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HWu3a

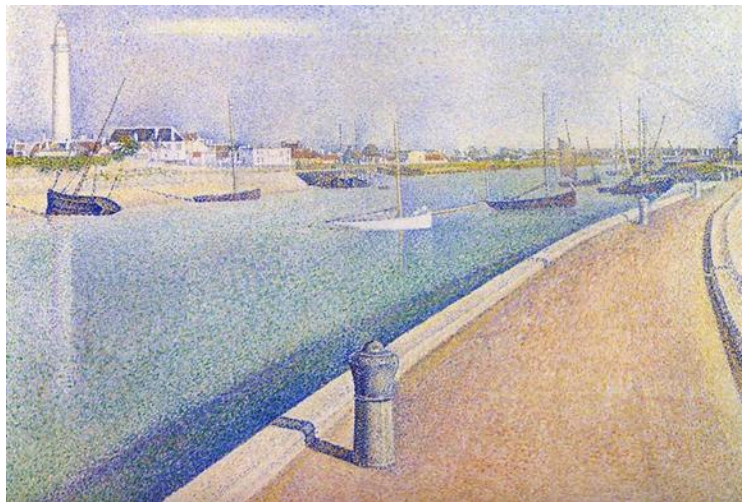
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Magazine of the
Harborough Welland u3a

Issue No. 53

Vive la France

May 2026



**Membership 2026 Fees
now due.
Payment details on P 3.**

Welcome and Committee news

Welcome to the May edition (No. 53 of the HWu3a magazine. This month's theme is **Vive La France! Thank you to all contributors.** Hoping our French ambassador to the HWU3A, Pascal Thyburm, makes a quick recovery and graces the courts at Great Bowden during Wimbledon.

David Martin, Ced Bufton Publishing team

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News from the Committee - April 2026

HWu3a AGM - 13th April 2026: Thank you to all members who voted at the recent AGM. The statistics show that 443 voted online, 55 in person and 6 by post, totalling 504 (38%). The good news is that this is more than double last year's vote, but it means that 62% of the membership did not participate. I'm sure we can do better!

New Trustees: The Committee has increased to eight members and I'd like to welcome our two newest Trustees - Ced Bufton, Marketing Officer/Magazine Co-Editor (marketing@hwu3a.org.uk and newsletter@hwu3a.org.uk) and Halina Pasiecznik, Community Outreach Facilitator/New Members Liaison (community@hwu3a.org.uk)

New Volunteers: I'm pleased to welcome two new members to the Tech Team - Gerry Growney and John Hill. Their assistance, along with Ced, will be a great help to Jim Tyson, as it means a rota system can be set up to spread the load. Gerry is also lending his support to Stephen Joy with the website.

Creative Harborough: HWu3a continues its alliance with the Creative Harborough initiative and plans are underway to participate in an event on 19th September in the Symington Building. Further details to follow soon...

Membership: Please note: Linda Reed, Membership Secretary, will be in the Lounge at the 11th May Speaker Meeting, dealing with renewals.

Other News: ❖ April Speaker Meeting: Colin Cohen, one of our members, gave us another of his popular architecture talks on 'Reasons to be Cheerful Part 2', showcasing several eye-catching buildings in and around Market Harborough. We enjoyed hearing Ian Durie and the Blockheads listing their reasons to be cheerful, then found out that we live in the 'Notswolds' (the Cotswolds, but less pricey). Colin took us through the history and architectural styles of Clipston Primary School, the Symington Building and an Arts and Crafts house in Great Bowden, to name but a few. The audience then had the chance to vote, for the second time that morning, for their favourite building and the winner was All Saints Church in Brixton, the largest surviving Anglo-Saxon building in England. We're very lucky to have all these stunning examples of architecture so close at hand. Thank you, Colin, for highlighting them and giving us such an informative talk. (Contd ..).

News from the Committee - contd

❖ PAT Testing - Monday 22nd June: All Group Coordinators who use electrical equipment, whether owned by HWu3a or themselves, have been asked to bring it to the 'Get Together' meeting where Kevin Millard has very kindly offered to carry out the obligatory tests.

Louise Elsome, Chair, Harborough Welland u3a chair@hwu3a.org.uk

By the members, for the members

Membership 2026

Membership renewal instructions have been sent to members to remind them that renewal is due by 1/6/26. Fees are £11 for full members and £8 for Associates who must be a full paying member of another u3a. Linda Reed – Membership Secretary – members@hwu3a.org.uk

You can renew online in the u3a members portal using the link below. This is quick and easy, will immediately update your membership and you will receive instant confirmation that your renewal has been processed.

1. Choose the renew your membership option.
2. Click go to PayPal, you do not have to have a PayPal account to use this option you can use guest checkout with a debit or credit card.

<https://www.u3abeacon.org.uk/u3aportal.php?u3a=609&sc=COFH>

Some of you will have used this method last year and already created a password. However, if you are trying to pay online through the members portal and have not registered to use the Portal before you will need to click on the blue "register for a membership account" link (below the forgotten password box). This will enable you to access the Portal using your membership number (you should have received a reminder email or letter which includes your membership No.), first and surnames, postcode and email. You will then be able to create a password to use for next time you enter the Portal.

If you are unable to pay via our members portal you may use one of the following methods:
By BACS - Our Account details are Bank - HSBC, account name Harborough Welland u3a, Account No. - 55150027 and Sort Code - 40-28-06. Please ensure that you include your name and Membership number as reference on your payment.

The above 2 methods are our preferred means of payment (and cost our u3a the least amount in charges), please only use one of the methods below if you really have to.

By Debit/Credit Card at one of our twice Monthly Meetings, **you cannot pay by card over the phone.** We will also accept payment by cheque, payable to Harborough Welland u3a, or cash but would prefer payment by one of the above methods in view of the high level of bank charges levied on cheque and cash deposits.

Thank you in anticipation of your renewal and continued support of your HWu3a.

*

Please help! Will Member Marion Iddison please contact Linda Reed Membership Secretary regarding your HWu3a membership.

If anyone knows her, could you please ask her to contact Linda Reed the Membership Secretary on 07986460319. We have no current contact details for her.

Vive La France! FIVE GO TO FRANCE

In May 2025, the U3a French Improvers group decided to have a few days in Paris, so that we could practise what we had been learning in class

The five of us travelled to Paris by Eurostar and checked into a boutique hotel in the Montmartre area, which was walking distance from Gare du Nord.

Having checked in to our hotel, we then found a pavement café nearby where we sat having an aperitif before having dinner in a small family run restaurant .

After dinner, we ventured to Sacre Coeur – climbing the steps to the top, then meandering around the streets of artists and bistros – before finally sitting on the steps of Sacre Coeur enjoying the view of the Parisienne skyline, and the music from students around us.

The following morning – after a continental breakfast in our hotel – we had divided activities: Tricia and I did further steps by climbing to the top of the Arc de Triomphe, while the other three visited the Tuilleries.

The view from the top of the Arc de Triomphe was fantastic, offering views in all directions, including looking along the whole of the Champs Elysees – which did not look that far from one end to the other – but was much further when walking the length of it, as we found out to our cost!

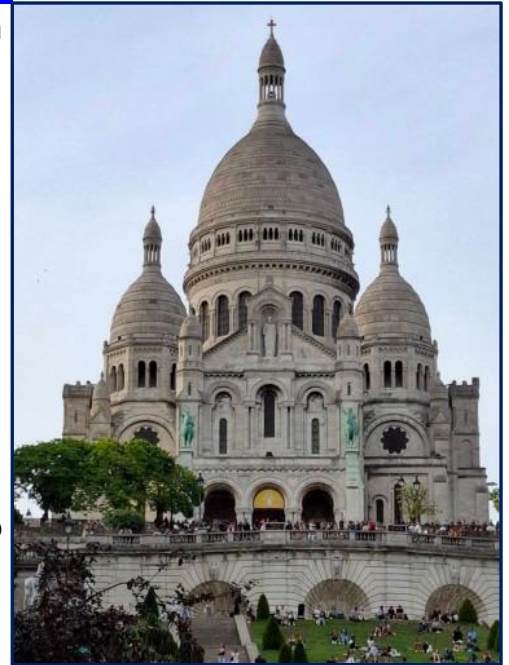
After lunch, our next port of call was a trip to the Musee d’Orsay, where we were totally in awe of the paintings on display there – by Renoir, Monet, Van Gogh and Manet – to name but a few.

From Musee d’Orsay, we wandered along the Seine towards the Eiffel Tower, where a glass of wine was called for at a nearby pavement café, before going for dinner.

The following day – our last – we were extremely lucky in that we had obtained entry tickets for the newly refurbished Notre Dame. This had to be the highlight of our time in Paris.

After a light lunch, we then caught the Eurostar back to London – then onwards to Market Harborough – arriving back early evening

Did we put our French to good use? *Mais oui!*



How our lives were changed by taking a chance on moving to France.

