



view from the Thames by Deon Gouws fm



Feeling French: France score a second goal in their 2026 Fifa World Cup quarterfinal win against Morocco

Reuters/Winslow Townson

Let's go have a drink and forget about it, I suggested. We walked down the road, turned another corner ... and magically another church appeared before us. I could hardly believe that there were in fact two different places of worship in such a small town.

Forefathers vs offspring

I should have known, though: that is, after all, exactly why my Protestant forefather joined a million or more French Huguenots fleeing from persecution by the Catholic monarchy.

Having found the right church, I started inspecting tombstones once more with great anticipation. My distant cousin had not lied to me – there were many commemorating our Gauch relations, some of them dating to only a few years before.

Anyone passing by would have wondered why I took so many photographs in that early-evening golden hour. Mission accomplished.

This whole story is just a long-winded way of explaining why I have always felt a little French. I have, accordingly, supported the country of my ancestors in a few World Cup tournaments over the years, especially the football variety where South Africa is never really competitive.

As I sit here writing this, immediately after the first of the quarterfinals of Fifa's flagship event playing out across North America, France is in the last four. *Allez!*

I guess anything can happen, and in a few days' time I could look like a fool for suggesting this, but there appears to be a reasonable chance of a France vs England final.

So, you expect me to support the French once more, right?

Wrong. If this is indeed the way it plays out, it will be the country of my past going up against the country of my future. My forefather vs my offspring. A team of foreigners, facing a squad with household names from the Premier League, which I follow week in and week out (and containing no fewer than four members from my beloved Arsenal).

I will therefore say it out loud: I hope it comes home! ✕

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The French connection

About 15 years ago, I was having a conversation with a distant cousin. We have the same surname, though his is spelt without the "w".

So how do I know that we are related? Well, the lineage of every single South African named either "Gouws" or "Gous" can be traced back to the same forefather: one André Gauch, who left a town called Le Pont-de-Montvert in the Languedoc region of France in 1690 and arrived at the Cape a year later.

My Gous relation told me that he'd been to our ancestral village, nestled in the middle of a magnificent national park, waxing lyrical about the trip. He described in vivid detail how he felt the connection with the place when he walked around the graveyard right next to the church, especially when he saw a multitude of tombstones adorned with our original French family name.

I was sold. A few years later, my family and I went on a driving holiday through France. After a few restful days in Provence, we headed to Bordeaux to imbibe some quality wine. On the map, it looked like Le Pont-de-Montvert was

pretty much en route. Big mistake.

Did I mention a national park before? Our trip turned out to be quite the adventure, navigating a single-lane road, up and down mountains and around numerous hairpin bends. What I thought would take a couple of hours ended up occupying the better part of a full day (this was before Waze existed). My wife was not best pleased, as I was feeling poorly and she had to do most of the driving.

All's well that ends well, and we got there in one piece in the late afternoon. The town was tiny but very beautiful. I had only one objective before sitting down for dinner in one of the small restaurants: find that graveyard and take pictures of my little daughter next to a tombstone inscribed with the original family name.

As we turned a corner, we saw the church with its magnificent steeple. Right next to it, there were a few hundred graves. I walked up and down the rows, squinting as I tried to read the names of those who had been laid to rest, some of the headstones heavily faded after centuries. There was not one "Gauch".

Had the dude lied to me? Were we even in the right town? I was devastated. My wife just shook her head.