

Exploring the

Delaforce

Homeland

Gascony 2003

by

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also with material from
Patrick Delaforce's "Family History Research vol 1"
and the Internet

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This was a trip we took in June 2003. Some of background is necessary for the genealogy bit & this is largely in Patrick Delaforce's book & on Ken's family tree web pages to avoid boring people only interested in this pleasant part of the World. I managed to keep most of the receipts for once, so note that the prices are as at the end of June 2003.

London to Biarritz

Tuesday 24th June 2003

We left for Stansted at 1220 & it takes about an hour from Islington now. The Pink Elephant Parking bus took us from Z3-8 to the terminal in about ten minutes. A bit too early to check in but soon done & we were delighted to find a Ponti's where the Garfunkles had been outside of passport control (not that they control passports anymore - just X-ray the luggage). We had serious salads & carrot cake, as we did not know when or if we would eat again. The flight was half an hour late (1620) out &, although it had been extremely hot previously in Bordeaux (40°C), as checked on the Internet, it had been pouring with rain when we landed. We had had some difficulty getting out of central Biarritz, not because it was difficult but there was a lack of road signs. Eventually, it was a piece of cake. Then, it rained on us somewhat on the journey to our friend's 'chateau', bucketing down after the rather anxious daughter of our friends had let us in to this large farmhouse in a present state of redecoration & therefore, some disorder. It is very roomy but it wouldn't do our friends any favours if I photoed the interior as it is, except for the drawing room's giant fireplace & the kitchen. The side door opens straight into the drawing room which has a massive fireplace. The daughter said they first tried to live in her mother's family home, here in France, when she inherited it but they were made unwelcome in the village by the incomers in the new estate, so moved to this village, where it seems, there is no such problem. There was bread in the freezer & we had 'tea' in the kitchen before going out to explore what there was of the village. A hop was taking place next to the Mairie but otherwise, all was silence. The church is an intimidating looking building.

No, I am not going to tell you where it is. You would need the RG (security police) to find it from these clues. There is still plenty of space with derelict buildings in France for you to find your own to 'English'. However be warned (July 2003), it is dawning on the French that going for new build is not necessarily the best option & too many English hanging around pushes up the prices. Below: Our friends' chateau





Above: The back of the chateau with Avis
Below: The little house, where the daughter lives





Above: The magnificent fireplace
Right: The Kitchen with Avis





Above: "next Door"
Below: The intimidating church



Biarritz to Fourcès

Wednesday 25th June 2003

Eggs & sweetened müsli for breakfast, after which we went to the store to replenish our friend's larder somewhat. We set off along side roads to Dax, observing that there was much maize being grown but also a fair amount of derelict land. Dax proved difficult to negotiate but we were soon on the boring Les Landes main road to Mont de Marsan. This was red lined on the map (suggesting there was something of interest in the town) but seemed a pretty dull place. The scenery improved on the D1 to Villeneuve & we stopped at **Monguilhem** (photos below) for coffee on its charming tree-lined square, the first viable coffee stop on this road.



More sunflowers & cattle appeared as we headed to **Eauze** (town website in French) & the road was quite pretty. Eauze was a revelation, although not red-lined. It has virtually a cathedral on a hill in the middle & we had lunch on the square there in the ancient Café de France, once the house of Jeanne d'Albret who was the mother of Henri IV & a powerful political figure in her own right. This had a sign up saying:-

“Maison de Jeanne de Albret
Durant leur voyage le Roy de Navarre & la Reine Margot se jourment dans cette maison le 15 Juin 1579 il y a fut pris d'une fieuv devorante e qui ne ceda aux efforts des medecins q'au dix-septième jour. Marguerite de Valois le soigna avec un devouement anquel. Henri fut sensible.”

Right & below: Eauze church out and in



We drove on the main road to Gondrin, as there was a green road marked to **Montreal**. It was nice but nothing special. However, Montreal was.



Photographs of Eauze

Above right: the house of Jeanne d'Albret



Notes on Montreal

This is the Montreal in Gascony, West of Condom & South of Fourcès, an ancestral home of the Delaforces.

If you approach the village from the South-West, do not go from Eauze but drive on to Gondrin, as there is a 'green' road marked to Montreal. It is nice but nothing special. However, Montreal is. This is the oldest bastide (fortified village) in Gascony. Built round a square with arcades under nearly every building. Bernard de Forcia's church of St. Laurence was very dark inside & part of the defensive wall, as the village is on a cliff. Very spectacular. We visited the Tourist Office, where I explained why we were there. The girl spoke some English, photocopied my family tree & took my card, saying the name Bernard de Forcia was familiar & would e-mail if she discovered anything. If she does, it will be added here.

