



Paris Branch

Newsletter

N° 45 – March 2026



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Chairman's introduction to the Paris Branch March 2026 Newsletter.

Welcome to this month's newsletter.

It's proving to be a busy month so far and we have a number of other events coming up.

We have our committee meeting on the 16th and on the 18th Janet and I have a meeting with a group who wish to set up a Franco-British association circle or similar and work with us.

On the 19th we have our monthly lunch of which you will find details below. This month's lunch will be provided by Adrian Parr to whom our grateful thanks.

On the 24th Janet and I have a meeting with a representative from RBL London to discuss plans for this year's Pedal to Paris arrival. This will be its 30th year so hopefully it will be quite some event. On the 26th we have our thank you cocktail for standard bearers and Poppy collectors who participated actively on 11 November last at les Invalides. New members are also invited.

On 28 February we were invited to what turned out to be a most impressive ceremony commemorating the French Resistance and, in

particular, Capitaine Trépe of the Kiffer commandos. (See photos).



Afterwards we came back to the clubhouse and had snacks and Champagne generously provided by our member Charles des Moulins. Thank you, Charles, once again.

Just a reminder: don't forget the "Dear Conjunction Theatre Company" play "Under Milk Wood". See Mark's reminder poster in this newsletter.

Regards to all

Richard

MARCH QUIZ 2026

1. March is called *maaliskuu* in which European language?
2. Which annual health awareness day takes place on the second Wednesday in March?
3. What is the full name of the actor who won Academy Awards for Best Actor in both 1946 & 1932?
4. Symbolizing courage, name March's birthstone?
5. On the first Thursday in March every child in full-time education in the UK is given a voucher to spend on what?
6. The Ides of March is a day on the Roman calendar that corresponds to which date?
7. On the 5th of March 1946, what did Churchill warn was falling across Europe?
8. Who wrote "*To Kill a Mockingbird*"?
9. What is the capital of Australia?
10. What is the largest organ in the human body?
2. What is the highest mountain in Africa?
1. What is the primary gas found in the Earth's atmosphere?
13. Who is known as the "*Father of Computers*"?
14. What is the world's most expensive spice by weight?
15. Which Commonwealth nation was granted full independence from Britain in March 1986?
16. In March 1966 which famous trophy was stolen and who found it?
17. Henri Cornet died in March 1941. A previous winner of the Tour de France, what record does he still hold (as of March 2016)?
18. This iconic plane made its maiden flight in March 1936. What was it called?
19. Completed and turned over to the Federal Government in March 1936, the Hoover Dam was built on the border of which two States in America?
20. In March 1986 a fire ripped through which London Palace?



Janet Warby

Correspondence

Our member Yves-Michel Riols reminds us that his mother, Noreen Riols, wartime member of the SOE, well known author and an active member of the RBL Paris branch passed away over a year ago.

You may well be interested to look at these links concerning her.



The texts of the interviews have been transcribed, translated and enhanced with photos and documents.

- 1) Discussion with Noreen, French subtitles (41 minutes): [Link here](#)
 - 2) Discussion with Jacques, English subtitles (36 minutes): [Link here](#)
 - 3) Book on Noreen in English: [Link here](#)
 - 4) Book on Noreen in French: [Link here](#)
 - 5) Book on Jacques in English: [Link here](#)
 - 6) Book on Jacques in French: [Link here](#)
 - 7) Moving BBC tribute to Noreen, by Jason Beck (2,45 minutes): [Link here](#)
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Events

This month's lunch will be on Thursday 19th March thanks to the good offices of Adrain Parr

Book now. Why not bring a friend?

 <p>Don't forget to book in for this month's lunch.</p> <p>Thursday 19 March 1215 for 1230 Only €18 - Pay on the day (in cash please)</p> <p>Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or richard.neave05@gmail.com <i>Reserve early to be sure of a place.</i> <i>(Cancellations up to 48h before)</i></p>	 <p>LUNCH MENU <i>Thursday 19 March</i></p> <p>STARTER- <i>Savoury Snack</i></p> <p>MAIN COURSE- <i>Chili con Carne</i> <i>Option curried Veg for vegetarians</i> <i>(Please tell Richard if you opt for this)</i></p> <p>DESSERT- <i>Mini pancakes with maple syrup</i></p> <p><i>Wine served with the meal</i> <i>Coffee or tea</i></p>
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Edith Cavell

Edith Cavell was a remarkable British nurse commemorated for having treated wounded soldiers from both sides without discrimination during the First World War and also for helping some 200 Allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium. The latter resulted in her being arrested by the German occupiers, accused of war treason and executed on October 12th 1915.