Anthony and Susan Saull

It was in 2005 when my husband and I decided to sell up in UK and run a bed and breakfast in France. Anthony had recently retired from working on Tower Bridge when we met on the Internet. Having been married for 2 years it was time to explore our future together. Selling our home ourselves in the Fens we told the family of our plan and were reminded that neither of us spoke any French! Our search took us to the Poitou Charente in a small hamlet near Poitiers called La Rallerie.



Chez nous—Le Tournesol

Here starts the story of 7 years of such fun living in Europe with relative ease. No Internet to begin with and not much in the way of stress, traffic or red tape. At that time many Brits were living the dream in France restoring properties and keeping village life going and we were so lucky to be surrounded by very helpful French and German neighbours. The 100 year old stone house seemed ideal for renovation and giving us an additional income as a bed and breakfast. Along the way we soon realised our budget was going to have to stretch very far. We bought a pick up van loaded with extra furniture, electrical equipment, fire grate, coal and almost the kitchen sink. I was used to basic life after farming in Malawi but think Anthony underestimated the extent of the work that was needed in order to get the tourist office and Mayor to approve our business. We called the house “Tournesol” after the large fields of beautiful sunflowers all around the countryside and the river Vienne. After only a few days in the house literally camping out it was pretty cold as the chimney smoked the minute we lit the fire!! Soon a neighbour arrived with a chimney sweep and after much laughter the job was done and we finally had a roaring log fire in the lounge only. New double glazing through the entire house also helped in the winter months. Later we were given a redundant oil boiler fired up with a tank of 1000 litres of oil from a local hospital which meant installing it in the cellar and installing over 10 old style storage radiators which did the job. The loft conversion upstairs of 15 square metres and 8 velux windows gave us 3 extra bedrooms to enable us to get the business up and running.

Vive La France! FIVE GO TO FRANCE

One essential first job too was to replace the ancient septic tank under the cellar with modern flushing toilet and link into the Hamlet's somewhat archaic 'flushable to somewhere'!

Using the French artisans meant they knew all the products to use, a dictionary was very essential to avoid any misunderstanding. One laugh was coming back to find that the new roof tiles on a massive roof had been replaced but the chimney taken away instead of the old television aerial. Needless to say we all saw the funny side of it and chimney was reinstated with a few glasses of wine to celebrate.

Before we officially opened the bed and breakfast we decided to host a pig on the spit party for the 25 hamlet neighbours to thank them for all the kindness and endless hours of help as they never accepted any payment.

A local fresh pig was sourced gallons of wine and salads, a marquee, a French band and party that went on well into the night. Guess what! They were all back the next morning to help clear up and loads of fresh croissants.

Our dial up Internet was finally replaced and the Internet cafe/coffee shop was a good source of income as well as taking care of holiday homes.

My pride and joy arrived one day yes, a left hand drive American Buick which meant I felt confident to drive in France on their beautiful roads.

A very useful Anglo/French commune was formed to enable us to learn the language, culture and the fabulous food. We totally immersed ourselves in the French way of life and soon invitations were coming from all the locals who wanted to practise their English.

Anthony was the chauffeur for the smart Buick whenever a wedding or special occasion was celebrated, the number of which seemed to be endless. Life was fun; no planning, rushing, or issues.

It was a very sad day in 2012 when we had to return to UK to look after elderly relatives and, interestingly enough, we sold the house and business to another English couple ourselves through a small advert in The Loot newspaper. The home was sold with all the lovely French furniture which we knew would never fit in a UK home.

We try to get back there to see all the French friends and always look forward to unwinding and enjoying the hospitality, wine and feeling part of the commune.

For those of you who have experienced the beauty and joy of France we will treasure the memories forever and are glad we took a chance!!!!

Vive la France! *Anthony and Susan Saull* aka Saint Antoine et Suzanne, by the French neighbours.



Why are French farmers revolting?

Where can you see David Hockney's superb *A year in Normandy* exhibition?

Answers in the online version.



Groups Notice Board

VERY IMPORTANT. Please contact the relevant Group Coordinator if you wish to join a group. Please **DO NOT** simply turn up hoping to be allowed to join on the day.

The editors thank all group coordinators for their help in updating and checking the group details listings, pages 7-9. We hope that this makes it easier for members to join any of the 90+ groups. See above. D.M & C.B.

Idea for group co-ordinators. Have you considered asking if one of your group would be interested in writing a report of your activities? It could be quite factual. This could then feature in the magazine and the HWu3a website. *D.M.*

TRIPS

TRIPS ARE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF HARBOROUGH WELLAND U3A



WORCESTER - THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2026

Worcester is a historic cathedral and university city situated on the River Severn. The medieval Cathedral houses royal tombs, a crypt and cloisters.

Cost of entry to the Cathedral is free but they ask for a donation (£7)

It is also home to the museum of Royal Worcester which tells the story of this famous porcelain in the place it was made. Cost of entry is £11.95

The coach will leave outside the Market Hall at **9am**

Cost of coach £18

To book contact Maryan Richardson Tel - 01858 462573

Email - trips1@hwu3a.org.uk

Harborough Welland u3a - Group Activities

MONDAY

Art History	Angela Deane	01858 431111	Congregation Ch	1st Monday	10.00 am
Book Talk	Andrew & Nita West	01858 461517	Lounge Room, Meth Church	1st Monday	2:00 PM
Backgammon	Peter Saunders	07341 528450	Youth Wing, Methodist Ch	1 st & 3 rd Mon	11am-1pm
Crafting for Charities	Helen Salisbury	07837 410575	Louisa's Place	3rd Monday	2.30 pm
Crafting for Charities 2	Judith Sampson	07724 807482	Louisa's Place	4th Monday	2-4 pm
French Refreshers	Rosemary Holden	07799 627145	Please call	Weekly	11.00 am
French Improvers	Julie Jarosz	01536 712119	Please call	Weekly	pm
Handbells	Helen Green	07840 543379	Various	Weekly	2-3 pm
Open Book	Judy Rowley open.books@hwu3a.org.uk		Methodist Church	2nd Monday	2 - 3.30pm
Pétanque	Kevin Millard	01858 468015	Welland Park, nr Café.	1st & 3rd Mon	10 to 2 pm
Quilty Pleasures	Diane Miles	01858 468357	Gt Bowden Village Hall	1st & 3rd Mon	2-4 pm
Sew 'n' Sew	Helen Salisbury	07837 410575	Louisa's Place	1st Monday	2-4pm
Songs of Leonard Cohen	Phil Aldridge ptaldrige@aol.com		Community Church	4th Monday	2:00 PM
Table Tennis 1	Keith Keeble	07795 434076	MH Leisure Centre	Weekly	11am-1pm
Ukuleles Introductory	David Evans	01858 463045	Community Church	1st & 3rd Mon	2-4pm
Ukuleles	David Evans	01858 463045	Community Church	2 nd & 4 th Mons	2-4 pm
Walking Football	Peter Prickett	07751 362857	Leisure Centre	Mondays	Afternoon
Wine Explorers	Louise Elsome	07740 572956	Please call	2 nd Monday	7.30 pm

TUESDAY

Architecture	Colin Cohen architecture@hwu3a.org.uk		Methodist Ch	4th Tuesday	2 pm
Art Appreciation	Hilary Bufton art.appreciation@hwu3a.org.uk		Congregational Ch: Ashley Room	4th Tuesday	2.30 - 4.30pm
German Conversation	Liam Lomasley	07772 325594	Louisa's Place	Every Tuesday	2-3.30 pm
Bookworms	Louise Elsome	07740 572956	Home-Start, 121 Coventry Rd.	2nd Tuesday	2.30 pm
Bridge – Social	Don Collins	01858 462409	Bowls Club, Little Bowden	Weekly	2:00 PM
Country Dancing	Sharon Webb	07886 855931	Congregation Ch	4th Tuesday	2-4 pm
French – Les Bavards	Sheridan New	07795 872496	Enigma Cafe	Weekly	10.30 am
Jamming Workshop	Bob Morris	07939 988595	Various	Fortnightly	10.30-12.30
Local History	Linda Swallow Local.history@hwu3a.org.uk		Congregational Church	1st Tuesday	2-3.30 pm
Music, Exploring	Kate Helm	07817 735784	Community Church	1st Tuesday	10:00 AM
Photography - Tuesday	Angela Lloyd photography.Tuesday@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Church	3rd Tuesday	2.30 pm
Choir - Ladies Choir	Liz Brett	07907 631529	Cong Church	2nd & 4th Tues	10.30 am
The Readers	Susan Trevorrow	07999 082657	Various	1st Tuesday	2.30-4.30
Tuesday Chat & Craft	Yvonne Starkey tarskey2015@gmail.com		Louisa's Café	Every Other Tues	10-11.30
Walking Half Day 2	Diana Baxter	01162 792947	Outside	1st Tuesday	Various

