

France May 23

Wednesday 10 May

It's been hard raising the enthusiasm to get started on the diary so have 1 few days to catch up on.

We once again treated ourselves to the more expensive Brittany Ferries route and a Commodore Cabin. It was a pleasant and not very busy crossing. The first visit each year usually involves a lot of cleaning but Don and Helen and their two cocker spaniels, Poppy and Dexter arrived the day before us. They had obviously been very busy and Helen cooked us a wonderful Beef Bourguignon, above and beyond Rick's standards! We enjoyed hearing all about their Motorhome trip to Italy and their time on their canal boat afterwards. Poppy who is elderly was finding the trip difficult but enjoyed being pushed in her doggy buggy.



Thursday 11 May

Helen and I got carried away taking arty photos.



Helen stayed at the house with Poppy and Dexter while Don came with us to Alençon to find an Estate Agent to give us a house valuation. We left our details with Lair, who appeared to have the highest profile, but just a few doors away was another much more friendly outfit who are coming to us next Wednesday. Gaby had a hip op today. I spent the rest of the day preparing my flower pots while Rick tried to sort out how we would be able to make it to Alan's in Milhars on Monday to join him in his 80th birthday celebrations. We had way too much to drink that evening and a very late night.

Friday 12 May

Still waiting to hear from two other agents, decided to make getting valuations our priority, so unfortunately visit to Alan is off. Rick sorted out the cellar door that had dropped, Don said most people would shave a bit of the bottom but Rick decided to drop the floor a little! Don and Helen took the dogs to the vet in Carrouges to get their worming tablets and rabies shot for Dexter. We did a bit of gardening and cleaned up the garden furniture. The green plastic had oxidised and after cleaning, Rick gave them a coat of vegetable oil. It looks very smart but a bit slippery.



Saturday 13 May



Don, Helen, Poppy and Dexter are off. Caught up with Lise who thought the Coronation was hilarious, all crowns, funny clothes and strange rituals, she couldn't believe how anyone could take it seriously. I gave her a Coronation tin of shortbread for mowing the lawn. Amazingly, I managed to organise a visit for next Wednesday from an agent in Pre en Pail, even though the shop was closed. Aperos with Julie and Rob up the hill, back in time for Eurovision.

Monday 14 May

We had booked a night in a hotel in Plaisir, close to Versailles where we have a tour organised for tomorrow. 60k up the motorway near Tourouvre au Perche the car started losing power, fortunately, we managed to get onto a grass verge before it finally stopped. Rick said, “don’t worry we have gold plus breakdown insurance, even no excess”. When the breakdown truck eventually arrived they couldn’t move the car as it was stuck in Park. After that was resolved we were taken to a nearby Renault garage who said it would have to be transported to a Landrover garage. Rick rang the Insurance Company who said they couldn’t help us because the car didn’t have a MOT. It was due last December when we were all unwell with Covid and it appears that Rick had forgotten to do it. Big, bad surprise! The mechanic spent all afternoon phoning garages but none of them were nearby or could take it before mid-June. Then he spent ages trying to get us a taxi to take us back to Saint Ellier les Bois. It seemed that no one wanted the work, however, he eventually found a very well turned-out gentleman with a clean taxi willing to do the job. It was €250 for the recovery to the garage, €300 to bring the car back to the house, €30 for the mechanic who was completely exhausted and hadn’t done any other work for hours and €150 for the taxi – that’s so far. Tomorrow is another day, perhaps we will be able to think a bit more clearly after a good night’s sleep. Need to try the garage at Caen but they are insisting we go there with all our documents and we don’t have the log book with us or any way to get there.



Tuesday 15 May

Rick had a thought in the night that without an MOT our Insurance would also be invalid and even if we got the car fixed in France we wouldn’t be able to drive it. He’s organised a transporter to take it to Harwoods in Pulborough on 23 May – cost £1069. Luckily, we have our electric bikes so we cycled the 30 minute trip into Carrouges to top up with supplies. Got a puncture but Rick was able to repair it.

Caught up with all Gaby’s news, she came out of hospital yesterday and is up and about, her hip operation was a great success. She thinks the Paris family have sold the house up the hill and the one round the corner from her. The glamorous couple Nicky and Micky that bought John’s house have wowed everyone.

Wednesday 16 May

We had a visit from two different Estate Agents today to give us a house valuation. It all went well and Lise did a brilliant job translating. They like our style; think we will go with both of them. The buyers here pay all the fees. Between visits Rick knocked 10 minutes off the 30 minute each way cycle trip to Carrouges for supplies. We are fighting ants and the mice are back. I stayed at the house as we were hoping that our car would be returned today but no luck. There has been a fault with the transmitter and most of the day we have been without internet and a phone signal. It was a bit brighter but still chilly.



Thursday 17 May

Nothing much happened today as it's Ascension Day holiday, some shops are open until lunchtime. Julie and Rob were going to the supermarket and saved us a trip. We had a cycle ride along the narrow roads nearby. It's a beautiful time of year, there are fields and fields of buttercups and the hedgerows are full of wild flowers. Julie and Rob came to supper. They have one of their cars back but only partly fixed and have had to have the vet out twice as their ponies have become ill by eating fresh grass. It was a lovely end to a very long day. Good news car is being returned tomorrow.



