



THE FRENCH CONNECTION
WRINGTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION
The John Locke Room, Silver Street, Wrington BS40 5QE
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News from The French Connection and VLB

- **From Shail Patel: Cinéphiles de Wrington**
(aka Wrington French Connection Filmophiles). Have you ever watched a French film or TV? As part of our lockdown efforts we have set up a new French Film Club. The idea is a bit like a book club: each member suggests a film that everyone watches in the comfort of their home and then once a month we get together on Zoom to discuss it (in English!). The films, or TV shows, are easily available on Amazon or Netflix though this is open to expansion if everyone agrees. We have a solid critical mass and by the time you read this we will have kicked off with the first film. However there is room for a few more members and we are keen to include more people. If you think you might be interested please contact Shail Patel on chair@wringontwinning.co.uk - there is no obligation and no cost (apart from the films), and if you want to just try it out for one or two sessions that would work too.
- TFC now has a paid subscription to Zoom. This paid version is more flexible than the free version and can be used by larger groups for longer periods.
- The idea of holding Zoom meetings between groups from TFC and groups from VLB has been warmly welcomed by VLB and arrangements are in the course of being made.

News from France

- Items brought into France from the UK: Bought items - new or otherwise - must now be declared if they are above a ceiling of €430, if coming by air or sea, or €300 by car (including a car on a ferry) or by train. There are also specific rules for alcohol and cigarettes and also for cash over €10,000. Above these values, French VAT at 20% is payable on the total value of the items transported. For alcohol/tobacco however the duty free allowance remains exempt.
- Green groups are calling for Emmanuel Macron's climate bill '*Projet de loi Climat et Résilience*' to be toughened up to meet Paris COP21 obligations. The Green groups are saying that major changes are needed to meet the obligations and cut carbon emissions by 40% from 1990 levels by 2030. The proposed new law is claimed to be President Macron's key ecological law and a step towards showing voters that his pledge to "make our planet great again" was serious. It comes amid new Météo-France temperature rise predictions.
- Thousands of motor-cyclists in France have protested against a ruling that bans them from being allowed to weave in and out of other queuing or slow-moving traffic on the roads. The practice has been banned everywhere since February 1, under pain of a €135 fine and a penalty of three points off the driving licence.
- Employees such as ski chalet staff can still be sent from the UK to France with "posted worker" status under the Brexit deal - but it does not solve the work permit problem. EU posted worker arrangements allow people employed by a UK firm, and paying UK tax and national insurance, to be sent to work in France on secondment to a branch of the same company or to a French firm that then bills the UK firm for their work.

The French legal system

Unlike the common law systems of the UK, the USA and Commonwealth countries, the French legal system, like most European systems, is entirely codified. All the law is

contained in codes, statutes or legally binding decrees and the doctrine of precedent does not apply. The French Civil Code, which dates from the time of Napoleon, has been adopted with local adaptations by a number of other countries.

The court system is localised in *tribunaux de grande instance* up to the level of the Court of Appeal (*Cour d'appel*), of which there are several, each covering a group of *départements*. From there the ultimate appeal is to the *Cour de Cassation* in Paris, whose role, as its name implies, is to determine whether or not to 'break' the judgements of the lower courts. Court procedure is very different from ours. Whereas in our system court procedure is adversarial, each party arguing its own case and trying to destroy the other side's case, this is not so in France. The job of the court is to examine the evidence and establish the facts and to do this it relies largely on written pleadings (*conclusions*) submitted before the trial by each side's counsel. For criminal cases there is a preliminary investigation conducted at his office by an examining magistrate (*juge d'instruction*) who decides whether the case should go to trial. The role of our CPS is played by a *procureur de la République*, a public official to be found in each area. The result of these differences is that court cases are usually both shorter and less expensive than they would be in the UK.

Judges are not, as they are here, appointed from senior practising barristers. They are educated in their profession at the *école des magistrats* and often start their professional activity whilst still quite young. It is not unusual to hear allegations of judicial corruption, but little evidence of this is available.

The rules of evidence are also quite different. Evidence is not taken on oath and it can be in documentary form. The court decides whether or not the evidence produced is proof of what it claims. There is usually no cross-examination of witnesses. There is a jury system for criminal trials. The word *juré* means a person bound by an oath.

La Suisse Romande (French speaking Switzerland)

French speaking Switzerland is not France, but it is adjacent to France and closely tied to it historically, linguistically and culturally, so no apology is made for covering it here.