WEDNESDAY

Badminton	Stuart Irons	07969 833342	Meadowdale School	Weekly	5.45-7 pm
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BELLEPLATES	Pru Normand belleplates@hwu3a.org.uk Pam Duffin		Community Ch	Weds NOT 3rd	2-4 pm
Birding Wednesday	Linda Lawton birding.wednesday@hwu3a.org.uk		Outside	2nd Wed	Morning
Canasta	David Parsons 07796 816650		Little Bowden Bowls Club	Wednesday	2-4 pm
New Age Kurling	Ian Webb beacon@hwu3a.org.uk		Congregation Ch	1st Wed	2:00 PM
New Age Kurling 2	Pat Middleton 07703 399432 Julia Granger 07909 330715		Congregation Ch	3rd Wed	2-3 pm
Movie Group	Dick van Aken, Jim Tyson moviegroup@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	1st Wed	10:00 AM
On The Edge - Biographies	James Hobson onthededge@hwu3a.org.uk		The Activity Room, Methodist Church	4th Wed	2-4 pm
Quilting	Anne Parker quilting@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	3rd Wed	10:00 AM
Railway Exploration	railway.exploration@hwu3a.org.uk		Bowls Club, Little Bowden	3rd Wed	10:00 AM
Scrabble for fun	Toni Parsons 01858 431944		Community Ch	2nd & 4th Wed	10-12 am
Table Tennis 3	Jenny Acaster 07530 999850		MH Leisure Centre	Weekly	9:00 AM
Transport Group	Michael Milsom 01858 419874		Bowls Club, Little Bowden	1st Wed	10:00 AM
Walking Half Day 1	Bruce White 07919 935496 walking1.wednesday@hwu3a.org.uk		Outside	2nd Wed	Morning
Walking Wed Strollers	Linda Reed 07986 460319 Les Dodd 01858 462244		Various	2nd Wed	10.15 am
Wednesday Book Club	Jacqui Crowe wednesday.book@hwu3a.org.uk		Members homes rota basis	2nd Wed	1.30-3pm
Wednesday Chat & Craft	Adriana White newgroups@hwu3a.org.uk		Louisa's Café	Every other Wed	10-11.30
Wine Tasting	Jonathan/Naomi 01858 682133 Shaw		Please call	4 th Wednesday	Various

THURSDAY

Birding Thursday	Bruce White 07919 935496 birding.thursday@hwu3a.org.uk		Outside	3rd Thursday	Morning
Cribbage	Colin Smith cribbage@hwu3a.org.uk		Little Bowden Bowls Club	Every Thursday	10-12
Drawing & Painting	Elaine Scarlett 01858 432 029		Oxendon Village Hall	1st & 3rd Thu	Afternoon
Family History	Rob Green familyhistory@hwu3a.org.uk		Community Ch	3rd Thursday	10-12
French Conversation	Hilary Pollak 07854 120605		Please call	Weekly	2.30 pm
Garden Group	Stella Freeman 01536 760124		Meth Church (winter)	3rd Thurs	2:00 PM
History, Aspects of	Ernie Parsons 01536 760141		Desborough Town FC	Final Thurs	2:00 pm
Intermediate German	Frances Parsons 07910 029273		E-mail for venue	2nd and 4th	10-11.30
Listening to Jazz	Mike Goldsmith 01536 770122		Please call	Last Thursday	2.15-4.15
Mah Jong	Pamela Costall 07803 204464 Carole Winfield 07966 442583		Baptist Church, Coventry Rd.	2nd & 4th Thurs 2nd Thursday	9.45 am
Play Reading 1	Alan Gurr 07967 566970		Methodist Ch	2nd Thursday	10-12
Play Reading 2	Alan Gurr 07967 566970		Community Ch	2nd Thursday	2-4
Spanish Beginners	Don Collins 01858 462409		Community Ch	Weekly	2:00 PM
Spanish Improvers	Don Collins 01858 462409		Community Ch	Weekly	10:00 AM
Table Tennis 2	Sheridan New 07795 872496		MH Leisure Centre	Weekly	Midday

sheridan.new1@gmail.com

Tennis	Neil & Maggie	01858 431 665	Gt Bowden Tennis Courts	Weekly	10:00 AM
Thursday Ramblers	Helen Salisbury walking1.allday@hwu3a.org.uk	07837 410 575	Outside, various	Last Thursday	10:00 AM
Urban Thursday Walks	Gina & Graham Handsley urban.walks@hwu3a.org.uk		MH	1st Thursday	11:00 AM
Walking Half Day 4	Alan & Linda Reed walking4.thursday@hwu3a.org.uk		Outside, various	4th Thursday	Morning
Wildlife	Diana Baxter	0116 279 2947	Outside, various	2nd Thursday	Morning

FRIDAY

Creative Writing	Ann Eato/Nita West	01858 461517	MH Library	2nd Friday	2.15 pm
Cycling	Kevin Millard	01858 468015	Outside	1st & 3rd Fridays	10 am
Health & Wellbeing	Rob & Kathy Davison	07983 948392 07881 816909	Methodist Church	2nd Friday	10.30am
Photography Friday	Phil Aldridge	07734 903737	Welland Place	3rd Friday	Afternoon
Papercraft & More	Jan Collins	01858 462409	Please call	1st & 3rd Friday	Morning
Papercraft – Beginners	Jan Collins	01858 462409	Please call	2nd & 4th Fri	Morning
Discovering Poetry	Jill Hart	01858 469663	Meth Church, Upper Room	1st Friday	10:00 AM
Sequence Dance	Christine Morris and Julie Holmes sequence.dance@hwu3a.org.uk		Little Bowden Bowls Club	1st & 3rd Fridays	4–5.30pm
Singing for Fun	George Cashell	01858 467616	Methodist Church	2nd & 4th Fri	Afternoon
Society Today	Martin Gossage society.today@hwu3a.org.uk		Methodist Ch, Activity Room	3rd Friday	2-4 pm
Vegetarian & Vegan	Chris Hobson	01858 289784	Various	3rd Friday	12-2pm
Walking, Fri Strollers	Carol Harvey Michael Parsons	07855 738706 07940 185429	Outside	2nd Friday	10.15 am

SUNDAY

Singles Sunday Lunch	Vivienne Murphy	01536 771410	Various	1 st , 3 rd & 4 th Sundays	Various
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OTHER

Do It Again Group	doitagaingroup@hwu3a.org.uk		Various	Various	Various
Drones & Photography	Terry Eato	07943 732841	Outside	Various	Various
Evening Activities	Yvonne Starkey evening.activities@hwu3a.org.uk		Various	Various	Various
Holiday Group	Maryan Richardson trips1@hwu3a.org.uk		Advertised to group	Normally 5 days	Various
New Experiences	Kevin Millard	01858 468015	Various	Various	Various
Trips	Maryan Richardson trips1@hwu3a.org.uk		See Events List	As advertised for each trip	
Walking – Evening	David Martin	01858 440530	Outside, summer	Various	Various

Vive La France – Mike Goldsmith

I love France – and indeed it is a second home for me. We have had a house there for over 30 years. Our married daughters have lived there for over 20 years and our five grandchildren are all French educated and bilingual to boot! And despite our limited French we have acquired many French friends, both locally and more widely in France.

I first went to France as a fifteen year old exchange student, visiting Paris and immediately fell in love with the city. Subsequently as a university student I spent summer vacations there, eeking out an existence as a ‘tourist guide’ working outside the Louvre. Later I was there for conferences, and at the turn of the millennium was lucky enough for four years to spend three months a year working in the city. Its many art galleries and museums helped fill my spare time during the day, whilst its jazz clubs allowed me to hear musicians I would never hear in the UK. And of course its various neighbourhoods have cafes and restaurants that provide excellent food and wine. So if the saying that the man who falls out of love with London falls out of love with life is true, it’s even truer for me if applied to Paris.

But I was also able to visit other cities in France, such as Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lille, Lyon, Rennes and Strasbourg. In the early 1980s my wife decided we would take holidays abroad on the grounds that I couldn’t possibly be called back to work if I was out of the country – something which seemed to happen when we stayed in the UK. We got to visit Normandy, Alsace, the Charente Maritime near La Rochelle, parts of the South of France (Carcassonne, Avignon, Nimes), and as a result we decided that we should look for a second home in France. Talking with a French friend about looking for a place in the Charente, he told us that, if we didn’t find somewhere there, we should look in Brittany.

The following year we had a list of ten places to visit there : at number 8 after looking around the garden and house, my wife said ‘I could live here’ – so an offer was made and accepted. And so we became the owners of a three bedroomed house plus large garden in the middle of a very small hamlet (summer population about 40, winter half that number), about 8 kilometres from the nearest town.



Each French region has its own culture and often its own language, so that of Alsace is very different from that of the centre and that in turn from that of the South West, many with their own wine and specials foods. Brittany is no different. It has its own language (Breton), which was banned from being taught for some years after the second World war to avoid any possibility of Breton independence. It’s a major food producing area for the country, and indeed our house neighbours a pig factory, though we have never seen a pig! It has its own food – crepes being the prime example-, as well as its own music, much featuring the bombard, a bagpipe type instrument which one of our grandsons now plays in public. It has its own traditional dress, often worn at fetes of various kinds. Given Brittany’s Celtic links, it’s no surprise that it holds a huge Celtic festival in Lorient each year, attracting participants and visitors not only from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, the West Country, but also from countries further apart as well.

