



THE FRENCH CONNECTION
WRINGTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION
The John Locke Room, Silver Street, Wrington BS40 5QE
NEWSLETTER MJUNE 2021

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News from The French Connection

- **Jane Finn writes:** Finally set up our first meeting with VLB. **6pm on 7th June.** The idea is to have something prepared in French or English to introduce yourself and give a brief outline of your life in lockdown i.e. any new hobbies, etc. The two hosts will translate this if required. If you feel this may be too much you could join as a spectator for the first zoom. We also hope to discuss the planned trip from VLB to join us for the Wrington Fair next year. It is hoped they will join us for a weekend and join in our festivities. Please let me know if you would like to join in this Zoom call - do hope so. Looking forward to our first chat. jane finn20@hotmail.co.uk

- **Lindsey Shaw-Miller writes: CINÉPHILES de WRINGTON.** We are a newly formed group of friendly *cinéphiles* who meet once a month, on the first Tuesday, to discuss a French film which we have all watched. The films are readily available on one or more of Netflix, Amazon, YouTube, BBC I Player, ITV Hub, Channel Four Films and Disney Plus. If a non-subscriber's charge is made it is rarely more than £2.50. Each member nominates a film in rotation. Discussion is mostly in English with occasional lapses into French, which makes for a variegated mix of language without the pressure to make complex points in French. Good humour prevails, even with controversy, and each of us leaves the meeting having learnt something about the film that we had not seen for ourselves.
To date we have watched *La Délicatesse* (2011) directed by David and Stéphane Foenkinos, starring Audrey Tautou and the Belgian actor François Damiens. This is an unusual love story, both sad and funny, which compromises conventional ideas of socially acceptable romance. We took issue with the English translation of the title, *Delicacy*, which inadequately expresses the more subtle French meaning of tact and diplomacy, qualities that are crucial to the hero's understated appeal.
Des Hommes et des Dieux, 2010, directed by Xavier Beauvois and starring Lambert Wilson and Michael Lonsdale (who recently died) is a beautifully composed film, based on a true story about a Cistercian monastery in Algeria during the civil war of 1996. Set in the village of Tibhérine, the monastery was deeply involved with the local community and inevitably caught up in the war, not least because it was a valuable source of medical aid. The tragedy of the story was made affirmative by the astonishing performances, and by the subtle wisdom of the main characters.
Our most recent film was *Jean de Florette* (1986), Claude Berri's adaptation of Marcel Pagnol's novel, starring Gérard Dépardieu, Elisabeth Dépardieu, Daniel Auteuil and Yves Montand. Most of us had seen it when we were young, and most people also watched Part II, *Manon des Sources*, starring Emmanuelle Béart, as the two films were released at the same time. Pagnol conceived *Manon des Sources* as a film and shot it in 1952, but at four hours it was too long and subsequently not shown. That disappointment led him to write it as a novel, with *Jean de Florette* as its prequel. The two were published as one novel, called *l'Eau des collines*. Berri's epic treatment of the story, set in a small Provençal community but with Verdi's *La Force du Destin* as the basis of the score, is on the

scale of Greek tragedy and had an impact on us all. As usual, there were different perspectives and points of interest, and a fascination to the things we remembered and others which struck us afresh.

The next film watching is *L'Ascension* (2017), described as an 'adventure comedy' and based on a true story about a young Senegalese Parisian, Nadir Dendoune, who climbed Everest as a gesture of love. It is directed by Ludovic Bernard and is available on Netflix and YouTube. Do join us if you would like to, by sending an email to Shail Patel: shail@wringtontwinning.co.uk

More TFC news can be found on the Twinning Committee website (address given above).

News from France

- As from 31st May people are allowed to enter France from Britain only for essential reasons. These do not include holidays or visiting second homes, nor do they include family reasons.
- Following the UK's departure from the EU, British citizens living in France now need a residence card, even if they have already had a *carte de séjour*. Applications are necessary under the Withdrawal Agreement for people who settled in France before December 31 2020. The deadline for applications is June 30.
- France is to confer a special status on health and care workers who have died from Covid-19, meaning their children will be entitled to financial and other support from the state. They will be said to have 'died in the service of the Republic', a recognition similar to that which already exists for police and the military who die in service. Anyone killed in battle is said to have 'died for France'.
- France has set up extra Covid testing centres after a cluster of around 50 people in Bordeaux were found to be positive with a new virus variant described by the regional health authority as "very rare."
- A new travel pass will come into effect on June 9 to allow access to events with over 1,000 people and travel within the EU. There will also be a digital check-in tool for bars, restaurants and gyms to help track Covid-19 cases
- Bars and restaurants in France are now allowed to reopen.



Napoléon

5th May marked the 200th anniversary of the death of Napoléon



Few people have so deeply marked French history in the 19th century or provoked so much controversy as he did. He was born in 1769 in Corsica as Napoléon di Buonaparte. He became a political and military leader and played a major role in ensuring the success of the French Revolution, as a result of which he was named First Consul of France. However, despite the aims of the revolutionaries to turn France into a republic, in 1804 he became Napoléon I, Emperor of France.

He was a gifted administrator and was responsible for the codification of French civil law. The *Code Napoléon* has been adopted by a number of civil law countries.

He fought and won a number of military campaigns and built a large empire that ruled over continental Europe before its final collapse in 1815.

He launched an invasion of Russia in 1812. It was a catastrophe that caused the retreat of the Grande Armée. His enemies Prussia and Austria then joined Russian forces in 1813 in a Sixth Coalition against France. France was defeated at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 and the Coalition captured Paris. Napoléon was forced to abdicate in April 1814 and was exiled to the island of Elba. (You may ask if this was the origin of the famous palindrome "*Able was I ere I saw Elba*"). He escaped from Elba in February 1815 and landed in France at Cap Juan, from where he began his famous march via Grenoble to Paris, which is well documented in our fellow TFC member, John Urquhart's excellent book, 'Route Napoleon' (John's book is no longer available commercially but he still has a few CD audio versions of it and has kindly offered to give one of these to any member who would like one. If you would like to have one please send an email to the address shown above). Having arrived in Paris Napoléon managed to take control of France once more. The Allies responded by forming a new coalition, which ultimately defeated him at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. This battle is recorded in British history books as a major British victory, although, without the support of the Prussians who were also there the result might have been different. The British exiled Napoléon to the remote island of Saint Helena, where he remained until his death in 1821 at the age of 51. His

magnificent tomb in *Les Invalides* in Paris is now one of Paris's tourist attractions.

A snippet of musical history

Did you know that Beethoven was an admirer of Napoleon? He composed a symphony to be dedicated to him. But just before the first performance of the symphony in 1805 Napoleon had himself crowned emperor of France. Beethoven, a staunch republican, was so appalled by this that he decided not to dedicate his work to Napoleon and instead it was called simply '*Eroica*'. (heroic).

French cycle paths

The French, like us, are being encouraged to cycle more. Many amenities are provided for them.



ANTHONY HANCOCK

