

# Franco-Scottish Society



# Bulletin

2020 - 2021

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## Editor's Note

Chères lectrices, Chers lecteurs,

At the end of our last session, 2019-2020, when the pandemic had already been with us for the final six months, we dared to hope that in the second half of the following session, September 2020 to August 2021, we might start to see a reduction in some of the COVID restrictions. Members were beginning to really miss the social contact and exchange which the monthly *face-to-face* branch meetings and cultural events have always brought. Projects with partners to support educational events or exchanges were also being impacted and on hold.

However, more or less stringent restrictions were to remain in place across the board until the end of our 2020-21 session. Branches had to continue to rely on a mixture of virtual and traditional means of communication and exchange. But as you will see from various articles under **Branch Activities** and **Society News** some positive and innovative *spin offs* have come from this forced adaptation to prevailing conditions.

Unfortunately, there was of course no **FSSS Language Prize** awarded since the Advanced Higher examinations were cancelled, and the **Exchange Visit** with our sister branch in France was postponed for a second year. We hope to be able to report on these again in next year's Bulletin.

During these COVID times, especially during *lock-down*, surveys have shown a marked increase in reading, divided between a return to familiar old favourites and a desire to experiment with new authors. We also note that Lord Balfour, who was President of the *Franco-Scottish Society of Scotland (FSSS)* for twelve years and its Honorary President for twenty-three years, was the first Chairman of the *Edinburgh Book Festival*.

So, in our final section, **French Connections**, the *written word* features prominently. You will find some old friends as well as being introduced to some new ones, while also reflecting on translating and cultural differences.

As always, my thanks go to all contributors and those who have offered moral and technical support in helping to put together this edition, which I hope you as members or friends of the Society will enjoy.

Bonne lecture à toutes et à tous !

Anne-Colette Lequet

## Branch Activities 2020 – 2021

### Aberdeen

**The 2020 – 2021 Programme:** All events of the Aberdeen Branch were suspended in March 2020 because of the lockdown but Janine Adamson agreed to give the talk scheduled for April on Zoom and we had a good audience for *Paris à la Belle Epoque* in October and for Odile Hughson's Zoom talk in November on *Personnalités Royales Françaises* postponed from May. This was preceded by our delayed **2019 – 2021 AGM**.

In December we had a short Zoom quiz arranged by our member, Margaret Murray and decided to pay for a monthly Zoom licence as this type of meeting proved quite popular with a good percentage of our members and we were also joined by members of the *Dundee-Orléans twinning association*.

Gerry Toner gave us an interesting Zoom talk on *Strasbourg* in January and Marie-Christine Graham of the Perth Branch followed this up with an excellent talk on *La Cuisine Française*. A number of our members joined the talk on *Aubigny* introduced by Vee Walker of the Highlands Branch.

**Committee Activities:** At our 2020-21 AGM, Simon Oladjins was confirmed as our new Chairman, and he represented the Branch at the *International School Aberdeen* in June by presenting prizes to the Primary winners of the *Concours de la Francophonie*.

We did not collect subscriptions from our members in the autumn as we had no *face-to-face* meetings and some of our members did not use Zoom. However, we have provisionally arranged dates at *Albyn School* from the autumn in the hope that we can resume meetings as they were pre-pandemic, and we have a variety of speakers who have expressed their willingness to come to Aberdeen when normal life resumes!

**Obituaries:** Sadly, I have to report the death of Robert Mulvey and Gisèle Roberts, mother of Françoise Kunka. Gisèle was the last remaining French member of the *Aberdeen Branch*.

**Other Activities and Outreach:** Discussions took place between Rhona Bean and Catherine Hare, General Secretary, regarding the National 2021 AGM which took place on October 16th, 2021, and the venue was confirmed as *Jury's Inn* within a few metres of *Aberdeen Railway Station*.

**Alexander Gray Bequest:** We promised money from the Education Fund to two pupils from *Aberdeen Grammar School* and two students from *Aberdeen University*. The University students have confirmed they are able to go ahead with their study trips to France and accordingly have received the promised support. We await confirmation from the grammar school students. We sent money to four university students during the last academic year.

*Rhona Bean*

### Edinburgh

For 2020 – 2021 initially our social meetings, also open to *French Institute (IFE)* members, were to be held at the Institute at an earlier time of 4.15 pm to 6.15 pm on a Wednesday.

A provisional programme had been drawn up. However, with COVID restrictions still in place, the traditional September *pot d'accueil* was postponed.

The committee felt the Branch should try to maintain the group ethos: commitment to French culture and language as well as developing our partnership with the *IFE*. It sought to maintain monthly events, if possible, by transferring them online and where possible with the *French Institute*.

Throughout the 2020 – 2021 session the committee was mindful that all members should be included, whether they had access to technology or not and that various means of communication should be used to maintain contact and offer *something French* to all members.

A regular Newsletter was started in November with information on forthcoming events, updates on branch projects, anecdotes, and a

quiz. It was sent by email or by post to those who didn't have email.

**Branch Meetings:** Our first meeting went ahead on Zoom in October with Dr Geoff Hare's talk on *Les Parcs et les Jardins de Paris*. The second meeting, also in October, was a presentation of the *French Film Festival 2020* given by Richard Mowe and Ilona Morison. The topic never ceases to please.

In November, Odile Hughson was our third speaker. She brought the sunshine of Provence to a dreich Edinburgh with her excellent exposé on *Mes Souvenirs de Provence*.

In December those with access to Zoom were able to enjoy a *concert with a French/Scottish Christmas theme*. Thanks to the technological prowess of Christopher Bell, Artistic Director of the *National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCOS)* and his team, members of the *FSS Edinburgh Branch*, of the *IFE*, and of the *Association Franco ecossaise (AFE France)* were able to enjoy the choral concert introduced by Laurence Païs, French Consul General and Director of the *IFE*, and Anne-Colette Lequet, *Edinburgh Branch* chairperson. The concert was then released on YouTube. It attracted over 1,000 viewings.

The January online event, a *Table Ronde* with the *AFE* was postponed. In February members were invited to participate in the online presentation of this year's *annual guest speaker from France* who usually gives his/her talk to three or four FSS branches. François Gresset, adjoint au *maire d'Aubigny* spoke on *l'Histoire d'Aubigny sur Nère et son lien avec l'Ecosse*. The talk was offered to all branches simultaneously.

Our final event in March, to coincide with the month of *francophonie*, was a talk on Morocco: *You don't really understand us, do you? A 40 Year Association with Morocco*, given by the writer and critic Gillean Somerville-Arjat, from a personal angle. A fascinating journey through many aspects of Moroccan life, she touched on the strength of extended family circles, the role of religion, wedding customs, food, and several other areas, all adding to the wide and interesting variety of the presentation which gave rise to

many questions and much interest from the participants.

Due to the prevailing COVID restrictions we were unable to organise a group meal in April and the May *AGM* was postponed till 21st July. This meeting was at last *face-to-face*, at the *French Institute* and very well attended, members being really keen to see each other again.

**Committee Business:** Election/Re-election of Office Bearers: No nominations were received for office bearer vacancies. The Chair and Hon. Treasurer agreed to continue in their roles for the forthcoming year, to ensure the continuing existence of the *Edinburgh Branch*. A *Job Description* (a list of the Secretary's tasks), was circulated.

**Obituaries:** The Branch was saddened at the death of James Edward (Eddie) Fraser and Professor Gordon Millan.

**Other Activities and Outreach:** This was somewhat limited this year due to the prevailing circumstances. Dr Geoff Hare gave a *virtual* talk to the Perth and Glasgow Branches and Odile Hughson gave a talk to Aberdeen Branch. Tom Wight has kept in touch with local schoolteachers.

Various articles and material were shared with members of other branches especially Aberdeen and Perth.

#### **Educational and Cultural Projects**

- *Branch Initiatives*, the Branch continued to support several initiatives with various partners where its participation is publicly acknowledged.

#### **Branch Funds**

- *Le Concours d'écriture*, in partnership with the *Institut Français d'Ecosse (IFE)*, the *Goethe Institut*, and *Edinburgh College*. The Branch offered the certificates and prizes for the winners of the entries in French to the writing competition for university students organised by Sylvain Blanche. It also supported the publication of the booklet by *Edinburgh College* with all the entries. The Branch Committee members read the students' submissions and chose the winners. Instead of the usual social prize-giving ceremony in November the

event had to be organised in a virtual form for which we supplied a video. This was posted on the IFE site and available on YouTube.

- **French Film Festival (FFF)** The Branch continues to support the FFF and has been active in publicising French Films selected by the FFF team. Despite COVID, the FFF went ahead in some cinemas and online. A special rate was offered to our members.
- **French Film Festival Education Programme: Le cinéma à l'école.** The Branch also supported the Education Programme aimed at school pupils from *P1* to *S5/6*. With COVID-19, cinema visits were no longer possible but an online version of selected films with supporting teaching material, was sent to participating schools. A competition for the best film review of one of the films viewed in a French class in a participating school was also launched as a pilot at primary and secondary level.

#### **Alexander Gray Bequest**

- **Lecture Fund (2020-21)** This was used for a Zoom licence due to the pandemic circumstances and for the French concert in December.
- **Education Fund (2020-21)** Advanced Higher French workshops. The Branch supported this initiative, organised by Caroline Cordier and Marianne Dupeux from *Edinburgh College*, to provide extra French for pupils studying for the **Advanced Higher Examination**. The six schools participating from Edinburgh and the Lothians were Beeslack, Firrhill, Lasswade, Musselburgh, Portobello, and Ross High.
- **Exchange Visit** between *Edinburgh College* catering department and *le lycée hôtelier de Dinard*. £500, had initially been earmarked for this exchange visit planned for May 2020 but postponed due to the COVID situation. No monies have yet been disbursed but the sum remains earmarked, and the exchange should go ahead in May 2022.

*Anne-Colette Lequet*

## **Glasgow**

For the period from September 2020 to June 2021, we continued to offer branch events by

Zoom. We were very pleased that a good number of our members faithfully joined us. Unfortunately in 2021, we were not able to hold either our members' lunch in May or the annual *pétanque* competition to celebrate *le 14 juillet*.

**Quoi de Neuf:** For our Monday afternoon *Quoi de Neuf*, French monthly conversation meetings, from September to June, we suggested a variety of topics to our participants. These ranged from *Contez nous un voyage particulièrement mémorable et donnez les raisons pour lesquelles vous en avez gardé de si bons souvenirs* to *Confiner ou ne pas confiner? Telle est la question*. In November we had a *puzzle solving meeting* in French and in April a *debate on two topics* in French.

**Branch Meetings:** We enjoyed a most interesting and lively selection of Thursday evening talks. We are grateful to all our guest speakers who put up with the unfamiliar and less convivial setting of Zoom to deliver their presentations.

