



**Paris Branch**

## **Newsletter**

**N° 30 - November 2024**



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## Chairman's introduction to the November 2024 Newsletter.

Welcome to this month's Newsletter. This month has been very busy. We had a very successful coffee appeal morning at the Embassy on the 24th October which was very well attended. Lots of fabulous raffle prizes and goods which were all sold out. We raised just under 1750.00 which is excellent. I attended the ceremony at the Wine Museum in Passy for the inauguration of a memorial plaque for Anna Boule-Guérin who was the lady who introduced the Poppy for remembrance.



On the 10th November Janet and I went to Gare de Nord to meet the Chelsea Pensioners and the Chaplain General. Whilst there we managed to get people to give a contribution to our Poppy Appeal

On the 11th November Ian our Treasurer went to the Embassy in my place and had breakfast with the British Prime Minister, who later attended the ceremony with President Macron at the Arch.



We had a rehearsal for our ceremony at Saint Louis Cathedral at 1.30 on the 11th which went smoothly. Those of you who attended the ceremony in the

afternoon would have seen that we were privileged to have the band of the Rifles Regiment playing in the courtyard. Their buglers played both the last post and reveille.



The service this year was the best service of remembrance that we have had at the Cathedral. Afterwards we attended the tea party at the Embassy.

On the 21st November we have our monthly lunch. More info below in “Events”.

Under the same heading you will also find details of our AGM on the 25th November. Please try to attend.

Finally, there will not be a Christmas lunch this year. However, as you will see from the poster included in this Newsletter we will be having a Christmas party instead which should be good fun.

All best wishes I look forward to seeing you at the up-and-coming events mentioned.

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### JANET’S NOVEMBER QUIZ

1. What change took place in Russia in 1918 which moved the date of the October revolution into November?
2. What are the two zodiac signs for the month of November?
3. What lightweight gemstone became popular due to the death of Prince Albert?
4. Which group had a hit with 'November Rain'?



5. Which flower's name derives from the Greek word meaning golden flower?
6. Where was James Bond born (The country will do!)?
7. Bonfire Night is celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> November, but in which year was the Gunpowder plot?
8. Is Thanksgiving Day in America celebrated on the first, second, third or fourth Thursday in November?
9. The national Remembrance Sunday ceremony is held in the UK at 11 a.m., on the second Sunday in November at the Cenotaph on Whitehall. Who designed the Cenotaph?
10. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1919, Britain's first woman MP was elected in Plymouth. Who was she?
11. ***"The house was very quiet, and the fog – we are in November now – pressed against the windows like an excluded ghost."*** is from which book first published in 1910.
12. N in the NATO phonetic alphabet is November, how many other letters are represented by months of the year in this alphabet?
13. What number month was November in the ancient Roman calendar?
14. There are two major meteor showers in November. Name one of them (or both if you can!)
15. What officially opened for the first time on November 17, 1869?

Answers on last page

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## EVENTS & CORRESPONDANCE



### **24 Oct: Poppy Appeal Coffee Morning at the embassy residence**

As always, this event was appreciated by all who attended, and we even had periods of sunshine which attracted the



more adventurous into the garden, resplendent in Autumn colours. The traditional draw was held with a generous selection of prizes. Several stalls sold home products and, as Richard mentioned above more than €1700 was raised for the Poppy Appeal



### 30 Oct: RBL Club lunch

A very convivial occasion, and well attended with a near full house. The next one is on 21 Nov. See further on for details. Why not come along?

### 7 Nov: Les Clack War Poetry reading.

Les with five others of his group “Dear Conjunction” gave a moving and wide ranging series of readings et the Theatre de Nesle on 7 Nov. The remarkable poets of the first war tend to dominate, and not without reason, this kind of event but Les put the subject into a more meaningful context by starting with texts from epochs long ago: the Bible, Julius Caesar, Shakespeare; all added historical relevance. Then, after some of the mandatory works of Owen, Sassoon, and even the pacifist Margaret Postgate Cole there followed an excursion into the 2<sup>nd</sup> war poets, and poets in other languages. Les pointed out that these were often members of a more practical and varied culture than the educated and cultivated writers of the 1<sup>st</sup> War. Hence, there was mention of Randall



Jarrell’s “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” (1945). Jarrell was a “celestial navigation tower operator”, whatever that is, in the American air force – a title which he seems to have felt particularly appropriate for a serviceman of his poetic vocation. We moved on to other wars, those rarely

mentioned - yet - in poetry readings, Korea, Viet Nam, and, even more recently the current conflicts we seem to be incapable of preventing in Gaza, in the Ukraine... It was an impressive rendition, and I should gladly listen to the whole thing again. I should mention that any profits from the venture will go to the RBL and similar organisations.



