

11 rue de Mars – or is it? (Continued)

After arriving in France we had to re-register the car within three months and that required the securing of a French MOT certificate, verification that VAT had been paid on the original purchase, and proof of imported car conformity. We secured the Carte Grise (registration document) and that enabled us to insure the car, the cost of which was very similar to UK prices, and get new number plates. Today 225 AVE 34 is happily transporting me around.

When completing the purchase of our house the Notaire asked why we thought the address was 11 rue de Mars – turned out to be the plot number! We were told to speak to the Mairie (Council) who would advise the correct address, and they advised that we lived in rue de Jupiter – so, really, we are on another planet.

The village in which we live is in Languedoc Roussillon, part of the Herault Department, an area concerned primarily in the production of wine. There are two small supermarkets, a Butcher, restaurant, bar, two bakers, two hairdressers, a Tabac, Doctor, Dentist, weekly market and a medieval watch tower on the hill around which the village is built. Any major shopping requirements (white goods, clothing, etc) are available in the city of Beziers, just 15 minutes away.

We have also been accepted into the French Health Service but since taking up residence I have yet to find a reason to visit our GP - compare that with regular surgery visits for chest infections and asthma when living in Ware!

Before moving to France we obviously had some concern as to how the local populace would receive us, not really surprising if you consider the sometimes humorous but mostly xenophobic hostility of the more popular tabloid UK press toward France and the French – many friends who read such stories quickly warned us as to the mortal (?) dangers we faced! In fact, the French believe in many of the standards held to in the UK, they are also friendly and extremely polite, frequently greeting us or stopping to speak – even children and youths are polite and considerate! The main difference is the way in which they approach life, having a very relaxed attitude but demanding high standards in food quality, health services and of course WINE. We have already attended a neighbours wedding, and celebrated New Year with 150 other villagers.

Obviously, life will always throw the odd problem at you and living in France does not mean we shall avoid these tribulations. But we have found an environment that is right for our health, has all the necessary facilities of life, and an affordable house best suited to my disability.

And holidays? Well, the UK of course, and tying in the trip with the Reunion weekend to meet up with former students and exchange memories. See you next year!

Peter Sedgwick