**September:** *La Cornemuse, ses cousins et cousines* (Gerry Toner, Glasgow)

**October:** We tried something different this month, a conventional *pub quiz* with participants in teams (breakout rooms on Zoom). There were questions in English and French on topics ranging from Scottish and French literature, geography, and history to general knowledge in either language

**November:** *Les Parcs et Jardins de Paris au 19e siècle* (Geoff Hare, Edinburgh)

**December:** *La Fête de Noël*. We organised *des petits sacs de gourmandises festives* for the many members signed up for our Zoom party and these were delivered by volunteers in time for the start of the Fête. Following greetings and a toast with *vin chaud*, we were entertained online by Mark Pentleton and his colleagues from Radio Lingua/Coffee Break French with a great concert of music and songs. We went on to share convivial chat and songs while enjoying our picnic bags. We all had a jolly time.

**January:** *La Tapisserie de Bayeux* (Janine Adamson, Glasgow)

**February:** *L'histoire d'Aubigny-sur-Nère* (François Gresset, premier adjoint et référent historique et touristique d'Aubigny.)

**March:** The *Alliance Française de Glasgow library and its on-line resources* (Anaïs Cayzac, AFG librarian)

**April:** *L'histoire de la danse classique* (Carol Woodward, Glasgow)

**May:** *Branch AGM*, followed by a quiz from the *Alliance Française*.

**Alexander Gray Bequest:** *The Lecture Fund* was used to pay for a Zoom license. We also made donations to the Alliance Française for the events – talk and quiz – that they organised for us.

*The Education Fund* was used in June to support an online course for fifth year pupils in Glasgow schools, delivered by the *Alliance Française* (£700). It was targeted at pupils who were continuing with French into *Advanced Higher* but who felt they needed greater support with the Higher material and we also gave support to a student at *Strathclyde University* who will spend 2021/2022 in a work placement in a school in Paris. (£500).

*Elizabeth Bryant*

## Inverness

*The 2020 – 2021 session.* The branch had 22 paid up members whose subscription for this session will cover next year too since there has not been much activity as members have been badly hit with concerns for their jobs and lives. Our members missed being able to gather and eat together. It was difficult to arrange Zoom meetings as many of the members work shifts and are scattered.

**Branch Activities:** A *WhatsApp* group has been developed for informal exchanges in French and sharing of pictures, interests, book reviews and providing opportunities to learn. This has proved very popular and entertaining. A series of language classes had a good take up and brought in some new members.

We were able to hold a branch *AGM* in January at which all the FSS committee were re-elected. We combined this with an excellent quiz night run by Cécile Mettot.

Verity Walker-Eley (Chair), took over the organisation of the *Guest Speaker from France* talk on Aubigny and with Cécile Mettot (Hon. Secretary), prepared and delivered a follow up talk on *French connections with the Highlands*. This FSSS international Zoom session in February with Aubigny was well attended by our members and the feedback was very positive.

**Outreach and other Activities:** The Branch had an approach from a Highland primary school to see whether we could supply French tuition for them and perhaps a grant towards it.

The Branch has always been mindful of supporting and maintaining links with French people in the area and the Chairperson again gave of her time in welcoming and supporting two recently arrived French families.

*Verity Walker Eley*

## Perth

Our enforced confinement continues, at least for the moment, but we live in hope that by the time the new season starts, we will be able to meet in person once again.

Despite last year's restrictions on movement, we managed to keep in touch by email, *WhatsApp*, and *Zoom*, sharing films and content produced by branch members from across Scotland. We are extremely grateful to Tom Wight, (*Edinburgh Branch*), for sending many films and musical concerts which I distributed to our members throughout the year.

Special thanks go to Joëlle Fabre and Marie-Christine Graham, who hosted several informal French conversation classes (chats) which really helped people improve their spoken French – this has proved popular, with many people expressing their appreciation.

More recently, it has become our tradition to meet every Tuesday at the *Café Tabou* in Perth where we converse in French and a host of other languages. This has become a diverse multi-cultural event – the staff are from Eastern Europe and our group is comprised of French, Swedish, Polish, Canadian, Scottish, and a few English united by their shared interest of France.



**Branch Meetings:** Our monthly meetings had to be delivered remotely, this proved to be a significant challenge which required a very different approach and quite a bit of experimentation. We paid for an annual Zoom subscription which was a good investment because it allowed us to reach people who are no longer able to attend our meetings in person.

Zoom provides an opportunity to network and invite other groups, like the *Friends of Cognac*, *The Dundee-Orléans Twinning Association*, members from other Branches, and my conversation group from Ballinluig. We intend using Zoom to continue with our informal, online, French conversation groups.

**The 2020 – 2021 season:** Our first talk of the season, delivered by Geoff Hare, titled *Les Parcs et Jardins de Paris*, was something of an experiment because it was our first attempt to conduct a meeting using Zoom.

By the time of our second meeting, a talk about *The exchange visits between Perth and Cognac*, given by Margaret Rae, we felt a bit more in control – on that occasion our numbers were swelled by members of the *Friends of Cognac*.

John Jessop gave an update on *The plans to turn the Perth Town Hall into a museum*, which will tell the history of Perth and its environs, from Palaeolithic times to the present – the talk provoked a lot of discussion because the city centre is fast becoming a shadow of its former glory.

Marie-Christine Graham gave us a very interesting account of the *DOM TOM territories of France*, which went some way towards compensating us for a lack of travel and sunshine.

Walter Perrie spent a great deal of time preparing a talk about the Scottish Philosopher, David Hume (*Le bon David et la France*) which you can watch on YouTube and/or listen to in-person, in October 2021.

Colin Browning from Glasgow told us about the massive projects to build *Cathedrals in France and Britain*, during the Middle Ages. The talk itself was a considerable undertaking which extended over two meetings, Part I, was about the people who commissioned and paid for the

work and the craftsmen who built them. Part II, focused on the engineering methods and skills required throughout their construction.

We will use some of what we learnt from his talk in a presentation about the *Notre Dame de Paris*, which will be delivered in December 2021.

At Christmas, Tom Wight sent us all a link to a YouTube production of *Christmas Carols* by the *National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (NYCOS)*. In the past they performed for the *Edinburgh Branch*, which for obvious reasons couldn't be hosted in 2020. Instead, the choir produced a video with an introduction that featured Anne-Colette Lequet (*Edinburgh Branch*), the Consule Générale Laurence Païs, and the Artistic Director of *NYCOS*, Christopher Bell. The video was beautifully produced and so far, has attracted more than 1,000 viewings from around the world.

At Epiphany we watched another YouTube video about the *Elysée Palace in Paris*, again beautifully produced and one of so many wonderful resources available via the Internet.

We had an excellent live presentation from the *Mairie in Aubigny sur Nère* about the *Auld Alliance*, which was reciprocated with an excellent talk on *Scottish History*, given by Verity and Cécile from the *Inverness Branch*. Both talks required a great deal of preparation and organisation, but worth the effort because they each attracted audiences of around 150 people, illustrating another major benefit of Zoom.

**Other Activities and Outreach:** This year more than ever, saw us interacting with other branches and groups. We have our conversation groups, share videos from the *French Film Festival* and assorted articles of interest sent by members from other branches.

We hope that greater variety will attract new members as well as being a welcome supplement to our previous programme of activities which, centred around monthly meetings at the *Royal George Hotel* in Perth. In future, whenever possible we intend meeting in person, but would like to give those who can no longer attend, the opportunity to join us via Zoom.

We are always on the lookout for new ideas and keen to make our activities more interesting and relevant. If you have any suggestions just contact us by email or a phone call.

Best wishes to you all and many thanks to everyone who supported us in these difficult times.

*Lucyna Lindsay*

## St Andrews

With the continuing restrictions, self-isolation as the result of Coronavirus, coupled with restrictions on venue access, and with the age profile of our membership we have not been able to run a normal programme.

**Committee Business:** In March 2020 the committee circulated all the current members with a document with questions about their preferences for the possibility of meetings and actions during the COVID pandemic. The outcome was a majority in favour of delaying any decisions on the future until December 2020 when the committee would review the situation.

The membership was asked if they would support the use of virtual meeting software. The response to this was negative. The overall feeling was that the meetings also provided social interaction and meeting with any speaker directly *face-to-face*.

**Other Activities and Outreach:** During the summer of 2020 Angie Emler (Chair), arranged a programme of talks, for 2020-21 starting in the autumn with the intention of introducing Zoom as a temporary measure, if acceptable to the speakers, and if *lock-down* or restrictions continued into the autumn. The speakers themselves were mainly from *St Andrews University* and the meeting software used by them is *Microsoft Teams*.

Contact with the members was maintained by the committee, making telephone calls to all members to ascertain their status and to offer some options for contact going forward.

Over the year the surveys found that many of the members had experience of utilising online software such as the Zoom package to keep in contact with friends and family.

As a result, and due to members now being more able, we organised a *Zoom get together* for a social exchange only, to ascertain the response and to examine the possibility of using Zoom for future talks.

The *St. Andrews Branch* was grateful to have the offer to participate in the central Zoom lectures and the quiz organised by the *Inverness Branch*. As a committee we feel that the members are more confident at using the technology after *lock-down* and we may be able to offer this as a temporary mode of delivery in the future if necessary.

Our members enjoy the social aspects of the meetings as well as the talk and other events.

Our normal venue, within the *Byre Theatre*, has been closed throughout the pandemic and is still not available.

At one Zoom committee meeting, it was agreed to explore the idea of having *un déjeuner Champêtre* during the coming summer with *socially distanced rugs* as a social event and thereby maintain the links with the members. On two occasions steps were started to organise the event only to discover the restrictions in place at both times limited the number of individuals / families mixing outdoors and consequently the event did not happen.

All *St Andrews Branch* Members have had their membership rolled over until the committee can resume something akin to a full programme of events.

Our membership sits at 21 but we are looking at further contacts to attempt to increase the numbers.

At the end of May, our **AGM** was held via Zoom and a new committee and executive roles approved.

**Alexander Gray Bequest:** The Branch Committee had a request for financial support from a Dundee student to enable him to spend two months in northern France during the summer of 2020 depending on the rules regarding Coronavirus restrictions and travel. To date this had not happened, and funds will be carried forward.

*John Vaughan*

## Society News

### Lord Balfour of Burley (1927 – 2019)

Long-standing members of the Society will remember Robert Balfour who was our President from 1984 until 1996. He was unusually tall for those of his age, with a fine head of white hair, infinitely courteous, and fast-talking with the hand gestures of a person used to making things. He was by profession an engineer – a career very different from those of his forbears. Members of the Society may be interested to learn something of this ancient Scottish family, as well as of Robert himself.<sup>1</sup>



Lord Balfour

The title Lord Balfour of Burleigh goes back to 1607. Being an old Scottish peerage, it can descend through daughters as well as sons and has done so several times before it reached Robert (and again it has passed to his daughter).

Michael, the first Lord Balfour, married a daughter of Michael Balfour of Burleigh Castle near Milnathort, hence the title. After various adventures including imprisonment in Edinburgh Castle, he was granted a monopoly for the import and sale of armour to prepare for the possibility of a war of succession on the death of Queen Elizabeth. Several landowners complained that they were being forced to buy armour they did not need. He eventually

became Scottish Ambassador to the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Duke of Lorraine.

His daughter became Lady Balfour, and her husband was granted the title Lord Balfour. The second Lord Balfour was a zealous radical politician, who was twice appointed president of the Scottish Parliament and energetically supported the Covenanter army in the campaigns against Montrose. His own military career, *although enthusiastically embarked upon, met with signal failure*. Nevertheless, his political career continued successfully after the Restoration of Charles II.

