

**THE FRENCH CONNECTION**  
**WRINGTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION**  
The John Locke Room, Silver Street, Wrington BS40 5QE  
**NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020**  
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**News of the French Connection**

This says it all



## Bonjour Wrington!

### A FANTASTIQUE PROGRAMME FOR 2020

"Deux Bières". Beginners French Workshop, Mother Hen Café Wrington. Starting Tues March 10 7-9pm, then fortnightly for 5 sessions. Small group (max 12), no experience necessary, focus on fun.

Monthly Events (free glass of wine). Wrington Reading Room Mar 30 7:30pm All about Villeneuve, Phil Parker & John Adams April 27 7:30pm "Blood, Sweat and Cheers!" with Luke Ford, Sutton Ridge Vineyard, a local wine grower, inc tasting session.

French Cooking Workshop, May, The Plough – details tbd  
Cooking workshop with Nathalie Grenet, the chef and proprietor of Les Enfants Terribles, an amazing restaurant in Villeneuve.

Céline Dubois, Cabaret & Musical Comedy May – details tbd  
Céline Dubois, an acclaimed and talented artist from Villeneuve, will bring her cabaret act to Wrington sometime in May.

French Corner, Wrington Fête, Court House Paddock, Wrington July 4: 2-6pm. with local and French producers of artisan food, drink etc. If you are a local producer, get in touch, we'll make it worth your while!

Plus: MONTHLY FRENCH CONVERSATION, BOULES, Film club ...

**GET IN TOUCH: £100 AVAILABLE FOR ANY GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL THAT ORGANISES A LOCAL EVENT WITH A FRENCH THEME**

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**News from France**

- Normandy is making efforts to retain its ties with Britain after Brexit. As part of its Brexit Day activity the tourist board produced a flyer with a picture of Nigel Farage wearing a Bayeux Tapestry tie. Underneath it was the legend 'Some Ties Endure'. As the head of the tourist board, Englishman Nigel Dodds said, Normandy's ties with Britain go back a long way, as far as William the Conqueror. The people of Normandy have still not forgotten the role the British army played in the D-Day landings.
- In the face of thousands of amendments designed to delay its passage the French government has announced that it will remove its bill for pension reform, which was at the root of the 'gilets jaunes' protests from parliament and bring the measures into force by decree, which it has the power to do.
- France has announced more than 80 cases of corona virus, and 2 deaths so far. Large gatherings of over 5,000 people have been prohibited, which will affect many sporting events.

**News from VLB**

- The municipal elections are due to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March. It is a two-round election, and the system allows for proportional representation, although it is not clear how such a system works in a town the size of VLB. In the next newsletter we shall be able to report on whether or not there is a new maire and town council.

- The town carnival, with 13 floats, was due to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> March and marks the beginning of Lent. Since the Revolution France has been a secular state, but, despite the fact that the teaching of religion in schools is illegal, the religious carnivals and holidays are still observed.



### The French way of death

It is never going to happen to you, but unfortunately sometimes it does. You are on holiday or at your French holiday home and unexpectedly, perhaps through an accident or an illness, somebody dies. In this unfortunate event the first step is to get a doctor to sign the death certificate (*certificat de décès*). Without it you can do very little. In the case of a road accident the police or gendarmerie will supply a certificate. We will not deal here with the subject of arranging funerals and dealing with mortuaries and funeral directors but we will assume that you wish to repatriate the body to the UK. The first step is to contact the British Embassy in Paris or the nearest British consulate. They will give guidance. A relative or other person closely associated with the deceased should contact a funeral director (*entreprise de pompes funèbres*). If the repatriation cost is covered by insurance the insurance company should be notified immediately and they will make the arrangements. Repatriation necessitates the embalming of the body. Normally, if the death was from natural causes there is no need for an inquest in the UK. In other cases an inquest may be required in the UK once the body is returned and there may be an order for a post mortem, even if one has already been performed in France. An alternative to repatriation of the body is to have a burial or a cremation in France. These can be arranged through a funeral director and, unlike in the UK, usually takes place within just a few days after the death. A burial will require the purchase or renting of a plot in a cemetery. Remember that funeral directors are businessmen and are sometimes ready to profit from the distressed state of a bereaved family. It is wise to insist on a detailed breakdown of costs in advance (a *devis*) and even, if possible to make a comparison between two or more businesses.

### A few historical facts about VLB

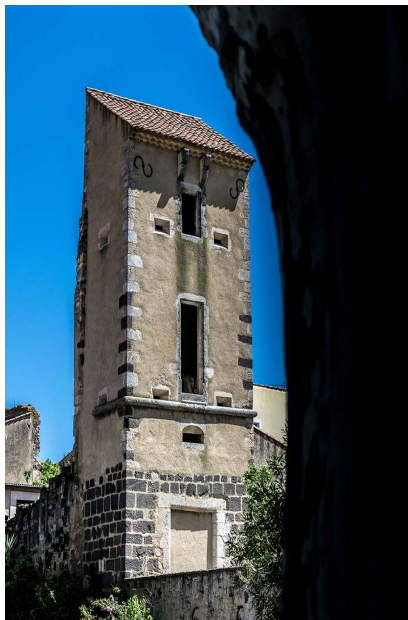
The word 'Villeneuve' comes from *ville nouvelle*, meaning 'new town'. *Ville* comes from the Latin 'villa', which originally meant 'country house' or 'farm'. The origins of the town go back to 778 AD, when the then uncultivated land on which the village stands was given by the Emperor Charlemagne to a man named Valchaire for services rendered. At that time it was called Villeneuve la Crémade, the word *Crémade* signifying that it had been burned by the troops of Simon de Montfort. It kept this name until 1631 when its name was changed to Villeneuve-lès-Béziers. The word *lès* is not a definite article. It is an old French word derived from the Latin 'latus', meaning 'close to'.

One of the landmarks of VLB is the Church of St. Etienne, a romanesque architectural relic



dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It was destroyed when the town was burned. The nave was reconstructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The tower of the château is what remains of the old château that was burned in the religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was restored and belonged in turn to several families. It gradually fell into ruin and the tower, all that was left of the old building, was given to the village in 1925, on condition that it would be properly maintained. It was restored by the commune and stands today as a monument to the past of VLB.



The tower of the château

### Praise for the French

The French liked this extract from The New York Times enough to translate and publish it. It has a ring of truth.

"La France incarne tout ce que les fanatiques religieux du monde détestent : la joie de vivre par une myriade de petites choses : le parfum d'une tasse de café et des croissants le matin, de belles femmes en robe souriant librement dans la rue, l'odeur du pain chaud, une bouteille de vin que l'on partage entre amis, quelques gouttes de parfum, les enfants qui jouent dans les jardins du Luxembourg, le droit de ne croire en aucun dieu, de se moquer des calories, de flirter, fumer et apprécier le sexe hors mariage, de prendre des vacances, de lire n'importe quel livre, d'aller à l'école gratuitement, jouer, rire, se disputer, se moquer des prelates comme des politiciens, de ne pas se soucier de la vie après la mort. Aucun pays sur terre n'a de meilleure définition de la vie que les Français".

ANTHONY HANCOCK