



**Paris Branch**

## **Newsletter**

**N° 25 - April 2024**



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## **Chairman's introduction.**

Welcome to the April Newsletter.

Sadly, as you know, we had to cancel last month's lunch. However, we have had a good response from members who have kindly offered to prepare lunches. Thus, this month's lunch on the 18<sup>th</sup> will be going ahead as will those in May and June.

In March I gave a talk to the upper primary school in Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, about the RBL and the Poppy appeal. It went well and the school has agreed to take a poppy box from us in October.



This month Janet and I have delivered a considerable number of poppies and crosses to the two ships that tour the rivers in Europe.

As reported in last month's edition, the thank you and welcome evening for those who helped with last year's poppy appeal and for new members. Several members of the RBL Lyon Liberation branch also attended and very kindly presented to our branch an excellent oil painting of His Majesty King Charles 111 by one of their members. It now holds pride of place in our clubhouse.



The RBL annual conference takes place next month and I have put forward a number of questions which I hope will receive the attention they deserve. Watch this space...

As you may be aware there will be no 4<sup>th</sup> August ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe this year due to the Paris Olympics.

However, Pierre and I have attended two meetings with the Pedal to Paris



organisers and there will be a joint ceremony at the Arc when the Pedal to Paris event takes place in September. The RBL President and National Chairman will be in attendance, and we hope that our ambassador will also attend.

Below, under “events” you will find a link to the RBL celebrations for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day. I have been invited to attend but accommodation in the area is virtually unobtainable and I am sure there are some among you who will share my disappointment at being unable to participate.

**Richard Neave**

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### **JANET’S APRIL QUIZ**

1. When arrested in Melbourne on Christmas Day 1974, he gave the name Donald Clive Muldoon. Who was he?
2. The three primary colours of light are red, blue and green. What are the three primary colours of pigments or paints?
3. First published in 2000: 'He has terrible tusks and terrible claws and terrible teeth in his terrible jaws. He has knobbly knees and turned-out toes and a poisonous wart on the end of his nose.' Who has?
4. Which artist, who died in 1954, was cut off without a penny because his father did not like his paintings, and so for a while had to be supported by his wife's millinery shop in Paris?



5. Three American Presidents, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and James Monroe, all died, and Calvin Coolidge was born on this date. What was the date?
6. Believing that its parents were a camel and a leopard, the ancient Egyptians called this animal a camelopard. What do we call it now?
7. Mabbott's Pearmain, Gascoyne's Scarlett and Golden Knob are all varieties of what type of fruit?
8. Which 19<sup>th</sup> century composer, pianist and cleric was also Richard Wagner's father-in-law?
9. Geometrically, what shape are PG Tips teabags?
10. What three-word phrase, borrowed from wrestling terminology, means 'anything goes' or 'With all restrictions relaxed'?
2. Now it's at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Once it was on a spike at Westminster Hall. What is it?
1. The 1985-86 season of Dallas was certainly unusual, and possibly unique in television history, in that all 24 episodes turned out to be someone's dream. Whose dream?
13. 9.4607 x 10<sup>15</sup> metres. How is that better known?
14. Bristol, Bodmin, Horwich, Liverpool South, Warwick, Port Talbot, Southampton Airport and Tiverton. What's the connection?

Answers on last page

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## EVENTS

Adrian Parr sends this message for all aviation enthusiasts:

Two days of the Pentecost weekend (18-19 May 2024) see the annual airshow at La Ferté Alais, 57k south of Paris (about an hour's drive from the périphérique) . This is one of THE main events of the French airshow calendar: an eclectic spectacle of mostly vintage aircraft, but with some modern types flying in. There is a collection of old aeroplanes (unhappily diminished by Allied bombing in 1944), akin perhaps to the Shuttleworth Collection in the UK.