Below: Montreal on its easily defended butte, seen from the North (Fourcès road)

Bottom: Entering the village





Above: Under the arches round the bastide
Below: The main square of the bastide. St Laurence' Church was Bernard de Forcia's.





Above: The bastide square has arcades all around it
Below: The buildings form the outer wall





Above left: The gloomy church interior
Above right & Below: Even the church forms part of the outer wall



We drove on the **Fourcès**. The Chateau de Garros, photos back and front below, where we had booked, is gorgeous & Anne Carter made us very welcome. We had the huge Gold Room & had tea. After cleaning up, I went down & was given wine while I explained our mission. They are very interested in local history & Don soon joined us. Later, the bathed Avis did, too. Anne was once with the BBC but they had had 18 years in Majorca before moving to France, first somewhere else. He had printed the Fourcès page off my web site years ago & showed it to me. I brought the computer down & showed them the history. Don said he used to have 'the Mandelson job' doing publicity for the Labour Party under Wilson but did not get on with Callaghan & saibut then, not many people did. Obviously, telling them I ran for Mayor of London was the right thing to do. It was now well after 7 & we went to the Auberge in the bastide for dinner. The villages had gradually improved as we went East today & Fourcès is staggeringly pretty, with its round bastide with trees on the site of the original castle. The 'new' castle is just outside on the banks of the Auzoue, which moves so slowly that it is full of water lilys. We met another English couple, Suzie & Ian, at dinner & exchanged tales. The next page is from the Fourcès Scrapbook:-



Notes on Fourcès

Fourcès is staggeringly pretty, with its round bastide with trees on the site of the original castle. It is partly surrounded by the River Auzoue, which moves so slowly that it is full of water lilies. However, this gentle stream is responsible for Fourcès being developed as a fortified site. It appears on a map of 1020 but the first indication in official records is from 1086, when it is recorded that the Seigneure of Fourcès had the right to raise taxes, to form an army, to have a judiciary and to exert vassalage, but its fortunes declined and by the end of the century, the ruling family was involved in an abortive revolt against the powerful Duke of Aquitaine. This was one of the early Bernards, trying to keep a purely nominal allegiance to France rather than have a more seriously imposed one to England.

It seems that the bastide was built after this & is unique in Gascony by being circular, that is, a more modern circular castle was built in the middle, surrounded by a moat (now the road). This is now the wooded area. Ken suspects that, as there is another circular bastide at La Force in Aude Departement (South-West of Carcassonne), the family may have been at La Force before Fourcès & imported this Languedocian design into Gascony. See also the rather thin La Force (Aude) page in the scrapbook later.

There is a big gap in the record here. However, in the 1279 treaty of Amiens, the village passed into the hands of the English King Edward 1st and the Seigneurs of Fources swore allegiance to him. This was to last throughout the “Hundred Year’s War” until when, in 1352 the village reverted to the French crown. At that time Guillaume and Jourdain de Fourcès were the local lords. In 1378, Thomelin de Fourcès accompanied Constable Duguesclin on his Spanish campaign.

The castle was destroyed on May 13th 1488 by Charles VII for unspecified crimes by the seigneur. The ‘new’ castle was built just outside the bastide, on the banks of the Auzoue, in 1491 by our ancestor Sir Bernard de la Force, who retired to Fourcès the following year after a lifetime of diplomacy between the powers of Western Europe & apparently, owned a third of the village. His son Bernard seems to have continued as the Lord of Fourcès but, since Ken is descended from his younger brother Anthony, he has no further information about Fourcès at this time. If he acquires any, it will be posted up here. Note that there are references to both Bernard & Anthony in Ann Rowe’s book “Perkin - a study in deception”, about Perkin Warbeck/Richard, Duke of York (take your pick).

The people of Fourcès are justifiably proud of their record in World War II for smuggling downed allied airmen into Spain but that is another story.



