



Paris Branch

Newsletter

N° 33 – February 2025



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Chairman's introduction, February 2025.

Welcome to this month's newsletter.

Too late to be mentioned in last month's issue was Noreen Riols' funeral on the 13th. It was well attended - I have rarely seen a church so packed - and many were the members of her family and friends who spoke of their memories of her. The RBL Paris branch was well represented. Noreen will not be forgotten.

This month I am pleased to say that we have revived our monthly lunch, thanks, this time, to the good offices of Jan Mitchel and Catherine Germain. A goodly number of people are expected. (I'm writing before the event). We need now to think about having a lunch in March. Can you help? Do you know anyone who can cook a simple lunch? We need volunteers to maintain this tradition so can you help? Incidentally the equipment has improved and thanks to Bill Beauclerk we now have a new dishwasher.

Janet, John Crowthers, Isobel from the Embassy and I visited Notre Dame Cathedral and were very impressed. The restorers have done a fabulous job, and the entire edifice is probably now more impressive than at any time in its long history. We can look forward with confidence to our service in November.

A reminder that on the 20th of this month we have our first theme night, which is a 60s night. There will be 60s music along with eats. I hope to see a good number of you there. Might even have a twisting competition, which should be fun - for those of us who remember how it goes...

Next month a cocktail is also slated for all who helped with the 2024 Poppy Appeal. Also, continuing on the theme of evening events, we hope to hold a quiz night next month which should be amusing. Again, there would be eats available.

Mark asks me to remind you that we are always pleased to receive contributions to the Newsletter. If you can put pen to paper, please consider writing something – about anything.

Best wishes, take care.

Richard.

FEBRUARY QUIZ 2025

1. What is the name of the event where seven members of the North Side Gang were murdered by Al Capone's gang on 14 February 1945
2. Who was the first American to orbit the Earth, aboard Friendship 7 on February 20, 1962.
3. The Polish astronomer who first proposed the idea that the planets revolved around the sun, was born on the 19th of this month in 1473. Who was it?
4. Born in 1960, Holly Johnson, fronted which group in the eighties?
5. The February 1945 conference with Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin was held where?
6. Who established himself as first consul in 1800 to overthrow the French Government?
7. The perfect fool was broadcast in New York in 1922, a new sound was heard for the first time on radio, what was it?
8. Which cricketer was knighted in his home of Barbados by the Queen in 1975?
9. In which year did Britain break off talks with Iceland in the so-called Cod Wars?
10. Which BBC soap opera was first broadcast in 1985?



Answers on last page

Janet Warby

EVENTS

January lunch. 13 February

Held a couple of days ago this was well attended. The conversation and the brandade de morue were much appreciated by all. Many thanks to Jan Mitchel and Catherine Germain for having enabled it to take place.

COMING EVENTS

Thursday 20 Feb: A Pub Night:

You can let Janet or Richard know you're coming

janetwarby@yahoo.com , richard.neave05@gmail.com – or just

turn up at the door

RBL Paris Branch Pub Night

Come and join us for our 1960's theme evening

On Thursday 20th February at 6pm
(Entrance free, paying bar)

Featuring...

- THE ROLLING STONES • ELVIS PRESLEY
- THE BEATLES • BOB DYLAN
- THE DOORS • JIMI HENDRIX
- JANIS JOPLIN • THE WHO
- ...and more

L'APPAREIL A SOUS
INVITANDO
LES AMIS DE LA MUSIQUE:
PAS D'AVANTAGE
LA MADRAGUE
EL CUCHIFE
EVERYBODY LOVES MY BABY
C'EST PROOLD

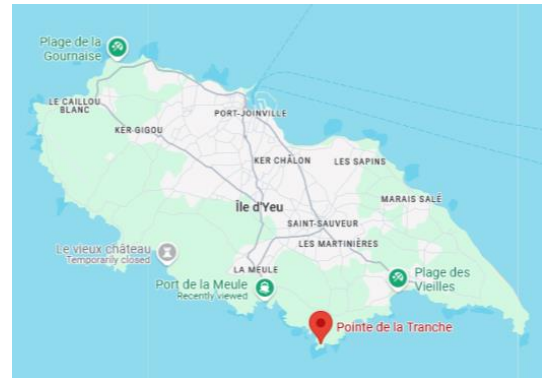
PHILIPS

March lunch – Details will be emailed to you when they become available.



