



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

- Margaret Hancock writes: When we installed ourselves in Wrington in 2013 after living in France for some years we were delighted to find that the village not only had a link with France but a French conversation group already existed. The group had been set up by Annabel Scott a couple of years before and we decided to join the group as soon as possible.

The group met informally at the Plough, which was very convivial, but given the noise level talking and listening to conversation in another language was quite a challenge. Annabel was wonderful, never refusing to do something and as a result she was definitely over-committed. I offered to help her with the group and soon found myself running it, and here we are some years later and it is still going strong.

We have tried various times and venues for our meetings, morning coffee, afternoon tea and evening drinks, it is of course difficult to find a time to suit everyone. During the first six months of this year we have been meeting via zoom, I have had lots of help from Lindsey and Shail in organising those meetings. Now we are taking a summer break and we shall resume our meetings, hopefully in person now that restrictions have been lifted, later in September. I will contact those on my list to try and find a time to suit the greatest number of people, and suggest we meet for tea in the afternoon as we did pre-pandemic.

We are a very relaxed, enjoyable and friendly group, with a mixed range of fluency in French and it seems to work very well. We sometimes use a theme or an idea for conversation, sometimes it is just a spontaneous conversation but always very interesting I find. If you can speak a little or even more French and have a free afternoon once or twice a month I hope you will consider joining us.

You can contact me by email at: [margaretdivonne@gmail.com](mailto:margaretdivonne@gmail.com)

**News from France**

- France is bringing in a mandatory Covid health pass for visits to cafés, restaurants and other everyday events and imposing vaccination on 70 professions. It is one of the first EU countries to take such strict action. The unprecedented move sparked protests, with 161,000 taking part on July 24 and 114,000 the previous week, amid claims of dictatorship and fears of a divided society.
- Menna Rawlings is the first woman after a long line of male ambassadors to France, including the Duke of Wellington, of Waterloo fame, who bought the residence she has moved to, in 1814. Since Wellington, there have been 36 men in the job (including the duke) before her .
- Over 700 former coal miners have received compensation of €10,000 each in recognition of anxiety caused by exposure to toxic substances as employees of the former French nationalised coal producer, *Charbonnages de France*.
- Drivers using the AP-7 motorway linking France and Spain will be able to do so for free from September 1. Users arriving from Occitanie will no longer have to pay to use the road as far as Barcelona.

- The world's largest cruise ship recently left the workshop in France and set out to sea for testing. Named 'Wonder of the Seas', it was built in Saint-Nazaire and was tested for 4 days between the city port on France's Atlantic coast and the island of Belle-Ile-en-Mer off the coast of Brittany.
- Bronze Age pottery packed with jewellery and weapons has been discovered by archaeologists working on a prehistoric site in Gannat in Allier in the Auvergne. The finds were made while excavating a fortified settlement dating from 800BC. The pots are believed to have been buried deliberately some 3,000 years ago.

### **1066 and all that**

1066 is one of the best-known dates in English history and it is often said that the Norman conquest was the last invasion of England. This is not quite right. In the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 Bonnie Prince Charlie brought an army from France to Scotland and unsuccessfully invaded England. The Norman conquest was however the last successful invasion of England and it had huge long term consequences for this country.

Although the Normans had settled in Normandy (which was not then part of France), their origin was Viking. Over the years they had intermarried with the local people and adopted their language and habits. Normandy was ruled by Duke William II, the bastard son of Duke Robert and a woman called Herleva. Like Edward the Confessor, who ruled England in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, William was a descendant of the Viking King Cnut. He was used to fighting. He had a long struggle to establish and maintain his hold on Normandy.

In the 1050s and early 1060s, William became a contender for the throne of England held by the childless Edward the Confessor, his first cousin once removed. There were other potential claimants, including the powerful English earl Harold Godwinson, whom Edward, probably under persuasion, named as king on his deathbed in January 1066. Arguing that Edward had previously promised the throne to him and that Harold had sworn to support his claim, William built a large fleet and invaded England in September 1066. He defeated and killed Harold at the bloody Battle of Hastings in October 1066. William had himself crowned king of England on Christmas Day, 1066. His coronation was not universally accepted by the English earls who traditionally appointed the English kings. There was then no automatic line of succession to the English throne and succession was a matter of agreement between the earls. However William made arrangements for the governance of England before returning to Normandy. There followed a period of bloody rebellions against the Norman rule with much bloodshed, although William was deemed by some to be a compassionate king because, rather than having his prisoners killed, he merely had them maimed or blinded. William's hold on England was mostly secure by 1075. He is remembered for having commissioned the Domesday Book, a huge and detailed survey of landholdings in England completed in 1085, compiled mainly by monks under the supervision of the earls, many of whom, by that time were of Norman extraction. Much of England's land was given by William to his Norman followers as a reward for military services in defeating the rebellions against him. By the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century a large part of England's nobility was Norman, the feudal system was installed, and the English were generally regarded as inferior members of society. Gradually, through intermarriage and adoption of the local language, the two societies merged, but for several centuries thereafter the language of the upper classes, the law and the courts was French and the English kings frequently spent far more of their time in France than in England.



Bayeux Tapestry

The history of the Norman Conquest is learned from a variety of sources, both contemporary and later, and notably, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. There are differing versions of the same events. However the most reliable and vivid pictorial description of these events is on the fabulous Bayeux Tapestry, a magnificent example of Romanesque art, which can be seen today on exhibition in Bayeux in Normandy.

### Virtual Traveller



ANTHONY HANCOCK



