

Dear family and friends,

This has been a strange and unpredictable year; like all of us who have escaped (so far) the curse of this invisible oppressive enemy Covid, we can count ourselves lucky to be healthy and looking forward to 2021 and all the lack of social distancing that it will hopefully bring.

We were fortunate enough to have both our daughters, Cécile and Bianca, as well as Bianca's boyfriend Tanguy to spend the spring lockdown with us. The population of the village also included William and Jonas, the Sinfonietta Bardou / Da Capo organizer who has been living in Bardou since November 2019.



It's been lovely having Jonas in Bardou because we have shared hikes in the mountains; Michelin level meals (food you never tyre of !) and he renovated the Taberna kitchen in the spring! Many long evenings were spent discussing the fine details of the kitchen. The floor first had to be tiled, which Brian and Jonas did together.



Jonas works out cleaning paths around Bardou and is organizing a “Path cleaning / rebuilding path walls that have collapsed workshop” (or should we call it master-class?) in May 2020 in Bardou. It will be an chance to discover hidden hiking paths, a chance for good cooking and maybe even beer brewing with Brian (Mayfest?).

In February, Franz and Klemens came with Franz’s brother Peter who is a carpenter and a friend and college, Klaus. Franz has been coming for years and renovated the 2 bergeries on the way to St Martin du Froid with the help of young people about 40 years ago. Every year there is a project and this year it was building 2 new dry toilets. Each of the dry toilets in Bardou have a name (*Down-under* down by the lower garden, *Canada House* which is a little drafty etc.). We named the new toilets *Brexit* because you have to cross a bridge to get there, it always seems to take longer than expected and the result, well we will see.





Martin, our mason finished the renovation of Daïsse and Klaus and Peter (from Franz's group) helped make head lights from the old floor boards of our library, then the kids painted the ceiling and the end result is MAGNIFICENT!



Most of our spring and fall reservations were cancelled, as were many summer reservations but it enabled a number of old timers and faithful Bardou guests to come last minute. It was lovely to reconnect with 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation of Sinfonietta's and get to meet their families.

Brian's brother John arrived in late July from Stansted for a few days on his gastro-cycle tour through France on his bicycle; it sounds impressive, but it is down hill from Dover.

All but 5 planned concerts had to be cancelled. Jonas opened the concert season with chamber music (instead of the planned full orchestra), which was a great success. We always look forward to Jonas's Symphonic holidays as these musical retreats come with good food, fine musicians and great people!



Joanna Goodale gave a piano recital in the music room; we turned the piano so that people could sit outside and still watch her play. Joanna gave a beautifully original recital combining classical pieces with Tibetan bowls, in homage to Alain Kremski who passed away last year and who gave a fantastic concert in Bardou with piano and Tibetan bowls 3 years ago.



We also had a few impromptu concerts given by Bardou guests (only for the village) that were a great success. Some ex-Sinfonietta musicians had planned to come as a full orchestra but as the concert venues were cancelled their trip and performances were jeopardized. Luckily about half of them were still able to come and gave a lovely performance in the Rittersaal. We set up benches in front of the window (an on the 4 Sisters terrace) and all the kids crowded around the window, mesmerized by the performance.





James Kline who has been coming to Bardou for over 20 years also graced us with his self designed guitar arch-harp. We set up the concert on the Lower Hostel terrace and raided all the benches and some chairs in the village, plus a make-shift sun parasol. It turned out to be a great sun drenched venue and James gave a great performance.



We had the Lower Hostel free end of July, so our friend Erik organized some of our theatre friends from Paris (Cinemorph) to come for a week. Two of them, Lucy Dixon and Perry Leopard gave an alternative concert for Bardou with Lucy accompanying her voice with brooms, leaf rakes and the like collected around the village. Perry peppered the duo with a sample of his original delta rock record.

We didn't go on any holiday trips abroad this year but we did go visit our life long friends in Provence, Jenny & Patrick and their daughter Svenja (my goddaughter) as well as Dominique (who I have known since I was 13) and his partner Yoko who live near by. We visited the famous perfume museum in Grace and came out smelling of lavender and roses!

As is our custom in September, Albrecht and Sigrid took us on a mystery day tour. We did a day trip to Avène, which is a pretty little town and the scenery along the way was breath-taking.



Sean, our son, came for a few days in August with 3 friends from high school. We had a fantastic time with them, and shared some great meals - courtesy of Sean and Adelchi's culinary skills- and some very voluble boules games!

This year we missed out on the precious help and company of our spring time helpers, but in July and August a whole group came to our rescue: Jonas and Leonie more or less spent the summer

here and helped us keep Bardou afloat. Brian's nephew John-Robin (better known as Johnny) arrived beginning of August, liked it so much he stayed till beginning of September. He joined the outdoor gang along with Ingeneer Léo, Julius, Klaus, Constantin, Lucas and Mira. They got to help Brian with such outdoor jobs as wall building and wood-cutting. The indoor gang (Dr Léo and Regina lead by Elizabeth) on the other hand helped getting houses ready for guests and keep the village tidy. We had most meals together and even had the luxury of meals cooked by Rohan, a fabulous Nepalese cook (living in Germany) assisted by his friend Sam.



As most guests had to cancel their holidays in the fall, Brian and I took advantage of the time to finish the pergola on our terrace and Martin built a beautiful terrace for Pan's house, taking this opportunity to work on the out-door plumbing around Atelier and Pan's (Brian has become our indoor plumber!).

For Christmas, Cécile only just escaped England in the nick of time to re-join Bianca who has been working from here for the last month. Brian's brother, Mike and wife and son, Christa and Johnny, were able to drive over from Germany to join us for Christmas and to start the Bardou annual home brewing beer festival (Decemberfest)





This year has definitely had it's challenges but we are so grateful for all the help we received and the lovely people we have met and met again. In this spirit we wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year and hope to see you soon again.

Betsy, Brian and family

