

*Founded
1989*



*French
Association
3035*

April 2016 Newsletter

*Events, activities, news
and reports for members*



Auray Photograph by Jackie Luckett

Who am I?

As your new President, I've been asked to introduce myself, although having been a member of Get Together since we first moved to live in France 14 years ago, I expect most of you know who I am. With hubby David, 5 dogs, one cat and one horse, I live in St Pardoux between Niort and Parthenay, which is reasonably central to the long department of Deux-Sevres. Besides organising a few Friday-morning walks, I have also run the Book Library for about 8 years and David has recently launched the Photography Group.



In the UK, my two career hats were working for BBC Radio – External Services, National and Local – and in the law as a Conveyancer, Wills and Probate. I served 15 years as Parish Clerk of our local council as well as President and Minutes Secretary of our local riding club.

Writing occupies a lot of my time now, as an author and a blogger. My Deux-Sevres Life blog includes a lot of information about the Winter Fuel Allowance, Votes for Expats, Referendum etc. You can subscribe to updates.

<http://www.thisfrenchlife.com/deuxsevres/>

Many of the Get Together members are now well into retirement when sadly health issues can raise their head. So during my term as President, I'd like to expand the information on the Welfare section of the association website to cover more than just the Pays de Gatine. With that in mind, I'm asking any of you who have knowledge and/or experience of any support associations in France – especially Poitou Charentes - for loss of hearing, loss of sight, disability, Parkinsons, Alzheimers, ME, MS, helpful contacts in hospitals, in fact anything relating to health issues (except cancer which we all know) which you could

share to let me or any member of the Committee have details of names, phone numbers, email address, website where appropriate so that these can be added to the GT website. I'm looking forward to my term as President, to getting to more events and meeting as many of you as possible and to working with the marvellous Committee I have been lucky enough to inherit from Roger.

Beryl Brennan

Announcing the GT Photographic Competition 2017

You can now start thinking about your entries for the 2017 GT calendar competition.

The theme for this year is "La Vie Française".

Your pictures can be of any subject matter which you feel best expresses life in France and obviously they must have been taken somewhere within France.

What do you think best portrays France and why we have chosen to make it our home (or even second home)?

The seasons, landscapes, French holiday destinations, local animals and wildlife, French food, sports, heritage – in fact anything...FRENCH! Over to you!

Each family member may submit up to four photographs. Photographs must be in landscape format (rather than portrait) and your entry must state where in France each photograph was taken. Closing date for submission of entries will be **midnight 30th September 2016.**

Details of how to submit your photographs will be available later, in the meantime start snapping!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Book Library	Mon 4 th Apr	2 – 4.00 pm	St Pardoux
Walk	Sat 9 th Apr	10.30 am	Loizé
Quiz Night	Thurs 14 th Apr	7.00 pm	Menigoute
History Group	Thurs 21 st Apr	3.00 pm	Menigoute
Photographic Group	Mon 25 th Apr	2.00 pm	Nr Lac Cebron
Walk	Fri 29 th Apr	10.00 am	Clavé
Walk	Sat 7 th May	10.30 am	Chenay
Reading Circle	Wed 11 th May	2.30 pm	L'Aumonerie
Summer Event/BBQ	Sun 17 th Jul	TBC	Le Tallud

- **Next Committee Meeting** **Thursday 28th April, Chez Ritchie**
- **Final Copy Date for Newsletter Items** **Wednesday 27th April**
(gtnewsletter79@gmail.com)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Book Library **Mon 4th Apr** **2 – 4.00 pm** **St Pardoux**



The next library day will be on Monday 4th March at Chez Brennan at St Pardoux. It's a great way to spend an afternoon, including a cuppa and biscuits.

Sat 9th April **10.30 am** **Loizé**

Walk

We would like as many people as possible to come on this walk and that includes members north of the A10!

This walk of 8km and shorter version of 4.5km is on flat open countryside in and around Loizé, which is situated on the D110 between Les Alleuds and Chef-Boutonne. The walk is on by-roads and tracks, some short stretches are very muddy but we hope that they will be dried out by April.

There are public toilets and ample parking in the Rue de la Mairie, Loizé.

Lunch will be taken at the Hotel Voyageurs, Chef-Boutonne. Three courses, wine and coffee at a cost of €16. Non walkers are very welcome.

Quiz Night **Thurs 14th April** **7.00 pm** **Menigoute**

GT Quiz Night at the Auberge des Voyageurs, Menigoute

This popular general knowledge quiz makes a welcome return for those of you who like to put your wits (and memory) to the test.

