

## FRANCE– August 2021

### Monday 9 August 2021

France has come off the Amber Plus list which means we don't have quarantine when we get back. We are fully vaccinated but have to take a lateral flow flow before we leave France and a PCR test 2 days after returning home.

Very early start., tunnel crossing 7.50 but they put us on 6.20 crossing. Early bird catches the worm. Last visit was July last year but came home early because of Pete's passing . The covid stats for July 2020 were 642 new cases and 85 deaths, how things have moved on today 23510 and 146 deaths, stats supposedly meant to be getting better. Post Brexit rules state we are not to take any fresh fruit, veg or dairy so smoked salmon sandwiches for breakfast. When is it ever going to stop raining, torrential rain both sides of the Channel.

First impressions after a year, not bad. We have a problem with mould on the ceilings in the loft bedroom and bathroom but otherwise okay.



Someone has backed into our railings

### Tuesday 10 August

The most brilliant thing today is that my back that has troubled me for over 4 weeks is easier and my cold is okay, I did a covid test just in case. We've had so much rain this year and today is no different but the forecast for tomorrow is much dryer and hotter. Rick's winding down, doing lots of tech things. I've weeded front and back. Someone has backed into the railings, not sure how we are going to get them fixed. The

fuchsias I planted are looking good, Isobel said that in November she cut them down for us and she has also planted up one of our pots. First year for ages no geraniums.

Rick said the first he thing was going to do was to cut down the climbing rose as it was a lot of work, he changed his mind when Gaby said that it looked absolutely glorious when it was out. Unfortunately, she didn't get a photo before the wind and rain wrecked it. Isobel doesn't run away now when we try to speak to her, in fact she gave us a huge courgette.



### **Wednesday 11 August**

No rain. Cleaned the loft. Rick mended the shower and sorted out the trailer ready for the tip. Went into Carrouges, very sad, its a ghost town. Both hotels closed and nowhere for anyone to eat, just a couple of bars.

### **Thursday 12 August**

Rick gave the lawn it first cut, the ground is still a bit wet and spongy. I painted the bathroom ceiling and made a start on the bedroom one. Hopefully, its going to cover the mouldy bits and freshen them up. Having to do everything slowly, can't run up and down the stairs again yet.

Lise joined us for a gin and tonic, she's doing a week's classical coral workshop in Montagne au Perche with the final concert on Saturday evening. A couple of months ago the guys at the back of our garden wanted to cut the hedge our side and made a huge fuss about the state of the grass saying it was attracting snakes and other horrid pests. Lise persuaded the village gardener to cut it for a reasonable fee. However, she shocked us by saying that a few weeks later it had grown high again so she got the gardener to help her carry the mower up the steps and she cut it herself. She must be over 70 and is already mowing our plot of land next to her. She very annoyed that they are forced to be vaccinated, it's a loss of their liberties.

## Friday 13 August

After Rick fitted a blind in one of the bedrooms and I had finished the bedroom ceiling we went to Montagne au Perche for lunch. It was very industrial on the way into the town, but definitely worth a visit.



The trees in our garden have got a bit out of control and Rick has taken a saw to them. Isobel and the two guys behind offered to lend Rick their card for the tip. Rick got them to speak through Google Translate. They were amazed, lots of wondrous noises and the next thing we know a huge courgette comes over the fence. It must be the French way to show you have been accepted.



**Saturday 14 August**



Lots of trips to the tip but a very enjoyable afternoon spent at Julie's surprise birthday party. We met another couple from Leeds, Michelle and Mark and their son and grandson and also Norman, all who live nearby.



**Sunday 15 August**

Rick used the car, an acro prop and rope to straighten the railings that someone has backed into. He also fitted a blackout blind in the other bedroom. We called on retired teacher, Norman for coffee. He has a lovely garden and his house is situation further down the road from Julie and Rob's, it's a fantastic quiet spot.



Had a trip to Ranes and discovered a great Municipal Park, it has a lake, all sorts of sports facilities, crazy golf and even a horse racecourse that is manned by volunteers.



Also, found a restaurant that had a good selection on the menu. Unfortunately, it's closed as from tonight for their holiday, this is happening everywhere, even hotels close for holidays. Why would they do that when they have also had Covid lockdowns and in the middle of the French holiday season which is already very short.



