

Our year started with a visit to Margate and the Turner Contemporary museum. We gave the museum mixed reviews. Some of the best art is not displayed well and there was a ton of video when we were there, not our favourite medium. The building itself is OK inside but looks completely out of place from the outside. We walked along the pier and Shelagh noticed a young woman, barefoot, standing on the edge of the quay staring down at the water. I called emergency services and Shelagh persuaded her to come down and sit on a bench. She was very depressed. She left with paramedics, and we have no idea what happened, although perhaps Shelagh did prevent a tragedy. Having no idea what happened is perhaps a metaphor for our year.

February took us to the Bahamas courtesy of Ed and Tina's invitation to join them for a week's cruising. We had a decent flight in both directions, a nice local hotel in Nassau and a fabulous, relaxing time on board Merlin. Wind speed and direction meant we did less sailing than we might have liked but the remote anchorages, great company, good food and small inhabited settlements made up for it. Back in the UK, the Samuel Pepys exhibition at Greenwich really brought the period to life and gave me a better understanding of the miracles that occurred during the restoration period in England, followed by a great meal at a local Greenwich restaurant.

March, and work at Pole Star included some intense sessions with potential partners in Greece and Copenhagen. We also found time to visit our French home in Gruchet at Easter. April included a visit to Bletchley Park on a lovely Sunday. We walked around the grounds and saw the famous hut where Alan Turing worked. They have also restored a decoder to full working order and we saw it doing its thing. The Royal Academy had a great show called Painting the Garden. Dan and Claire also visited us in Gruchet and we took them on a tour of the Normandy Beaches. Amazingly, the builder who is creating Claire's American harpsichord and his partner arrived at the final stop at the same time we did. We toured the American cemetery together. Then Dan and Claire bought wine and staggered home with a car



1Warderick Wells in the Bahamas



2 Claire and Dan do Normandy

full. I returned with them, and thus missed Shelagh's excitement. The car died on the motorway and she endured a really painful time getting home. The whole thing took 24 hours.

In May Frank and Jennifer came to visit us in Gruchet and we left them to enjoy themselves despite an injury that meant that their son Kai was finding it difficult to get around. Peter was let go by Pole Star and this was understandably disappointing after working very hard to get their new software out the door. So we went back to France for a break.

Claire and Dan held a party at the end of the month at a friend's place right on the Thames at Barnes. A wonderful time was had by all. Officially it was a going away party, although as of this writing they are still here! Time for another party????



3 Grass needs cutting in Gruchet!

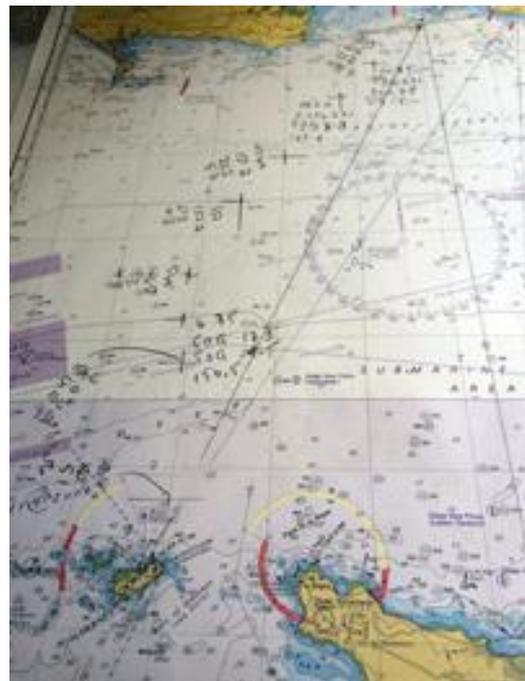
June included a lot of work on the boat. Timeout was out of the water for some R and R. We repainted the decks, put a new lot of coppercoat antifouling on the bottom, and arranged for some gelcoat repairs to be done to the starboard side of the boat. This is the second time we have had extensive storm damage. Peter did a French course at the Institut Francais and really enjoyed it. We went to Polo and to Madrid to see the Hieronymous Bosch exhibition. The latter was fabulous and well worth a visit. We had originally wanted to see this exhibit in the Netherlands but had not got it together. So a nice short break to Madrid was in order. June of course was the famous Brexit vote. We were shocked to wake up on Friday morning to discover that the country had gone completely mad. The lies told on both sides were very frustrating and in the period since, it has become clear this was an anti-foreign and anti-globalisation vote by the people left behind in the current economy

