

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

Of course there is none. This newsletter will take a holiday in July and August and re-appear in September - unless there is a surprise revival of The French Connection before then, in which case a special edition might suddenly appear.

News from France

- Visiting your holiday home after the transition period? As things are now you will be limited to a maximum of 90 days per year in France, but campaigners are asking the government to seek to have this increased to 180 days.
- Tests conducted with trained German Shepherds at a veterinary school in Val-de-Marne show a 95% success rate in sniffing out the coronavirus.
- From June 8 travellers arriving in France from the UK will be invited to enter a voluntary two-week quarantine period. This appears to be in retaliation for the UK's imposition of quarantine for travellers arriving from France. However, in contrast to the UK's rule, which will include fines of up to £1,000 and spot checks at quarantine addresses, this quarantine will be voluntary.
- The French government proposes to install 100,000 charging points for electric vehicles by the end of this year. It will also subsidise the purchase of electric cars - and Britain?

News from VLB

The Mairie of VLB is distributing 4 masks to each household through their letterboxes. They are said to be washable 20 times. If you need more you can get them from the Mairie.

The postponed second round of the local elections will be held on June 21st. We will break our summer silence to bring you the result.

Toulouse

If you are interested in visiting a major city on your way to or from VLB it is worth considering Toulouse. There are (or were) daily direct flights to and from Bristol and from Toulouse to Béziers is about 1 hour by train. Toulouse, the fourth largest city in France, is located on the Garonne plain and sits astride the River Garonne. It is the capital of the European aerospace industry, which almost certainly accounts for the daily flights from Bristol. At this difficult time for the aerospace industry there is much concern in Toulouse about a potential surge in the unemployment rate. Toulouse is known as *La Ville Rose* (The Pink City) because of the predominant colour of the brickwork of its traditional brick built buildings. It is a fairly compact city, the centre of which stands between the Canal du Midi and the river Garonne. The central area is a maze of narrow streets, crossed by a few wide boulevards. Old Toulouse is a historic area worth spending some time in.

There are numerous museums and art galleries. The Place du Capitole is claimed to be one of the finest urban piazzas in Europe. It has a large pedestrianized area, bordered by 18th and 19th century buildings, including the great palatial facade of the Capitole, which is now a fine opera house. The Basilique Saint Sernin is the most significant historic monument in old Toulouse. Built in the 11th century it is the largest surviving Romanesque church in Europe, a UNESCO world heritage site and on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella.



The Pont Neuf is a fine 16th - 17th century bridge over the Garonne.



The Couvent des Jacobins, formerly a church and now a museum houses the relics of St. Thomas Aquinas. The building and cloisters are a significant example of southern French gothic architecture.

When you have finished sightseeing you will need time to visit the excellent shopping area.

Thoughts from a French philosopher about this year

**Je demande pardon aux
années précédentes de les
avoir considérées comme:
"Année de merde !"
Car je n'avais pas encore
vécu l'année 2020.**

The historical relationship between France and Switzerland

This has evolved over the years. The boundaries between the two countries took their present form only after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The Swiss Federation had existed since 1293, having been founded in German speaking Zwingli and having been gradually extended by the addition of new

cantons, the last one being the French speaking Vaud, bordering the North side of Lake Geneva, in 1803. Geneva, the home of Calvinism, was an independent city state until it was occupied by Napoleon in the early 19th century. After Napoleon's defeat, when Europe was carved up by the Congress of Vienna, Geneva was awarded to Switzerland, but it was totally surrounded by France and Lake Geneva, so a small strip of land along the North shore of the lake was given to Switzerland to allow access between Geneva and the Vaud. The South bank of Lake Geneva was part of the principality of Savoie, part of the huge Savoyard territory which at one time stretched from Lake Geneva to Sardinia. The region to the South of Geneva, known as the Chablais, was Roman Catholic and there was constant strife between the locals and the Calvinist Geneva. Calvinists living in the Chablais were sometimes obliged to leave their villages and move to a Protestant locality. The Chablais area too was occupied by Napoleon's forces. In 1860, following a plebiscite, the Savoie was annexed to France in exchange for Napoleon's agreement to the unification of Italy. As on the North side of the lake, the final boundaries were fixed by the Congress of Vienna and the boundary between France and the main territory of Switzerland on the South side of the lake is now around 60 km. east of Geneva. 40% of the surface of Lake Geneva is now French territory. The Savoie was eventually divided into two *départements*, Savoie and Haute-Savoie. Today, Switzerland, although not a part of the EU, is a Schengen territory and so there are no longer any frontier controls between the two countries. Although Geneva is a French speaking city it has a very Swiss feel to it and does not feel like France. Apart from architectural and cultural differences, the French spoken in Geneva has a particular accent and even some words that are different. For example the French numbers 'soixante-dix', 'quatre-vingt' and 'quatre-vingt-dix' are not used. Like the Belgians, the Swiss say (far more logically) 'septante', 'huitante' and 'nonnante'.



Latine-rigged sailing boat on Lake Geneva

Stay alert!



ANTHONY HANCOCK