Her story is celebrated by the Edith Cavell Commemoration Group in Belgium and Andrew Brown, the Chairman of that association is returning to Paris (he formerly lived here and indeed carried the flag at the 11 November ceremony at Notre Dame in the '70's as a Royal Navy Reserve officer). He will be giving a conference about Edith Cavell at the Mairie of the 15th arrondissement on Wednesday 1st April at 17h.



Between the wars Edith Cavell's memorial on the wall of the Jeu de Paume in the Tuileries Garden was annually celebrated as in this photo where the British Legion standard is visible. The memorial was destroyed by the Germans during the occupation of Paris.

Please note that the conference will take place in French. Entrance is free. You will find some details on the 15th arrondissement information site here:

<https://www.paris15histoire.com/copie-de-nos-activit%C3%A9s-en-2025>

Les Clack's production of "Under Milk Wood" at the Theatre de Nesle, announced last month, is well underway. There is still time to see it, hence, as a reminder, here is the poster once again.

DEAR CONJUNCTION THEATRE COMPANY


Dylan Thomas


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

*pièce en anglais
non-surtitré*

N.B. SIX
PERFORMANCES
ONLY

**UNDER
MILK
WOOD**



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

Royal British Legion - Oradour sur Glane Visit

Saturday 23rd May (travel Friday 22nd & return Sunday 24th)

Just a reminder for those interested in the planned RBL visit to Oradour sur Glane, the village destroyed by the Germans on the 10th June 1944. Full details in last month's newsletter & republished in the link below.



Getting there :

SNCF Intercities from Paris, Gare d'Austerlitz to Limoges. Time to travel approximately 3 ½ Hours.

Friday 22nd May : Price (18-59 year old) from €50 to €70 Paris to Limoges.

Sunday 24th May : Price (18-59 year old) from €50 to €77 Limoges to Paris.

Hôtels :

1) B&B Hotel Limoge Gare (4.0 Tripadvisor)

24 Allée de Seto, 87000 Limoges.

Next to SNCF Station.

From €57 per night

2) Hotel IBIS Budget (3.1 Tripadvisor)

14 rue du Chinchauvaud, 87100 Limoges
Short walk from station.

From €43 per night.

Those interested, please make your reservations & let me know so that we can plan transport on site: Robin_sweeney@hotmail.com

[For details click here](#)

Ceremonies and Other Events Coming Up

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

Date	Month	Venue	Time
19th	March	Monthly lunch RBL (see above for menu)	1215 for 1230
26 th	March	Thank You Cocktail - RBL	18h30 - 21h30
26 th	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.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION PARISH BRANCH HISTORY Part 2

The Paris Branch of the British Legion held regular meetings in London during its 'exile' in World War Two.

One of the founding members was Mr. W.H. Robinson who, like his friend Mr. George Norbury, saw both wars at close quarters. Members were asked for memories of the days in 'exile' in London. The contents of a letter from Mr. Robinson are reproduced below giving his experiences of the Paris Branch in London. It was written around 1981.

British Legion, Paris in Exile 1940-1944

Dear Sir,

I have a little information that you were seeking concerning the reopening in London of the Paris branch of the British Legion in 1940.

After France was overrun in 1940 many British residents in France arrived in London. Some of them were members of the Paris branch of the British Legion who got together and decided to keep in touch with one another by continuing in London the monthly British Legion businessmen's luncheon on the first Tuesday of each month.

I think it was for our first November luncheon in London that we invited General de Gaulle to be our guest of honour. He accepted and accompanied by René Cassin, he joined us at the Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane. It was my good fortune to sit at a table on the right of General de Gaulle. Two years previously he was present at the Paris branch Annual Dinner at the Hotel Lutetia in the Boulevard Raspail, Paris, and this gave us a subject for conversation. The result of our talk was that he promised that if all went well he would come to one of our luncheons at the Hotel Lutetia after the war. Unfortunately, political circumstances prevented him from coming, but he asked his good friend René Cassin, who accompanied him during his visit at the Grosvenor Hotel, to replace him at the Hotel Lutetia.