June also saw the opening of the Tate Modern extension. Both Shelagh and Peter got to see it courtesy of our friend Anne before (Peter) and on opening night (Shelagh). It promises to be a good addition.

July brought another trip to Gruchet with a stupidly long wait at Calais because of increased security. This was solved much later in the year by closing and bulldozing the camp at Calais where the refugees congregated near to the ferry terminal. It took the French government 15 years to decide to act and deal with the migrants.

Back in the UK, we really enjoyed watching the Americas Cup boat races at Portsmouth for the second year in a row, and then took off in our boat for the Channel Islands and St Malo. We had a really enjoyable time with good weather, although it did sometimes mean more motoring and less sailing than we would have liked.

While we were away we listened to a BBC Proms concert from the Stuttgart Symphony Orchestra. What made this memorable is that this was their last concert ever. Formed in post-war Germany to try and reconstruct the arts and having broadcast many times over the years, it is being merged with another orchestra. The last piece they played was Elgar's Nimrod. Not a dry eye in the house. Peter having visited Stuttgart many times during his time at Kodak, and knowing what a difference orchestras make to the community, was sad to know that they are no more.



4 Crossing the Channel still requires paper plotting!



5 Fisherman in Jersey. Feels like that kind of year to us as well.

August was spent on the boat and in France. To quote Peter's Facebook page... 419.6 nautical miles from Hamble to St Malo and back in 23 days with a week in Portsmouth for the Americas Cup. So that's an average of 26 miles per day although there were some long and non-sailing days in there. When we were coming through the Needles we heard via mobile phone that after 18 months of torture and 4 months with the current buyer, we had exchanged contracts and would be moving at the end of September. A really painful period of uncertainty was coming to an end. Painful was also the experience of getting back to France, this time not refugees on the French side, but a crash on the UK side that closed the Dartford Bridge and left traffic in absolute chaos. Another metaphor for the year as a whole. While in France Shelagh took a week to do singing with a course in Dieppe. There was also a very

interesting concert which had four different performers doing 20 min in four different spaces, with the audiences moving round to each venue. For some reason our cars seem to have problems only in France. This time it was a car tyre with a slow leak that got us back home but when I took it in, they found a screw in, of course, a non-repairable area. The end of August included the Threepenny Opera at the National.

Shelagh managed to get to a prom with Claire in early September. We have become increasingly disappointed with the Proms which is rather sad. Somehow the combination of artists, programmes and composers isn't inspiring to us. But it does fill the halls. Shelagh really enjoyed seeing the exhibition about the fire of London 1666 at the Museum of London with Marilyn in September.

End of September meant moving. And even that wasn't without its trials and tribulations. Packing went smoothly, as did loading the van (no ticket despite not having legal parking). We stayed with Claire for two nights, thank you Claire for minimising the stress at that point! We moved out one day, then moved in the next. 15 minutes after we got the keys for the new, the lifts in the building stopped working, and didn't start again for four hours. The new flat is on the 9th floor. When the lifts finally restarted, all was accomplished in 20 minutes.



6 Cleaning and saying goodbye to Kingsmill

October meant our only RAFYC rally in 2016 – at Yarmouth. A great time was had meeting new members and seeing old friends. In the flat, there has been plenty to do: shelving in Shelagh's work room for books and music, added storage in the

utility and electric cupboard, new shelving in the wardrobe, and extra storage units in the kitchen to give us something approaching decent storage space. We are adapting to being further out of town, though service on the Piccadilly line has been frustrating. So was the process of getting internet and phone service to the new flat.





