
At the end of December, a group of twelve gathered around Frederick and Maryline in their friendly home of Cronenbourg to sing traditional Christmas carols in English (and some in German) accompanied on the guitar by Chantal Stewart. The table was richly adorned with a selection of bredele, mince pies, mulled wine and juice (and some Indian snacks), thanks to the efforts of Nigel Permail.

Renewal of membership for 2018 is now due. Continue to enjoy your free newsletter, always packed with a varied selection of social events.

Use the registration form on page 12 or go to http://esc-alsace.org/about/register/

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What's happening ?
19/01 Apero at BOMA
27/01 Burns supper
15/02 Coffee morning
16/2 SWAS 2018 closing date

Stay tuned to the website for more updates
http://esc-alsace.org
Previous events

Salute the New Year party

Our first observation after the door opened was the healthy buzz of conversation, always a good sign. After depositing our coats, Jean on bar-duty ensured that we were provided with glasses. Those clean-living souls who decided to have a “dry January” and the drivers had a range of soft drinks to tempt them, while those of us who are not so noble (or who had started dry January, but regrettably failed already!) tucked in to some nice wines and beers provided by the ESC, and chosen judiciously by Maggie and Henri from our favourite wine merchant. Conversation flowed easily, as members, new and old, wished each other Happy New Year and (surtout) good health – sometimes “la bise” was exchanged and sometimes not, depending on the suspected presence of departing or latent flu bugs. I didn’t count the number of members present, but I guess it was around 40-50, which was just right for Sue’s apartment (thanks for hosting Sue!) and allowed guests to circulate freely between the many small enclaves which formed around the rooms.

Conversation ranged from Christmas tales, bad weather, cancelled flights and recent family activities to 2018 resolutions and plans, forthcoming ski trips and of course the 2018 Six Nations. Allez les Bleus (both French and Scottish varieties)! There was of course a fair amount of reminiscing about previous Burns Suppers and anticipation of this year’s pending extravaganza. If you have tickets, please remember that kick-off is at 19h00 sharp and arrive on time so that the packed programme, as Messrs Barker and Corbett used to say, can run to plan.

The guests provided a delicious array of sweet and savoury snacks to accompany the drinks, some lovingly hand-crafted and others lovingly purchased from the local supermarket. I think it is fair to say that no-one left hungry.

A nice touch was a flipchart in a corner of the room where members could write suggestions of what they’d like to see from the ESC in 2018. The committee will vigorously debate in their next meetings on the 15 entries. Snapper Nigel was on hand to capture the event for the ESC annals, and I’m sure the best photos will duly appear on the website gallery.

All in all a very pleasant way to spend a January Saturday evening, and on behalf of all guests I thank the organising team and hostess once again. To those who weren’t present, Lang may yir lums reek (traditional Scottish new year greeting) and hope to see you at an ESC event in the near future.

Alasdair Hunter
As a former member of the ESC who went away for a few years and just rejoined it, I was very pleased to see new activities on the programme. One of them is as recent as the New Year party which was a very pleasant way for me to meet lots of new faces and to see some very familiar ones too.

This event gave those for whom it is not always easy to come to the Coffee morning or the Apero, an opportunity to gather -- and speak English -- in a jolly atmosphere.

The food was incredibly plentiful and varied and surely there was something for every taste! Thanks to Sue who generously welcomed us in her home and to each member who made a gastronomic contribution, a good time was had by all. I certainly did.

Christine Beetham

Member profile

**TODY – Too Old to Die Young**

This month’s ‘Member Profile’ looks at both the story behind the birth of TODY, one of the ESC’s favourite bands, and Martyn Symons, one of its founder members.

It is hard to separate the birth of Too Old to Die Young from Martyn’s instinctive understanding of music – meaning that he has no professional training! Having owned various electronic keyboards for 30 years, Martyn would close his eyes and feel out a tune or create a theme and improvise around it. Then he began to sing along, behind closed doors. He found it a great way to relax and destress. As she grew up, daughter Joelle began to join him in duets on the piano. Martyn also learned drumming from his father who was a great drummer, practising with drum brushes all around their home, on different furniture items. There was always music or film music playing in his childhood home.

In 2006, a close friend in Strasbourg was running the local gospel group and needed more male voices. Having not sung in public before, Martyn found he had a good bass voice, although the style of singing didn’t really suit him. Then the local Tuesday night singing group, The Pavarotti’s, run by Paula Hinchey, caught his eye: here, one prepares a song individually, for performance to the group and Martyn found he loved this communal singing, reminding him of the exhilaration of singing on the football terraces as a teenager, in Leigh on Sea. Next he joined Simon Palmer’s group, The Songsters, who sang classical and folk songs, performing at the Camionneur and Tagora.

