

FRENCH HOUSE

August/September 2017

Thursday 24 August

Lovely weather and had until 3pm to get ready to set off to Newhaven. The time seemed to drag, we even managed to get quite a bit of gardening done. Calm crossing, spent ages again trying to sync my Garmin fitbit to my new Samsung phone. Arrived at St. Ellier at 2am and drank gin and tonics with Caroline and George until 3am. It must be the first time we have ever been to the house when we haven't had to immediately set to and cleaned through. Everything was spick and spam, hope we didn't wake the whole village up with our late/early arrival.



Friday 25 August



Another lovely day, we had all the windows and doors open. Loads of flies everywhere. George and Rick set off to Brico Depot to start buying the materials for the loft. Meanwhile Caroline, who had already taken the moss off, scrubbed and bleached the back steps started on the garden steps. I took over the gravel weeding and clearing of the top garden. It all looks in good shape. The boys came back for a short while and then set off again for another load. They are going to upgrade their choice of toilet 83 euros and have found a sink unit and mirror for 84 euros and shower unit for 345 euros, While they were gone pyromaniac Caroline put a match to the bonfire.



It was quite late by the time they finished unloading but it was such a lovely warm evening that we still went ahead with our barbecue plans. There were loads of bats flying round the cellar. Our raucous laughter must have kept the village awake.



Saturday 26 August

The boys set off for Alençon at 8.45. They've found a helpful member of staff at Brico Depot who loaded the plasterboard sheets onto the trailer with the forklift. Had a huge fry-up late breakfast before they set off again. Meanwhile Caroline carried on scrubbing, I planted some fuchsias by the workshop and cleared up. Caroline and I went along on the third trip where we introduced them to Le Clerc supermarket. Bit of a wobbly journey back as the trailer ropes kept coming loose.



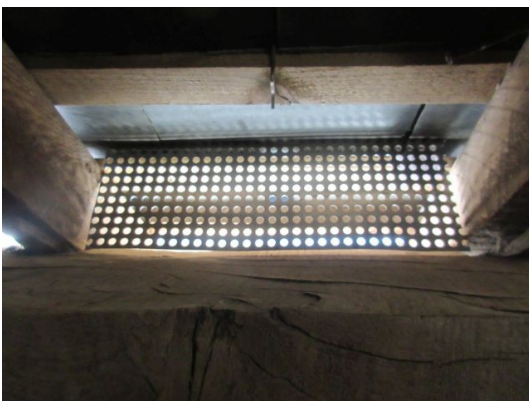
It took a while but we eventually worked out a system using all four of us to get the plasterboard up into the loft. The girls pushed and the boys pulled. They had trouble keeping up with us pushing so fast. It took a fraction of the time it had taken the boys when they did it on their own. We were all absolutely exhausted and covered in sweat. Too late for a barbecue so we roasted the chicken in the oven and enjoyed the salads I had prepared from our home produce. It was fun evening, It's strange that Caroline's sister Karen was born on the same day as me, she also has a sister Elaine and both Elaine's were married on the same day, Caroline's surname is Hatch and I was once a Hatch. I don't know if George ever got to watch the football but Rick found him asleep on the sofa when he got up the next morning.

Sunday 27 August



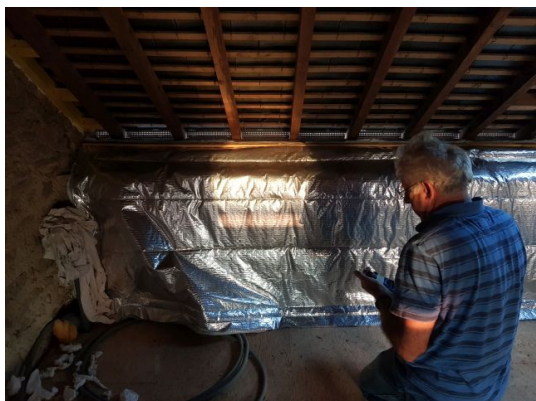
George said that the thunder and lightening woke him up – I didn't hear it but it was still raining until just before they left at 7.45. Waved goodbye to George and Caroline, they were on the 12.30 Dieppe boat (have since heard that they missed that one). It's been really nice spending time with them. I haven't spent that amount of time with George for years, he so reminds me of dad. Lots of technical thinking today, we needed to get the ceiling height absolutely right as there were so many obstructions to take into account. Disappointed that the outside door by the staircase has started to delaminate in places. I suppose that's what comes of buying a fairly cheap door but the next stage up was too pricey. Very hot day. It was an early night for us.

Monday 28 August



Needed to work out how to keep the birds and bats out. Another trip to Alençon where we bought more wood and half sheets of plasterboard, a door and a fix for the birds. It was over 30 degrees and even hotter in the loft when loading and unloading materials. Made the most of the warm evening and had another barbecue.

Tuesday 29 August



Got up really early but it was still dark in the loft. Put the insulation on half of the roof, battened and plasterboarded it. It was a learning curve on how to cut the insulation, get around the curving beams and generally find all the tools we needed at a certain times. We found the battening a bit gutty but George bought over a chop-saw with him and Rick says it is absolutely fantastic, he doesn't know how he has lived this long without one. Late trip to Alençon to save time tomorrow. 32 degrees as we left Alençon 7.30 in the evening. Weather has started to break though as we had a shower on the way back and a breeze got up.

