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The Librarian

President's Message

Sometimes facts hit you with something of a shock.

It is six years ago this week that lockdown was imposed.

Ah, lockdown, loved by some, hated by others. Loved because of the freedom it gave, no obligations, no commitments, just whole days to oneself. Hated because of the freedom it took away, no chance to chat to friends, no dates on the calendar to look forward to.

Did you love it or hate it?

Does it seem like yesterday or like twenty years ago?

Whichever it was, I hope the spring weather brings whatever type of freedom you would like and you enjoy it to the full.

Sue



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JUNGLE DRUMS

*It's your
Library!*



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& Thursdays**

10.00—12.00

**Large Variety of
books to choose**

**Tea & Coffee
Available**

**Drop in for a
chat**

Quiz Night Left Luggage

FOUND!! After you had all left on Friday night a pair of black rimmed specacles in a soft case (readers??) were handed to me. We have tried contacting those we remembered being on that table but without success. If these are yours then please make contact with me on 0689338245.—Editor

Date for your Diary

Next Quiz Friday 24th April 2026

Book Swap News

Do you know of the monthly English book swap that is held at Le Chien Fou in St Antonin on the first Monday morning of every month? It is run by Jane Robinson and Caroline Mills, who both live in St Projet. Recently the library had a clear out of duplicates, and they were the happy recipients of what was leftover after the clearance.

Books at their swap are free and they rely on donations, so they were very grateful to receive ours. If anyone else has paperbacks they don't want, please let them know. They take mainly fiction in good condition, no missing pages or brown aged paper please. No hardbacks...too heavy! Caroline is happy to meet up at a suitable point in Villefranche, or come to your home to collect. Just text her on 0604452066. Caroline tends not to answer unknown numbers as she does not want solar panels, so a text is best. She is on WhatsApp too. Or go and join them in St Antonin, and have a coffee!!

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**The
Book
Review
By
Elaine Morgan**

“FLASHLIGHT.”

Susan Choi

This is a complex story about a family which spans time and geography. The main characters are Seok, Anna, and Louise and the novel covers their back story as well as their lives together.

It opens, powerfully, with a strange scene in which a man and a child are on a beach in Japan at night and then one of them disappears. This key incident is replayed several times throughout the novel and each time a different perspective is added. We learn that Seok is the man who disappeared and Louise is his daughter aged 11.

We then go backwards to Seok's origins, born in Japan of Korean parents and therefore part of a population which has no status and few opportunities. Seok is clever and resists his family's desire to return to Korea. He later emigrates to the US and meets Anna, they marry and have a daughter, Louisa. Seok tells Anna almost nothing about himself and all his tender feelings are reserved for his daughter whom he protects obsessively.

Anne also has a past which she does not share with Seok. She comes from a large mid-western family which she has left behind to drift around the world with Adrian and have a son, Tobias, who is adopted.

Thus the marriage has a very shaky foundation and little trust, Neither character is particularly likeable but you can sympathise with why they are the way they are. However the most unlikeable of all is Louisa who is filled with rage, hatred and contempt for her mother whom she blames for everything. Even before her father disappeared she aligned herself with him and despised her mother.

There are big jumps in time as we learn what happens to each character. The backdrop is the political situation in Korea where the horror of life in North Korea is well conveyed. (Choi is half Korean herself and alienation is one of her themes).

Alienation is portrayed in many contexts: from family, from country, language and emotions. There is also the theme of how geo-political events shape lives and crush many individuals as nations jockey for power and make alliances.

I found this a gripping story although at 464 pages it is not short. Some trimming might have improved it a bit but some of the long descriptions give us and the author a break from the intensity of the story. It's not "Patchinko" which covers some of the same issues of Korean alienation in Japan, but in a cosier manner. However I found myself caring about two of the main characters and wishing they could communicate more. The character of Louisa is implausibly lacking in any charm and could have been more nuanced.

The novel was a runner-up for the Booker prize. Many of the choices are unreadable in my view, but not this one.

ALAS, ADAS

ADAS stands for Advanced Driver Assistance Systems, a widening range of electronic gizmos now being fitted to our cars. They are intended to make driving safer, but do they?

I have three areas of concern; touchscreens, ADAS and self-driving vehicles.

