



**RS Archer** @archer\_rs *Fri Sep 25 09:17:41 +0000 2020*

Brian and Audrey have arrived. Off loading car now, first thing we spotted, copious boxes of PG Tips T bags and Tesco lavatory paper. Wife and dog watching from kitchen window and providing updates.

Also being offloaded:

Tartan blankets

Nordic walking sticks

A large ham

A dog's basket (but no dog)

A case of Mateus Rosé

One cardboard box inscribed "Ian's gloves"

A pick-nick basket

One large Golf umbrella

Another ham

Three lime green suitcases

A garden gnome

Roller Blades

I was working but I heard Audrey from my study,

"Cooee dear, how are you?" My wife replied.

"Je vais très bien. Comment puis-je vous aider?"

"O we don't speak any French dear. You will need to speak English with us - make an effort, we will help you with it"

My daughter who had just returned home overheard this and intervened,

"My mother does not speak English, only French". This clearly baffled Audrey,

"Well that must be difficult in everyday life" My daughter let her down gently,

"Not if one lives in France"

Brian arrived at my door, waving a bottle of the aforementioned Mateus Rosé

"Hello old boy, peace offering. Got some glasses?"

I declined, saying I was working

"No probs, we'll be in the garden, just give us a shout" he said in retreat, his red trousers clashing with my roses

Wife giving a commentary on Brian and Audrey. Seems they have put out deck chairs, have got changed and are now sharing a bottle of wine plus sausage rolls in their garden.

I should say that it's 14 degrees and there is a slight rain shower however they are clearly 'on holiday'

It is very hard to write a chapter on Septimius Severus role at the Battle of Lugdunum and his relationship with Caracalla when I have wife and daughter in the kitchen both using binoculars and screeching with laughter.

Brian and Audrey are now putting on their roller blades.

Even for a writer like me it is difficult to describe the sight of them on their roller blades. Words like elegant, refined, composed and graceful do not play a part.

It is as though they have entered a new dimension of gravitational effect.

Newton's Third Law of Motion seems not to play a part in their progress, they exist on a new strata of independent progress and movement. They can convert blind panic and flailing arms into onward progression.

It is utterly bewitching to watch.

They have returned and I was closing the gates when they passed,

"Hello there, we've just started this roller blading you know"

I congratulated them.

"Our son said it would keep us young"

I have a suspicion the son is eyeing up a fast inheritance.

Spoke with Brian and Audrey at the weekend, they are nice enough people but criminally uninformed when it comes to Brexit. They think the EU will,

"Give us all we want in the end, they can't afford not to" and "Free movement ending stops illegals sneaking in"

I asked how the new restrictions will impact on their visits to the new house, they are not bothered in the slightest,

"They will never check, it's all talk just to frighten us, the usual EU bullying. We'll be able to come and go just as we do now. "

I tried to warn them, I mentioned the robust measures the EU has in place for visitors who overstay their visas but Brian was very relaxed,

"For foreigners from Africa and that yes but that will not apply to us." Audrey memorably chipped in

"We're Europeans, so it's different"

I was gentle,

"Well to be fair you're not Europeans anymore, you left"

Brian dismissed this with a wave of his hand,

"Yes but we're part of the European continent and that's what matters. The Communist EU will be gone in a few years anyway so we're not worried"

I felt I should challenge this,

"The EU is not in any way Communist". In response Brian delivered what I assume he thought was the definitive statement on the matter,

"Try reading the Daily Mail, they have the real facts about the EU"

He wasn't finished.

"Also take a look at the videos Nigel Farage does, he talks about the sort of facts the BBC is trying to hide from us. Thousands and thousands of illegal immigrants flooding into Britain every day. He's the man we need in charge not that weak Johnson"

It occurred to me at this point that Johnson is never going to be able to deliver the Brexit people like Brian voted for. Brian's Brexit is a fantasy and it will be interesting to see who Brian blames for that. I would previously have said the EU but now it may well be Johnson.

Audrey was still intrigued with the concept of my wife only speaking French (she in reality speaks good English).

"How does she get on with watching TV?"

"Well" I said "she watches French or Belgian TV"

"O I see" she said "and they have programs and that do they?"

Brian was able to offer a view,

"They have the same programs as us just dubbed into French"

"Well that's partly true, we also have our own programs as well produced in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada in French" They both looked confused, Audrey spoke,

"Canada?"

"French Canadian TV" I said. They stared at me blankly.

"The Quebec region of Canada, the language is French"

Audrey thought this was very funny,

"O you are wicked, fancy trying to get us to believe that!"

Brian chipped in,

"No Audrey to be fair I think the French Canada thing was around before the war but not now, they've all learnt English these days". Audrey was smug,

"One more reason for his wife to learn English then. Might be able to talk with us if she did"

Audrey was still pulling at the thread,

"So it's the same for everyone in France?"

"Well" I said "Yes all French people speak French but many of us speak other languages as well. For example I am currently learning Italian"

"No need" said Brian. "We went, they speak English"

I said to Brian,

"Surely it's better to learn the local language. Will you be learning French now you are buying a house here?" He scoffed,

"Utter waste of time, once they know you have a few words they use that against you. Always better to stick to English"