

# The View from Vaupillon or Tacchi's Tittle-Tattle

## Week 4

Monday May 4 to Sunday May 10

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Skies are currently neither gloomy nor sunny - let us hope that the forecast of better weather this afternoon is correct.

This is the beginning of week 4 of the second four-week lockdown. Is that light at the end of the tunnel or is it a train coming from the other direction? This 'new normal' is bearable only because we believe there is an end in sight. I am hopeful that come next Monday some meeting of friends and family will be allowed. I have heard nothing further than last week's announcement by the Prime Minister which was not explicit (probably deliberately so) as to the detail of changes to be effected May 11.

Yesterday I had an email from Amazon telling me that the ant killer I had ordered from them had probably gone astray and that if I wished I could ask for a reimbursement. The order had been placed twenty days ago, an infestation required attention and our previous supplies were zero. Unable to find the product in our local supermarket Amazon were the default provider. Unfortunately the site did not make it clear to me as to how this could be achieved so I clicked on the button 'Contact Us'. It said I could get someone to call me so I entered my mobile number and waited. I expected nothing to happen as yesterday was not only Sunday but part of a Bank Holiday weekend. I was wrong, one minute later my phone rung and an Amazon customer service agent was on the other end of the line. I was pleasantly surprised and further so when he was extremely polite and helpful, especially as soon as he comprehended that I was English he spoke slowly and clearly so that I would be able to understand him. He dealt with the problem, but my only slight reservation was he took ten minutes to explain that I now needed to do nothing further as he would contact the vendor and that they should reply to me within 48 hours. He also followed this up with an explanatory email. I was staggered when ninety minutes later I received a communication from the vendor that he was sending a replacement package with immediate effect and that should I receive two packages please be so kind as to return the second. As far as I was concerned excellent customer service from two companies. Praise where it is due - and certainly due in this case.

## Tuesday May 5

Weather continues to be miserable though meteorological jam is promised for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The continual rain is inhibiting me from using my camera, both because I do not wish it to become moist and secondly because there is nothing bright and cheery to photograph. On the nature front yesterday evening I heard my first cuckoo. I find that strangely evocative as it recalls my first memory of recognising a bird call when I was very tiny child living in Bedford. There is sad news on the frog spawn front. It seems that it has all disappeared. The possible good news is that it all turned into tadpoles and they have descended to the bottom of the pond, unfortunately the more likely scenario is that it was infertile and regarded as a minor delicacy by the pond life such as the fish or the dragonfly larvae.

These grey days are casting a miasma of despair over the Tacchi residence. Even searching YouTube for examples of the Kardashians's quest for the callipygian ideal fail to raise my spirits. Even searching Amazon for bargains I do not need is failing to improve my mood. There is only one thing left to do: retire to the kitchen and cook. We are fairly late in the weekly cycle of shopping so in the fresh produce section of the pantry is fairly bleak but I see an aubergine, a tomato and some mozzarella that are in imminent need of use, the tin of fermented black bean paste still rests prominently on the shelf demanding to be used but sorry, not today, Mr Bean Paste. I am toying with the idea of a Pithivier as I also have some ready made puff pastry at the back of one of the shelves in the refrigerator. I shall retire to my office to consider and make plans for an afternoon of producing comestibles.

My earlier session in the kitchen has turned out well. I have fourteen pork cheeks (there were fifteen but one had to be tasted) tenderly and flavourly braised and now being stored under refrigeration in a sous vide bag. They are waiting to be coated in panko crumbs and quickly deep fried. They will be served with the braising liquid reduced down to a glaze. The stock for my demi-glace sauce is now at the point where the final preparation will be to add some

port, reduce again and add a little redcurrant jelly to give it body. The paleron of beef has just finished cooking in my water bath for forty hours and has been rapidly chilled before being retired to the cooler.

## Wednesday May 6

Upon wakening this morning I looked through the bedroom window and was disappointed to see a misty outlook. However by the time I had finished my early morning coffee kindly brought to me by Mrs. T. the sun had driven off the greyness and the world was bathed in sunshine. I rose and took the optimistic step of leaving my ganzy behind and setting forth into the world in my shirt sleeves. So far my gamble has paid off, the temperatures have not yet reached the point where I might say 'Phew, what a scorcher', but they are climbing steadily and I anticipate a very pleasant day.