In the meantime, many of our members were permitted to attend an enormous rally of the Free French held at the Royal Albert Hall in London, when General de Gaulle informed his helpers, that French troops were active in North Africa.

Yours faithfully,

W.H. Robinson

Once members came back to France after the war, the new committee, chaired by Sir Charles Henderson, and elected on 14th December 1945, was soon at work, hampered by conditions of austerity and lack of funds at first. Nevertheless, the Chairman, in his address of 1946 said that they aspired 'not only to attain the position held prior to the war by the Paris branch of the British Legion, but to exceed it'. He reminded members of the aims of the Legion:

“To promote comradeship; to remember the fallen; to care for the disabled, widows and orphans; to continue service in peace as in war”.

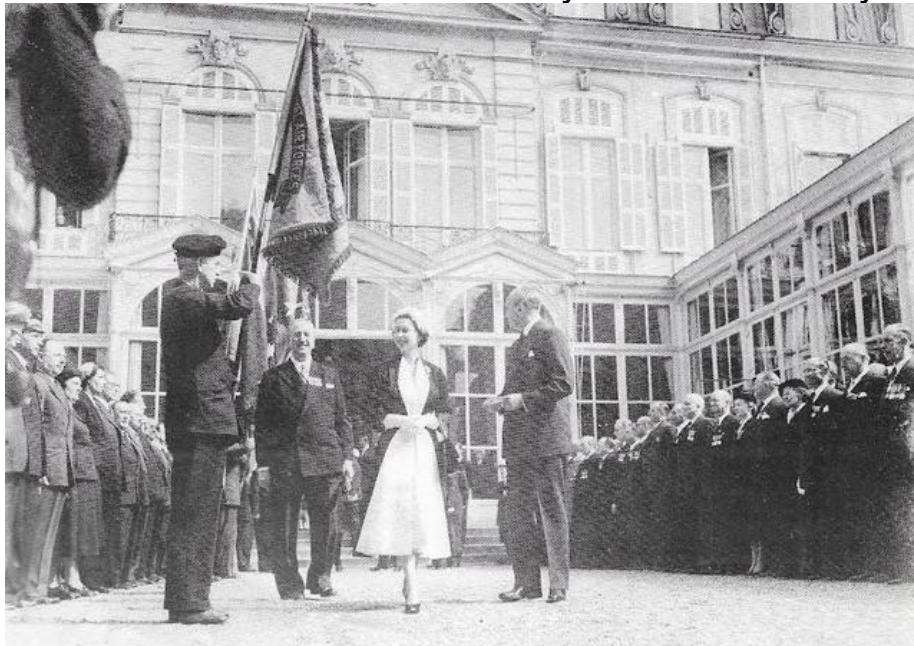
He also mentioned in his speech the arrangements being made to co-operate with the British Charitable Fund to provide relief when required, an arrangement which still functions today.

In 1947 he suggested that the 'young men of the 1939-45 War be given a chance on the committee, and on 20th February 1948 at the A.G.M., Sir Charles stood down in favour of 'young' Brigadier E.R. Cawdron, OBE, who was 'eminently fitted to fill the position'.

Many of the subjects discussed in committee have a familiar ring – how to make the rue Boudreau more attractive for members to hold meetings, whether to send Appeal money back to London, something that has to be done, or keep it on hand for need in Paris, arrangements for rekindling the Flame and should a Dinner Dance be held .

At the A.G.M. In February, 1950, Brigadier Cawdron stepped down after a long illness and his place as Chairman was taken by Brigadier S. Swinton-Lee, DSO., who, according to George Norbury, was a very active, full-time Chairman, 'and really made things hum'.

Tragically, Swinton-Lee died in 1952, to be succeeded for two years by Lord Norwich, and then Colonel H.A. Wilsden, OBE under who the branch thrived for seven years until his death in August, 1961. During his chairmanship, membership of the Legion rose from about 650 to nearly a thousand, and on 4th May, 1962 the main room at the rue Boudreau was formally named after him by his widow.



