



Paris Branch

Newsletter

N° 38 – July 2025



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Chairman's introduction to the Paris Branch July Newsletter.

Welcome everyone to this month's newsletter. Please note: There will be no Newsletter in August. The next issue is planned for September.

This month I have been busy putting together a new package for our schools on delivering the new schools programme with one of our new members who has agreed to work with me on this. There is still quite a lot to be done including some new innovations which hopefully I will be able to inform you of in September.

I was grateful to our Ambassador who invited me to attend His Majesty's birthday party at the Embassy. Some of you I met there and I am sure that like myself you will agree that it was a splendid occasion. Thanking the Ambassador for the invitation, I took the opportunity to ask what she was planning to do when she stands down as Ambassador at the end of this month. She informed me that after 37 years of being a diplomat that she is leaving the diplomatic service and will be taking on a senior post with Queens University in Cambridge. I am sure that you will join me in wishing her every success in her new position.

So, what's in the pipeline? Well we have our annual ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe on the 4th August and we look forward to seeing many of you there. See below for details. Please let Janet or I know if you will be attending the reception afterwards.

On Sunday 7th September we have the Pedal to Paris event, and unlike last year where they finished at Les Invalides due to the Olympics the cyclists will be arriving at the top of the Champs Elysees in the usual place. Janet and I will be there handing out the medallions as per usual. This will be followed by the ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe. Do come along if you can.

As mentioned below There will not be an RBL lunch this month or in August. We will however be having a lunch in September. I will let you know of the date at the beginning of September.

With reference to our service of Remembrance on the 11th November, again I will inform you of what will be happening in September.

There will be no newsletter in August so let me wish you all a very happy summer.

Regards

Richard

SUMMER QUIZ 2025 (A double-length version to tide you over the summer)

1. Which British seaside attraction is 158 metres tall?
2. At 1.34 miles, where is the longest seaside pier in the UK?
3. Which group had a Top 10 hit with Summer Sunshine in 2004?
4. What was the name of the ITV holiday show fronted by Judith Chalmers which ran from 1994 to 2003?
5. Thunderstorms are most likely to hit the Southeast of England.
True or False?
6. When does summer officially start in the UK?
7. The month of July is named after which famous historical person?
8. What British show starts every year in August and ends just before Christmas?
9. In which month are most babies born in Britain?
10. 'The First Day of Summer' is an annual public holiday celebrated in which European country on a (variable) date in April?
11. Can you give the first line of Grease's 'Summr Nights' lyrics?
12. Which feast day falls on July 15 every year?
13. Which American president was credited with saving 77 lives over seven summers work as a lifeguard.
14. Which singer was known as the 'Queen of Disco'?
15. Which American comic character met and fell in love with Marge Bouvier in a 1974 summer camp?
16. Which novel has Esther Summerson as heroine?
17. The "dog days of summer" are named after the Dog Star; what is the better known name of this star?
18. What term defines a period of dry hot weather in the autumn?

19. 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' is the first line of which of Shakespeare's sonnets?
20. What was the first name of Clegg in the sitcom Last of the Summer Wine?
21. The summer solstice occurs during which month in the Southern Hemisphere?
22. 'In the Summertime' was a debut single and big hit for which British rock band?
23. Name the fictional seaside town in the Australian sitcom Home and Away?
24. The character Robin Goodfellow in the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" also went by a much shorter name. What was it?
25. Who sang the song 'Summer', which received nominations for British Single of the Year at the 2015 Brit Awards?
26. One Summer, a 1983 British TV drama by Willy Russell, gave which English actor his first break as sixteen-year-old Billy Rizley?
27. Castel Gandolfo is famous for being whose summer residence?
28. Name the cities which hosted the following Summer Olympics:
(a) 1952, (b) 1960, (c) 1972 and (d) 1988?
29. What is the Italian word for Summer?

Janet Warby

EVENTS



Richard adds a couple of photos from the Embassy's celebration of the King's birthday mentioned in his introduction.



