



Wimborne: wvta.org.uk

Valognes: sites.google.com/site/cjvalogneswimborne/

President's Message

Dear Members and Friends

I hope you enjoy this excellent Newsletter and I must thank our Editor, Graham, for his work doing the editing and layout, delivering and sending out, and Chris for his entertaining contributions and enlarging on our programme of events, and Malcolm for providing an informative and moving account of the events of June 1944 in Valognes.

In this regard, we have talked previously about the **Peace celebration** there on the **22 June**. Philippe Perée, President of the Valognes Wimborne twinning, has advised us that we will be receiving an invitation later from the Valognes council for a group from the WVTA to attend, up to 40 in number. By now you will have received the programme for the day, and will be able to decide if you would like to attend.

Before then we have the visit to Wimborne of our friends in Valognes to look forward to, and we have an exciting programme for the weekend which we hope you will all enjoy. The Dinner at Crane Valley promises to be another great celebration of the friendship Wimborne and Valognes have enjoyed since the 1960s. Besides the dinner there will be a civic reception at Allendale House on the Saturday morning, and in the afternoon Les Halton of Wimborne in Bloom has kindly arranged for a number of gardens to be open for the WVTA hosts and visitors, but if anyone not hosting would like to join this outing from 2.30 to 4.30, please let me know so that details can be sent. Also, do come to the outing to Tyneham on the Sunday to join the picnic and day out there.

The first social event of the year was a very enjoyable and well attended evening of talks and music, with wine and delicious eats, and thanks go to Maya for organising this. As you can imagine, a lot of planning goes into each event, and we hope all of you will make the effort to come along and support the evenings and days we have arranged. Our strength as an Association is dependent upon your support.

Our next event is a new sortie! We are having a visit from an expert in French dance, who is coming to demonstrate, and invite to join in, some of the traditional dances of France. Details are included in the Newsletter on [Page 6](#), but please do come along and make it a terrific evening.

Let us hope for a summer of good weather to enhance our visitor's experience in May, and the rest of our summer events.

Damaris Eaton

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Note: The minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting in February are now available on the Library page of the WVTA website

We are grateful to Christopher Batten Estate Agents for printing the posters and tickets for the Open Gardens event.



Above: Dinah Ingle-Finch provides live music during the interval at the Evening of talks.

(Photo: Malcolm V Lowe)

An evening of talks

We held our second successful evening of talks on Thursday 14 March. Once again the topics were varied and interesting.

The first talk was titled “The great 1925 Paris scam” and was researched by Michael Evans. It was presented by Michael’s son, Antony. We learned how Victor Lustig had persuaded five businessmen to believe that the Eiffel Tower was going to be demolished and that he was selling the rights to the scrap metal. He invited them to tender and announced the successful bidder, who he had persuaded to pay a “bribe”. The crime was not uncovered to the public for some time because the conned businessman was too embarrassed to reveal what had happened!

Next, Damaris Eaton spoke about Matisse’s last, perhaps greatest, work of art. The French artist had become seriously ill and advertised for “a young and pretty night nurse” to look after him. A nursing student named Monique Bourgeois responded. Their relationship developed as Matisse’s condition improved and, after Monique had left his employment, she returned to pose for him. Eventually Monique took the veil and became a nun; but now Matisse became involved with the building of a new chapel at the rest home in Vence where Monique was assigned. Together Monique and Matisse designed the chapel, its decorations and stained glass windows.

During the interval delicious finger food was available plus a variety of drinks. Flautist Dinah Ingle-Finch played tunes with a French connection.

Sue Desborough started the second half of the evening by providing keyboard accompaniment to French songs. Sue encouraged enthusiastic audience participation, including marching on the spot to “Napoléon avait cinq cent soldats” whilst omitting a different word from the verse each time it was sung.

The final talk was “The woman in the yellow dress” by guest speaker Liz Gibbons. Liz explained how her research into an unknown woman in a painting in her aunt’s home led her to tracing relatives across France. Some relatives lived around Lyon and were involved in the silk industry. Others were related to the Montgolfier brothers, the pioneering balloonists. Tracing ancestors in France is a little different to that in the UK. The French have been very good at record keeping since the revolution. However, the records tend to be held locally and it is necessary to look in the town or even suburb where the person was known to have lived. Also, French women tend to keep to their maiden names except in formal and legal situations where they use their husband's name.

This was altogether a successful evening. Thanks go to Maya for her hard work organising this event.



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Gazebo & wine glasses

Mike Wharfe has a fairly substantial gazebo stored in his garage and belonging to WVTA (about 3 m x 3 m x 3 m) of which he would like to dispose. We think it was donated by Ochsenfurt Twinning Association. Would any member please take over the storage, otherwise Mike will try to dispose through Gumtree, or similar.