TODY emerged three years ago, when Martyn joined Bruce Acres, who had a music studio in his cellar – with drums, guitars, mikes and amplifiers – the works. They enjoyed rehearsing, without a particular goal to perform: no-one was reading music and Martyn (English) was now the chief singer. Canadians Bruce provided guitar and Jim Roughton the guitar
rhythm; English Richard Cruse, the bass
guitar, John Young on the drums and Simon
Palmer the harmonica. Practice increased
confidence and ‘Too Old to Die Young’
played at Martyn’s 60th: they began to be
invited to play for other parties. Christian
Fleck introduced them to the Kurgarten
venue and they became an item on
Strasbourg’s live music scene, becoming
‘like a wine, better and better with age’!

But, as with his painting, Martyn is always
evolving and after three years of singing the
glorious golden oldies of the 60s and 70s,
Martyn is ready for a change. The band’s
pre-Christmas gig at the Kurgarten was
Martyn’s last performance: he was
presented with an album of all their gigs
and an EP of their songs. What a treasure.

Now Martyn is planning to play acoustic
guitar and write his own songs, perhaps in
collaboration with others. And now that
Joelle is a professional sound engineer,
perhaps they will make recordings.

Tell me about your past then, Martyn…

Well he left home at 17 with virtually no
qualifications but through his sister got a
job running a small menswear shop called
‘Flashman’ next to the shop she managed.
He did the window dressing, clothes repairs
and everything in between, except the
accounts: the day’s takings were handed
over to the shop owner at the end of the
day – and that was probably ideal. As
Martyn said, his interests then were ‘girls,
football and fashion’. Living above the shop,
he stayed for three years but yearned to
travel and, having saved, set off to see the
world – Europe and Asia for a start. He met
Janis, his future (and present) wife, and
they travelled first to Greece (three nights
on the Magic Bus) and then Israel, joining a
kibbutz and earning. It was a great time,
working in the cool of the morning, free in
the afternoons and singing around the
campfire at night. He felt this practice of
socialism at that time was exemplary: there
was no hierarchy, everyone did all the jobs.

When back in the UK for work, Martyn and
Janis (now a fixed item, ie married) often
moved home and he frequently left a mural,
representing, for example, “Stairway to
heaven” – art and music interdependent. As
he was increasingly asked to paint murals
for friends, it was suggested that Martyn
learn interior design: he applied to the
Inchbald School of Design in Eaton Gate,
presented a portfolio of murals, was offered
a government scholarship, and found
himself studying with princesses and
chauffeur-driven ladies – who had paid the
full price! He loved the course and became
a freelance designer and decorator,
specialising in finishes – woodgrain,
ragrolling, etc - and began doing full house
renovations, buying and selling London
properties.

In 1979, Janis, who had been working in the
Bank of Credit and Commerce in the City,
got a Council of Europe job offer in
Strasbourg, first in the ‘pool’ to Education,
Culture & Sport as P.A.: Martyn got a carte
de séjour as an artiste-peintre and they
spent four years here, but eventually got
homesick for England: the Strasbourg of the
early 1980s was more provincial than now,
the EU and CoE being much smaller. It was
time to go ‘home’. They spent 20 years back
in London, Janis working for Hansard, the
record of proceedings at the House of
Commons, as journalist and then editor, Martyn buying and selling houses, having children - but France lured them back, hoping to give their children a European perspective. They expected to live in the south of France but couldn’t work out how to make a living. Answering an ad in The Guardian newspaper, Strasbourg called them back. Janis now works in the Court (ECtHR).

Martyn has been pursuing his painting, with several exhibitions at the Council, and exploring very different themes. Martyn also often kindly donates his photography for the ESC Christmas card, as this year. Involved in Tagora, he designs the sets, as well as directing some of the plays. He paints now because he loves it – look out for his next exhibition (tbd).

And then came the music...

