asked to see them and indeed had forgotten them until, looking through her papers after her death I discovered a copy of them.

I am taking the liberty of adding a couple below, for your appreciation.

Can hearts and minds harmonious as yours and mine
Be finely tuned and pitched so splendidly
To make this union between you and me
Not having love's sweet fetters to entwine?
Twixt such as we are, can a friendship be
That asketh naught, and yet would tender all
Without incentive of babe Cupid's call?
Knowing full well just what the end will be:
Is it the end? Not complete end we trust.
Surely in memory's gentle cradle lies
The whole sweet story for we two to share,
And in dark times, and when the nights are hushed,
Our treasures will be light till darkness flies
And only joy and happiness are there.

And in a more frivolous – not to say Barrack Room style:

Marriage of necessity

A telegram came
To say King was to blame
For a condition produced by their lust;
With a tear in her eye
She gave voice to the cry
“Make a matron of me Sir you must”
Now his head in a whirl
He grabbed hold of the girl
And he married her looking quite glum.
But we say, “After all
For regrets you’ve no call
Remember that you’ve had it chum.”

(This was considered a great joke when Ian received a very ominous telegram from Maisie after he’d had four days’ leave with her.) Feb 1941

Wartime poetry: Sergeant James S Roberts (died 11/4/42)

Mark Yates

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

We would like to suggest a new subject for our newsletter to which all our members and friends will be able contribute:

It will be entitled “**Photo of the Month**” and was inspired by this shot on the next page sent in by Frank Yates who is currently involved in a Space shot at Cape Canaveral.



If, by the way, you are interested in the nature of this venture and an explanation of the photo you can get a full description of the cerebral aging project in English and in French on the Pasteur Institute's website: [click here](#)

The launch took place at 02h28 on 10/11. NASA's recording can still be seen [click here](#) It's quite long: go to 1h25 minutes into the film to watch the pretty bit.

Do you have a favourite photo? A recent shot with a story attached? an ancient one with a memory worth recounting? Send it in, with your comments for inclusion in our December edition to: mfyates@gmail.com

A Word in your Ear...

Scot-free.

No ! Not a term describing a pub sufficiently south of the border to ensure that nary a kilt nor a sporran is in sight and the skirl of the pipes is but a nagging memory.

As far as the expression **Scot-free** is concerned, the Scots for once, cannot be blamed at all!

So where did it come from ?

Well, « **Scot** » comes from the word « sceat », which was an Anglo-Saxon coin of small value. In the 11th century, the vowel sound was modified and it became a more general term. A « **scot** » was now a tax levied on homeowners, according to the size and quality of their land. Thence in Old English, **scotfree** came to mean « exempt from Royal tax ». Poor people whose houses were in unfavourable positions, got off « **scot-free** », and didn't have to pay the tax. By the 16th century, innkeepers also used a « **scot** » or slate to mark up consumed drinks. So, leaving without paying, meant they were getting off scot-free. Little by little, this came to mean getting away with anything at all .



Maxine Arnoult

The Last Laugh:



Three Rich Brothers

Adam - Well, it's really tough finding something to please Mum on her birthday these days.

David - Yeah. I really went overboard this year, but she wasn't exactly overwhelmed! What did you get her?

Adam - I got her a limousine with a chauffeur so that she can get out and about a bit more easily. And you?

David - A house. Quite a big one. Five rooms and in the best part of town.

Adam - Well, she must have liked that.

David - Nope. She sent me a thank you note complaining the house was so big she felt like a pea in a rattle. Says she lives in one room and has to spend all her time cleaning the others.

Adam - Well, you could have got her a cleaning lady!

David - Of course I did. She fired her - said she couldn't trust anyone else to look after her stuff. And the car you got her? How did that go down?

Adam - Not well. She wrote saying she hardly goes out any more. And she doesn't get on with the driver. Says he's rude. I gather she's given him notice too.

David - And you Saul, did you do any better?

Saul - Well sort of. You know she's got into a religious kick. Spends all her time reading the Bible.

Adam - Right - but you didn't just buy her a Bible, did you?

Saul - No of course not. I got her a parrot.

A&D - A what?

Saul - Not just any old parrot: This parrot had been trained over many years to quote the Bible. For example, you say "Exodus 20:12" and the parrot says "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land."

David - Good lord! She must have been impressed. Have you heard from her since?

Saul - Yes. I got a note this morning. Let me read it to you... "My darling boy, you know just what your mother loves! The chicken was delicious!"

Mark Yates

Janet's November Quiz: Answers :

1. *Grace Darling*
2. *Charles Lutwidge Dodgson*
3. *Mary Robinson*
4. *Monopoly*
5. *Franklin D. Roosevelt*
6. *Neville Chamberlain*
7. *Juan Carlos 1*
8. *2005*
9. *Laika*
10. *Yitzhak Rabin*



*Comments & contributions to mfyates@gmail.com
Back numbers: rblfrance.org/ then "Paris Branch Newsletters"*