

## WARE'S LANGUAGE NOTES

### Saying it with a card.

Although most of the time a Brit living in France is going to be most concerned with speaking and understanding the spoken language, there are times when it is useful to communicate in writing. Our own first experience of this type was a piece of paper stuck under the windscreen wipers with “Il ne faut pas bloquer la voie publique,” a none too friendly neighbour setting the trend for our relationship thereafter. (You mustn't obstruct the highway!). Fortunately this kind of thing is rare, as are people like the neighbour concerned. He acquired a strange reputation by writing to Charente Libre with the suggestion that frogs should be slaughtered because of the noise they made at this time of year.

More often you are going to want to invite someone to a party or other celebration or express your sorrow at the death of one of his or her relatives. For this social business, they use a device which many in Britain would think of as old-fashioned, even class-ridden, the calling card. It is quite common to have cards about the size of a postcard or a little smaller printed with the family's name across the top and address at the bottom, and with plenty of space for a message. It is here that you can put your invitation or your message of support.

So what do you put on them? Here are a few ideas, gleaned from here and there.

A housewarming party is not a uniquely British thing. In France in former times the food was all cooked over the fire with the cauldron on a hook adjustable with a ratchet. The memory lives on when you “pendre le cremaillère” or hang up the ratchet in the company of old friends and new neighbours. So what might you put on the card?

Bonjour à tous, nous sommes les Smith (notice the singular – not the Smiths as in English) vos nouveaux voisins! Nous habitons .... Nous aimerions faire connaissance avec chacun d'entre vous et nous vous invitons donc à notre pendaison de crémaillère Samedi.... à... Bienvenus dans notre nouvelle vie !

Hi everyone, we are the Smiths, your new neighbours. We live at ..... We would like to get to know each one of you and so we are inviting you to our housewarming on Saturday ..... at..... Welcome into our new life!

Notre chez nous, enfin ! Our home at last!

Nous vous invitons à venir le découvrir au ... lundi... à ... autour d'un barbecue ! We invite you to discover it at ... on Monday .... at .... around a barbecue.

Soyez les bienvenus ! Come and be welcome

When you invite someone to a party it is normally to celebrate something. Nous vous invitons pour fêter (to celebrate) nos trente ans de mariage (30 years of marriage), la naissance de notre petit fils (birth of a grandson).

You might also want to wish someone a swift recovery:

Voici un petit mot d'encouragement pour un bon rétablissement !

Here is a little note of encouragement for a good getting well.

J'espère que vous guérissez petit à petit et que vous vous portez mieux. Je suis là, vous pouvez compter sur moi. Courage, je pense fort à vous.

I hope you are getting better little by little and that you are feeling better. Here I am and you can count on me. Keep it up! I think about you lots.

Comment vas-tu/allez-vous ? Mieux ? Je l'espère du fond du cœur et te/vous souhaite un bon rétablissement. How are you ? Better? I hope so from the bottom of mt heart and I wish you a good recovery!

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If there is a degree of shmoltz in these messages, all of which I have gleaned from an authentic source, this is just the local way, so to speak.

But it is good to be able to express emotion when it is called for, for instance when someone's loved one dies.

C'est avec une grande émotion que j'ai appris cette très triste nouvelle.

Nos pensées vous accompagnent. Recevez nos plus sincères condoléances.

It's with great emotion that I learnt this sad news. Our thoughts are with you. Accept our most sincere condolences.

Un petit mot pour te/vous dire que nous pensons bien à toi/vous et à tous les tiens/vôtres.

Just a word to say that we are thinking of you and your family

Nos pensées sont avec vous – Our thoughts are with you all.

Je garderai un très bon souvenir de ... , qui nous a toujours très bien accueillis.

I will always have warm memories of so and so who always welcomed us very kindly

Si tu veux venir nous voir, tu es la bienvenue – If you would like to come and see us you will be most welcome.

Je te fais plein de gros bisous ainsi qu'à tes enfants – I give you lots of kisses, and to your children, too.

Et a vous, mes lecteurs, gros bisous! – And to you my readers big kisses !