

France February 2014



All loaded up with insulation etc



First essential supplies

We met Don, Helen and their two cocker spaniels Poppy and Dexter at Newhaven. It was a beautiful day but a bit choppy whilst at sea. Rick was probably a bit delicate from our previous night with Alan and Sheila at The Star in Petworth. This is Chris' new pub. They have been there a year and we didn't know! It was the first time abroad for Poppy and Dexter and they behaved very well.

It was 8pm and dark before we arrived at La Maison Kirk. Everything was damp and there was a horrible thick mould on anything wooden. After a quick clean we enjoyed our Shepard's Pie before heading to bed.

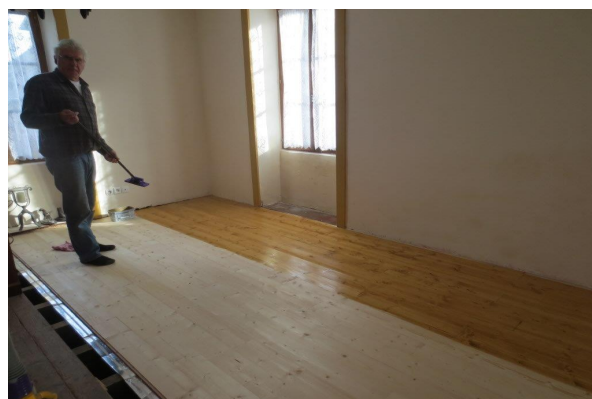
Saturday

When we saw how damp and dirty everything was we began to feel a little despondent and began to question the point of keeping the house. Rick and I went to Alencon to check out calor gas stoves and pick up the woodworm treatment. We left Don pulling up the lounge floorboards and Helen generally cleaning everything in sight. She's a whirlwind !

Don and Rick sprayed the rafters, attached the mesh, installed the insulation and waterproof membrane and started putting down the new floorboards. How good is it to know that above and below us in the lounge is clean and free of years of dust and infestation. Mind you the garage below is very wet as water has been coming through the walls.

Helen and I carried on preparing the kitchen for painting and cleaning and more cleaning. After a big walk with the dogs we cooked a delicious roast pork supper, it was yummy.

Sunday



Well done boys- a great job

Today has been most successful. The boys have done a great job laying and staining about half of the lounge floor. It's looking great. Helen and I have painted the kitchen walls and ceiling. Helen also managed to put a first coat of the lighter colour on the kitchen woodwork.

It's been another beautiful bright cold day and I am really enjoying walking the dogs and being given tea in bed. The village is looking smart as they have finished installing a new drainage system and resurfacing the road. The house is warming up but one wall and the door to the small bedroom is still damp.

We finished the day off sending emails, eating pork curry and playing "Who Wants to be a Millionaire".

Monday

We woke up to another beautiful morning and to a cacophony of bird songs. Rick and Don got stuck into ripping up the remaining floor boards while Helen and I put the second coat of the lighter colour on the kitchen woodwork. All was going too well and the boys had their first set back. Rick went to show Don a butterfly and fell through the gap between the eaves - he has a nasty graze on his thigh. I rushed to get the camera when I should have been offering sympathy. On her return from walking the dogs Nurse Helen bandaged it for him but he is now very stiff and walking with a limp.



Rick's bad leg - bruised down to his knee



Don's bruised painful wrist

After lunch Helen and I set off to Carrouges to find a vet and replenish our supplies. The visit to the vet went well but being a Monday most of the shops were shut so we decided to go to the supermarket in Pre en Pail. I suggested we go back to the house and through Cirel but Helen had other ideas so we took the scenic route via Bagnoles which was completely in the opposite direction. An hour or so later we arrived at the supermarket absolutely desperate for the loo. Helen rushed into the loos, then rushed straight back out and said they must be disabled ones as they were locked. She was told there weren't any alternative one and the man seemed bemused when she insisted he should unlock them. Then it clicked, they were actually engaged! In fact a family of 3 came out of one and a little later a man came out of the other. I nearly wet myself laughing. Helen was almost at the stage of backing onto the urinal.

When we got back to the house Don had also fallen through the eaves and had hurt his wrist and leg. It's dangerous work here.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday



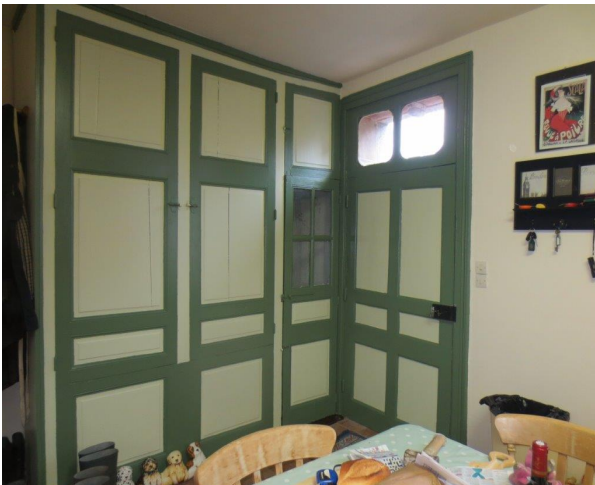
Temporary rainwater fix



Water seeping through the garage floor

We've been very, very busy finishing off the lounge floor, adding the skirting boards, painting the kitchen woodwork and scrub, scrub, scrubbing. Helen is a fantastic scrubber and I mean that in the nicest possible way. She is obsessive about cleaning. We are no longer depressed about the dirty, damp house. I've joined Helen for a enjoyable few walks with the dogs and she is now monitoring them with "Map my Walk". The local carpenter has diversified by starting a free range poultry farm with brand new industrial type buildings. The new village roads and drainage system are almost finished. They messed it up at our house because the new drains by our kitchen are sending all the rainwater into our garage and foundations. Rick and Don have made a temporary fix and hopefully they will sort it out when they return in a March.