His son, the third Lord Balfour, was educated in France and was wounded in a duel. On his way back to Scotland he married the daughter of the Warden of the Tower of London, also a Balfour. But his father so disapproved that he petitioned the General Assembly of the Kirk (unsuccessfully) to annul the marriage. Nevertheless, the couple went on to have a large family of three sons and four daughters.

This Lord Balfour has gained undeserved notoriety through being confused with John Balfour of Kinloch the fierce Covenanter rebel and murderer of Archbishop Sharpe, who is immortalised as *Balfour of Burley* in Scott's *Old Mortality*.

The fifth Lord Balfour did nothing to enhance the family reputation. In his youth he fell in love with a girl of lower social station and was sent on the Grand Tour to forget about her. But, before leaving, he threatened her that, if she married during his absence, he would kill her husband. While he was away, she married a blameless schoolmaster in Inverkeithing. Daniel Defoe takes up the story:

*After some time the Young Master returns from his travels, and enquiring for the young woman, and being told she was married, and*

<sup>1</sup> For those who would like to dig deeper, my sources have been the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, the Complete Peerage, Who Was Who, Magnus Linklater's excellent obituary

(unsigned) in The Times of 15 October 2019, as well of course as the invaluable web. I am also grateful for help and encouragement from Janet, Robert's widow.

*to whom, retaining his hellish resolution he rides away to the town, and up to the school door, and calling for the schoolmaster, the innocent man came out to him unarmed in a gown and slippers; when, after asking if he was such a one, and flying out in some hard words upon him, he drew his pistol, and shot the poor man dead upon the spot, riding away in the open day, and nobody daring to meddle with him.*

*But justice pursuing him, and a proclamation being issued, with a reward of 200 shillings for apprehending him, he was at last taken, and was tried at Edinburgh by the Lords of the Justiciary, and condemned to have his head cut off, and the day of execution appointed. Nor could all the intercession of his family and friends prevail with the queen, after Her Majesty had a true account of the fact laid before her, to pardon or reprieve him: But the day before the execution his friends found means for him to make his escape out of the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, disguised in his sister's clothes.<sup>2</sup>*

He is said to have avoided recapture by hiding in a hollow ash tree. After succeeding to the peerage, he became involved in the Jacobite rising of 1714-15. He denounced damnation against all who would not drink the health of the Pretender and was engaged in the Battle of Sheriffmuir. His punishment was that his peerage was attainted, and his estate forfeited.

He had no children, and the family was restored to social respectability, though not to the title, by his sister's nephew, Robert Bruce of Kennet, whose family could trace its line to Robert the Bruce. Thus, the family name became Bruce rather than Balfour. He held the prestigious Chair of Law of Nature and of Nations at the *University of Edinburgh* and then became a Judge with the judicial title of Lord Kennet. In 1783 he was a founder member of the *Royal Society of Edinburgh*.

His grandson, Ensign Bruce of the Grenadier Guards, was wounded at Waterloo at the age of 16. He survived and in later life successfully

petitioned the House of Lords for reversal of the attainder. Sadly, he did not live to enjoy the fruits of his success. The necessary Act of Parliament was passed six months after his death so that his son, Robert's grandfather, became the sixth Lord Balfour of Burleigh (although the tenth in the line of succession).

Robert's grandfather had a very distinguished career of public service and was a confidant of Queen Victoria. The Dictionary of National Biography says that he had *a commanding presence and much charm of manner. Without brilliance, he yet represented the best type of public servant, conscientious, purposeful, and with a gift for mastering complicated details and presenting them lucidly and cogently.*

He was elected one of the sixteen Scottish representative peers and was chairman of any number of commissions and committees, *the reports of which became authoritative documents, noted especially for their thorough accumulation of evidence* (We could do with such reports now).

He was *Secretary of State for Scotland* from 1895 until 1903 and achieved much in the gradual process of modernising Scotland's system of government and administration. He was summarily removed from office by A.J. Balfour, the Prime Minister, because he was an uncompromising free trader while the *Conservative Party* embraced imperial preference (echoes of what happened to the Remainers in the *Conservative Party* after Brexit). Throughout his life he was enormously influential in the life of the *Church of Scotland*. He was elected Lord Rector of *Edinburgh University* and Chancellor of *St Andrews University*, with LL.Ds (honorary law degrees) from Glasgow and Aberdeen as well. It is not surprising that he was one of the first Vice-Presidents of the *Franco-Scottish Society*.

Robert's father, George Bruce, was the second son. His elder brother, Robert, the heir to the peerage, was killed at *Le Cateau* in the first month of the First World War. In 1915,

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A tour thro' the whole Island of Great Britain*, letter XIII.

-serving with the Indian army, he was wounded in the head at *Neuve Chapelle*, having been mentioned four times in despatches. He was transferred to the *Intelligence Corps* and from 1917 was involved in counter-intelligence, working in Paris in an office at No. 41 Rue St Roch, of which more later.

After the War he married the tall, grey-eyed Dorothy Done who had been one of the secretaries. She had spent her teenage years as companion of Germaine, daughter of the *tragedienne* Gabrielle Réju, known as Réjane. She became a nurse at the start of the War and developed an ingenious arrangement for sending maps, compasses, and other escape materials in food parcels for British prisoner of war – *Miss Done's Parcel Fund*.

George Bruce succeeded to the peerage in 1921 as the seventh, or eleventh, Lord Balfour of Burleigh. Like his father, he became involved in public service chiefly in the fields of local government, agriculture, and banking.

Robert was born in 1927. After the breakout of War and the start of the Blitz, his school (Westminster) was evacuated from foggy soot-laden central London to various houses in Herefordshire. The school magazine (the Elizabethan) gives a lively account of reconciling *metropolitan culture with rural simplicity*, piling swedes and mangelwurzels and tending a variety of ducks, hens, geese, and goats, as well as pigs to be fattened for slaughter. Snow fell to such a depth that one boy, possibly Robert, took thirty hours coming from Scotland at the start of term and another walked the ten odd miles from Worcester arriving at four in the morning.

Robert chose to do his National Service (then three years) in the *Royal Navy*, initially as an Ordinary Seaman and then as a radio mechanic concerned particularly with radar which was then in its infancy. On leaving the Navy, he joined *English Electric* and completed his training at Faraday House (set up and funded by the engineering industry as an *Engineering College for the sons of Gentlemen*, as engineering was not yet a *respectable subject* of study at universities). He then worked his way up from assistant foreman to assistant

superintendent of the heavy engineering plant at Netherton in Liverpool.

In one of the formative experiences of his life, he was sent in 1957 to Madras (Chennai) to build and run a new factory manufacturing switchgear. He employed as many women as he could, believing that they had a civilising influence and brought colour with their saris. As one of them said, referring to the caste system, *when we come and go to the factory, we can't speak to one another; when the bell rings we are one family*. From 1960 he was for four years general manager of the company's affairs throughout India. He never lost his love of India and remained a trustee of a trust that he had set up to train disabled workers and run a special school for children afflicted by polio. Decades later, when he went to visit the factory with his wife Janet, one of the workers fell to his knees saying, *thank-you, sir, for putting bread in the mouths of three generations of families*.

When his father died in 1967, he gave up his engineering career, though not his eternal fascination for making and inventing things. He came back to Scotland to run the family estate, but took on many directorships including *Viking Oil*, *NWS Bank*, *Scottish Investment Trust*, *Tarmac*, and *William Lawson Distillers*. He was Deputy Governor of the *Bank of Scotland* from 1977 to 1991.

He was just as active, if not more so, in the field of education, culture and the arts: Chancellor of the *University of Stirling* (1988-1998), Chairman of the *Scottish Arts Council* (1971-1980), Trustee of *Bletchley Park*, and the first Chairman of the *Edinburgh Book Festival* (1983-2004). The first Director of the Book Festival said that without him it would not have happened. As Chairman of the *Turing Institute* at *Strathclyde University*, he took a keen interest in the *Robot Olympics* in Glasgow, which included a robot carrying the Olympic torch from a Greek restaurant at the top of Sauchiehall Street.

In 1995, he and Janet investigated the contents of a filing chest which had belonged to his father. This contained a file of papers concerning his father's work in counter-

intelligence in Paris during the First World War. There, as well as Miss Done, he worked with another Scot named Campbell. Bruce (codenamed Rose) and Campbell (Réséda) identified the railway marshalling yard in the City of Luxembourg as a place of key importance in the movement of troops and supplies from Germany and Russia to the German front line in France and Belgium. Because of its strategic importance Luxembourg had been invaded and occupied by Germany at the start of the War. The Grand-Duchess and her advisers were sympathetic to Germany, but the bulk of the population were not.

Rose and Réséda recruited a Luxembourg lady, Madame Rischard, whose husband was the medical adviser of the *Luxembourg Railway Company*. Who were they, and what more could be known? Robert and Janet determined to find out.

At that time, I was the British Judge of the European Court of Justice, which sits in Luxembourg, and we lived in a village nearby. Robert and Janet came to stay, and we got out

the telephone directory in the hope of finding the family of Madame Rischard. The first Rischard in the book, a retired doctor, turned out to be her nephew who greeted Robert with the question *Êtes-vous le fils de Rose ou de Réséda. Je suis le fils de Rose*. So unfolded the story of an intricate (and highly dangerous if discovered) intelligence operation, which involved railway workers and ladies with windows overlooking the marshalling yard, who identified and counted what troops and supplies were being moved to what sector of the German front. The story is told in Janet's fascinating book, *The Secrets of the Rue St Roch* (Allen Lane, 2004).

Robert and Janet received the *Luxembourg Ordre de la Couronne de Chêne* in recognition of their services to the Grand-Duchy. Robert was also Officier of the *Légion d'Honneur* for his services to France.

Robert remained strong and fit well into his '80s, walking, climbing, skiing, skating, and making things in his workshop. He died in 2019, aged 92.

*Sir David Edward, FSSS Hon. President*

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## The Annual Guest Speaker from France Lecture



*Aubigny Logo*

Due to COVID 19 restrictions the ninth edition of this February event was held by Zoom and offered to all branches simultaneously.

Members of the *Association franco-écossaise* in France and the *Institut français d'Ecosse* also attended this presentation on *l'Histoire d'Aubigny-sur-Nère et son lien avec l'Ecosse* given by François Gresset, premier adjoint au maire d'Aubigny and followed by a talk from Verity Walker-Eley and Cécile Mettot, *FSS Inverness Branch*, on French connections with the Highlands.

*Anne-Colette Lequet*

## Le Concours de la Francophonie



Logo taken from the IFE Website

The Franco Scottish Society has been co-sponsor with *Total E&P* of *le concours de la francophonie* since its launch in 2016. It is organised by the *French Institute* in partnership with *Scotland's National Centre for Languages (SCILT)*, *Scottish Association for Language Teaching*, *Alliance Française of Glasgow*, the *University of Edinburgh*, and *TV5 Monde*.

This national school competition encourages all young French learners and their teachers around Scotland to celebrate the international day of *la francophonie*.

