



Paris Branch

Newsletter

N° 29 - September 2024



CONTENTS

Page

- 2 Chairman's message**
- 4 Janet's September Quiz**
- 5 Events**
- 6 Coming Events**
- 7 Romania: Part 3**
- 12 A Word in Your Ear...**
- 13 The Last Laugh**
- 14 Quiz answers**



Chairman's introduction to the July 2024 Newsletter.

Welcome everyone. I hope you have all had an enjoyable summer break.

it's been an eventful time since our last newsletter.

As I mentioned in our July edition I was invited to attend the welcoming



ceremony for the British Olympics team at the Embassy, and what an eventful evening it was! Her Royal Highness Princess Ann was in attendance greeted by our Ambassador Menna Rawlings. I was fortunate enough to meet and chat with her Royal Highness and also with our athletes some of whom were medal winners in the Paris Olympics. We are justly proud of their splendid performance and our congratulations go equally to our Para Olympics team. Both figured high in the list of medal winners.

On Monday 19th August I attended, with our secretary, a remembrance ceremony at Verneuil sur Seine for an American pilot, Major Henry William Shurlds, who was shot down during WW2 and crashed and died in the woods there. We were heartily welcomed by the mayor and representatives of the different organisations involved who have, with members of the pilot's family, erected a fine memorial to him. We were then treated to an excellent lunch.

On Sunday 8th September Pierre and I went to les Invalides to welcome the Pedal to Paris Cyclists and hand out medallions to all those who had completed the challenge.



This replaced the usual meet and greet at the Arc de Triomphe was moved because of Paris Olympics. It was an eight-day bike ride from



Manchester to Paris, to promote green action and innovation ahead of the Olympic Games. Appropriately the field was led by Christopher Miles Boardman, CBE, an English former racing cyclist of many achievements, notably winning the individual pursuit gold medal at the 1992 Summer Olympics.

The Arc was not completely left out: the following day there was a short



ceremony for the cyclists there which Pierre attended.

We have had to defer the proposed dinner and dance in October. A sudden

decision by the caterers to raise their terms meant that we should have had to increase the ticket price to an unrealistic figure. Hopefully we will be able to replace this with an event next year. Watch this space.

During August I managed to visit the WW1 Museum at Meaux, the biggest of its kind in Europe. I highly recommend it to any of you who have not seen it.

Just a reminder: next month is Poppy Appeal month and as usual we will be at the Embassy for the Poppy coffee morning on the 24th so please do come and join us.

Oh yes! Our monthly lunches are resuming on 26 September with the combined culinary skills of Janet and myself to provide a gastronomic event. See the announcement below for the menu. Reserve early.

Best,

Richard

JANET'S SEPTEMBER QUIZ



1. The name September comes from the Latin word 'septem', What does it mean?
2. Which two zodiac signs occur in the month of September?
3. What four-day tragedy started on 2nd September 1666.
4. The Anglo-Saxons called the month Gerstmonath, naming it after which crop, usually harvested in September, and with which they made beer?
5. What is September's birthstone, a variety of the mineral corundum?
6. In 1752, September had only 19 days in the UK. Which calendar was changed to the Gregorian calendar?
7. In the United States, which federal holiday is observed on the first Monday of September?
8. Which biennial sporting event was postponed in 2001 after the September 11th terrorist attacks on New York City?
9. Which world-famous festival, held annually in Munich, Germany, runs from mid or late September to the first Sunday in October?
10. Queen Elizabeth 1st was born on 17 September 1533. Who was her mother?
2. What did Robbie Williams switch on in 2010, the Bee Gees in 1995 and Red Rum in 1977?
1. "September" is a 1987 drama film modelled on Anton Chekhov's 1899 play Uncle Vanya. Who wrote and directed it?
13. Which American said : "My favourite poem is the one that starts 'Thirty days hath September' because it actually tells you something."?
14. Which British Prime Minister exclaimed on the 30 September 1938, "I believe it is peace for our time"?
15. On the 9 September 1513, James IV of Scotland was killed in which battle?
16. What name is given for the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, celebrated on 29 September?

17. What is the name of the Longstone lighthouse keeper's daughter who, on 7 September 1838, risked her life in a small rowing boat to rescue nine shipwrecked people?
18. On the 13th of September 1902, Harry Jackson became the first person in Britain convicted on what sort of evidence?
19. Every September the Egremont Crab Fair in Cumbria is home to which face pulling competition?
20. Which festival in the UK is about giving thanks for a successful crop yield over the year as winter starts to approach?