PLOUFFE ET BOUFFE was the nickname of the diving club I belonged to for many years. A light-hearted organisation, its function was basically to have a swim (Plouffe) and then, more importantly, to go off and have an often noisy meal (Bouffe). As our slot for the swimming pool was rather late in the day our choice of restaurants was pretty limited and we did the rounds, looking for the least bad. The worst was the one with the dead rat under the radiator. An enterprising hand picked it up and hid it in the salad. When the waiter went by, he was politely requested to mix the salad. His expression was memorable as he, with a fork and a spoon, raised the corpse by its tail... Our firm decision to frequent the establishment no longer was equalled only by the proprietor's firm decision never to let us through his doors again.

It was during the annual general meeting that a trip to the Ile d'Yeu was mooted. The idea was enthusiastically and vocally welcomed. "vachement chouette" someone said. Now there's an expression I bet you'll have trouble translating into English, observed François (in French), picking up on the comment, "vachement chouette". Easy I said – done that one before. It's obviously "cowly owly" – and, as usual, it's shorter in English. The trip was arranged. François' brother Lionel and his wife Els (pronounced Else) owned a house and a small boat on the Ile d'Yeu, both of which they said we could use. Extra accommodation was procured for the surplus members. When the three vehicles in our convoy set off, one was towing an inflatable boat similar to the well-known Zodiac.



The little ferryboat, between Fromentine and the island, the only boat existing at the period I am talking about, could only take about six vehicles a trip and we had had to book two places – one for the boat. (They can carry dozens these days.)

Lionel and Els' house was one of those immaculate cottages painted in the brilliant and universal white typical of the island's architecture. Els, with Dutch thoroughness, ensured that the inside was as immaculate as the outside.



They had a boat too – a wooden one berthed at the Port de la Meule from where our diving expeditions were to be launched, so our fleet consisted of two craft. Our very first departure was observed with great interest by a group of tourists (diving was still uncommon at the time) several of whom had a somewhat envious expression. The inflatable set

off first with the other following. A couple of the company sat bravely on two of the four float chambers of the inflatable, taking up positions designed to impress the spectators back on the jetty. Unfortunately, in that model of boat the air valves were placed, not slightly on one side, as they should have been, but right on top of the air-filled floats. The movement of the boat, coupled with the weight of the two divers sitting on them caused the two valves to open with immediate and catastrophic results. The remaining two chambers, on opposite sides, one at the front, one at the back, slowly drifted together, leaving the crew and equipment trapped in a sort of sling between the two. There remains in my mind an image of Isabelle, already up to the waist in water, still desperately trying to bail out the boat with her shoe, shovelling water from one side to the other in a brave but futile gesture.

The group of spectators on the quayside were no longer looking on with envy. They were now doubled up with laughter as Lionel's boat slowly towed us back in in an ignominious tangle of limbs and equipment.

Half an hour later, in chastened mood, we resumed the expedition which progressed normally and for a couple of days we scoured the sea bottom until, over an evening bottle or two of wine, Lionel mentioned that a Japanese ship, the Jinsen Maru had gone down in December 1918, sunk by a German submarine. The wreck lay only a few fathoms down off the Pointe de la Tranche, only a mile or so from our port. The weather was good enough, he thought, to give it a go. Everyone agreed enthusiastically.

Thus, the next day found us carefully exploring the tattered remains of the Jinsen Maru.

The Japanese, were on the Allied side in WW1 and this ship had been ferrying food and ammunition from Wales to Bordeaux when it had the misfortune to be located by a German submarine. It was sunk. The crew was saved and shortly afterwards an American



attempt was made to recuperate some of its militarily valuable cargo. This was abandoned when there was an explosion (injuring a boy) and a good part of that cargo must have been blasted some distance for now, largely scattered over the seabed we found quantities of shells – that is, ammunition shells, many of 75mm. It was interesting to observe that 50 years of submersion had eroded away the quasi totality of the shells themselves leaving only the brass nosecones and cartridges - immune to marine erosion - intact. I discovered one such which had its nose buried in the mud and there remained a sort of plug of steel, a remainder of the shell itself, in the orifice of the brass cartridge. This, I thought, would make a nice souvenir...