Above: Bernard de la Forssa's rebuilt chateau,
now an expensive hotel
Left: The Church seen across the Auzoue



Above: The bridge into the bastide, with the chateau behind
Below: From the bridge looking North





Above: Looking back to the bridge with Avis
Below: Looking forward into the bastide









Above: The Clocktower from the East
Right: The Clocktower from the West





Above: All these bastides seem to be arcaded, perhaps for defence against people or the Sun



Tours from Fourcès

We set off for the **Seviac Roman Villa near Montreal**. This was quite impressive, especially for the mosaics, which were mostly covered by roofing.

There are more mosaics in the Montreal Museum. One ticket gets you in to both.







Then, to **Larressingle**, the ‘Carcassonne of the Gers’: dream on, but very well looked after, though hard to photo, as all too close.



Above: Larressingle gatehouse

Right: The Gatehouse from the side, showing the moat





Above: Walls and moat
Below: Inside the bastide, looking back at the gate





Then, via Condom to **Auch** (rhymes with gosh), quite a trip & not really worth while, as there is a small 'old town', a big cathedral, a view over the Gers River & not a lot else. This is the traditional capital of Gascony. We had lunch in a rather too expensive café & I got money out of the wall, as the Carters do not have credit cards.



Scenes in Auch. Above: The Mairie
Left: An old house

In Auch Old Town





Left: In Auch Old Town
Below: View South over the Gers River



Auch Cathedral



We went back to Castel Verduzan & off to **St Puy** by a green road, where the sun finally came out. This was worth it, a charming place on a hill with a view.



Above: St Puy across the fields
Below left: War Memorial Below right: The Church





Above: From St. Puy Church
Below: In the streets





Above: The Market

We stopped in **Condom** this time & went round it. Lots of narrow streets, a certain traffic problem & a cathedral with some light in it. Most others round here are very gloomy inside. The river Baise has to be pronounced correctly (Baiyeez) for obvious reasons! (We did not visit the Musée des Protectives - condom museum - but they have one). I left Avis on the quayside & walked back to the car round the outside of the hill, with some trepidation, as like many very old towns, the streets are a jumble.



Above: Looking up to the Old Town
Left: Old houses





Typical buildings





The Cathedral





Typical streets





Rivière Baise

Driving back to Avis involved going into the centre, where the roads are tiny & medieval. Back on another road to Fourcès, the sun came out so I dashed into the Bastide & took photos again. Then, we went into the tiny Mairie &, while Avis read a guide outside, I bought another copy of the guidebook for Patrick & made the man look it up on our web site. He was tickled pink & ignored the breach of copyright implicit but went down my family tree from Bernard I to me & took my card. We bought cards & stamps & wrote them in the garden of the Garros. The Carters were out & I played Beethoven on their hi-fi (this is part of the deal). Anne made us tea & invited us to meet some Professor of Psychology & wife this evening. These were Jack & Doreen Duffy. He was very quiet & she not much more so. It would appear that we were to help provide the cabaret, which I suppose we did.

Tours from Fourcès Day 2

Friday 27th June 2003

We crept up the road to Mezin (not very attractive) & **Nerac**, which was, with a lovely old town & a new town that was not much newer on the other side of the river (the Baise again), where I had parked. As yesterday, I dumped Avis at Notre Dame & collected the car. Henri IV had a castle here from which he ran the country for half the year.



Typical 'new town' buildings





Above: Cathedral from the river
Below: Looking West from Notre Dame





Views towards the Old Town with
Notre Dame

Right: Inside Notre Dame

Below: Old houses by Notre Dame





Above: Place de la Liberté et Droit des Hommes
Below: Henri IV's castle. He spent half the year here, making Nerac the de facto capital.



We went on a partly green road towards Agen, stopping at **Calignac**, a village apparently undergoing gentrification, as the church has modern glass (not that uncommon out here) & a modern altar with a concrete roof. We also stopped in Moncaut, very pretty.



Above: The Church at Calignac Below: The view Next page: Inside the church, Avis & modern glass





We also stopped in **Moucaut**, very pretty & also with modern stained glass in the church.



Agen looked adverse, so we took the road to La Plume, a village not up to the best local standard & off on the green road to Condom, stopping in Ligardes for what turned out to be dinner-at-lunch, three courses for €11.50 each, being a huge plate of dried meat & salami, roast pork (Avis) & veal (me) with pesto spaghetti & quiche (!). Pud, ice cream or 'patisserie', which was a sort of big custard tart. We stopped at **Gazaupouy**, off on a side road, which looked interesting on the map & certainly was. We suspect gentrification again, with a church in the older walled part but some of that part evidently gardened. The wall was a proper one with a fire step. A unexpected treat.



