

## Christmas News 2019

Dear Friends,

One notable event this year was the heavy snowfall In February which left us stuck at home for longer than we would have liked. I had to cancel our Tuesday string quartets as the other players couldn't get their cars down the driveway. Daughter in law Kjerstin and grandson Hugh eventually rescued us and got one of the cars dug out. There were power cuts, one lasting 36 hrs, leaving us without light, heat or internet except via cell phone. Whenever this happens, I tell myself I will go out and buy a Honda generator for use in future outages but then the power comes back on and life returns to normal and generators languish unsold in the stores

I have gone on making spotty plates and bowls. This involves putting a coloured opaque glaze over a glaze containing manganese dioxide, the manganese particles bleed through producing spots whose size and density are concentration-dependent. One can paint on patterns or designs using wax resist over the manganese layer, and these show through as dark lines. All this is tricky, and success has been mixed but experimenting with glazes is always fun.



Gillian and I go for drives most days, collect mushrooms when they are in season, or walk down footpaths to seats by the beach. When there are a lot of windfall apples, we take a bag or two for whatever farm animals we come across on the way. To the list of animals friends we fed last year, we have now added a pair of pigs. They are watchful and intelligent and recognize our car from a distance and come at the trot, it is the high point of their day. When Rachel was here in

October, she joined us in feeding russet apples to these clever swine.



Our son Al often comes and takes his mother out for drives. They like to go to St Stephen's church and sit in the graveyard, which is particularly beautiful in spring when it is carpeted with Easter lilies.



Nearby there is a nice café with home made bakery products. Al's granddaughter Frida, our only great grandchild, is now 6. She is in French immersion at school and doing very well.

Rachel has been making raku pottery in France for years, and sells beads, earrings and pendants through an [Etsy site](#) but she has now started making much larger objects like this amazing coffee table, seen here from above and from the side, a remarkable feat. She came to see us three times this year and cooked us wonderful meals, including truffle



omelettes.

Both our archaeologist sons, Al and Quentin, have spent time at SGAang Gwaii, a Haida village abandoned in the 1880s after smallpox, leaving mortuary and memorial poles still standing (photo by Al).

Rachel and Tina masterminded my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, which was attended by all five of our children, my nephew Patrick from Argyll, about half our grandchildren, plus wives, partners and friends and Quentin's dog. The centrepiece of the meal was Rachel's delicious lamb tajine. The birthday cake took me three blows to get all the candles out. It was a particular pleasure for me that my work mate Bob Meech could come to my birthday party.



*Grandkids: Hugh, Raffi, Charlotte, Parsa, Claire, Nimbus*



*mirror mirror on the wall.....*

Here I caught Bob taking a selfie which he claims he needed for ID (a likely story!)

Well, that's our news for 2019, sent with our love and best wishes for the coming year

*Gillian and George*

PS. I forgot to mention that there is now a Wikipedia article about my father [F.P. Mackie](#) put together by Richard, Sue and myself, following a suggestion by my niece Caroline.