**11 Nov: Commemoration at Les Invalides** Once again at les Invalides the ceremony started with the strains of the pipes as Murdoch Macleod put on his annual performance.



Two Chelsea Pensioners were in attendance. HM Ambassador read "Perhaps" and, with a representative of the Commonwealth, laid a wreath.

Those who took part were too many to mention individually. The readings of two poems by pupils of the Kingsworth International School and the British School of Paris, however, were particularly effective. The music, orchestrated by John Crothers was impressive. Guests at the embassy afterwards were treated to champagne by our generous ambassador and a good idea of the wide range of representation can be inferred from the photo below: the hatrack in the Embassy cloakroom.



## COMING EVENTS

### 21 November



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

**Thursday 21 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 Wed. 21 November**

**APERITIF**

**STARTER  
To be announced**

**MAIN COURSE  
To be announced**

**DESSERT  
To be announced**

**WINE SERVED WITH THE MEAL**

**COFFEE OR TEA**

25 November

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024**

To be held at 28, rue des Acacias, 75017, Paris

On Monday 25th November 2024 at 18h30

All members are invited to attend and will have opportunity to speak at the AGM. Only those members who have paid their subscription may vote and, should they wish, have their names put forward for Committee positions.



12 December



***THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION PARIS BRANCH  
CHRISTMAS COCKTAIL***

***THURSDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2024 - 18h30 – 21h30***

***€10 per person: first drink, Christmas nibbles***

***More drinks can be bought at the bar***

***Please contact Richard Neave***

***[richard.neave05@gmail.com](mailto:richard.neave05@gmail.com)***

***Reserve your place. before Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December Numbers restricted***

***Address of venue***

***28 Rue des Acacias 75017 Paris***

***Street code for gate will be sent on reservation***

## **Vive la difference!**

The “Bol de Ris” restaurant serves the best *canard à l’orange* I have met with – a slightly oriental version served on a blazingly hot, hissing metal plate. It is the main reason we frequent the place so often. The restaurant being Chinese – or anyway generally oriental in its cuisine - I always have tea with my meal. We were there last Sunday and, once again, as I tried to sip from the cup, I was obliged to abandon the effort. As per usual the bowl was far too hot to pick up.

Once more I reflected on that curious phenomenon: The Chinese and the Japanese have brought the practice of drinking tea to a fine art – each in its own way – and this for more than a thousand years in Japan and more than two thousand in China. This raises the big question: How is it that they never got around to putting a handle on the cup? Two thousand years is a long time hanging around waiting for the pot to cool down enough to get your breakfast cuppa! Thank goodness the English (or someone in Europe) got around to putting handles on cups.

Anyway, reflecting on this curious national anomaly, it occurred to me that these national habits – or often national blind spots – are surprisingly numerous.

Obviously, living in France, it is mostly British and French examples which occur to me but, to remain in the field of cuisine, why is it that French dessert spoons are so big? And they turn up with delicate servings more appropriate for a teaspoon. And tablespoons, don’t seem to exist.

And teapots: Why is it that French teapots have the spout so arranged as to ensure that, before coming out of the spout, the first lot of tea comes out of the top of the pot and spills all over the table? And when you get to the last cup poured, the top falls off because there’s no little protruding bit to keep the lid in place even when the pot is tilted at a substantial angle. And then, for those few who still use loose tea leaves instead of the ubiquitous teabag, the French version never has a filter inside the pot. The traditional British teapot has a few holes inside, serving as a simple but practical filter which retains the larger pieces of leaf, the ones which float annoyingly on the surface in your cup and yet leave enough to get through so that you can invert the cup when empty in order to read the tea leaves.

Let us not go into the unexportable tradition of the tea-cosy which remains an object of mystery to most French tea drinkers.

And there again, what about heating plates before serving? I’m pretty sure that I’m not alone in recalling the ritual Sunday dinner (served at midday in my part of the UK) when my mother would ritually take a heap of hot plates out of the oven upon which one’s slices of roast beef would remain comfortably warm for the



time it took to eat them. I cannot recall anyone in France doing this. Or could it be a regional thing.