More on the ship here:

<https://mairie.ile-yeu.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Jinsen-Maru-web.pdf>



It was an interesting dive. I'll spare you the details. Cousteau, Haas and Beebe do that sort of thing far better than I could. Anyway, I carefully carried my find back to the house and put it in a sunny place to dry out. A day or so later I examined it again. What, I wondered would

The shell & a couple of nosecones

there be inside the cartridge. This was the only one to have its contents intact. With care and attention and a large diving knife, I eased the remains of the shell away from where it was rooted in the cartridge. That concave piece of steel served me as an ashtray for many years. I carefully tipped out the contents inside. Lots of little cylindrical sticks about 1cm long tumbled out. I looked at them with some trepidation. This, of course was the "powder" to fire the shell. I knew that gunpowder and its modern equivalents were not really a powder. They don't explode: they burn, at a rate calculated to maximise the velocity of the missile at the moment of its ejection from the barrel. The question was whether they would still burn after 50 years of submersion in salt water. I took one of these tiny grains and having started a small fire, threw it in. There was a small flash of light and a puff of smoke. I called over the others and gave a



demonstration which I thought went rather well.

Francis however, looked at the heap of little cylinders and said "And what are we supposed to do with all that? You can't burn them one by one."

"You don't have to. We can burn the lot. It'll just make a big flame. Won't do any harm."

We finally agreed to do that, remaining, nonetheless at a respectable distance. It would be, after all, an interesting experiment.

So, I piled the heap of what I now know was an extruded stick powder – (see pic) retaining enough to

make a track of the powder from a point some yards away. Then I lit it. There was an impressive flash and a large cloud of smoke but hardly any noise "I told you so." I said, turning to Francis. "All perfectly safe." I turned back to the now fading cloud of smoke

through which was slowly emerging a long black scorch mark the height of the building and its beautiful dazzling white frontage was no more.

Els emerged from the kitchen, eyed the results with horror – her lovely white wall scarred black from foot to roof ridge. Her comments were delivered in tones and at a volume rarely witnessed from this elegant and calm Dutch lady. The group of us looked at each other in consternation. Francis turned towards me. "Congratulations," he said, "but that wasn't exactly ... how did you put it in English the other day? Cowly Owly?"

Mark Yates



A Word in your Ear....

Clue

I bet you haven't a clue as to the origin of this one:

In Middle English a "clew" was a ball of thread. A ball of thread was the "clue" which enabled Theseus to escape from the Labrynth and defeat the Minotaur in the Greek Myth. The spelling changed, however, "clew" evolved into "clue," and expanded to include anything which might help to solve a mystery.



M.Y.



43 - You Can't Park Here!

Policeman: What do you think you're up to, dumping your bike against those railings?

Cyclist: I'm just parking it here while I nip down to the shops.

Policeman: You can't leave it here sir. This is the main entrance to the county court.

Cyclist: Well, I don't mind and I shan't be long. I only have to get a pound of sugar and a melon. And, oh yes, pick up a pair of shoes at the cobbler's.

Policeman: Sorry sir. It's quite impossible.

Cyclist: Oh, come on! It's not as if it were a ten-ton truck. It's only a bicycle and it isn't doing any harm here, is it?

Policeman: That's not the point sir. This is a public building - and if that weren't enough, the court is in session right now.

Cyclist: Well, if it's a public building, as a member of the public I ought to be able to leave my bike here, don't you think?

Policeman: No, I don't think! This is the courthouse. You do know what that means, don't you?

Cyclist: Of course. It's where they hold trials and send people to jail.

Policeman: Exactly. And there are all kinds of important people connected with the law going in and out of these gates.

Cyclist: So what? My bike's not stopping them.

Policeman: We don't want them all to see your ratty old bike here. There are judges and lawyers, solicitors, barristers...

Cyclist: Hmm. I see. Well in that case I'll put a lock on the bike.

M.Y.

February Quiz: Answers:

1. The Valentine’s Day Massacre	6. Napoleon
2. John Glenn	7. The sound of a live audience
3. Copernicus	8. Garfield 'Gary' Sobers
4. Frankie Goes to Hollywood	9. 1976
5. Yalta	10. Eastenders



*Comments & contributions to mfyates@gmail.com
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