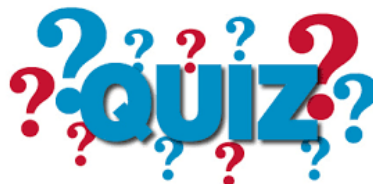
The evening will follow the usual format with four rounds of questions, a simple meal served during the interval followed by a further four rounds of questions.

The quiz will start promptly at 7.00 pm but the doors will be open from 6.30 pm for those wishing to stimulate their brain cells with a pre-quiz drink.

Your quiz master will once again be Jonathan Townsend and the questions have been devised by Jackie Lockett. Maximum of four quizzers per table with an entry fee of €2 per person.

Supper will cost €10 each and consist of a main course plus desert followed by tea or coffee.

As usual there will be the glittering array of prizes for the know-alls and a consolation prize for "les nuls". All good fun. Numbers will be limited so if you would like to book your place, max 4 per table.



History Group

Thurs 21st
April

3.00 pm

Menigoute



This month our presenter is **Gaynor Mickelborough** speaking on ***The Search for Marianne.***

The search for Marianne began with the advent of the *First Republic* in 1792.

The new Republic sought a new and distinct symbol to represent its aims and philosophies, and sought a figurehead that would unite a divided nation behind the ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* rather than the absolutist dictat of the *Ancien Régime*. In order to achieve this end, Marianne has had to be essentially all things to all men, and (to quote the French government's official website) had to appear 'at times fiery and warlike', whilst at the same time displaying the 'pacific and nurturing' republican breast. An obviously impossible task for a man, but no less difficult for a woman in a man's world: unless, of course, one accepts that Marianne's obvious and well-endowed femininity was (and still is?) nothing other than a male construct – a product of the search by innumerable French revolutionaries, presidents and politicians for the perfect allegorical image in an imperfect social and political milieu. Consequently, Marianne has been born and reborn in various guises during the course of five republics and two world wars – a topic that provides us with an illuminating study in itself. But perhaps the more pertinent question is – have they found her yet or is it a question of 'dreaming on'? The cost is **€5.00 per head**, to cover refreshments, hire of the room & heating (if needed).

Directions to Auberge des Voyageurs in Menigoute.

From North (Parthenay), exit towards Pompaire then via Vausseroux and La Pagerie, on mainly D176 and D21. **From South** (Lezay), via D45 and D5 through Chey, La Mothe Saint Heray and Saint Germier.

From West (Champdeniers), via Saint Georges de Noisne, Chantecorps and La Pagerie, mainly D329.

From East (Poitiers), via La Torchaise and Sanxay, mainly D3. The restaurant itself is in the centre of the Bourg, opposite the small chapel.

N.B. We have to confirm numbers to the Auberge one week before the meeting. As a result we will be charged for any people who DO NOT TURN up on the day. So, we will have to charge individuals for “No Shows” on the day, sorry about this, but we have no choice!

Photographic
Group

Mon 25th Apr

2.00 pm

Nr Lac
Ceburon

The next Photography group meeting will meet at Ali Sherwin's house near to Lac Ceburon.

Come and join in and learn how to use YOUR camera!

Walk **Fri 29th Apr** **10.00 am** **Clavé**

We will meet at the picnic area of the Plan d'eau du Soleil Levant. The walk is around the top part of the reservoir approx 8 kms. Hopefully the sun will shine but it is a must to wear footwear with a good grip and it could be muddy in places.

It's generally flat with lovely views of the lake, it makes for an interesting walk. Toilets are available at the start.

Please note that there are two picnic areas, the one on the Clavé side is brand new, it's not this one, travel across the bridge (towards St George de Noise) and it's the first turning on the right, you will see the toilet block and picnic/ parking area.

Directions:- If coming from St Maixent L'Ecole take the D938 (direction Parthenay), as you enter Les Grand Ajoncs take the first turning on the left S.P Clavé, follow this road and signs for Clavé, as you enter the village, turn left onto the D329, cross over the bridge and first right to parking. If you are coming from the D748, initially follow signs to St George de Noise, then Clavé. Take the left turning 100 m BEFORE the bridge.

We will be going to L'Auberge des Voyageurs, 2 Place de la Mairie, Menigoute for lunch.

Starters, mains, fromage, dessert, wine and coffee for €11.50 (supplement of €2.50 for fish choice). Please indicate when booking whether you would like, meat, fish or vegetarian for mains.