Find more on

1. Too Old to Die Young: esc-alsace.org/2017/11/16/too-old-to-die-young-saturday-16th-december
2. Martyn’s work: www.martynsymons.wordpress.com
3. Tagora: www.tagora.eu

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**Announcement**

We are sorry to announce that Alicia Verdier has passed away on 13th January after several months of a painful illness. For many years she had been hosting the ESC Spanish conversation group fortnightly meetings at her home, always providing a generous table with pastries and hot drinks. There will be a religious ceremony on Wednesday 17th January at 2.30pm in Eglise Saint-Maurice, avenue de la Forêt Noire in Strasbourg.
**English Conversation**

chez Frederick & Maryline William-Smith  
7 rue des Ducs, Vieux-Cronenbourg, Strasbourg  
(trams A/D station Ducs d'Alsace)

for details of the next meeting,  
contact Nigel Permaul  
nigelpermaul@gmail.com  
Phone 06 75 63 89 98

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**French Conversation**

The group meets twice a month,  
on Wednesdays from 2 to 4 pm,  
Chez Patrick, 5 rue de Verdun, Strasbourg  
If interested, get in touch with  
Colette Jandrok on 03 88 20 21 17 or  
fredericka06@yahoo.fr

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**German Conversation**

The group meets fortnightly,  
on Tuesdays from 1.30 to 3.30 pm,  
in Café Rapp, Haupstr. 104, Kehl.

Contact: Bernard Greiner  
bernard.greiner@numericable.fr  
Phone 03 88 66 32 06

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**Spanish Conversation**

If interested, get in touch with  
Colette Jandrok on 03 88 20 21 17 or  
fredericka06@yahoo.fr

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**Book-club: Nutshell by Ian McEwan**

I discovered the writer Ian McEwan a few years ago through his novel “The Children Act”. I liked it so much that when it was my turn to suggest a title for the book-club, I naturally thought of picking another book written by the same author. I was back in Edinburgh in October and “Nutshell” was on display in the bookshop on Princes street where I was wandering while Olivier, my husband, was exploring George Street looking for the pair of shoes that you supposedly can only get in a specific shop in Edinburgh. But that is another story!

I flipped the book and read the back cover:  
Trudy has betrayed her husband, John.  
She's still in the marital home - a dilapidated, priceless London townhouse - but John's not here.  
Instead, she's with his brother, the profoundly banal Claude, and the two of them have a plan.  
But there is a witness to their plot: the inquisitive, nine-month-old resident of Trudy’s womb.

The word “banal” intrigued me. Although it means that nothing interesting is going on, I thought that it was worth discovering the character. The story is somehow based on Shakespeare’s Hamlet, providing you know Shakespeare well enough. It is narrated by a foetus who is also Hamlet. “Bounded in the nutshell” of (Ger-) Trudy’s womb, he listens to her planning to murder his father, John Cairncross, in partnership with her lover, John’s brother Claude (-ius).

Most members of the group were enthusiastic about the story although one or two felt that it was not Ian McEwan’s best novel. Someone even suggested that it was poorly written. There was a debate about how realistic and unique it is to let a foetus observe the plot and tell the story. Maybe not totally unique as the idea was already used in the 1989 film “Look Who's Talking”. Realistic? Of course not! This is what creative writing is about, after all.

*Joelle Glore*
Forthcoming events

Apero at BOMA: Friday, 19th January - 18h30

Our first after-work apéro of 2018 will take place at the BOMA bistro situated 7 rue du 22 Novembre www.boma-hotel.com (see review in the November issue).
As usual everyone pays his or her own way but some finger food will be provided by the ESC. No need to register, just come along any time after 18h30 and join in the conversation. A warm reception is assured.

Film-club. The Pentagon Papers

End of January (provisional date Sunday 28/01) the film club intends to view the film The Pentagon Papers, with Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks, at the UGC cinema. The date will be confirmed during the month, once the screening timetable will be published.
Tickets are available at 6,20€ /ticket. Usually the group meets afterwards for a drink and a small debate. See the film preview here The Pentagon papers
If you are interested contact Malika Radünz at esc.film.club@gmail.com

Strasbourg Write a Story 2018 competition: closing date 16/02

Dear Writer

The Strasbourg Write a Short Story competition opened on 2nd December and already we have received many interesting, absorbing and funny entries.

List in your new year resolutions to put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard and let your creative juices flow.

We look forward to receiving your entries.

See our website (www.sxb-write-a-story.org) for details about the rules and conditions of entry. You will also find hints and other tips to help your writing on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/sxb.write.a.story).

