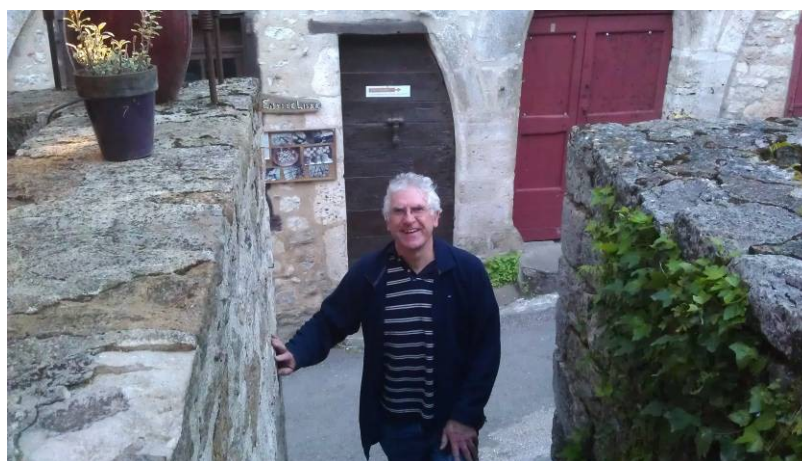


Sunday 12 May 2013 Loches & Chateauroux 23573 – 23761 = 188 kms

We finally left about midday and went via Ciral as Rick wanted to get his baguette but we only got as far as Alencon when he had a big, big panic thinking he had left his mobile at the house. Fortunately it was a false alarm. We stopped at an Aire in the medieval Cite Royale de Loches and wandered around the royal lodge where Joan of Arc met Charles VII and then explored the dungeons (le donjon) . As it was still reasonably early we set off for the campsite at Chateauroux. It's lovely to be back in the motorhome as we are forced to relax. We have seen some beautiful spring flowers here as the warmer weather means they are ahead of Normandy and home. Bluebells are lining the verges, lilac, laburnum and blossom are in full flow and the wisteria is just so fresh that it looks artificial. The only down side is that the crumbs from the French bread and bobbles of wool from my jumper and Rick's fleece where I washed them at too high a temperature are everywhere and it's driving me mad.



Monday 13 May 2013 Saint Cirq Lapopie 23761 – 23968 = 207 kms



It's another French public holiday today and it was raining and miserable as we set off on our long journey to Saint Cirq Lapopie. The final hour was a bit scary as we were on minor, narrow, windy roads with overhanging cliffs and sheer drops into valleys below. The scenery was quite stunning and we somehow had hit on one of the prettiest locations in France next to the River Lot. The sun had come out and it had warmed up as we settled into our plot at Camping De La Plage. We set off about 7pm to walk along the river to what we thought was the nearest town for supper. After about 20 minutes we came to a sign that said Bouchies 3.5 kms. I had my sensible Sue hat on whereas Rick was wearing his Reckless Rick one. We went back for the bikes but Rick has also forgotten the lights and there was no way I was going to risk having to get back without any. To cut a long

story short we cycled about 10 miles up and down hills to find that the only restaurants open were in the village of Saint Cirq Lapopie which was right at the top of the hill. Rick was getting annoyed with my lack of adventure and we were both secretly thinking it was back to the motorhome for a bowl of cereal. However, we struck gold, the climb up wasn't too bad and we found a brilliant busy restaurant in fantastic surroundings where it was even warm enough to sit outside. Of course it was all downhill back to the campsite and good moods restored all round.



Tuesday 14 May 2013 Milhars 23968 - 24012 = 44 kms



Cycled the route along the river we would have taken last night if I hadn't put my foot down and thank goodness I did as it would have been impossible to even walk back in the dark let alone cycle. Bouzies was a little port where you could hire a boat for a few days and travel approximately 25 kms along the river.