Salad with tuna, onions and olives

Slow cooked leg of duck with potatoes

Cheese plate

Financier (almond cake)

1/4 of wine and coffee included price 11,50 €

For the fish (like a fish soup with halibut) sup 2,50 €

For vegetarians, salad with tomatoes and omelette (same price as normal menu).

Non walkers and guests are always welcome to join us.

Walk **Sat 7th May** **10.30 am** **Chenay**

Please note the date, it's a week earlier than usual!

The walk will be around 8 kms on a combination of tracks and road and will be fairly level.

Suitable footwear should be worn. There will be an option for a shorter route.

Directions - Chenay can be found on the D950/D150 road between Melle and Lusignan.

At Chenay take the route to Vancais (right hand turn if coming from Melle direction) and meet in the car park on the left. There is a toilet available near the church.

Afterwards lunch will be at Les Trois Pigeons restaurant in Chenay and will cost €15.

There is a choice of starter, main and dessert which must indicated at the time of booking.

Starter: salade de lardons or terrine de saumon

Main: roti de porc echine ratatouille or saumonette and riz:

Fromage

Dessert: bavarois mangue passion or moelleux au chocolat

cafe et 1/4 vin compris

**Reading
Circle**

Wed 11th May 2.30 pm

L'Aumonerie

At our next meeting we shall be discussing *Flight* by Isabel Ashdown which was first published less than a year ago. A young woman wins the lottery. She doesn't tell her husband but instead packs her bags, kisses her baby daughter goodbye and disappears. Two decades later the past comes back to haunt those she left behind and maybe we eventually get to learn what prompted her to leave in the first place. You can catch up with our latest book reviews on the GT website.

**Summer
Event**

Sun 17th July Time TBC

**The
Committee**

Put the date in your dairy - more details will follow.

REPORTS ON RECENT EVENTS

History Group

Thurs 18th Feb

Menigoute

**Report by
Gaynor
Mickelborough**



We welcomed Archaeologist Nick Wells to the History Group meeting in February as our Guest Speaker, his topic *From Gallia to Francia*.

During Nick's very interesting and entertaining talk we learnt much about the ambitions and aims of the Roman Empire in Gaul during the 4th to the 6th centuries, much of which seemed strangely familiar to us in the 21st century.

Military conquest and changes in the conduct of military warfare and

weaponry, political ambition, mass movement of peoples, religious controversy, financial manipulation, massive infrastructure projects were all part of this Roman World view. In what we probably regard now as 'our' Province, then named Aquitania Secunda, the capital was Bordeaux in the south, which had a strong military garrison as did Poitiers in the north, but generally the area was wealthy and peaceful as 'we' were off the important beaten track to Imperial Rome, that is until the Visigoths turned up, and the rest as they say is history!

We hope that it will be possible for Nick Wells to come back again soon with his infectious enthusiasm and tell us a great deal more about this subject, Visigoths and all.



Thirty four members attended the GT AGM at the "Maison Pour Tous" at Maziere-en-Gatine.

The President



Roger Amsden chaired the meeting; his last, as he is retiring after three very successful and hardworking years at the helm. The minutes of the meeting, which covered the Treasurers report, adoption of accounts, reports of the year's events and election of President and committee members; will be put on the GT website so that everyone can read the business of the day. During the reports of events thanks were given to those who had organised an event and encouragement given to all of us to arrange one for the coming year. Prizes were handed out to winners of the photographic competition and Jeremy Luckett gave a short report about the History Group as did David Brennan on the Photographic Group. Both Jeremy and David reminded us all that all members of GT can go to these Groups events, they are not separate clubs. Last but not least thanks were given to the committee from the floor and a small gift of appreciation was given to the retiring President Roger Amsden.

After the official business of the day we were given a talk by David Hardy of Blevins Franks who explained the differences and pitfalls of the French and English succession laws. A very interesting talk giving us all plenty to think about.

Finally the day was completed by a super "bring and share" lunch (co-ordinated by our brilliant newsletter editor Rebecca Sewell) where we were able to share everyone's favourite recipes and drink a glass of wine or two. It was a very convivial way of ending the day and I would encourage those members who do not attend the AGM to think about coming next year. It is a good way of finding out how the association works, gives us all a chance to thank the committee who work really hard to throughout the year and we all had a super lunch and chat.

David Hardy asked if he could to reply to a question posed to him at the AGM:

May I clarify one question put to me by a lady on Friday (sitting near the doors on the right of the hall) concerning the Tontine Clause.

She asked whether it was true that the clause had an upper financial limit?

