



**Paris Branch**

## **Newsletter**

**N° 24 - March 2024**



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### Chairman's introduction.

Welcome everyone to this month's Newsletter.

It has been a quiet month so far. However, by the time you read this we shall have held (on 14<sup>th</sup> March) our thank you evening for those kind people who helped with last years Poppy Appeal. We are expecting to have forty-four guests if they all turn up. A full report on the evening along with photos will be in April's Newsletter.

We have our monthly lunch on the 21<sup>st</sup> so please contact me to book your place if you haven't already done so.

Some good news. Having written to the director of the cabinet at Cathedral Notre-Dame to enquire if we could restart holding our annual remembrance service on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, I received a reply from him this week to say that they will be delighted for us to start holding our service there starting back in November 2025. It will certainly be good to be back there again.

Our intruder who is not a paid-up member of the branch i.e. the mouse might hopefully have decided to go elsewhere, as there were no new traces of his or her presence to be seen when I went in on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Be careful for your toes however, if you go behind the bar as I have set up a baited electronic trap behind it. Let's see what happens.

You will be pleased to learn that Janet is slowly recovering from a chronic sinus infection, which has proved to be very painful and annoying for her. I am sure like me you wish her a speedy recovery.

Have an enjoyable month, and I look forward to seeing some of you very soon.

**Richard Neave**

## JANET'S MARCH QUIZ



1. What is the birth flower of March?
2. Which UK Saint's Day is on March 1<sup>st</sup>?
3. The lives of the four March sisters feature in which famous novel?
4. March is called maaliskuu in which European language?
5. The March Hare is a character from which book?
6. Which annual health awareness day takes place on the second Wednesday in March?
7. What is the full name of the actor who won Academy Awards for Best Actor in both 1946 and 1932?
8. Symbolizing courage, name March's birthstone?
9. March is named after Mars; what is Mars the Roman god of?
10. What's the zodiac signs for early March until March 20? And what about the sign for the latter part of March?
11. On the first Thursday in March every child in full-time education in the UK is given a voucher to spend on what?
12. The Ides of March is a day on the Roman calendar that corresponds to which date?
13. Complete the saying: 'March comes in like a lion and goes out like a .....?'
14. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1946, what did Churchill warn was falling across Europe?
15. 'Dear March – Come in', was a poem by which reclusive 19<sup>th</sup> Century American poet?
16. On what date in March is Saint Patrick's Day?
17. In British tradition, which quarter day falls on March 25<sup>th</sup>?
18. St. Piran's Day, held on 5<sup>th</sup> March every year, is the national day of where?

Answers on last page

## EVENTS

Thank you cocktail.

This annual event took place only yesterday. A long-standing tradition of the Paris branch, it provides the occasion to thank standard bearers, all those who worked on the Poppy Appeal, provided music for 8 August and 11 November etc. New members are also invited to participate. Yesterdays event went very well and Richard will doubtless give a full account in next month's edition.

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D-Day 80th anniversary:

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings, the RBL is holding several events, two of which are in Normandy. These are:

A ceremony on 5 June at Bayeux War Cemetery, at 5pm. This will be open to both Normandy and WW2 veterans, families of the fallen, and descendants of Normandy veterans.

A further event at the British Normandy Memorial, Ver-sur-Mer France will take place on 6 June.

Those of you having family members who took part in these events (and I know that this is the case for some of our members) will be eligible to attend but you have to apply.

There will also be a raffle for members of the public.