Originally, screens were fitted to display satnav and in-car entertainment information, but as touchscreens evolved, cars of recent years have seen bigger and bigger displays which also incorporate the functions of buttons, switches and levers. If operations such as headlights were just an icon that was pressed to switch on and off, that would be fine. Unfortunately, they aren't and frequently need two or three taps to complete. The driver's attention is distracted from the road and you often need your lights or wipers instantly. Motorists have long complained about these retrograde devices and manufacturers are reverting to buttons and switches. Nonetheless, we now have millions of vehicles stuck with touchscreens.

ADAS systems fall under two major headings, alerts and driving task assistance. The former just sound or flash alerts, the latter automatically instigate braking and/or steering actions. The list of alerts and assistance on offer is long, so I'll look at some and address their problems.

Forward collision control, incorporating automated emergency braking, is now mandatory on EU vehicles. On a number of occasions, this has triggered without reason or warning, causing serious rear-end accidents and some deaths. No reason for these malfunctions has been found; one possibility is that the monitoring camera behind the mirror has not been recalibrated after fitting a new screen. Lane centring assists the driver to remain in lane and may autonomously take over the steering to do so. Drivers have complained that when on a narrow country road, they have steered towards the verge to pass an oncoming vehicle and the system has tried to force them back to the centre. Cruise control originated in the US and has become adaptive cruise control, monitoring the surroundings and road signs. One driver (and he's not alone) was on a dual carriageway at 60mph, when he passed a slip road. The camera spotted a 40mph sign for the slip road and slammed on the brakes to reduce speed, much to the surprise of the driver and the vehicle behind.

The major beef from motorists is that driving is now peppered with beeps, chimes and flashing warnings from ADAS products, and from more than one at a time, distracting when they are trying to concentrate. In a recent poll, 80% said they switched off all the ADAS before driving away. Unfortunately, switching off can be complex and all the systems reset when the engine finally stops.

Self-driving vehicles are on the rise, owing to ever-improving technology and legislation across the globe permitting them. The argument is that they are safer, because 88% of accidents are caused by human error. Currently the rule in most countries is that there must be a driver ready to take over in case of malfunction. In Los Angeles, however, Waymo are trialling a fleet of taxis that have no driver.

I remain to be convinced. Perhaps AI will bring these robots to the same level as a competent motorist, but I worry that a driver doing nothing behind the wheel will let his or her attention wander or even switch off completely. Also, that a human brain can assess a complex situation in an instant that even the smartest AI cannot.

Will I be proved wrong? As the French say, on verra.

NW



GALLIVANTING GOURMETS

ALL IN THE FAMILY - THE PLEASURES OF FRENCH HOME COOKING

Take a fifteen minute drive from Villefranche de Rouergue or Villeneuve to the tiny medieval citadel town of Sainte Croix . The undulating landscape reveals serene pastoral vistas of fields and pastures, ancient farm complexes and stately Grande Epoch manors checkerboarding the country side. There's even a pre-Roman church in the area.

History lives on in the beautifully preserved royal chapel and watchtower centered at the heart of Sainte Croix d'Aveyron. The entry to this working dairy village is marked by a small square featuring an enormous wrought iron cross, and opposite the war memorial obelisk with the names of the villagers killed in past wars. The same families continue on in the tight knit little community. Right next to the monument is where you will find "Au Family's," the family owned and operated restaurant, bar, epicerie, depot de pan, and postal hub. Opened in the summer of 2024, it is the social hub of the village. Au Family's is located in the same building previously occupied by Cafe Pandore.

Au Family's offers visitors the traditional rich, seasonal country cooking still enjoyed in homes across northern Occitane. Diners come in all stripes, local workmen, families celebrating special days, tourists looking for good local meal in a comfortable setting. If well-behaved the family dog is still welcome too, a feature sadly disappearing from French dining establishments. The beating heart of Au Family's is Emmanuelle Meunier, founder and literally chief cook, hostess, baker, dishwasher and mother of three sons. When needed, everyone in the family helps out, including her husband Christian, and at times extended family, cousins and friends. Visitors write their accolades in the little book on the bar, praising the food, ambiance and value of the meals. Manue, as she is known, told me that an often-repeated observation by her clientele is how much they have enjoyed these flavourful unpretentious meals, so reminiscent of the earlier years at home. She stated, 'Nobody seems to have time to cook any more, and people are hungry for this food.'

Au Family's is open from 7:30-19:30 Tuesday & Thursday ;

Friday & Saturday 7:30 - 22:00 or later for special music events;

Monday & Sunday 7:30 -15:00; CLOSED WEDNESDAYS.