Wednesday 30 August

Weather has definitely broken, big thunderstorm in the night and heavy rain. 17 degrees today, a lot less than 33 yesterday. Rick fixed up some temporary lights in the loft. Had quite a productive day, but really the only thing that went well was installing the insulation. It's so much more comfortable working in cooler conditions. We had a break mid morning to visit the market in Carrouges. Bought the Carrouges cheese, the one year mature was 16.44 a kilo whereas the extra mature was 29.07 a kilo.



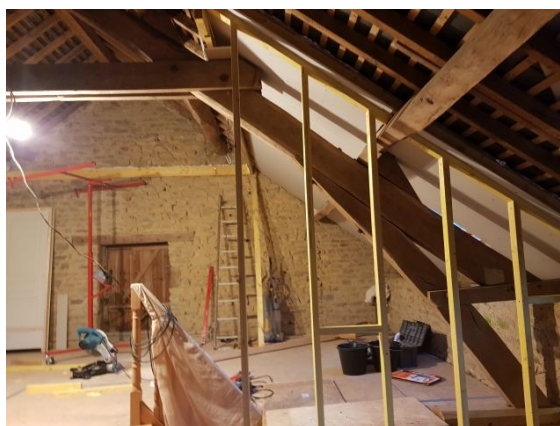
I am enjoying being Rick's Apprentice, passing this, holding that, lifting materials, keeping the work area clean and providing refreshments. I have all the tools etc laid out like an Operating Theatre and Rick has saved loads of time with me knowing where everything is. Although it did take a few days for us to find all the bits he brought over with him.

Thursday 31 August



Heavy rain on and off all day. We started really early again and were going great guns until we ran out of battening. Nothing at Carrouges and not wanting to waste the whole afternoon going to Alencon we then tried Pre en Pal where we paid double the price. We were determined to finish the sloping ceilings/walls today and almost settled on accepting a bit of plasterboard that got damaged fitting under the beam. Having to cope with twisting beams either end was difficult when trying not to leave too large a gap. Even with great team work, a bit of experience under our belt and working until 8pm we couldn't quite finish it. Both very tired also disappointed that rain somehow found its way in a place under the new kitchen door.

Friday 1 September



Heavy showers on and off all day again. When it rains here it comes crashing down the roads. Couldn't live with that last piece of plasterboard we put up last night. That set us back again but we finally finished the sloping ceilings/walls mid morning. As the week has progressed I'm coping much better with lifting quite heavy things. Next stage was to mark out the rooms and doors, once again very tricky around the stairwell.

Saturday 2 September

In Brico Depot at 9am buying more wood, electrical stuff, another two doors and bathroom radiator. It took forever and we had to follow that with a visit to Le Clerc to top up on supplies. Didn't get back to the house until 12.45 pm. As we were unloading two young lads whizzed by on their scooters. One of them had a nasty fall, the colour drained out of his face but he was very brave. Had a Skype call to Don and Helen and we have taken their advice and made the landing smaller. Can't wait for them to come as I am not doing anything like my usual amount of steps. I am

exceeding my stairs target but it doesn't seem to count when you just use your arms. That trip to Brico Depot killed me off. It's like Rick having to hang around a dress shop for a couple of hours. What with that and the 11 hour working day I am exhausted.

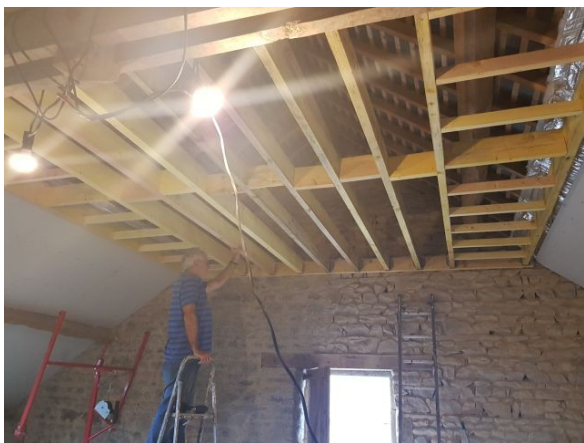
Sunday 3 September

Rained on and off again all day, not that I went outside except to carry the rubbish up the hill. Most of the day was spent putting the ceiling rafters in place. Sue and Martin arrived and joined us for a drink – what a laugh we had.



Monday 4 September

Just the odd light shower but mizzle most of the day. Spent the morning cleaning up and doing household chores. Rick missed my help with the nogging and was pleased when I went back to being his apprentice. Before we plasterboarded the ceiling we needed to work out where the electrics will go. Another great evening with Sue and Martin, she makes a fantastic Beef Bourguignon.