All Scottish primary and secondary schools offering French may enter by submitting a short video of a classroom activity in French such as a conversation, poetry, or songs.

The first prize in each of the four categories, *P1/P4*, *P5/P7*, *S1/S3*, and *S4/S6*, is an invitation to attend a French immersion day in Edinburgh to celebrate the international week of *la francophonie* at the *French Institute*. Unfortunately, this was not possible in March 2021 due to the pandemic and the sanitary rules in force at the time. The second prize in each category is a selection of French books, dictionaries, and games, specially purchased for each winning class.

The judging panel (Emily Calme, *Teacher Institut Français d'Ecosse*; Edouard Notte, *Teaching Fellow/Codirector of Le Centre de Recherches Francophones Belges, Edinburgh University*; Philippe Sibeaud, *Attaché de coopération pour le français, Institut Français d'Ecosse*; Steven Calder, *Courses Coordinator, Institut Français d'Ecosse*), was again very impressed with the quality and creativity of the entries for this edition. Submissions were received from North Ayrshire, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh.

### The prize-winning schools were:

#### *P1/P4*

- Winner: *Clifton Hall*, (Edinburgh Independent School).
- Runner-up: *Hermitage Park* (City of Edinburgh Council)

#### *P5/P7*

- \*Winner: *Largs Primary School* (North Ayrshire Council)
- Runner-up: *International Aberdeen School* (Independent School)

#### *S1/S3*

- Winner: *Edinburgh Academy* (Independent School)
- Runners-up: *Lamberton High School* (City of Edinburgh Council), *Edinburgh Academy* (Independent School)

#### *S4/S6*

- Winner: *Erskine Stewart's Melville School*, (Edinburgh Independent School)

\*A special prize was awarded to *Largs Primary School*, North Ayrshire, for the creativity of their film.

Anne-Colette Lequet

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## The Jacqueline Munro-Lafon Essay Prize 2021

The *Franco-Scottish Society of Scotland (FSSS)*, in partnership with *Scotland's National Centre for Languages (SCILT)*, established an essay prize in honour of Jacqueline Munro-Lafon's long and active life in the Franco-Scottish community and to mark her one hundredth birthday. She was a

longstanding member of the *Glasgow Branch* of the *FSSS* and had both personal and professional links with *SCILT*. The essay competition – for written French at **Advanced Higher** level – was announced to her on her birthday and she was delighted to have her life marked in this way.

Sadly, she died before the competition was completed.

Jacqueline Munro-Lafon was the epitome of Franco-Scottishness and a *modern woman*. She was born in Paris on 27 January 1921 and spent her early years living comfortably with her family in the Latin Quarter. She studied journalism and during her years as a student she became politically active, with a particular interest in fighting for the rights of workers and of women. But her career was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War, living through the difficulties of the Nazi Occupation of Paris and its liberation. Immediately after the war she joined the French Army and was assigned to British Forces as a liaison officer. While in the army she met her future husband, Major Hamish Munro. After marrying in Paris, they moved to England and then settled in Scotland in 1960.

She experienced huge change during her lifetime in France and Scotland. In her working life she promoted French culture throughout Scotland, particularly in her work as a *Librarian* at the *French Institute* in Glasgow. In later life she maintained an interest in the arts, progressive politics, and in current affairs. She was against any form of nationalism and very much for Europe. It was therefore very fitting that the title of the essay in her honour was *La seule constante c'est le changement: La vie en France et en Ecosse 1921 – 2021*.

The competition was open to learners of French at *Advanced Higher Level* in Scotland, other than native French speakers and those of French heritage. Twenty-four pupils from eighteen

### Winning entry

**Matthew Goodwin Robert Gordon's College: *La seule constante c'est le changement*.**

Cent ans, c'est longtemps. Le monde a beaucoup changé depuis 1921 quand Jacqueline Munro-Lafon est née. Elle a vu beaucoup de changements: elle a entendu les armes de la seconde guerre mondiale; elle a vu la chute de l'Union soviétique et la montée d'Internet. Cependant, une chose qui n'a pas changé était le désir de Jacqueline de lutter pour un monde meilleur. Elle s'est définie par sa lutte pour les droits des femmes, les droits des travailleurs et

schools across Scotland took part in the competition and are all to be congratulated on the quality of their essays. The four members of the judging panel were: Lisa Hanna (*SCILT*), Sheena Bell (*SCILT*), Elisabeth Campbell (Board member of *Alliance Française Glasgow*), Deborah Rutherford (Member *FSS Glasgow Branch*). The awards ceremony was hosted on Zoom on Tuesday 15 June 2021, with the participation of Laurence Païs, Consule Générale de France, and Jérôme Munro-Lafon, Jacqueline's son.

### The results are:

- **Winner: (prize funded by FSSS Alexander Gray Fund)**, Matthew Goodwin, *Robert Gordon's College* (Aberdeen).
- **Runners-up: (prizes funded by SCILT)**, Evi Brachimi, *Kelvinside Academy* (Glasgow), Laura Hewitt, *Jordanhill School* (Glasgow), Sacha Wylie, *Dalbeattie High School* (Dalbeattie, Dumfries and Galloway).
- **Highly Commended:** Natalia Grochowska, *St Roch's Secondary School* (Glasgow), Emma Thomson, *St Margaret's Academy* (Livingston), Eve Canning, *Robert Gordon's College* (Aberdeen), Millicent McKenzie, *Aberdeen Grammar School*, Olivia Stark, *Wellington School* (Ayr).

*The winner's essay is included below and followed by the extracts of each finalist's essay.*

*After such a successful and productive collaboration with SCILT, the FSSS looks forward to more joint projects in the future.*

*C. Hare, Gen. Secretary FSSS*

l'égalité. Alors qu'on essaie d'honorer sa mémoire, il faut poser une question: serait-elle fière de la société d'aujourd'hui? D'un côté, il est bien évident que la situation a changé pour le mieux. Bien que les travailleurs soient encore exploités par le système capitaliste, de nos jours, ils sont mieux payés et ont de meilleures conditions de travail. En 1920, le salaire moyen en Écosse était d'environ 6000£; maintenant, c'est 38000£. Le rôle des femmes s'est également transformé: elles ne sont plus obligées de rester à la maison, aujourd'hui elles ont la liberté (au moins en Écosse et en France) et peuvent choisir de travailler où elles veulent.



L'Écosse a eu sa première femme Premier ministre en 1979, et cette année, on a vu la première femme vice-présidente des États-Unis. De plus, des cendres de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la convention européenne des droits de l'homme a été créée. Le Royaume-Uni l'a ratifiée en 1951; la France en 1953. Tout compte fait, on peut constater sans aucun doute que la société s'est améliorée depuis 1921. En revanche, il est clair qu'on n'a pas encore le monde dont Jacqueline rêvait. Le capitalisme continue de perpétuer l'inégalité: l'écart entre les plus riches et les plus pauvres augmente et la situation empire de jour en jour. De nos jours, un personne sur cinq en Ecosse vit dans la pauvreté; en France le chiffre est d'environ un sur dix. Les femmes doivent toujours faire face à la discrimination, dans leur vie quotidienne et dans le monde du travail. Par exemple, en 2018, les hommes gagnaient en moyenne 15,2% de plus que les femmes. De plus, la France n'a jamais eu de femme présidente. Plus inquiétant encore, l'influence de l'extrême droite se développe à travers l'Europe, même en France et en Ecosse. Entre-temps, les politiques de gauche sont décrites comme radicales et dangereuses. Dans le monde entier, des millions de personnes réclament encore l'égalité. On est encore loin d'un monde parfait et égal. Pour conclure, le monde a changé constamment depuis la naissance de Jacqueline Munro-Lafon. On a pris des pas vers l'égalité, néanmoins il faut noter que on n'est pas encore arrivé à notre destination. Cependant, le monde dont Jacqueline a rêvé et pour lequel elle s'est battue est possible. Sa lutte nous appartient maintenant. Sa voix nous appartient maintenant. Pour honorer une femme incroyable, il faut continuer de lutter pour l'égalité pour tous. Si *la seule constante est le changement*, au moins on a le pouvoir d'assurer que le monde changera pour le mieux.

#### **Extracts from finalists' essays**

**Natalia Grochowska (St Roch's Secondary School):** D'abord, il serait utile de se pencher de plus près sur la vie de Madame Jacqueline Munro-Lafon. Son intérêt à changer le monde en un endroit meilleur découle de ses expériences de vie et de ses études en journalisme. Elle a été témoin de scènes horribles dans les villes allemandes et les camps

de concentration. Dans sa longue vie, Jacqueline a traversé de nombreuses épreuves douloureuses, telles que la mort de sa fille Fiona et de sa belle-fille Geraldine. Cependant, malgré tous ces événements terribles, elle n'a jamais cessé de répandre la gentillesse et l'amour dans notre communauté Franco-Écossaise.

**Emma Thomson (St Margaret's Academy):** La France et l'Écosse sont du même tonneau. Avec une alliance datant du 13ème siècle, l'amitié franco-écossaise est à la fois belle et longue. Regardons ce qui s'est passé au cours des 100 dernières années.

Ça a été un voyage difficile pour que l'Écosse ait un rôle politique au sein de la Grande Bretagne. Même si elle n'a pas voté pour les Conservateurs depuis l'année 1959, elle reste contrôlée par leur gouvernement. Après tant de protestations, l'Écosse a obtenu son propre parlement. L'éducation, la santé, les transports... elle avait enfin le contrôle pour mettre au pouvoir les politiciens qu'elle voulait.

**Evi Brachimi (Kelvinside Academy):** Pendant sa vie, Madame Jacqueline Munro-Lafon a accompli des choses remarquables. Elle a lutté pour sa nation pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, elle a manifesté pour les droits des travailleurs et surtout elle a contribué à la préservation de la culture française en Ecosse. En tant que femme avec une carrière aussi réussie, il s'ensuit qu'en son honneur, nous reflétons sur les changements sociétaux concernant les droits et les pouvoirs de la femme en France et en Écosse.

**Eve Canning (Robert Gordon's College):** C'est l'an 1922. Une mère écossaise laisse sa fille avec une nourrice pour qu'elle puisse aller voter pour la première fois. Elle a de la chance, parce qu'elle a trente ans, l'âge minimum pour aller voter. C'est-à-dire, l'âge pour les femmes. Son frère de vingt-deux ans a voté aussi. Une mère française tient sa fille pendant que son mari vote.

**Sacha Wylie (Dalbeattie High School):** À peu près au même moment la Cour Européenne des Droits de l'Homme a été créé afin de s'assurer que les atrocités qui avaient lieu pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale ne puissent jamais être répétées à l'avenir. Mme Munro-Lafon était totalement contre la peine de mort – elle avait elle-même fait l'expérience de l'oppression et

ne voulait que la paix. La Convention Européenne des Droits de l'Homme a déclaré les droits humains fondamentaux y compris l'interdiction de la discrimination, de l'esclavage, de la torture et du meurtre, ainsi que le droit à la liberté, à la sécurité et à un procès équitable.