For details of how to participate, click on the following link:

[RBL D-Day 80 events](#)

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**Don't forget to  
book in for this  
month's lunch.**

**Thursday 21 March  
1215 for 1230  
Only €18 - Pay on the day  
(in cash please)**

Contact Richard at 06 45 10 47 70 or  
richard.neave05@gmail.com

*Reserve early to be sure of a place.  
(Cancellations up to 48h before)*



**LUNCH MENU 21 March**

**APERITIF**

**STARTER  
Charcuterie**

**MAIN COURSE  
Chili con carne**

**DESSERT  
Fruit tart**

**WINE SERVED WITH THE MEAL**

**COFFEE OR TEA**

## A Recipe (eventually)



I am the possessor of a hovel near the frontier between the Oise and Normandy, that relic of ancient British occupation of ancient France, unfortunately on the (from my point of view) “wrong” side of a little stream, the river Epte, which has historically marked the frontier of what once was two countries. Local historians tell me that the neighbouring village of Neuf-Marché was so called, not because of the establishment of a market there but because it was on the “new frontier”, where “marché” is used in the sense of the Scottish and Welsh “marches” between medieval England and its

neighbours. The river is better-known these days because it was diverted by Monet to provide the “Jardin d’Eau” without which we would never have had all those water lilies.

Amongst my country friends and acquaintances is Pierre, a small unaided farmer of the exact category, vigorously and justifiably defended by the recent demonstrations in France in favour of the agricultural community. I believe his, probably passive, pacific participation in the various demonstrations has been limited to approving the inversion of the signs indicating the name of the village, a probably ineffective but somewhat touching mark of civil disobedience of which I find it difficult to disapprove. I note, in passing, that our local remarkably efficient and comprehensive mayor, has seen fit to leave this harmless demonstration in place and I can only express my approbation. Pierre, would certainly not have taken part in those more obstreperous demonstrations which others instigated. He has far too much to do getting up at some ungodly hour of the morning to attend to the needs of his cattle (120 of mostly Salers, beasts with wide horns and a tendency to escape their boundaries, thus occasioning Pierre with the further obligation to get up in the middle of his already short night in response to a phone call to the effect that “another of thy beasts is oot there in’t middle of t’road.” (I am translating into my native Yorkshire). Similarly, he is rarely available to come round for dinner until 9 pm.

In his rare moments of leisure, Pierre, like most of his kind, goes shooting (hunting to those of you of the American persuasion) and, when I can occasionally persuade him to come round for dinner, sometimes presents me with chunk of wild pig or whatever – to my delight, as game is almost





unobtainable on the market in France. Some time ago he brought me a brace of woodcock. Now the woodcock is supposed to be the most difficult bird to shoot owing to its habit of flying zigzag amongst trees and waterside bushes. There is an expression in English “to have a feather in one’s hat”, denoting an exceptional accomplishment. This comes from the habit of taking the longest wing feather from a woodcock and adding it to one’s headgear. I have a couple of Irish tweed hats which have a small loop specifically designed for such an addition.

I had never had the occasion to taste woodcock before. Indeed, my only personal experience with the species was when I was a member of a gun club sometime in the early ‘60s. It was on one of the weekend trips we sometimes made to Holy Island in Northumberland to shoot duck. Holy Island was a popular venue at that period of strict licensing laws. The only access being by causeway, high tide cut it off from civilisation and visits by the police. The local pub had thus, for the period, remarkably flexible and adaptable opening times.



We were two shivering sportsmen wandering over our allotted section of the barren slopes but nary a duck was in sight. The weather was terrible so, undoubtedly imitating the ducks, we sought shelter, the opportunity for this being the entrance to some sort of tunnel excavated for goodness knows what reason, not far from the castle

on the island. We wandered in, happy to escape the gale for a few moments. A strange movement in the shadows advanced upon us at high speed. My companion struck out at it with the butt of his gun. Something fluttered to the ground. It was a woodcock, which had, like us, sought shelter from the elements! “Well”, I said, “Downed a woodcock! And without even firing your gun! You deserve both feathers for that.”

Anyway, to go back to Pierre’s woodcock, it was therefore with some reverence that I accepted his offering (in return for a meal of unworthy warmed up supermarket sauerkraut) and I carefully put the birds in the freezer for due consideration. I knew they were considered somewhat special, so looked up appropriate recipes on the internet.