7 Rijsttafel in Amsterdam

British Telecom were hopeless, taking 10 days to make the connection for us despite our attempts to hurry them along.

At the end of October, we were back in France briefly but also made a foray up to Amsterdam to meet with Nathalie and Wick, who are the publishers for the periodical that Shelagh edits. We managed to visit a lovely little protestant chapel in a house and see the Rijksmuseum as well.

November took Shelagh to Canada for two weeks with a side trip to Rochester NY. She visited friends and family and even had Thanksgiving dinner with Chuck and Helen Valenza in Rochester. Kim, Siubhan, Nigel and Aiden are now in Hamilton, and a trip to London meant a visit to Janet and David Brent, Allison and Dave and their new family, and with Gayle. In Toronto, she caught up with Angela and Scott.

Of course, the Trump election took most people by surprise, and since then the Italian vote has seen another leader go. So the leaders of the free world are tumbling like ninepins. It can't be good in the long term for there to be so much uncertainty about politics. Above all, the death of facts and the low quality of debate in the political classes means that we seem to be getting more insular by the minute.

Peter dashed to Gruchet while Shelagh was in Canada to try and fix a problem with the central heating there. It took three visits by the local folk to clean out and repair, but we hope it is working now. As we write this, our internet



8 Nice autumn picture from the Netherlands



9 Central heating belching smoke

controls seem to be working as expected. While Peter was in Gruchet the neighbour drove his tractor round with a huge bunch of apples that he picked while we were away. He doesn't seem to understand that we wanted him to pick them for himself, not for us! Ah well. A London friend has offered the loan of a press and some bottles. We might have to take him up and maybe we can fob some of the product off to others!

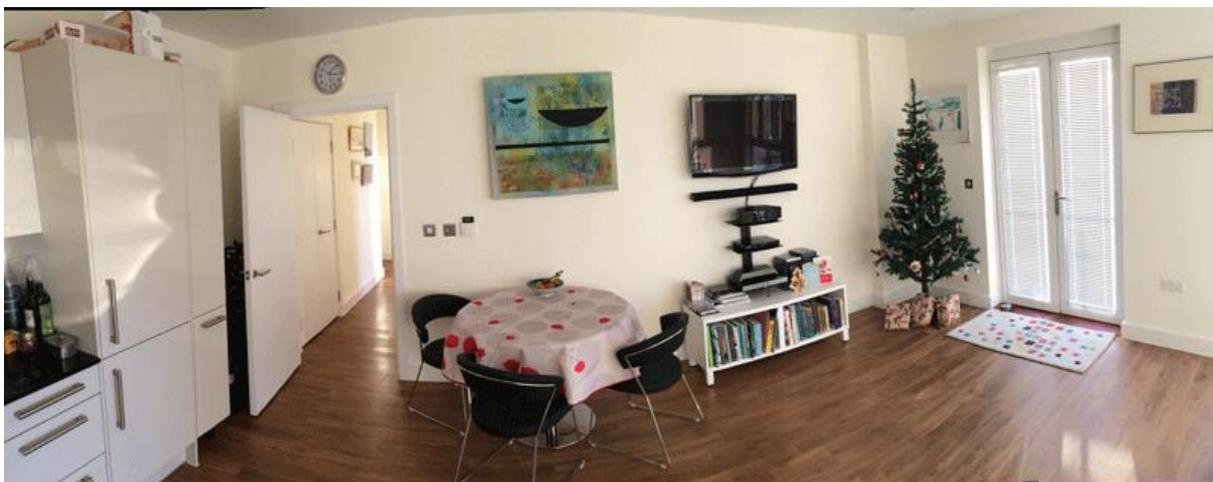
We plan to spend Christmas Day with Claire and Dan as we did last year. The excuse last year was that they were moving back to the USA. This year we hope that

it is true, and this really will be the last Christmas that the London Play Group will be together again in Barnes. Then we are off to Gruchet to see in the New Year in our normal quiet style. All in all 2016 has not been a vintage year, but we are still here, still standing.