Free the writer within!
Brexit round-up 2017

In January 2017 the Brexit “roadmap” was presented by Theresa May in her “Lancaster House” speech. The “hard Brexit” policy was made clear – i.e. Britain would be leaving the single market (EEA/EFTA) and the customs union. Stressing that “we are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe” – which would be rather difficult without floating out into the Atlantic – May set out her “cake-and-eat-it” strategy (how to ensure the closest possible relationship without “holding on to bits of membership”). The idea of a transition period was already floated (a “phased process of implementation”) to avoid a cliff-edge scenario. As the year went on, May’s red lines (e.g. an end to ECJ jurisdiction) were regularly trumpeted by the hardliners (especially Boris), while a few sops were thrown to the Europhiles (though presented as “climb-downs”, it was usually just minor tweaking of the initial position). On 29 March the UK formally notified its intention to leave the EU (under Article 50 of the Treaty). A couple of weeks later May announced a snap general election, the outcome of which on 8 June left her on shakier ground than she had wished – but Labour also stood on a pro-Brexit manifesto and their exact policy has remained somewhat unclear.

In the meantime the various groups defending citizens’ rights (mainly “the3million” representing EU nationals in the UK and “British in Europe”, a coalition of expat groups) worked to ensure the best possible deal and gained media recognition. Any unilateral guarantees having been ruled out, the Government’s policy paper on citizens’ rights was not published until the end of June, subject of course to negotiation to ensure reciprocity. The EU had already made its pretty comprehensive offer on rights, but the false impression was constantly given by Brexiteers that the UK had made a more generous offer – and had been willing to settle the matter back in November 2016!

In September the Council of Europe staff had a visit from Lord Ed Llewellyn, UK Ambassador to France, who has been doing the rounds to “reassure” Brits throughout the country. As later reported in Private Eye, his visit was “a bit of a snoozefest, with platitudes galore about the UK’s commitment to the closest possible relationship with its European partners”! A few days later, May’s Florence speech (with Boris metaphorically breathing down her neck) was more of the same: “the United Kingdom has never totally felt at home being in the European Union”, she explained, having reiterated “We may be leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe” (at least she didn’t say “Brexit means Brexit”).

The Autumn saw various rounds (six in all – or perhaps seven, I’ve lost count!) of EU/UK negotiations on three preliminary withdrawal issues: citizens’ rights, the border in Ireland and the “divorce bill”. At the end of the third round in September, Davis accused Barnier of looking silly, Fox accused him of blackmail, and Barnier said
that “the English people need to be taught what leaving the single market means”. Tension was evident at the various press conferences. The idea was to make “sufficient progress” on the three issues before the future relationship could even be considered. The clock was ticking. Citizens’ groups began to lobby even harder, afraid of being “sold down the river”, with the possibility that the rights issue would be overshadowed by the others, rather than being ring-fenced. As part of a mass lobbying of MEPs I personally wrote to Nathalie Griesbeck (Grand Est) and received a supportive reply.

The Brexit climax of 2017 was not reached until mid-December after a busy week for May. Just when she thought she had resolved the Irish question on the Monday, the DUP put a spanner in the works, and after a further flurry of talks she had to fly to Brussels at the crack of dawn on the Friday to finalise the “deal”. It was presented as a preliminary agreement on the withdrawal issues, but was it really? Raab immediately referred to it as “strategic ambiguity”, Davis told Marr that it was only a “statement of intent”, and Gove said that the deal could be ditched by voters if they didn’t like it. To avoid a hard border in Ireland the UK seemed to be accepting “full alignment” with EU rules – but May later described this as a “default default position”, whatever that means. Endorsement of “sufficient progress”, as recommended by the Commission, was nevertheless given by both the European Parliament and the European Council, with the proviso that the agreement would become legally binding as soon as possible (Barnier said by the end of January). This was clearly a victory of sorts for May, allowing her to move on to the all-important subject of the future trade relationship, to be governed by a second (post-Brexit) free-trade agreement (already foreseen by Davis as “Canada plus plus plus”). Brexiteers are now falsely claiming that the terms of withdrawal (especially the money) remain conditional upon what is agreed for the future, twisting the expression “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” to suit their own agenda.

Before talks on trade, the next main issue will in fact be the transition period. The UK and EU negotiators seem to be talking at cross-purposes. While the EU draft guidelines on the transition talks state "As the United Kingdom will remain a member of the Customs Union and the Single Market (with all four freedoms) during the transition…", the Downing Street spokesman confirmed on the very same day that the UK would be leaving both in March 2019, adding “I will write it on a sign if you like”. On the one hand, Brexit seems to have passed the point of no return (with the outcome of phase one), but on the other, the vast majority of issues still remain very much up in the air ...

