



**Paris Branch**

## **Newsletter**

**N° 37 – June 2025**



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### Chairman's introduction to June 2025 RBL Newsletter.

Welcome one and all to this month's newsletter.

I attended the RBL National Conference online for three days. It was a mixture of interesting bits and pieces and routine matters. One interesting item raised was the mention of being able to pay for items by credit card. Frequently, especially at coffee morning and our poppy appeal events, we are asked if we accept credit card payments. Unfortunately, we can't. However, the RBL in the UK has started to introduce this possibility. When asked when this will be possible for overseas branches, the answer was that they "are still working on this". The other question raised was with regard to the issue of overseas branches, like ours, inability to purchase items from the RBL shop online. We get requests for RBL ties, blazer badges, etc which we cannot meet. The only way to do so is to find someone willing to pop into the RBL shop in London and personally bring them over. The question was raised as to whether a central RBL outlet would be set up in Europe. The answer was "no".

Last month as you know our monthly lunch was catered for by Janet and I. Over twenty people attended and a very pleasant event it was. This month's lunch is on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> and thanks to Julie Knapp. See details below to sign up. At 18 euros, it's extremely good value.

D-Day 81 was the occasion for many events. Our Defence staff and Ambassador went to Normandy. Didier organised events in Bennecourt where he is the Mayor and Janet attended a local ceremony.

We were invited to attend events in Paris organised by the United War Veterans Council on the occasion of the second annual European Tour for U.S. and Allied veterans. More on this below, with pics.

Janet and I also attended the reception en l'honneur du Général de Brigade Al Veitch at the Embassy on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> which was very enjoyable.

With reference to our remembrance service at Notre Dame in November. Janet and I were to have had a meeting there on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> only to find when we got there that it had been cancelled. However, it has been rescheduled for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June. Let us hope that this inauspicious date is not a portent... I will keep you informed.

Regards

Richard

## JUNE QUIZ



1. Trooping the Colour is held in London annually on a Saturday in June. On which parade ground?
2. June has two zodiac signs. What are they?
3. What is celebrated in the UK on the third Sunday of June?
4. Which animated cartoon character has three triplet nieces named April, May and June?
5. What is June's birthstone?
6. 'Seven Days in Sunny June', by Jamiroquai, is the soundtrack when Andrea and Christian meet in James Holt's party in which 2006 American film?
7. In which year did June Brown first play the role of Dot Cotton, in EastEnders?
8. Which historical novel begins in 1815 and culminates with the 1832 June Rebellion?
9. The longest day of the year can occur on any one of three dates in June. Name one.
10. In its own country a specific event is always termed "The June Fourth Incident"; where did this incident happen?
11. In 1968, June Whitfield began her long television partnership with which actor and comedian?
12. Which 1956 film adaptation of a Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical of the same name features the song 'June Is Bustin' Out All Over'?
13. The name June for baby girls in the UK dropped out of the top thousand in 1986, but in which 20<sup>th</sup> century decade did it peak at number 39?
14. What takes place near Pilton in the last week of June each year?
15. What historical event happened on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944?

Answers on last page  
Janet Warby

## EVENTS

Richard reports on a United War Veterans Council event:

This was an invitation to attend events in Paris organised by the UWVC on the occasion of the second annual European Tour for U.S. and Allied veterans. The day started with myself, Caroline Clopet and Nick Marshal, one of our new members who is also a member of the American Legion in Paris attending breakfast at the Delegation of Flanders. We met Mark Otto, President of the Council, Ryan Hegg, responsible for Legacy and Education for the UWVC, The Chairman of the American Legion in Paris and British and American Veterans attended. We then all went to Les Invalides where we were met by LTG Christophe de Saint-Chamas, Governor of Les Invalides, and André Rakoto, director of the Office National des Combattants et Victimes de Guerre (ONaCVG)



in Paris. We heard an interesting talk about the history of Les Invalides, and this was followed by a discussion on French, American and British care for veterans and what can and is being done to improve it.

Afterwards, we had a very enjoyable lunch and a tour of the Invalides museum. Caroline and I then went to our clubhouse to set things up for those whom I had invited for drinks and snacks after the ceremony at the Arc. We were joined by Bill Beauclerk and we then went to the Arc for the ceremony. Caroline carried the branch standard and we were joined by Robin Sweeney who carried the SOE standard.



Drinks at the clubhouse were convivial and we may well have now discovered some new members. In any event a lasting bond has been formed with the UWVC who thanked us for our



contribution and look forward to joining us again next year. We then went for dinner at the Arc café. A very enjoyable event. (see photos).





Rosemary Rudland sends this report of an event at Caen:  
5 June 2025: British Remembrance Ceremony at the Caen Memorial.

A moving meeting with Henry Rice, of the Royal Navy, one of the 6 British veterans present, with whom I was able to exchange a few words about his experience of the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944.

