

## Christmas Newsletter 2024

Another year has gone by and this newsletter will fill you in on what has been happening with us. We hope you are well and in good health, or at least as good as can be expected given our advancing years. We take all the medication, jabs and vaccines offered to us. I don't have any significant health issues, although I definitely do not have the strength I once had and soon start aching if I do DIY jobs that involve too much bending, twisting or stretching to get into awkward places. Whilst Val's hip replacement was very successful she still suffers from arthritis in her other joints. She is not really that mobile and is usually suffering once we have had a shopping session. As a result we do not get out and about as much as we once did.

Our first visit to France was in April and we decided that the time had come to get our roof fixed. We have suffered from an increasing number of leaks in recent years and although I attempted to reseal slipped tiles during our visit in October last year I could not keep up with where the next leak would appear. We left in November 2023 knowing there were leaks but the weather was too bad to fix them so we just placed buckets in a couple of the bedrooms in what seemed to be the best places and hoped for the best. Fortunately we did not have any leak above our bedroom. It is difficult to find a local French builder who is not booked up 18 months to two years ahead. I found a building company set up by a British guy who had just expanded his team and could fit the job in at a few weeks notice. So we bit the bullet and went for a full tile replacement. We saved some money by having the garage and back kitchen roof done in corrugated panels but it was still a substantial cost. The work was done in June, between our first and second visits. That was good as judging by the photos we were sent it would have been pretty chaotic with scaffolding up at the front and years of dust and dried moss falling as the roof was stripped back. All was fine except for one leak over the back kitchen during a heavy downpour in October. It was under a complicated junction between a wall and two roofs, covered in zinc flashing. It took a few visits for them to track that down, including the morning of our last day so we were late leaving for the drive up to Calais. I had asked our neighbour to check after we had gone and he came back a week later to say there was still a leak. The builders came out again and finally worked out what was happening and made substantial changes to the zinc flashing. We are crossing our fingers that it is now fully watertight. The builders are going back to check it again shortly.

The summer in France was very hot, in the mid to upper 30s and dry so we did not pick up on the roof leak then. We spent a lot of time inside trying to stay cool, the nights were often hotter outside than in making it difficult to get any relief. Thank goodness for the mobile aircon unit we used in the bedroom. It is quite noisy but once it was so hot we left it on all night and put up with the noise. The Olympics were on TV so we rather overdosed on those. It was very quiet outside, nobody was venturing out at all in the heat.

We had lovely weather in Autumn, warm and sunny and were able to enjoy the garden and catch up with gardening from the summer. We didn't need to use the central heating either which was a bonus as we had run out of wood and not been able to find any dry enough to be used this year. In November we had a very pleasant day out on our 53<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. We went to Royan, had a very nice lunch in a restaurant overlooking the beach and went on to look inside the cathedral, something we had not done before. Royan was occupied during World War 2 and heavily bombed by the allies so there has been a lot of rebuilding. It is an interesting cast concrete building, impressive for its design and the way it dominates the skyline but disliked by many due to its drab colour and plain monotone exterior. Its modern interior displays many beautiful stained glass windows, in contemporary designs and vibrant colours, the most spectacular being behind the altar.

Alistair and family have visited several times during the year and they will be coming for Christmas as usual. He is keeping busy as alongside



his day job he is now building up a very successful eBay business. He mainly sells used clothing and particularly trainers but other items as well. He has a good eye for what sells and what is good quality. He is well known in his local charity shops and Post Office! Amélie-Grace continues to do well at school, she is exceptionally good at art. Her secondary school is a performing arts academy and in February she was in the school's production of 'Mathilda the Musical'. We went up for the weekend to see her in that, it was very good. It seems a long time ago and she is growing up fast. As a teenager she gets out and about a lot with her friends now. We visited them in Leeds, in June, for Josie's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday family party. They had a friends party the weekend before but split the celebrations over two events to accommodate everyone. Fortunately the weather was dry both weekends, probably the only ones without rain this summer here. A bonus as people could spill out into the garden, their house is not overly large inside. We took the opportunity on the way there to spend two nights with old friends who live near the Yorkshire coast. We had not seen them for some years but we just picked up where we left off and had a most enjoyable time. In fact we had another catch up with old friends who visited from Canada in September. The trouble now when we meet up with friends of a similar age is we spend a lot of time discussing our ailments and operations! Ian's mum has just turned 92 and enjoys activities most days in the main residential home adjacent to her assisted-living apartment. We call in to see her on our way to and from France as it is a very short deviation off our route and we can stay with his brother, who is only five minutes drive away, when we want to spend a bit longer with her.

We will be giving up our landline in January when our broadband contract comes up for renewal. Our mobile numbers are: Ian 07941 712953 Val 07980 457131

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Ian & Val



Inside Royan Cathedral