It was quite tricky without a Sat Nav finding our way to Alan's along the windy roads. We had to take a sharp left turn at the top of the hill near Saint Cirq Lapopie and Rick had to do several three point turns trying to avoid a tree and the wall which had a sheer drop down to the river below. The village signs were very confusing and we had to keep reversing back to a crossroads or junctions. At one time we tried about 5 different roads and of course it ended up being the one we started with but we just had to go a little further before it branched off to the correct road. Arrived at Alan's late afternoon and we were welcomed by his sister Debbie and German brother-in-law Wilfred. After an aperitif in Saint Antonin we had a meal in Festin D'Babette. Not too late to bed as we have an exciting day planned for Alan's 70th birthday tomorrow.



Wednesday 15 May 2013



It was raining but we started the day as we meant to go on with a champagne breakfast. Alan took 20 friends to lunch at Le Segelar the local restaurant. It was great fun meeting all his English and French friends. I sat next to Andrew who does barn conversions and got the low down on plastering. He confirmed that the French don't go in for PVA so he always brings loads back with him after a visit home. Alan has made some nice friends, Mo and Sharon who worked and work as Air Stewardess for BA and also Gillian who recently became a widow. It was a four hour lunch after which we spent the evening listening and mimicking the different owl sounds on You Tube.



Thursday 16 May 2013



We have to go to Albi today as now Alan is 70 he is unable to renew his British driving licence without an English address. He took all his forms for a French licence into the French official office but he now needs to sort out a medical and fill in loads more forms. Had a look at the Basilica Sainte Cecile in Albi that is built to look like a fortress with its internal walls and ceilings painted in an interesting style. Best lunch so far was found in a side street from the Basilica for only 18 euros for 3 courses. Apparently it has been a French law since the 1940's that all restaurants should include service charge with their bills but you can leave them something extra for the drinks. Really good, well presented very French food. Had a visit to Le Clerc to buy something to replace my jumper and Rick's fleece that I have completely wrecked. Had an aperitif at Linda and Andrew's up the hill near Alan. What an amazing place, they have basically restored a ruin. When their daughter reaches 14, because she lives in a remote village she will board at a school in Albi until she is 18. Linda was saying that their daughter started school in France age 7 she was in a class of only 14 with varying ages. She came back after the first day and said that she needed a napkin and a knife and fork as each lunchtime the French children sit down to a 3 course lunch. How civilised is that! Great evening playing "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" on my ipad. Even though there were a lot of German questions we couldn't seem to get past £8000. Then suddenly we made the £1,000,000 but by then we had had so much to drink that we didn't understand how we did it. Rick couldn't help keep mentioning the war but Wilfred took it well and we were all laughing our heads off.



The front of Linda and Andrew's house and part of the courtyard
Friday 17 May



After all this wining. Dining and entertainment we needed to chill out a bit. We stayed in and caught up with a few jobs while Wilfred and Debbie set off along the pot holed road to Cordes . Rick helped Alan take of the old swimming pool cover and had a go at fixing the shed door. It was actually quite warm for a couple of hours in the afternoon but we all spent ages searching the gravel for a tool Alan either dropped or mislaid. Champagne at 7.30pm with Fraiser who lives in Epson but has a holiday house opposite Alan. He then joined us all for a delicious meal once again at Le Segelar. We couldn't resist another game of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" and even though some of the questions were repeated we couldn't get past £32,000. We bought some new questions and then Rick got a bit cocky and took too many chances. Great fun and great evening.

Saturday 18 May

Rain again, sometimes heavy. We said goodbye to Wilfred and Debbie who were off to stay with a couple in the French town they were twinned with and then onto help their granddaughter celebrate her first birthday. Rick couldn't help slip in a little something about the war but agreed that some Germans especially Wilfred do have a sense of humour. Not sure that having our Sat Nav back is such a good thing as it sent us all over the place on our journey to Moissac. However, after somehow avoiding all the deviations because of the fair in the town we made it to the L'Ile de Bidounet campsite just before the next downpour.

