



**THE FRENCH CONNECTION**  
WRINGTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION  
The John Locke Room, Silver Street, Wroughton BS40 5QE

**NEWSLETTER November 2021**

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*As one hat is hung on the peg, another is donned ...*

On behalf of all of us it gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to Lindsey Shaw-Miller as the next editor of our French Connection Newsletter. Lindsey is used to writing professionally and is involved in many of the activities of the French connection. She also speaks excellent French.

At the same time it is sad to say farewell to Tony Hancock and we wish him well for the future. Tony set up the Newsletter four years ago and has diligently and unfailingly produced amusing and informative Newsletters even during these trying and troubling times. Many, many thanks Tony!



The French Connection Newsletter is very much our Newsletter, so please do (continue to) send in any articles, letters, news snippets, photos. This would help Lindsey, and also be of interest to our readership.

The mark of a solid democracy is that there are smooth, peaceful and regular transitions of administration. So perhaps the mark of a thriving and valuable newsletter is that it changes editorship in a similarly smooth manner :-). Vive l'éditrice/l'éditeur!

*Shail Patel*

*Chair, Wroughton Twinning and French Connection*



*Lindsey with her amazing dog Benji. Jumping up is not allowed! But hugs are ...*

### **Editor's greeting**

Thank you so much, Shail, for this warm welcome. As a member of the Connection, I am very sorry to see Tony hang up his hat. I cannot possibly do such a good job as Tony has, but I'll give it what I can, and here goes!

Let me begin, then, with a correction: 'She also speaks excellent French'. Ho hum. That's just the sort of flattery that landed me this job. I'm afraid my French is woeful, as anyone who has borne with me through a struggled Zoom conversation topic will know. But as always, I appreciate the encouragement!

In this newsletter, you will find all the dates for upcoming meetings and conversations, and a couple of new features: I'm intending to highlight a wine of the month (this month that subject is covered by the conversation with VLB below) and a recipe of the month. Also, *le mot juste*: each month I shall look at a particular French word, just for interest, and unpick it a little. If you have a word that you would yourself like to contribute, one that just fascinates you both for its meaning(s) and perhaps for its resonance in English or other languages, please do let me know. Either send me in your own analysis of the word or alert me to it, and I'll do the research. Recipes and seasonal wine suggestions are also warmly welcomed. ([lindseysm8@gmail.com](mailto:lindseysm8@gmail.com))

*Lindsey Shaw-Miller*

*Editor, Newsletter of the Wrington Twinning Association and The French Connection*

## **Forthcoming AGM of the Wrington Twinning Association**

The Annual General Meeting of the Wrington Twinning Association will take place on **Wednesday 17 November 2021 at 7.00 p.m.** via Zoom. The meeting can be accessed by using the standard log-in. **Please note that this is now the universal log-in for all French Connection and Wrington Twinning Association Zoom meetings, whether committee, conversation or Cinéphiles:**

The French Connection & Wrington Twinning Association is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: The French Connection Universal Invite! Use for ALL TFC groups :-)  
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/4933115546?pwd=bmhLSnZrSkIPRHZhRjhQaFFNczJHZz09>

Meeting ID: 493 311 5546

Passcode: 610359

One tap mobile

+442080806592,,4933115546#,,,,\*610359# United Kingdom

+443300885830,,4933115546#,,,,\*610359# United Kingdom

Dial by your location

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+44 330 088 5830 United Kingdom

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

+44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom

+44 208 080 6591 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 493 311 5546

Passcode: 610359

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/azUkSh7IX>

*The only exception is Cinéphiles on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, which will remain as per the invitation already sent out (see below). Subsequent meetings of Cinéphiles will follow the universal protocols above.*

## **News from France**

Dominated by border controls and the dangers of small-boat migration to the UK. Border staff at Calais has become better at spotting and preventing them, with the result that people are leaving from less vigilant locations, entailing a longer voyage. So far this year, 19,400 have made the crossing in small vessels, but with the winter coming, there will be tragedy.

The EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier is strengthening his contention for Président.

The French government (I write on the day of our UK budget) has awarded 38million people on low incomes €100 towards rising winter costs.

Monty Don has visited Monet's garden at Giverny as part of his 80-most-beautiful-gardens project.

Did you know that French mobile phone bills are among the lowest in the world? On average, €15 per month.

In this month of **bonfires and fireworks**, do the French light celebratory bonfires? No, they do not, and bonfires are generally outlawed in France, even the gentle ones that burn your autumn leaves or fallen branches. The rules vary a little from region to region, but if in doubt, assume illegality and do not light. There is leniency with firepits in your garden, though, if they are mobile and are not built from either iron or stone.

