

January 2022 started with a wonderful New Year's Eve chez Bernard and Julie. One of their local restaurants does a fabulous takeaway dinner. The side benefit for them is that the restaurant doesn't have to work the evening, and the stream of cars around 6 pm shows how popular the food is locally. A glass of champagne while waiting for the dinner to be boxed up didn't hurt.

Heading back to the UK in the middle of the month, we discovered that Calais had opened the new and convoluted entrance to the port, which did nothing for the UK (not French) immigration control queues. Either more government incompetence or the Brexiters wanting to punish us for the presumption of seeing the world beyond their borders. The queues for UK immigration control have been horrendous all year. When the Brexiters said they wanted to stop free movement of people, we're not sure this is what they meant.

We attended the Holocaust Immersion Day at the Barbican, which included a concert by the BBC symphony of pieces unknown because the composers died in concentration camps before they could be performed. One was a short opera, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, which had only a dress rehearsal in Theresienstadt, where the Nazis finally got the anti-Hitler subtext, before the composer was gassed. A fitting memorial for National Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK. We saw a wonderful exhibition of Late Constable at the Royal Academy and thoroughly enjoyed a play of Philip Pullman's *The Book of Dust* at the Bridge Theatre.

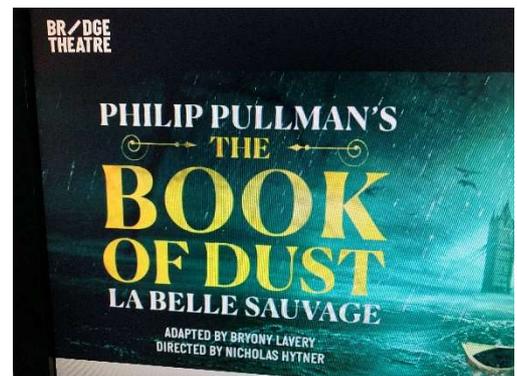
February included an amazing new music concert at Kings Place called *Deep Time* by Theatre of Voices, finally scheduled after lockdowns. We also saw Eddie Redmayne and Jessie Buckley in *Cabaret*. *Tomorrow Belongs to Me* powerfully evoked the menage of the coming storm in 30s Germany. The newly opened Courtauld Gallery rehang/renovation is a great success. If you're in London, you should make time to see it.

March gave us our first weekend sailing trip to Cowes and Portsmouth. We also went to a taping of the popular British show *QI*. Sandi Toksvieg does her own warm up which is wonderful. We also had a box for a Philharmonia concert at the Royal Festival Hall. Very posh. Bryn Terfel singing Brahms Four Last Songs plus a wonderful Schoenberg *Pelleas and Melisande*. A lunchtime concert at St Johns Smith square with Steve Devine planning a concert of Krebs – a pupil of JS Bach that I had never heard of but worth a listen. The end of March included a trip to the Beaulieu River on the boat and the good news that our engineer would be able to fix the fridge onboard without replacing it altogether. Phew.

April saw us heading to France. We have finally managed to persuade the French bureaucracies to give us both residence and health cards. We are shifting the centre of gravity to France from the UK. We had a visit from Phil and Gina from Baltimore. This included some touristy stuff around our area, but we also went up to Compiègne to see the railway carriage museum where the WW1 armistice



*New Year's Day walk*

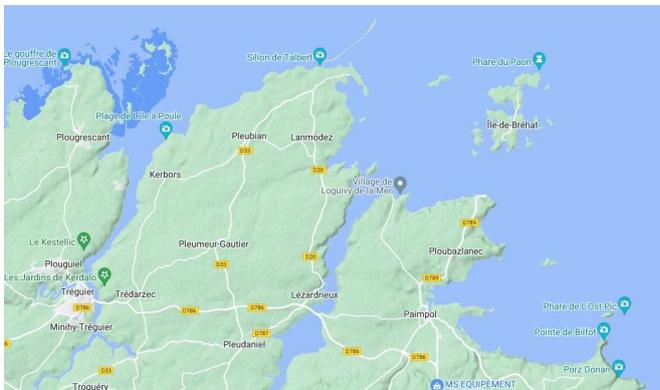


and the WW2 French surrender were signed. We had a wonderful lunch at a prebooked brasserie in Compiègne. The place was heaving with Easter Sunday guests and fab it was too. Then onto the Somme and to Waterloo (Phil is a history buff). Back to the UK and a boat trip with Max to Portsmouth. Discovered it was his birthday and celebrated at Loch Fyne in Gunwharf Quays. A great fish meal! The end of April saw us onboard Galene heading to Weymouth with the RAFYC rally.



*Etretat in panoramic view*

Early May saw us back in France. We made first use of the little fire pit bought after seeing Louise's in Bridport. A fine idea. Thank you, Louise. We made the decision to buy a French car to replace our aging, non-emission standards Peugeot. We brought both cars back to the UK and sold the Peugeot. The end of May saw us make a trip to Bristol to see the Art Club exhibit at the museum there and we had a wonderful day. The docks there are refurbished and buzzing with people and things to do.



*Part of our sailing area this summer*

June was sailing season. We started in Portsmouth and scrubbed off our dirty bottom before heading across the channel to Cherbourg at the start of a month away. Cherbourg marina did not do itself proud except for the restaurant which provided a lovely lunch for the RAFYC rally. Then we headed westwards along the Normandy and Brittany coasts. Dielette where we arrived with just enough water to get into the harbour and found the owners of Aquila who had been with us in Cherbourg. Both headed off to Carteret and they then

headed to Jersey while we continued round in France to Granville to meet up with Bernard and Julie and Esme the dog. A truly gnarly sail and we had to wait 30 minutes to get over the sill at the entrance finally arriving at around 1030 in the evening. In Paimpol, we met up with Myron and Julia on Evening Star. The entrance to Paimpol is only accessible at high water: at low water, you could wade through the mud from one side to the other. We then moved on to Lezardrieux.