Reservations are much appreciated, and necessary for groups of six or greater. The only full meal service is at lunchtime, from 12:00 - 14:00, the cost is Euro 15,50 for entree, plate, dessert. The menu is fixed and everything served is made in-house. Sunday luncheon is a more elaborate affair and priced at Euro 22,00. Traditional Petit déjeuner is also offered daily, a plus for anyone choosing to spend a night or two in the guest rooms available above the establishment.

The daily menu and notices for events are posted on their Facebook page, Au Family's Sainte Croix.

There is an ample wine selection featuring local vineyards, With full bar service always available the choice of beverages is extensive. The desserts are delicious, with Manue's traditional Italian recipe Tiramisu being my personal favourite, The rich dark chocolate mousse (no gelatin or other thickeners used), is also noteworthy. Soups, quiches, intricate salads and hearty main courses like beef Bourguignons, salmon filet en croute with creme sauce and savoury sautéed or oven roasted meats served with varied potato presentations ensure that you will leave contented .

You can call ahead to find out what is planned for the week, or for the Sunday meal. The traditional winter warmer Estofinado (Stockfish), is offered once a month during the winter and usually sells out, so planning ahead is advised. On Friday & Saturday evenings from 19:30-21:30 handmade pizzas are made to order for dine-in or take away, I like the smoked trout with white cream sauce, cheeses, lemon zest and dill, garlic added on request.

Manue installed a specialized pizza oven to ensure crusty, sizzling hot pies. Pizza service is limited to the quantity she can cook during the 2.5 hours available, so ordering ahead if you want quantities of pies is a must to avoid disappointment . You can enjoy a craft beer or other beverage while you wait, at the bar or weather permitting on the lovely, sunny outdoor terrace. I can't recommend the terrace enough for whiling away an afternoon or pausing for refreshment after a local footpath excursion. You can also burn off some calories after lunch by climbing the watchtower spiral stone staircase for views of the country. The key is available at Au Family's. Remember that the huge bells ring on the half hour and it's loud inside

Au Family's, 170 Route du Bourg. 06 09 55 56 65. Facebook: Au Family's Sainte Croix. Event catering, group catered meals, 40-50 for sit-down dining; 120 person capacity for buffet service parties & special events, by reservation. Regular events include Salsa Dance night, once a month; Writers Group, the Vagabond Writers (in French) twice monthly, and regularly scheduled live music events with dancing. All events, daily menu & any schedule variations shown on their Facebook page.

GG



WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

HOME OF LOCAL INTEREST

DATES TO NOTE IN APRIL

EVENTS

Advance Notice

Frippa Affairs Fun Filled Fashion Show provisional date Friday 5th June 2026 confirmation next month.

VIDE GRENIERS—SUNDAYS (Normally)

If you feel you want to venture further afield, check out what's on via the tourist websites or www.vide-greniers.org

- 6 April - Laramiere, fairly large annual VG in fields and village centre
 - Villeneuve, small VG in garden outside Resto du Campagne
- 19 April - La Madeleine, Villefranche in aid of Chats en Bastide (big VG, partly under cover)
- 26 April - St Julien d'Empare (just outside Capdenac). Annual VG in streets of village
 - Figeac, under the Hall, big professional Easter Brocante

Interested? Double check late cancellations if weather inclement and find out how to get there on www.vide-greniers.org/office de tourisme websites covering Figeac and Villefranche

FISH & CHIPS

10th April @ Cesaree, Gare, VdR

21st April @ Café Maison, Parisot, - Film Night

Pre book with "Cod-en-bleu" to ensure satisfaction!!



APOLOGIES

**NOTHING
RECEIVED IN
TIME FOR
PUBLICATION**

7€ PLEIN TARIF

5€ TARIF RÉDUIT (ADHÉRENTS, ÉTUDIANTS, + 65 ANS)

4€ TARIF SUPER RÉDUIT (- DE 18 ANS, CHÔMEURS, RSA, AAH)

Animals or Vegetables?

Following on from last month's piece on the need to change our eating habits to "save the planet" we have received an alternative point of view

I think the original suggestion rather misses the point. It is all very well in theory but surely the last thing the world needs is another X Million children who will grow up, mature and populate.

Surely the biggest threat to our survival is that we are the only animal on the planet that does not have an Apex predator nor the sense to see that we are the problem. And when nature does come up with a means to reduce the world population by creating a virus that kills us we think we are the clever ones by finding a vaccination / cure to by-pass the efforts of the natural world to keep us in check.