Now the first thing about woodcock, seen from a culinary point of view, is that traditionally you do not gut the bird. It seems that, each time they take off, they empty their bowels. Thus the guts are quite edible. Further, the brain is



considered the finest morsel. Oh dear, I thought but went about roasting it - only for some 15 minutes, as indicated. The result was interesting but rather disappointing. It was hard to get the meat from the bones and it didn't seem exceptionally tasty. So, I left the second bird in the freezer for quite some time until, today, when discovering that I had forgotten to go shopping, I decided to have a shot at the other woodcock (excuse the pun). I left it for several hours to melt down. This time, I thought, we'll try something different.

Now I had bought at Christmas a small pot container in which to cook foie gras (an experiment which worked very well) and saw that it was exactly the size of the woodcock. So, I chopped off its head (couldn't stand the idea of that long beak hanging around in the soup in spite of the supposed qualities of the brain), put it in and thought about what to add. I had half a sweet potato hanging about, a carrot, a stick of celery and some miniature tomatoes that had been drying out in a corner for a month – and a clove of garlic. There was just room to put slices of all this around the bird and I laid a rasher of bacon on top for good measure. In the tiny container, a quarter of a bottle of Bordeaux was enough to douse the lot. Anyway, an hour and a half in a lowish oven and the result was actually rather remarkable. The sauce was a little sweet, but that is as it should be with game and the meat, this time, if it didn't actually fall off the bone, sliced off nicely.

I'd try it again but for the absence of woodcock. Maybe it would work with quail, if I add an oxo cube.



Mark Yates

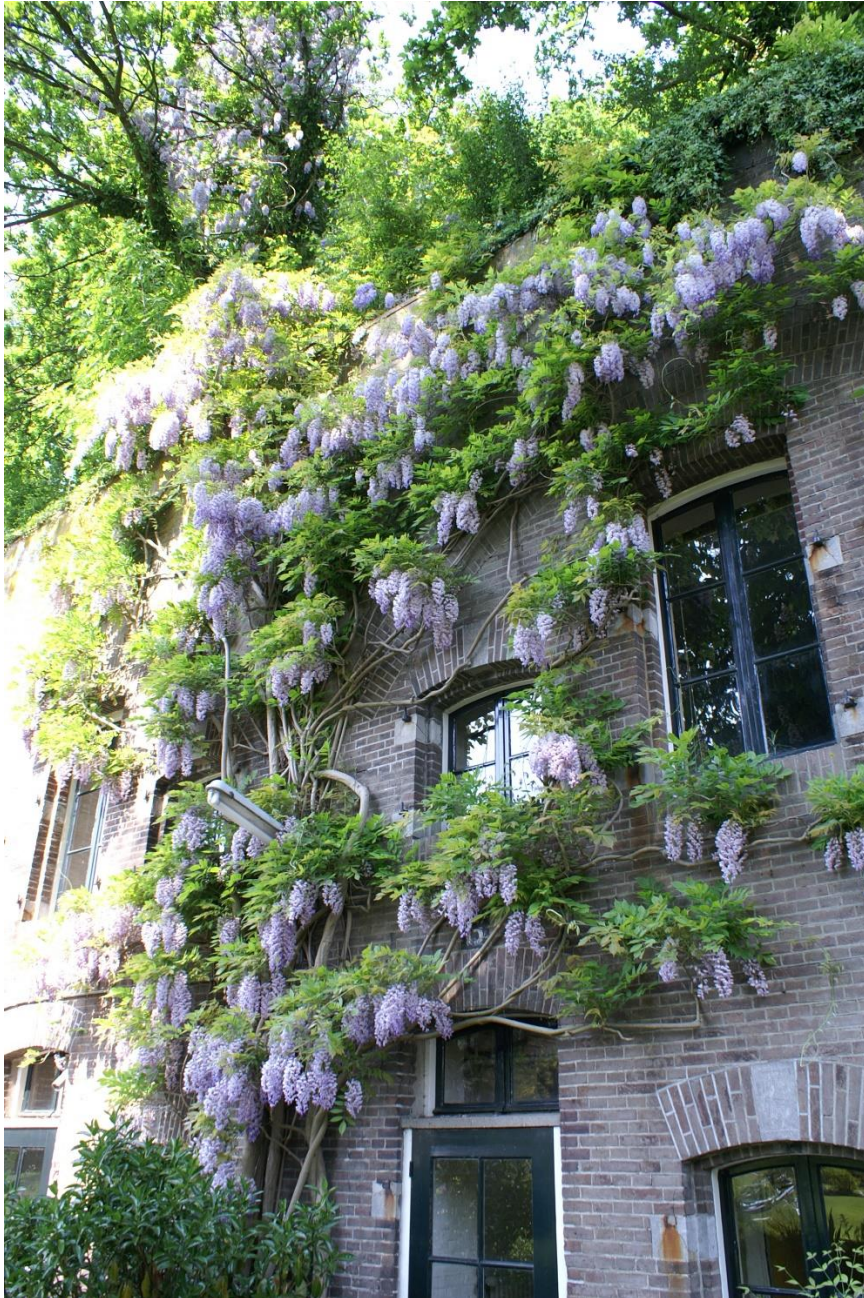
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## Photo of the Month –