Answers on last page

OTHER EVENTS

Commemoration Ernest Russell Lyon

Geoff Williams reports on a ceremony he attended:

On Saturday 27th July 2024 a commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the death of British airman Ernest Russell Lyon took place in Larmor-Plage, near Lorient close by to where his plane came down. The ceremony took place at the roundabout named after him nearby (see photo). Military representatives and veterans with their flags, as well as local mayors, and a pipe band - Russell Lyon was a Scot who had left his native Scotland to train as a pilot in Canada before joining his UK fighter squadron. Russell Lyon is buried at the cemetery in Guidel, one of 116 members of the forces who lost their lives around Lorient and in the Finistère.



The twist in the tail is that, until 2009, Russell Lyon was buried as an unidentified airman. It is only thanks to a local historian, Jean-Yves Le Lan, and to Russell Lyon's nephew Richard, that his tomb was identified.

Lorient was the home to a major submarine base, so bombing missions were frequent. However, as the allies pushed ever deeper into France the situation changed with Lorient remaining one of the occupied pockets. It was only liberated on 10th May 1945.



Thus, in July 1944, German forces still held an area that included the airfield of Kerlin-Bastard, now known as Lann-Bihoué. A group of 8 Spitfires from RAF Predannack in Cornwall was tasked with reconnaissance of the airfield and the destruction of any planes on the tarmac. Two Spitfires failed to return. One pilot, Lieutenant Walton, head of the mission, was captured. The other, Flying Officer Lyon, died,

A group of local historians led by Jean Robic interviewed a local farmer and found the remains of the plane in 2003. In 2008 a

monument was raised to Ernest Russell Lyon in a ceremony attended by members of his family, The location of his grave remained unknown. It took the work of Jean-Yves Le Lan to prove that the grave in Guidel was that of Ernest Russel Lyon, after a long campaign to get it recognized. The combined efforts of Richard Lyon and Jean-Yves Le Lan paid off and in 2015 it was finally possible to hold a ceremony of Re-Dedication at his graveside at Guidel.

For anyone interested to know more, the quest to prove the identity of Ernest Russell Lyon is the subject of a book co-authored by Richard Lyon and Jean-Yves Le Lan (see photo) , *Finding the Ring of Truth*, published by Janus Publishing Company, Cambridge in 2019.

COMING EVENTS



THE 2024 POPPY APPEAL COFFEE MORNING will take place by kind permission of HM Ambassador at

The British ambassador's residence,
39 rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, Paris 75008

THURSDAY 24th OCTOBER, 2024

Reserve

janetwarby@yahoo.com or by telephone 01 39 28 90 28



As a matter of general interest, here's a link to a small article in "the Spectator" about the Legion. [Click here or on the picture](#) to see it.



The Theatre des Deux Anes is putting on a play about Churchill between 6 Oct. and 22 Dec.

Entitled “So Churchill” you can see a trailer for the play here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvFDCNyQ0Ho&t=102s>

Details and reservations at: <https://www.2anes.com>

Please note: It is in French

IN MEMORIAM

Michael Stam

Our member Mike Stam has died. He had a stroke around the 17th August 2024. Mike was a member of the Paris branch for 15 years.

Our condolences go to Anne, his wife and his family.

Yet More about Romania

Well, after July’s detour into Whitby, I am tempted to revert to my subject of Romania which we left, you may recall, in Bran Castle, home of Dracula the vampire. Back in 1974, Isabelle and I had moved on from Bran Castle to a place where we had heard there was a lake with warm water. It is apparently heliothermic – warmed by the sun. A layer of salt water underneath preserves the heat on the surface. It was a small village, as I recall, and there was no obvious

accommodation – except for the beginning of what was a remarkably modern venture into the world of tourism for Romania – half a dozen tiny wooden huts, like large tents,



scattered through the woodland and all of them for rent (holiday camping not having caught on in Romania at the time). This proved quite comfortable and

the perfect base from which to spend a couple of days floating around the lake, luxuriating in the warmth with an occasional, masochistic dive into the cold layer below.

Hence, on our more recent visit, circa 2020, it was with considerable interest when Sara, with whose family we were staying, suggested that we visit Bear Lake, a place which sounded remarkably like the lake I had visited so long ago. When we arrived, it turned out to be a different kettle of fish (to coin an appropriate phrase). After fighting our way through jams of holiday traffic we came to the lake. There was no sign of the little huts of yesteryear. The lake itself was walled in and there was a long queue waiting to buy tickets for access. Having come some considerable way we decided to give it a go, and eventually got to the poolside area, which was covered with towels, each well and truly occupied. It was only with great difficulty that one could pick a way through the bodies. A look at the lake, a seething mass of naked humanity, and we decided to leave. Outside again Sara said, "Of course this is only the first lake. We could look at the others...". In fact, the lake we had just left was the last, and biggest, of a short string of them the length of a little valley. So, we walked up. The next lake up the valley pathway was a much calmer affair (and a lot cheaper too) however we decided to continue exploring and soon came to a third lake – free, this one - which might, at first sight, have been situated in darkest Africa and largely occupied by a colony of natives. On closer examination, they turned out to be completely covered in the blackest of black mud dredged up from the bottom of the pool. Each lay, encrusted in his or her slowly drying carapace. I had heard of mud baths, but this was the first time I had ever encountered one. It failed to attract me and, the others being of similar opinion, we continued until we found a fourth little lake, quite deserted, tiny, maybe 8 or 10 metres across, but remarkably deep, it looked so attractive that I stripped off and dived in. Beautiful, clear spring water (but not warm), it was one of the pleasantest dips I have experienced.



