



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

**NEWSLETTER January 2022**  
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## **BONNE ANNÉE à TOUT LE MONDE!!!**

Welcome to your January newsletter. This will be a brief one, as your editor is still languishing in the aura of the Festive Season. So, let's start with a run-down of New Year celebrations in France. I am quoting this in full, from a fun Australian website written by bereft and estranged Francophiles, [www.frenchaffair.com.au](http://www.frenchaffair.com.au) .

## **New year celebrations in France**



### **New Year's Eve in France for 2021**

For the second year in a row, Covid-19 has upset the usual New Year's Eve celebrations in France.

This year, there will be no crowds on the popular Champs-Élysées. Paris municipal authorities announced with regret that the fireworks and festivities planned for the Champs-Élysées on December 31st are cancelled.

In small villages and towns across the country, 2022 will also arrive in a very subdued fashion.

French officials will curb outdoor revelry on New Year's Eve in a bid to limit Covid-19 infections that risk overwhelming hospitals, Prime Minister Jean Castex said.

*"I'm appealing to everyone's responsibility to find other ways to celebrate than large gatherings, and avoiding moments of conviviality,"*

Regional prefects will ban spontaneous parties and ask cities to hold off on fireworks and other celebrations, he said.

## Saint Sylvestre

The French call New Year's Eve la Saint-Sylvestre. But who is Saint Sylvestre? This saint, who is celebrated on December 31st, has no link with New Year at all. It is just a coincidence of the Gregorian calendar. Each day of the year, a saint is celebrated on the French calendar and December 31st is his feast day. La Saint-Sylvestre is feminine because it's short for la fête de Saint-Sylvestre.

Sylvester was the 33rd Pope and held the throne of Saint Peter for almost twenty-two years from 314 to 335 A.D. Under his reign, Christianity was recognised as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

New Year Celebrations in France usually begin on New Year's Eve. It is celebrated with a feast, called le Réveillon de Saint-Sylvestre. The feast consists of traditional dishes like pancakes, foie gras and champagne. According to French tradition, this special dinner brings prosperity and good luck to the lives of all those attending the feast.

The party can range from an intimate dinner with friends to a grand ball or *une soirée dansante*. At midnight, everyone kisses under the mistletoe and offers best wishes for the new year. Yes, kissing under the mistletoe is a New Year's custom in France, rather than a Christmas custom as in other countries.

## New Year's Day

In France, New Year's Day has not always been January 1st. In the 6th and 7th centuries, in many provinces, New Year was celebrated on March 1st. Under the rule of Charlemagne in the 9th century, the year started at Christmas. From the time of the Capetian kings in the 10th century, the year started on Easter Day. It's only since 1564 that the new year has started on January 1st. King Charles IX decided to fix the start of the year as January 1st to standardise the calendar throughout the kingdom.

New Year's Day is popularly called Jour des Étrennes, and le Jour de l'An. The French love to dine with loved ones on this special day. A farewell to the old year and a grand welcome to the New Year is done, with an optimistic hope of success, prosperity, happiness, and peace in the coming time.

Celebrating in high festive spirits, they exchange gifts and cards and share new year's resolutions with family and close friends. The French love the tradition of gift-giving and consider it more auspicious to present gifts on New Year than at any other festival.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Last call for subscriptions, please!** They were due on October 1st. Your subs are an important part of our economy, as well as a signal of commitment from our members. Next year the subs will be raised to £10, so why not enjoy as much as possible of this year at the current rate of £5 per person, £10 per couple/family? Bank details are:

A/C Wrington Twinning Association

Bank: Santander Sort Code 09-01-27

Account No. 88663595.

Or send a cheque made out to Wrington Twinning Association to:

The Treasurer, c/o The John Locke Room, Silver Street, Wrington BS40 5QE

### **News from France**

Eurostar, P&O and their scores of putative travellers breathed a collective sigh of relief as rules were relaxed, on 28<sup>th</sup> December, for British nationals who needed to travel through France to get to their place of residence in another EU country for the new year.

On December 29<sup>th</sup>, however, there was a record 208,000 Covid cases reported in France over 24 hours. Some people are still planning to party, but conflict pervades: 'Soirée ou canapé?' (Party or pyjamas)? (Your editor is dismayed to think of the French spending an evening in pyjamas. I thought they always looked nice, even on the sofa.)

### **News from VLB**

Not much is happening. We await the arrival of 2022 into their *Agenda*. As we go to press, they are preoccupied, perhaps, with the dilemma of Soirée ou canapé.