Similarly he has two trays of wine glasses comprising about 30/40 glasses.

Please call Mike at 07570890111 if interested.

An apology. In our December 2023 Newsletter the photograph on the right was wrongly attributed to Merley First School. It shows performers from **Pamphill First School** at the Hello! Bonjour! evening.
(Photo: Malcolm V Lowe)



2024 events

We organise a variety of monthly meetings for the membership. Many of them have a fund raising element, in order to pay for the expenses when we entertain our guests from Valognes, every other year. The Valognes Mayor supports their Twinning Association financially, but we are not so fortunate. We have had requests, from those members who are not comfortable coming out in the evenings, to have some of our events in the afternoon and we have taken notice of this.

April Friday 26th 7.30pm: **French Folk Dancing**

Steve and Helen lead monthly French Folk Dances at Ibsley Village Hall near Ringwood, where they teach and demonstrate a range of French Folk dances, accompanied by their colleagues Gill and Raymond, on cello and piano accordion. Members will be able to sit and learn, or to



have a go. We will invite participants to bring their own choice of food and nibbles to be shared amongst us all. This is a new venture which sounds fun and we are delighted to offer it to the Association.

Above: Breton Girls Dancing, Pont-Aven by Paul Gauguin

May Friday 17th to Monday 20th **Exchange visit**

Our visitors will arrive late on Friday evening. There will be a reception on Saturday morning with the new Wimborne Mayor, and in the afternoon, Wimborne in Bloom have arranged for us to visit six of their best gardens on a private tour. In the evening, a double decker London bus will take visitors and hosts to a celebration meal at the Crane Valley Golf Club.



On Sunday we propose an optional picnic at Tynham Village. There are always more visitors from France eager to come to Wimborne, than there are hosts, and so we encourage as many of you who have wondered about doing so, to give it serious consideration. Advice and help will be given to all potential hosts.



June Saturday 8th

Wimborne Folk Festival.

We erect our gazebo on Minster Green, along with other local charity groups, in order to raise our profile and increase membership.

June Saturday 15th. **Afternoon Event**

2pm at the Little Pickle Cafe at Walford Mill. An opportunity for members to meet in an attractive setting, outside if fine or inside if wet.

July Saturday 13th/Sunday 14th **BBQ or Tea Party**

Peter Rock has generously made his garden available to us over the Bastille weekend. This may be a repeat of previous years barbecues where we provide sausages, burgers, wonderful salads and desserts. We will also cook any meat that members bring. The alternative to the barbecue may be a garden party on Sunday afternoon.

August Sunday 11th **Picnic at Pamphill**

Despite the challenging weather last year, some members met on Pamphill Green under some red, white and blue bunting, for a picnic with a gentle game of boules. For those who are interested we can offer a short historical walk round Little Pamphill and Cowgrove.



September Saturday 21st **Afternoon Event**

2pm at the Little Pickle Cafe, Walford Mill, as for June 15th.

October Thursday 24th **Encore Hello Bonjour**

Plans are already in hand for the repeat of an exceedingly successful event that involved the youth of Wimborne and district, whilst raising the profile of the Association.



November Wed. 20th **Quiz Night.**

Another enjoyable event at the British Legion, for teams of six to compete for the Norman Payne Cup.

December Friday 6th **Wine Tasting.**

We had a wonderful evening last December at the Wimborne Community Centre, where we were able to enjoy six different French wines accompanied by fantastic savoury platters. The wines were introduced by Ted Orchard of the Wimborne Fine Wine Society.



The liberation of Valognes in June 1944

by Malcolm V Lowe

This year, June 20th 2024, will mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of our twin town.

Valognes was occupied by the victorious Germans on or around June 19th, 1940, having been largely undamaged during the Battle of France in May-June 1940 as there was no bitter fighting in the Cotentin Peninsula.

On D-Day June 6th, 1944, the Allies landed on five beaches on the Normandy coast to begin the liberation of France from German occupation. Unfortunately, this came at a terrible price to some of the Normandy towns, including Valognes. A key objective for the Allies was the strategic port of Cherbourg, and the Americans knew that Valognes was an important road intersection on the route to Cherbourg. Valognes was also a communications centre for the German Army.

The town was therefore bombed several times by the Ninth US Army Air Force, starting on June 6th itself. Apparently, leaflets were dropped to warn the town's inhabitants, but they landed elsewhere and so many of the local people were still in town when the bombs fell.