**Laura Hewitt (Jordanhill School):** Le degré de tolérance et d'égalité a continué d'augmenter énormément dans les deux pays, mais il faut que nous continuions sur cette voie. Les français et les écossais d'aujourd'hui vivent des grands challenges résultant de la pandémie, et il est plus important que jamais que nous essayons de soutenir les autres et de garder l'espoir.

Si ces cent dernières années nous ont appris quelque chose, c'est que le temps continuera de passer, la vie continuera de changer, et la lumière l'emportera sur l'obscurité.

**Millicent McKenzie (Aberdeen Grammar School):** 2021. Maintenant, il y a l'égalité des droits et des opportunités, des États providences et les femmes sont mieux représentées. Les batailles du siècle dernier ont changé la société en profondeur et nous devons tant aux générations précédentes et qui ont tant sacrifié pour notre liberté. Bien sûr, de l'eau a

coulé sous les ponts mais il reste du travail à faire et maintenant c'est à nous de continuer à nous battre pour améliorer le monde pour les prochaines générations. La seule constante c'est le changement

**Olivia Stark (Wellington School):** Le philosophe grec Heraclitus a déclaré ces mots puissants, impliquant que tout autour de nous est en constante évolution, ce que Jacqueline Munro-Lafon a réalisé après avoir vécu de nombreux changements tout au long de sa vie. De 1921 à 2021, la société a beaucoup changé en Écosse et en France. Les changements vécus par Jacqueline sont d'une grande importance dans ces pays, comme l'accès des femmes au vote, l'amélioration des droits de l'Homme et le développement des mouvements politiques, jouant un rôle dans l'évolution de la société moderne. *Le temps, l'amour et la guerre* sont trois choses dont elle a parlé qui ont marqué sa vie et influencé ces changements, dont elle évoque en se souvenant des 100 dernières années.

*A recording of the awards ceremony. which includes a short extract from each finalist's essay – read by its author and made available by SCILT.*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9oelqLNTsY>

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## The 2021 AGM

The *Aberdeen Branch* of the *Franco-Scottish Society of Scotland* hosted the National AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Last year's AGM was held as a Zoom meeting because of the COVID pandemic. This year the event was held in *hybrid* form (some members attending via Zoom and others in person), at the *Jury's Inn Hotel, Aberdeen*.

At this meeting Elizabeth Bryant did not seek re-election as vice-president and has been replaced by Angie Emler.

Those present were delighted to have an occasion for meeting *face-to-face* and enjoyed a post meeting lunch in the hotel. There was also an opportunity to visit the *Aberdeen Art Gallery* in the afternoon.

*Anne-Colette Lequet*

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## New Partnerships and Support for Educational and Cultural Projects

Over several years the *FSS Edinburgh Branch* has supported various educational and cultural projects through its local contacts. Some of these projects have expanded geographically

and now include other areas in Scotland. The *FSSS* has decided to give support to two of these for the next session.

### **Ateliers pour niveaux Higher et Advanced Higher**

This project was set up in partnership with *Edinburgh College* to offer workshops for **Advanced Higher** French pupils in schools with no native French speaking staff or insufficient numbers for a viable group.

At the onset of the pandemic, delivery was easily transferred online. *Edinburgh College Language Department* has many years' experience of online delivery and teaching material creation and enjoys a high reputation in this area. Several of their candidates have in the past received the **FSSS Language Prize** for the highest mark in Advanced Higher French. In 2020-21 the online provision enabled *Edinburgh College* to promote these workshops to more schools throughout Scotland.

For the next session, the *FSSS* will provide funding for a similar programme of workshops, individual sessions, and material for students across Scotland. So far, students have signed up from Edinburgh and the Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Glasgow, Aberdeenshire, Moray, The Highlands and Islands, Dumfries and Galloway, and Fife.

### **French Film Festival Learning Programme: Le cinema à l'école**



*Image from FFF Brochure*

The annual *French Film Festival UK* was launched in Scotland in 1992.

As well as films for the public, the French Film Festival Team has provided a small selection of films aimed at school pupils from **P1** to **S5/6**.

Pupils are invited to attend the showing of a film of their choice at a local cinema. Whilst their teachers are provided with supporting material which helps to make it a valuable experience.

For many years the *FSS Edinburgh Branch* has helped with transport hire for pupils in outlying schools in its area who would not otherwise be able to attend these educational events.

With COVID restrictions, cinema visits became impossible, but an online version of the films could be sent to schools with the supporting teaching material.

A competition for the best film review of one of the films viewed in a French class in a participating school was also launched as a pilot at primary and secondary level.

The *FSS Edinburgh Branch* decided to give support for language departments experiencing difficulties with funding. The Branch offered to fund the prize for the best film review judged by the French Film Festival both at junior and secondary level.

The online 2020-21 project proved a great success with positive feedback from teachers and pupils. The geographical reach in Scotland ranged from the Western Isles and Moray to the Lothians in the south.

The *FSSS* has therefore decided to give support for the continuation of this project along the same lines for the next session throughout Scotland.

*Anne-Colette Lequet*

## The Biennial French Exchange Visit: Les Hauts de France



*Hauts de France (Wikipedia)*

The pandemic pushed the French Exchange Visit Programme, which was scheduled for June 2020 to June 2021

However, the dates in June 2021 were also considered inappropriate. A further postponement has resulted in the dates 7<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

The visit to *Les Hauts de France* on these dates will be confirmed by January 2022 and an itinerary sent to interested partners.

*Tom Wight*

## French Connections

### A French Poem translated into Scots

(From *Twelve Fables made owre intil Scots Jean de la Fontaine* by Walter Perrie)



*Spilt Milk*



**La Laitière et le Pot au lait**  
Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables* VII,10

*Milk Maid*

#### THE DAIRY LASS AN THE STOWP O MILK

Perrette, a stowp o milk atop her heid  
 Weel planted on a saft bit pad,  
 Ettled tae win without mishanter tae the toon.  
 But licht an scantie cled, she stepped it oot,  
 In cotton smock and braw flat shoon,  
 Pit oan that morn mair soople tae be gaan about.  
 Oor Milk Lass thereby busked an reid  
 A'reddies coontin in her heid  
 The hale worth o her milk, wis wirkin ilk bawbee;  
 Oan a hunner eggs, an sae, had three clecks fee'd:  
 The thing wis gaun weel, wi hersel aye sae cannie.  
 Said she tae herself: Easy for me  
 Tae fatten chookies roon the but an ben;  
 The tod'll be unco skeelie  
 Wha'll no leave me eneuch tae fatten  
 A soo. That turn'll no tak muckle scan.  
 Whan I got her she had her a guid-bittie girth:  
 Whan I mart her, fair rowth l'll be o siller then.

#### LA LAITERE ET LE POT AU LAIT

Perette, sur sa tête ayant un Pot au lait  
 Bien posé sur un coussinet,  
 Prétendait arriver sans encombre à la ville,  
 Légère et court vêtue, elle allait à grands pas,  
 Ayant mis, ce jour-là, pour être plus agile,  
 Cotillon simple et souliers plats.  
 Notre laitière ainsi troussée  
 Comptait déjà dans sa pensée  
 Tout le prix de son lait, en employait l'argent ;  
 Achetait un cent d'œufs, faisait triple couvée ;  
 La chose allait à bien par son soin diligent  
 Il m'est, disait-elle, facile  
 D'élever des poulets autour de ma maison ;  
 Le renard sera bien habile  
 S'il ne m'en laisse assez pour avoir un cochon.  
 Le porc à s'engraisser coûtera peu de son ;  
 Il était, quand je l'eus, de grandeur raisonnable  
 :  
 J'aurai, le revendant, de l'argent bel et bon.

An wha'll say me nay tae stance in oor berth,	Et qui m'empêchera de mettre en notre étable,
View the siller I win fae her sale, but cauf an a coo,	Vu le prix dont il est, une vache et son veau,
There's the cauf gien a lowp mang the herd juist the noo?	Que je verrai sauter au milieu du troupeau ?
An Perrette lowps tae, juist fair cairried awa:	Perrette là-dessus saute aussi, transportée :
Skails the milk: fareweel cauf an coo, soo, clecks an aa.	Le lait tombe ; adieu veau, vache, cochon, couvée.
The mistress o these guid, watchin them gang wi dolefu ee	La dame de ces biens, quittant d'un œil marri
Her fortune thereby departed,	Sa fortune ainsi répandue,
Maun some tale til her guidman say,	Va s'excuser à son mari,
It's unco like she'l be weel scairted.	En grand danger d'être battue.
The Comedy is played that sall be tellt;	Le récit en farce en fut fait ;
As The Dairy Lass an the Stowp o Milk.	On l'appela le Pot au lait.
What spirit beats aboot the lan?	Quel esprit ne bat la campagne ?
Wha disna bigg castles in Spain?	Qui ne fait châteaux en Espagne ?
Picrochole, Pyrrhus, Dairy Lass an aa,	Picrochole, Pyrrhus, la Laitière, enfin tous,
As mony wyce as glaikit faa.	Autant les sages que les fous.
Aabody dreams on luikin roon; there's naething mair fine:	Chacun songe en veillant ; il n'est rien de plus doux :
A mischievous error cairts aff oor saul;	Une flatteuse erreur emporte alors nos âmes ;
Aa that's in the warld is mine,	Tout le bien du monde est à nous,
Aa the glore, ilk Peg or Poll.	Tous les honneurs, toutes les femmes.
Whan aa my lane I sall defy the faur kent hero	Quand je suis seul, je fais au plus brave un défi ;
I wanner awa fae masel, l'll dethrone the Shah;	Je m'écarte, je vais détrôner le Sophi ;
They'll mak me king , aa my fowk sall loe me weel;	On m'élit roi, mon peuple m'aime ;
An jewels sall rain aboot my door:	Les diadèmes vont sur ma tête pleuvant :
Whit mishanter sall tak me back tae masel,	Quelque accident fait-il que je rentre en moi-même,
I'm big, daft John, juist like afore.	Je suis gros Jean comme devant.

## Translating Between Cultures

### The Gift

I saw an angel in the sky.  
 She was as surprised as I.  
 She blew a kiss. She wore two rings.  
 She flew away on silent wings  
 One feather spiralled from the light,  
 Whispering, *Sharpen me and write.*

### Le Cadeau

J'ai vu un ange dans les cieux.  
 Quelle grande surprise pour nous deux!  
 Elle m'a envoyé un baiser.  
 Aux ailes blanches, elle s'est effacée.  
 Une seule plume descendit,  
 En susurrant, Écris ! Écris !

*Translating poetry involves more than word for word exchanges. You must let the cultural context of the first language thrive in the second language.*

**The Gift / Le Cadeau illustrates some of the challenges:** The simple language and metre make translation more difficult than from poems that use scholarly language and free verse. The poet-translator has to decide priorities and be prepared to make sacrifices. For example, in the third line, to retain the metre in French, there is no space for both the kiss and the rings. The kiss is important in showing the angel's instant attitude to the poet, so the rings must be omitted.

In the first line *cieux* is more literary than *sky*, but it conjures up *heavens* which is appropriate. *Deux* in the second line is only half-rhyme. It delivers the meaning exactly, but the French reader may experience the subliminal full rhyme *dieux*. This enhances the playfulness of the divine exchange, particularly when followed by the exclamation mark.

