

CHATEAU DU TRICHOT - MARCH 2017



This little book is dedicated to Joanna
who worked so hard to make our stay and the concert such a great success
and to Bill
who honoured his Euro 1 bet so swiftly with all the cash he had.



We spotted an 3rd hand people carrier, a van with comfortable car like front seats going cheap-ish. It took the bikes with the back seats removed.

After several false and over engineered starts, the fabricator was persuaded to try a simple frame bolted to the original seat sockets with welded uprights and a removable cross bar all covered with pipe insulation.

It took longer than we thought to strap the 4 bikes safely to the cross bar and load our baggage into the unexpectedly reduced inconvenient spaces. Something to be said for soft cases & holdalls.

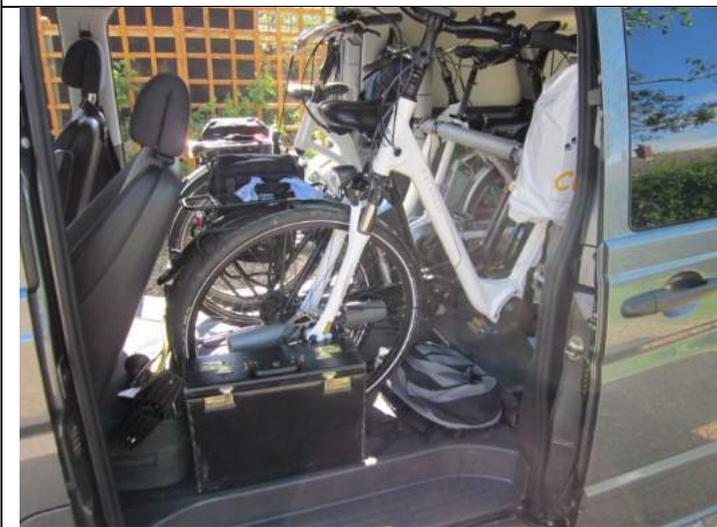


The garage said no need to worry about the oil and other leaks on our garage floor.

Early next morning we were off. Just after joining the M40 the oil warning light came on. The garage said it was not safe to go on.

They found the fault, a loose connection, and gave us 5 gallons of oil just in case.

By mid afternoon the Shuttle booking were changed, surprisingly easy and without cost. We spent the night at the Maurice in Calais, supping at the nearby Ancienne Histoire, both old favourites.





Leaving Calais early we got close to Chateauroux before our backs said it was time to stop.

Vatan, once a good halt on the old Roman road, has been bypassed. It is now a dead town of faded splendour, unappreciated and degraded. Shame.

The elderly woman in the tourist office suggested Issoudun and the Jules Chevalier - a monastery completed in 1906 to further the enlightenment mainly in West Africa. A great story of dreams, doubting cardinals and miracle funding.



We shared the many hundred bedrooms with pre-confirmation classes from Paris (confirmation in Notre Dame the next week), pilgrims going to Compostela and others. We had our corridor to ourselves.

We thought it was dry when we were refused corkage. But wine was included.

Kim had spoken to some of the children. Word spread there were English staying. An Irish priest came to check our Christian background and convert us. We asked if he knew Bishop Richard Hare, Kim's cousin. A good man.

Our chef and 2 helpers cooked and served us all in 2 rooms. The children in a hall like any school.





Richard the Lionheart made Issoudun an HQ in the 100 years war. He built a white tower wherein he kept his mistress.

The obvious approach is a blind alley that fools many English - which the locals think desperately funny.

Its gardens are shared now by a grand town hall, once a splendid private house. There are many such. The boulangerie with its wheat sheaf motives is still a boulangerie today.

We ended our walk at dusk. The floodlit church attached to the monastery looked well, the cross on its spire reminiscent of the Coptic ones in Africa.





