



**Paris Branch**

## **Newsletter**

**N° 44 – February 2026**



### **CONTENTS**

#### **Page**

- 2 Introduction**
- 3 February Quiz**
- 4 Correspondence etc.**
- 6 Poppy Project 2026**
- 7 2026 Ceremonies and Events**
- 7 RBL Paris history**
- 9 A Word in Your Ear...**
- 10 The Last Laugh**
- 11 Quiz answers**

## **Chairman's introduction to the February 20026 Paris Branch Newsletter.**

Welcome one and all.

The wet and the cold which has dominated this month didn't stop Robin Sweeney, who carried our standard, Ian Reed MBE LdH FRAe, Ian Titman-Reade and myself from attending the ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe on Monday 9<sup>th</sup>. The occasion was the 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Order of Liberation, awarded to those who resisted and fought against the NAZI occupation during World War Two. The event was led by former head of the French armed forces, General Thierry Burkhard and General Loic Mizon, Military Governor of Paris. It was a happy opportunity for us to meet them, and they expressed their satisfaction at having British participants from the RBL at the ceremony. The ceremony was well attended, and it was good to see a substantial number of school children taking part. (see photos)



On Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> we had our first branch lunch of the year, an excellent meal prepared by Catherine and Jean-Louis Germain. Our grateful thanks go to both of them. The lunch was well attended and several remarked that it was one of the best that they remembered. Those who didn't manage to attend certainly missed out. We plan to have a lunch in March, details of which we will notify you of later.

Les Clack who attended the lunch, brought details of his up and coming production of 'Under Milk Wood' to be put on by the "Dear Conjunction Theatre Company". See full details further down in this Newsletter. I do hope that, like myself, you will attend this production which gives support to Les and his Theatre Company.

The RBL has nominated a new overseas membership engagement officer, Mr Micheal Renshaw (Micky). We look forward to getting to know him and, with his help, to build closer links with RBL London.

Finally, I must inform you that our Honorary President Colonel Sean Cunniff will be leaving us this month as he will be taking up a new role with NATO. I am sure that you will join me in wishing him well in his new posting. Sean will be replaced by Colonel Ollie Sted whom we look forward to welcoming at our committee meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Richard

## FEBRUARY QUIZ 2026



1. Valentine's Day is celebrated on which date in February?
2. What star sign are you if you were born in early February?
3. What is the flower for the month of February?
4. What is the traditional birthstone for February?
5. February gets its name from the word 'Februa' from which language?
6. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 1659 what was used for the first time in Britain by Mr. Nicholas Vanecker?
7. Which popular tradition is celebrated in the USA & Canada on February 2<sup>nd</sup>?
8. In the poem called 'The Months' by Sara Coleridge, if "Hot July brings cooling showers" what does February bring?
9. How often does February have 28 days?
10. Which awards show normally occurs at the end of February?
2. What country's New Year celebrations often land in February?
1. The February Revolution was the first of two revolutions which took place in Russia in which year?
13. Which Human Rights Leader was assassinated on February 21 1965?
14. On which date in February is Superman's birthday in the DC Comics?
15. Who was beheaded at the Tower of London on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1554?
16. Easter can fall in late February. True or False?

Janet Warby

## Correspondence etc.

### A Late Delivery

Patrick Gilant, Conseiller municipal de Broué (Eure et Loir) writes telling us of a Lancaster which crashed on 8 July 1944 killing five of the crew of seven. The anniversary of the event is annually commemorated in the village and, they ordered a rather impressive wreath from the RBL in the UK. for the 2024 ceremony – the year before last. The wreath was posted to them on 20 March 2024 in good time for the event of that year.

He informs me that the wreath has just arrived some 22 months late, having, it would appear, spent nearly two years circulating round France in search of a destination! All is not lost, he informs me, as it will happily serve for this year's commemoration to be held, as usual, on 8 July.

He adds a couple of photos: a commemorative diagram of the plane with details and those of the crew, a shot of the wreath itself and one of a rather splendid stained-glass window which has graced the local church for some seventy years.