### **Conversations with our friends in VLB**

No dates yet for 2022.

### **French Conversation in Langford and on Zoom**

14 January

5pm

Zoom

If you would like to attend the Zoom meetings, just drop Margaret Hancock a line ([hancock.divonne@gmail.com](mailto:hancock.divonne@gmail.com)). It is a recurring meeting, so the universal protocols apply (see below).

## Cinéphiles de Wrington

The next meeting will be on **4<sup>th</sup> January at 5pm**, on Zoom, when we shall discuss *Les Intouchables* (2011), directed by Olivier Nakache and Eric Tolédano. It stars François Cluzet and Omar Sy. If you are having difficulty finding the film, Shail recommends these two links:

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Untouchable-French-Audio-Fran%CC%A4ois-Cluzet/dp/B01DFT47OC/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?crid=2OOM8YKLC22HW&keywords=les+intouchables&qid=1639047192&sprefix=les+intou%2Caps%2C167&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Untouchable-French-Audio-Fran%CC%A4ois-Cluzet/dp/B01DFT47OC/ref=sr_1_2?crid=2OOM8YKLC22HW&keywords=les+intouchables&qid=1639047192&sprefix=les+intou%2Caps%2C167&sr=8-2)

The discussion will be led by Sue Gearing. Please use the universal joining instructions below.

Going forwards, our next films, all available on Amazon to rent or buy, will be:

1 February *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (2014), directed by the Dardenne brothers, starring Marion Cotillard and Fabrizio Rongione

1 March *Etre et Avoir* (2002), a documentary about a small, rural school, directed by Nicolas Philibert.

**Please note the universal log-in for all French Connection and Wrington Twinning Association Zoom meetings, whether committee, conversation or Cinéphiles:**

<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

## Recipe of the month

**Pancakes** are a traditional dish in France for bringing in the new year, especially with foie gras or with caviar. They are also a very good way of using up leftover smoked salmon and charcuterie. Here is a recipe for buckwheat pancakes, which are particularly good with seafood.

5 ozs plain white flour

4 ozs buckwheat flour

Salt

3 eggs

$\frac{3}{4}$  pt milk

Sieve or mix the two flours together and add a little salt.

Make a well in the flours and break in three eggs.

Beat the mixture with a whisk and add the milk a little at a time.

Leave for an hour, and then mix again.

You can cook the pancakes in batches in a frying pan with a very little oil (coconut oil works well as it has a very low melting point). If your pan is reliably non-stick, you won't even need that. You can also use a flat griddle pan. If you have an AGA or other range stove, you can cook them directly onto the oiled hotplate, or use a silicon sheet.

The pancakes are small, thick ones, you can cook several at once in a large pan or on a griddle. Use a ladle to drop circles of the batter onto your hot cooking surface and cook them for about two minutes on the first side, and a minute on the second, flipping them over with a palette knife or spatula. Enjoy with your choice of topping. Smoked salmon with a squeeze of lime is good, or with some cream cheese as well.

*Recipe is from Arabella Boxer and Tessa Traeger, A Visual Feast, (London: Ebury Books, 1991)*

## **Wine of the Month**

My dear friends, it is January.

Your editor humbly suggests you step away from the wine rack.

To assist with the deprivation of a dry month, why not experiment with sparkline mineral waters, which, I am reliably informed, require a palette of great subtlety to distinguish? If this is unconvincing stuff, just try Badoit, who now offer a red version and a green version. The green is the one you want as an aperitif, or to drink with a main course. The red is subtly sweet and more appropriate to a dessert.

If you absolutely refuse to greet 2022 with austerity, then I suggest tucking into the delicious remains of the Christmas cheeseboard (ref. Tony Hancock's Encyclopaedia of Cheese, October Newsletter, 2021) with a modest measure of sloe gin. Perfect partners.

**Le mot juste** in January is **outré**. Unconventional, bizarre, breaking boundaries., extravagant, shocking (in an amusing way). It is the past participle of the verb **outrer**, to exaggerate, or to outrage. It was rather fashionable in English in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, a Noël Coward or Oscar Wilde sort of word, meaning something with a *frisson* of naughtiness. Not to be confused with ordinary old **outré**, meaning besides or apart from. Not so very far, however, from **outrépasser** meaning to overstep the mark, to exceed.

Until February, **BONNE SANTÉ à TOUS.**

*Lindsey Shaw-Miller, Newsletter Editor, Wrington Twinning Association and The French Connection.*

