

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF DONALD AND JEAN CREASY: *For six months of the year Marcham is lucky to have their company, but what happens the rest of the year? Part 1 this month and Part 2 in September.*

Part 1 How we came to buy a house in France

It began nearly sixty years ago when Jean was a teenager in Exeter. She visited a French girl called Anne who was in hospital after suffering a bad leg fracture and was likely to be there for many weeks. The two girls struck up a friendship and during the following years they and their families made numerous exchange visits to and fro. When we were married Anne was one of our bridesmaids she herself was married soon after and eventually both families had five children of similar ages, and they in turn made exchange visits. Anne's husband, Michel, had an apartment provided with his job so the family had no house of their own. Every year on holiday they kept their eyes open for their dream home and in 1973 found a site and built a house at Le Vigan in the Cevennes. We spent our summer holiday that year in a tent in their garden and were about to go home when Jean said, "Couldn't we have a little house out here?". Donald replied that a house in the south of France was not within our means, but Michel said "You could buy a house for £100!" and he took us to see some. Well, they were not so much houses as places where a house had been, but the foundations, and water, electricity and drainage were all there. A green-field site in UK at that time would cost at least £5000 so it would have been excellent value for money. However we baulked at trying to organize and supervise a builder that far away and decided to buy a very small, but liveable, house in Arre, a village six or seven miles from Le Vigan.

It was indeed very small three rooms, each about 10' x 9', one above the other, and with no garden. But the top floor had room for two pairs of bunk beds for our four daughters, the next had a put-u-up settee and two arm chairs, and the ground floor had everything else; shower, loo, kitchen and dining room! When we ran out of space we spread into the little square outside the front door where there were benches and a fountain. We spent several happy summer holidays in Arre and, not surprisingly, many of our friends and neighbours from England used it when we were not there. Over 100 friends spent a holiday there during the following five years.



much bigger, but rather derelict and needed a lot of work. However Donald had changed his job and now had five or six weeks holiday a year (instead of two) so we embarked on the project. The house was built on rock so the 'cave' (cellar) was at ground level and the main accommodation was up a flight of steps. This meant that we could make a flat for ourselves at the bottom and have a complete house above as a holiday home for family and friends. And of course they came, and when Donald was made redundant some years later, Jean took early retirement and we stayed there for six months each year and ran it as a guesthouse-cum-gîte. Our daughters now had families of their own and we were as pleased to have them as they were to come. In addition to our immediate family over a thousand people have now been to stay with us in Molières, although many of these holidays have been repeat visits one couple have come 25 times!



By now our girls had become teenagers and wanted to invite their friends to holiday with them, and as there was some money available from the transaction when we moved house to our cottage in Marcham, we decided to find something bigger in France. The house we found was in Molières, a hilltop village only a mile or so from Le Vigan, and was very



The Cevennes is in the Languedoc Region and is a bit like Wales, mountainous and with its own language, Occitan. One summer, when we had our little house in Arre, a well organised group painted slogans on rocks and gable ends, "Touristes déhors!" (Tourists Keep Out!) and removed every signpost in an area the size of Berks, Bucks and Oxon so that the tourists really would get lost! When questioned, our neighbours said, "Oh that's not you we don't like, it's the people from Paris!" We have always been made most welcome and have felt completely at home.