10 9th Floor, Alperton

Theatre included Tom Stoppard's Haggood at the Hampstead Theatre, Nell Gwynn at the Apollo with Gemma Arterton, Ralfph Fiennes in The Masterbuilder at the Old Vic, Guys and Dolls, Welcome Home Captain Fox at the Donmar, Funny Girl at the Savoy starring Sheridan Smith (we did see on of the performances she was actually there for), Hobson's Choice at the Vaudeville, Britten in Brooklyn at Wilton's Music Hall, No Man's Land with Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellen (who are brilliant together) at the Wyndham, the Last Five Years, a new musical at the St James Theatre, and The Entertainer with Kenneth Brannagh. Our Christmas outing will be She Loves Me at the Menier on the 27th December.



11 The other view including the Christmas tree

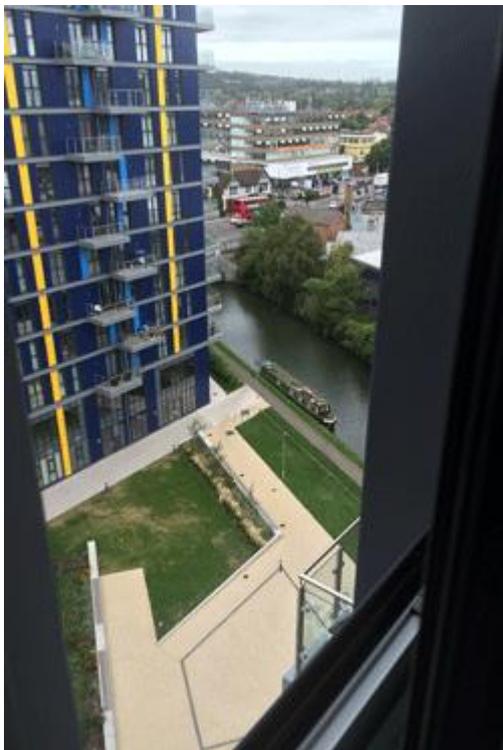
Concerts included some jazz at Kings Place – this is a venue really worth supporting in London doing some very interesting things, the Philharmonia at the South Bank, who under Esa Peka Salonen have become our favourite orchestra. Shelagh has managed to find more people to play with this year, including a little group of people near Dieppe that seem to manage to find time to play whenever she is in France.

We wish you all the best for 2017 where ever you are. Please do let us hear your news when you can.

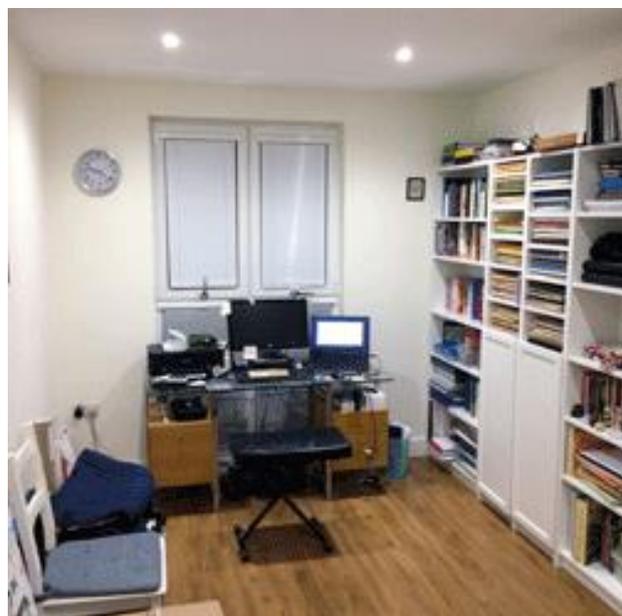
All that remains is to give you yet another set of addresses for us:

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Peter and Shelagh



12 the view from our flat



14 Shelagh's new office