I now think she was probably referring to Inheritance Tax between spouses when the house, on the first death, was transferred to the surviving spouse's name. Several years ago there was an inheritance tax free limit of F500,000 (€76,000) between married couples. However, Inheritance tax between spouses (and PACS'd couples) was abolished in 2007 so, the value passes to the survivor without any tax liability.



Nine members including David Brennan our resident expert, gathered at Jim and Julie Hutchison's 'Chateau' for our monthly meeting. Today Jim and David had set up groups of still life scenes for us to photograph without using automatic exposure, to experiment with various settings that were available on our cameras in differing lighting conditions. This was then analysed by David and Jim to hi-light where our efforts could be improved.

Members also had a chance to see other pictures shown on a large screen including pictures that Carol Andrews had taken in India. (see left)

David had edited several and showed un-edited alongside edited to compare the difference.



Our new idea was to have a picture of the month.

The picture of the gateway to the Taj Mahal taken by Carol at 5am from Princess Diana's seat was voted picture of the month just ahead of Jim's "Four Partridges on a Roof" (see left), for it's perfect symmetry, clear exposure and delightful well rounded capture of the monument.

Finally after some delightful yummy cake and coffee whilst summing up, we left hopefully wiser and eager to try our new found knowledge.

This month Keith treated us to some Spanish wines, we tried a Vina Sol which reminded us longingly of summer, light and fruity and very drinkable. We then tried three Reds, a Celeste Roble and a Altos Ibericos Crianza, both made from the Tempranillo grape, finally we tried a very fine Salmos from the Tarragona region, very Spanish, Deep dark appearance and bold flavour. These were complimented by cheese choux pastries, Serrano ham and bread. Our theme was 'Valentine' and a feast was to follow our wine tasting! 'Love and heart' soup, chicken terrine, roasted carrot humous, Spanish omelette, salad and bread, it was easy to go back for more but knowing several desserts were to follow most of us behaved ourselves! Desserts consisted of raspberry frangipani pie, chocolate brownies and 'Queen of Hearts' cake. All tasted delicious.

In addition we had chocolate mousses and sponge cake decorated with hearts from a very generous Brigitte.

Our thanks go to Margaret and Frank for hosting, providing teas and coffees and as always making us feel so welcome.



Walk

Fri 26th Feb

Mouilleron des
Pareds

Report by
Michel Desmidt

Hallelujah – after days of English-like weather, Friday 26 February dawned bright and beautiful. This no doubt contributed to the healthy turnout of 19 walkers and accompanying dogs for a walk along the colline des moulins (ridge of windmills) near Mouilleron-en-Pareds, the picturesque town just inside the border of Vendée.

Yours truly kept the party waiting as a result of my mad Brittany spaniel going AWOL from home and, then, being stuck behind a learner truck driver for almost the entire journey to Mouilleron. Duly assembled and accounted for by walk organiser Barbara Whitehouse, we set off through the narrow streets of Mouilleron.

For such a small country town, it punches way above it's weight in terms of history. It's the birth place of George Clemenceau, head of the French government during World War I and who signed the [Treaty of Versailles](#) with [Lloyd George](#), Vittorio Emanuele Orlando and Woodrow Wilson. The house where he was born was bought by the state in 2006 and converted into a museum.

The more recent local hero is the fine gentleman by the name [Marshal Jean de Lattre de Tassigny](#), who led the French First Army during the liberation of France with the allied forces in 1945. There's a grand memorial to the marshal along the footpath from town to the colline de moulins.

Winding our way out of town, we passed a fine example of a 18C century fountain with an adjoining 'lavoir'. It's worth noting that to do the walk up to the windmills, you don't have to start from town: there's a car park at the beginning of the walk with a large viewing platform overlooking the countryside for kilometres.

The star attraction of the walk is the refurbished windmills dating back to the 15C. These were strategically located at the top of a granite to catch the prevailing wind and were used in the production of flour. More than 13 of the windmills were destroyed in the Revolution. Much later, under the ownership of the marshal, some of the windmills were rebuilt on the original site. Some of them have been only partly renovated and one has been converted into a chapel. The history of the mills and the local area is well documented along the trail by way of ceramic plaques mounted on rocks. If you happen to be passing at night, the illuminated mills make for a very impressive sight.

The combination of the good weather, abundant local history and an interesting orientation table, meant that the group was soon spread out investigating the various points of interest. Before long, it was time to head back to town for a meal at the Clemenceau restaurant. A smaller group eager to make the most of the winter sunshine continued to the endpoint of circuit – a statue of Mary and Child strategically located on a granite outcrop with stunning views. The return leg was boggy in places but the extra

effort was worth it and nobody seemed to mind us being late for the starters!