Our Romanian friends come from Purcareni, a village about ten miles from Brasov so it was an opportunity to see what had happened to that town since my last visit with Isabelle nearly 50 years ago. It had impressed me then because it was the only place in the country where I could make myself (partially) understood. Hungarian is still spoken by about 20% of the population of Transylvania, Romanian now about 80%, both languages equally

incomprehensible despite all I had been told about Romanian being the nearest Latin language to French. In Brasov, however, I found that German worked (I had a little knowledge of that language at the time thanks to the encouragement of a previous girlfriend from Munich and the language had proved longer lasting than the girlfriend). Indeed, the city had an alternative name at the time, Kronstadt. At some point I was told that if you asked a Romanian speaker where Kronstadt was he would declare ignorance – as would a German language speaker if questioned on the existence of Brasov. Certainly, at the time, a substantial percentage of the Brasov population spoke



German. There were German bookshops and at least one German newspaper. Consequently, on this more recent visit I expected to be able to practise my long-rusty German. I was doomed to disappointment. Nearly all the German population had left. In

the Ceaușescu period, Romania was paid by West Germany for allowing ethnic Germans to emigrate to Germany in a secret agreement between the two governments from the 1960s to 1989. During this period, West Germany paid hundreds of millions of Deutsche Marks to Romania for around 200,000 ethnic Germans and this, notably, changed the ethnic profile of Brasov. Since ethnic Germans were the descendants of immigrants between the 12th and the 15th centuries, their retention of the language across all the centuries since must rank as something of an exploit. However, thanks to Ceaușescu, the German-speaking population is now down to about 1%. On this, my second visit after half a century's absence, the German influence in Brasov seemed to be limited to a section of the bookshop attached to the Black Church and the city is the poorer for the loss. The city itself, I should add, is much improved with, around the church, a particularly attractive square, now lined with tempting bars and restaurants.

I learned about another of Ceaușescu's erstwhile plans when I remarked on the new (and ugly) high rise buildings which disfigure some of the traditional town centres. "Ah, yes", Sara, my guide on all things Romanian, told me: "He (Ceaușescu) was trying to destroy all the old individual homes and get people into these modern structures where telephones would be installed throughout with a system allowing everyone, everywhere to be listened in to by the "Securitate", the enormous state secret police force." In 1985 Ceaușescu announced that, soon, between 90 and 95 percent of the inhabitants of

Brasov today

Bucharest would be living in apartment buildings. Fortunately, he got stopped, definitively, in 1989.

It wasn't just the Germans that Ceaușescu had his teeth into: During our 1974 visit, when we had been staying with Dodo in Bucharest, I remember, one evening our hostess rather timidly suggested that we visit a family she knew. She didn't say who, or why, but we went, of course, and found ourselves sitting (or standing – there weren't enough chairs) around a bare kitchen table in a bare kitchen in the centre of a bare apartment. Slowly the



Execution stopped Ceaușescu's wife Elena from buying shoes. That alone must have represented a substantial economy for the country. Rumour has it that almost every museum in the country has a pair...

situation became clear – or a bit clearer. This was a Jewish family – a couple and their teenage son -- who had somehow, with the help of a French association devoted to this kind of assistance, finally acquired the right to leave the country. I gather that this had cost them everything, down to the last stick of furniture. Their eventual destination was to be the USA but, perhaps because the association was French or perhaps because France was more acceptable politically, they were to come to Paris for two or three months before moving on. What Dodo wanted to know was if I would give them some help learning English while they were in Paris. I happily agreed to that and indeed a month later, the family turned up in Paris where I gave lessons to the father and the son.

To digress a little further, and to elaborate on a couple of incidents which resulted from this long-ago stay in the only communist country I have ever visited, whilst this emigrant family was staying in Paris, some weeks after that first trip to Romania, we invited them round for dinner. We sat down at table and I produced one of my culinary marvels of the period – rabbit stew. An ominous silence greeted its appearance on the table. Perplexed, we couldn't understand the reaction. Not only did they look askance at my haute cuisine: The boy was the only one to eat reasonably well, the father reluctantly pretended to nibble a little and his wife merely shuffled bits of vegetable around the edge of her plate. Nobody thought to explain the reason although that would certainly have improved the atmosphere. It was only days later whilst recounting this misadventure to Michel Verdier that he enlightened me to the fact that Jews mustn't eat rabbit. Apparently, as the rabbit doesn't have

split hooves and chew the cud, it joined the pig on Leveticus' hit list in the Torah. Animal biology doesn't seem to have been Leveticus' best subject. He said fish were ok as long as they had fins and scales. That ruled out eels (which do have scales, but too small to see easily) and, of course, whales, considered fish at the time (although, not having hooves they would have been non-kosher anyway). Still, wandering around in the middle of the Negev as they were at the time, it is surprising that such distinctions were considered relevant.