(Contd ...)

Vive la France!



Our hamlet has its own annual fete des voisins, which starts around lunchtime with all the residents present, features pork on the menu and lots of alcohol, and normally ends somewhere in the middle of the night!

Though well known for its cheeses (over 300 of them), perhaps France is best known for its wine, whether it be those around Bordeaux (claret); Dijon (Burgundy wines which took me ages to understand); the Rhone valley with its Cotes du Rhone and Beaujolais wines; Alsace (Reisling and Pinot Noir) and Rheims

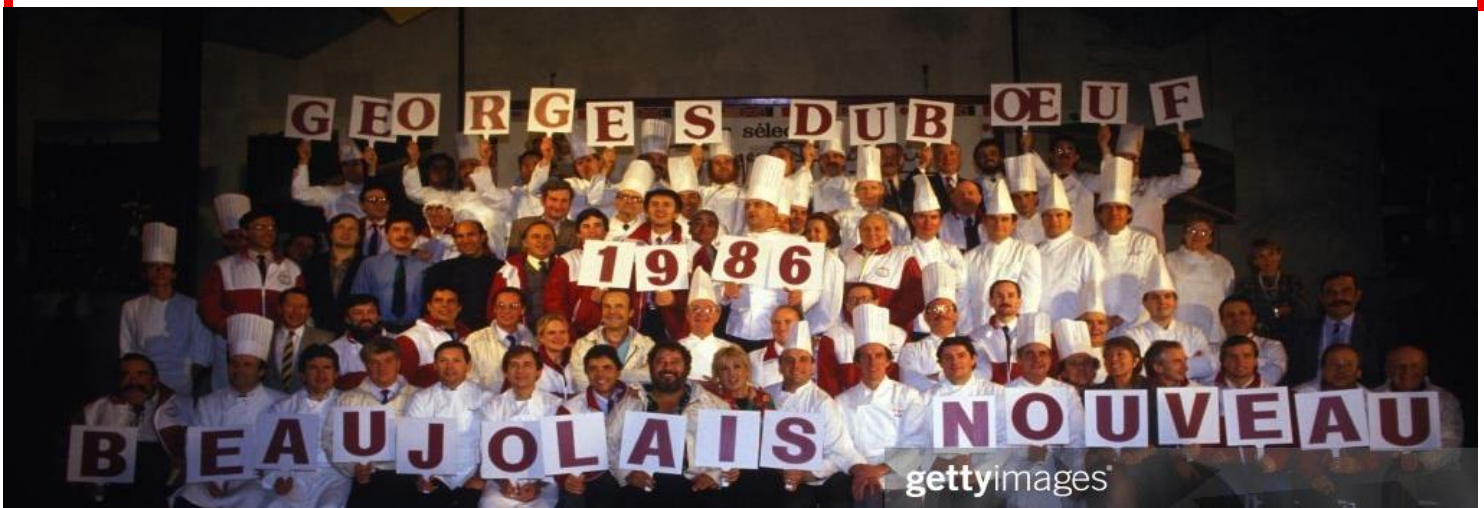
(Champagne).

Although Brittany does not produce wine, it does make some excellent cider and beer, whilst locals may produce some eau de vie which would put hairs on your chest! One of our great pleasures over the years has been to sit outside in the garden of our French house in the evening, watching the sun go down with a plate of French bread and cheese and a glass of wine in our hand. No wonder I love France!

Mike Goldsmith

Sweet Charity

In 1986 I was the area community services officer for Mid and South Wales area of Round Table. 119 Round Tablers set off from Pontardawe to drive to Paris in a variety of vehicles including an ice cream van. The purpose was to collect Beaujolais Nouveau and resell it in this country at a profit for Children in Need.



£20,000 was raised. On Sunday a lunch was held with French Round Tablers and their wives. I had to give a speech to several hundred people in French written for me by the children's school teacher I thought I was doing well until a Frenchman sidled up to me and translated my French into French that could be understood by the gathering!!!!!! Dave Parsons

Vive la France!

French Experiences – Libby van Aken

The best part of my week is when I get together with my U3A French conversation group.

This is not surprising as my husband Dick and I lived in Brittany for ten idyllic years, absorbing the culture and the language, exploring the countryside and sailing along the rivers. Our village, St Anne sur Vilaine, had two dairy farms, a school, a library, a pub, a general store, a bakery and a restaurant by the river. We met so many people of different nationalities, as they sailed down the Vilaine, and moored alongside the jetty to enjoy French cuisine at the restaurant.

The owner of the restaurant now rents out kayaks and canoes as the river is very popular.

Our home today in Market Harborough is full of French souvenirs and paintings, that we collected over the years we lived in our 220 year old farmhouse. We bought many items at *vide greniers* (car boot sales) and markets.

English people were made very welcome by the French and the mayor of our village organised meetings to welcome the English speakers which included Irish, Dutch, New Zealanders, South Africans and Israelis.

Our village had several clubs and I joined the drama group, poetry reading group and walking club. Dick busied himself renovating our old farmhouse, building staircases, fitting plumbing and installing electricity as well as building walls. He also converted our large stone barn into a theatre with a stage, lighting and 36 seats. We held soirees which included music, drama and storytelling. Musicians joined and played jazz as well as classical music. We also added tables to create a French cafe atmosphere.

How could I forget to mention French food? Cheese, wine, boeuf bourgignon, tarte aux pommes, crepe suzette and mussels with garlic sauce. What a wonderful time we had in France!

VIVE LA FRANCE *Libby Van Aken*



Photo from Martin T Goodman – he likens the one showy sunflower to a child in the class photo. What do you think?

Art History - Seurat and the Sea -

I recently went to see this lovely exhibition at the Courtauld Gallery in London.



The **French** artist **Georges Seurat** (1859 – 1891) developed a new way of painting building on the techniques of Impressionism. Instead of mixing paint on the palette, Seurat applied dots and dashes of pure colour directly onto the canvas and invented a technique known as pointillism. He is famous for his huge paintings of Parisians at leisure, such as '**Bathers at Asnières**' which can be seen in the National Gallery, London. Less well known are his paintings of the sea made during summer trips to the Normandy coast between 1885 and 1890. The Courtauld exhibition was the first to be dedicated to these paintings.

The advent of the railway made it possible for artists to escape Paris for the coast in the summer. Seurat liked to sit up on the cliffs or on the shore and make oil sketches on small wooden panels slotted into the lid of his travel paint box. Once back in his lodgings he would use the sketches to work on larger canvases. Seurat was fascinated by the vast expanses of sea and sky

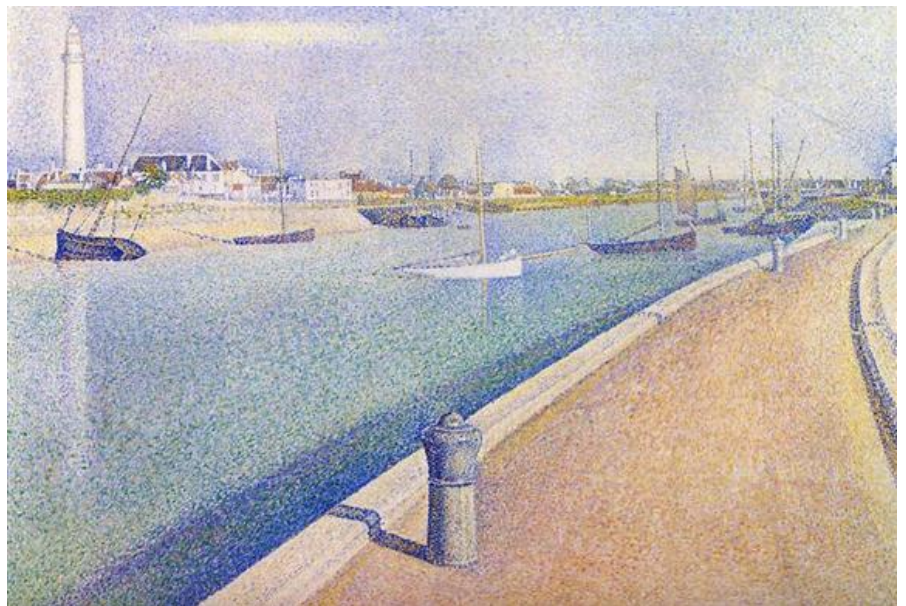
as well as the boats, harbours and piers; he rarely added figures.

Watch this youtube video from the Courtauld to see the way in which Seurat painted seascapes on location along the Normandy coast.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzA9UBq6zkM>

Seurat's technique

Seurat was influenced by contemporary writings on optics and colour. These theories stated that placing unmixed colours side by side on the canvas, instead of blending them, gave better vibrancy and luminosity as they merged in the viewer's eye (optical fusion). Seurat applied paint in short strokes and later dots of pure pigment. Equally important was the effect of placing complementary colours, from opposite sides of the colour wheel, next to each other. Over consecutive summers, Seurat experimented and refined his technique.



