



THE FRENCH CONNECTION
WRINGTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION
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News from The French Connection/VLB

- Jane Finn writes: A scheduled zoom meeting between Wrington and Villeneuve took place recently. The theme for discussion was rugby and Villeneuve turned up in rugby gear! It became clear that Villeneuve are extremely passionate about this subject and showed a huge depth of knowledge. Wrington were able to demonstrate their knowledge with both personal experiences and even a short quiz. Fun was had by all with a good level of banter. The next zoom meeting is set for Monday 20th September with a topic of 'Cooking Tips'. If you would like to join in please contact: jane@wringtontwinning.co.uk

News from France

- France introduced a red-amber-green travel system on June 9 that, like the UK's system, classifies countries depending on their Covid-19 risk factor. It has since updated the rules several times. Rules for travelling between France and green countries are the most relaxed, and rules for travelling between France and red countries are the strictest.
- France is strengthening its Covid-19 testing, tracing and isolating measures as cases of the Delta variant continue to rise and the summer tourist season begins.
- A deal has been signed on driving licences. Thousands of British drivers will not have to swap their UK licences for French ones..
- The deadline to apply for a Withdrawal Agreement residency card has been extended from June 30 to September 30,
- More areas around France are reinstating mandatory mask wearing rules outdoors. The Var is one of the latest *départements* to bring back the measure in 58 of its communes. This follows similar moves by Pyrénées-Orientales, Hérault, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Charente-Maritime. Monaco has also made masks mandatory in all outdoor public areas.

NOTAIRES

If you are involved in property transactions or the administration of a deceased's estate in France the one professional person you will inevitably be in contact with is a *notaire*. The *notaire* is a lawyer who is a public official and who, as well as dealing with other non-contentious legal matters, has a monopoly of what we would call conveyancing and probate work as well as some corporate work. To become a *notaire* attendance at a special notarial school is necessary. There is also a problem of 'dead mens' shoes' since the number of notarial offices in each area is regulated, so the would-be *notaire* has to wait for an office to become vacant and, perhaps, pay a premium to the outgoing *notaire* to take over his practice. Until this happens he may have to be content to be a *clerc* in another notarial office. Until relatively recently notarial offices tended to be small practices, with perhaps just one or two *notaires*. Many still are but in recent years a number of larger, more sophisticated and more specialised notarial practices have appeared.

It is quite normal for the same notary to act for both parties to a transaction. In such a case he has a duty to act impartially as between the parties. In a property transaction it is the seller who has the right to designate the *notaire* who will deal with it. Strictly speaking the *notaire* is there to record the details of the transaction rather than to give advice. Some *notaires* hide behind this rule to avoid giving tax or other advice, or to avoid having to favour one party to the detriment of the other. However, especially in complicated or high value

property transactions it is now common for each party to appoint their own *notaire*, who will then have the task of representing that party's interests. In this case the *notaires* must agree between themselves how to divide the work between them and how to share the fee. In a property transaction there is only one fee and this must be shared between all the *notaires* who are involved.

The fees for work for which *notaires* have a monopoly are fixed by law, based on the value of the transaction. If a *notaire* agrees to give advice outside the strict scope of effecting the transaction his fee for this additional work is a matter for agreement between the *notaire* and the client and it is a good idea to get it agreed in advance. The total transactional costs of a property purchase (payable in full by the buyer in the absence of a contrary agreement) amount to about 8% of the purchase price and are collected by the *notaire* at completion. This includes the taxes attracted by the transaction (other than any capital gains tax, payable by the seller). Of this amount, only around 2% of the value of the transaction is the *notaire's* fee. The rest are taxes and other costs.

As in all walks of professional life there are some excellent *notaires* and some very poor ones. One of the main complaints against them is slowness in dealing with matters and poor communication. They are not generally renowned for their linguistic ability although, especially in areas where there is a high volume of property transactions involving British people, it is increasingly common to find notarial offices that can work in English.

Les Landes

Les Landes is part of the Aquitaine region, bordered by the Gironde River to the north, the *Pyrénées Atlantiques* to the south, the Lot and Garonne and the Gers to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. It forms a large triangle approximately 220 km long and about 100 km wide, characterised in the main by extensive forest. This forest is one of the largest in Europe and largely consists of maritime pines with the *Parc Naturel régional des Landes de Gascogne*. The coastal area is characterised by water, wind and sand, the Atlantic Ocean, many lakes, (where African migratory birds break their journey), dunes and forest. The beaches claim to be the largest in Europe and attract more than 7 million tourists during the summer. The south and east of the region are green and hilly with agricultural land, (mainly sweet corn and kiwi crops), beef and duck farming. This is a haven of green tourism with the vineyards of the *Bas Armagnac* and others.