The Clemenceau restaurant is owned by a young British couple – he was in the Signals in the Army. The food is freshly-cooked and unpretentious and represents good value for money. The owners are really making an effort by holding curry evenings, quiz nights and visits from the fish and chips van. For eating out, there are other possibilities, including a traditional French restaurant called La Table du Centre near the church square.

All-in-all, Mouilleron offers excellent walking with great views and an interesting heritage. To round it off, there is a choice of three restaurants.

Thanks again to Barbara for pulling it all together.



Walk

Sat 12th March

**St Vincent la
Châtre**

**Report by Jane
Oram**

After last month's wet experience walking from Pamproux (ok I personally wasn't brave enough to do it), it was a delight to meet in the car park at St-Vincent-la Chatre with the sun shining and the prospect of a good walk chatting with friends. We set off at 10 am, along with 4 dogs, and our new president Beryl whom I met for the first time.

We assembled for a group photo at the point where members of the group were to decide on the shorter or longer route options. The photo shoot was a hurried affair as at that moment a car appeared, and as we were blocking the whole road, Geoff Little was in danger. Happily all passed without incidence. Later the dogs were able to be let off their leads and go exploring.

The sun continued to shine, and after 2 hours and almost 9 kms we arrived back at the car park with most of us having shed our coats. It definitely felt like spring had arrived at long last. We then drove to Lezay and had a pleasant lunch at the Berlands restaurant where we were received in a friendly manner by the owners.

Many thanks to Chris and Bob Parsons for organising the event, especially for including the sunshine which was the best part for me.



Photographic Group **Mon 21st Mar**

Mazieres

**Report by
Carol Andrews**

Ten enthusiastic photographers met at the home of Carol Andrews on Monday 21st March, where we discussed DS Monthly, Sally Coppack was congratulated on having her lovely photo of daffodils on the front cover of the March issue, The May issue will be focused on the Bayeux Tapestry and Angers, the June issue will cover the Bressuire Grand Prix, so David is looking for you to dig out any pictures you have from previous years to submit for consideration.



We then looked at each other's still-life shots from last month's meeting, comparing angles, lighting and composition, it was decided after very little discussion (not much was needed) that Jim's was the "shot of the month" .

We then went on to do some portrait shots (Carol and David being this month's "models"!), these will be analysed at the next meeting . Jim suggested that we

perhaps visit a chateau for inside and outside shots, he will look into before the next meeting. The next meeting will be at the home of Ali Sherwin, near Louin, on Monday 25th April, David will send out directions nearer the time..

The weather is improving and the sun is shining, so get out there with your cameras and enjoy yourselves!

Picture shown is the "shot of the month", chosen by the members from the "still-life" photo-shoot last month at Julie and Jim Hutchinson's. The Photo was taken by Jim during the photo-shoot on his Nikon DSLR at settings of 1/50 sec at f/4.2, ISO 1000.

Welcome to our NEW MEMBERS

Michael & Nicola Lee La Chapelle St Etienne
John & Diana Stubbs Aubigny
Jon & Helen Booth La Chapelle Thireuil

Non GT Items of Interest

If you know of an event that you think other members might be interested in – please email the details to gtnewsletter79@gmail.com and we can publicise it in following newsletter – if space permits.

TheatriVasles is performing its next production on 22 and 23 April at Vasles (about 15 minutes from Parthenay). It is "Ghost Writer" by David Tristram, a comedy-murder-mystery. Performances at 8pm on both evenings, the modern theatre in the centre of the village has full disabled access. Tickets are 10€ each from TheatriVaslesTickets@gmail.com, tel 05 49 05 67 41. The Zinc bar/restaurant opposite is offering a pre-theatre supper of fish and chips from 6pm - booking essential (tel 05 49 69 94 92).

"Les Amis d'Oroux" are organising a choral concert by l'Ensemble Orpheo, a wonderful choir based in Niort. They have put together a superb, varied programme from traditional songs to operatic arias, something for everyone. The concert takes place in the church at Oroux (79390, near La Ferrière and Thénézay) on Saturday 30 April at 8.30pm. Tickets are 12€ in advance or 14€ on the door, from amisdoroux@yahoo.fr or tel 05 49 63 10 40.

Emergency Phone Numbers

15 SAMU (Medical)
18 Pompiers (Fire Service – also trained for Medical Emergencies)
112 European Emergency Number

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