To terminate this account of two surprisingly enriching holidays, a consequent event of the first visit was when our kind Bucharest hostess, Dodo, managed, about a year later, to leave Romania for a holiday. This, it seems, was possible, provided family members – her husband in this case – remained at home. Paris, to her, was a wonderland of shopping opportunities, most of them, unfortunately, well beyond her severely strained budget. Isabelle had a brilliant suggestion. We lived in Montmartre at the time, so she took her to Tati's, that universally well-known (to Parisians) source of the most astounding clothing bargains in the country, situated just down the hill from us. Too overwhelmed, at first, to buy anything, it was the following day that she set off for an unaccompanied trip there on her own. I remember the joy and excitement with which she staggered into the flat with her booty and proceeded to lay it out for inspection and approval from Isabelle. She had found lots of underclothes of a kind totally unheard of in Romania, blouses, a skirt and then a couple of packets of stockings. "Stockings," she said, "real ones, and look at the quality!"

Isabelle looked at them with interest. "Oh, look!" she exclaimed, "They're made in Romania!"



Dodo's paradise - Tati 1980

Dodo was mortified. She picked up the packets, looked at them in disgust and threw them in the waste-paper basket. I seem to recall that Isabelle rescued them and "bought" them from her so that she could go off and get some proper French ones.

Mark Yates



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

**Thursday 26 September
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
Thursday 26 September**

Aperitif

**STARTER-
Mixed meats plus patties-**

**MAIN COURSE-
Fish and Chips-**

**DESSERT-
Apple pie and cream-**

**Wine served with the meal
Coffee or tea**



A Word in your Ear....

Back to Square One

The phrase “back to square one” is believed to originate from radio broadcasts of soccer games in the UK in the 1920s and 1930s. The pitch was divided into numbered squares (which were published in the “Radio Times”) to help listeners visualize the positions on the field in that pre-TV era. If the ball was passed back to the goalkeeper, it was said to be back to square one.

But there are also theories that it comes from the age-old game of hopscotch. Certain moves would have you hopping right back to the beginning, aka the first square or square one.



Maxine Arnault

The Last Laugh:



A parking ticket

A policeman approaches a man leaning against a car:

Policeman - That car's parked on a delivery bay.

Man - Yes but the shop it was put there for has gone out of business. Look - it's boarded up.

Pol. - That makes no difference. It's still a no-parking spot and it'll get a ticket if it stays there.

Man - Well, don't try to get me to move it!

Police constable writes out ticket and puts it behind the windscreen wiper while man looks on indignantly.

Man - Well, of all the nerve! You could use a little bit of common sense! Or is blind stupidity a basic qualification for your job?

Pol. - I'm not blind sir. For instance, I can see the rear sidelight's broken on this car too. That'll be another ticket.

He writes another ticket and puts it behind the windscreen wiper.

Man - That's crazy. It's licensed aggression. They shouldn't allow aggressive lunatics of your sort out on the streets. They've got homes for people like you.

Pol. - I should watch it if I were you. There's a bald tyre on this side and that's another offence.

Man - I don't care what there is on that side. I've never seen such overbearing officiousness. You should be ashamed of yourself.

The policeman writes a third ticket and carefully puts it behind the others.

Pol. - That kind of language will get you nowhere sir. If you don't move your car within one hour you will find you have yet another parking ticket. So If I were you, I'd shift it - and quickly!

Man - *My* car?! What do you mean "*My* car". It's not *my* car. I just happened to be standing here. The car belongs to my neighbour. He's a police inspector by the way.

Mark Yates

Janet's July Quiz: Answers:

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 - Seven. (It was the seventh month of the old Roman calendar)2 Virgo (until September 22) and Libra (September 23 onwards)3 The Great Fire of London.4. Barley5. Sapphire9. The Oktoberfest10. Anne Boleyn	<ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Julian7. Labor Day8. Ryder Cup11. Blackpool Illuminations (always annually switched on in September)12. Woody Allen13. Groucho Marx14. Neville Chamberlain15. Battle of Flodden16. Michaelmas Day17. Grace Darling	 <ol style="list-style-type: none">18. Fingerprint evidence19. The Gurning World Championships20. Harvest Festival
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Comments & contributions to mfyates@gmail.com
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