As Christmas approached, the Government announced that the post-Brexit British passport would become navy blue again – and of course would lose the words “European Union” on the cover. Verhofstadt promptly pointed out that the UK had never been obliged to change the colour to burgundy, but the news was clearly a Christmas present for the Brexiteers …

James Brannan

* In the next issue, James will deliver an article focusing on the British citizen rights following the recent agreements.
Tuscany: beautiful villa to let

12 km south of SIENA: country-maisonette (19th century-villa), 6 large and bright rooms which are nicely furnished, two floors, sleeping up to 7-8, hall, big Cantina (former wine cellar) with extra large living room, summer kitchen (dish-washer) and two bathrooms (washing machine), extra WC, sunny courtyard and lovely garden and forest to be let from Mid March till November. Cool rivers, lakes and hot thermal springs in the vicinity, 50 km to the sea, beautiful landscape, picturesque towns and tranquil hills. From 490 Euro/week

Call for information: Birgit Meyer: 0033 388 36 1991 e-mail: Birgitmeyer2@gmx.de

Also available: lovely apartment for 2 persons with garden and terrace 420 Euro/week, look on airbnb for photos

Hello, bonjour! I am a student of professional translation in English and French (Master’s degree at ITIRI, Université de Strasbourg) and a member of the Strasbourg English Speaking Community. I completed my first year Master’s in 2017, and will finish my second year in April 2018. I am looking for an internship and am available from end of May till August. If you are interested in a motivated intern for this spring and/or summer, do not hesitate to contact me at famarxer@hotmail.com. A bientôt! Ami Marxer

For Sale
TOYOTA COROLLA (dark blue)
90 D-4D LINEASOL
Diesel
Date of production 27/09/2005
Second owner
Service & contrôle technique May 2017
French registration in Strasbourg (67)
Vignette Crit’air 4
94 600 km
Possibility 4 winter tyres
Price: 4 950 Euros
Contact Mobile 06.32.07.71.47
Contact E-mail cdbdj67@gmail.com

A Vendre
TOYOTA COROLLA (bleu foncé)
90 D-4D LINEASOL
Diesel
1ère mise en circulation 27/09/2005
2ème main
Révision & contrôle technique Mai 2017
Immatriculation à Strasbourg (67)
Vignette Crit’air 4
94 600 km
Possibilité 4 pneus d’hiver
Prix: 4 950 Euros
Contact Mobile 06.32.07.71.47
Contact E-mail cdbdj67@gmail.com
**Coffee Mornings**

Come and catch up with ESC members and visitors at our monthly coffee mornings at l’Escale!

The Escale community centre (address left) is our regular home and has good parking facilities whilst it is within a five-minute walk of bus routes 6, 15A and 30.

The coffee morning is always held on a Thursday morning between 9.30 and 11.30 and is free. We are always pleased to see friends, visitors and potential new members.

For further information, email contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com

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**The Anglican (Episcopal) Church in Strasbourg**

Holy Communion each Sunday, 10:30 am at the Eglise des Pères Dominicains.

Contact the Chaplaincy on 03 69 57 40 03
anglican.chaplaincy.strasbourg@gmail.com or visit website, www.saintalbans.fr

**Trinity International Church of Strasbourg**

Sunday service at 10:00 at the Foyer (Fellowship Hall) of the Eglise St. Louis, 12 rue du Cygne.

www.trinitystrasbourg.org

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**Bilingual International School of Strasbourg (BISS)**

For full information, please contact the school at
Tel: 03 88 15 28 00 - Fax: 03 88 15 28 09
contact-lucieberger@legymnase.eu

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**ESC Email contacts:**

contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com
esc.events.67@gmail.com
esc.newsletter.67@gmail.com
esc.film.club@gmail.com
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| Is this application for a: | New Member □ | Renewal of last years membership o | Past ESC member □ |

If you have given us an email address we will automatically send you the newsletter by email. If you do not have an email address, or prefer to receive a printed copy by post please tick here. o

Postage is one of our highest costs - please consider this option carefully.

Completed application forms should either be given to the Membership secretary at an ESC coffee morning, or posted, with your cheque made payable to "English Speaking Community", to:
Mike Wraith, 7 rue Lovisa, La Robertsau, 67000 Strasbourg

If you have used our PayPal option would you please enter the reference here: _____________

And send a completed membership form to: contact.esc.alsace@gmail.com

**IMPORTANT:** We will only ever use your contact details to send you information about the ESC or ESC events. We will never sell, lend or pass on your details.

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