

SEPT 2023

3Ls French Club Session 2022-2023



Club Social Activities

There are monthly cheese and wine socials after every talk plus the following special events took place last session



Social Events

NOVEMBER - French breakfast at Côte restaurant

MARCH - Film outing to GFT - Les Trois Mousquetaires.

MAY - French brunch at Côte Restaurant

JUNE - French lunch at Côte Restaurant

AUGUST - Lunch at Butterfly and Pig Tearooms and film at GFT - L' Innocent.

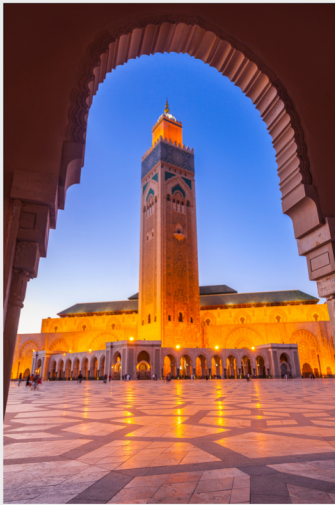


RESUMÉ OF TALKS AND ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER – CÉDRIC MOREAU

SENIOR TEACHING FELLOW FRENCH DEPARTMENT, STRATHCLYDE UNIVERSITY

CHANT DU MUEZZIN. ARABESQUES ET COSBORE – UNE ENFANCE MAROCAINE



Cédric regaled us with memories of his childhood in Morocco. Born in Rabat to French national parents, Cédric lived in Morocco until he was 9 when he returned to France. He based his childhood memories on the appeal of the country to the senses: sight, sound, smell, taste. Having attended a French school, he did not mix too much with the locals but his experiences of the city when he was sent to fetch bread left a strong impression. He recalled the sound of the call to prayer from the minaret, the heady smell and taste of the brightly coloured spices in the market and the wonderful arabesques patterns on the local architecture. His evocative descriptions transported us to his childhood world. On his return to France and a French school, his use of Moroccan French words caused some amusement.

Cédric did not return to Morocco until many years later, as a grown man, but as the doors of the plane opened and he was met with a wave of heat, his childhood memories came flooding back.

Always an entertaining and informative speaker, Cédric did not disappoint.

NOVEMBER -MARY CREARIE, CLUB PRESIDENT

L' AFFAIRE BETTENCOURT

Mary took us through the intricacies of L’Affaire Bettencourt which caused quite the feeding frenzy in the French press from early 2000-2017/8. The drama had all the ingredients of a modern scandal- money, family disputes, unconventional relationships, political corruption, with even a nod to the Nazis!

Everything centred around Liliane Bettencourt, heir to the L’Oréal company and at one point the world’s richest woman, and her relationship with photographer, writer and man-about-town François Banier, 25 years her junior, gay and friend to all the social luminaries of Paris. Liliane lavished money, gifts, paintings and even insurance policies on Banier. Matters came to a head in 2007 when her butler recorded a conversation in which Liliane spoke about adopting Banier and making him her heir. Her daughter, Françoise, accused Banier of “abus de faiblesse.” There followed almost a decade of legal wranglings. In 2015 Banier was sentenced to 2½ years in prison and ordered to pay 158 million euros in damages. On appeal in 2016 the sentence was upheld but suspended and the damages cancelled.

The butler’s recording also uncovered a political scandal. Liliane had been giving envelopes stashed with cash to conservative politicians and had contributed to Sarkozy’s presidential campaign. There were also rumours about links that Liliane’s father and her husband had to right wing and antisemitic groups in the past.

Each slide of the presentation uncovered another layer of intrigue, and the audience had a number of interesting questions after Mary’s presentation.





DECEMBER - FÊTE DE NOEL AND PRESENTATION FROM STRATHCLYDE FRENCH DEPT STUDENTS

Our annual Fête de Noel was a jolly affair with French songs and games, accompanied by some welcome Christmas cheer (of the liquid variety) and a delicious buffet. We even had a visit from Santa, in the guise of John Parkhill, former club president. All members were deemed to be on the NICE list and a Merry Christmas for all was predicted.

Before the start of the festivities, we had a delightful presentation from students from the French dept, accompanied by their tutor Joan Lefever.

LANGUAGE LEARNING AT STRATHCLYDE – JOAN LEFEVER, TEACHING FELLOW, FRENCH DEPT

Joan gave us some facts and figures about the current uptake of languages at the University and how languages were combined with other subjects.

LIVING AND WORKING ABROAD

Students, Ben Shaw, Rosie McCann and Erica Henderson gave us some excellent presentations on their experience of living and working in France. We heard of the pros and cons of being an au pair, life as an assistant in a big city and life as an assistant in a small village where you are the only English speaker.

The presentations were very well-structured, informative, and delivered with charm and humour. Club members were won over by the enthusiasm of our youthful speakers.