<https://letempsdeshelices.fr/>

It can be done as a day trip from Paris - Gare de Lyon, with a walk of about 2 km each way from the railway station to La Ferté Alais aerodrome, plus a few extra



kilometres walking along the flightline, in the hangars and so on. Otherwise, with children for example, experience has shown the interest of renting a *gîte* in Essonne. There are invariably long queues of cars accessing and leaving the aerodrome. Ear protection for children during the air display is recommended.

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D-Day 80th anniversary:

As mentioned in last month's Newsletter, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings, the RBL is holding several events in June, two in Normandy. For those who may appreciate a reminder, here is the link to obtain details.

[RBL D-Day 80 events](#)

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 <p><b>Don't forget to book in for this month's lunch.</b></p> <p><b>Thursday 18 April</b> <b>1215 for 1230</b> <b>Only €18 - Pay on the day</b> <b>(in cash please)</b> Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com</p> <p><i>There is still time to reserve. (Cancellations up to 48h before)</i></p>	 <p><b>LUNCH MENU 18 April</b></p> <p><b>APERITIF</b></p> <p><b>STARTER</b> <i>Quiche Lorraine</i></p> <p><b>MAIN COURSE</b> <i>Ratatouille with Tuna</i></p> <p><b>DESSERT</b> <i>Apple Crumble with fresh cream</i></p> <p><b>WINE SERVED WITH THE MEAL</b></p> <p><b>COFFEE OR TEA</b></p>
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**HOBBIES:** It has been a while since we published anything on the subject of hobbies so here's one:



## MAPS

A cousin of mine came to Paris for the weekend last month. He brought along a guidebook to the city. This looked a bit worn to me, so I had a look to find it was indeed a guide to Paris but had last been edited 102 years ago. "Well," said Robert, "the interesting bits don't change much, do they?"

I admitted that a lot hadn't and looked through the contents. I came to a map. Now maps have always interested me, and I sometimes browse a map as one will a book, gathering sometimes irrelevant but curious information.



This time it was a map of Paris.

"This bit for example." I said.

"Where are we on this map?" Robert asked.

"The bit covered by that wobbly line." I said. (I live in a block of flats near Vincennes – on the Paris side but only about 120 metres from the Péripherique – see inset)



"What is it? A road?"

"No, it was the last wall around Paris, built in the 1840's."

"What? Did it go all the way around?"

"Yes, as you can see on your map."

"But walls like that went out of fashion around 1600, didn't they?"

"Maybe, but the military mind is slow to change – that's how we got the Maginot Line in the 1930's."

Curiously it seems quite hard to find pictures of the "*L'enceinte de Thiers*" as it was termed. Here's one, curiously bucolic with a goat and child goatherds. There seem to be fewer remains of it standing than there are of the earlier "*Mur des Fermiers Généraux*", that much-hated customs barrier to the city which at least left behind the elegant *Rotonde de la Villette* in its wake.



Maps, of any kind, are fascinating. One can spend ages reading them as one would a book. Over the years I have acquired one or two old maps, the most interesting being a 1570 map of Africa. It must have been about 1980 when I was wandering around the *Marché d'Aligre* which used to contain (and I believe still does) a small but attractive flea market. As always in such venues, a number of casual vendors were sitting on the pavement,