Above: The square outside the church
Below: the wall







Above: The Church at Gazaupouy from what appeared to be someone's garden!

On the road from Condom to Fourcès, we had a look at Larrouche sur l'Osse, another charming place. We stopped at the Fourcès car park, so I could photo the clock tower, which has a bad crack in one side, then under the arches. We tried to get into the church but it was the first we have found locked. We poked round the back of the village a bit more before returning to the Garros. We had tea in the garden, telling Anne that Jack had been a bit disappointing as a conversationalist. She later told us he had looked at our web site & would have had lots to say if he had realised I was in to music but he is a jazz fan, so would have had more to say to Avis. Meanwhile, we went to the expensive Auberge for salads at €18 for 2. We read in the Garros garden after, where Anne gave us glasses of wine.

Fourcès to La Mazut

Saturday 28th June 2003

Breakfast was bigger than usual, including baked apples with sultanas & (hard) boiled eggs as well as croissants, one of which we shared. For once, the sky was clear, which promised for heat that was delivered, gradually increasing through the day. Anne charged us €255 as promised & insisted the extras (which of course, included an excellent dinner) were part of the hospitality. (If you stay there, don't rely on this. I suspect the level of hospitality is dependent on your level of compatibility with the Carters!) I gave her my card & said to drop in for dinner in London some time, which she did not take seriously, although they do visit Blighty occasionally. She told us more of their tale: when orders for documentary films dropped right off in 1979, they decided to take a year's sabbatical in Majorca rather than hang around for the market to pick up (Don did documentaries for companies etc.) This turned into exile in practise, when a baby appeared (didn't anyone tell you why they appeared, I asked?). The boy went to school in Spain & then to boarding school in Britain. Then he went to university in Bordeaux, as they were now in Fourcès.

We left after 1000 & drove on a route I had carefully written up for Avis' navigation, as it looked tricky. Back through Condom & on the road to Lectoure. It was a pity we did not think we had time (we did) to stop in Lectoure, as it is a fortified medieval town on a good position on a rock, with much extant wall. We carried on, being impressed by another town, Tournecoupe, but disappointed by St Clar. We went on another road to Verdun (in French), which cut off a corner I had not noticed but was signposted, the signs being quite good out here after our bad time in Bayonne. **Verdun** is a 'proper' working town but the bastide middle is very well preserved & we liked it a lot. The town hall was just closing & the library would not be open for two hours but I think I will write to them if their stuff is not on the Internet. We walked round under the wall back to the main square, where we had coffees €4.20 & left, going over the narrow suspension bridge over the Garonne. Just before, there was a splendid view back, which I photoed. Our scrapbook page for Verdun follows:-

Notes on Verdun sur Garonne

This is not to be confused with the Verdun (in English on this link) where the great World War I battle was fought.

Patrick Delaforce reckons that 'we' ran this town in the tenth century. As far as Ken can discover, at that time it was run by Guillaume Fortun de Terride (link to Ken's page). Although a modern town (i.e. not living off the land or tourism), the bastide, which is brick-built, has been well preserved. The interior of the church is much painted in the traditional style of the Middle Ages.



Above: Typical France up the street...
Below: ...but a view of the brick bastide down it.



Right: More half-timbered brick
Below: The relatively modern (Victorian?)
chateau





Above: The Church in the bastide

Next page: Below: Paintwork in the nave

Above left: The painted interior of the church Above right: A painted statue of the ghastly 'St' Louis IX





The view back to the Verdun bastide from near the rickety bridge over the Garonne

The road to **Montauban** was straightforward & free motorway at the end. We parked just outside the pay zone & wandered into the town. We found the wonderful square (Place Royale, now properly Nationale) where the market had been this morning (it was now after 1300) & had paninis for lunch there, rather large ones. This was under the double arch that surrounds the square, which looks very old & built, like much of the town, of brick from, it appears 1651 after a fire. We needed to see this place, as it was one of the last Protestant strongholds in France. Below: The prefecture Bottom: The Place Nationale market.