Angela Deane

Vive la France!

During April, the **Drawing and Painting Group** have been working on a variety of sketching exercises. We have practised sketching the outlines of landscapes, Mike kindly posed for the rest of us to have a go at a life drawing, and we went on to produce sketches of him from various angles. Finally, we watched a very instructive YouTube video on how to insert figures into a landscape painting, our focus for next month. We went on to practise creating a series of outline figures in various poses in preparation for our May projects.

Earlier this year, we completed some very pleasing landscapes.

Elaine Scarlett and Sue Garman



Still to come -- in the online version...

John Lord and Steven Kim write about their happy experiences in France. Plus group reports (although we would welcome more) from walking and strolling groups and Bookworms.

Plus, *Film noir* or French farce? What will you make of Elaine Ramsay's story, *Quelle Horreur?*



Pictured below, RHS Bridgewater, visited by the Garden group in April. Report in the online version.

STOP PRESS

Unfortunately, due to its own popularity and existing large numbers of members, the group has had to close its membership to new members. Stella Goodman explains further in the online version.



Coming Up

UPCOMING EVENTS 2026

May 11 th	SAT Navs and how does GPS work - Roger Cooper
May 25 th	NO GET TOGETHER - Bank Holiday
June 8 th	A walk across Africa- Fran Sandham
June 22 nd	Get Together

Theme for June edition : *It's not ONLY Rock and Roll.* The theme of the June edition of the magazine will be centred around music and will be an invitation to individual members and particularly groups which have a musical basis, to contribute.

What does a typical session at your music group involve? When might music have played a particularly important part in your life? What is your favourite type of music and why? What memorable concerts and performances have you attended? What music might have been played at your wedding or other celebration? Do you have a favourite musical artist? What is their best recording? Deadline Weds May 27th

Please send your contributions to newsletter@hwu3a.org.uk, not marketing as this only goes to Ced Bufton and he then has to forward them to me. Dave M

You can read many more articles and see more photos in the online edition. Go to hwu3a.org.uk then click on 'What's on' and 'Newsletters'. We would welcome your comments and your contributions for this online version. **David Martin & Ced Bufton.**

Copy Deadline for June edition - Wednesday 27th of May.

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WELCOME TO THE ONLINE VERSION of the May 2026 Issue of the Magazine.

Thanks again to all members who have contributed to this edition.

Dave Martin and Ced Bufton. Co-editors.

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Page 27 ...and there's more from him!

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Garden Group now closed to new members

I have been running the garden group with my loyal team right from the start of HWu3a and have 150 members.

About half of these regularly attend our indoor speaker meetings during the winter months. Some people join so that they can come along on our monthly coach trips to visit gardens, these are very popular and the earlier ones going out in May and June are often oversubscribed.

Naturally everyone wants to travel when the gardens are looking their best in early summer.

There have been complaints about the queues for booking and resentment from some of those who were not able to book a place.

Because of this I have decided not to accept any more new members.

This is a pity because the later trips often have spare seats, the July trip to David Austin roses still had spare places on booking day.

But due to the mad scramble for the May and June trips I have decided not to increase my numbers further.

I am trying to devise a way of still taking new people for the winter meetings only but as yet have not come up with a plan.

Sorry folks, we do try to accommodate everyone but we can only take as many as the capacity of the coach and garden allows.

Stella Freeman

Bookworms Report

'Go Set a Watchman' by Harper Lee was our book of choice for April. Most groupmembers had read 'To Kill a Mockingbird', Lee's 1961 Pulitzer Prize winning classic and, despite the fact that 'Go Set a Watchman' wasn't published until 2015, it was the first of the two books to be written. Originally promoted as a sequel, it is now accepted as a first draft of 'To Kill a Mockingbird'.

In the book we meet the same characters twenty years later in the 1950s when racial tensions are brewing in the South and the civil rights movement is gaining strength. Jean Louise ('Scout'), now 26, returns from New York to her hometown of Maycomb, Alabama, for her annual visit to her father, Atticus Finch, a lawyer and former state legislator. She is reunited with her childhood sweetheart, Hank, who works for Atticus and her Aunt Alexandra who has moved in with her father to keep house.

It's not long before Jean Louise feels out of place among the bigotry of the Maycomb County residents and, when she finds a pamphlet titled 'The Black Plague' among her father's papers, she is shocked. She follows him to a Citizens' Council meeting, also attended by Hank, where Atticus introduces a man who delivers a racist speech. Jean Louise is conflicted between the love she has for Atticus and his stance on segregation, and conveys her feelings of disillusionment to her Uncle Jack. The explanation he gives is that Atticus has not suddenly become a racist but is trying to slow down federal government intervention in state politics. On challenging her father, Jean Louise is told that the blacks of the South are not ready for full civil rights. Hank's beliefs echo those of Atticus's and to Jean Louise he is a hypocrite. However, although she is faced with disturbing truths about her beloved father, she learns to separate the two opposing facets and accepts him as a flawed, fallible human being.

This controversial novel, published when 89 year old Lee may have felt under pressure to do so, was not as popular among group members as 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. However, Lee's writing, which is punctuated with humour and anecdotes, was praised by most of us and, although the storyline lacked fluency at times, it asked challenging questions that perhaps its more famous counterpart omitted.

Louise Elsome 'Bookworms' Group Coordinator

Friday Strollers

Thank you to all volunteers, we now have all strolls covered for the remainder of 2026.

Vivienne and Janet will lead our stroll on Friday June 12th. at 10:15. We meet at The Bull's Head, Arthingworth. LE16 8JZ to order lunch and start our stroll at 10:30.

Parking in the pub car park and nearby road. We will follow the footpath from the village which includes crossing fields.

To book a place please contact Vivienne Murphy by 5th June. 20 strollers max please. 07811 094740 vivatcarlton@aol.com

Best wishes Carol and Mike.

The Garden Group's visit to RHS Bridgewater



The garden group had a great start to the summer season with our outing to RHS Bridgewater. The journey to Salford was a fairly long one and we all coped well but were more than ready for a stretch and a coffee when we arrived.

Our welcome was warm. We had booked guided tours and were pleased to find they had supplied plenty of guides so we had small groups and plenty of attention. The gardens are still being

developed with attention given to training the next generation of gardeners.

The site is very open and windswept and we were glad we had taken coats. There was a good display of tulips in the walled garden but a lot of perennials were still developing.

The Chinese Garden I had been looking forward to seeing was still a work in progress. It looks like we shall have to go again.

Stella Freeman

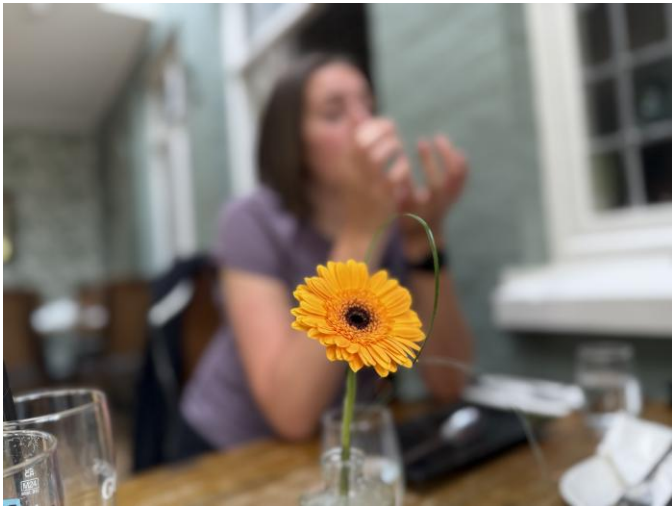
Vegetarian and Vegan Group

Our group meets at 12 noon on the third Friday of the month. It is a good time to meet because everyone is ready to try some food and there are always delicious dishes for us to sample. Each month we have a different theme and in April we chose Caribbean food because none of us knew much about that style of cooking so we thought it would be fun. You can see the dishes we made – a Caribbean Bean Curry, Rice and Beans, Jamaican Callaloo, Jamaican Peanut Clusters and Caribbean Coconut Pie. It is not compulsory to make a dish for us to sample but most people like to bring something along. Usually there is a fun quiz and we share recipes, food preparation ideas, and just have a chat - it is very informal.