We've eaten like Kings in the house but only managed to eat out twice. For only 12 euros we had an amazing lunch in a cafe in Ciral, it was great value not like the evening meal we had at Le Louis XI restaurant in Carrouges. Madame Vidu's old restaurant has been taken over by a couple from Paris. It was very disappointing as basically it was a limited and expensive set menu (26 euros) and they didn't have most of the choices. Don, Helen and Rick literally had the dogs dinner to start - marrow bones swimming in a fatty broth - ughhhh!



Newly painted cupboards



Dogs Dinner! Marrow bones

Friday

While Don and Helen went to Alencon we caught up with all the village news from Gaby who hasn't been well these last few days. Rick started filling in the skirting boards and Don cemented the alcove plinths. The lounge is looking good and we are celebrating Don and Helens last day by me making my special Beef Bourguignon . Panic set in for a while as the meat wouldn't soften . Early night for the Kirk's as they have to get up at 2.30 am for the early ferry. We've all worked very well together and now that the lounge is in good shape we won't feel embarrassed to bring friends over. We're going to miss Poppy and Dexter, they are gorgeous!



Saturday

The house is quiet, no dogs! We've got used to putting slippers and food out of their reach and making sure the doors are closed. There's no one here to be pleased to see us.

On the way to Alencon I started to feel car sick when reading a catch up text from Lynn in Tenerife. It wouldn't go away and just worse and worse. Nothing seemed to be going right as I kept accidentally knocking into Ricks bad leg. He nearly passed out in the supermarket when I hit it full on with a full trolley load in the wine aisle! We made our major purchase of the new staircase but it was extremely heavy and I was struggling as we tried to load it into the trailer but fortunately a man helped us out - what a hero and at just the right time.

Yves help Rick carry it into the lounge as I had come over all shaky, hot and cold and was being sick. With me in bed the rest of the day was wiped out .

Sunday



Very smart alcove



Tidy workshop - new rack

We must have caught the bug from Gaby as now Rick has it and I had a text from Helen who said Don also had it. I was feeling a bit better but full of headache whilst Rick was at the worse stage. Lots more texts from Tenerife as still problems with neighbours building works. Rick managed to tile two of the lounge window recesses and put up a few pictures. I continued to paint and touch up. I also stained the beam above the front door and painted the door locks, they look good. Rick is still feeling very poorly and it is the first day there have been no wine or beer bottles in the bin.

Monday



Just waiting for curtains

Everything is taking longer as the bug has sapped our energy and appetite. Even though I am at the touching up phase the painting seems never ending. I repainted the window recesses in each bedroom and stained the kitchen steps. Rick finished filling in the skirting and put up the rest of the pictures and new lounge curtain rails - without me even asking! He also grouted the alcove tiles but it's made the walls black and now they have to be repainted too.

I took a bottle of fizz and some mussels (we defiantly can't face them) round to Gaby as a way of thanking her for letting us use her internet. It was Gaby that gave us the bug so I didn't stay long especially since she was at the farting stage! It strange how you can catch these things so quickly as within minutes I reached the same stage. Using our phone as a hotspot we booked our April Tenerife flights and just to get us back into the real world again we phoned, texted and face timed everyone we could.

Tuesday



The new road layout with provision for flower beds

It's home today and we are ready. We've achieved the main objectives being replacing the lounge floor and painting the kitchen woodwork along with lots of other jobs. However, once the weather warms up we need another visit to bring the oak furniture Don has picked up, paint the skirting board, tile the last alcove, fit the splash back kitchen tiles, clean the carpets and sort the garden

out, then we will be all ready for summer visitors. Of course we mustn't forget that the next exciting project is the staircase but that will have to wait until Don and Rick can coordinate their time.

It's been a good family bonding time. We know that Don and Helen like their tea strong with semi skimmed milk whereas we like it weak with skimmed and they like their porridge runny with Demerara sugar and milk while mine is stodgy with half skimmed and water. We didn't pick up too many of their other habits other than they are very hard working. When concentrating Don has a bit of tongue trouble and Helen, who is very much her own woman, is fantastic at scrubbing. On the other hand they would have learnt about a few of the many of Ricks peculiarities such as insisting on full cream milk for his cereal, horror of a wet wiped table, love of hot plates and insisting on having time to enjoy his pre dinner drinks and snacks. Whereas I seem to be blind as a bat, prone to talking to myself, a little hard of hearing and frugal - oh the joys of getting older!