

2173 Tryon Road, North Saanich, B.C., V8L 5H6,

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Dear Friends

Looking back at 10 years of our Christmas newsletters (diligently archived at <http://web.uvic.ca/~mackie/>) I realize how blithely cheerful many of them seem, almost to the point of smugness. Everything in our rose garden was wonderful and the world outside was moving along well, with the steady spread of liberal ideas and institutions. It's impossible to feel the same Panglossian optimism in 2016. It seems we have been living in a dream world, unaware that so many people in our affluent societies were angry and discontented – and not without reason. Now they have lashed out against the established order by seemingly irrational actions, voting for Brexit, electing Trump. I do believe however that Britain will muddle through this crisis as so often before in our history and remain a force for good in the world. We may exit the EU but we will always be culturally intertwined with Europe. The EU itself will survive and consolidate, for the vision of a united Europe is too powerful to be dispelled. Europe will gain strength and influence as a beacon of enlightenment in the world. Canada will be fine too, but it is hard to be optimistic about the USA where the two political parties are so bitterly divided and where the power of the lobbies and wealthy business interests to shape political decisions is so shamefully evident. The new regime will not be able to put an end to the corruption and partisan divisions in Washington and may well make them worse - bad for all of us. Russia's destiny is to be part of Europe. Cold war attitudes will fade, green shoots of trust will sprout and Russia will draw closer. I suppose I am hopelessly Eurocentric. I don't know and can't imagine how the rise of China is going to affect us in the west though it obviously will. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.



Gillian and I live on in the same old house. I was 87 in October but can still drive so we go out for a spin almost every day, do the shopping, see friends, even attend concerts, but we travel much less and haven't been out of Canada once this year, not even to Friday Harbor. People come and see us however and we are glad they do. Rachel came over from France early in the year and again in May when Gill had her birthday. She is good at taking photos of birds and took pictures of bush tits at the suet block that hangs outside the window. Bigger birds like Downy Woodpeckers, Flickers and Steller's Jays come too, even red squirrels. Gillian spends hours watching them. It's more fun than watching TV especially when the news is so depressing.



Here are Rachel and Gill down on the dock just across the water from our house. (no, that's not our cabin cruiser). We are looking forward to seeing Rachel and Alice flying over from France early next year.

Tina and Chris, seen here with Quentin and me, came over in July and stayed at their house on Mayne Island which they have now done up beautifully with new curtains, a wood burning fireplace insert, repaired flooring etc. Gill and I have been over for visits and so have most of the family at one time or another.



Quentin, shown left with Claire at the house on Mayne, goes there a lot with his dog Nimbus for peace and quiet. He is teaching a full load again and the archaeological work he and Al and their colleagues have been doing on Quadra Island is beginning to reveal its potential as sites are coming to light dating back to the time of the first human migrations into North America, ca 13,500 years ago.

Richard and Sue, seen on the balcony of the Mayne house, lead busy lives in Vancouver. Richard combines teaching at UBC with his new job as editor of the Ormsby Review, an online journal publishing articles and book reviews in conjunction with BC Booklook. They are now going into book publishing too and the whole project is turning out very well. Richard's three children are all going on in higher education, two in Quebec and one in BC.



We often see Al now that he has retired and he took Gill out to a crafts show recently and later they met in a pizzeria with his firstborn Bran and granddaughter Frida. This nice picture of them was taken there with an Instax Mini 8 camera, a dinosaurian revival which prints out instant pictures somewhat like the long-defunct Polaroid.

Bob Meech has been to see us several times on his way to and from Friday Harbor and it is always a joy to see him, plus he does heroic work in the garden on the hedges and roses, and brings me single malts from Heathrow. Here we are at Tina and Chris's place on Mayne.

My nephew Peter's daughter Rachel Bishop and her husband Simon came for a brief visit off a cruise



ship passing through Victoria and we had another memorable visit from my niece Caroline's son Charlie Ogilvie and his friend Julia Mintzer. Julia is a professional opera singer and I got a group together to accompany her in songs by Purcell, Handel, Bach, Mozart, and Franck. Luckily I was able to find arrangements scored for soprano and string quartet along with the software needed to transpose the parts down a third to suit Julia's mezzo. It was fun! The young guy in the picture is Richard's son Rupert.



In the fall Gill and I often went mushrooming. The best spots we found were the grounds of the 443rd Maritime Helicopter Squadron, and the grassy areas around the Institute of Ocean Science (Pacific Geoscience Centre). Mushrooms have their own peculiar ideas about where to come up!

Now in December I am making pots for Christmas presents. This is hard work and, as you can see, I have to plug myself into the toaster periodically to restore my motivation.

As always, this comes with our love and best wishes

Happy Christmas and a Survivable New Year!

George