In the fourth line, to use the literal *silencieux* and *s'envoler* would be metrically impossible and would sound ungainly. The sibilants of *blanches* and *effacée* introduce tones of sound, colour and movement which are more precise than in the English, but entirely appropriate. The scansion in this line uses tricks common in *Molière* and *Racine*.

Metrical requirements prevent a French equivalent of *spiralled from the light* in the fifth line. It would be more consistent to retain the same form of past tense as in the earlier lines. However, particularly since the angel's flight fades into the distance in the French fourth line, *descendit* has more immediacy and creates a direct sensation of the feather arriving in the poet's hand.

Because *plume* means both *feather* and *pen* in French, the act of quill-writing is diminished.



*La Plume – a quill pen*

This is useful in the final line, because there is no room in French for sharpening the quill. It is already a pen. However, there is a generation problem. Only older readers use the word *plume* in their own speech. *Stylo* is the standard term.

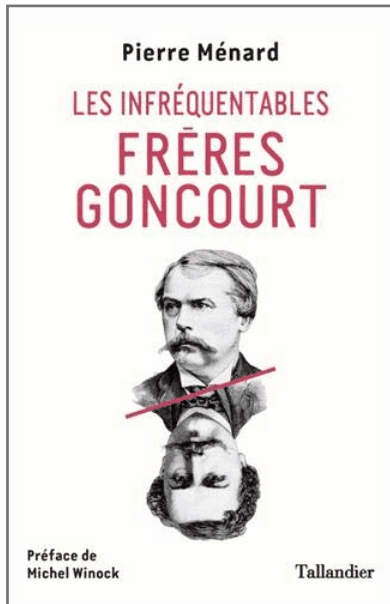
The final line sustains the sibilants of the previous two lines, contrasted with the sharpness of the exclamation marks. *Écris!* is more intimate than *Écrivez*. It is the encouragement of a guardian angel, rather than the instruction of the *Pantocrator*. The repetition of *Écris* in French is currently less bossy than *Write! Write!*, would be in English, though such nuances evolve over time.

A reader understands a poem within his or her own context. A translator should assume that the reader has no knowledge of the original language and focus on creating a satisfying new poem that respects the original as far as possible. If the reader does know both languages, he or she can have fun trying to do better than the translator. At the very least, it encourages a close reading of the poem.

*Robin Bell @Fras 33*

## Quelques Idées de Lecture en Période de Prix Littéraires

### **Pierre Ménard, *Les infréquentables frères Goncourt***



Tallandier, 2020

Comme chaque année, l'été finissant, la rentrée littéraire agite les esprits, phénomène très français qui intrigue tant nos voisins. Les éditeurs se pressent en rang serrés, stimulés par le Tout-Paris intellectuel. Chacun met en avant ses protégés avec pour ligne de mire les grands prix d'automne, notamment le plus prestigieux d'entre eux, le Goncourt. Il faut dire que le jeu en vaut la chandelle. D'un point de vue médiatique, le lauréat peut espérer vendre son livre à 300 000 exemplaires en moyenne ; ce n'est pas rien dans un univers éminemment compétitif. Malgré quelques récentes entorses à la règle, il est rare que le prix échappe à l'un des trois grands éditeurs du genre romanesque ; Gallimard, Grasset, Le Seuil. Bref, le prix Goncourt, c'est l'incontournable célébration de l'année littéraire française ; mieux, c'est une institution.

En léguant leur fameux prix, les frères Goncourt sont passés à la postérité. Pourtant, les inséparables compères sont peu connus du lecteur d'aujourd'hui. C'est donc fort à propos que le jeune biographe et historien, Pierre Ménard, nous livre le fruit de ses recherches,

une étude très fouillée et souvent drôle sur ces deux diaristes à la plume impertinente.

Edmond et Jules de Goncourt héritent d'une honorable fortune à l'âge où il convient de choisir une carrière. A la bonne heure ! car ni l'un ni l'autre ne souhaitent s'embarrasser des contraintes d'un emploi régulier. Rentiers ! voilà qui sonne juste même si d'aucuns diront que c'est un peu faible pour les fils d'un défenseur de l'empire. Peu importe, leur vocation, ce sont les arts et les lettres auxquels ils s'adonnent sans relâche, convaincus de leur immense talent. Surtout, ils se confondent dans l'écriture, une *hydre* à deux têtes qui a tant marqué leurs contemporains : un *être hybride, symétrique et complémentaire, monstrueux pour certains, fascinant pour d'autres, est évident pour les intéressés qui se rêvent jumeaux et même siamois, au point de signer leurs lettres de leurs deux initiales accolées*. Et pourtant, les frères sont pour le moins dissemblables, l'aîné Edmond, un solide brun dont la verve acide cache une certaine timidité par opposition à Jules, son jeune cadet, un frêle blondinet ouvertement désobligeant, voire cruel. Bref, on comprend dès l'abord que le duo a frappé son entourage, mais pas toujours dans un sens favorable : *Le jeune était impertinent, l'aîné était présomptueux ; et ils n'étaient amusants ni l'un ni l'autre* dira laconiquement le secrétaire de Sainte-Beuve.

Un couple *infréquentable* donc, et à plus d'un titre comme Pierre Ménard se plaît à le décrire ; tant il se délecte de leurs aphorismes vengeurs dont il parsème son étude. Il est vrai que les deux misanthropes ne sont pas avares de perfidies à l'égard de leurs contemporains, surtout s'ils bénéficient des faveurs du public et de la critique. Les plus grands en feront les frais : George Sand, *la communiste*, dont ils admirent le talent malgré leur misogynie intrinsèque les tiendra éloignés de Nohant. Les soirées de Médan ne seront pas davantage les leurs : Zola, d'abord fasciné par leurs romans, naturalistes avant l'heure, s'attirera les foudres des Goncourt lorsque sa popularité s'imposera. Las, la postérité retiendra *L'assommoir* bien devant *Germinie Lacerteux*. Le mélancolique



Baudelaire, *le Saint Vincent de Paul des croûtes trouvées* les indispose au plus haut point. Tout comme Victor Hugo, le républicain honni, dont le narcissisme serait sans égal. Même leurs *amis* se méfient: Flaubert, qualifié de *génie provincial*, est vigoureusement interrompu dans son gueuloir. Quant à Alphonse Daudet, le dernier des fidèles, chez qui Edmond a passé ses ultimes moments, il avouera qu'il s'exprimait toujours avec beaucoup de retenue devant les frères Goncourt, par crainte d'être cité dans leur journal.

Car le journal, voici l'œuvre majeure des Goncourt. De cuisants échecs au théâtre, une

consécration littéraire tardive les mène à cette voie parallèle où ils excellent. Certes, leur jugement est sévère pour le XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle et ne vise pas à l'objectivité. Ils décrivent sa bourgeoisie triomphante et ses émeutes populaires par opposition à la grandeur d'esprit du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Il n'en demeure pas moins que le journal des Goncourt dresse un tableau précieux de la société de leur époque. A travers leurs descriptions pleines d'acrimonie, c'est un pan de l'humanité qui se dessine. Un document inestimable pour l'historien des arts et des lettres tant il fourmille de détails sur la vie parisienne. La passionnante biographie de Pierre Ménard nous invite à le redécouvrir.

**Ruth Zylberman, 209 rue Saint-Maur, Paris X<sup>ème</sup>, autobiographie d'un immeuble**



Éditions du Seuil, 2020

Appréhender l'histoire de Paris en se concentrant sur celle d'un microcosme, tel est l'itinéraire emprunté par Ruth Zylberman dans sa magnifique autobiographie d'un immeuble parisien situé au 209 rue Saint-Maur, dans le dixième arrondissement.

Ruth Zylberman, sur les pas de Patrick Modiano, arpente inlassablement les rues de Paris, Paris

qu'elle n'a jamais quitté et qui se trouve au centre de son oeuvre cinématographique et romanesque. Elle déambule dans la capitale afin de capter les lieux de son enfance, des détails architecturaux ou tout simplement des impressions. *Tous ces immeubles me sont une terre natale. Cette province intime dont on dit en France qu'elle est un "petit pays", un lieu indiscutable d'enracinement - un paysage originel dont les formes s'inscrivent en vous aussi sûrement qu'une langue maternelle. Un "petit pays" fait non de collines, d'horizons maritimes mais d'alignements minéraux qui fut, pour mes grands-parents venus de Pologne au milieu des années 1930, une terre d'accueil.* Cependant, si Modiano tend à resserrer sa pensée sur un ou quelques êtres isolés dont il dresse un portrait épuré (comme celui de Dora Bruder), Ruth Zylberman s'approprie un foisonnement de personnages, plaçant son enquête sous le regard exhaustif de Georges Perec. A la façon de *Une vie, mode d'emploi*, l'autrice tente de cerner l'évolution de la communauté des habitants de cet immeuble, du Paris populaire des années 1850 à la gentrification des récentes décennies.

Le choix du lieu pourrait sembler aléatoire tant sa construction ne diffère en rien de ceux de l'est de la capitale au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle: un ensemble de quatre bâtiments entourant une cour et reliés entre eux par une porte cochère, large entrée surveillée par la concierge,

personnage emblématique dont les indiscretions ou remarques acerbes rythment la vie des locataires.

La rue Saint-Maur, très représentative de ce quartier du Faubourg-du-Temple dans les années 1850 rassemble ouvriers et artisans réunis par l'exode rural, massif à cette époque, et les bouleversements du centre parisien engagés par le baron Haussmann. Les échoppes se succèdent, tous les corps de métier sont représentés. Le quartier s'uniformise sur le plan social et devient naturellement un foyer de revendication contre le Second Empire. En 1848, les barricades érigées rue Saint-Maur et rue du Faubourg-du-Temple furent les dernières à lâcher prise. L'histoire se répète sous la Commune en 1871 lorsque les fédérés de la rue Saint-Maur lancent l'assaut avant de plier devant les Versaillais soutenus par l'armée régulière. Louise Michel aurait combattu en première ligne sur cette barricade puis rejoint celle toute proche de la rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi, dont la chute met fin à l'insurrection. De nombreux habitants du 209 seront traqués, condamnés, déportés pour leur participation aux émeutes.

L'histoire du 209, c'est par la suite celle des hommes qui partirent pour la guerre en 1914, laissant femmes et enfants organiser leur survie. Ces hommes qui ne revinrent pas ou tellement affaiblis physiquement et moralement que la vie ne fut plus jamais la même pour eux, ni pour les leurs.

