

Francophiles like ourselves, had recommended a stay at an hotel just outside the town at Clairmarais. Patrice and Sonya have recently (2006) taken over this Relais de Romelaere, which is situated in the 'marais', that is the marshes in this part of the Pas de Calais. The area is interlaced with canals and dykes, similar to the Norfolk Broads and is a wild life sanctuary. If you have not been to this part of France, do give it a go and do please go and visit Patrice and Sonya. What will you find? A hotel, built in the 1920's I guess, very simple and very comfortable and gradually being improved in terms of the facilities. It is set in a peaceful location amidst the 'marais' and offers a warm and very humorous welcome from 'Basil'. Patrice tends to model himself on Basil Fawlty (*not exactly a recommendation! - Ed*) and we had a hilarious two night stay. A request for a second cup of 'cafe au creme' was always met with a resigned shrug of the shoulders and "Yes, certainly, but it is expensive!" The food is excellent and most reasonably priced with a Flemish flavour and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves - so much so that we booked two more nights at the end of our visit. The wines Patrice can offer are from a reasonable range but, frankly, his offering of the house wine of the Gamay variety in a carafe was smooth, with an excellent bouquet and went down extremely well. I can highly recommend this establishment - do visit Le Relais du Romelaere at Chemin du Grand St-Bernard, 62500 Clairmarais. There are so many other interesting places to visit in this area, but don't miss Patrice and Sonya.

We travelled on to the Baie de Somme and spent a week in this lovely area, returning to St.Omer via Normandy with a visit to French friends there. Perfect weather, a car at its best in the country of birth. We counted more than 30 XMs of all types - more than we have ever noted before. So, the car is running well.