The town of Dax claims to be the main spa resort in France.



Dax

The local climate is influenced by the Atlantic, which borders the *département* to the west. It is mild and oceanic: rainy and windy in autumn and in winter, warm and often wet and stormy in summer. In recent years there have been some notable extreme weather events such as the -23°C recorded at *Mont de Marsan* during the winter of 1985, and over 40° in the summer of 2003. There can be violent thunderstorms in summer and severe storms in autumn and winter. In January 2009 Storm Klaus brought

winds of 170 km/h that flattened millions of trees and it was estimated that 60% of Les Landes forest was destroyed.

French TV to Binge on!

Shail Patel writes: Like everyone else you are probably spending a lot more time outdoors these gorgeous summer days. If the weather breaks and you're stuck inside on a rainy day, or if sadly you are self isolating and in need of some essential TV to binge on, here are a few recommendations. The quality of French cinema has worldwide recognition, but lately some excellent French TV series are beginning to make their presence felt. There are many rave reviews online - here are my personal thoughts:

Call my agent (Dix pour cent, Netflix) This comedy-drama series has it all. It's funny, witty, touchingly personal, and with a sharp dialogue and French focus on relationships it's not to be missed. The story revolves around a struggling acting agency, and as such is deliciously self-referential and a beautifully crafted entry into a world of scheming, double-crossing, conniving but gold-hearted mavericks. The characters are all gorgeously French and it's a joy to be part of their lives. They might be going through relationship hell, professional nightmares, and financial crises, but none of it really matters because they are in Paris - so life is beautiful whatever happens. There are celebrity cameos every episode and you'll see the human side of famous actors and actresses such as Juliette Binoche, Audrey Fleurot, Sigourney Weaver, Isabelle Adjani, Jean Dujardin, Isabelle Huppert, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Christophe Lambert plus many more - and one has to wonder to what extent they are acting themselves, or just being themselves. All four series are on Netflix.

Missions (BBC I Player) This little gem crept quietly onto our screens last October, and passed largely unnoticed, at least by yours truly. French science fiction - who would've thought? - and before you turn away and say it's not for me, Sally liked it too. It borrows from 2001, Solaris, and many other classics but still manages to occupy a distinctly French niche: relationships on Mars if you will. Leaning more towards fiction than science the plot twists and turns and there's never a dull moment. The cinematography is beautiful, and with a focus on the personal drama rather than off-putting CGI or ridiculous action shots it deserves more attention. It's little known at the moment, so remember you heard about it here first. The 10 episodes of series 1 last only 25 minutes each and these rock on at a cracking pace, series 2 airs on BBC4 from 28 July - Enjoy

Lupin (Netflix) This feel good Robin Hood / heist series has become, perhaps a little unexpectedly, a smash Netflix hit and the first French series to crack the US top 10. The lead actor, Omar Sy, is hugely likeable and fills the screen with his indelible optimism and joie de vivre. He towers over his scene partners, literally and figuratively, perpetually unreadable yet brimming with charisma. His character, Assane Diop, is a con man with big heart. The biggest draw is the allure of the gentleman thief, dating back to the eponymous Arsène Lupin, the hero of Maurice Leblanc's 1905 books. The hook is in the Hollywood slickness of Assane's scheming and the illusion of dauntless competency under pressure (think Ocean's Eleven) - similar perhaps to Idris Elba in Luther, possibly Assane's clearest TV antecedent. The baddies have a two-dimensional cartoon feel to them, and the scrapes and escapes can feel a little far-fetched, but the social issues are personal and real and somehow the whole thing hangs together in a massively satisfying way. The two series of five episodes each are on Netflix.

Spirals (Engrenages), (BBC I Player) Billed as the French counterpart to The Wire this police drama doesn't shirk from French police brutality, gratuitous racism, and in-your-

face rawness of life. It's dark and twisted yet utterly compelling viewing. Like everything French it's all about the relationships. The characters are complex and multi-dimensional, nothing and no-one is quite what they seem, and everyone operates according to their own agenda. Paris itself stars: the most romanticised city in the world is shown with all its warts - there is no cheesy Stella accordion music here. We see the underbelly of anonymous hotels, sleeping bags under flyovers, sleazy bars, derelict sites and we feel for the people caught up in them. We also get a fascinating view into the French legal system, where the French police work closely with the judiciary. Some big names star: Audrey Fleurot, Caroline Proust, Phillipe Duclos. All eight series are on iPlayer if you need something to get your teeth into.

Garages before computerised diagnostics

Truc de pro: Pour réussir à vidanger complètement l'huile usée, presser au maximum.



Could this be a Citroën pressée?

ANTHONY HANCOCK