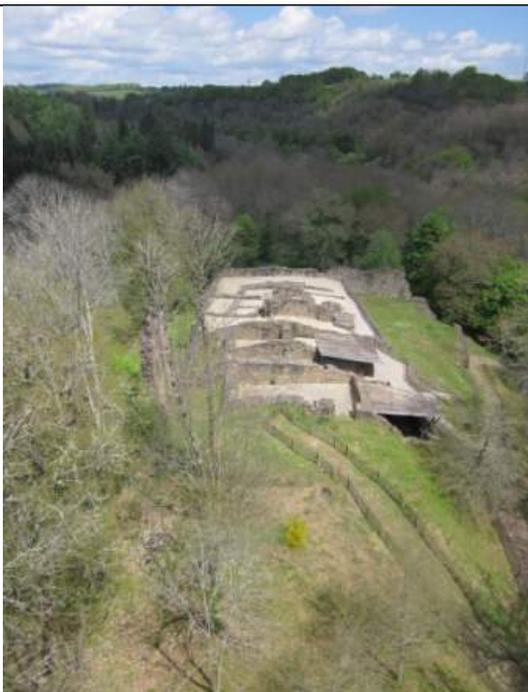
South of Limoges we needed another walk to fend off travel stiffness, one of age's blessings. On a detour to Solignac was a sign to Chalussat Castle, under English control until its destruction after a 5 day siege.

Originally a fortified palace built 1,000 years ago close to a village of 20 knights and their followers, it changed hands in the 100 years war and ended up run by brigands in the pay of the English to control the plateau.

The good people of Limoges en mass besieged the place and pulled it down. The EU is restoring it as far as it can be.

The excavations of the knights' village can be best seen From a peel tower - Jenny's Tower. The brigands got her. Her bones were found there 3 centuries after she let the besiegers into the castle.

Worth a visit if you need a break. A lot of history kindly provided in English too. After all we too are paying.



© Depart from the reception area:
The Chalussat site has belonged to the Haute-Vienne Departmental Council since 1996. Since purchasing the site, the authority has launched a huge excavation, maintenance and development programme to be carried out over the next 25 years.

© Arrival at the low castrum: historic location and landmark
The Chalussat site is located on a 500m rocky outcrop, bordered to the north by the confluence of two rivers: the Brianne to the west, alongside which we have just walked, and the Ligoure, on the other side. As will be seen later, a defence strategy had to be adopted with respect to the vast plateau to the south.

This site comprises two distinct parts: the low castrum, in front of us, and the high castrum. The word castrum does not mean castle, but fortification. This section is a fortified village. We can see the remains of the wall that surrounded it.
The second part, the high castrum, is an actual fortified palace.

The low castrum, which is a primitive dwelling to which we'll return later, together with a small section of the high castrum, was built at the beginning of the 12th century, around 1130, by a family of knights called the Jaunhac family, on land belonging to Solignac Abbey. They had the support of Bishop Eustorge of Limoges.

Why did Bishop Eustorge support the Jaunhac family?
This was due to the split within the Catholic church between Innocent II and the anti-pope Anaclet II. During this troubled period, the bishop doubtless wanted to protect himself in the event of excommunication.

Anaclet II (1130 - 1138) was a "marrano", that is, a Jew forced to convert to Catholicism. His family, the Pierleoni, had amassed enormous wealth from money-lending, which enabled him to be promoted to the cardinalate. Having become a cardinal, he plundered churches and used the gold to bribe other cardinals with a view to a future conclave. Pope Honorius III, who was already dying, seeing that the Jewish group was becoming dominant, reduced the sacred college to eight cardinals, thereby eliminating a great number of Pierleoni's supporters. Innocent II was elected by those with legitimate votes. Several days later, Pierleoni, having won over two thirds of the other cardinals, had himself elected (anti)pope under the name "Anaclet II".

As his contemporaries had done, "Anaclet II" plundered churches. According to one contemporary, Abbot Ernaud, "When even his bad Christian followers refused to carry out by the Jews. They removed sacred vessels and engraving enthusiastically. These objects were sold, and thanks to the money they brought... Anaclet was in a position to persecute Innocent II's followers."



Will the van fit? We turned back.