John Crothers

Judy Allen Poggi writes with news of our member John Crothers, that splendid orchestral conductor whom fellow RBL members will best know from his impressive handling of the music at our 4th Aug ceremony (See events). John has just received an Honorary Award from the Royal School of Church Music granted to people who have made outstanding achievements and invaluable contributions to church music. He has been made an Associate of the RSCM and this was announced in the Church Music Quarterly in June 2025. The prize will be presented at a prestigious ceremony on 4th October in Oxford. It is an honour for the Paris branch of the RBL to be able to count such a talented albeit modest musician in our numbers.



**Please note that there will be no monthly lunch
in July or August.**

See you in September...

4th August: Rekindling the Flame

An important annual event is the RBL Paris branch's "*Reanimation de la flamme*" at the Arc de Triomphe on 4 August.

the Deputy Ambassador for Australia is the guest of honour and David Hannah from the Defence Section at the British Embassy will be present. Members arriving early can meet at the Metro entrance at the top of the Champs Elysées. After 17h45, go directly to the Arc for the ceremony which starts at 18h30.

There will be a reception at the clubhouse, rue des Acacias afterwards (Please inform Richard if you can attend the latter. 06 69 28 45 89 or richard.neave05@gmail.com)

Sunday 7th September: Pedal to Paris.

The RBL sponsored cycling marathon from London to Paris

To witness the arrival of the riders and distribution of awards, aim to be at the Arc de Triomphe around 1630

Th The River Epte, the Vikings and after

When, some 30 years ago we bought a little cottage in the Bray, exactly halfway between Paris and Dieppe, the only thing I was a bit sorry about was that it was so near but not actually in Normandy. The river Epte was only a mile or so away. I quickly learned that this modest stream had a long history as the once much-disputed frontier of Normandy. This accounts for



the numerous castles which lie along the river – Gisors being the biggest but also Chateau sur Epte, St Claire sur Epte and several others.

The 793 pillage of the monastery on Holy Island signalled the start of that long period of Viking expansion with the Norwegians concentrating on Scotland and Ireland, the Danes on England – where they eventually established the Danelaw in a treaty with Alfred the Great – yes, he who let the cakes

burn. It was the Danish Vikings too, principally, who favoured the coast of France and their presence which led to the terms Norman and Normandy. The Norwegians, incidentally, headed further north concentrating at first on Ireland and Scotland and the Swedes headed the other way and got at least as far as Turkey, their nautical ability adapted to traversing a whole series of lakes and rivers, presumably carrying their longboats over the intervening watersheds.

Back in the period before the Vikings entered upon their expansionist exploits, they used to have periodic meetings to decide local issues and feuds and these usually took place on a ritual mound of earth, dug if necessary, for the occasion. Tynewald hill, on the Isle of Man is, to this day, used for ceremonial legislation. One wonders if this tradition partly led, by association of ideas, to the establishment of “motte and bailey” castles of which that at Gisors is an excellent example, perched, as it is, on a very substantial mound.

Driving over the Epte bridge in Gisors one day with a Canadian friend, he suddenly said, “What’s that?”. He had spotted the uppermost towers of the castle in the distance. “Oh, it’s just an old chateau.” I replied dismissively –



we had friends coming for dinner later and the supermarket beckoned. “We haven’t got many of those in Canada.” He said. “Can we go and see it.” I could hardly refuse so we made a detour and parked outside the walls. Standing at the foot of the mound he said, “Can we go up?”. “Yes, I said, “I’ll get tickets.” The office, however, was closed. The chateau was not