Puis, évoquant ses propres racines familiales, Ruth Zylberman accentue ses recherches sur le sort des habitants pendant la deuxième guerre

mondiale. S'appuyant sur les imposants travaux de Serge Klarsfeld rassemblés dans Le Mémorial de la Déportation, elle identifie un à un les occupants d'origine juive, si nombreux dans le quartier. Que sont-ils devenus, ces immigrés d'Europe de l'est qui voyaient en Paris *une armure* pour échapper aux pogroms? Que sont devenus leurs enfants dans ce qui devait être *l'eldorado des proscrits*. Certains échappent à un destin funeste, bénéficiant de la protection de voisins généreux. D'autres n'ont pas la même chance: ils sont 18 hommes, femmes, enfants à sortir du 209 sous bonne escorte le 16 juillet 1942 lors de la tristement célèbre rafle du Vel d'Hiv. Dix-huit locataires embarqués sans ménagement vers les camps de Pithiviers et Beaune-la-Rolande en attendant le pire. *Je suis sonnée par cette tragédie qui rejoue à l'échelle familiale, dans les pauvres pièces du 209, celle de tout un pays.*

Aujourd'hui réhabilité, modernisé, le 209 offre un visage bien différent. Quelques vieux daguerréotypes ensevelis sous des montagnes d'archives, quelques noms griffonnés sous des papiers peints, c'est à peu près tout ce qui resterait de ces êtres sans le travail minutieux, bouleversant de Ruth Zylberman. Un travail de mémoire sur un peuple vivant pour finalement se retrouver soi-même.

*Il est à noter que ce livre est largement inspiré d'un documentaire réalisé par l'autrice: Les enfants du 209 rue Saint-Maur, Paris Xème (Zadig Productions/ Arte France). Un DVD est disponible (Arte éditions).*

Catherine Guiat

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## **You Don't Really Understand Us, Do You? Reflections on Nearly Forty Years Association with Morocco**

In my mid-30s, in the summer of 1983, I signed up for a *guided trip of Morocco*, from the Spanish enclave of *Ceuta* in the north, to *Zagora* in the south, in an open-sided truck with a dozen other British professionals, keenly curious, but not sure what to expect.

Emboldened by a brief encounter in the city of *Fes* en route, I returned the following Easter to meet that individual's family. Five years later

he came to Edinburgh, we got married and here we still are.

I'm not an expert on the country or its people. But over years of frequent summer visits, the time of grand family reunions and significant events, like weddings, circumcisions, departures on *Hajj* (pilgrimages) and funerals, I've accumulated experiences and impressions, which have focused my attention during a period of profound

international turbulence between east and west. I've also tried to deepen that awareness by selective reading in primarily francophone writers from the region.

Before this trip my only awareness of a *Maghreb community* was during 1968-69 when I was lucky enough to secure an assistantship at a *lycée in Marseille*.



Marseille

They were primarily economic migrants, usually from the countryside, working in construction or agriculture. They clustered around the area of *le Vieux Port*, and I would come across them waiting interminably, like me, their faces nervous and anxious, in the office for their official *cartes de sejour*. At that time the immigrant population was smaller and there were no anxieties about  *jihadism*, but the French tended to keep their distance unless they had a specific reason to get to know them.

My husband's family in Morocco, owned a small two-storey house in a *quartier populaire* between the French built *Ville Nouvelle*, built during the *Protectorate*, and the ancient Medina, *Fes El Bali*, which dates from the 9th century, a place of steep winding streets and alleys deeper and darker than any Edinburgh close. Initially a one-storey dwelling with a courtyard and a vine in the middle, by the time I arrived the courtyard and vine had disappeared and the activities that had formerly taken place there, from the weekly wash to the annual *Eid el Adha* sacrifice of a sheep or a lamb, took place on the flat roof surrounded by a parapet.

I spent hours on the roof initially, mesmerised by the daily comings and goings in

the street below. At one end, a mosque called the *faithful* to prayer five times a day, and a *Koranic school* echoed with the sound of children chanting their lessons. Opposite an illuminated winking green crescent indicated a pharmacy, and the *high-pitched skirl* of an electric saw emanated daily from a joinery. Street traders passed with their handcarts or laden donkeys, calling out their wares in hoarse, stereophonic cries, like the salt seller or the rubbish collector, a small man with a squint, or hawkers of vegetables and fruit in season, or ice cream, or candy floss, those swirls of pink or white spun sugar, I remembered from fairgrounds and gala days in my childhood.



Gnaoua Musicians

Occasionally *Gnaoua* musicians, dark *Saharaouia* from the south, in bright costumes and caps with swirling tassels, danced from door to door, beating drums, strumming their three-stringed *Guimbri* and clicking metal *Castanets*.



Wedding Party, Morocco

Or there might be a wedding procession, a groom and his veiled bride mounted on a tall horse, or a circumcision with a small boy in traditional *fez* and *djellabah*, seated in front of his father, also on a horse or mule. Crowds of family and friends accompanied them, their joyful ululations clashing with the drums and trumpets of an *Aïssawa* band, another type of traditional music, usually hired for family occasions of this kind.



Aïssawa Band

During *Ramadan*, around two or three in the morning, a man with a drum would strum his way along the street, followed by another with a trumpet, encouraging people to eat before dawn arrived and the next day's fast began.

In those early days my husband's family never shopped in a supermarket, although small ones were appearing. Food was bought fresh in local markets from farms outside the city. Chickens chattered in pens, fruit was heaped in profusion and pyramids of spices glowed in rich terracotta colours. Once my husband took me to a market in the medina to buy a turkey, traditionally eaten during the annual *Fête du Trône*, the celebration of the king's accession, a national event marked by flags and bunting everywhere. Given I was

used to the oven-ready, *clingfilm-swathed variety*, I was a bit flummoxed to be confronted by a row of beady-eyed live birds. So, I left the choice to my husband. Back home it was tethered on the roof. Then my husband's younger brother decided to give it a breather before it breathed its last. It promptly fluttered on to the parapet and had to be brought back down in short order or we would have lost our dinner.

One thing I do regret is not acquiring a sufficient conversational or reading mastery of Arabic. What I have I call *kitchen Arabic* – domestic words and phrases, forms of basic greetings and the like. Arabic is challenging to read. The letters reminded me of *Pitman's shorthand* which I once attempted to learn, and their form changes, depending on where they occur in a word. I have to spell them out like a five-year-old. I meant to do better. I did enrol for an Arabic class in Edinburgh, but the usual idiomatic Arabic spoken by most Moroccans is a vernacular form called *Darija*, which contains, among other components, words, and phrases from *Berber dialects* and from Morocco's colonial past. For example, in my beginners' class in Middle Eastern Arabic, I learned the word for *car*: *sayaara*, the word for *fish*: *samak*, and the word for an *orange*: '*burtuqa*'. In *Darija* they are *tonobile*, *hutz* and *li-cheen* respectively. *Tonobile*, of course, comes from French. Other common French borrowings include: *tilifun*, *tobees*, *camioun* and *la glace*. From Spanish you have *cusina* for *kitchen*. Ironically, a *baguette* is *comer*, the Spanish verb *to eat*, distinguishing it from *khubz*, the everyday word for the round flat loaves traditional Moroccan housewives bake every morning early and serve at every meal.

No one in my husband's family was equipped to explain the grammatical structure to me and books I've found have tended to confuse the issue. Also, *Darija* is only available in transliterated forms, which are difficult to sound out clearly. So, in Morocco I communicate in French. Although Arabic is the official language, French is still a commonly spoken *lingua franca*. Unfortunately, I could never converse with my husband's parents. But we smiled at each other and someone else

was always around to interpret. My husband learned French from the start of primary school from teachers who were French, so he has always had a competent fluency. Some of his family speak good French. Most can make a little go a long way.

On recent visits to France, I've become aware of Arabic words that have crossed into idiomatic French, like *tbib* for a *doctor*, *bsaaf* for *too much*, *keefkeef* for *the same*, and so on. If you've watched the French police procedural, *Engrenages*, which we know as *Spiral*, those words and similar borrowings are used along with the *coded verlan*. In the last series I noticed the term *une shouf* for a police surveillance stakeout.

Morocco is a conservative country, traditional in outlook, conformist in behaviour. Family is paramount and marriages between cousins traditional. When you marry, you marry the tribe. It means you're never alone, but you also rarely have any peace. Individualism puzzles them. However, from the beginning, my husband's family was very welcoming and hospitable. I intrigued, but also baffled them, this *nasraniya* – a word derived from Nazarene or Christian, as they call us Europeans – from an obscure country called *Scotlanda*. They're proud to show you their culture, but their understanding of ours tends to be limited. For them acquiring a travel visa is a bureaucratic nightmare. Only salaried employees, the well connected, and authorised migrants can travel legitimately. Others, risk going clandestinely. So, while I've been able to visit Morocco whenever I want, the reciprocal freedom to visit me has not. Only my mother-in-law ever visited us in Edinburgh, although family and friends from France have done so, once they acquired European passports.

Emigration remains a huge issue, for ordinary Moroccans, like my husband's family, life is far from easy. Corruption is rife and welfare benefits exiguous. This, along with high unemployment and low wages, explains why so many want to emigrate. Despite prejudice and integration difficulties in Europe, for many this has worked well. When one of our nieces in France got married, I asked her husband his

impressions of his wife's family. *Every Moroccan family is the same, he said, they all have a banker who lives in Europe*. Every year, come August, the roads south through Europe to the Mediterranean ports are filled with homing North Africans, driving cars full to bursting with children and baggage, boots crammed, roof racks piled high with presents or supplies for houses or apartments they are building bit by bit as they can afford them.



Family Meal

Food is very important. They love feeding you and the women pride themselves on their culinary skills. On special occasions all available women will gather in the kitchen, sitting on the floor if need be, they roll up their sleeves and prepare a meal for perhaps 50 people. Hours of preparation will result in mounds of couscous or tajine dishes with accompaniments, like a medieval banquet. I had to adjust to eating meals by hand, from a single large dish placed in the centre of the family dining-table, trying to remember to use my right hand, when I'm naturally left-handed. If you pick at your food, they'll urge you to eat more. *Kuli, Kuli. Manges. Tu manges comme un petit oiseau*. Nowadays they give me a plate and a knife and fork, which I find more congenial.

Of the Moroccan writers I read early on, three stood out: *Tahar ben Jelloun*, *Driss Chraïbi* and the sociologist *Fatima Mernissi*. Chraïbi, who died in 2007, and ben Jelloun studied, lived and worked in France and wrote in French. Both wrote about the problems of Moroccan migrant workers, ben Jelloun in a psychosexual analysis, *La plus haute des solitudes*, and Chraïbi in a raw, violent novel, *Les Boucs*. They've also written about family dynamics in Morocco, the situation of women,

tensions between fathers and sons, bonds between mothers and sons, religious conflict, cultural identity, and the clash of Arabic and European civilisations.

*Fatima Mernissi*, who studied in France and the US, focused on the lives of women in Muslim culture. Her account of growing up in the *harem* of her wealthy landowning grandfather in *Fes medina* in the 1940s, *Rêves des Femmes*, *Une enfance au harem*, describes the burning frustration of her mother who longed to have her own separate household, to be able to come and go as she wished, instead of being under the constant surveillance of her disapproving mother-in-law. Other wives had to share their husbands with several co-wives. The men made all the decisions and women were not allowed past the guardian doorkeeper, even to go shopping, unless authorised to do so. Much has changed since then. Harems no longer exist. More nuclear families live as single households if they can afford it, and women have access to education and professional careers.

Women writers were scarce. Since then, *Leila Slimani*, who also lives in France and writes in French, is probably the highest profile. Her novel, *Chanson Douce*, translated into English as *Lullaby*, about a children's nanny who murders her charges, became a bestseller, and won the *Prix Goncourt*. It's a distressing read, but Slimani doesn't fight shy of tackling challenging topics.

