



WRINGTON

## THE FRENCH CONNECTION



VILLENEUVE-  
LÈS-  
BÉZIERS

**Welcome to your *May* newsletter**



**Lilies of the Valley** are the flowers associated with 1<sup>st</sup> May in France, and this tradition has an interesting history going back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the reign of Charles IX, who was offered the flower when he was travelling around the Drôme region on a progress. **Le Muguet** in French has also acquired strong associations with Labour Day, which is celebrated in France with a bank holiday, although it's a tradition that was adopted from America. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the

Vichy period of the second world war, Marshal Pétain officially instated May 1<sup>st</sup> as 'Labour Day and Social Concord' as part of his policy of *Work, Family, Country* as the mantra of social loyalty and responsibility. The flower traditionally associated with the left wing of politics was the Eglantine, which is red, but Marshal Pétain replaced it with *le muguet*. After the Liberation in 1945, Labour Day was suppressed for a short time, but reinstated in 1948, since when it has been and remains a public holiday.

## NEWS FROM FRANCE



It's all about **protests**. Falling as it does on a bank holiday Monday, Labour Day has occasioned a 'tsunami of protests'. This is nationwide, but especially in Paris. In addition to the pension reform protestors, there is demonstrable opposition to the new immigration bill brought by France's Interior Minister, Gerard Darmanin, which relates especially to France's islands in the Indian Ocean, Mayotte and Comoros. <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230429-thousands-march-against-controversial-immigration-bill-in-paris>

However, the recent attempt to hijack the Coupe de France final on April 29th (Toulouse v Nantes, defending champions, Toulouse won 5–1) as a vehicle for protest seem to have fallen quite flat. In the final couple of days the police banned the protest, which still continued subversively. Président Macron was there to meet and congratulate the players, in spite of rumours that he would not do this and would enjoy special security. There were spiked metal fences installed at the base of the stands to prevent storming of the pitch. Many of the fans did not like confusing enthusiasm for sport with conviction for politics, so held off their protest voice for another occasion. It's interesting that the protestors against pension reforms are mostly young people. 64 may seem like a perfectly reasonable retirement age here, where the age keeps rising closer to 70, but for the French it's a passionate issue. Is there a kind of hope, though, that young people at the beginning of their career are looking to their future ... ?

## NEWS FROM VILLENEUVE



Alarmingly, there is already a drought warning in Villeneuve, and in the whole region of Hérault. People are being asked to save water wherever possible.

There is a series of three workshops available for senior citizens on driving in older age, with the aim of retaining mobility for as long as possible: *Prévention routière: nior, restez mobile!* Updating risk assessment, new traffic regulations, the effects of medication and fatigue, and knowledge of new equipment are all covered by the programme. This is especially timely, as there is a new system of road signs in the town. What a good idea!

The local magazine of Villeneuve lès Béziers is available to read, in French, here <https://www.calameo.com/read/005462676a07ad0b6151d>

## CULTURAL NEWS

The home of the controversial singer and songwriter Serge Gainsbourg will open to the public from September 20<sup>th</sup>. It will evoke the atmosphere and charisma of this scandalous, yet adored, creative libertine of the 60s and 70s. He wrote for his most famous partner, Jane Birkin, all his life, long after they separated; for Brigitte Bardot, Françoise Hardy, Juliette Gréco among many others, and later Whitney Houston. He was involved with art and film—his name itself, truly Ginzburg, is an adoption of Thomas Gainsborough's name, a painter whom he admired—he was always controversial, always international, and his sexual charisma spectacularly overcame his 'cauliflower-head' looks.

The house is in a lovely area of Paris, St-Thomas-d'Aquin (Septième), a 6-minute walk from St Germain-des-Près. It's a time-warp, the ashtrays reputedly still overflowing with Gitanes (he smoked five packs a day), musical instruments everywhere among Baroque statues and Gainsbourg's eclectic furnishings. It's been a site of pilgrimage since he died in 1991 at the age of 63. It belongs to his daughter, the famous anti-star actress and musician Charlotte Gainsbourg, who has held onto it as her last link with her father. During Covid she spend time in New York, and, at a distance, realized she had to let it go, both for reasons of its

heritage, and for her mental health. When asked to describe it during a televised visit in 1979 (when Charlotte was only eight), Serge said "Well, this is my house. I don't know what it is: a sitting room, a music room, a brothel, a museum."



## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

The programme published below is also fully available on the website, and thanks to **our administrator, Anne-Marie Savory**, on social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with links from the website. <https://www.facebook.com/people/French-Connection-Wrington-Twinning-Association/100089579449000/>

**See Thursday 18 May for our fun Quizz at The Plough: Le Quizz Fronsay.**

Organized by Jane Finn, it promises to be a fun evening for those whose French has rusted, and who have forgotten more than they ever knew about France.

7.30pm at The Plough, *les stylos* at the ready!

<i>May</i>			
Tue 2	CineClub 3: <i>Ma Vie de Courgette / My Life as a Courgette</i>	6.00-6.50 Zoom Film to be seen in advance individually. (Rent/buy from Amazon or elsewhere)	Contact <a href="mailto:john@wringontwinning.co.uk">john@wringontwinning.co.uk</a> for Zoom link to join discussion
Tue 9	Conversation Group	3.00 Langford Inn	
Thur 18	<b>Le Quizz Fronsay:</b> the quiz for everybody who's French has rusted through and has forgotten more than they ever knew about France'. A sociable and fun event	The Plough Start 7.30	
Thur 25	Conversation Group	3.00 Langford Inn	
	Boules		
	Virtual Villeneuve: meet the twin		Date too be confirmed
<i>June</i>			
Tue 6	CineClub 4: <i>Paris brule-t-il? Is Paris Burning</i>	6.00-6.50 Zoom Film to be seen in advance individually.	<a href="mailto:john@wringontwinning.co.uk">john@wringontwinning.co.uk</a> for Zoom link to join discussion
Tue 13	Conversation Group LUNCH	12.30 Woodford Lodge	
Thur 22	Conversation Group	3.00 Langford Inn	
Thur 15	Wine and cheese: social evening and discussion of plans for twinning events and visits 2023-34.	Doors 7.15 Start 7.30 Wrington Bowling Club clubhouse	Hold the date. Some ideas will be circulated in advance but also welcome on the night
	Boules	<i>Detail to come</i>	Contact <a href="mailto:Frank@Wringontwinning.co.uk">Frank@Wringontwinning.co.uk</a>
	Virtual Villeneuve: meet the twin	<i>Detail to come</i>	Contact: <a href="mailto:jane@wringontwinning.co.uk">jane@wringontwinning.co.uk</a>
<i>July</i>			
Tue 4	Cine Club 5: <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	6.00-6.45	Zoom
	Boules		Contact <a href="mailto:Frank@Wringontwinning.co.uk">Frank@Wringontwinning.co.uk</a>
	Virtual Villeneuve: meet the twin		Contact: <a href="mailto:jane@wringontwinning.co.uk">jane@wringontwinning.co.uk</a>



## FRENCH CONVERSATION



**Come along for some friendly and lively conversation in French. All levels are welcome, and the Langford inn is a comfortable, relaxed place to meet and share.** Dates in for the conversation group in May are:

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May, 3pm, Langford Inn**

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 3pm, Langford Inn**

For more information, please contact Margaret Hancock at [margaretdivonne@gmail.com](mailto:margaretdivonne@gmail.com).

## CINÉ CLUB

We have put back our discussion of *Ma Vie de Courgette* in order to welcome new members.



The **May** meeting will be on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm** on **Zoom** to discuss Swiss Director Claude Barras' stop-motion animation ***Ma Vie de Courgette***, a heart-warming story, set right in the world of children. It shows how their lives are affected when their parents and families are out of control, and much of it is seen from the child's point of view. It's not a depressing film, it's a hopeful tale, written by Céline Sciamma, who directed the much-fêted and rewarded *Petite Maman*.

On **June 6<sup>th</sup>** we shall discuss ***Paris, Brûle-t-il?*** Made in 1966, it is a Franco-American production directed by René Clément, with a star-studded cast of co-writers: Francis Ford Coppola, Gore Vidal, Jean Arenche, Pierre Bost and Claude Brulé. It is about the liberation of Paris in 1944, by the French Resistance and the Libération forces, and the cast list seems to contain everyone from Jean-Paul Belmondo to Orson Welles. The story is based on a book of the same name by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. We shall meet at **6pm** on **Zoom**.

