2025 has not been a quiet year.

January saw us make our second visit to Boot, the boat show in Dusseldorf. This is an amazing show with 17 halls the size of large warehouses filled with everything water-related, including scuba diving and fishing. And one hall full of superyachts.



Koln Cathedral and Museum on a January day

The verbal assaults against Canada in the early part of the year by the US administration were upsetting – but also provided Canadians with the opportunity to post plenty of low-key patriotic memes on social media. Mark Carney has been one of the more balanced and professional western leaders this year

April saw us back in London, where we saw the play *Retrograde*, a three-hander about an early episode in Sydney Poitier's career. A good play with fine acting.

At the end of the April, we headed to Scotland and the boat. Galene went into the water a week late because the boat hoist broke down. Once in the water, we stayed in Largs Marina for a few days for final preparations for the summer voyage. The food delivery from Sainsburys seemed enormous, with lots of bottles of water and a variety of tins. On the 9th of May we were finally ready to go. We headed around the Isle of Bute to Tarbert on Kintyre. Co-op supermarkets prevail on the islands. The company was was hit with a cyber attack, which meant few alternatives and empty shelves during the first part of the trip. Plenty of cat food, no butter.

We had a good trip through the Crinan canal for the second year running. Our first major stop after exiting the canal was Oban, then over to the marina on Kerrera, where we resolved a problem with the windlass. Someone had removed the power cable to the battery. Grr.



Shelagh in Scotland

The rest of May was spent headed north: first to Arrisaig, then Mallaig, Portree on Skye, then Ullapool. We dodged galesport andto Stornorway on Lewis,

our most northerly port and spent a week there in the expert company of Norman and Jane and their family, who were fabulous tour guides. From there we headed down the inside of the Outer Hebrides. Weather meant we went back to Oban, then stopped in Croabh Haven where a new VHF antenna, new lights at the top of the mast and a new wind vane were fitted on a windy Sunday afternoon. From there we sailed to Port Ellen on Islay for the whisky section of the trip. We hired a car this time to visit 7 of the distilleries, each one different. We also had a lovely scallop roll from a food truck overlooking the fishing harbour. The woman running the truck pointed out a boat in the harbour below. It was her husband's. He caught the scallops.



Whisky tasting at Lagavullin on Islay

From Port Ellen we crossed to Ballycastle in Northern Ireland. Tiny marina, quite a rough crossing with lots of swell. We were just settling ourselves in a berth when Shelagh yelled: the woman on the boat that arrived just after us had fallen in the water trying to get the lines ashore. Peter rushed round to help. Someone had taken charge and between the two of them they hoisted her out of the water. In the meantime Shelagh helped to get their boat safely tied up in a different berth.

The next day, the woman Peter helped save and her husband came round to say thanks and have a cup of tea. They offered use the use of their buoy in Beaumaris in the Menai Straits, that runs between mainland Wales and Anglesey, as they would not be using it for a bit.



Giants Causeway in the rain

We visited the Giants Causeway and Bushmills, with its distillery, and then moved on to Belfast, which has a marina in the centre of the city.

The castle part of the trip starts at this point, with Carrickfergus on the north side of Belfast Lough. A longish day got

us to Peel on the Isle of Man, with the next castle.



Peel Castle at night from our anchorage

From there it was on to Beaumaris, a foggy entrance late in the afternoon, and another great castle, before heading down the Menai Straits to Canaervon, where surprise, surprise there was a very famous castle. The straits need careful timing with tides of up to 8 knots. (Not helped by our chart plotter going on strike)

We moved on to Pwllheli (don't ask how to pronounce it!) where our water pump packed up. New one ordered, received and replaced. In Aberystwyth, we took the funicular up the hill to the top of this cliff for a brilliant view. After a fraught and very stressful night on a mooring buoy at Milford Haven. with gale force winds, where our lines almost gave way, we moved upriver to a small marina with one visitor's berth and slept.

Then on to Padstow, followed by a brief stop in the Scilly Isles before we made the last stretch in familiar territory. Falmouth, Fowey, Newton Ferrers, Dartmouth, Portland and then from there back to the Hamble. We covered 1483 nautical miles over 83 days.



St Peter Port Guernsey

Back in London at the end of August, we saw a single-handed play called *Every Brilliant Thing* starring a well-loved British comedian, Lenny Henry. A serious topic but handled brilliantly. We went on a rally to Chichester with the yacht club and then headed across the channel to Alderney.

What was supposed to be a sailing holiday turned out to be a week in Guernsey, as the weather gods did not cooperate. On shore it was benign, but the seas were rough and the winds from the north. We have now been to every WW2 Museum and attraction on the island. We finally crossed back to England on the 7 September with a sparkling sail and 82 nautical miles in 13 hours.

In London again, we saw a stage production of Mel Brookes' *The Producers*, very camp, and *Brigadoon* at the Regents Park Open Air Theatre. Both were a lot of fun.

Then it was back to France to see how the garden was holding up. It has been an exceptional year for weeds, apples, quinces and walnuts. Pretty much everything, really. We picked apples and found a place that turns them into juice. We ended up with created 66 litres (22 packs) of pasteurised apple juice from about 100 kilos of apples.

Another brief trip back to London included a great performance of *The Importance of Being Ernest*, with Stephen Fry playing Lady Bracknell. He played it straight while the rest of the cast bounced around him. We also went to the Wildlife Photographer of the Year in the Natural History museum. We are always knocked out by the stunning photos by young photographers as well as the professionals.

Back in France there have been two concerts in Rouen, the first an orchestra concert with a last-minute concerto substitution (piano for cello), and the Lebèque sisters with a Basque-flavoured programme that included an arrangement of Ravel's *Bolero* for two pianos and Basque percussion instruments. Fab.



New Garage doors painted

December jobs included putting new doors on the garage (thanks to our neighbour Alain for the assist) and painting them along with the rest of the outside. Much improved. We head to a small village outside Stuttgart for Christmas with Frank and Jennifer Hohenschlager and their extended family followed by a trip to Villedieu les Poêles for New Years with Bernard and Julie, which is nearly a tradition.

As always, we wish you a safe and happy holiday season, and trust that 2026 will treat you well and bring some sanity to the world we find ourselves living in.

Peter and Shelagh