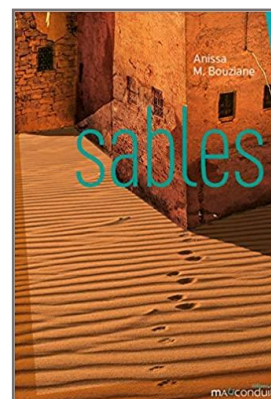
I was more interested in her later non-fiction book, *Sexe et Mensonges: La Vie Sexuelle au Maroc*, based on a series of candid interviews with Moroccan women who volunteered to talk about a hitherto taboo subject.



Leila Slimani

Her latest novel, *Le pays des autres*, the first in a trilogy about her own family, reimagines the experience of her French grandmother from Alsace who married a Moroccan soldier after WW2 and went to live with him on a farm near *Meknes*.

Other women writers include the novelist, *Anissa Bouziane*, author of *Sables* (*Dune Song* in English) who witnessed the fall of the twin towers in New York and is interested in issues of cultural identity, and German-born, international journalist, *Souad Mekhennet*, who has investigated  *jihadism* in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.



Anissa Bouziane

Her memoir, *Derrière les Lignes de Jihad*, was first published in English in New York in 2017 as *They Told Me to Come Alone, My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad*.

(Adapted from a lecture given in March 2021, as part of le mois de la francophonie)

Gillean Somerville-Arjat

## Obituaries

### Dr Helen Cargill Thompson (1933 – 2020)



Helen Cargill-Thompson

**Helen** and her family left **Burma** where she was born and came to **Glasgow** when she was 6 years old, just before the outbreak of WW2.

Helen became an **art lover** at a young age frequently visiting Glasgow's *Kelvingrove Art Galleries* and went on to acquire an important and most valuable collection. She donated nearly 1,000 artworks to *Strathclyde University*. After 10 years working as a research scientist with a degree from *St Andrews* and a PhD from *Edinburgh University*, Helen realised she no longer felt committed to science and went on instead to qualify as a **Librarian** at *Strathclyde University* moving up to head of the **Reference and Information Division**. She retired in 1999 after 30 years.

Helen lived in the same end of terrace house in **Glasgow's West End** for over 80 years. She was immensely proud that all the original fittings dating from its construction in the **Scots Renaissance style** in c. 1906 remained unaltered. Helen left the house to *Scotland's National Trust* of which she was a loyal member.

As well as her passion for art, Helen dedicated much of her time and energy to supporting numerous charities, not least the *Glasgow*

*branch* of the *Franco-Scottish Society*. She was a loyal and very generous member for many years and took part in several exchange visits to France. An acquaintance recently recalled that Helen loved visiting friends in France and that her **first love** was for **France**, the French language and French cuisine!

*Elizabeth Bryant, Glasgow*

### James Edward (Eddie) Fraser (1932 – 2021)



James Edward Fraser

Members of the *Edinburgh Branch* were saddened by the death of **Eddie Fraser**, a very loyal member of our group. Eddie was a true **Aberdonian**, his father came from Aberdeen and his mother from Yorkshire.

He was **dux** (top pupil) of *Aberdeen Grammar School* and later obtained a first in Classics at *Aberdeen University*. He gained a scholarship to *Christ's College, Cambridge* but had to complete his National Service first, which he did by joining the *Royal Artillery* – reaching the rank of acting captain. After completing a degree in law at *Cambridge University* he joined the *Civil Service*.

Most of his career was spent at the *Scottish Office*. However, he was seconded to the *Cabinet Office* in London for two years and to *the Treasury* for a further two years before returning to Scotland and the *Scottish Office*.

He was much appreciated by his colleagues, one of whom pointed out the **incredible contribution (he made) to the work of the Scottish Office and Government**. He was awarded the *Order of the Bath Commander* –

CB in 1990, for service of the highest calibre, and retired in 1991.

He and his wife Patricia never missed an FSS meeting of the *Edinburgh Branch*. Although Eddie preferred the Classics, he also appreciated the French Language, even though he had to give up French early at school to make way for ancient Greek – school timetable oblige!

A quiet, private man with a wry sense of humour Eddie was a delight to be with and always very interesting to talk to during our time of *conviviality* after each Branch talk.

He is survived by his wife Patricia and their two sons, Paul, and Mark and their three grandchildren, Sophie, Charlotte, and Jamie.

*Tom Wight*

### Professor Gordon Millan (1946 – 2021)



*Gordon Millan*

**Gordon Millan** was an exceptional Francophile and Francophone. Educated in his native *Kirkcaldy* and in *Bristol*, he returned to *Edinburgh* to read French and Latin at *Edinburgh University* where he completed his doctorate in 1974. From 1991 to 2009, when he retired, he was professor of French at the *University of Strathclyde*.

Gordon was a fierce defender of the French Language in Scotland and lobbied tirelessly to maintain and enhance the position of French in Scottish education at various levels.

He and his wife Anne were active members of the *Franco-Scottish Society*. Gordon gave several lectures to Edinburgh members and those from other Branches. His lectures on the *Belle Epoque* were very much appreciated.

Gordon was a specialist in the literature of *19th century France* with particular reference to *Stéphane Mallarmé*, *Claude Debussy*, *Paul Valéry* and *Pierre Louÿs*. He was editor in chief of the *Études Mallarmé* and a Fellow of the *Royal Society of Arts*. In 2004 he received the *Palmes académiques* for his services to French culture.

His wit and good humour and his natural charisma made him a popular member – his verbal puns both in French and English, some good, some not so good, were always entertaining!

He is survived by his wife Anne, his children David and Bryony and his twin brother Freddie.

*Tom Wight, Edinburgh*

### Robert Mulvey (1937 – 2020)



*Robert Mulvey*

**Robert Mulvey** was a very faithful member of the *FSS Aberdeen Branch* never wishing to miss a meeting. He enjoyed the social gatherings such as our visit with the *St Andrews Branch* to the *V&A Museum* in



Dundee or the last *FSS Public Lecture* in Edinburgh.

Having lost his wife 14 years ago, no longer working, and being diagnosed with mixed dementia, the societies of which he was a member were his lifeline and gave him the stimulation he needed to keep his brain active. In his prime he spoke *seven languages* fluently, but his real love was French, which he could speak in various dialects and was often thought of as a *native Frenchman*, when on holiday in France.

Robert attended *Edinburgh University* and started his working life in sales and marketing, progressing to education later in life. After teaching French in various *private schools*, he founded *Aberlour House's summer school for gifted and talented children*. The success of these summer courses led him to found a school in *Peebles* for able children and those with learning difficulties.

Robert enjoyed classical music and opera. He played the *piano*, was an excellent *storyteller* and an extremely talented *artist*.

Sadly, COVID prevented him being able to attend any of his *clubs* for his final months. He very much missed that human contact and stimulation. Cancer of the brain, beat his dementia, in taking his life. One of the few things he didn't forget, right to the end, was the friendships he had made in these clubs, for which he was so grateful.

He is missed by his children and society members.

*Helen Macpherson, daughter*

## Jacqueline Munro-Lafon (1921 – 2021)



*Jacqueline Munro-Lafon*

*Jacqueline Munro-Lafon* died on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2021 after celebrating her *100th Birthday* on 27th January 1921. Born and brought up in *Paris* she moved to Scotland at the end of the second world war having married *Hamish Munro*, the love of her life. She was a *Parisienne* to the core but adored Scotland and loved the Scottish people.

Her charm and her enthusiasm for life combined with her warm and caring personality made her a very popular person and she had many friends in all walks of life. Despite her petite stature she was also a force to be reckoned with.

For most of her working life she was the *Librarian* at the *Institut Français d'Écosse, Annexe de Glasgow*, and during this time she was able to help young students many of whom became lifelong friends. Although heavily involved in the arts, the *Citizens Theatre*, the *GFT*, the *Glasgow Museums*, it was in the *Franco-Scottish Society* where she felt most at home and where she made many close friends.

During her long life she did much to promote Franco-Scottish relations and was awarded the *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*, by the French Government for her services to the *Franco-Scottish Community*. She will be missed by many but especially her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

*Jérôme Munro-Lafon, son*

## Gisèle Rey-Roberts (1922 – 2021)



*Gisèle Rey-Roberts*

*Jeanne Marie Gisèle Rey-Roberts* was already in her eighties when I first met her at a French conversation group. She made a big impression on me, and I feel privileged to have known her. She was a most *intelligent woman*, very kind-hearted and charming. Her lively sense of humour was enjoyed by the group when she recounted tales of her life. *Born in Paris* in 1922, she grew up in Brussels where her father had a *bullion business*. In her autobiography *I Order You to Hope*, she gives a fascinating account of life under *Nazi occupation*. When Brussels was occupied, the family moved to France where Gisèle got her *Bac* before studying to become an *assayer of metals*. She subsequently worked for the family firm.

As a schoolgirl, Gisèle went on an exchange visit to London staying with four English families. She quickly achieved fluency in the language and was from then on, an *ardent Anglophile*.

When Brussels was liberated, Gisèle had many opportunities to use her English as her family often gave hospitality to members of the British forces. That was how she met *Peter*, an English railway engineer. They became engaged and Gisèle later moved to England where they married.

Always keen to promote French, Gisèle gave private lessons and also taught in schools. After Peter retired, they moved to *Cheltenham*, where she played an active role in the *Cercle Français*. After moving to

Aberdeen to be near one of her daughters she regularly attended the Franco-Scottish meetings, giving a talk on *Robert Schuman* one evening.

Gisèle died at the age of 99. She will be sincerely missed by her family and friends and remembered with much affection.

*Margaret Murray, Aberdeen*



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GENERAL TREASURER: Gerry Toner | email: gerrytoner59@gmail.com

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Bulletin Editor: Anne-Colette Lequet | email: ac.lequet@btinternet.com

Publications: Chris Lindsay | email: chris.lindsay.cl@btinternet.com

Website Host: Stefan Cent | email: stefan@onthespot.org.uk

---

Aberdeen: Rhona Bean  
22, Gain Crescent, Aberdeen AB10 6BE email: rhonabean@hotmail.com | 01224-590 903

Edinburgh: Warden Black  
122, Gilmore Place, Edinburgh EH3 9PL email: w17b@aol.com | 0131-229-3158

Glasgow: Elizabeth Bryant  
Flat 22, 38, Addison Road, Glasgow G12 0TT email: ebryant96@gmail.com | 07511-747 326

Inverness: Cécile Mettot  
60, Craigton Avenue, Inverness IV3 8AZ email: cmettot@gmail.com | 07534-097 845

Perth: Chris Lindsay  
7A, Woodlands Meadow, Blairgowrie PH10 6GZ email: chris.lindsay.cl@btinternet.com | 01250-872 886

St Andrews: John Vaughan  
Sunnybank, The Square, Letham, Coupar KY15 7RW email: letham359@gmail.com | 01337-810 359

Scottish Charity Number: SC 002507

Website: [www.franco-scottish.org.uk](http://www.franco-scottish.org.uk)