With *la rentrée* in September, came Paris Design Week, with an emphasis this year on sustainable materials. I hoped you might enjoy this fabulous console table by the designer Pierre Renart, featured in the October edition of *The Design Edit*, an online journal for contemporary design.



Pierre Renart, 'Console Ellipse', from 'Collection Fusion', 2021  
COURTESY: Galerie Maison Parisienne

## News from The French Connection/VLB

On 16 October a square in VLB was renamed Place Samuel Paty to commemorate the teacher of that name who was assassinated exactly one year ago. On the website you will find a short film about the inauguration, which shows the design and painting of the portrait mural of Samuel. Mayor of VLB, Fabrice Solans, said:

*Il y a un an jour pour jour, le 16 octobre 2020, Samuel Paty, Professeur d'Histoire-Géographie était assassiné à l'âge de 47 ans pour avoir cultivé la liberté d'expression durant son cours d'enseignement moral et civique.*

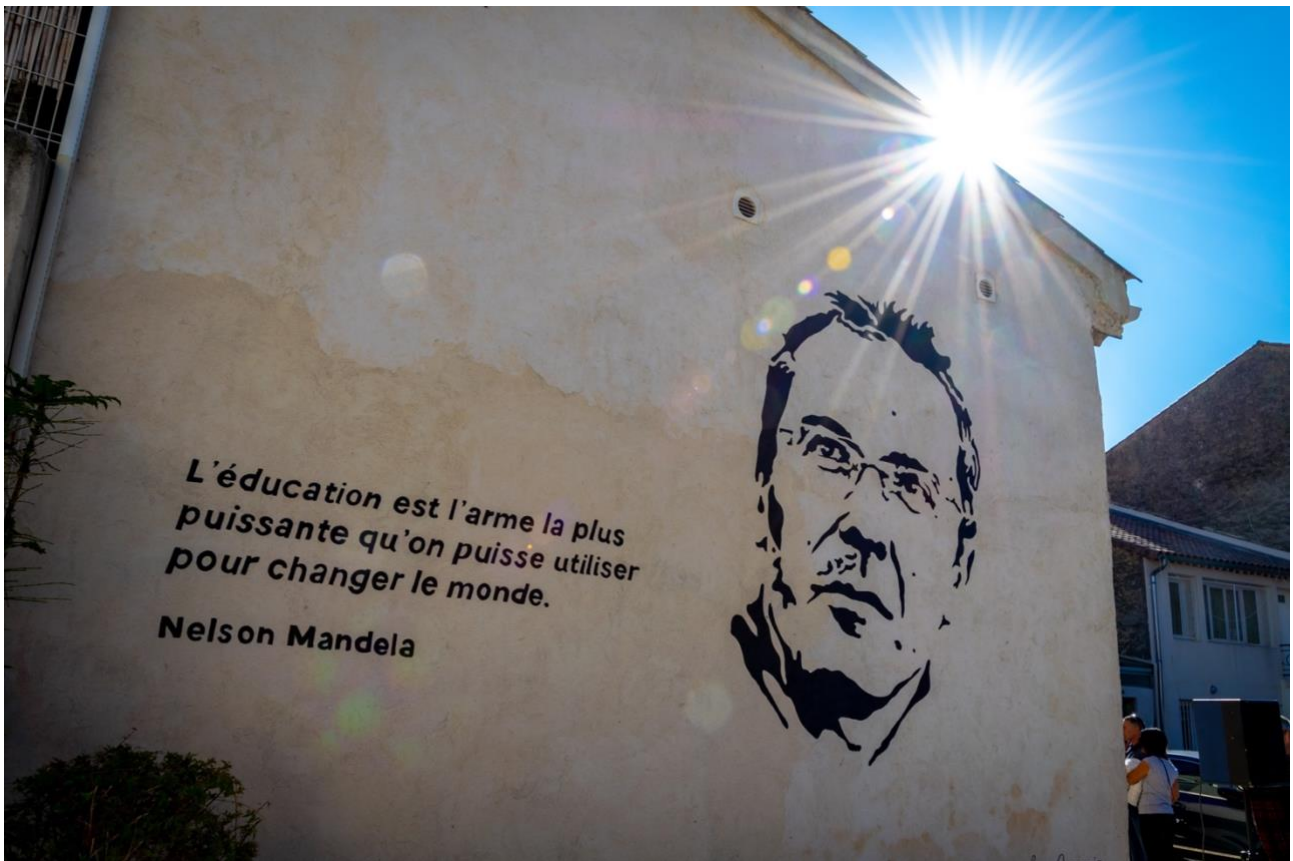
*Ni lui, ni sa famille, ni ses proches, ni la nation entière n'auraient souhaité un instant qu'il soit si tristement célèbre.*