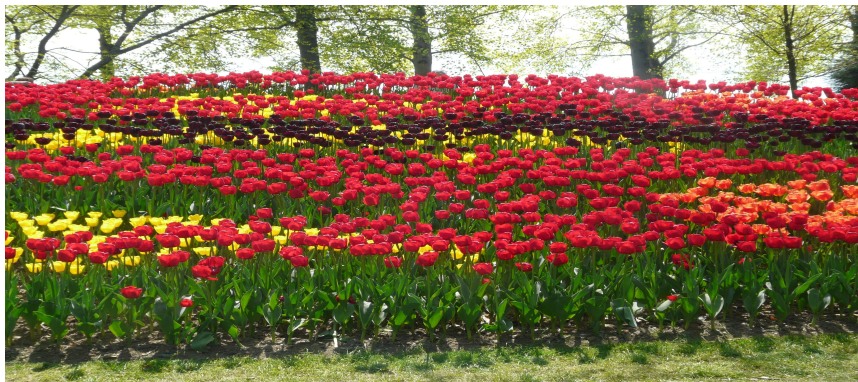
French Switzerland includes the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Neuchâtel and Jura as well as parts of the Valais, Fribourg and Berne. It covers an area smaller than German speaking Switzerland but larger than the Italian speaking Ticino and has a population of just over 2 million. The attachment of French Switzerland to the Confederation in its present form dates back to the Congress of Vienna in 1815, after the defeat of Napoleon, who had occupied the area and created the *Département du Léman*. Geneva, which, immediately prior to Napoleon had been an independent and staunchly Calvinist region, became part of Switzerland, joined to the rest of the country only by a small strip of land previously part of the French Pays de Gex. The main cities of French Switzerland are Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel and there are 2 large lakes, Lake

Geneva (most of whose southern shore and 40% of whose surface is French territory) and Lake Neuchâtel.



Lake Geneva, with Mont Blanc in the background

French Switzerland has much to offer the tourist and we can only scratch the surface here. If you fly to Geneva it is easy to explore the lakeside vineyards of the Vaud, which make largely white wine from the Chasselas grape, as well as the steeper vineyards of the Valais, which produce mainly red wines. The Vaud is sandwiched between the Alps to the South and the Jura range to the North.



Springtime in Morges on the banks of Lake Geneva

There are some spectacular views, including the magnificent Mont Blanc, about 50 km. to the South and the Jura to the North. The Jura produces its own varieties of both wine and cheese. It also offers some splendid walking opportunities. If you drive along the lakeside do not miss the wonderful Romanesque church at St. Sulpice near Lausanne, the Olympic museum in Lausanne or the interesting organ museum at Roche. Another must is the spectacular lakeside Château de Chillon, near Montreux. Lausanne has a gothic cathedral well worth visiting.



Château de Chillon

Many famous expatriates, including Charlie Chaplin and Audrey Hepburn, chose to make their home in the Vaud, mainly because of its excellent quality of life and favourable tax regime. The World's largest food-producer, Nestlé, has its headquarters at Vevey. The Vaud also hosts two internationally famous annual jazz festivals, at Montreux and Nyon as well as the celebrated classical music festival held each year in Verbier. If you are in the Vaud you must try some of their culinary specialities, such as *filets de perche*, fresh from the lake and *atriaux*, a sort of rissole made of minced pork, pork liver and spices, roasted and served in a white wine sauce.

The Valais is renowned, as well as for its wines, for its ski resorts such as Verbier and Crans Montana, situated on the lower slopes of the highest mountain in the area, Les Diablerets. Also in the Valais is the town of Martigny, home to the Gianadda Foundation, which not only has a museum of old cars and a Gallo-Roman museum, but also puts on concerts and other cultural events.

Much of the rest of the region is devoted to agriculture, although it also has the ancient town of Avenches, the old Roman capital of the area, which has a Roman amphitheatre that puts on cultural events such as open-air opera. The banks of Lake Neuchatel are less built up than Lake Geneva and there are some interesting old towns and villages around the edge of the lake. Just north of Lausanne is the lovely medieval town of Gruyères, famous for its cheese. You can visit the cheese factory. Proper Swiss Gruyères has no holes.

The official language is French, although there are some local variations from classic French, as well as a very pronounced Swiss accent. English is widely spoken. Although they speak French, the *suisses romandes* have a culture of their own, much of which is borrowed from German Switzerland.

Switzerland is not part of the EU although it is linked to it by a number of bi-lateral treaties. Nowadays it is part of the Schengen zone and EU citizens have the right to live and work there. (SEE P.S.***)



ANTHONY HANCOCK

If you are interested in learning more about the *Suisse Romande* I shall be pleased to send you an email PDF copy of my book 'Around Geneva' which covers most of the area and parts of surrounding France in much greater detail (210 pages). Just ask me by replying to the email to which this newsletter is attached.