Unité 83 Sq RAF 5 Grp  
Angleterre/Common

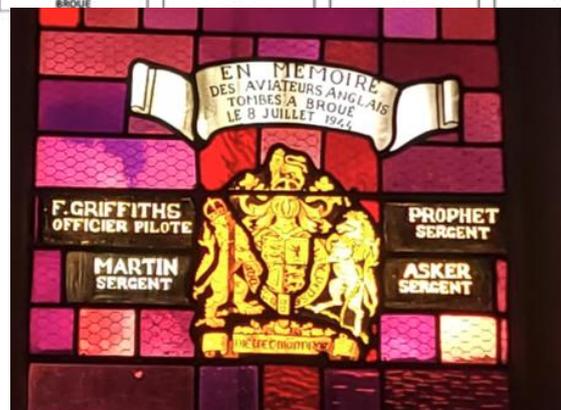
Avro Lancaster- type BIII-s/n ND966 OL°C

Mission: St Leu-d'Esserent (60)  
Site de stockage de bombes volantes

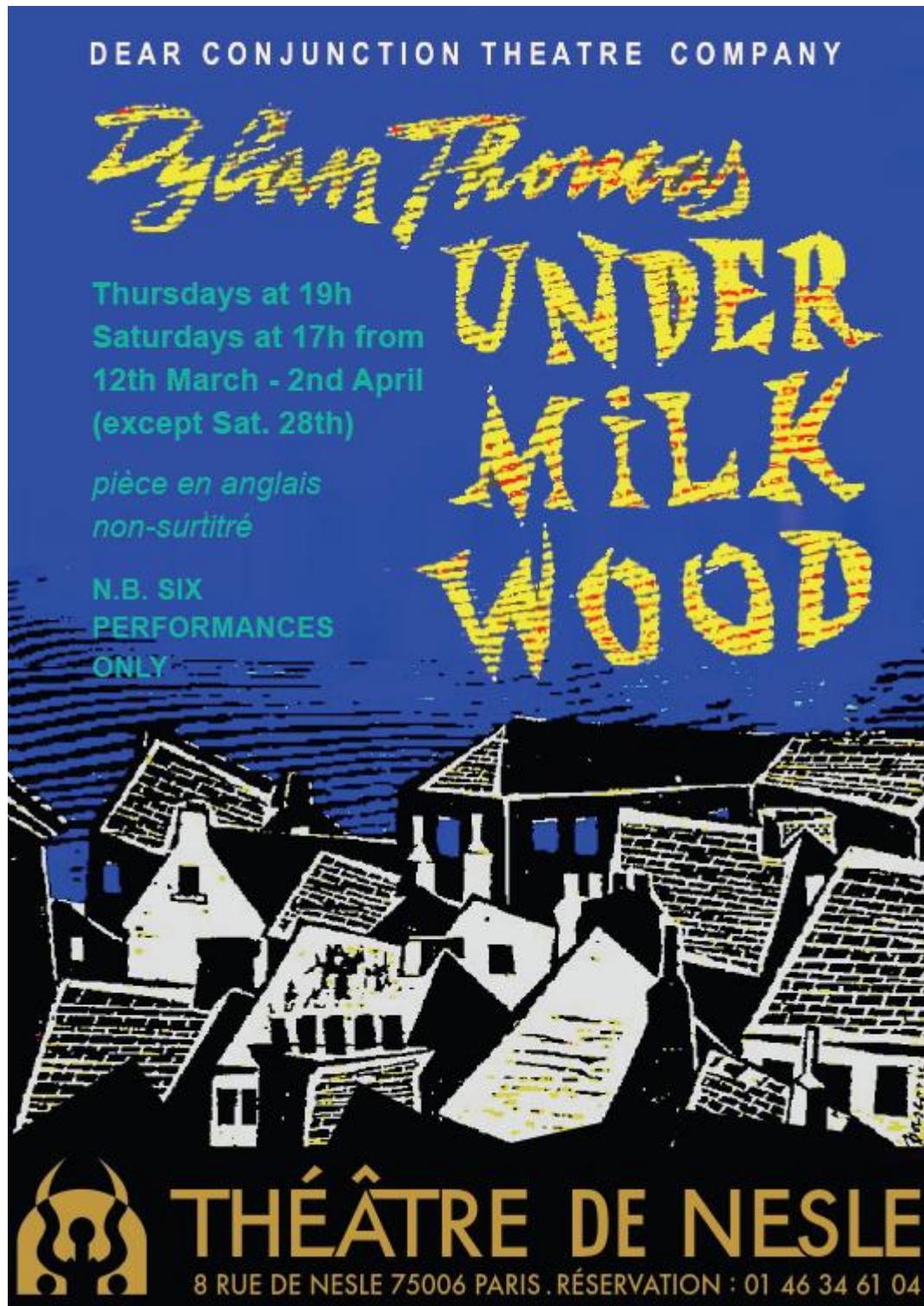
**L'équipage du Lancaster OL-C**  
aux postes de combat