We have received two photos worthy of interest this month so both of them are shown here.

Firstly, Adrian Parr sends us this photo of a splendid Glycine in full flower with the following account of where it was taken in Utrecht. I have included the links he suggests for those who would like to more about the splendid gardens there.





This picture shows part of the Botanic Gardens of Utrecht University in the Netherlands, which are literally built over the 1870s Fort Hoofdijk. It is the country's largest academic botanic garden, containing some 10 000 plants, occupying more than 9 ha ( [Utrecht University Botanic Gardens - Utrecht University \(uu.nl\)](https://uu.nl/botanic-gardens) ) and easily accessible by bus or bicycle from the centre of Utrecht or other directions.

Fort Hoofdijk formed part of a defensive line called the New Dutch Water Line (Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie), now recognised as UNESCO World Heritage. Further information may be found at [Dutch Water Defence Lines | Hollandse Waterlinies](https://www.hollandsewaterlinies.nl)



Fort Hoofdjik and the larger nearby Fort bij Rijnauwen, which sometimes has open days ([Fort bij Rijnauwen excursies & buiten activiteiten Utrecht](#) - Dutch only) were built almost contemporaneously with the Séré de Rivières forts around Paris, such as the Fort de Corneilles-en-Parisis which features in the film THE NIGHT OF THE GENERALS. There are some inevitable similarities. Cf. [Les amis du fort de Corneilles – Fort de Corneilles-en-Parisis](#)

Fort bij Rijnauwen is a few hundred metres from a pleasant pancake restaurant ([Theehuis Rhijnauwen – De heerlijkste pannenkoeken van het heeelal](#) - Dutch only).

A visit to the Utrecht forts can easily be combined with a visit to Arnhem, and to the house at Doorn where Kaiser Wilhelm II lived in exile ([Homepage - Museum Huis Doorn](#) ). The Botanic Gardens are very beautiful in the spring: a visit could be planned either side of the King's Day (Koningsdag) festivities at the end of April or the Dutch Remembrance and Liberation Days on 4-5 May.

A J William Parr

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Janet sends this photo of that spectacular curiosity, Spanish moss. She and Roger were on a paddle steamer on the Mississippi when they stopped off at the Oak alley plantation, a visitable residence near Orleans, redolent of the old south with all its splendid architecture and memories of the accessory slavery which went with it. You can see more about that at <https://oakalleyplantation.org/> Janet captures, in her photo, the somewhat eerie alleyways of the moss bedecked trees and says it has something of a Halloween atmosphere.

Spanish moss is a curious phenomenon – starting with the fact that it is not moss – and those of you curious to know more about it can go to <https://www.eatstayplaybeaufort.com/spanish-moss-beaufortsc-2/> which has a curious collection of information about this odd plant.