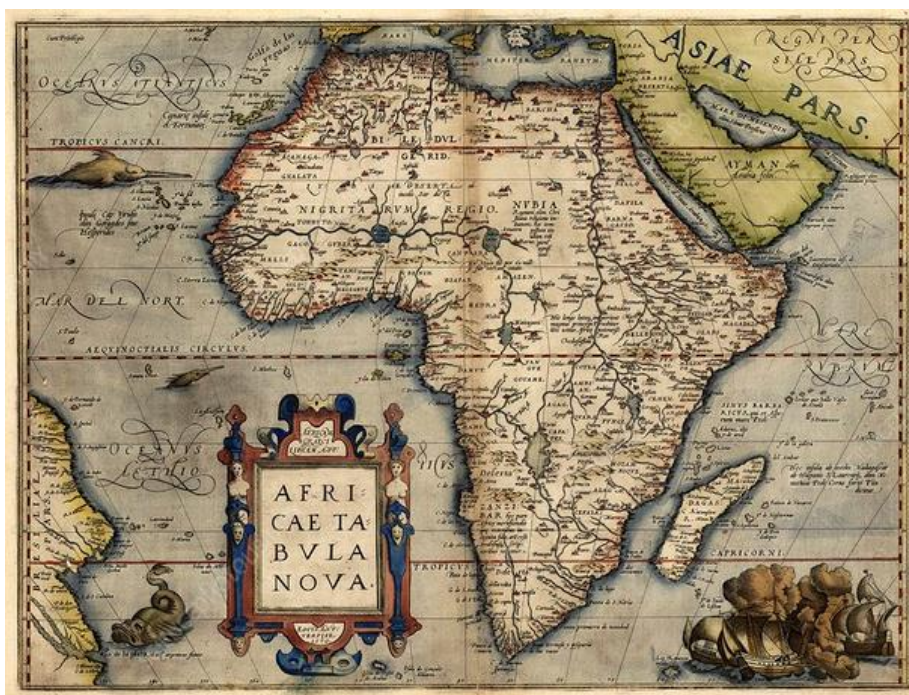


their wares displayed in such a way that they could all be assembled and carried off at a moment's notice should the need arise. A group of policemen appeared. I noticed one chap scuttling off with what looked like a framed map under his arm. The police were momentarily preoccupied by a particularly vocal objector, and I managed to stop the man with the map. He let me glance at it. It looked old and interesting but might have been anything really. "How much?" I asked. The man looked around and saw that the police were once again advancing. "Two hundred francs." he said. I decided to risk it:

"One hundred!"

"OK. You can have it for that." A quick exchange took place and I set off for home with my find.

Internet being a thing of the future, it took some research to establish that I was now the owner of an original example of Ortelius' 1570 map of Africa. The latter part of the sixteenth century was a fascinating period for mapmaking. Until then the best maps available were portolans – maps of the coastline for navigators. The interior of continents, especially in the case of Africa, were often filled with a random series of names and symbols.



Ortelius' map was the first to correlate all the available information on Africa into a coherent whole. It is remarkably accurate in many ways but, as always with old maps (and some new ones) it is the mistakes and what they tell us which are most

interesting.

Here, for example, the distribution of the great lakes, with the Nile rising in two of them seems to indicate a possibility that Lake Victoria was separately discovered from both east and west. This lake appears to be represented twice, with different names and shapes.

The river Niger is depicted going the wrong way, into a huge west African delta when in fact the river rises in that area and heads east – the Niger probably being confused with the Senegal river.

There is a reference in the French text on the back of the map to the “Pays de Prestre lean”, a reference to “Prester John”, that legendary figure who haunts medieval European literature, purportedly the Christian king of a powerful kingdom in the East. On the map under “NUBIA” is a mention of Christianity – certainly an early reference to the Coptic faith which St Mark is supposed to have brought to Egypt.

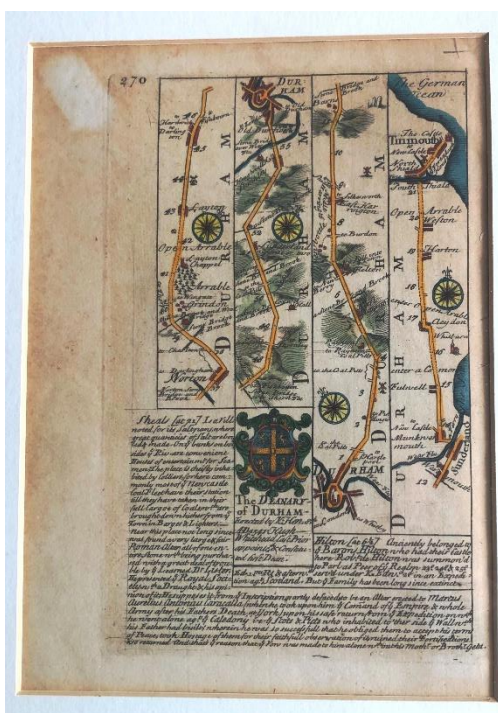
Here is a photo of my map but for a detailed exploration [click on it](#). Wiki does a much better job of it. On the online version you can enlarge parts of the map very satisfactorily.