<p>1</p> <p>Bombardier G.J.O MARTIN F/Sgt Maticule: 1415676 04/05/1921</p> <p>08/07/1944</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Pilote F.GRIFFITHS F/O Maticule: 168661 15/03/1922</p> <p>08/07/1944</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Mécanicien C.B PROPHECT Sgt Maticule: 1365162 25/01/1915</p> <p>08/07/1944</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Navigateur W.F ASKER F/Sgt Maticule: 1389734 30/08/1921</p> <p>08/07/1944 22 ans BROUÉ</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Radio E.J DAVIS F/Sgt Maticule: 1491273 03/09/1922</p> <p>08/11/1946 64 ans</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Mitrailleur dorsal R HESLOP Sgt Maticule: 547843 29/09/1918</p> <p>09/03/1990 71 ans</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Mitrailleur arrière R.H MELLARD Sgt Maticule: 1592717 09/11/1924</p> <p>08/07/1944 19 ans 80</p>
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Les



Les Clack informs us that he and his theatre company are putting on a production of "Under Milk Wood" at the Theatre de Nesle. Here is a poster giving the dates and times. Les' productions are always impressive and the play itself, both comic and surreal, has a timeless quality which makes it eminently re-seeable. I recommend it.



DEAR CONJUNCTION THEATRE COMPANY

*Dylan Thomas*

**UNDER  
MILK  
WOOD**

Thursdays at 19h  
Saturdays at 17h from  
12th March - 2nd April  
(except Sat. 28th)

*pièce en anglais  
non-surtitré*

**N.B. SIX  
PERFORMANCES  
ONLY**

 **THÉÂTRE DE NESLE**  
8 RUE DE NESLE 75006 PARIS . RÉSERVATION : 01 46 34 61 04

Robin Sweeney sends this account of a proposed RBL visit to Oradour sur Glane to take place in June this year.



After the D-Day landings in June 1944, French Resistance activities increased. In response, elements of the Dach Reich SS unit were sent to the Tullés & Limoges regions to unearth the résistants. Their behaviour was brutal and

characterised by executions of the civilian population. This culminated on the 10th June 1944 in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane where all civilians were rounded up and executed. The village was then sacked & destroyed.

After the war had ended, it was decided to keep the village in its current state in memory of those who were murdered on this site. Our visit in June will be to explore the site & learn more of the history of this terrible and tragic event.