My sojourn into the kitchen yesterday to create a pithivier was extremely successful. Further investigation into the store cupboard unearthed a red pepper and a packet of smoked air dried ham that had been on promotion the previous week. These along with the ingredients found earlier along with store cupboard goodies of onions, garlic, tomato paste and some harissa combined to create the tasty dish of which there is a photo below.

I watched the news last night and saw that at last the UK has managed to top the Europe Coronavirus league. What a magnificent achievement by the British government. To reach this milestone they have had to overcome the fact that they have one of the best healthcare systems. Furthermore GB is an island and as far as I know no one has yet sneezed droplets 23 miles. However the positive factors must include that the person in charge is not a woman - it appears that countries with female leaders do so much worse in this contest - Germany and New Zealand being the obvious examples. Another fact was the Prime Minister demonstrated the ease with which one can catch the disease by shaking hands with persons already infected. As an aside I was disappointed in Boris as he did his Brexit credentials no good at all as he did not refuse treatment

from immigrants, what a splendid gesture it would have been if he boosted the numbers by one for declining help from a European foreigner. The cleverest weapon was the decision to ignore the care homes and then ensure that they did not receive PPE or testing. There is a rumour that now with so many spare places in the care homes those reprobates found guilty of egregious crimes will serve their sentences in a care home.



## Thursday May 7

After a fine day yesterday this morning is full of promise, the sky is cloudless and the the mercury in the thermometer is slowly but steadily rising (in reality there is no mercury in thermometers any more and mine is digital, but I allow myself artistic licence occasionally) and the sun is pleasant on my back during my first bout of morning exercise.

The fine weather encouraged me to have a wander around the garden with camera in hand and I found some interesting sights worthy of snapping. The one I enjoyed most was discovered by Mrs. T., it was the spider's nest, you needed very sharp eyes to see it as its size is tiny. As each one hatched it shimmied up one of the silk threads that suspended it between a couple of leaves. In the space

of an hour they had all hatched and dispersed. It was fascinating to watch.

Planning this evening's TV viewing I saw that the BBC has a program tonight 'The Coronavirus Newscast', that in itself is hardly worthy of mention but the fact that is advertised as 'Series 1' is a little disturbing - what do they know that we do not and when is Series 2 planned.



A Prince awaiting a kiss



**A nest of tiny spiders hatching.**

There are several hundred in this photo and the nest is about two centimetres by one. The silk thread is so fine that you cannot see it on this photo



One of the Bluetit parents leaving the nest box after taking a delicious caterpillar to feed one of the chicks in the brood, who probably has a dozen siblings.

## Friday May 8

Glorious sunshine was the order of yesterday, to such an extent that I had a very lazy day and failed to achieve all the chores I had set myself. The afternoon was taken up with visiting the local supermarket and watching the Prime Minister deliver the government's plan for the deconfinement. As usual with French politicians delivering news it took over one hour and a quarter - and it was then followed up by an interminable Q&A session.

The main points of his disquisition were that as of Monday May 11 there would be some relaxation of the confinement. However the rules would be different for those in 'red' zones to those in 'green'. If you imagine a line drawn from the North West towards the South East passing through the very West of the Paris agglomeration then everything to the North East would be 'red' and not surprisingly everything to the South West would be 'green'. Fortunately Eure-et-Loir is in the green sector.

In general the current form or 'attestation' will not be needed to leave your house and you can now go up to 100 kilometres from home without a permit. To travel further you will need a good reason and have filled in a form which can be found on the government web site. As of Monday schooling will restart gradually and be optional. Public transport will be increased but to travel during the rush hour travellers will need an affidavit from their employer. The rules will be stricter in the red area. A lot more shops will be allowed to open, including hairdressers, book shops and florists. All personal interaction must encompass social distancing where possible, in fact on public transport it will be mandatory to wear a mask. It is claimed that masks will be readily available in pharmacies, tobacconists and supermarkets, let us hope the theory becomes reality. For me the important change is that small social groupings can now take place. Up to ten persons may congregate but again you are supposed to maintain safe contact, i.e. no kissing, embracing or shaking hands. My current cunning plan is sometime next week to have a meal with friends but eat outdoors and keep the numbers small.

For those in green departments if all goes well then at the end of the month it is hoped to start reopening bars and restaurants, but this will depend heavily on what actually happens to the statistics.

For the conspiracy theorists out there when I listened to the BBC news this morning no mention was made of Britain's nearest neighbour had relaxed the 'Stay At Home' message. I shall say no more.

One of the many little lizards that rush around the garden when the sun shines.