Left: The arch leading into the Place Nationale
Below: The Place Nationale Market



We wandered more, retrieved the car with difficulty, as someone had double-parked us & set off up the 'old' road (N20 still) to **Cahors**. The N20 was very attractive after a while, being largely 'up' with big views to the East. In Cahors, we parked by the River Lot & walked into the town. This was very clearly, the birthplace of Leon Gambetta, the hero of part two of the 1870-71 war. (One would have thought that such an important politician would have a considerable presence on the web but all I found was this:- GAMBETTA, Leon 1838-1882 A Republican politician, opponent of the Imperial regime and the war with Prussia, Gambetta proclaimed the Third Republic in 1870. He contributed to the downfall of Mac-Mahon, but did not exercise power until 1881 when his shortlived government nominated Manet for the Legion of Honour.) The older part had this huge cathedral with domes & a wedding on, the low point of which was when the priest sang a song. Outside, friends of the happy couple had prepared a motorbike with a straw man on it & a straw woman with a gallows. Not that different from one's English friends. The town is on a tight bend of the river & the wall cuts off the landward side. A good position. I dumped Avis on the river bank near another Henri IV house & picked up the car, it now being bloody hot (the pharmacy in Verdun said 28.5C hours before).

Below: The bridge over the Lot





Above: The Gambetta statue
Below: The Mairie



The Cathedral





In the Old Town





The Henri IV house



Above: A tower on the Cahors wall.

We drove along the Lot slowly, as it is very pretty & were much impressed by Vers & St. Gary, after which there was a bridge & a frightful road up to Pasturat, on which one would never want to meet an on-coming vehicle. We found Mike's place, drove in, parked & I wrote this up so far.

Mike & Françoise turned up earlier than we expected, at 1835. Someone had asked us when they would & open their swimming pool & I said after seven. He took us up to the gîte we were to stay at, Les Mazut, about 3 km away & we immediately got into our swimming things. Then he ran us back. The pool was pleasantly warm after being in the sun all day & we dawdled around for about half an hour, when food appeared, strange stuff, a veggy paté, a 'cake' with tomatoes & mushroom baked in. Then, a long sort of crepe roll with salmon in & not a vegetable in sight but a chocolate mousse thing for pud. This was enough, though & the gallons of wine were too much really. We were joined by two people (not a couple), Pierre-André & Marie-Ann, a distinguished translator, sixtyish & quite a dish, which Mike said she did not know. I stayed in my swimming things throughout. Mike ran us back to the gîte, run by a nice old couple Carmen & Pierre & with charming, imaginative, decor, orange walls & blue sheets (yes, it does work).

Les Mazut to Souliac via Meymac

Sunday 29th June 2003

Even hotter today, getting up to a ghastly 39°C. Pleasant breakfast & a bill of €40. We headed along the spectacular Célé valley breaking off at Brengues & heading North across varying terrain, mostly of no agricultural use, to Tulle & North-East, stopping at Roses de Egletons for a protracted three-course lunch (€42 for 2) during which we spoke to an American couple, he Bob, who spoke no French & whom I sorted out with the menu. Then, on for 20 minutes to Meymac. The weather was so grim, what with the heat, that I was affeared that it would be a disappointment. It wasn't...

Views on the way to Meymac

Below: Cabreret castle





Above: Cabreret
Below: The Célé Valley from Brengues





Above: Livernon
Below:Chateau d'Ayrac



Notes on Meymac

At the end of June, this is a bit like a hot, dry Buxton or Bakewell (in the English Peak District), because of the similar local stone & very attractive. We looked in Bertrand de la Forsa's church ([link to the family tree](#)), still in excellent condition & in the Musée Archéologie, where we told the girls the story, left my card & bought the town history book, regrettably in French, written in 1881 & patchily revised before 1950. Not much help in our family history matters. We learn that the church is XII century but with earlier elements still visible. Richard the Lion-heart, who justifiably has a very bad reputation in Aquitaine, appears to have done (performed?, committed?) a massacre here. It was pillaged in the Hundred Years War in 1350 & the following period was very miserable. This would have been Bertrand's time. Things looked up after this until the Wars of Religion in the XVI century, when the forests were fired & there were revolts against Henri IV & Louis XIII. To cap things, the Plague arrived in 1633.

Below: Approaching Meymac from the South-East





Above: The main square in front of the church & priory
Below: Top of the square



Left: The chateau gate
Below: Rue de la Fontaine de Duras



Left: Approaching the church
Below: West side of the church





[illegible]

Then, I drove back as fast as I could to try to get a cooler breeze going (failed) to Tulle, on to Brive (horrible) & down to Souliac, where we soon found a nice, coolish, quiet hotel on the main road but well back & we were at the back as well. This was the dodgily-named Hotel la Roseraie. Cold baths failed to induce hypothermia. It was still boiling hot at 1930. Then, as the hotel was completely shut up in the evening, I drove us into the town for beers at a café on the main street, reading our books (Perkin in my case) & watching the world go by. It made a very tentative attempt to rain but all that did was add humidity to the temperature, soddit.