The back of my map of Africa is in French and contains some intriguing observations and comments including speculation as to why the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope were black when, at similar latitudes north, the Italians and the Spanish weren't.

For those of you who enjoy deciphering 16th century French I include here a link to the text on the reverse side of the map.

[http://rblfrance.org/paris\\_newsletters/IMAGES/mapback.jpg](http://rblfrance.org/paris_newsletters/IMAGES/mapback.jpg)

Another map I have is not particularly rare. It is simply an example of that formalisation of map information that we are all familiar with on the Metro – the plan for the line. Here's line 1:



Well, given some latitude for imagination, I see the following map as the ancestor of the foregoing. It is essentially a linear simplification, straightening out all the bends and curves of a complex route to make it quickly comprehensible for the user.

In a somewhat more picturesque way, Emanuel Bowen's *Britania Depicta* published in 1720, does something similar. It is a book of over 200 maps covering the main roads of England and



Wales. Each map divides the road into linear sections. This one, which I bought in Scarborough many years ago, goes from Norton (near Middlesbrough but that didn't exist at the time) to Tynemouth via Durham. It is true that I find it difficult to imagine a coachman bouncing along the rutted turnpikes of the time with what was certainly a very expensive book balanced on his knees and am more inclined to see it in the hands of a moneyed passenger intrigued by the landscape as seen from his coach window.

If you click on the map, you should get a link to an online version which you can magnify so that the text becomes visible. Miles are marked on the map, numbered every half-inch or so. Each section has its own compass indicating the geographical direction of each section.

Mapmaking, like much else of course, has taken on a new dimension with the computer and Google Maps. A notable but undesirable side-effect of these convenient apps on your iPhone being that these days we rarely know in which direction we are going, beyond the few metres or kilometres accorded by Waze. Personally, I find my sense of direction has been enormously reduced and without that phone I am lost Oh, for the days when you could look at a scrap of paper and figure out everything aided only by the ability to read a proper map and, to align it, two now redundant bits of local knowledge: One, that the thousands of tv aerials were all focused on the Eiffel Tower, and two, Paris streets are always numbered starting at the end nearest the Seine. If you knew that, finding your way was easy.

Mark Yates

*Have you a hobby? Why not write something about it – and send it to [mfyates@gmail.com](mailto:mfyates@gmail.com) for possible publication.*

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## **A Holiday - Memphis to New Orleans in 2016**

I have a husband who loves jazz music, I was thus persuaded to go on a trip with two American couples with whom we had formed a friendship on a Scandinavian cruise some years before. Roger had told Kris that he loved Jazz so, Kris being the go-getter of the group, had found out that American Cruise Lines was doing a trip from Memphis to New Orleans travelling on the *Queen of the Mississippi* a replica of one of the old paddle steamers.

Our friends joined us in Memphis where we stayed in the Peabody Hotel, reputedly the oldest hotel in the city. A curiosity of the establishment is that they have ducks that come down each day in their own lift from the roof where they have their 'duck palace'. Twice a day the Duck Master gets the ducks to come out of the fountain in the middle of the lobby and waddle around the floor. The afternoon session is open to any guest who wants to try their hand at 'herding' the ducks. They then get a certificate and a commemorative staff, an honour which costs them US \$300. We passed on that. We decided to visit Graceland, the home of Elvis Presley, wondering if it was going to be as tacky as some had suggested. To our surprise it was very well done. Each guest is given an iPad which describes the various rooms as you visit. The



actual house is not as big as I imagined it would be but the visitable rooms were very tastefully decorated except for the “Green Room” - the den Elvis used with his band and friends. It was very – err - green. Well worth the visit if ever you find yourself in Memphis. Being a big fan of Jerry Lee Lewis, the old rock and roller, Roger wanted to see if there was any mention of him in Memphis. We

walked up to Sun Records which is where the Million Dollar Quartet, Elvis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee had their big breaks. We were taken around by a member of Sam Philipps family, who was the first Manager of this lot, except for Elvis who was managed by Col. Tom Parker, a shady person, to see the old recording room and the picture of the Million Dollar Quartet on the wall. We found a cafe with Jerry's written all over it, unfortunately it did not open until 9 pm so needless to say we did not go in.

