



# **THE FRENCH CONNECTION**

*(incorporating Wrington Twinning Association)*

**NEWSLETTER January 2023**

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**Bonne Année à Tous!!**



*Welcome all Francophiles* into 2023, with health and prosperity. Bonne Année!

January 1<sup>st</sup> has only been the official start of the new year since 1564 in France, standardized by King Charles IX. New Year's celebrations are tied up with the feast day of Saint Sylvestre, who was important for being Pope when the Romans accepted Christianity as their official religion. He was the 33<sup>rd</sup> Pope and was in office for 22 years (314–335 AD). His feast day is 31<sup>st</sup> December, and survives from the Gregorian calendar, when New Year's Day was March 1<sup>st</sup>.

The French give gifts at New Year, and it is considered auspicious to dine together, a meal of, among other things, pancakes, foie gras and champagne. This is called *Le Réveillon de Saint Sylvestre*, and to share the occasion with others is thought to bring health and prosperity for the year to come.

Kissing under the mistletoe is a new year's tradition in France, not a Christmas one, and happens at midnight at the end of the New Year's Eve feast. This can be anything from an intimate dinner to a *soirée dansante*.

A village in the *Hautes-Pyrénées* region, near the Spanish border, called Vieilla, has a special new year tradition. There is a church service late in the evening, a little like midnight mass at Christmas. Afterwards, there is a torchlight procession to the local vineyards and the new year grape harvest begins at midnight. The grapes having matured naturally on the vines, the resulting wine is strong and sweet, and bottles are specially labelled to show that they were harvested on New Year's Day.

## News from France

The nation remains *en deuil* for losing the World Cup to Argentina. *Dommage!*

France has signed a deal to sell two space observation satellites to Poland.

There are rail strikes in France., as well as in the UK. Christmas weekend was horribly disrupted by a strike of ticket controllers. Train drivers have, however, reached a deal and called off the strike planned for the New Year weekend.



*Photo copyright Lewis Joly*

France's 'energy sobriety' policy of switching off public lighting earlier at night, or in the early hours of the morning, has resulted in a 20% decrease in consumption during the dark hours. Result! (Is our Department of Energy taking notice?) The bad news is that France's nuclear energy plants are experiencing maintenance and breakdown problems, leaving 13 of them currently shut down.

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## **Cultural News**

There is a fascinating exhibition in Paris of light sculptures, that is, working lights, mostly wall-mounted, that are sculptural as well as functional. The artist is the Belgian designer Arnaud Eubelen:

**'Arnaud Eubelen: A Night Street Walk' – Tools Galerie, 8 rue Alfred de Vigny, 75008 Paris.**

"The street is like a hardware store for me," declares Belgian designer Arnaud Eubelen at the opening of his solo show, 'A Night Street Walk', at Tools Galerie. "Near my atelier there are lots of things that people throw away. I try to highlight these discarded elements by assembling things based on what I've seen in everyday life in the city."



Arnaud Eubelen, 'Facade', 2022  
COURTESY: Arnaud Eubelen & Tools Galerie

## NEWS from VILLENEUVE-les-BÉZIERS

The 'Mayor's Vow' ceremony will take place on January 7<sup>th</sup> this year, the first time since before the pandemic that there will be a gathering in person.



SATURDAY JANUARY 7, 2023

MEETING 6 p.m.  
SPACE OF FREEDOMS  
Salle Gérard Saumade

### MAYOR'S VOW CEREMONY

The municipality invites all the inhabitants of the commune for the ceremony of the Mayor's wishes which will be followed by an aperitif dinner, a moment of conviviality to celebrate this new year and the pleasure for the Mayor, Fabrice Solans, to address his fellow citizens face-to-face after 2 years when the pandemic did not allow it.

Let's celebrate together a new year with beautiful constructive projects for our commune!

## Conversations with our friends in VLB

No dates so far for 2023, but perhaps in the next newsletter. If in the meantime you would like to know more about how the conversations work, please contact Jane Finn on [jane finn20@hotmail.com](mailto:jane finn20@hotmail.com) .

**The French Connection** is looking for new committee members to take us forward into a new, fresh phase. The only obligatory attendance is at one meeting a year, the Committee is friendly, and duties are not onerous, but there is potential for interest and excitement for Francophiles in the region. We are all enthusiasts! If you would like to discuss this, please email [secretary@wringtontwinning.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wringtontwinning.co.uk).