Souliac to Condom via La Force

Monday 30th June 2003

Not a very good night for me, partly owing to Avis taking half the bed - the middle half. It was overcast in the morning & we had breakfast at 0730, so were away at 0815 in the cool. The drive along the Dordogne Valley along the green roads was interesting but one does not see the river very often. There was a big castle of the De Montforts & later, another even bigger one but we stopped to oggle a village, la Roque Gageac, which was plastered to the rock at the side of the valley, like several others along here. (The de Montforts are probably due for a bad press with the Delaforces, because I would be surprised if 'we' were not up to our necks in the Cathar business.

Below: Cingle de Montfort, top from the East, bottom from the West





la Roque Gageac



Towards Bergerac, it was less interesting, much, & Bergerac itself was nothing special, which I had divined from the Bergerac web site, which is in English. Nor was La Force, although we gave it a good going over. All that is left of the Caumont's chateau is the gatehouse.

Notes on La Force (Perigord)

This village was the one handed over to the Caumont family after the Hundred Years' War, who then caused all true Delaforces looking for their ancestors serious confusion by adding 'de la Force' to their name. Added to which, Henri IV, of blessed memory, made Caumont into the Duke de la Force, employed both him in his government and also Sieur Jean Delaforce, Ken's ancestor.

The name, John Bost is very prominent in this village. See this link for interesting information about the John Bost Foundation. Here is a biography, ripped off from a French language website, shrunk, transliterated & rendered politically correct:-

John Bost

Jean Antoine - known as John - Bost was born on March 4, 1817 in Moutier-Grandval, canton of Bern, where his father was a Protestant Minister. A brain fever stopped his studies at the College of Geneva when he was 12, although he was a passionate student. He was then apprenticed to a bookbinder for 7 years. But he learned the piano and violoncello & Franz Liszt heard him and offered to teach him, launching him on a concert career.

In 1839, he left Geneva for Paris. He gave lessons & became a pupil of Zimermann & Chopin. But he is also impressed by the poverty in Paris & considers becoming a Minister himself.

In 1840, he gave up his musical career. After a long stay in Ireland, tutoring a Christian family, he entered Sainte-Foy College in 1841 to prepare for the baccalaureat. This was courageous at that age. After two years, violent headaches prevented him from continuing. The alarm clock then started to wake the Churches of the Dordogne valley. He had attended meetings in the country, in particular in Laforce, getting to know the life of the Protestant farmers, of whom he became pastor and organizer. In 1843 on the advice of some friends, John Bost went to the Ability Montauban to better prepare for the ministry. One day, he noticed the absence of a pupil. He investigated & discovered the poverty of the families there as well.

In 1844, a group of Christians evangelicals in Laforce determined to form an independent Church. They remembered John Bost and called upon him to be their Minister, which he accepted, being ordained in Orleans on September 26, 1844. Thus John Bost became established in Laforce and lived with his Ponterie parishioners, in the beautiful house of Meynard, which became his when he married his host's daughter, Eugenie Ponterie, in 1861. He immediately organized the community, which built the new temple, the Consistory having disallowed his use of the old temple which it had however paid for to the heirs of Caumont La Force. The new temple rose on the hill which dominates the valley not far from the ruins of the Caumont Chateau.

The new temple, built by volunteers, was inaugurated on December 15, 1846 by Bost's father. John Bost wanted to build the Asylum of his dreams by the temple. The parishioners supported him with enthusiasm. He raised support and funds in Montauban, Paris, England and Scotland, enough to start the construction. The parishioners provided more voluntary building work in the evenings.

The Family, as it was called, was inaugurated on May 24, 1848. John Bost was then 31 years old. It was immediately made available to children, orphans, incurables, the blind, deaf-mutes, phthisics & the mentally disabled before completion. This led to the idea of other establishments. The first, Béthesda, was inaugurated on November 15, 1855. Soon, other locations requested asylums.