Salignac from the Roman bridge



Invigorated by the castle walk we went on to Salignac a 2-Star small town on the French scale of pretty places. It was not open for the season yet. We found 4 locals. There are no shops. Nowhere to buy hay fever eye drops. No coffee. No buns.

It was important in Roman times. With some trepidation we drove the large van down narrow alleys to the Roman bridge, still in use.

The unusual multiple mill complex is being restored by the EU. It will look good and may generate green power.

Salignac suffered its share of massacres in the war.

More of Richard Lionheart everywhere: on buildings, in windows and cheeses. A complex. Or the French think of him as their Duke of Normandy and of Aquitaine.



It was great to arrive at Trichot. The party was gathering. Preparations for the concert were well in hand. Some were keen to test the bikes.

First stop - impressing neighbours at Lagabertie with the good looking girls Bill had gathered.





Where the hell are we!

Workmen showed us a track through the woods. Where the track came out Bill's SatNav knew not.

My map did - Told you!

Downhill speed trials on the road from Cardou.

We made it! In one piece! Back to Trichot!

Wow! What a team.





Refreshed by cycling up mountains and down valleys we took a culture day.

Chateau Biron is the much fought over dilapidated seat of one of France's great families now owned by the nation. Bill & Joanna nearly persuaded Kim to bid for it for holiday lets.

I needed a stiff drink. So to Tournon's ancient square before fanning out to case the joint and chat up the natives. They are always delighted by foreigners' who speak their language. And find my polite attempts hilarious. Odd.

Back at Trichot, Bill enjoyed the evening as Joanna & Penelope put the final touches to the table. Joanna fed 200 odd mouths over the week end including the concert goers





More friends and relations arrived on Saturday.

Rosie, Bill's sister, and Wendy checked out the music ready to delight us later in the evening.

Joanna rustled up something to eat.

A short walk after lunch in the rain with Joanna and Penelope showed up some unexpected wild flowers.

No one knew what the first and last were.

The little patch of bee orchids were spectacular.





Wendy did not make breakfast next morning. But the rest were out early to get the auditorium ready.

Cheese table out of store and set up under Susanna's watchful eye.

Setting out the bar tables protected against spills.

Decanting the box wine for quick dispensing.

Setting the stage and chairs in the auditorium.

Stuffing the holes in the barn to keep the sun out.





The great moment approaches. The piano tuner arrives early.

After lunch the cooled wine and cheeses are brought out.

The cheeses are all British with their names on flags to help the locals, covered with netting ready for later.

Elspeth of perfect pitch checks out the piano tuners work.

A quick change. Meet and greet on duty. The Deux Cheveaux will light the entrance.

And they come, leaving their cars in the vineyard.

Soon all is hushed expectation.





Joanna photographs us all for her thank you for coming letters and next year's mail shot.

Bill's polished introduction and welcome is well received.

Bounding from the shadows to centre stage Michael has us all enthralled.

All too soon Bill eloquently winds up expressing so well the rapture of us all. The party disperses into the warm enchanting twilight, the end of a fabulous day.

All save a lucky 14 who stay to supper and enjoy Bill's very own Chateau Tsar much improved since 1917.



Thus another Trichot concert swells the memory with magic moments of food, wine, friends, music and ...well - best stop there.



All too soon the party's good byes. Those left packed away the chairs and cleaned up the tables.

The bikes unloaded, pumped up and prepared.

And Team S-B set off down the drive for the ride of their lives.

Kim and I had recc'ed the lanes France is riddled with to see if the walking map was good for cyclists. We hoped so.

We plunged off piste. May not be so bad.





Soon we are all in the swing of it.

Some of these old roads (that is what most once were) pass splendid places the tarmac traveller will never see.

Soon everyone had the bug.





This track from Dorde must once have been a main highway - beautifully built up and not yet broken down though unused for decades but by farm vehicles .

The occasional dog showed great interest in us.

A duck farmer put us right when we lost our way.

But we were not at all sure this was still the old road.





If the bike stops you can't start again on a steep hill. There is a trick: change down early and on full power.