At the other end of the - ahh - spectrum from gastronomic considerations, I wonder how many of you recall that phenomenon the *toilettes turques* which were so common a few decades ago. I still recall wrestling with the principle of the thing on my first acquaintance with the device. And then, when my mother came to Paris on her very first venture abroad and we took her to one of the more picturesque establishments at the top of Montmartre .... well, I'm afraid we just had to walk out...

And that reminds me of the time I relinquished the wheel of the car to my wife Isabelle on the last lap back to Paris after a trip to the UK. Rather tired, I dropped off and slept solidly for what must have been a good couple of hours. Waking up I said, "Stop at the next service station or wherever with a loo." At the next anonymous service station, I was standing gratefully before the sparkingly clean porcelain when I suddenly had a revelation. Back at the car, I accused Isabelle, "You've got us on the wrong road, haven't you?" I expostulated. "You've brought us on the road to Germany!" This I had realised as soon as I had seen the porcelain toilet was one of those with a sort of platform at the back which, presumably allow those of a Germanic persuasion to exercise a more personal adieu to their waste before flushing the bowl – a "*Flachspüler*" I understand is its name. Anyway, It allowed me to deduce that we were way off course far enough to be in an area of France which, if no longer occupied by the Bosches, was even now, a century or so later, still culturally German, at least in this respect.

To move onto a different difference, to coin a phrase, there is also the question of windows. In France, it is a pleasure in the morning (well, some of them) to throw back the shutters, pull the window open and savour the view. In the UK you have to try and make the sash work and try to slide the window upwards. In any event you can only get a sash window up so far and you'll probably bang your head when you try to lean forward for that refreshing breath of springtime. In any case at least one of the two sashes is probably broken, the weight stuck inconveniently inside the wooden frame and the devil to reach so half the time the whole opening the window thing goes by the board. Oh for the simplicity of French windows so easily thrown wide inwards to give access to a pair of shutters equally easy to throw wide outwards. And why don't we have shutters in the UK? Is it because you'd never get them open, fiddling around with those finicky sash windows?



vs



FRANCE

UK – nary a shutter in sight...

I've just thought of one last Christmassy example. In the UK (at least in my experience) the traditional crib contains the baby Jesus right from the start. In France, the crib remains empty until Christmas Eve when, at midnight, he is ceremoniously installed.

It occurs to me that many of you have a wide experience of living in different countries. I wonder if any of you have observations on the subject for our December edition...

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### A Word in your Ear.... "Muscle"

Oddly, this word is linked to little mice! It comes from the Latin word "musculus," which means both "muscle" and "little mouse." It was thought that the shape of some muscles and their movement when flexed looks like a mouse burrowing under the skin. So "muscular" ought to mean mousey which would put a few body-building zealots in their place.

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### The Last Laugh:



### 35 - Best Friend Chat...

**Jane:** I'm only telling you this because you're my best friend.

**Abby:** Oh yes. What's the problem?

**Jane:** I can't stand Dave's mother - my mother-in-law. She's nothing more than a suspicious old bag. She doesn't trust me at all.

**Abby:** Really? Are you sure? What gives you that idea?

**Jane:** Lots of things but the last straw was this letter that came for Dave this morning. It was marked "personal".

**Abby:** "Personal!" Hmm, that's interesting! What did you do?

**Jane:** I did what anyone would do. I steamed it open of course!

**Abby:** Oooh. What was in it? It wasn't from that floozy he knew before you got married, was it?

**Jane:** No. It just turned out to be from his mother. I mean, what does she want to send "personal" letters to Dave for?

**Abby:** Maybe she just wanted to make sure the postman took special care of it. Some people do that.

**Jane:** No. It's all about me. And now I know just how suspicious she is of me.

**Abby:** What makes you think that? Did she say something about you in the letter.

**Jane:** Not really but it had a PS at the end saying "*Dear Jane, don't forget to give this letter to Dave*"

Mark Yates

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

1. Russia adopted the Western (Gregorian) calendar
2. Scorpio (Oct 24-Nov 22)  
Sagittarius (Nov 23-Dec 21)
3. Jet
4. Guns N' Roses
5. Chrysanthemum
6. Wattenscheid, Germany,
7. 1605
8. Fourth Thursday
9. Edwin Lutyens
10. Nancy Astor
11. Howard's End – by E.M. Forster)
12. None (just November)
13. Ninth (November retains its name from the Latin novem, meaning "nine")
14. The Taurids and the Leonids
15. The Suez Canal.



*Comments & contributions to [mfyates@gmail.com](mailto:mfyates@gmail.com)  
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