JANUARY - FIONA REID – FRENCH TEACHER ON SECONDMENT TO STRATHCLYDE UNIVERSITY.

EDITH PIAF 1915 – 1963



Fiona gave us a very extensive account of Piaf's life. Her aim was to distinguish fact from fiction, and she also provided several clips of Piaf singing, to the delight of her audience.

Born Edith Giovanna Gassion, Piaf was abandoned by her mother, neglected by her maternal grandmother, and brought up in a brothel run by her paternal grandmother. Piaf relied on the affection of the working girls who adored her. She lost her sight at 3 and claimed it was restored by a miracle of Sainte Thérèse of Lisieux to whom she had a lifelong devotion.

In her teenage years she joined her father, an acrobat, in his street performances. She was discovered in 1935 by Louis Leplée, nightclub owner, who gave her the nickname La Môme Piaf. He also taught her about stage presence and advised her to wear the black dress which became her trademark.

Piaf's career gained momentum during the war when she met and formed friendships with many of the celebrities of the time. She was accused of collaborating with German forces but defended by a member of the French resistance. After the war she gained international fame, touring Europe, the USA, and South America. She had a famous love affair with the boxer Marcel Cerdan who died in a plane crash.

During her life, she suffered many illnesses and depression and developed a dependency on drugs. She died in 1963 of liver cancer and is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery. Her funeral procession brought Paris to a standstill.

Fiona's talk was warmly received by enthused club members who appreciated the comprehensive detail she had provided about Piaf and enjoyed her presentation style.

FEBRUARY - LÉA MASCIOCCHI

LES FEMMES DU PANTHÉON

A place of remembrance dedicated to the great figures of France, the Panthéon was originally intended as a church dedicated to Sainte Geneviève, commissioned at the behest of Louis XV. By the time construction was finished the Revolution had begun and it became a mausoleum for the remains of distinguished French citizens.

The 6 women buried there are –

1907 SOPHIE BERTHELOT – the first woman to be buried there but only because she was the wife of Marcel Berthelot, politician and renowned chemist.

1995 MARIE CURIE – buried there on her own merit but almost a century after the first woman.

2015 GERMAINE TILLION and GENEVIÈVE DE GAULLE ANTHONIOZ – both associated with the French Resistance.

2018 SIMONE VEIL -politician, holocaust survivor, President of the European Parliament.

2021 JOSEPHINE BAKER – Black American entertainer- an unusual choice as she was an American national, but she had spied for the French Secret Service and was involved in anti-racist activities.

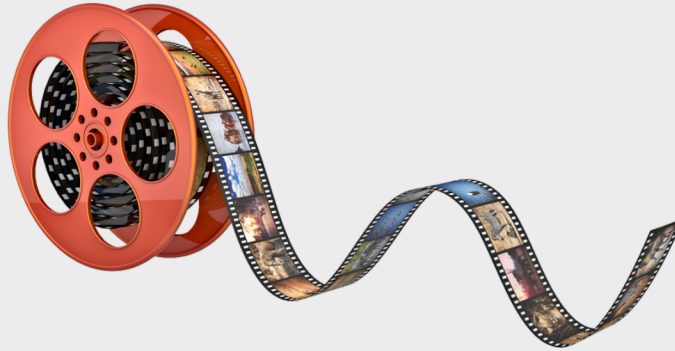
Léa also spoke of women of note who had not been buried in the Panthéon. Most buried there were associated with the resistance and placed there after their deaths. Léa mentioned a movement called the Collectif pour Les Femmes du Panthéon which lobbies for women's inclusion.

This was a very enjoyable and informative talk delivered by an engaging and knowledgeable speaker.



MARCH – FILM LE MYSTÈRE HENRI PICK (2018)

PLOT. An editor discovers a novel that she considers a masterpiece in a remote Breton library whose particularity is to collect manuscripts refused by publishers. She decides to track down the author who may already be dead. Charming and witty with enough twists and turns to make it a very good mystery movie.



APRIL – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND QUIZ

Mary Crearie, Club President, presented a review of the past year, with everyone happy to be back in the building. There had been an interesting programme of talks and outings. Thanks were due, as always, to the Club Committee members and to Diane Campbell, Club Secretary, for her sterling work in coordinating the work of the club. Unfortunately, Moira Kerr, committee member, was standing down due to family commitments and warm words of appreciation were extended to her. Colin Browning, Treasurer, presented the accounts for the year. Colin and Jim Gray, auditor, were thanked for their work.

An evaluation sheet was issued to ensure that members had a voice in club activities and to inform future programmes. It was agreed that a donation of £250 would be given to the President's Charity, THE COURTYARD PANTRY. Some of this money came from the sale of hand-made greeting cards by Monique Feeley. Members' thanks were expressed to Monique for this.

The meeting ended with a fun quiz.