Janet Warby



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### A Word in your Ear...

#### **Lb – The pound**

The form “lb” is actually an abbreviation of the Latin word “libra”, connected these days with an uninspiring constellation in the zodiac supposedly resembling a set of scales. Originally it was a shortened form of the full expression, “libra pondo”, “pound weight”, the “pondo” bit being of course the pound.



“Libra”, used for a pound in currency, is first found in English in the late fourteenth century, almost at the same time as “lb” started to be used. Strictly speaking, it was the Roman pound of 12 ounces, not the modern one of 16. And by the way, one should never use “lbs”; for modern metrologists all units are singular – use “lb”.

Another abbreviation for “libra” became the standard symbol for the British pound in the monetary sense. In the modern “£”, an ornate form of “L”, a pair of cross-strokes (often just one these days) were the way that a medieval scribe marked an abbreviation. The link between the two “pounds”, weight and money, is that in England a thousand years ago a pound in money was equivalent to the value of a pound of silver. However, inflation being what it is....

For those few of you who still recall a time when “lsd” didn’t mean a hallucinogen, you probably learned to do calculations, not just in the modern, simplistic metric system (always using base 10) but also, handling “£ s d”, a system using bases of 4 (farthings) 12 (denarius or pence) and 20 (sesterces or shillings) all on the way to the pounds.

And when you consider that a junior arithmetic lesson involved, not only money, as above, but a weight system using bases of 16 (ounces to the pound), 14 (pounds to the stone), 8 stones to the hundredweight, etc., one does tend to look askance at the young boulanger’s assistant as he gets out his calculator to work out the cost of a baguette and two croissants.

Maxine Arnoult

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### The Last Laugh:



#### 34 - At the Police Station - A Missing Person.

**Husband:** I want to report a missing person.

**Policeman:** Yes sir. Who's missing?

**Husband:** My wife. She went shopping two days ago and hasn't come back.

**Policeman:** That is a bit long for a shopping expedition. You'd better let me have a description. What's her height?

**Husband:** I'm not sure. I've never asked her. Maybe your height.

**Policeman:** And her build; Is she thin or stout? How much does she weigh?

**Husband:** I've no idea. She's not thin but I don't think you'd say she was stout either...

**Policeman:** What colour are her eyes?

**Husband:** Sort of brown I think, or rather more greenish maybe.

**Policeman:** Hair colour?

**Husband:** Couldn't say. She gets it dyed every few weeks and it changes.

**Policeman:** What was she wearing?

**Husband:** A dress, or maybe it was trousers and some sort of top.

**Policeman:** Was she on foot or did she go by car?

**Husband:** She took my car.

**Policeman:** Describe the car please.

**Husband:** It's a Nogaro blue Audi RS4 V6 Bi-Turbo 2.7-litre, 380 hp with semi-automatic 6-speed transmission. It has red leather seats, LED headlights and integrated GPS. There's a slight scratch on the passenger side door.

**Policeman:** Don't worry sir. We'll soon get your car back for you.

Mark Yates

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### *Janet's March Quiz: Answers :*

1. Daffodil
2. 1<sup>st</sup> March
3. Little Women (by Louisa May Alcott)
4. Finnish
5. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (by Lewis Carroll)
6. National No Smoking Day
7. Fredric March
8. Aquamarine or bloodstone





9. War
10. Pisces (until March 20) and Aries (March 21 onwards)
11. Books (it's World Book Day)
12. 15<sup>th</sup> March
13. Lamb
14. An 'iron curtain' ( he was speaking in Fulton, Missouri)
15. Emily Dickinson
16. 17<sup>th</sup> March
17. Lady Day
18. Cornwall

***Comments & contributions to [mfyates@gmail.com](mailto:mfyates@gmail.com)  
Back numbers: [rblfrance.org/](http://rblfrance.org/) then "Paris Branch Newsletters"***