[For details click here](#)

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#### POPPY PROJECT 2026

Last month's newsletter announced Janet's project, of getting as many knitted poppies as possible by the beginning of the Poppy Appeal in October. The work proceeds apace as you can see here:



Just to remind you, the idea is to knit as many poppies as possible with the eventual aim of creating, by mid-September next, a network suitable of them for hanging in the clubhouse. It might, with the ambassador's permission, be exhibited at the annual coffee morning and would also find its place at the 11 November service at St Louis. Do try and participate. Janet will be glad to supply Instructions, patterns and if necessary, wool, on demand. - janetwarby@yahoo.com

## Ceremonies and Events coming up

(N.B. - TBC = To be confirmed)

Date	Month	Venue	Time
26 <sup>th</sup>	March	Thank You Cocktail -RBL	18h30 - 21h30
26 <sup>th</sup>	April	Maisons Laffitte, Park RAF Memorial	10h30 for 11h00

For a fuller account of the year's events click [here](#)

These are the Ceremonies and Events we know of at the moment. You will be notified of others as information becomes available.

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### ***THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION HISTORY***

In the last Newsletter I recounted the beginnings of The British Legion in 1921, its gaining of the "Royal" title in 1971, the origin of the Paris branch, its original officers and its succession of addresses.

A certain George Norbury was an influential founding member. He was summoned to take tea at the Racing Club de France by Rear Admiral Heaton-Ellis and subsequently took part in a meeting at the Methodist Church Hall, near St. Lazare. It was here that the branch was formally set up.

The branch soon had an active social life with an annual dinner at the Salle Lutetia. This photo (1937) gives an idea of the impressive membership numbers at the time.



I mentioned last week that, after a modest beginning with the branch's address being, apparently, that of one of its members, premises were in the old camp of the R.C.M.P – a sort of scout hut on the boulevard Lannes. In those days the Secretary was paid. Mr. Arden, was sent from London HQ to act as Secretary. The branch was very busy looking after the quite numerous ex-servicemen and their dependents who fell on hard times in France. One such story dates from 1925:

*An ex-Duffadar of the Bombay cavalry, this man lost his right arm in action on the Belgian front. During the war he had married a French woman by whom he had two children and with his war gratuity he bought a small business in Amiens. He made bad debts and eventually sold the business and came to Paris in search of work, his small savings were soon exhausted. He came to the Legion and it succeeded in finding work for him and fought with the Indian Government for his pension until at last a satisfactory settlement was reached.*

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1924, the British Commonwealth War Memorial plaque in Notre Dame was unveiled by H.R.H. Prince Edward, The Prince of Wales., he was accompanied by his brother Prince Henry in the presence of the President of France, Monsieur Gaston Doumergue, and Marechal Foch. From that year onwards, until the tragic fire in Notre Dame, an Annual Service of Remembrance was held in Notre Dame.

In 1921, the French Government laid to rest the *Soldat Inconnu* at the Arc de Triomphe, (see photo in the January edition) but it was not until 1923 that there was a rekindling of the Flame as a National ceremony on 11<sup>th</sup> November. The following year the British legion was invited by the *Gouverneur Général* of Paris to initiate its own ceremony of Rekindling the Flame on 4<sup>th</sup> August, the date Great Britain and her Dominions entered the First World War. This ceremony continues to the present day, the only interruptions being the Second World War and, more recently, the Covid crisis.

It was in 1928 that the Legion acquired a lease at 8 rue Boudreau. George Norbury was once again at the helm to clear up the mess! He is reported as saying, 'You have never seen such a filthy looking hole in all your life. It was

like looking at the Black Hole of Calcutta'. Together with a number of members, including a group of executives from the British banks, they rolled up their sleeves and cleaned it up and made it habitable.

For several years before the outbreak of the 1939 war the Chairman at the Branch was Lt. Colonel Fred W. Abbott, a bound copy of minutes records the 'doings' of the Legion from 26<sup>th</sup> January 1938 until 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1940, optimistically concluding : "The next General Committee Meeting will be on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1940". In fact, the next branch meeting was not to take place until 14<sup>th</sup> December 1945 in the Methodist Church Hall. Mr. C.J. Henderon (later Sir Charles Henderson, KBE) was elected provisional Chairman, and Lt. Colonel R.L.O. Beasley, DSO, Secretary).