Bill dashed ahead to talk to the fair blond restaurateur. Sadly my photo missed her. But lest you want to try here is her sign.

And so on, on along a short stretch of main road - Kim with her battery switched off.

On to Mauroux a pretty village with some very fine assets.





Unpacking lunch on the old Palot to Garrigues road.

For a moment Bill thought we had lost the Lavaysse road to Combe de Mortayroux and dismounted.

Faint heart. Some rode down the field. Others down the track in time for a photo opportunity. Smuggy.

Safe and steady followed on.

Suddenly in Combe de Mortayroux it was friends reunited.

A fine workshop and an old car too. What luck.





The Fontaine de la Combe still works though the hamlet is on mains water.

It issues now into a small field-side reservoir. We all inspected it.

The way back by Bazerac means a steep, steep hill. Bill bet Kim she could not bike up. He paid up as soon as we got back. What a man.

But not before he demo'd the skilled art of skid turns on Trichot's fine gravelled yard. What a player.

What an end to the week end.





A light supper.

A moonlit stroll to Thezac village with a debate about camera settings and flash.

All good things come to an end.

Tomorrow the S-Bs are at the grindstone.

And we head home after a very special week end.

Bless those that made it happen.





Traffic, stops to straighten our backs and a missed turn meant we would not get north of Rouen.

We retraced our steps to N13 J24 south of Rouen and pulled into a restaurant to study our options.

Kim asked 2 young Frenchmen for advice.



They lauded the small town at the foot of the escarpment below.

Thus we came to La Bouille, an old salt tax town, pretty, and to the Bellview Hotel, a Logis on the banks of the Seine.

Other hotels will open in the season.

It is a tourist town now.

But once was a rich port.

Many fine building are preserved on the river front.

Some are very old and the woodwork looks in need of preservation.





A popular spot for painters in the 19th century and with much going on there now.

chemin Le fleuve étape n°2

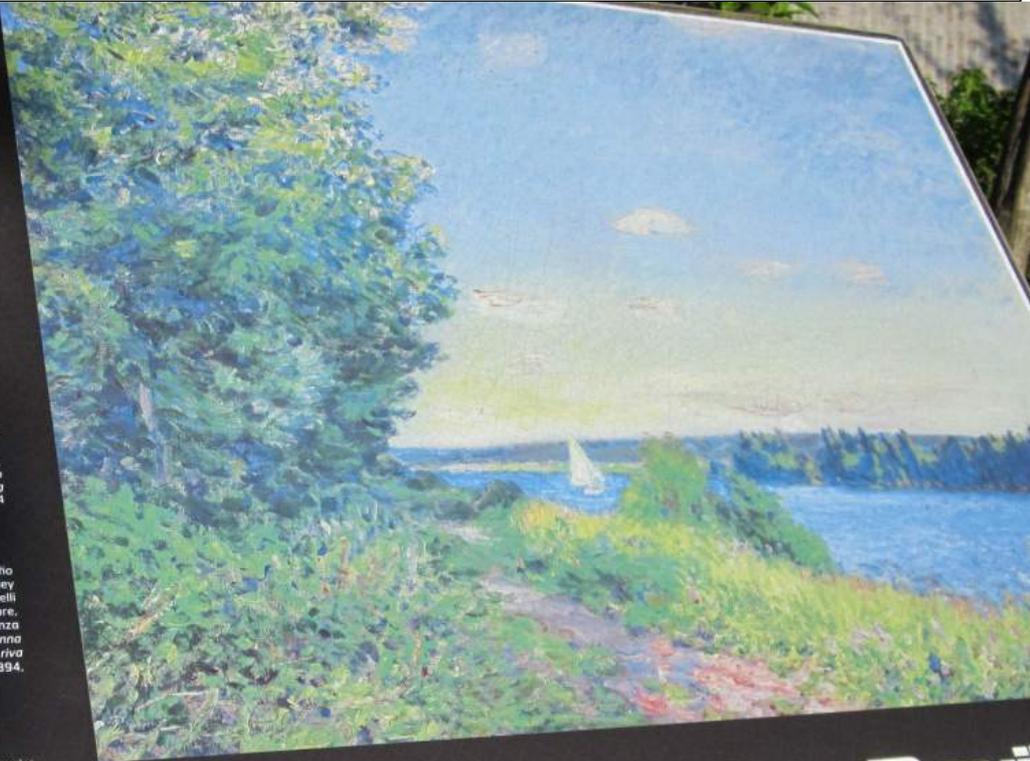
Ici, vous êtes à l'endroit précis où le souffle d'un coup de vent est venu un jour attendre le peintre. Immergé dans la nature, Sisley est à l'affût des moindres treillisements de l'air en particulier lorsqu'il s'agit de reproduire sans limite et il saura les reproduire dans leur touchante vérité. *La Seine à la Bouille, coup de vent* est l'exact pendant de *Sentier au bord de l'eau à Sahurs, le soir* peinte elle aussi à l'été 1894, alors que Sisley est de passage à Rouen.

