

France -September 2015

Newhaven/Dieppe £165 DFS Seaways, that included a 20% discount for the over 60's (you have to phone to get the discount). Ferry was very busy perhaps because of the migrant situation at Calais.



On arrival the house looked in good shape and someone has been watering our geranium pots as they were flourishing. There is a bit of life in the village and we keep hearing the sound of a cow seemingly in distress. Rick is glued to the Rugby World Cup, big shock Japan beating South Africa. Jen, Hayden and Lydia having their first family holiday in Tenerife.



It's was a special weekend in France and Europe "Journées Europeennes Du Patrimoine" where churches, manor houses and historical building are open for free to the public. On Saturday we went to the nearby village of Pace to have a look at the Manoir (Manor House) that was a 1000 years old and was once an Abbaye des Templiers. Over time it has lost its tower and other sections but the proprietor, an American artist called Casimir Farley, has renovated the main building but has his kitchen in an outbuilding the other side of the garden. He said the the beams in the main building were made of chestnut which doesn't rot or attract spiders. He has lived there for over 20 years with his colleague who sadly died recently. We were lucky as there was only us and a couple from the nearby village of Gandelain so we almost had him to ourselves and even had time for him to walk us through his wooded garden. It was all a bit spooky and dark especially when he showed us an exhibition by his departed colleague of theatrical costumes through the ages, all displayed on

manikins. His colleague was apprenticed to a seamstress in the early 30's and all the costumes were made by him. The local authority had turned down their plans for a small theatre in one of the outbuildings. Turned out Gaby and her parents visited him just after us.

The following day we visited "Site d'Avoise" at Radon where a local historian talked us through the history of the house and its industrial farm where they once made alcohol from beetroots. It was a huge site and the grounds were being used to sell and store anything from ancient and modern statues, reclaimed building materials to imported Chinese goods. This is definitely worth another visit.



Autumn Show in Alençon

I've been working hard at my French conversation course but faced with the real thing my mind goes completely blank. I am disillusioned!!!! Biggest embarrassment of all is when I saw the man we met at the weekend from Gandelain at the recycling point. We exchanged pleasantries and then I don't know why I decided to ask him about the distressed cow we had been hearing. I just couldn't remember the word for cow so started to do a bit of charades and started to "moo". Just how embarrassing is that, I even did the head action. He looked completely bemused and couldn't make out what was going on. Once I started I felt I had to continue, what a terrible embarrassment. He must have gone away thinking I was some sort of nut-case. I had a little bit of success with the lady from the Epicerie when I admired some Dahlia's in a garden near her. I managed to get her to understand that we were going home on Sunday and not coming back until next year.



This time as the house is quite habitable we've managed to combine some work with pleasure. Apart from the visits on the special weekend we had lunch for 24 euros at Saint Leonards des Bois in the Alpes Mancelles where there is a special walk along the river which we must a point of doing sometime. The restaurant had a beer cave full of a wide variety of beers which is definitely worth a look. Another day we had a very nice 12 euro lunch each at the modern Hotel La Lentillere as the usual restaurant Au Pere Tranquille was closed. We also went mushroom picking in the forest but the neighbours all agreed that we shouldn't eat them and suggested taking them to the local Pharmacy. In fact Gaby had only read that morning that a supposedly mushroom expert in France had been poisoned and died last week.



Gaby came round with her sister and brother in law who live in Storrington. They had taken a ferry to Santander and had been on a roadtrip on their motorbike through Spain and France.

Jobs

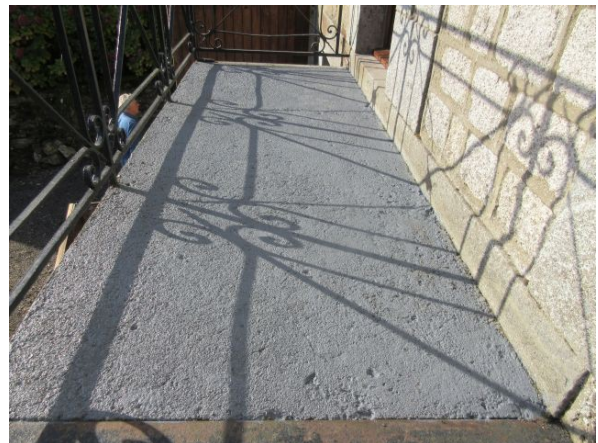


Our main project was to replace the door above the back steps. Of course it took so much longer than we anticipated especially as Rick's first impression was that perhaps he should have bought the smaller door. That meant he had a lot more cutting out for the frame but it wasn't too bad. The door needed 3 coats of stain, that means 3 days as you have to wait for it to dry in-between. We are pleased with the results, its fantastic to have a door that has a proper lock and is not crumbling away. It also makes the hallway lighter. Rick has temporarily put the original window above the door back but will build a new one at home that he will replace it with. As the platform above the steps was letting water through I finished off leak proofing it with a special paint. I also painted

underneath but not sure how much that will help.



Unfortunately, the gravel front and back of the house had seeded badly with dandelions, I've sprayed this with weedkiller and hopefully that will sort it out. The lawns didn't look too bad, we thought perhaps someone else had mowed them since George and Caroline's visit. My border in the main garden was choked in bind weed as was all along the borders. Rick has marked out our border with weedkiller so our boundary is more obvious. The grass further in the village was as long as expected.



Rick has cleared out the garage and has plaster boarded the old loft entrance and the back of the stairway. We ran out of filler so that has held us back quite a bit. Unfortunately, we didn't get round to finishing off the stairway entrance and skirting board. Jobs for next time! We've measured out the loft area and will ask you all for your ideas as what to do with it.

Last full day



Cleared out the garage and had a trailer full of rubbish for the tip. Popped into Carrouges on the way back . Indian supermarket definitely closed, hotel opposite the Post Office open and Madam Vidu's has once again changed hands and is now a weekend cafe with Karaoke and Football, Pool and Pinball tables. Thought we would have a trip down memory lane and looked at the Municipal Campsite where all stayed about 19 years ago when we first visited the house. It's looking good, lots of sponsors advertising the football pitch, a couple of 6 a side football pitches and electric points to all the camping pitches. Pierre came round with a big bag full of peaches from his garden. Hey, its our last night and we are in the lounge watching England v Wales rugby, disappointing result. Just had a fantastic Beef Bourguignon cooked in the slow cooker. How different it is from the early days when we had no lounge and lived in the kitchen while watching a DVD on a tiny television.



Rick's taken lots of measurements and will forward you all a plan in due course
House all closed down for the winter and we are looking forward to our next visit in 2016