

October 27, 2017  
(October Letter)

Dear Samantha,

I'm very excited to be actually writing my October letter in October! It seemed like the perfect time to get you up to speed on what has been happening to our Ile-Bigras bridge this month. We travel past the action every time we head off-island (including during my every-other-day bike ride).

Since the old bridge has reached the end of its life, the city is busy with the process of building a new one. It will take some time to build, so they are constructing a temporary bridge that we will use in the meantime. I'm not sure of the dates they will need to build the new one, but we get a front row seat on the construction of the temporary one since it is right beside the old bridge. I have some photos of the process to fill you in. I find it to be a fascinating process.

The first sign that things were happening was when they tore down the old house at the north end of our bridge. It was a lovely stone house with a little shrine with the Virgin Mary. This was to be the access to the temporary bridge from the far side. The Ile-Bigras access is via a vacant lawn between a couple of houses on the south side. You can see these points in some of the photos I will show below.

They installed floating booms in the river to catch any of the materials falling from the installation, then started piling rocks in the river from the north side of the river. They just kept piling them until they reached the point where the first support post was to be installed (about a third of the way across the river). You can see this arrangement in the first photo. It shows the worker finishing the first support beam, the rocks that they piled to get the beam in place, and some of the floating booms. At that time, I wondered how they anchored the support post in the river since I had only arrived after it was done.



Once the first support beam and "T" was in place, they began digging out the rocks, putting them in a dump truck, and driving them to the other side of the river. Here's a photo of that process. You can see how the "T" is left behind as they take out the rock access.



While they were digging and transporting the rocks, another crew began assembling the deck for the bridge. It was like a process of huge Meccano construction, composed of steel sections all bolted together. You might not know about Meccano, but it was the "lego" of my days: tiny metal pieces drilled with holes and plenty of nuts and bolts to put them together. There were also small motors, pulleys, wheels, and other gadgets that could be built into whatever we dreamed up. Piet found a small car made out of Meccano at some second-hand store and brought it home. It had a motor that drove the wheels so we took some time to fix it up so that it is running. I expect you will run across it sometime you visit Fort Langley.

I was impressed by the work of a young woman on the crew. She was busy hucking the huge metal pieces around. You can see her in the following photo on the left-hand side.

Once the deck was assembled a reasonable distance, they pushed it out toward the support beam without the deck installed. The next photo shows what it looked like. It also shows what they were doing on the other side of the river.

They had trucked the rocks to the other side and built a causeway to the point where the second beam would be installed. I finally got my question about the anchoring of the support post answered. They got a pile driver and drove a huge metal tube into the spot where they wanted the post. You can see the pile driver at work on the left hand side of the photo.



Once the post was driven in far enough, they filled it with concrete. You can see the post in the photo. In addition, you can see that they have pushed the bridge structure well past the north support beam – getting ready to join up with the south part of the bridge.

The last photo in this sequence is one of Fran checking out that action from the old bridge. At this point the bridge structure has been pushed past the north “T” support and is waiting for a similar structure to be installed from the other side.



I'll continue the story as it unfolds, but I expect it will take them longer than October to finish it off. However, I'm keen to mail this before the month is finished!

Love,  
Bill