*Dielette, enjoying a drink aboard Aquila*



*Myron and Shelagh waiting for dinner in Paimpol*

The nautical almanac says of this area, “stop at the marina if you can”. What they mean is that there are VERY strong tides and that even the locals who have any brains leave and arrive when the tides are slack. Heading back to the UK, we stopped at Guernsey and then Alderney. While at Guernsey we took the obligatory bus tour round the island but stopped in at several WW2 sites including a wonderfully restored communications bunker. No one there when we visited but beautifully done and interesting to see where enigma communications started from in Guernsey. We also visited the underground hospital, constructed at

huge cost in both money and forced labour and was never really used properly. Crossed the channel from Alderney and lost the autopilot about three quarters of the way across. We moored outside Poole harbour. Border Force arrived before we had finished anchoring. We finished the trip with a lovely spinnaker run up the Solent from Hurst Castle to East Cowes.

July saw a quick turnaround in London before heading off to France via Belgium to pick up Shelagh’s 8-key flute that had been repaired. Now in working order, she and Norman MacSween have been playing some early classical music on their 8 key flutes. July in Gruchet was warm and dry. We went to a lovely solo viol da gamba concert near us but came away with COVID. This forced the cancellation of Shelagh’s music summer school. Our shots meant that it was mild for both of us with no long-lasting effects. But it did ruin our concert plans for a week as well as Shelagh’s summer school. August meant lots of concerts in the Dieppe and Rouen areas and many of them are baroque music focused.

We had sad news, though, that Richard Paul, the best man at our wedding, passed away after a long illness. He had been living in Portugal, and fortunately, we got to visit with him and his husband Frank last November. RIP Richard.

September saw us back in London and two wonderful concerts with Simon Rattle conducting the LSO. We heard him do Stravinsky’s Firebird suite twice. Both times there is a quiet section near the end of the piece where you had to strain to hear the music and could barely breathe. The control he gets from the musicians is outstanding. My birthday concert was also with Rattle playing Berlioz, Takemitsu and Ravel’s La Valse. We also were present for an organ concert at the South Bank by Iveta Apkaina who shone with Widor’s magnificent warhorse of an organ symphony. We also heard Edward Gardner who replaces Eka Pekka Salonen at the London Phil do a nice concert with a black composer Walker. Lilacs for Voice and Orchestra deservedly won a Pulitzer Prize for him.

In October, we had a bit more sailing, including going into Keyhaven harbour for the first time in Galene. An interesting shallow harbour, shall we say. Mid-October had us removing the sails and getting the boat ready for winter hibernation. Also, a visit to Sands Theatre in Rotherhithe where there is an amazing little cinema and theatre, for a flute and harpsichord concert by friends of Shelagh. We finished October with a visit to the Barbican and the LSO playing the 1947 version of Stravinsky’s Petroushka. I was more familiar with the earlier version, this one rewritten to extend the copyright and ensure Stravinsky got money from royalties, but I really think it is better.

November was very social by our standards and included Benedictine tasting with Bernard and Julie MacDaid who came with Esme to visit us in Gruchet. We also took them to lunch at the Café des Tribuneaux in Dieppe which has featured in several paintings, as well as tons of tourist photos. We were also visited by the famille Hays who came down from Boulogne for the weekend.



*Bernard enjoys 4 different Benedictine liquors*

We visited the opera house in Rouen for the first time for a fascinating and truly amazing concert version by a Belgian group of Philip Glass' Einstein on the Beach, 3.5 hours long, with no break. Audience members are encouraged to come and go, which they did, taking time to visit with friends in the café/bar. A standing ovation at the end from an enthusiastic crowd, most of whom had stayed to the end. The virtuosity and stamina of the musicians was amazing. A very difficult piece to do and we're glad to have seen it.

Myron and Julia Bileckyj made time to come to visit us in Gruchet and we had a lovely time, celebrating her birthday at the Comptoir du Huitres in the port at Dieppe. Great food and great company!



*A little downtime for the Hays Family*

Rain meant that little was done in the garden in November. We did manage to scrounge some apples and walnuts and made a few jars of apple jelly, apple chutney and dried some apple slices. You can see the theme there. We also had a visit from the famille Hays!

December saw a quick trip back to the UK and a chance to catch up with some music-making friends for Shelagh. We plan to spend Christmas in France. The observant amongst you who are still reading have noticed lots of music this year. Peter belongs to two different online groups that provide cheap tickets to plays and concerts in London to help fill unsold seats. We have benefited a lot from these, as audience numbers have still not really recovered post-Covid. Peter has also become a regular Monday night bridge player online with a group of people who are in theory based in Shropshire but in fact there are people from all over the UK. Special thanks to Mark Powell who introduced me and encouraged me to give it a go. Shelagh managed to test positive for the second time this year to COVID but by some miracle Peter avoided it or was so mild as not to notice. Shelagh's cough has now subsided. She did sound like a sea lion some days.

As always, we wish you and yours a safe and happy holiday season. We are looking forward to 2023 where there are visits planned by friends, more sailing and more music planned!

Shelagh and Peter



*Headland near St Cast le Guido*



*Near Studland Bay our arrival back to the UK*