### French Conversation

We shall meet on Tuesday 24 January at 3pm at the Langford Inn. If you haven't been before and would like to come along, we are a friendly group and French is spoken at all levels, from hesitant to fluent. Why not give it a try? You can have a chat about it with Margaret Hancock at [margaretdivonne@gmail.com](mailto:margaretdivonne@gmail.com) .

### Saturday mornings at Mère Poulet

Sophie at Mother Hen in Wrigton is very proud of the *chocolat chaud de bon qualité* that she serves on a Saturday morning, with, of course, croissants. From 10am, this is a must for the Wrigton Francophiles.

### Cinéphiles de Wrigton

The next meeting will be on **Tuesday 10th January at 5pm** on Zoom. The film is a classic of the 'New Wave', *Jules et Jim* (1962), directed by François Truffaut, starring Jeanne Moreau, Oskar Werner and Henri Serre. It has been chosen by Renée Bolton, who will introduce the film and lead the discussion.

**Cinéphiles is looking for a new convenor.** Shail Patel set it up during the pandemic and has done a great job in raising enthusiasm for French film. His charity involvements leave him less time now, however, and he would like someone to take it over. It has a very good following, and we watch a wide variety of French films, or films set in/about France. Anyone is welcome. Each month a different member chooses the film, and the programme is set several months in advance, usually for the whole year. It is only a monthly commitment to attend, and to send out the reminder to members and attenders. Would anyone like to take this over? If so, please email [shail@wringtontwinning.co.uk](mailto:shail@wringtontwinning.co.uk) .

**Please note the universal log-in for all French Connection and Wrington Twinning Association Zoom meetings, whether committee, conversation or Cinéphiles:**

<https://zoom.us/j/4933115546?pwd=bmhLSnZrSkIPRHZhRjhQaFFNczJHZz09>

Meeting ID: 493 311 5546

Passcode: 610359

One tap mobile

+442080806592,,4933115546#,,,\*610359# United Kingdom

+443300885830,,4933115546#,,,\*610359# United Kingdom

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## **Recipe of the month**

This month a good recipe for using up leftover cheese from your Christmas cheeseboard. It is a savoury variation of Tarte Tatin and comes from Sarah Raven.

### **Shallot Tatin with leftover soft cheese**



### Serves 6

- 450g shallots
- 175g leftover soft cheese, such as Brie or Camembert
- 40g butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon soft brown sugar
- salt and black pepper
- 500g puff pastry (make your own if you can)

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6.

Peel the shallots, leaving them whole. Cook in boiling water for 7-10 mins depending on size. Drain and put to one side.

Heat the butter and oil in an ovenproof pan or a frying pan with a detachable handle. When the butter has melted, sprinkle in the sugar and allow it to dissolve gently before adding the shallots. Season well with salt and pepper and allow the shallots to cook until they are a rich golden caramel. Remove from the heat.

Roll out the pastry on a floured board to a circle a bit bigger than the pan. Spread the cheese, cut into thickish slices, over the shallots and lay the pastry over the top, pressing it down slightly all around the edge.

Bake in a preheated oven for about 25 minutes, or until risen and golden.

Allow it to cool a little and then put a large serving plate over the pan and invert it quickly so that the shallots are on the top, with the pastry underneath. Serve the tart warm.

*This recipe appears on p225 of Sarah's Complete Christmas book*

## Wine of the Month

This month we are going for a versatile wine that will certainly match the dish above, and goes well with your cheese board, with cold cuts and pies, with poultry and with game. The French like to drink red wine with all meat, whatever the hue, and a medium-bodied glass is just the tickets for the wide variety of Christmas food that hangs around at this time of year. It is Beaujolais, and I am recommending Fortnum and Mason's 2020 Origine Protégée. It comes from the vineyard of Dominique Piron and is amazingly good value at £10.50.





### **Le mot juste**

This month we are considering some words associated with heat. *Torréfier* means to roast, usually used in relation to coffee, so a dry roast, probably also applied to peanuts. In English we rarely, but occasionally use the word 'torrefied' to apply to a roasted grain in, for example, specialist beers. *Torride* means torrid, scorching, as in English. The same root forms the word *la torche*, meaning torch, and *la torchère*, meaning flare. Don't, however, be tempted to use the verb *torcher* in the sense of 'to torch', to set fire to. *Torcher* is a false friend. It means 'to wipe'. Thus, *le torchon* is a duster, or cloth. However, the phrase *le torchon brûle entre eux* means 'they are at daggers drawn', so a bit of heat remains in the word from long ago.

*Lindsey Shaw-Miller, Newsletter Editor, The French Connection.*

