

January, February, March, April

A new year and I think everyone is hoping that this year will see life return to normal.

The Covid Christmas broke many family traditions, and we are missing our loved ones and friends very much. However, we started the year with hope and optimism that bookings would hold. We were facing our first event at the end of May and wanted everything ready for that.

Of course, all the hopes did not stop lockdowns, and in France

we have faced no restaurants from October going through to June.

We all now hope summer will be a little more normal. This was not the best timing for our change of life and start in the hospitality industry. However, we continue to tell ourselves that this gives us the time we need to get things done. No midnight shifts trying to finish for a deadline. In fact, we have not had

one of those moments so common on renovation shows. Yes, we have worked virtually seven days a week but we have always finished for dinner and apart from computer work we have not been finishing a room and making beds at midnight. This I am very happy about.

Oh The Cold

When we moved into the Chateau last year it was February.

It was so cold then, but we have since insulated the vents in the floor and closed off fireplaces, so it is going to be so much better. Famous last words this morning, because with a puppy there is no staying indoors and deciding to face the day in the now warm house and light the fire.

We did not really get to explore this amazingly beautiful event

of frost and a clear sunny morning last year. Thank you, Cooper, for getting us out and about. There have been several frosty mornings this season and while the vineyards and the orchids have battled to save as much of the yield as possible and we feel for them terribly, it is a very magical experience. The amazing spring blossoms and the beauty of living in a place with

all four seasons so distinct is what we love about living in Europe. We both grew up in a majority ever-green environment and while you know it is winter in Sydney you do not have the dramatic spring we love so much here and the autumn colours.

So, while I do spend a lot of winter saying come on summer, I do love its beauty.



How Many Plates Do We Need???

Plates, plates and more plates.



We made the decision to go vintage and I am having so much fun finding items and collections. Funny how life comes around in circles, my Mum was an antique dealer, and I was even a second hand dealer a long, long time ago. I never thought I would use that background and experience again, but this project has constantly drawn from both of our life experiences in ways we did not think it would.

It is wonderful to now tell my mum that the dinner set she gave me when I was 19 is now part of a bigger crockery collection. The willow pattern teapot, sugar bowl and

milk jug joined by many others. We have a large, shared kitchen for guests to use and as we can sleep 58 we need to have enough crockery, cutlery and glasses for that as well as the 5 apartments needing their kitchens fitted out. In addition, I have started the event collection so when we cater for parties, weddings and events we have crockery for this as well. I do wish both of our mothers were able to be here because they would both love hunting for this lot. Not to mention it would be great to have the help with the washing and sorting of it all.



destiny

noun

/ˈdestɪni/

plural *destinies*

the way your life will develop in the future



The Cave

Some jobs you just do not want to face.



Cleaning out the cave or the cellar was definitely one of those jobs. The cave is two thirds of the footprint of the Chateau. The previous owners

did not part with many things over the 30 years they owned it and we were guessing neither did the previous owner. People had picked through it and over it as the previous owner tried to sell off what they could so things that were once ordered were no more.

We would say one day we will clean this out – yes one day in the distant future. So what happened? Well, Peter needed to move out of the bedroom he took over as his tool room as we were getting closer to starting the last four bedrooms, and he just did not want to take things down there and add to the piles. The other thing that happened to us was a fearless Workaway volunteer Natalie who said – I'll do it! So mostly three people but up to five took four days to wheelbarrow things out, while trying to stop Natalie saving everything. Organising and then finally moving Peter in. What an achievement and what an amazing feeling. Although most of our guests will never see this part of the house it is what makes upstairs work. Our shortage of storage is now sorted, and we have rooms empty as well. So the job we did not plan in our phase two work was fitted



in and done. Again, the amazing people that have come to help give us the energy to go on and do more than we thought possible.



The River Rises

We knew the river rises and it has never been in the house, but it did reach the cave in 1904



So while we were fortunate to not be too worried it was amazing to see just how high it came. It did come close to coming in our stormwater drain and that could have been very unfortunate for the work we have done on the lower ground apartment.

Aside from the nasty thought of flooding there is something magical about watching the power of nature. Our steps into the river in summer number about 15, and suddenly there were no steps to the river. At its peak it was 7.5m and in summer it is 0.6m, so a significant change in

water level.

Of course, there was a lot of clean up with logs, rubbish and debris so another unplanned job was scheduled in. Our very brave Natalie was a true athlete as she swung from branches and bounced the piles of debris until they were free and floating away. Pete tried and had to make a quick evacuation of his pockets for fear he was going in, luckily, he did not. There is only one Natalie I say.



Bamboo

We started on the wall of bamboo that was in the kitchen garden a year ago, just a little at a time. All the time thinking there has to be a faster way. Sometimes it takes a while to use your head. How do they harvest bamboo? There must be tools in

Asia for bamboo. Internet searching found the samurai blade for a whipper snipper (trimmer, whatever you call it at home). This little invention literally mowed down the remaining bamboo. We now have a kitchen garden with light and, amazingly, much quieter without the wind in the bamboo. We have posted photos and every day we walk out there we take a breath and love how different

it is. The raised herb beds are really thanking us and so are the beautiful trees that were bending themselves to try and get light around this massive wall of Bamboo. Of course, getting rid of the roots is a bigger project than chopping it down, I am out there hunting bamboo shoots every day. The roots will have to wait for next year.

The Work Continues

The last four rooms on the first floor got furniture and were fitted out. This is exciting because it means the two upper floors are done on the inside. As the sun came out the girls started sanding, patching, puttying and painting the windows and doors for the last four rooms in the whole house.

Finishing takes the longest and I know I am going to be impatient to get the furniture in these rooms and finally tick the inside as done. What an amazing ride to be finished by the end of May – our apartment, two large reception rooms, the orangerie, two hallways, two stairwells, five apartments, and 21 bedrooms. It makes me tired to think about it. And I know that like painting the Sydney harbour bridge, by the time we get to the end we can start all over again - and that will be the outside. But we'll celebrate along the way and will certainly pop some corks when the last beds are moved in.



Valentine's Day



We decorated the Chateau in hearts and did a five course dinner for romantic couples. Of course, private dining fits a Covid Valentines so it felt normal and was so nice to have people in the house again other than us. Couples escaping their bubble for ours, so nice.



Bits and Bobs

The flowers come and keep on coming, the sun is shining, and we can even sit outside with a fire and enjoy the longer days.



I was inspired by the flowers when picking the curtains for the last four bedrooms obviously, as I am not usually a pattern curtain person, but I just couldn't turn away from this beautiful fabric.

Cooper is growing like mad and driving us mad as he turns into a rebellious teenager testing the boundaries – so cute at the same time making it even harder to discipline him even when you know you have to.

Love spring, love the promise of summer and all it will bring!



The Escape From The Chateau

Needless to say, we have not had a vacation since we purchased the chateau and the number of days off we could count on one hand.

So, Easter is coming, as is Peter’s birthday, mine was not long ago and the sun was shining so we decided to go for it! We hatched a plan to drive 2.5hrs to the coast and change our bubble for 3 nights. Cooper had never seen sand, the ocean and not many other dogs so it was a chance for the three of us to do something different. Cooper loved it, we went for walks morning and evening and had a sleep in the afternoon. That is what you do on holidays!

Meanwhile back at the chateau Xena was having a girl’s weekend with Natalie and Lucie. I am not sure she

liked their taste in music, but the food was very good she said. She also had three nights with no Cooper in her face, so she had a vacation as well.

We came back with energy and a renewed focus! Bring on finishing the last four bedrooms and starting the barn!

Bring on SUMMER!



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