Friday 18 May

It's weird being confined, thank goodness we have the bikes. Car has been delivered.



Cycling to Carrouges is a doddle for us now, might try to venture further tomorrow. There are so many properties for sale in the town that they might be better to knock the whole lot down and start again. The café looks like its permanently closed but the Boulangerie has a few tables and chairs outside so perhaps they are now serving coffee. Both hotels are shut and up for sale as is the florist, bistro and last years new restaurant. However, the Tabac has reopened and we found the Notary's office. There is a meat van while the Boucher is undergoing renovations. Rick's very taken with it and is dreaming up tomorrow's feast.



Saturday 19 May

Had a lie-in the last two mornings but Rick suddenly remembered that Yves, who is a car mechanic, was coming to have a look at the car. Gaby and I spent a while comparing our India visit diaries. Rick said that Yves had a very nice fluent English-speaking Frenchman with him who arrived in a blue car. Gaby for the life of her couldn't think who that could be. We had to rush out as the baker arrived, he now only calls on a Saturday about 11am. The English-speaking French man turned out to be their son, we were in hysterics. After Gaby and I spent another hour comparing our notes and photos about India we then cycled to the Logis Hotel for lunch. We followed the Google map's not so hilly route, but it took us twice as long, over an

hour. We only just made it as they stop serving lunch at 2pm. The Belgium waiter was interesting, he had spent some time in the UK and Dubai working for top stables of Godolphin and Michael Stoute as a jockey exercising and helping the training of the race horses. He became disillusioned doing a similar job in France as an awful lot is expected of you and they don't have anything like the good working conditions and benefits he had experienced while working in the UK and Dubai. He rents some land here for his horse for €100 a year, difficult to match that anywhere else. Zoned out for the rest of the day, woke up in time to enjoy Britain's Got Talent.

Sunday 20 May

It's been a busy day today. Rick rode into Carrouges, he asks the Butcher what he wants in French and she replies in English, same in the Supermarket. I did a big window cleaning job upstairs and then went and updated Lise on our progress with the house sale. Rick mowed the bit of grass next to her as it has to be done before midday on a Sunday. He's knackered after all that exercise before lunch. I touched up the rusty screw marks everywhere and Rick tarted up the cellar staircase walls and ceiling. He also trimmed the rose - a very productive day.

Sent email to Notaire in Carrouges to introduce ourselves and to ask him to act for us in any future sale.



Cycled to Ibis again for dinner but just us and another British cycling couple. They looked older than us and had left their car at Mayenne and were cycling along the Loire. They said to check out Esterbauer.com.bikeline for cycling holidays. Now this is really bizarre, they met a lady who was riding her horse from Chartres to Mont Saint-Michel, can't think it will be easy to get accommodation to include a horse. Not bad meal: Foie gras, duck and crème brulee. Raced to get back before the sun set as we had no rear lights.

Monday 21 May



More dead mice. Still a bit overcast and chilly wind. Rick thought he would cycle into the Notaire's office in Carrouges and show his passport as proof of his identity. We should have looked more carefully when we took photo's of the opening hours the other day. That office hasn't been open for quite some time as the door handle was covered in cobwebs. Also, it must be another holiday as there was not a single shop open.

Best news, we've been invited to Julie and Rob's for lunch. Turned out to be a 6 hour one!!



Tuesday 23 May

Up bright and early to pack the car and put the bikes on ready for the transporter. Message at lunch time to say that the Polish man driving it had just had an accident in Holland – oh no, no, no. While waiting for a response Rick did a few little jobs that always turn out bigger than expected. He sealed the big green broom cupboard, we have been wanting to do that for years. We are due to go back home tomorrow and have Gaby and Yves taking us to the ferry. Decided we wouldn't delay it as Rick is having some stitches out Thursday morning and we don't want to get involved with the French doctors again. Also, we have Ed's 70th Goodwood celebration on Friday. Gaby said we shouldn't leave the bikes on the back of the car as they may get stolen. Had a rethink and took the bikes and carrier of the car and put them in the cellar. Then we had a message from the shipping company, they can collect the car tomorrow. Bit tricky as Gaby and Yves are going to have a day out after they drop us off at the ferry.

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Wednesday 24 May

Everything went to plan, Gaby, Yves and granddaughter Jolene took us to Ouistreham and were looking forward to their moules and frites after they dropped us off. Had a message to say that the car wouldn't now be collected until tomorrow. We headed straight for the ferry restaurant and had the works including a bottle of wine as Rick wasn't driving. Don was waiting for us the other end we were very pleased to see him. Our garden at home had gone wild, especially the lawn but it all looked very lush. The French, neighbours have been fantastic: Lise for her translation help with the Estate Agents, Rob and Julie for entertainment and Gaby and Yves for lift to port and help with agents.

Car didn't arrive at Harwoods until Saturday 28th. A screw had come loose and got into the turbo and wrecked it, it's going to cost about £4000 to fix, maybe more if the engine is affected. Expensive visit, about £6000 altogether.

We decided to go with the one estate agent, Annabel at My Home, as not too sure having two agents will work. It's sad thinking that we are putting it up for sale after all the hard work that has been put into it. However, it may be a few years before its sold and it seems the right time now we are all of a pensionable age – I hate saying that! It has been an exciting project and a good family bonding experience.

We've got to go back soon to collect our bikes.