Then onto Ecouche which was a bit disappointing.

### **Monday 16 August**

While it was raining we drove to Alençon, first stop Action , the shop which all the locals are raving about. It's like a Tenerife Chinese shop, full of everything at very low prices. Then Mr Bricolage and Carrefour. We haven't been to Carrefour for a while as we tend to use Super U in Pre en Pail. The fresh fish counter has gone and the vegetables weren't particularly fresh or plentiful.

While Rick was fiddling with the railings a little old French lady started chatting to him. I was in the kitchen with Lise who was helping me sort out the French Bank account when Rick came to be rescued. Having Lise there to translate was a real bonus. The lady said that her grandparents bought our house in 1926 and ran it as an hotel. Our kitchen and lounge were the bar and restaurant and Sue & Martin's house were the

bedrooms and Tabac. They also ran a saddlery. St Ellier in those days was thriving with cafes, boulangerie, epicerie, notarie but for about 20 years now there have been no shops, only houses.

## Tuesday 17 August

Early appointment at the Carrouges Pharmacy to have our Lateral Flow Test ready for our journey back. We can't have been doing it right at home as he poked the stick way up our nose, I thought it might come out of my mouth. Fortunately, we are Covid free. The garden is in good shape and Rick managed to pull out some nasty, big briars along the border. Last trip to the tip, it was very busy and Rick got a telling-off for leaving such a mess. He was given a broom.



Have been wanting a French Post Box for over 20 years, it's the highlight of our visit.

Julie, Rob, their son, partner and baby Isobel came round for aperitifs. They said there is a lovely little zoo in the forest called Parc Animalier d'Ecouvies , it has a 10 euro entry fee but worth a visit. Also, we mentioned the lack of a fish counter in Carrefour but apparently they don't have one on a Monday.

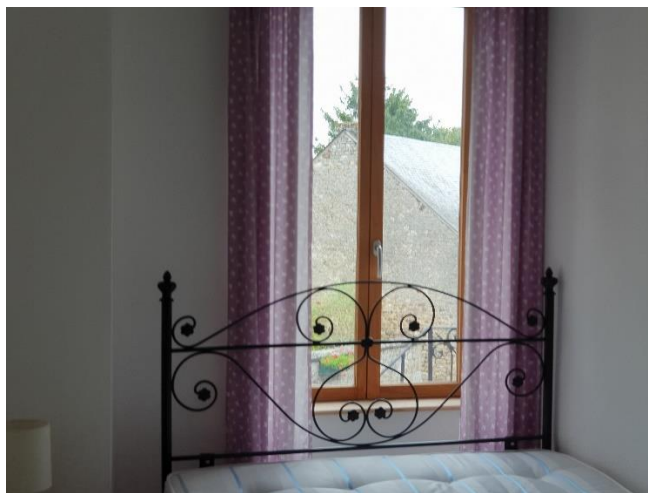
We're just getting settled in and now we have to think about our return home. Lise came round to say she hadn't yet had a text with our bank code. She then gave us a lesson on how to sing by flaring our nostrils and projecting our voices further up from our throat. Whatever next!

## Wednesday 18 August

Lise has been brilliant, helping us with the banking, translating, grass cutting and making us laugh. I want to practice my French but she also wants to practice her English, she reminds me of Auntie Ray. Monique came round with a copy of the 1926 census for the village though more difficult this time without Lise to translate. Monique is interested in history and pointed out all the different occupations that were going on in Le Bourg (centre) St Ellier at that time. She was with us for quite some time. We had a chat with Gaby and her daughter while they were walking baby Max. Can't think I've ever had so much inaction with neighbours.

Just a reminder of what you are all missing!







## Thursday 19 August

Back through the tunnel, very efficient. PCR Test due on day 2 of return.

### Jobs To Do

Work out a fix for canopy over stairs door which could also be used when fitting the canopy over kitchen door.

Build shelter outside for gas cylinder.

Fill in edges in loft floor.

Seal walls in loft and fill in gaps in back wall.

Fit register plate to kitchen woodburner.

Grout steps with coloured cement and fill in gaps at bottom of outside walls

Paint railings

Stain windows

Sealant on lounge staircase

Possible project – RSJ to kitchen floor in cellar