At the moment there are 6 of us in the group but we would welcome a few more members. Each month one person offers to host the meeting and they kindly provide us with a cup of tea or coffee which usually accompanies any cakes or sweet dishes we are trying. You do not have to be vegetarian or vegan to join our group – just open-minded enough to try different things and maybe learn that vegetarians and vegans are just ordinary people who prefer not to eat meat (and dairy in the case of vegans). Chris Hobson

Mobile Phone Photographs



Phil Aldridge



Fiona Barnaby



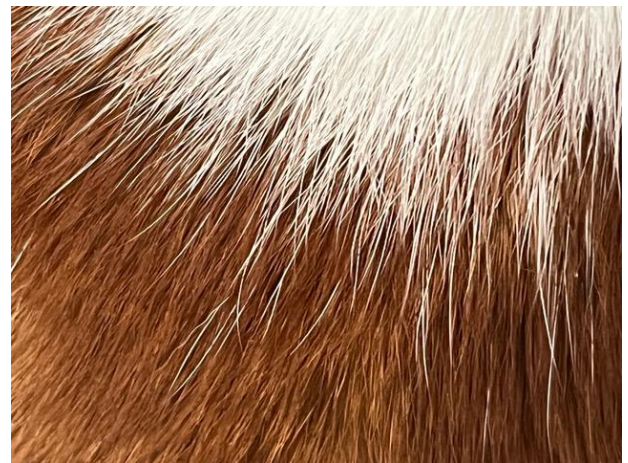
Steph Goodway



Alisoun MacDermid



Phil Aldridge



John Dyson



Eileen Robinson



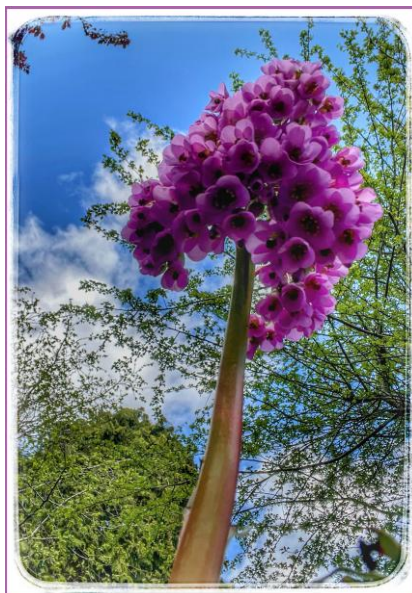
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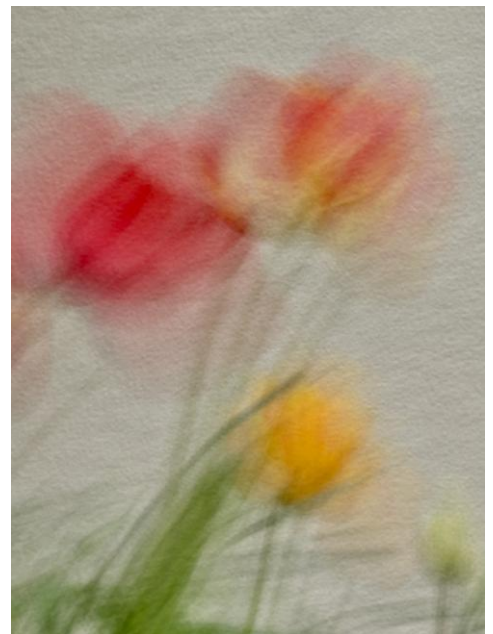
John Hammond



Colin Rolls



Steph Goodway



Angela Lloyd

Let me begin with a confession: I am not French. I am South Korean by birth, British by citizenship (hard won, but more on that shortly), and, for one rather peculiar and emotionally charged chapter of my life, deeply, profoundly grateful to France in a way that most people reserve for a beloved grandparent or a particularly excellent GP.



You see, between 2010 and 2013, I found myself in what one might diplomatically describe as *a slight bureaucratic misunderstanding* with the British government. I had lived in England, married an Englishwoman, earned my doctorate here, and raised two children on these drizzly, tea-soaked islands. Then, with my family, having spent several years back in South Korea working for truth and reconciliation commissions, doing, one

might argue, rather important work, I attempted to return with my family. At which point Her Majesty's Home Office, in its infinite wisdom, informed me that my permanent residency had lapsed and I was, effectively, *persona non grata*.

Britain, the country I had called home for over two decades, had bolted the door.

Enter France. *Magnifique* France. France, which asked no such impertinent questions.

While my British lawyers engaged in what I can only describe as an extremely expensive interpretive dance with the British legal system, my wife and children, bless them, would cross the Channel, and I would cross from whichever direction I happened to be coming from, and we would meet in France. Paris. Normandy. The Loire Valley. Wherever was convenient, beautiful, and, crucially, not Britain.

Now, I had not previously considered myself a particular Francophile. My French, let us say, has always been *enthusiastic rather than accurate*. And yet France received our little international family, one Korean father, one English mother, two mixed-heritage children who had already endured quite enough upheaval, thank you very much, with that particular Gallic shrug that means, essentially, "*You are here, you are eating, what is the problem?*"



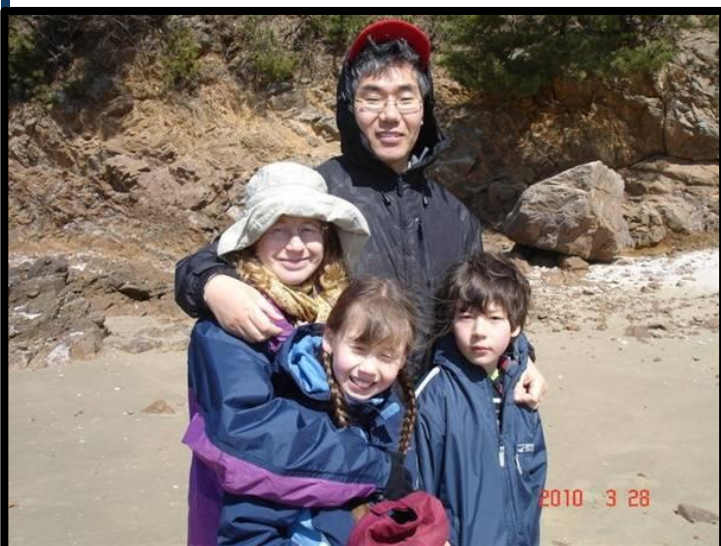
And what eating it was. After years of institutional canteen food at government offices in Seoul, and before that the curious British conviction that a meal is complete if it contains one beige item, France was a revelation. Bread that crackled. Cheese that smelled, memorably, of things one cannot mention in a newsletter. Wine that arrived at lunch without anyone raising an eyebrow. I once ate a croque-monsieur in a small café near the Gare du Nord while my daughter drew pictures on paper napkins and my son attempted to order in French with catastrophic but charming results, and I thought: *if this is what being stateless looks like, it could be considerably worse.*

There is something quietly radical about France's relationship with paperwork. Yes, the French have bureaucracy, mon Dieu, do they have bureaucracy, but there is a certain *joie de vivre* in their administration of it that the British, and certainly the Koreans, might study with profit. A French official once stamped something for me with an air that suggested he was doing me a personal favour, which, compared to my experiences elsewhere, felt almost unbearably kind.

The French, of course, have strong opinions about everything: their food, their wine, their philosophy, their strikes, their presidents, their cheese (354 varieties, as de Gaulle famously noted, a man who clearly understood that national identity is best expressed through fermented dairy). And yet, faced with a Korean man attempting to visit his English wife on French soil, they produced merely a "*Bienvenue, monsieur,*" and pointed me toward the nearest boulangerie.

I eventually won my legal battle with the British government in November 2013, a partial victory, hedged with conditions, accompanied by a legal bill that I prefer not to contemplate before bedtime. In December of that year, after five years of what I can only call a very scenic form of family separation, I was reunited with my wife and children in England.

But France had given us something that no court ruling could: the gift of simply being *together*, if only for a few weeks at a time, in a country that neither knew nor cared about our immigration status, and which consistently offered excellent pastry by way of consolation.



When I finally became a British citizen in July 2021, thirty-one years after I first arrived as a student, I raised a glass. It was, as it happens, a rather decent Bordeaux.

Vive La France. And vive le croissant, le café crème, the unhurried Sunday afternoon, and the magnificent French indifference to other countries' administrative complications. In our darkest chapter, France was our warmest room.

My wife and I have spent a lot of time in France and have particularly enjoyed its food culture, “marchés nocturnes” and “vide-greniers”.

For me the fascination started with my wonderful French teacher, Mr Collier who understood how to get 12-year-old boys interested in his subject. He would tell us stories or jokes (some of them just a tinge rude or unsavoury) in French and then ask us to write them up in our own words for homework. The jokes seemed a lot funnier when after thinking how to make sense of them in a foreign tongue, one eventually got the punchline. The story I remember best was about l’omelette perdue. One of his friends, visiting France for the first time, decided to eat at the Gare du Nord. He ordered a simple cheese omelette and was delighted to find it was by far the best he had ever tasted. Thereafter, wherever he ate in France he requested a cheese omelette but was always disappointed that it did not match the first one. We still use the perdue suffix to describe something you might hanker for, but can never relive.

The most successful of our French adventures concerned pen pals. This was about 35 years ago, before email and the internet. We thought it would help our two sons to learn the language if we could find them French pen pals and perhaps organise an exchange. We had heard disconcerting stories of school exchanges that had gone badly. As a GP, I received “Pulse” magazine regularly and noticed that it had both small ads and some circulation in France. We posted an advertisement for pen pals wanted. There was a good response, and soon we had a list of French doctors and dentists with boys of similar age, who might wish to correspond.