Our friends arrived the day before we were due to board the *Queen of the Mississippi*. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April we embarked and departed for Vicksburg. We were taken to the battlefield which was really nicely kept. They had different areas devoted to the various troops and Generals who participated in the battle.

The next day we travelled to Vidalia and visited a house that belonged to a concert pianist. He gave a rendition of a range of music covering the centuries. The last piece sounded a bit like the European Anthem which was strange. We finished our tour with a glass of champagne, orange juice or Mint Julep a bit like our Pimms.

From Vidalia we went to St. Francisville where we visited our first Planation House. It was quite small compared to others in the region. We were greeted by ladies in crinolines and a faithful retainer who showed us around.

From St. Francisville we went to Baton Rouge. This was a huge town and everywhere we went there were parts of cannons in the ground as a reminder of the battles that took place there.

Our next stop was Oak Alley, this was a huge plantation with trees lining the alley to the house. We were shown the house and then wandered around the grounds. We found a tent that was used by one of the Generals during



the War in the States. Further down we came across the restored huts of the slaves. They were not as small as I had thought they might be. We decided to have a Mint Julep as it was quite warm that day. Steve, Kris's husband suggested to Roger that he try the

Gator Bites. He asked me if I wanted any; 'not on your life pal' was my reply. Roger, who is game for most things, had some, they are cooked in batter. He said they tasted a bit like chicken but did not like them that much. On the trees grow Spanish Moss. It is rather weird and, in the dark, somewhat ghostly.

Entertainment was provided every evening. Once two members of a Jazz Band played for us. Roger spoke to them and told them that he used to go and see Chris Barber and his Jazz Band play in London in his youth. The players told Roger that when Rock and Roll hit the scene, Jazz was not top of the pops anymore, so they went to London and they played with Chris Barber; small world. One other entertainer was a big black lady



comedienne who was hilarious. She asked if there were any ex-service people on board as, naturally there were amongst the Americans. Steve said to Roger 'tell her what you were in Roger'. He yelled out The Royal Artillery, she looked at him and said, 'excuse me' so he said again to which she said, 'Do I detect an accent'. She said things that no white person would be able to get away with, I was crying with laughter.



We had decided to stay a few days in New Orleans where we left the ship. At the time the streets were being dug up and re-laid which made getting around a bit hard. We had visited a big graveyard and I mean big. The tombs were like small houses, there was one with turrets, one with stained glass windows, I only saw one modest slab of the kind seen in England. It seems the

expression "Bag of Bones" comes from New Orleans. The tombs can only take about 6-10 coffins depending on the size of the tomb. When they reach the limit, the first coffin is taken out and the bones are then put in a bag and re-placed in the tomb, hence a bag of bones.

We went one day down Beale Street in New Orleans which is known for its homosexual population. Roger, in his wisdom said 'let's go down Beale Street. We did: this guy approached him; I have never seen my husband move so fast in all my life. He said to me 'I think we will turn left at the next corner'. We never got back to Beale Street again. We also went to the big market in New Orleans. Fortunately, part of it is covered for we couldn't have picked a worse day; it poured with rain accompanied by thunder and lightning of a ferocity I had never seen before.

In spite of the occasional mishap of this kind we had a great trip and would recommend a trip to the Deep South to any potential visitor.