Photo:©Yvan Barbieri

## COMING SOON :

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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|  <p><b>Don't forget to book for this month's lunch.</b></p> <p><b>Thursday 19 June.</b><br/><b>1215 for 1230</b></p> <p><b>Only €18 - Pay on the day (in cash please)</b></p> <p><b>Reserve through Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com</b></p> <p><b><i>Book soon to be sure of a place.<br/>(Cancellations up to 48h before)</i></b></p> |  <p><b><i>LUNCH MENU Thursday 19 June</i></b></p> <p><b><i>APERITIF</i></b></p> <p><b><i>STARTER</i></b><br/><b><i>Melon and ham.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>MAIN COURSE</i></b><br/><b><i>Pork fillet a' la Normandie.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>DESSERT</i></b><br/><b><i>Apple quatre-quarts.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>WINE SERVED WITH THE MEAL</i></b></p> <p><b><i>COFFEE OR TEA</i></b></p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## The World's Biggest Book

In the '70s the *bouquinistes* on the banks of the Seine seemed to be a richer source of interest than now. One could find a strange variety of old papers and I used to browse there frequently with Michel Verdier, professor at the Sorbonne and remarkably erudite. He would explain to me all kinds of things and without his explanations I would have missed a great deal. I would occasionally buy an old map, an oriental tracing, whatever took my interest – and was not too expensive. The result was a folder of these documents which I rediscovered the other day on the top of a cupboard. I blew the dust off it and looked inside at pages I had not seen for maybe thirty years.

One in particular struck my attention, a huge page of reproductions of Egyptian illustrations. I suddenly recalled finding it. I had fished it out of a folder next to one of the quayside stalls and was admiring the rich and fresh-looking colours on this large page, 71 by 54 cm, when Verdier looked over my shoulder. "I see you've found a page of "Description of Egypt." he said.

"What description of Egypt?" I said. After all, Egypt is a place that has been described many times in many ways. "Napoleon's" he said.

Well, I knew that Napoleon certainly went to Egypt in his unsuccessful effort to boot out the British, but I shouldn't have thought he would have had much time to describe the place. After all he had the battle of the Nile and the siege of Acre to occupy his mind. I made a comment to that effect. Verdier suggested lunch

and, in a small café, started to tell me how wrong I was. His account of Napoleon's "*Description*" may indeed have taken more than a lunchtime. The origin of the "*Description*", at the time, the biggest "book" ever published (23-37 volumes depending on the edition) turned out to be rather remarkable.

That Napoleon had been responsible for such a work cast, at least as far as I was concerned, a rather different light on his character from that of brutal warrior which tends to dominate, at least in the UK.

A little research reveals that the page I have is from the largest version (termed "elephant folio") and consists of copies of underground wall-paintings or sarcophagi illustrations.

Napoleon's primary aim was, of course to



boot out the British from Egypt and surrounding territories and to that end he embarked about 38,000 troops of all categories. However, he didn't just take his army to Egypt: he took around 160

scientists and about 2,000 artists and technicians with him when he left Toulon in 1798. Actually, the exact aim and destination of the expedition was largely kept secret although it must have been pretty easy to guess, once it was pointed in that direction. Rather more subtle than brutal conquest, his intention was not just to beat everyone into submission but also to facilitate contact and cooperation with the native population. To this end he dropped off in Italy on his way and begged, borrowed or stole all the Vatican's Arabic printing font – the Vatican being the only organisation to dispose of printing facilities in Arabic at the time.

The French, at first, hammered the British forces and their allies until Nelson reversed the situation in the Battle of the Nile. In passing, it seems appropriate to mention, this was when he (Nelson) received his third wound in battle – the first had been an eye lost at Calvi in Corsica when the British took over that



island for two years. That was from 1794–1796 but, possibly having got an idea of the temper of the island and its inhabitants, they had the sense to quit it, leaving the Corsicans to plague the French forever thereafter. Nelson's second wounding was when he lost a forearm at the Battle of Santa Cruz. Now the long-suffering captain was once again wounded, this time in the head, in the battle of the Nile but without serious consequences this time. It would be superfluous to refer to Nelson's fourth and fatal wound at Trafalgar. Let us return to our mutttons and look at the activities going on in the background of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign.

Napoleon's team of scientists were indeed hard at it: they mapped the country and the Nile and studied Egypt's flora, fauna, climate, geology and of course history, in depth. Their devotion to their tasks was remarkable given the circumstances as testified to by anecdotes like that of the biologist carefully drawing a lizard, oblivious to the shells falling around him.

With hindsight, the best-known event, the crowning glory of their work, was undoubtedly the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799. However, the stone's real significance only became evident 23 years later when Champollion discovered the key to the ancient hieroglyphics, a mystery until then.