After raids on June 6th and 7th, the most destructive bombing took place on June 8th and then again on June 9th. The American bombers accurately aimed for the centre of the town, destroying virtually everything in and around the Place du Château and the Place Vicq d'Azir, thus completely wrecking the historic Église Saint-Malo and the surrounding streets. Many other buildings in and around Valognes were also hit.



Above: The centre of Valognes was devastated by the US bombing. Part of the ruined Église Saint-Malo can be seen at right. The Jeep in the foreground belonged to the US Army's 298th Engineer Combat Battalion which cleared the rubble from the roads. (Photo: US Signal Corps)

The exact death toll of the Valognes citizens has never been decided upon, but totals ranging from 176 to well over 200 have been published at various times. These figures do not take into account the casualties among refugees from other parts of Normandy who had fled to Valognes for safety, and foreign deportees forced to work in the Valognes area by the Nazis' Todt organisation.

Some of the Valognes residents who left the town for safety, thus themselves becoming refugees, sought safety at Yvetot-Bocage.

Valognes was liberated by the advancing US Army on June 20th. The Germans under Generalleutnant von Schlieben had intended to defend a line running through Valognes and Montebourg to thwart any advance on Cherbourg. But heavy losses elsewhere caused them to fall back to a defensive ring around Cherbourg itself, and Valognes had been effectively vacated by most of the Germans on or by June 18th. During the evening of June 19th an advanced

reconnaissance team from the 4th Infantry Division's 8th Infantry Regiment reached the outskirts of Valognes backed up by light armour. The main force arrived on the morning of June 20th to find the town practically deserted.



Above: German prisoners are marched along a less badly bombed section of the Rue des Religieuses on June 21st, 1944, the day after the town was liberated. (Photo: US Signal Corps)

The rubble in the roads caused by the bombing was cleared quickly, mainly by the US Army's 298th Engineer Combat Battalion, so that the movement of US troops and equipment north towards the Cherbourg battleground was not hindered.

Above: Mechanised US Army infantry moving forwards through



Valognes on their way to the Cherbourg battle following the clearance of rubble from the roads. The bombed half-house on the right was still standing at that time. (Photo: US Signal Corps)

In the years following World War Two, a massive reconstruction took place across Normandy to rebuild shattered towns and villages. For Valognes, Marshall Aid from the US was forthcoming, although the historic appearance of the town pre-1944 was not reproduced. Few of the devastated chateaux and fine residences of the town and its vicinity were rebuilt, an exception being the Hôtel de Louvières in the Boulevard Félix Buhot.

There was some controversy as to how the Église Saint-Malo itself should be restored, resulting in the reconstructed church only being completed in the 1960s. Within its new walls lie some of the remains of the original devastated building.

I was privileged several years ago to attend a poignant ceremony during which a memorial plaque was unveiled commemorating the Valognes citizens who were killed during that terrible time. It is situated on one of the outside walls of the Église Saint-Malo.

For more photographs go to [Page 7](#).

Tynham Village

If you are hosting French visitors in May and there is the possibility of you joining the Picnic at Tynham Village, please keep this article to share with them.

Le village de Tynham est situé au nord-est de la baie de Worbarrow sur la côte jurassique, à environ 16 km à l'ouest de Swanage. Il se trouve dans les Lulworth Ranges du ministère de la Défense et comme ceux-ci sont toujours utilisés pour la pratique du tir, l'accès n'est autorisé qu'à certaines périodes de l'année. Des vestiges datant de l'âge du fer et de l'époque romaine ont été découverts et le village a été mentionné dans le Domesday Book de 1086. Le dernier résident survivant a été récemment interrogé et il se souvient avoir fréquenté l'école du village et l'église. Il a dit qu'il n'y avait ni gaz, ni électricité et que la seule source d'eau était une pompe près de l'église. Au début de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, il se souvient avoir observé des avions britanniques et allemands en combat au-dessus et il se souvient d'un pilote de Spitfire heurtant un avion ennemi.

À contrecœur, en décembre 1943, les 225 habitants furent contraints de quitter le village afin de pouvoir l'utiliser pour entraîner des troupes. On leur a promis que ce serait temporaire et ils ont laissé un message sur la porte de l'église. Veuillez traiter l'église et les maisons avec soin; nous avons abandonné nos maisons où beaucoup d'entre nous ont vécu pendant des générations pour contribuer à gagner la guerre et garder les hommes libres. Nous reviendrons un jour et merci d'avoir traité le village avec gentillesse. On a dit aux villageois qu'ils pourraient rentrer chez eux après la guerre, mais ils n'ont jamais été autorisés à revenir.