Here, you are in the exact place where the painter would have been touched, one day, by a gust of wind. Immersing himself fully in nature, Sisley was on the lookout for the slightest murmur of a breeze, which he tried to capture and convey with his paintbrush. Skies were to be an endless source of contemplation for him, and he had the ability to reproduce them with impressive realism. *The Seine at La Bouille, a Gust of Wind* is a counterpart of *Path on the Water, in the Evening at Sahurs*, which was also painted during the summer of 1894, while Sisley was visiting Rouen.

Hier, befinden Sie sich genau an jener Stelle, an welcher der Maler von einem aufkommenden Windstoß eines Tages tief ergriffen wird. Sisley ist von der Natur ganz vereinnahmt und spürt den geringsten Luftbewegungen nach, die er mit Hilfe seiner Pinsel auf die Leinwand zu übertragen sucht. Besonders den Himmel beobachtet er endlos lange und er versteht es, seine ergreifende Wahrhaftigkeit wiederzugeben. *Die Seine in La Bouille, Windstoß* ist das genaue Gegenstück zum *Uferweg bei Sahurs, Abendstimmung*, den Sisley auch im Sommer 1894 malte, als er in Rouen Halt machte.

Qui, vi trovate nel posto preciso in cui un giorno un soffio di vento commosse il pittore. Immerso nella natura, Sisley rimane in attesa del più piccolo fremito di aria che i suoi pennelli si sforzeranno di riprodurre sulla tela. I cieli, in particolare, diventeranno per l'artista un soggetto di contemplazione senza limiti e riuscirà a riprodurli nella loro toccante verità. *La Senna a La Bouille, colpo di vento* è il corrispettivo del *Sentiero in riva all'humo a Sahurs, di sera* dipinto anch'esso nell'estate del 1894, quando Sisley era di passaggio a Rouen.