The Queen inspecting British Legion members in April 1957. Among those present may be identified: on the left Joan Bunyan, John Gentry, Bray Zeff, R. McDiarmid, John Gilmore Wood and Titus Oates; on the right, Arthur Cook, Nobby Clark, Raymond Lared and John Luckily. Her Majesty is accompanied by Jim Barnes, (left) and Sir Gladwyn Jebb.

During his tenure he was actively helped by a number of enthusiasts whose names have become legend within the branch. They were John Taleen, sadly killed in a car accident in September 1971, Bray Zeff, 'Robbie' Robinson, 'Mandy' Mandeville, Arthur Cooke, Bobby Gay, Barry Lynham, 'Nobby' Clark, George Norbury, 'Rudolph' (Valentino) Burton. For many of these of the 'Old Brigade' the rue Boudreau was their principal social centre in Paris for a pint of beer, a game of cards, or simply 'chewing the fat'.

John Taleen was Parade Marshal, and in those days, with NATO troops and bands in support, the British Legion Standard, the Union Flag and the flags of the other service organisations were proudly paraded the length of the Champs Elysées on special occasions, such as the Rekindling of the Flame.

A highlight of this period was the State Visit by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II accompanied by Prince Philip, in 1957. On the 8th April, Her Majesty laid a wreath at the Arc de Triomphe in a ceremony at which 60 members represented the Legion, RNVRA and RAFA and on the 9th April the Queen inspected a parade of ex-servicemen of the Legion in the Embassy gardens. As was remarked by the National Chairman of the Royal British Legion in 1980 on his visit to Paris, the British Legion has always enjoyed special support and interest from the Royal Family.

Part three next month.

Janet Warby



Eating Humble Pie.

My modest suggestion for this week's etymological excursion is the word "Humble".

This goes back to the Latin "*humilis*" – "low, lowly, on the ground" which also led to *humus* – which, for gardeners still means "earth, or a rich soil" though usually in a positive context.

Hence "humility" and its adjective "humble" meant lowliness, and by extension, something to be disparaged..

However, when we look at the expression "to eat humble pie", used when someone admits his error and apologises, the word's origin is quite different: This comes from old French "*nombles*" which referred to those

inferior parts of an animal, the heart, the liver, the kidneys, etc. which would be rejected by the more discriminating (or richer) diner). They would, of course have been eaten by the less fastidious poor – and undoubtedly in those days when any form of protein was something of a luxury - eked out with pastry. Thus two origins, both with their negative connotations converged in modern usage.

M.Y.



The Last Laugh - Breakdown

Jill: Oh John. I have to speak to you.

John: Yes. What's the matter? Have you been crying?

Jill: You know Bill and I have been married for ten years now. I can't believe what happened this morning!

John: Go on then. Keep calm and tell me all about it.

Jill: I took the car to go to work as usual but I'd only gone half a mile when the engine hiccupped and stalled.

John: That's annoying.

Jill: So I walked back home to get Bill and guess what I found.

John: I've no idea. What did you find?

Jill: He was in our bedroom, in our bed, with the girl next door!

John: Hmm. That's a bit thick. It really hasn't been your day, has it?

Jill: So I walked out without saying a word. And now I'm not sure that was the best thing to do. Do tell me John. What should I have done?

John: It was probably the carburetor. If you had taken off the top and blown the valves clear that would probably have solved the problem.

MY (69)

February quiz: Answers:

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Finnish2. National No Smoking Day3. Fredric March4. Aquamarine or bloodstone5. Books (it's World Book Day)6. March 157. An 'iron curtain' (he was speaking in Fulton, Missouri)8. Harper Lee9. Canberra10. The skin11. Mount Kilimanjaro	<ol style="list-style-type: none">12. Nitrogen13. Charles Babbage14. Saffron15. Commonwealth of Australia16. Jules Rimet Trophy. A Border Collie Dog called Pickles17. He is the youngest ever winner18. Supermarine Spitfire19. Nevada and Arizona20. Hampton Court Palace
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*Comments & contributions to mfyates@gmail.com
Back numbers: rblfrance.org/ then "Paris Branch Newsletters"*