Tuesday 5 September

Reinforcements in the shape of Don and Helen arrived at 4am. We didn't hear a thing until one of the dogs barked when Rick went to the loo. Don and Helen were in recovery from their all night travelling and we were in recovery from overindulging with Sue and Martin. It was Lydia's trial day at Oakwood. A long time spent in Brico Depot but in-between I had a look around the shops near Le Clerc. Didn't get back until about 4.30pm and so disappointed that we had bought the wrong size window. Poor Rick and Don had to do another trip to Alencon – too late and too tired to do any work in the loft today. Another Beef Bourguignon and an early night.

Wednesday 6 September



Helen and I went to the market at Carrouges to top up with vegetables and enough meat to last for a few days. Up in the loft Don was fitting a new window while Rick worked on the electrics. I took some flowers and a bottle of wine round to Gaby as it was her birthday. Her parents were there and her mother showed me some wonderful pieces of art she had done for Gaby over the years. She is a talented artist with a huge Indian influence especially with the vibrant colours. She exhibits every August and hopefully she will send me an invite for next year.



Thursday 7 September



The boys had a few setbacks today which delayed them quite a lot with the ceiling plasterboarding. There were a few disciplinary's given! Rick should have made that phonecall to George about the electrics. Also, "thank you George" for the loan of the laser level.



Helen and I have been upping our steps and I've been up the hill to the football field 6 times. The house is smelling wonderful as Helen has been making a sausage cassoulet . It was sunny enough for us to have coffee outside. I saw the lady gardening in Susan and Louis's house so I went and thanked her for mowing our grass. Her name is Christiana, she is a retired German teacher and speaks good English. Later in the afternoon she stopped on her walk to have a look around the house. We've had two visitors today as John who used to live up the road called in and had a long chat to the boys. He's been working with a mate dismantling the building attached to the Petit Maison. Despite have a pacemaker fitted he is in good shape for an 80 year old. I'm not keen to drive in France but Helen managed to persuade me to drive to Carrouges where it was chucking out time for the school and the busiest I have ever seen. We drank the weeks wine supply in one evening and nearly had to resort to the bottle that Helen had hidden away for the boat.

Friday 8 September

When is it ever going to stop raining here! Did manage to get a short walk with the dogs. Spent the rest of the day in the loft helping Rick with the studwork while Don finished plasterboarding the ceiling. Helen gave the door and window a second coat and made a delicious lentil soup.

Saturday 9 September



Rick and Don were going to start plasterboarding the stairwell but had loads of setbacks with the electrics coming through in the wrong places . A few more Disciplinary's ! I drove to Pre en Pal to top up with food and drink supplies, that was a first but once again under Helen's persuasion. Helen and I did quite a few walks to pass the time while Rick and Don were in the loft - how come there always seems more uphill then downhill.

The lad that fell of his scooter last week came round with a petit cadeau of tiny French meringues and a local pate. We had a celebration supper of duck with blackberry sauce and Prosecco as a "thank you" to Don and Helen for their help and to wish them well on the first voyage in their boat.

Sunday 10 September



Said goodbye to Don and Helen. Rick did a bit more work on the electrics while I did a few household chores. We started plasterboarding the landing and stairwell. Very short of plasterboard screws and partitioning wood. Sue and Martin came round about 5pm and that was the end of our working day – way too much wine and beer but Rick does need to emerge from the loft occasionally, It rains a lot here, it has rained every day since the heatwave for the first 3 days. Its funny but the village seems dead but we have have more inaction with neighbours than ever we do at home. Rick's enjoyed having some bonding time with his brother-in-laws.



Monday 11 September

Have sore hips from lifting the full plasterboard sheet, everything hurts. Set off early for Brico Depot and Le Clerc to top up. Waved Martin and Sue off, now is the chance to have a sober evening. Spent the rest of the day finishing plasterboarding the stairwell. It was very tricky and time consuming. Perhaps tomorrow we will have a more productive day.

Tuesday 12 September



Bedroom



Landing

Still hurting all over, especially the hip and back area but we've had a great day. Finished off the final tricky bits on the stairwell and finished off screwing it as when we were short of screws we only put enough in to hold it up. Sealed the bathroom area by plasterboarding the wall shared by the bedroom. The best bit was installing the bathroom and bedroom doors. They come already mounted and George had suggested that if you make the opening slightly larger you can square up the door more easily. Wish we had known that when installing the kitchen and back door. Had to make a late trip to Brico Depot to change the other door as it opened the wrong way. Stopped at the Italian restaurant opposite Carrefour, very average and very limited choice for me but it was nice to get out. Once again quite a few heavy showers throughout the day.

Wednesday 13 September

Very early start and late finish. We achieved Rick's objective of a sealed landing. It rained and rained all day, not that we ventured outside. I made a lovely chorizo and chicken casserole which we washed down with Le Clerc Prosecco and Mas red wine.



Insulating the back wall



Bathroom waiting for the sanitary ware to be installed

Thursday 13 September



The Bedroom



Onto the landing/ bedroom door ahead
Door to recreation area on left



Finished back wall in recreation area

Friday 14 September



Rick wore out his trainers – There is a very infrequent bus service from St Didier to Alencon via St Ellier

Well what a result after 3 weeks work ! Coming back very soon to fit out the bathroom and finish the electrics.