From 1858 to 1860, there was a short pause. John Bost consolidated the work of 10 years. During this time,

now aged 44, he finally married Eugenie Ponterie on July 2, 1861. They had 4 children: Leila, Caroline, Henriette (dead at 6 weeks) and Henri. More Asylums followed, to take in epileptics, widows, old teachers and for old, crippled or incurable maidservants. Two elderly spinsters of Bergerac left land in 1878 for more establishments. He was growing old & tired but had the joy of seeing the Asylums recognized by the State as Public Utility Companies in 1877. This secured the future of his work.

In 1881, he summoned his last strength to go to Paris to promote the interest of the Asylums and the education of the children. He fell ill there and died on November 1st at 64 years of age. His body was brought back to Laforce for burial.

After the 9 asylums created during his life, 13 more have followed.

Below: Two aspects of La Force across the fields by the Dordogne, a good defensive position





Above: The John Bost Church
Left: The old Protestant Temple,
built from the chateau stones



Above: Hostellerie des Colonnes
Below: Hostellerie des Ducs





Above: The Caumont chateau gatehouse
Below: The Mairie





Above: The graveyard church (fairly modern)

We went back to Bergerac, as it has a bridge over the Dordogne & headed South, stopping at Seyches for lunch in the Restaurant du Mistral, €9 each menu of four courses: soup (home made, very good), a salad buffet like Garfunkel's best with meats & fish etc, kebab main course & I had profiterolles for pud & Avis, home made pineapple tart. Super. A 'rat run' road leaves here to avoid Marmade & we took a short-cut from Aiguillon towards Lavardac, which was where we started to look for a hotel, as the sun came out at La Force & things had warmed up quite a lot. Now, the next bit is unusual for Mainland Europe, where finding hotels is usually no problem... The first was shut on Mondays. On to Nerac - no hotels. We tried the Phare at Montcrapeau (that's what I called it) which was also shut but after driving round Condom several times, I found the Logie des Cordeliers (as found on the web) which although modern, is very nice, quiet & has a swimming pool. We flaked out for a bit & got into the pool, chatting as best we could with a couple of medical students. The landlady is our age & rather pretty & the landlord spoke English, so I explained our mission to him. After a shower, we went into the town for a salad at the Pizzeria del Fulvio by the cathedral, €18 for 2 with coffee.

Condom to Argèles Gazost -Tour de France country

Tuesday 1st July 2003

This was the day we abandoned the ancestors & went into country familiar from watching the Tour de France. We wanted to examine the frightful passes the riders have to go over. Breakfast at 0730 again & away by 0815. We used a bit of road we had been down before as far as Valence, where we went off on the D939, a delightful road going due south through gradually more and more rolling agricultural country until we reached the main road to Tarbes, which then climbed out of the Baise valley & over the watershed to the Adour system. Eventually, we had our first view of the elusive Pyrenees. We went into Tarbes but, although the centre did not seem too bad, there was nowhere to park & precious little, if anything, remained of historic Bigorre Town. So, we headed South through a number of rich-looking villages which is where the better-off Tarbians live, to Bagnères & into the Campan valley, stopping at the village itself (in English!) for coffee in the Hotel Beausauvages. The road starts to climb to Sainte Marie des Campan, where the serious climb to the Col de Tourmalet (English option, does La Mongie & Baregues as well) goes off to the right, which we took. But a few miles before that, we stopped at the horrible ski resort of La Mongie, almost completely new build.

Below: First view of the Pyrenees, north of Chis





Above: Campan
Right: Gripp - the climbing has begun



Above: La Mongie

We decided that, in view of the suspect cloud conditions, €20 each for the gondola to Pic Midi de Bigorre was not worth it & carried on up to the Col summit. The view forward is even more spectacular than the view back. We had lunch in the café at the top, with many cyclists hanging around, justifiably resting after their ordeal but then a coach party of crumbies appeared & filled the place. We had a ham salad starter, beautifully roast chicken & Tarte Basque (of course) for pud.

Below: Looking up the pass from La Mongie





Above: Looking back down the pass to the East
Below: Looking down forwards to the West





Above: The café on the pass
Below: the Cyclist Monument and Avis, a keen Tour de France follower



Baregues



Then, the drive down. Clearly, the west side is the one to come up on a byke because I would not fancy zooming down this grossly unprotected road, steep & bendy. However, this year's Tour (2003) goes down it. Coming up the East was not brilliant but there seemed fewer opportunities to kill oneself. We stopped at Baregues (photo left), as it is a proper village, although the car emitted some 'funny' burning plastic smells. I hoped it was only the brakes. This was not yet the bottom.