Le Beauvais, la mer, l'instant, la villégiature, lumière de l'estuaire



La Seine à la Bouille coup de vent

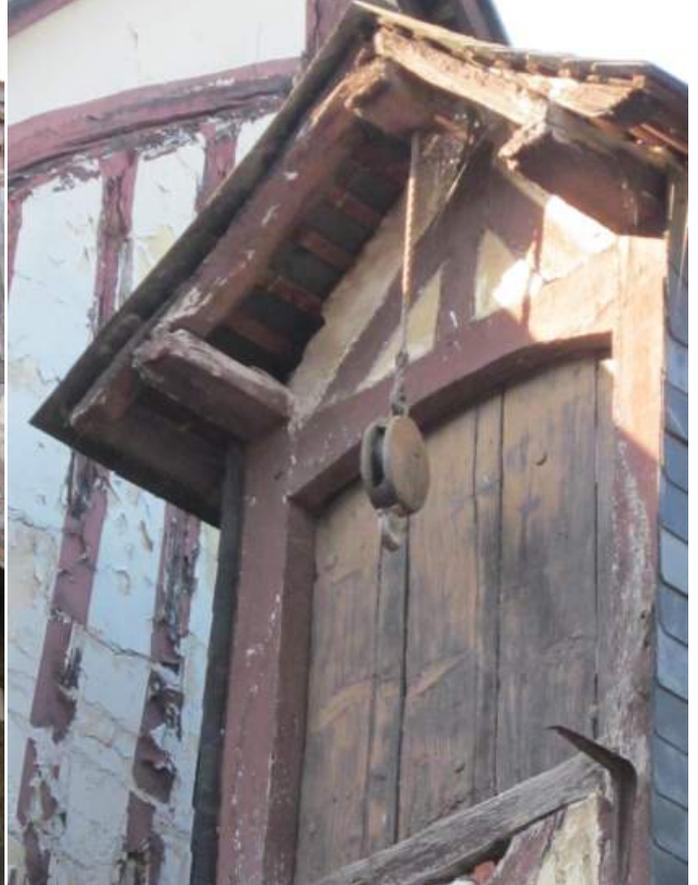
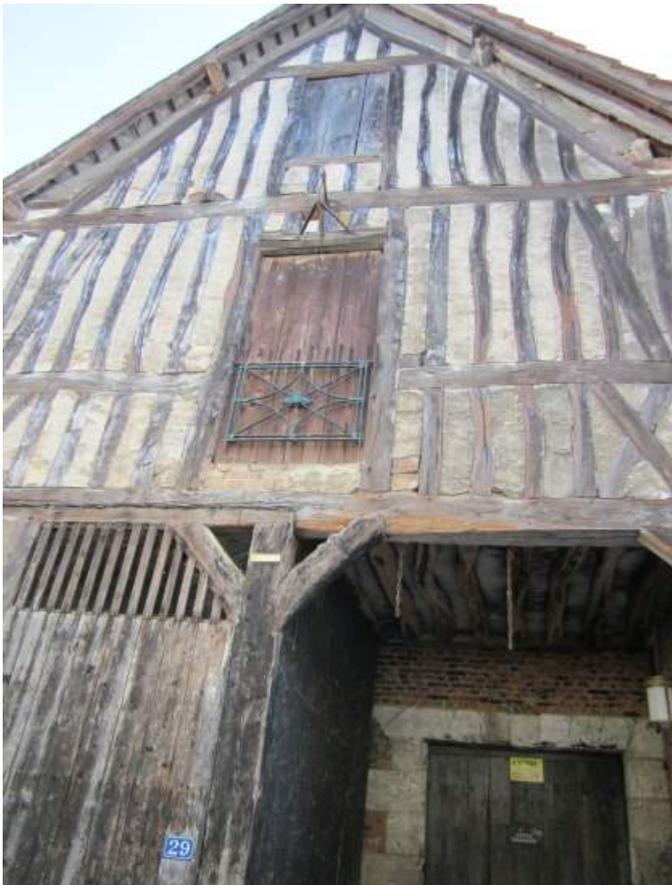
ALFRED SISLEY, 1894

Collection du musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

en particulier seront pour lui un sujet de contemplation sans limite et il saura les reproduire dans leur touchante vérité. *La Seine à la Bouille, coup de vent* est l'exact pendant de *Sentier au bord de l'eau à Sahurs, le soir* peinte elle aussi à l'été 1894, alors que Sisley est de passage à Rouen. ■

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It is different further back from the river.

Bouille's old warehouses look derelict, unused, unloved.

And for sale.

Trees grow from the church: disused and neglected.