*Ironie du sort Samuel Paty, professeur d'Histoire, est rentré dans l'Histoire de son pays à son insu.*

*Aujourd'hui, un an après nous sommes réunis en ce lieu, où sous nos pieds étaient édifiées les anciennes écoles de la commune, où tant de Villeneuvoises et de Villeneuvois, comme moi-même, y ont appris les valeurs de l'enseignement de la République dans la paix, le partage, le respect et la laïcité.*

*Cette place est désormais la place Samuel Paty pour que les générations futures se souviennent qu'en assassinant un homme, on n'assassine en rien les valeurs qu'il porte. Ce n'est pas en fermant les yeux que l'on empêchera les étoiles de briller.*





### Conversations with our friends in VLB

We had a lively exchange on Zoom with our friends in VLB on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October. The subject was wine! English and French wine-drinkers exchanged animated information about their enthusiasms. Obviously, Céline, Jérôme and Benoît were enthusiastic for their local wines, in particular their rosé, in which grenache is the main grape. The favoured example of this was **Preignes Le Vieux**, and here I quote from the *Talking Wines* website of a wine merchant in Cirencester:

*Domaine Preignes is a 1200 acre estate dating back to 400 AD run by two brothers, Jerome and Robert Vic, who still live in the old Château. Their philosophy is for minimum intervention and wines that are pure fruit expression of the grape varieties. The family control the whole process from tending the vines to wine production. Picking of the grapes in the cool part of the day 3am-8am ensures freshness.*

Rosé needs to be drunk young, so the name refers, no doubt, to the vines!



The conversation also highlighted some unusual wines, however, for which interest, nostalgia and recollection were generously shared. Here are some highlights:

**Rivesaltes**, an appellation from the eastern Roussillon, is a rich, sweet, fortified wine, perfect as a Christmas dessert wine, and one that may surprise and delight your friends. At 17% it is high in alcohol. It can be made from a combination of all the grenache grapes, *blanc, noir et gris*, and there is also a muscat version. The Banyuls version of this wine was particularly praised in the conversation. An organic **Rivesalte Ambré**, made from grenache blanc, 2006, is available from the Great Wine Company—a dangerous two-minute walk from my house in Bath—for £18.85 a bottle (£14.41 for a multi-buy). This is competitive compared with the three available at the Wine Society, which range from £21 for a 1998, 50cl bottle, to £155 for a beauty from 1960.



Another delicious, sweet wine from this region is **Rimages**, a really dark red with flavours of cooked, black fruit and prunes. Grapes are carefully selected from an early-morning, hand picking, as with the Béziers rosé. The Wine Society have one available, 2018, *Cuvée Léon Parcée, Domaine de la Rectorie*, for £22, and the Great Wine Company again come up trumps with *Domaine Cazes*, the same vintage, for £18.95 for 50cl.

Another unusual favourite was a Swiss wine called **Saint Saphorin**, named after the village where it is made in Lavaux appellation, Vaud canton. This is a wine region with some kudos, where the dominant grapes are Fendant and Chasselas, which grow on the steep slopes around Lake Geneva, where the brilliant alpine light is magnified by the water of the lake. This is a difficult wine to source in the UK. If anyone finds some, please let me know and I'll include it in a future newsletter.

**Our next Zoom conversation will be on December 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm**, when we shall be talking about Christmas, and the different ways of celebrating in our two countries. Please put it in your diaries, the mood is very convivial and both French and English are spoken with a wide range of competence. The conversation lasts about an hour. If you would like to join in, please contact Jane Finn ([jane finn20@hotmail.com](mailto:jane finn20@hotmail.com)).

## French Conversation in Langford and on Zoom

The Langford inn is a delightful venue for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat in French. If you would like to attend the Zoom meetings, just drop Margaret Hancock a line ([hancock.divonne@gmail.com](mailto:hancock.divonne@gmail.com)) and she will send you the joining link. It is a recurring meeting, so the protocols are the same each time.

4 November 3.30pm The Langford Inn  
12 November 4pm Zoom  
18 November 3.30pm The Langford Inn  
26 November 4pm Zoom

## Cinéphiles de Wrington

The next meeting will be on **2<sup>nd</sup> November** when we shall discuss the wickedly iconoclastic ***la Grande Bouffe (The Big Feast, 1973)***, directed by Marco Ferreri, starring Marcello Mastroianni, Michel Piccoli, Philippe Noiret and Ugo Tognazzi. It is available to buy or rent from Amazon, or from BFI. Renée Bolton will lead the discussion. Looking ahead to December, we shall meet on 7<sup>th</sup> December to discuss ***Le Havre (2011)***, produced, written, and directed by Aki Kaurismäki and starring André Wilms, Kati Outinen, Jean-Pierre Darroussin and Blondin Miguel, John Adams to lead. If you would like to join *Cinéphiles*, please contact Shail Patel ([shail.email@gmail.com](mailto:shail.email@gmail.com)) and he will send you the zoom link. Everyone gets the chance to nominate a film and we watch a wide variety.

