

Christmas news 2022

Dear Friends,

By January this year, after three months, Gillian's grave had begun to blend into the grassy background of St Stephen's churchyard. Snowdrops were starting to move in. There seemed no rush to get a proper gravestone installed but we eventually agreed on a design. It included acanthus leaf scrolls. This seemed appropriate as Gillian had drawn attention to acanthus leaves as a decorative motif in mosaics and frescos of her early chapels.



By the time Rachel came in May, the stone was in place surrounded by daisies and so it will remain until my own demise.

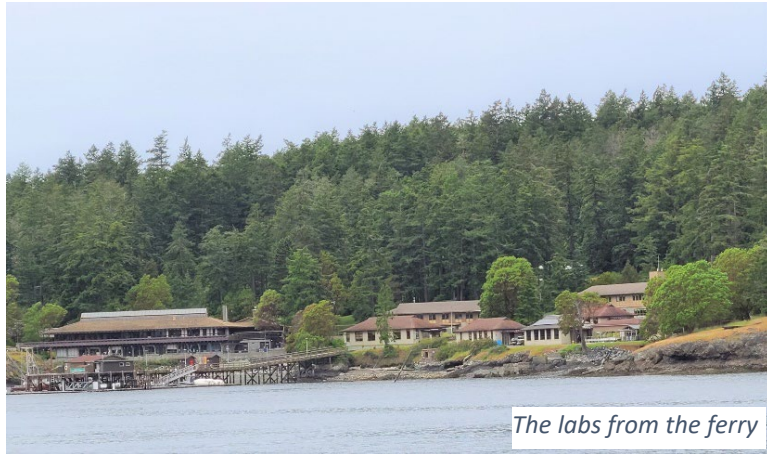


2nd daughter, Rachel

Rachel came again in December and this time we spent a whole day burning the brush piles that had been building up all year.



(Neighbours not happy)



The labs from the ferry

Looking after this big old place on Tryon Road has kept me busy as there are always repairs needing to be done, about an acre of lawn to mow, hedges to clip, tree branches falling down. I get outside help with the garden and I have a cleaner who comes every two weeks to do the inside. I have had many happy hours sitting outside on the patio with friends, neighbours and family members but I still get up to the pottery and have made a fair number of plates, mugs, flower vases and bowls and an egg cup for Chris.



Roberto, Bob and Claudia at the Friday Harbor Laboratories

In early June I nerved myself up to go to Friday Harbor where Bob Meech was working. The ferry from Sidney was not operating because of covid so I had to drive the long way round by road, crossing the border into the USA and catching the ferry from Anacortes. All went well and it was a real pleasure to see my friends again and drive around San Juan Island with Bob visiting our old haunts.



Bob ready to pounce



After 21 years in our cottage, Ellen moved to Cobble Hill to live with her daughter, and her son John



Fran, Marie, John and Michael

Wetherill took over the tenancy. Providentially, John is an accomplished musician in many genres and sight-reads piano music fluently. John joined with Michael, Fran and me to play baroque trio sonatas. John sometimes brings his electronic keyboard which has a harpsichord setting which adds authenticity to our rendering of music of the baroque period. We have been meeting twice a month followed by tea and Eccles cakes on the patio. Sadly, Michael's wife Marie had to go into extended care not long after this picture was taken.

In December Michael organized a Christmas concert for the care home residents. I did not play at the concert but rehearsed with them and helped with the logistics.

The highlight of the event was having Ellen, who has a lovely soprano voice sing with the group. Here is a picture of us rehearsing some carols.



George, Fran, Michael, Ellen and John

The Holly and the Ivy

In addition to playing music at home I have been to several concerts with my friend Carol who plays the flute in the Sidney Concert Band. Carol lost her husband Tim Parsons in April this year so we are both still trying to adjust to being single. Here is a selfie of us at a concert at Uvic. On the right is the Lafayette String Quartet playing Mozart. They have been the resident quartet at the university for thirty years and a huge boon to music lovers but regrettably have decided to retire next year.



Several of my grandchildren are gifted in the arts and crafts.



Bran Mackie



Bran is currently artist in residence at the Comox Valley Art Gallery giving talks, workshops and shows of his own paintings but he still finds time for experiments with dyes extracted from Spanish Moss and other plants. For my 93rd birthday he knitted me some beautiful mitts in a Scandinavian style.

Hugh is a musician and music producer but he is also a virtuoso of the portable pizza oven!



Hugh, pizza maestro



Juliet

Juliet is doing a Ph.D in indigenous art and she also makes highly original earrings in métis style. She is seen here at the vernissage of a show in Montreal with some of her earrings on the wall behind her.

Charlotte is a leather and textile worker and has been making quilts since she was twelve but her recent creations, like the one below that she gave me for my birthday are really wonderful.



Charlotte quilting, 2002



Quilt by Charlotte, 2022

The last weeks of 2022 were clouded with sad news of the passing of Gilli's sister Pat at the age of 94 and, tragically, the death of Jessica, daughter of our friends Pat and John Hutchings.

With best wishes for a Merry Christmas, from George

<http://web.ubc.ca/~mackie/>