At the first meeting of this committee the Treasurer, Mr. F.H. Lane, reported 905,90 Francs shown as cash in hand, but which had actually been paid out by Mr. Barnes (the 1940 Treasurer), although the covering vouchers were not to be found. "Mr. Barnes was in the act of writing up his Cash Book, when he was arrested by the Germans in 1940".

However, the Paris Branch of the British Legion, though dispossessed from 1940-1944, was not out of action. It set up in exile in London and held meetings throughout the war. George Norbury was one of those who remembered attending lunches and reunions of the Branch in London, at one of which Charles de Gaulle was Guest of Honour. Sadly, there are no written records of this period available.

The second part of our History will be seen in the next Newsletter.

Janet Warby



#### **A Word in your Ear - Window**

When it comes to the concept of a "window", the word in most European languages reflects the object's function: the source of wind. Glass, of course, was a relatively modern invention and remained far too expensive for the common man until surprisingly recently. For thousands of years, having a hole in the wall to enable you to see had its disadvantages as well as its advantages.

Ventus in Latin, meaning wind, led to various European languages referring to it, probably in reference to a soothing breeze so often desirable in warm climates. *Fenêtre* (Fr) *Finestra* (It) *Fenster* (Ger) *Ventana* (Sp) are all examples.

English, however, has an etymology which, although philologically comparable, conveys a more brutal concept with the eye, as in expressions like “the eye of the wind” “the eye of storm” “an evil eye” etc. (“*auga*” being “eye” in Old Norse the whole word “window” deriving from “*vindauga*” – the eye of the wind.

Similarly derived are “*Vindu*” (Norwegian), “*vindue*” (Danish). “*Vindöga*” (*dialect Swedish*)

Somehow this conveys an idea of indoor wind far removed from the balmy south European concept, and more the unpleasant draughts and blasts of the north which provide so much conversational material for the British.

M.Y.



### The Last Laugh - The History Lecture.

**Prof:** You at the back of the room, stop staring at the wall like that.

**Stud:** Sorry. What's that? Are you talking to me?

**Prof:** I am, young man. I don't believe you've been listening to a word I've been saying. Tell me, in what year was Henry VIII crowned??"

**Stud:** Sorry. I haven't a clue.

**Prof:** Haven't you? It was 1509. Well, let's try this. Who was Wolsey?

**Stud:** Err. Not the foggiest idea."

**Prof:** Hah. Henry's Lord Chancellor and principal advisor. An easy one: How many wives did Henry have?"

**Stud:** Well, I seem to remember he had quite a few - but only one at a time.

**Prof:** For someone aspiring to a degree in history that hardly constitutes an adequate response. He had six. How many of them were executed?

**Stud:** All of them? Sorry but I'm sort of guessing now.

**Prof:** Two were beheaded. You're supposed to know all this. I set it for you last Friday. What were you doing over the weekend?

**Stud:** I was out drinking beer and fishing with friends.

**Prof:** And you admit it? Tell me, How the devil do you ever expect to pass the exam next June?

**Stud:** I have no intention of passing your exam. I only came in to fix the radiator.

M. Y. (68)

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*February quiz: Answers:*



<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 14<sup>th</sup></li><li>2. Aquarius</li><li>3. Violet</li><li>4. Amethyst</li><li>5. Latin</li><li>6. A cheque</li><li>7. Groundhog Day</li><li>8. February brings the rain.</li><li>9. Every year</li><li>10. The Academy Awards</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>11. China. The Chinese New Year coincides with the lunar calendar.</li><li>12. 1917</li><li>13. Malcolm X</li><li>14. Superman's birthday is 29<sup>th</sup> February, so he is a leap year baby.</li><li>15. Lady Jane Grey</li><li>16. False (March 22<sup>nd</sup> is the earliest Easter can fall).</li></ol>
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*Comments & contributions to [mfyates@gmail.com](mailto:mfyates@gmail.com)  
Back numbers: [rblfrance.org/](http://rblfrance.org/) then "Paris Branch Newsletters"*