The village of Tynham is located to the north-east of Worbarrow Bay on the Jurassic Coast, approximately 10 miles west of Swanage. It lies within the Lulworth Ranges of the Ministry of Defence and as these are still used for gunnery practice, access is only permitted at certain times of the year. Remains dating from the Iron Age and Roman times have been discovered and the village was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The last surviving resident was recently interviewed and he remembers attending the village school and the church. He said there was no gas or electricity and the only source of water was a pump near the church. At the start of World War II, he remembers watching British and German planes in combat overhead and he recalls a Spitfire pilot hitting an enemy plane.

Reluctantly, in December 1943, the 225 inhabitants were forced to leave the village so that it could be used to train troops. They were promised it would be temporary and they left a message on the church door. Please treat the church and homes with care; we abandoned our homes where many of us had lived for generations to help win the war and keep men free. We will return one day and thank you for treating the village kindly. The villagers were promised they could return home after the war, but were never allowed to return.



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A glass of wine will be provided. Please bring food to share and your own drinking glasses.

Members £7.50 per person Non-members £8.50 per person

Please book using the online booking form on the Programme page at wvta.org.uk. Or contact Peter Brooks: Tel: 01202 619892

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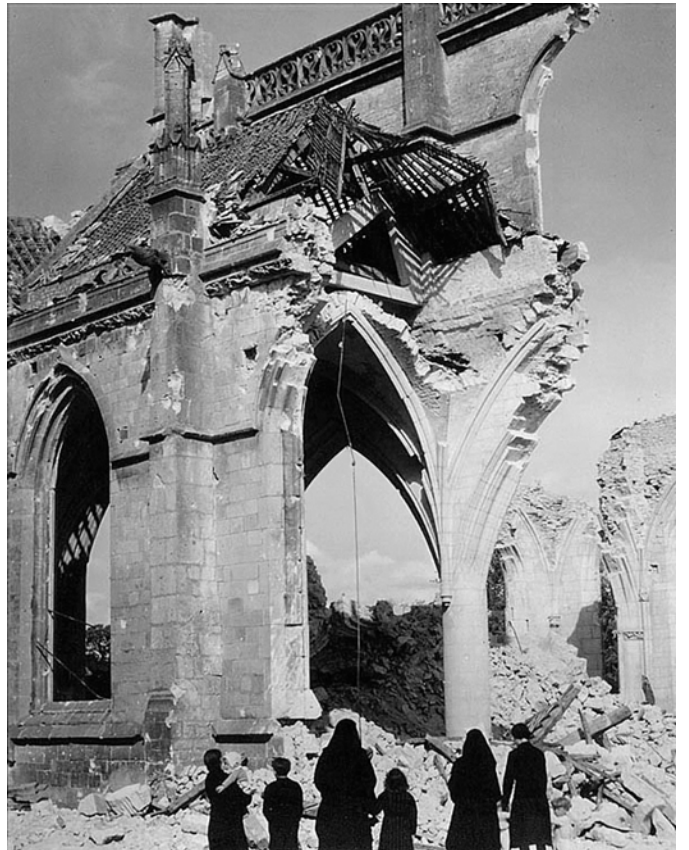
The liberation of Valognes - continued



Above: With the rubble cleared from the roadways, the US Army vehicles could pick their way through Valognes on their way north to the battle for Cherbourg. (Photo: US Signal Corps)



Above: A 'then and now' photo montage showing a devastated part of the Rue des Religieuses. The Place Vicq d'Azir is in the distance. (Photo: Internet)



Above: Some Nuns and local Valognes residents survey the damage to the Église Saint-Malo. Reconstruction of the church was not completed until 1964. (Photo: US Army)



Above: The bombing of Valognes not only devastated buildings, it destroyed infrastructure. Here a water main had burst, while a US Army engineer manoeuvred his Osgood earth-mover. Note the bombed half-house on the right. (Photo: US Signal Corps)

Merchandise

We now have shirts, caps and badges in stock to show off our Association.
To order, please contact Graham Richards;
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£8.95



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Les galletes des rois



Épiphanie

Les vacances de Noël sont peut-être terminées et bien que jour normal d'école et de travail, le 6 janvier, la Fête des Rois reste toujours une tradition familiale. A l'époque de la Révolution, la fête des rois était une fête de l'égalité plus importante que Noël, et le gâteau spécial préparé pour l'occasion s'appelait le Gâteau de l'Égalité, car le mot 'roi' avait disparu de mode. Une 'fève', qui était à l'origine un haricot mais qui tend désormais à être un bibelot, est cuite à l'intérieur du gâteau et le gâteau est coupé et partagé autour de la table. Celui qui reçoit la fève est alors couronné roi ou reine du jour et a l'opportunité tant convoitée de diriger le reste de la famille. Selon une tradition, le gâteau doit être coupé en autant de tranches qu'il y a de personnes présentes, plus une supplémentaire. Cela peut être la part pour Dieu ou pour un ami absent. Cette tranche supplémentaire est appelée soit la 'part du Bon Dieu', la 'part de la Vierge' ou la 'part du pauvre' et doit être offerte au premier pauvre qui arrive. En Bretagne cette pièce était conservée et si elle restait en bon état, la santé de l'absent serait bonne, mais si elle moisissait, c'était de mauvais augure.