Rather than picking two at random, we decided to visit them all in a grand tour of France. We took a little hamper for each family to introduce them to things like Yorkshire Tea, and baked beans. The tour itself was entertaining and informative. I learned a lot about how my colleagues in France worked, and the difficulties of their system. We saw each family for coffee or sometimes a light meal. On one occasion it was a massive breakfast: They seemed to have bought the entire boulangerie. One parent met us at a café where we had just consumed a large breakfast. Before we could object, he paid for us all with one of those very high value French Franc notes that seemed almost as large as a tablecloth.

The meetings with the parents highlighted gaps in my own knowledge of French. I discovered that one does not say “à Le Touquet” but “au Touquet”; it is impolite to decline further food by saying that you are full - the preferred term is “I have no longer hunger”; and that one should not suggest there are preservatives in food because “preservatifs” are condoms.

Our boys seemed to get on well with 3 of the French boys who were from 3 different families. The written letter exchanges began with all 3. One was called Laurent and 2 were called Julien.

After some exchange of mail, we proposed holiday exchanges too. Laurent's father wisely suggested there be total immersion – that the child who visited another country should be spoken to and expected to try to talk back in the language of that country.

The first to visit us was Laurent. His command of English developed by leaps and bounds. The first Julian to arrive was very different. We could scarcely get a word out of him, and never in English.

When we suggested entertaining days out like to Alton Towers, Julien's answer was always "Non". One of our friends tried his best to talk to him in French, though that was limited to "Did you come here *par avion*"? and this too failed to coax him into a response. We phoned his mother, but she felt the child was being his usual self. So, after what for him was presumably a miserable week in England, we declined a return visit to France. The second Julien to visit thrived and the exchanges were reciprocated.

Laurent visited often, always with goodies his mother had made. The jam made from her apricots always tasted as if fresh off the tree. He was exuberant and fun to have around. Sometimes to slight excess – we still have a family phrase to "faire un Laurent" – to stack disposable drinks containers together forcibly without realising the bottom one is still full. Laurent achieved this spectacularly at Manchester airport soaking everyone in cola.



Laurent on the left

Now Julian is still in touch. Daniel and Laurent are still the best of friends, both completely fluent in each other's languages and meet up often. They attended each other's weddings. Each has both a son and a daughter, and the children are of very similar ages. Sadly, Laurent's father died 2 years ago but we are still in touch with his mother.

I have always enjoyed travelling around France. Often referred to as *Le Hexagon*, reflecting its general shape, France boasts 3 different coast lines and two mountainous areas, three if you *include Le Massif Central*.

In recent years, I have begun to appreciate the many attractions that Normandy has to offer and the fact that the Portsmouth – Ouistreham ferry route brings one to within miles of the D-Day landing beaches.

It is always gratifying to see how well the sacrifices of Allied Servicemen, British, Canadian and American, are still respected and remembered by the various communities which were the first French towns and villages to be liberated in June 1944.



Just 15 minutes drive away from the port, you will find the British Normandy Memorial, located in Ver-sur-Mer, Normandy, inaugurated on June 6, 2021. It honours the 22,442 British soldiers who lost their lives during the D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy. The memorial overlooks Gold Beach and serves as a place for reflection and remembrance of the sacrifices made by these soldiers.

If in doubt, click on this link to enjoy a splendid video which explains further. [British Normandy Memorial](#)

Normandy is steeped in History. Further afield Bayeux and Rouen have many interesting histories to share. Falaise, the birthplace of *Guillaume le Conquerant*, boasts a magnificent castle.

Apart from History, Normandy is a wonderful mix of blue and green, *Mer et Terre*. This is reflected in its marvellous cuisine where fish, seafood and beef feature heavily. No wine here but cider and calvados are on offer everywhere.

Apple orchards in May are stunning, not to mention beautiful sandy beaches and chalk cliffs (Etretat) which are stunning.



The port of Honfleur (left) is both historical and visually pleasing.

I have grown to appreciate some of the small resorts where some French families still spend their summer holidays, braving the occasional grey clouds and strong coastal winds. Luc-sur-Mer is a wonderful example. *Dave Martin*

I cannot leave France without drawing your attention to the following items.

French protests. The English are famous for moaning but the French are much more likely to take to the streets to make their feelings clear. French farmers lead the way. In a recent campaign, they decided to illustrate their dissatisfaction by reversing road signs leading into towns and villages.

The name-bearing roadside plaques have been unscrewed, flipped, then meticulously screwed back on. It's a campaign by farmers to draw attention to what they say is their increasingly precarious way of life. Starting with a protest in the southern Tarn department in November, it has now spread all over the country.



"We were trying to think of a way of denouncing all the contradictory instructions we keep getting," said Philippe Bardy, head of the FNSEA farmers' union in the Tarn.

"Where we come from, if someone tells us to do one thing one day and then the opposite the next, we say we're walking on our heads. That's where the idea came from." Read more below.

[Rural France turned upside-down by farmers - BBC News](#)

La Fete de Musique. The **Fête de la Musique** (also known in English as **Music Day, Make Music Day, or World Music Day**, is an annual music [celebration](#) which usually takes place on 21st June, Midsummer Eve. On Music Day, citizens and residents are urged to play music outside, in their neighbourhoods or in public spaces and parks. Free concerts are also organized, where musicians play for fun; no fees are involved.

The idea for the first all-day musical celebration on the day of the [summer solstice](#) came from [Jack Lang](#), then [Minister of Culture](#) of [France](#), and [Maurice Fleuret](#); it was celebrated in Paris in 1982. Music Day later became celebrated in 120 countries around the world. Read more - [Fête de la Musique - Wikipedia](#)

I have the good fortune to experience two of these festivals. One in the French city of Nantes, where there were literally hundreds of musicians and thousands of people thronging the streets. A truly eclectic mix of music styles.

More recently, friends of ours in Epworth, a small town near Doncaster, invited us to their version of this event. Obviously much smaller in scale but equally enjoyable as various open spaces, pubs, churches etc were made into music venues. Brilliant. Rock on. *Dave Martin*

He is scrubbing his hands in the bathroom when there's a knock at the door. He ignores it and watches the water eddy down the plughole, the colour of dark cochineal. He rinses round the bowl fastidiously then dries his hands on a fresh towel, paying particular attention to his nails. There has been no time for gloves.



The knock comes again, this time more insistent.

“Hello. Mr Perrin are you there?”

Stepping carefully over the stained, sodden bath towel on the floor, he shudders, shuts the bathroom door tight behind him and makes his way along the hall. Two eyes stare through the letter-box.

“ ‘Oo is it please?’ ”

“It’s Melanie from upstairs. I need help! I’m in trouble!”

He unlatches the door and peers out. Melanie looks to be in her mid-twenties. Attractive in a common kind of way, if you’re partial to dirty bleached hair-spikes and lip studs.

“Ello?”

“It *is* Mr Perrin isn’t it? Mrs Pountney, lady in the flat opposite me mentioned your name. I don’t suppose she’s here is she? Only she’s not answering her door.”

“Er no Mademoiselle.”

“Thing is, I’ve locked myself out. Stupidly left the key in my other bag. You know how it is – oh well no, I don’t suppose you do.’ She grins and moves forward a little. ‘Can I come in? I need to ring for a locksmith. My mobile’s in the other bag as well.’ ”

He pulls the door closer to him and leans on the jamb protectively.

“ Zere is a call box in Jubilee Street... just round ze corner. It is with much regret that I cannot ‘elp you Mademoiselle, I ‘ave urgent appointment’ ”

“Oh fudge! I’ll only be a minute, I promise. Thing is I think I might have left the bathroom tap running and the plug’s in the bath. Could be catastrophic Mr Perrin. It’s likely to flood and my

flat's right on top of yours. I'm such a scatter brain! Really sorry to be a nuisance.'" She smiles engagingly. 'Please...?'

He swallows and licks dry lips. "Er... ze telephone it not work...ze engineer 'e don't come 'til tomorrow. It is unfortunate no? There is a phone box in Jubilee Street.' He gives her a consoling smile and starts to close the door when his phone rings.

"Hey that's lucky – that's your phone! They must have mended it on line. That's BT for you, expensive but pretty efficient I'd say." She gazes down at him through thick mascaraed lashes. "I'll be ever so quick."

He turns to answer the phone and she's inside before he can change his mind. The phone stops ringing.

"Don't suppose you know a good locksmith do you? Have you got the local directory? Oh...!"

Melanie stares at a sky-blue Hermes silk-scarf draped over the back of a chair. It's decorated with butterflies and exudes a faint essence of Chanel No 5. "That scarf, it's just like the one Mrs Pountney's got." She looks at it closely, moves nearer and sniffs. "Well, I'd swear that *is* Mrs Pountney's."

She scrutinises him with narrowed eyes.

"Indeed...er...yes. Ze lady she visits earlier... she must 'ave forgotten... I will return it to 'er later." His eyes flick towards the bathroom door.