visitable that day. Now, at that time, the ruins were surrounded merely by a simple wire fence about 3 feet high. On the other side a rough footpath spiralled up the mound towards the keep. I looked around. "No Parky" I said in reference to the parkkeeper, the bane of our childhood years, the snarling official who interrupted our football games on the grass and stopped us from hurling stones into chestnut trees to make the conkers fall. "Shall we climb over the fence." At that point, a chap who had been dawdling nearby approached. "Are you going up to the castle?" he enquired in English. "If they don't stop us." I replied. "Do you mind if I come with you?" "The more the merrier." I said. "They'll hesitate to stop a bunch of us." We clambered over the fence, our new companion a little awkwardly because he was carrying a folder of papers under one arm. I asked him a few questions, but he replied noncommittedly and seemed inclined to avoid conversation. He opened his file, looked around, and consulted a paper. I couldn't see what it was. A little further up he looked at another and, craning my neck I could see it was a drawing. "Are those drawings then?" I said stupidly, as one does. "Yes".

"Oh, err, did you do them?"

"No they're just copies."

"Really? So, who did them." The fellow sighed and said, "All right. It was JMW Turner."

Really? The one who painted that Dutch ship?

I only knew this because, some time previously at the grand Palais in Paris there had been an exhibition in which two works, Turner's *Helvoetsluys* and Constable's "*The Opening of Waterloo Bridge*" had been hung together, for the first time since 1832. That was the occasion when, famously, Turner had looked at the picture next to his in the annual Royal Academy Exhibition, and noticed the way that Constable used a touch of bright red to create a focus in his work. He went home, got a brush and some paint and, back at the exhibition, there and then, on the wall, added the little red buoy which now decorates his work – to considerable effect. You can see the two works [here \(Turner\)](#) and [here \(Constable\)](#).

"Yes, that one. These are copies of his sketches from round here."

"Can we have a look at them?"

(Reluctantly) "I suppose so."

In the end our companion on the castle admitted to being a curator from the Tate museum which was planning an exhibition of the works Turner did on a trip up the Seine (It was a sort of sequel to a series on a trip up the Loire which had already



figured very successfully in a British publication.). The curator was comparing Turner's sketches with the modern landscape. When he finally gave way to the inevitable, he ended up giving us a fascinating lecture, splendidly illustrated with his collection of photocopies. It was intriguing to compare the changes time had effected and Turner's interpretation of perspective and proportions.

It was the river Epte's function to become the frontier between Normandy and the France of the time when the treaty was signed at Saint-Claire-sur-Epte between Rollo, the Viking leader, and King Charles III of France ("Charles the Simple") in 911. Rollo was an ancestor of William the Conqueror, (or "William the Bastard", his pre-royal nickname in early, pre-royal days – an early example of bowdlerisation, that prudish rewriting which later bedevilled 19th century literature. Rollo had the upper hand at the time and Charles, ruefully surveying his rapidly diminishing realm, realised that the best way to avoid continual attacks – even Paris had proved to be within reach of Viking longboats – was to make some kind of settlement with their leader. Handing over the title of Duke and most of the land between the Epte and the sea, a fairly generous concession one would have thought, it is said that Rollo was supposed to kiss the king's foot as a sign of submission. Rollo refused, saying, *"I will never bow to any man."* He ordered one of his followers to do it for him. The warrior grabbed the king's foot and tripped him up. Charles fell over backwards. Not, perhaps, an auspicious beginning to the new alliance. However, in fact it was pretty effective until about 1066. Interestingly the commune of Neufmarché is said not to be named after a "new market" but a "new frontier" with "marché" used in the sense of "the marches as in the Scottish and Welsh marches between those countries and England.

There were certainly skirmishes on the Epte between the two sides, but it was only about 150 years later that William the Conqueror re-ignited the conflict, notably precipitated a period of castle building on the river's banks.

Gournay, on the Epte, is one of the most interesting towns on the river, carrying as it does, the name of Hugh de Gournay, one of the Norman knights who participated in the invasion of England in 1066. The castle there has unfortunately disappeared almost completely. To move on to more recent epochs, Gournay, in the first WW had a hospital for wounded horses (one tends to forget the importance of horses these days). The war memorial in Gournay is of a "poilu", helmet raised and brandishing a torn French flag. Originally his feet trampled a fallen



German eagle. The German occupants during the second war took exception to the eagle underfoot but however, and planned the destruction of the statue. The mayor however, managed to negotiate a compromise and a sculptor was commissioned to chip away the eagle, but leave the gallant warrior.