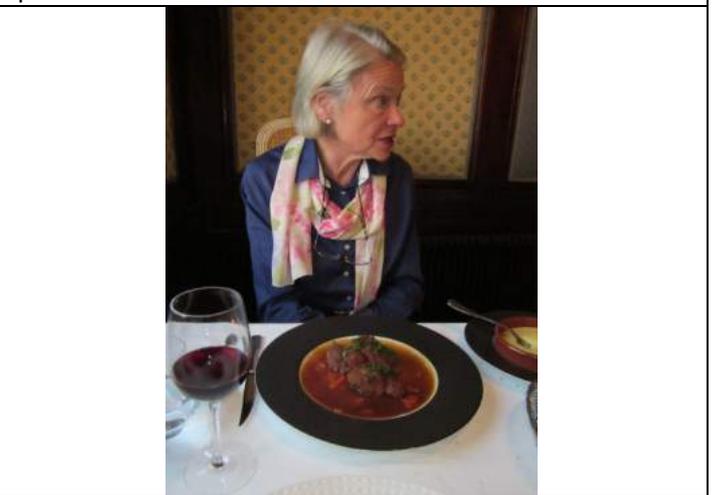
The Belleview's adequate but cramped rooms.

The dining room was the only eatery open in town. Looked OK. Staff chosen for youth and beauty played up to it. It worked. Filled this outpost with a wide range of male humanity.

Well presented food tasted good too.

Kim chatted up the couple returning from their daughter's wedding. Bride & groom, both northerners, wanted a French Chateau wedding. It went very well.

The cheese was even better than it looked. Kim waited long before tucking in to those (Lion?) hearts. Shame to spoil a work of art.





A stroll along the Seine, still light after supper.
The river is clean & may be tidal here.
Rouen dock just in sight upstream.
Very pleasant at twilight, up and down stream.
And so to bed.





The day dawned misty. We had watched the ferry the day before. The sun burnt off the mist and we boarded.

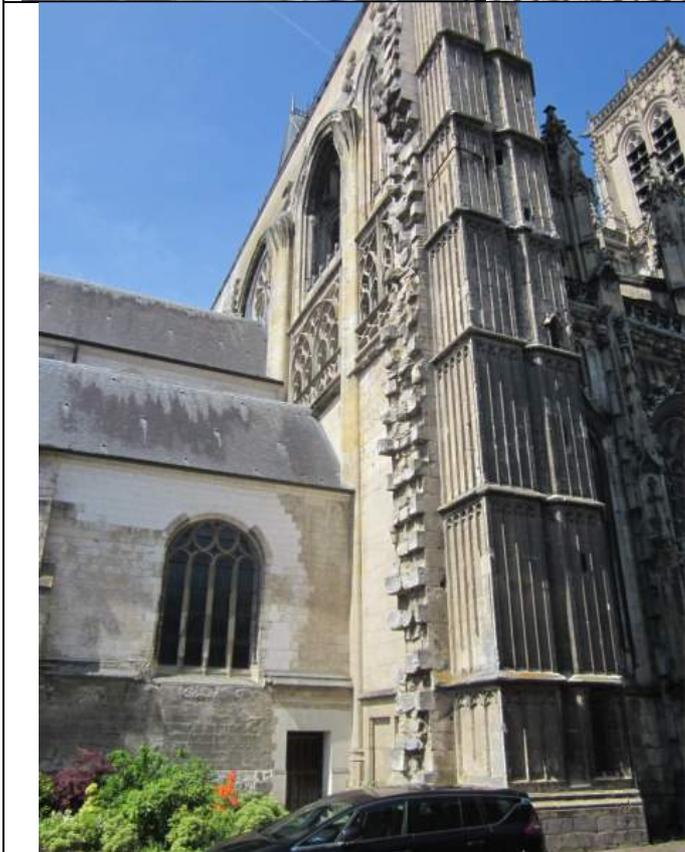
Bouille looked small.

Landing at Sahurs the proud ferryman assured us it was free even for foreigners - until after Brexit.

Then on up the D351 & D94 by-passing Rouen's gridlock to join the A150 at J2 to Dieppe before changing to the A29 then A28 to Calais.

Will try this way again.





We never got that day cycling in Normandy.

We cultured in Abbeyville. And dallied.

Only the facade was undamaged in the war.

The vaulting and inside is new - 1950s & 1960s.

But the money ran out at the back.

So a short walk - Halinghen to Haut-Pichot and back.





Another night at the Maurice in Calais, eating at the Anciene Histoire nearby.

A successful wine tasting.



What a promise.



Home and unpacked.

All seems rather empty.

But the memories!