'Tell you what. While you're looking up the locksmith's number, I'll pop and use your loo. Hope you don't mind but I'm bursting. Is it this way?' Melanie heads purposefully towards the bathroom, he darts to intercept her and cracks his shin on a footstool.

"Aargh! Mon Dieu!" He crumples up with pain.

Melanie opens the bathroom door and shrieks. Mrs Pountney sits slumped on a chair, her scalp hidden by a thick, red, gelatinous gloop. Crimson rivulets slip slowly over her temples, slide down her cheeks and drip viscous goblets onto the soggy bath towel around her shoulders. She peers out through sticky eyes and on seeing her visitor, moans. Melanie looks up in horror as Mr Perrin limps in.

"Oh My God! What have you done! Keep away! You dare come anywhere near us and I'll scream! Don't just stand there you fiend, call an ambulance!"

Melanie grasps Mrs Pountney by the hands and enunciates loudly and slowly, "Don't move Mrs P, help is on the way. Stay absolutely still – I've got first-aid qualifications. Er... certificate's a bit out of date but..."

Mrs Pountney bursts into tears. "Oh dear! Oh dear! Mr Perrin! I expressly told you I did *not* want anybody to see me in this state. I expect the utmost privacy when having my hair done!"

"A zousand pardons Madam, I am afraid I was no match for this young lady." He turns accusingly to Melanie. 'Mademoiselle, "Oo do you zink I am? Ze Sweeny Todd!" He draws

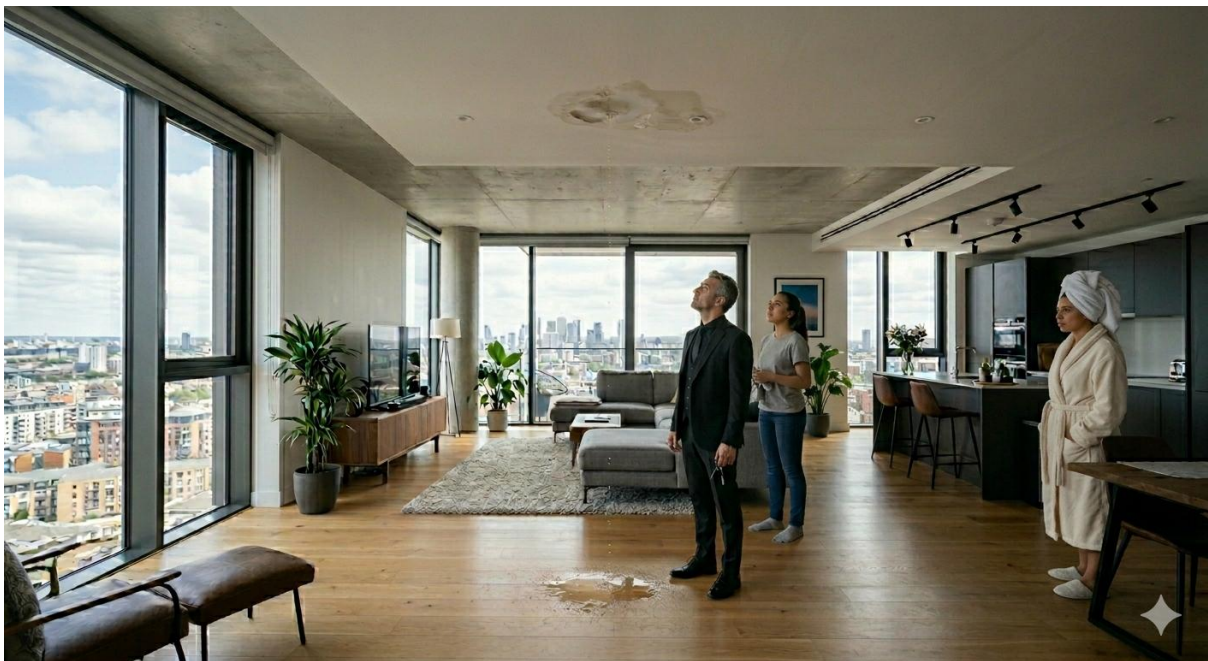
himself up to his full height of five foot one inch. “I am Monsieur Pierre Perrin of *Pierre Coiffure’s* Park Lane!”

He prods a stubby finger at his chest. “Ze most prestigious ‘air stylist in London. C’est moi! I give to Madame Pountney ‘er emergency ‘enna root-touch. I use my own apartment at no extra cost – special favour for very valued client.”

He pats the weeping women gently on the shoulder and wipes the seeping liquid from her face with a corner of the towel. “Nevair would I ‘urt one single ‘air of ‘er precious ‘ead!”

“Well excuse me, I’m no mind reader – anyone can make a mistake! No worries Mrs P, your secret’s safe with me. Oh lord!”

Melanie’s eyes are riveted on the far corner of the ceiling where the plaster is ballooning out to disastrous proportions. As they all watch, water begins to drip rapidly onto the floor below.



“Quick Mr Perrin, where’s your phone directory? We’re going to need a plumber as well as a locksmith!”

Images by D.M and Gemini AI (Inspired by Jack H)

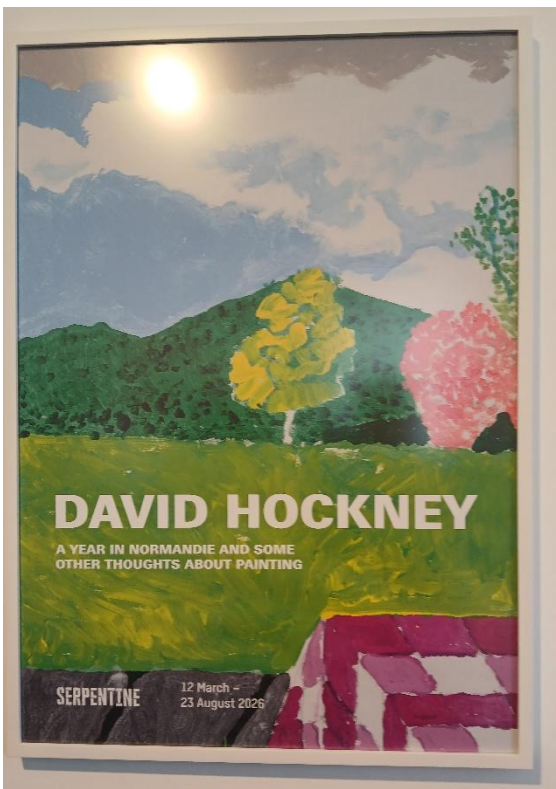
David Hockney – A year in Normandy exhibition

Ann and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to London last month to see the latest David Hockney exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in Hyde Park. For fans of Hockney's work, executed on a tablet and beautifully displayed, this is a triumph. If you are also a devotee of the Normandy landscape, you are in for a double treat!



The exhibition takes inspiration from the Bayeux Tapestry. The continuous 'canvas' depicts various scenes near to Hockney's residence in Normandy. I thoroughly recommend. Dave M

Runs until 23rd August. Free admittance but contribution is expected



Strangely there are no 4 legged animals in any of these countryside scenes. Can D.H. paint cows?

The national literacy charity Schoolreaders, which recruits volunteers to support children in local primary schools with reading, is encouraging more people to get involved in supporting children's literacy as part of the National Year of Reading 2026.

Schoolreaders currently supports over 35,000 children each week in more than 1,800 schools across the UK. Over 30 primary schools in Leicestershire are currently waiting for volunteers, including 3 primary schools in Market Harborough.

Volunteers visit a local primary school for around an hour each week to read one-to-one with children. No teaching experience is required – just a good standard of spoken and written English and a willingness to help.

Volunteers commit to one hour per week during term time, and schools arrange and fund the Enhanced DBS check.



**Do something
amazing**

If you can spare just an hour a week you can make a world of difference to children's reading

[Volunteer](#)

If you have time on your hands and would be willing to help out, please contact Susan Lawrie, Engagement & Outreach Coordinator - s.lawrie@schoolreaders.org

You can find out more about Schoolreaders and the work they do at www.schoolreaders.org.

Wednesday 8th April



The April meeting, seemingly early in the month, was based from The Wharf Inn Welford: We are indebted to Reg and Jeanette Atkins for their successful debut leading a stroll. The group numbered double figures and we were delighted to welcome back Alan and Linda after their trip to New Zealand and their subsequent return travel issues from the Iran conflict. A fine, bright, warm day began with a stroll towards the children's farm before taking a track alongside the reservoir. We crossed the dividing wall and then continued uphill a little, before eventually descending to a lane leading to the "exclusive(?)" small historic settlement of Sulby. The path had taken us over the site of the ancient abbey and the ariel

displays from gliders at nearby Husband's Bosworth were not prearranged! We returned along a minor road, although a sign further on suggested we ought not be there! A passing motorist kindly took a fatigued member safely back to base so no ghoulish headlines followed! The plan to complete by walking from road to the canal 's Welford lock and then to the basin was curtailed due to timings and we made our way safely back for welcome refreshment at a busy pub! Les Dodd