The latter events were some time after what many would consider the crowning glory of the Epte. It was around 1900 that the painter Monet produced what are arguably his most famous works *The Water Lilies (Nymphéas)* on the lake he had created by damming the Epte near its confluence with the Seine.

After a history heavily impregnated with violence over some 2000 years it is at least reassuring to reflect on the calm and beauty of Monet's works which provide a contrast to all the earlier violence connected with the Epte's historic stream.



M.Y.

A Word in your Ear: Bowdlerisation

It has been suggested to me that a word occurring in today's earlier article is worthy of inclusion here as an example of words originating with proper names.

Thomas Bowdler (1754–1825), was an editor. In 1818, he published *The Family Shakespeare*, a version of Shakespeare's works for family use which could be "read without blushing".

Lady Macbeth's "*Out, damned spot! Out, I say*" became "*Out, crimson spot!*"

Original (Iago, in Othello says "I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs."

This became:

"I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter is married to the Moor."

Numerous passages, mostly bawdy ones, were simply eliminated. Interestingly, Hamlet's line to Ophelia: "*Get thee to a nunnery.*" was one. Apparently it could have meant a brothel in Elizabethan times.

Unsurprisingly, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio's "*O, that she were an open-arse, thou a poperin pear!*" disappeared.

Bowdlerisation is a perjorative term usually applied to historical efforts to re-write the past. Things haven't changed very much though. These days we just call it "politically correct".

The Last Laugh



A compliment.

Peter - I must say John's girlfriend over there is very attractive. She's got the lot: a perfect figure; lovely blond hair. And what a nice ... smile.

Ginny – (Unenthusiastically) I suppose so.

Peter - And that other girl by the bar looks great too. More lovely hair.

Ginny - And a surprisingly low neckline - as you may have noticed.

Peter – Er ...Yes. I suppose she has.

Ginny - It draws the eye away from all those layers of makeup she's wearing.

Peter – Oh. Don't be catty. I'm only commenting on the crowd.

Ginny – Well, Half of the crowd! Extolling the qualities of other women again. Pity you never say anything like that to me anymore.

Peter - What do you mean? You know how much I think of you, Ginny. It's just that I run out of compliments after a bit, and I don't want to repeat myself.

Ginny - Well You could still mention my looks it from time to time. It wouldn't do any harm to remind me that I'm attractive too: I can't remember the last time you paid me a compliment on my looks!

Peter – Well darling, I still think you're a wonderful woman.

Ginny - That's a bit ... succinct. Couldn't you make it a bit more convincing?

Peter - Well, let me say how happy I am that a gorgeous young lady like you, combining both beauty and intelligence, should be with me rather than any of the other unfortunate blokes cluttering up the landscape round here.

Ginny - Oh, Peter: That's a lovely thing to say! See how wonderful you can be if you try?

Peter - Yes. Well, I sometimes forget how attractive I am!

M.Y. (51)

Summer Quiz: Answers:

1. Blackpool Tower	17. Sirius
2. Southend	18. Indian Summer
3. The Corrs	19. Sonnet 18
4. Wish you were here	20. Norman
5. True	21. December
6. 21 st June	22. Mungo Jerry
7. Julius Ceaser	23. Summer Bay
8. XFactor	24. Robin Goodfellow
9. September	25. Calvin Harris
10. Iceland	26. David Morrissey
11. Summer loving had me a blast	27. The Pope's
12. Saint Swithins	28. (a) Helsinki, (b) Rome, (c) Munich, and (d) Seoul
13. Ronald Reagan	29. Estate
14. Donna Summer	
15. Homer Simpson	
16. Bleak House	

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