Epiphany

The Christmas holidays may be over and although a normal school and working day, the 6th January, La Fête des Rois is still very much a family tradition. At the time of the Revolution, the day of the kings was a celebration of equality more important than Christmas, and the special cake cooked for the occasion was called the Gâteau de l'Égalité, as the word 'king' had gone out of fashion. A 'fève', which was originally a bean but now tends to be a trinket, is baked inside the cake and the cake is cut and shared around the table. Whoever receives the fève is then crowned king or queen for the day and has the much coveted opportunity of bossing the rest of the family about. According to one tradition, the cake should be cut into as many slices as there are people present, plus one extra. This can be the share for God or for an absent friend. This extra slice is called either, the 'part du Bon Dieu (God's slice)', the 'part de la Vierge' (the Virgin Mary's slice) or the 'part du pauvre' (poor man's slice) and should be offered to the first poor person who arrives. In Brittany this piece would be kept and if it stayed in good condition, the health of the absent one would be good, but if it became mouldy, it was a bad omen.

Derek Arthur Henderson 1931 - 2024

We were sad to hear that Derek Henderson had passed away in February 2024, age 92. He had been active up to Christmas 2023 when he caught a cold which led to pneumonia.

Derek was born in 1931 in Ealing, London. An early indication of an interest in France was in gaining RSA French at grammar school. At technical college he obtained his mechanical HNC and in 1948 he started work as a test engineer with C.C. Wakefield where in 1951 he met Joan Bickham.

In 1953 Derek opted to join up for 3 years military duty. The money was better than for 2 years national service and this helped Derek support his widowed mother. In the Royal Army Educational Core he taught maths, physics and technical drawing to army apprentices, as well as delivering adult education.

Derek married Joan on 26 March 1955 and they honeymooned on the Isle of Wight. Some 12 years later they followed Derek's mother and sister and moved to Poole, buying a new-build bungalow in Fleetsbridge. This move brought an employment opportunity with Flight Refuelling at Tarrant Rushton. Derek stayed with the Flight Refuelling group of companies until taking early retirement.

Derek and Joan had three children. Sadly their first daughter Gale died of Cystic Fibrosis at 10 months. Son Mark was born in 1962 and daughter Shelley in 1964 in a new house in Orchard Avenue, close to Poole Park. Then another tragedy, Mark died of asthma just after his 15th birthday on Christmas Eve 1977. Despite these devastating personal losses Derek and Joan found courage and strength to live their lives to the full. Derek was interested in everything and everybody. He liked getting involved with and helping the community.

For 25 years Derek and Joan owned a cottage in Denneville, La Manche. The village lies about 30 km

south west of Valognes. Here they got involved with the local community. Perhaps Derek's proudest moment was his involvement in the erection of a war memorial to eight British soldiers who were killed in the village on 17th June 1940. Derek researched and located some of the families of those men. Some of the relatives were present at the unveiling, including a lady who knew that her father had died in the war but until then did not know what had become of him.

Back in Dorset, Colehill library was threatened with closure. Derek was determined that the library would not close for financial reasons. He tackled the local Council and the County Council and put together a team of volunteers to run the library. The library is still operating.

Derek served on the WVTA Committee for almost 20 years from around 2003 to 2021. He loved a bit of fun and games and was described as a devilish quiz master.

Derek and Joan were married for 64 years until Joan died in 2019. The photograph below shows them enjoying a drink in La Maison du Biscuit.



Diana Prestidge

Diana came to many of our events with Michael Evans, and joined our trips to Valognes. The picture shows her in the shade on a hot day, watching their liberation ceremonies in June 2019. We were sorry to learn that she died on 27 February and we send our deepest sympathy to Michael.

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Subscriptions fall due for renewal on 1st January.

From 1st January 2023 the rates are £10 for an individual and £15 for a family.

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Valognes:

www.sites.google.com/site/cjvalogneswimborne

Dorset Twinning Association:

www.twinning.org.uk

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The newsletter is edited and set by Graham Richards, tel: 01258 857341 e-mail contributions to: editor@wvta.org.uk

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