Janet Warby

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## Photo of the Month –

Maxine says she can't get the song "Keep right on to the end of the road" out of her head:

Last month's issue also figured an avenue of trees – but in the south USA. The contrast is interesting:



Maxine Arnault





## A Word in your Ear... Dead as a doornail

An ancient expression dating back to 1350, “as dead as a doornail” occurs in the fourteenth-century work “*The Vision of Piers Plowman*” and in Shakespeare’s “*Henry IV*”. A related expression, of rather later date, is “*as dead as a herring*”, presumably because most people only saw herrings when they were long dead and preserved. Other variants include “*dead as mutton*” and “*dead as a stone*”.

But why particularly a doornail, rather than just any old nail? Could it be because of the alliteration, and the rhythm? Almost certainly the euphony has caused the phrase to survive longer than the alternatives I’ve quoted. But could there something special about a doornail?

The usual reason given is that a *doornail* was one of the heavy studded nails on the outside of a medieval door, or possibly that the doornail referred to was the particularly big one on which the knocker rested, this being particularly “dead” because of the number of times it had been knocked on the head.

*The Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins*, quotes a correspondent who points out that it could come from a standard term in carpentry. If you hammer a nail through a piece of timber and then flatten the end over on the inside so it can’t be removed again (a technique called *clenching*), the nail is said to be *dead*, because you can’t use it again. Doornails would very probably have been subjected to this treatment to give extra strength in the years before screws were available. So they were dead because they’d been clinched. Plausible, but whether it’s right or not we will probably never know.

Maxine Arnoult

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## The Last Laugh:

*This week's story is based on a real dialogue with a neighbour:*



### 59 - The Rat

M - So did the trap work? Have we caught the rat?

N - No. It hasn't touched the cheese.

M - Tell me again. How did it get into your flat?

N - Well, I opened the French window yesterday and I saw it sneak in round a corner of the curtain. It was horrible!

M - Hmm. I see. And you're pretty sure it's still in the flat?

N - Yes. I could hear it scrabbling about in the night. I couldn't sleep a wink. Oh dear! What should I do?

M - Well, I think we can just put down more traps. Maybe find a better bait. It'll have to eat eventually.

N - Well, I've been down to the shops and bought three more traps but the man in the shop says most people use cheese.

M - Yes but I've been looking it up on the internet and it seems not.

N - Really? Is there a better bait?

M - Absolutely. There are several sites which recommend other things to attract rats.

N - What sort of things?

M - Well. It seems that cheese is only third on the list. Much better is peanut butter.

N - Oh. I haven't got any of that.

M - No problem. I've got peanut butter, but there's something even better. It's reckoned the best of all. And I've got that too!

N - Oh good. And what's that?

M - Bacon, Mrs. Levy. It seems rats can't resist bacon. Here's a slice of bacon.

N - Bacon! But I can't use that! You know I can't! We're a Jewish family and we never touch bacon.

M - Look Mrs. Levy. If it'll get rid of the rat surely you can make a little exception. I'll set the trap. You don't have to touch it. Only the rat.

N - Oh I couldn't! Don't you see? You can't do that sort of thing when you're Jewish.

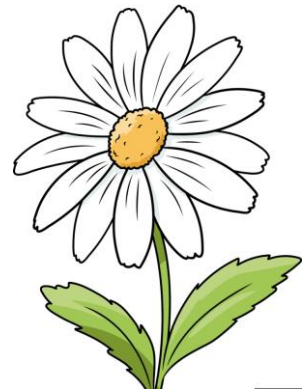
M - Oh come on Mrs. Levy: I can understand it for you but - is the rat Jewish too?

Mark Yates

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### *Janet's March Quiz: Answers :*

1. John Stonehouse
2. Red, blue and yellow
3. The Gruffalo (by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler.)
4. Henri Matisse
5. July 4<sup>th</sup>
6. A Giraffe
7. Apple (They are all from Kent)
8. Franz Liszt
9. Tetrahedron ("Pyramid" is not a shape – just an example of one.)
10. No holds barred.
11. The head of Oliver Cromwell
12. Pam Ewing
13. A light year
14. Each one has a railway station called Parkway. (This usually means it's nowhere near the town it serves. Port Talbot is a rare exception.)



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