We continued down & turned right in the direction of the highly avoidable Lourdes but stopped at **Argèles Gazost** at about three, finding the Hotel Les Cimes, which had a pretty atrium leading to the main building & a glorious view South to the hills (photo below), second only to the view from the Weggis Seehof in our experience together. I rang our friend near Biarritz successfully this time & we arranged to spend tomorrow night there. After a snooze, we swam in their pool, which is in a sort of conservatory & quite warm. It had a wave-making machine, very fierce. After, we spoke to two Parisiens, who were quite human. We

walked into the town, looking for a restaurant & eventually asked the pretty girl in the Tourist Office. She really only suggested ones out of town so we went back to our hotel. Good decision, although it meant we had two full dinners in one day. An odd lentil & salmon starter, pork medallions & creme brulee for Avis & apple pie for me. Excellent. Like several of these Pyrenean towns, Argeles has architecture which reminds one of England, as in the Peak District or Lake District, not the Alps, which the hills don't resemble either.





Argès Gazost



Argèles Gazost to near Biarritz

Wednesday 2nd July June 2003

A proper buffet breakfast in the morning, included in the price of €103 (as was the dinner) but the VISA machine would not work & I had to pay cash, damnit. We set off up the Col de Soulor, which got tougher as we progressed but the top was in cloud. A little way below, it was not & a grand view opened up or rather, closed, as the hills are of a different character to the West. A narrow, high-level road cut into the rock leads round, carefully indeed, to the top of the Col d'Aubisque, which was blowing a gale, to the point where the car door bashed my left jaw quite painfully. We had a coffee, partly for me to recover & met a late middle-aged German couple, who had cycled up. I was impressed & chatted to them. It was a relief to speak in a language I was more-or-less comfortable with.



Right: Argèles Gazost Church

Below: Aucun on the way up the Soulor





Left Aucun Church

Below: West from the Col de Soulor

The road to the Aubisque is the thin line crossing the patch of Sun to the left of the photograph





Above: East from the Aubisque
Below: West from the Aubisque





Above: South from the Aubisque. The road down goes under the pointed mountain in the middle.

Left: Gourette

The road down was steep but an easier drive. It had two surprises, both towns. The first, quite high up, as **Gourette**, some sort of holiday town but, although skis were available for hire, it did not look as if there was any safe skiing, although the web says there is. The second, **Eaux Bonnes**, was a redundant spa with huge, derelict hotels & a Victorian Casino.

Laruns is the bottom of the pass, in the Ossau Valley, which we drove down to Bielle, where the **Col de Marie Blanque** goes off West. This is quite different from the other passes, lower at 1035m & largely wooded with a great mixture of trees & came out at the village of Escot, where there was nowhere to eat.





Above: The central park of Eaux Bonnes with the derelict Hotel des Princes on the right
Below: The Casino at Eaux Bonnes





Laruns





The start of the climb to the Col de Marie Blanche, looking back up the Ossau Valley towards the Aubisque.

Down North on the main road from Spain, we turned off on the D918 again & eventually had a big, very, meal for €11 each at Arette. We continued on green pre-Alpine roads to **Mauleon**, which was impressive with a castle overlooking the Mairie, a Chateau & other interesting buildings.



But, because of road-ups, we had to go to Saint Palais by D11. There, we sort of got lost & went up to Peyrehourade on the wrong road through Labastide Villefranche. This did not really matter & we were at our friends chateau again by 1630, where Martin made us tea & we chinwagged for about three hours. Then, we took him to a restaurant for another huge dinner. We are eating too much.

Left: The Cstle and the Mairie
Below: The Chateau





Other buildings in Mauleon



Biarritz town

Thursday 3rd July 2003

We set off for Biarritz proper, with me noting the rarity of French petrol stations, as we had to fill up. We eventually did & got to the front, parking above the big beach at the South end of this enchanting resort. We walked back, in a fairly strong wind, to look at the little beaches & rocks & also the hotels, some of which were real antiques. Biarritz can look after itself, web-wise. Here are just a few photos.











Because they were digging for a new motorway, I had some difficulty in finding the airport but I had left plenty of time for this exercise, anticipating French road sign troubles & we were early. I dumped the car & sang its praises to Hertz, who are not used to this reaction & we ate enormous ciabatta rolls to fill up for the day. Coffee is cheap at this airport €1.20.