The British, of course had nicked the Rosetta stone from the French in 1801 and carted it off to the British Museum which has jealously guarded it ever since, even refusing, in 2022, to lend it to France for a major exhibition about Champollion at the Louvre – they claimed it was too delicate!

The French finally left Egypt in 1801. A military failure, it was a scientific success providing the inspiration for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's growing fascination for research into historical and many other domains.

It was between 1809 and 1829 that the "Description of Egypt." was progressively published by the "*Commission de Publication de la Description de l'Égypte*" instituted by Napoleon. Something like 160 scientists and more than

300 artists, engravers and technicians were involved. The size of the work meant that enormous, custom-built printing presses - and the paper for them - had to be produced. It was the biggest literary work ever published when it first came out. In presentation copies the illustrations were hand-painted following a strict colour code. I would like to think that the single page I have is drawn from one of these, but I have to admit that the colour may have been a subsequent addition designed to enhance its appeal.



Illustrated here is a photo of the page of the work in my possession and of an enlargement of one illustration. They are copies of funerary illustrations and the page is entitled "A vol 2 Thebès Hypogées pl 58".



Such was the size of the work that special furniture was built to hold it and one such example is illustrated here.

Should you be so inclined and, if you have a few free weeks, below is a link to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina which shows the same page (but uncoloured) and you can even, on that website, browse the entire work!

[https://viewer2.bibalex.org/BookViewer/?locale=en&EnableLogin=True&book\\_id=DAF-Job:575165&keyword=&page\\_id=119&page=119](https://viewer2.bibalex.org/BookViewer/?locale=en&EnableLogin=True&book_id=DAF-Job:575165&keyword=&page_id=119&page=119)

Mark Yates

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### A Word in Your Ear ...

**Incunable** or incunabulum (pl incunables or incunabula)

While perusing old papers, I discovered, just under the page mentioned in the above article about Napoleon another page which I once bought simply because of its age. What's this? I asked and was completely foxed by the *bouquinist's* reply, "It's an incunable." Once again it was Verdier who came to the rescue and explained that an incunable (or incunabulum) is any document printed with moveable type before the year 1500.

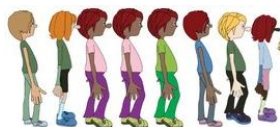
Since then, I have found the etymology of the word rather intriguing. Instead of inventing yet another boring word with "*pre*" and some variant of "*annus mille*"

*quingenti* », the creator of the term uses the Latin for "swaddling clothes" or "cradle". hence the word symbolises the infancy of printing with movable type in Europe – the first book being the **Gutenberg Bible** in 1455. It is the domesticity of the origin of the word which makes it oddly attractive. Here is a view of the page and a small extract. If anybody feels they can translate the text in the latter please do.



M.Y.

## The Last Laugh



In the queue at the theme park.

**Jane** : So this "Terror Tower" ride is the one you particularly wanted to try?

**Mary** : Yes. But I didn't think it would be so popular. How long have we been queuing now?

**Jane** : Goodness knows. 20 minutes maybe?

**Mary** : Well we must be getting to the entrance soon: Look we're coming up to a corner. It's probably just on the other side ... Oh no!

**Jane** : Yes, This queue keeps going round corners. This is just another section – and 20 yards of queue to the next corner.

**Mary** : And how many corners are there? Is it worth while waiting?

**Jane** : Oh it must be. "The Terror Tower" is supposed to be the most thrilling ride in all the American theme parks.

**Mary :** And there again, I'm not that sure I really want to go on it. Did you see that sign at the beginning of the queue saying it wasn't recommended for pregnant women?

**Jane :** Yes I did. But don't let it put you off. You're not pregnant and anyway I'm sure it's there just to make people think it's even more exciting.

**Mary :** This queue is just zig zagging back and forth! Here's another corner: Let's hope it's the last. How long is that we've been queuing now?

**Jane :** About 35 minutes. I think. And no, it's not the last corner! It's another section. Look, there's a sign at the end. I've not got my glasses. What does it say?

**Mary :** It says the same thing as the one at the beginning. "This ride is not suitable for pregnant women."

**Jane :** Ah, yes! That's for the ones who've got pregnant since they joined the queue!



M.Y. (49)

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### June Quiz: Answers:

|                                                               |                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Horse Guards' Parade                                       | 8. Les Miserables                                          |
| 2. Gemini (until June 20) and Cancer (from June 21 onwards)   | 9. 20 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>st</sup> or 22 <sup>nd</sup> |
| 3. Father's Day                                               | 10. Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China (1989)                |
| 4. Daisy Duck                                                 | 11. Terry Scott                                            |
| 5. Pearl or Alexandrite or Moonstone (it seems to have three) | 12. Carousel                                               |
| 6. The Devil Wears Prada                                      | 13. 1920's (1925)                                          |
| 7. 1985                                                       | 14. Glastonbury Festival                                   |
|                                                               | 15. Normandy beach landings                                |



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