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## Recipe of the month



### **Le Cassoulet de Castelnaudary**

This is the classic recipe from *French Country Cooking* by Elizabeth David (Penguin, first published 1951, second revised edition 1966). Although often associated with using leftovers after Christmas, it can be a very reassuring dish at this time of year, especially if you have leftover duck. It is marvellously hearty, and I once ate it in the Marais in Paris on a cold, misty day in November. I have not updated the quantities or denominations. It is a dish to make in quantity, it reheats well, and this serves 6–8 people. (A modern vegetarian alternative follows below.)

1½ -2lb medium-sized white haricot beans  
A wing and a leg of preserved goose or half a fresh goose  
(ed. I have frequently made this using chicken, turkey or duck)  
a coarse pork sausage, about 1lb, small or large  
½ lb bacon

3 onions  
4-5 cloves garlic  
2 tomatoes  
2 pts meat stock  
Some good pork dripping  
Breadcrumbs

Soak the beans overnight. Drain and wash the next day, put into fresh water, bring to the boil and simmer for 2.5 hours until  $\frac{3}{4}$  cooked, then strain them.

While they are cooking, slice the onions, cut the bacon into squares and melt them together in a pan. Add the crushed garlic, tomatoes, season with salt, pepper and whatever herbs you have available, bay, thyme and sage are good. Pour over the hot stock and simmer for 20 minutes.

Take a good earthenware pot and rub it well with the garlic.

Take the goose pieces out of their pot (if you are using fresh goose, it should be half roasted. You can also use leftover goose from the Christmas roast, or chicken, turkey or duck). Put the goose, some good dripping, the sausage and the bacon at the bottom of the earthenware pot, and the beans on top.

Add the stock and bring the cassoulet slowly to the boil, then spread a layer of breadcrumbs on the top. Put the pot into a slow oven and cook for about an hour. By this time the beans should be cooked, the stock absorbed, and a crust formed by the breadcrumbs.

Serve just as it is with a young, red wine, a salad, and a good local cheese to follow.

*(Editor's note: if your earthenware pot cannot be put on the hob, you can also make this dish in a cast iron casserole.)*

### **Nigel Slater's Aubergine Cassoulet**

*Reproduced from The Guardian online, Sunday 14 December 2014*

*A simpler version also appears in Greenfeast (4<sup>th</sup> Estate, 2019) p. 74.*

Serves 4–6

2 aubergines  
2 onions  
3 garlic cloves  
Olive oil  
250g tomatoes  
2 bay leaves  
4 sprigs thyme  
3 sprigs rosemary  
A little tomato purée  
250 ml vegetable stock  
2 x 400g cans haricot beans (butterbeans also work well)

Discard the stems from the aubergines, then slice each one in half lengthways, then in half again. Warm 3 or 4 tbsp of oil in a deep, heavy-based casserole, then fry the aubergines in the oil until they are soft and nicely golden brown on their cut sides. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Peel the onions, roughly chop them, then let them cook in the same pan, adding more oil if necessary, for 10-15 minutes, until soft and pale honey-coloured. Peel and thinly slice the garlic, stir into the onion as it cooks. Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6.



Roughly chop the tomatoes and add to the onions, together with the bay leaves, whole sprigs of thyme and rosemary. Stir in the tomato purée, continue cooking for 5 minutes, then tip in the haricot beans, drained and rinsed, the aubergines, a generous seasoning of salt and black pepper and the vegetable stock. Partially cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Reduce the bread to coarse crumbs in a food processor then add the thyme leaves, process briefly, then scatter over the surface of the bean and aubergine mixture.

Shake enough olive oil over the crumbs to lightly saturate them then bake for 25-30 minutes until the crumb crust is crisp and the cassoulet is bubbling around the edges.

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

This month's word is *crépiter*, meaning to crackle or to express a variety of break-out sounds, such as the spitting from a frying pan, or a person who splutters. It can also be used to describe applause breaking out spontaneously. Leaves underfoot *crépitent*. So do bullets from a *mitrailleuse*, a machine gun. Those of us who have creaking joints these days—and I mean that literally; a tendon or joint that protests by audibly creaking under use—might wish to know that the medical term for that creaking noise is *crepitus*, the Latin word for rattling, crackling, and the snapping of fingers, from which the French word derives. And so to the other word that goes along with the creaking of joints: *decrepiter*. Oh dear. Let's just go out for a lovely autumn walk on those *feuilles crépitant*.