Less people on the earth means less pressure on all of the earth's resources and less production of the harmful byproducts of our existence.

Until we find a way to control the urge to procreate, and it was made pleasurable for a reason, no amount of tinkering around the edges of diet in the western world is going to make the slightest difference. The majority of the world's population does not eat a western diet of meat and two veg on a daily basis, use fridges or drive diesel 4 X 4's

Nostradamus foretold that the last great war would come from the East. Perhaps Doanld Trump will actually turn out to be the greatest conservationist of all and saviour of the world by causing that last great war and reducing the worlds's population by millions and our dependence on fossil fuels because he bombed them to pieces! MAGA Make America Green Again?

EDITOR'S NOTE

At the recent AGM I requested the members to contribute to the content of the Newsletter and this is the first of the contributions received. It is the personal view of the author and you are free to agree or disagree.. If the latter please remain polite and concise.

AGWM

CLASSIFIEDS

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PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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Andrea May, for a stress free property journey. Buying or selling your home or know someone who is? Refer them to me and upon completion receive Euro 200 as a thank you.. Andrea May Enterprise Individuelle 06 48 69 72 20. Siret 987 513 157 RSAC RODEZ

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Ben Naismith, Arborist. Tree and hedge cutting at competitive rates. Tree pruning, reductions, felling, trimming and logging. Contact ben-naismith@outlook.com or T: 0786807434

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English - French translations of documents and interpreting during meetings. Help with French administration and/or with official French letters. Also one to one French lessons or French conversation, contact Jacynth Crozier, Tel. 06 30 31 13 00 contact@crozier-traductions.com <http://www.crozier-traductions.com>

Justin Fairley - Garden Maintenance & Small Projects

Contact: jvfairley@outlook.com or Mob 07 85 17 86 52

Learn French in a friendly, fun atmosphere at So'Happy School in Villefranche. All levels/all ages. Qualified, motivated teacher with excellent OFSTED reports and 15 years experience. Small groups: 18 Euros/1h30 lessons; individual lessons: 22 euros/hour. Contact Sophie on 07963050236 or sohappy-school@gmail.com

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Nicholas Powell— "D Origine", Architectural Salvage Yard
160 Rue de jonquekkes, 46260 Limogne en Quercy
Contact 06 20 55 10 40

The Writing Desk can swiftly turn your ideas into sharp, punchy script. As an author and experienced freelance journalist I have spent many years creating features for business and lifestyle magazines. For great words and a fast service, contact Nigel on: 05 65 65 81 53 nigelwild@hotmail.co.uk

DOMESTIC SERVICES

Gardener and/or cleaner available. Contact Ruth Patterson on 05 65 34 37 88 or 07 80 45 50 46

We have Small bales of straw suitable for larger animals for sale. Contact Bridget Blunsdon on 0 6 40 46 48 87

LETTINGS

Olive Tree Cottage, Bed and Breakfast:

Self-contained Chambres d'Hôtes in Martiel, suitable for 2 adults, large pool and garden, ample parking. Booking via Airbnb or direct on 0565 29 44 96

Holiday apartment to rent in La Herradura, Andalusia, Spain.

A light and spacious 1 bedroom apartment (sleeps 4) with large terrace, sea and mountain views. Only a 7 minute walk to the beach & restaurants. Monthly winter lets available. Please visit <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089978104205>

Holiday apartment to rent in beautiful Nerja, Andalusia, Spain

Apartment Aqua Marina is a modern 2 bedroom ground floor apartment with terrace and spectacular sea and Mountain views. Superb location only a 3 minute walk to the beach and a short walk to the restaurants and shops of the old town. Monthly winter lets available See: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100090122020875>

For further details on both these Spanish properties contact: Lynne Harding 06 65 50 95 37 or lafage.harding@gmail.com

SOCIAL

FripAffaires, a charity shop based in Parisot (82) raises funds for Médecin sans Frontières and Restos du Cœur. Situated at the Pole Medical, next door to the pharmacy, open Tuesday & Wednesday 2-6pm and Friday & Saturday 10am to 12.30pm. Donations always gratefully received



If you would like us to include a small ad in any of these columns, please let us have the details by emailing us at the address below. If you have any questions or comments (complementary or otherwise) please don't hesitate to contact us on the same address. editor.elnbafvdr@orange.fr