**Please note there is no longer a universal log-in for French Connection and Wington Twinning Zoom meetings.** You will be sent an invitation to join, and a link, shortly before the meeting. If you are **NEW** to Ciné Club and would like to join in, please let John Adams know ([jradams@gmail.com](mailto:jradams@gmail.com)) and he will send you the Zoom invitation. Current members will automatically be informed

## Recipe of the Month



I am turning unapologetically to **Elizabeth David** this month, and for a very good reason: I think I remember correctly (please write kindly to the editor if you know this to be wrong) that **Lily of the Valley, by Penhaligon**, was her favourite perfume.

**Sorrel (*l'oseille*)** and **lovage (*la livèche*)** are two herbs which are of-the-moment in contemporary cuisine. Both are delicious, and the leaves need to be eaten young, before they become bitter. Varieties of sorrel that are available now are softer than the wild sorrel, lovage needs to be used sparingly as it has a dominant flavour that is a little like fenugreek. It can be simply torn into strips and added, judiciously, to a salad. Here, I go back to sorrel and give you Elizabeth David's recipe for **Sorrel Sauce**, taken from ***French Provincial Cooking***.

### Purée d'Oseille

Wash and chop very finely **a small handful of sorrel leaves**, not much more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. Melt it gently in  $\frac{1}{2}$  **oz butter**. Stir in, bit by bit,  $\frac{1}{4}$  **pt cream**, previously boiled (this is important, for sorrel is very acid and there is a risk of the cream curdling when the two come into contact) and then thin it with **a tablespoon or two of the stock** from the dish the sauce is to accompany—



usually veal or fish. A very excellent little sauce, which also makes, in larger quantities, **a good accompaniment to poached eggs.**

It may be hard to believe, but a purée of green gooseberries, barely sweetened, with the same additions of cream and stock, is almost indistinguishable from a sorrel purée.

## **Wines of the Midi**



**Following the highly successful and fascinating tasting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April, hosted by Mimi Avery of Averys in Bristol, we are featuring wines of the Midi.** The wines that were tasted (alongside a very funny quiz) were:

**Aimery Crémant de Limoux Brut Rosé** from the Languedoc, NV, Chenin/Chardonnay blend, 12.5% £18.99

**Vignobles Canet, Picpoul de Pinet**, Languedoc, 2022, 13% £13.49

**Grande Réserve de Gassac Blanc**, Languedoc, Vermentino blend, 2021, 13%, £12.49

**Domaine le Bac**, Languedoc, Marsanne Blend, 2021, 14%, £15.99

**Le Malbec d'Hervé**, Languedoc, Malbec, 2021, 13.5%, £12.99

**St Chinian Berloups, Vignes Royales**, Rousillon, Grenache Blend, 2019, 13.5%, £17.99

**La Fé, Madiran**, Tannat, 2018, 15%, £18.99

**The most popular wines** from the tasting were:

1st **Le Malbec d'Hervé** from Valée D'Or

2nd **Le Fé Madiran**

3rd equal **Grande Réserve de Gassac Blanc** and **Domaine le Bac Corbières Blanc**

**Wines can be ordered using this link:**

[https://www.averys.com/wines?cid=RECR/6535001&gclid=CjwKCAjwuqiiBhBtEiwATgvixAAMSaWHZJELEXwcqolqY2Z3OoFkO09RQeL4dz-o-xJoCMUsWSDL2hoCINQQA vD\\_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.averys.com/wines?cid=RECR/6535001&gclid=CjwKCAjwuqiiBhBtEiwATgvixAAMSaWHZJELEXwcqolqY2Z3OoFkO09RQeL4dz-o-xJoCMUsWSDL2hoCINQQA vD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds)

### ***Le mot juste***

*Brian le Raton Laveur* is the name of a track on an album by the French (from Montpellier) jazz trio Rémi Panossian. *Le raton laveur* is the French word for raccoon. *Raton* means rodent, and *laveur* because raccoons like to wet, or wash their food before eating it. (Incidentally, the French don't have a word for 'pet'. They use *animal familier*, *animal domestique* or *animal de compagnie*.) Ironically, given its preference for food hygiene, the raccoon is the animal blamed by the Chinese government for the origins of the Covid pandemic. While not connected

in any way to Covid, Rémi Panossian's distinctly quirky take, featured in this YouTube video, <https://youtu.be/-KPYPFuyubl>, goes a little way to rehabilitate the raccoon through the bizarre activities of Brian. Enjoy!

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