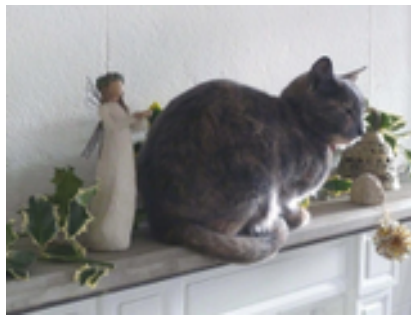


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Christmas 2016

Dear Friends,

This picture of one of our cats wasn't posed, it was seen, and photographed by our Companion Lois, who does most of our photography. You can't see the radiator underneath that ledge!

The community has had a good year I think. One aspect has been dominated by the re-roofing of our guest house, Michaelgarth. The work is a month behind schedule, which is a nuisance, but the amazing side has been the way people have given us donations. Sr Veronica Ann has written over 200 personal thank you letters. Two communities have also given us generous grants. We are a tiny community out in the Welsh hills and it is very moving that so many want to support us.

Sr Lorna Francis SSC, 96 in December, has been living in Whitby as a solitary for years and years, and she has now returned here. She and Sr Veronica Ann, who is only 93, spark each other off with lots of wonderful stories of times past. If only we had a permanent tape recorder set up wherever they are! But it is good to hear the stories anyway, of when the Rev'd Mother had a gun (for pigeons), when scapulas got caught in tractor wheels and Jersey cows misbehaved! When Sister Ann fell off the hay load, and they had cheese curds for lunch.

One Sister has had surgery and is recovering well. Just like most of you, and why should it not be so, we are very busy. But it is a very varied life, from organizing bookings to mopping floors, singing and of course, clearing up after cats. Sister Veronica Ann, 93, today attended two formal meetings in the afternoon, having just sent several hundred Advent Letters off yesterday, and struggling with finances in between - a 12 hour day every day. I took her and Sr Lorna to the hospital and people waiting in the clinic thought 'dear old ladies!' We don't retire, ever.

We have had a 'Visitation', when our Bishop Visitor and Sr Rosemary SLG researched into the life of the community, hearing from all the SSC family and interviewing those who live here and one or two others who are involved. We are working through their report with recommendations concerning free time, the land, worship, and everything in between. One fruitful result was a series of good meetings on how each of us sees our charism, (gifts, flavour of this particular community) and those meetings were very enriching. Otherwise my already overloaded work was overloaded a bit more! But that's life.



It certainly isn't dull, not just living with each other though that is definitely not dull, but we have all sorts of visitors, which have included a lass who didn't want to go, so she walked up the hill and squatted in the greenhouse of an empty house, and another who arrived on a cold November day wearing a floaty long white silky gown, down to the (wet) ground! Some intriguing speakers, and then Katharine has been exhibiting in Newport Cathedral. Her colours are so rich that a stuffy member of the cathedral staff thought she must have been taking those new drugs! (Just home made elderflower cordial!)

This is actually a photo of a cross of beans, rice and lentils etc she made on our chapel floor for Holy Cross Day!

On a personal front, life has been hard. Pippa died this spring. She died as beautifully as she lived, but it is taking me a long time to come to terms with her death. Her family sent and said I might use, this lovely picture taken on what would have been Alan's 75th birthday. The grandchildren went up to the cathedral cloisters where Pip's ashes will join his, to eat his birthday cake for him! Many of us gathered in June for Cath's ordination to the priesthood and Mair has been to stay with her and the Lincoln family since.



My brother has been battling cancer for some years now, with great courage and discipline and they gave Mair lunch in Spain while she was working there .

And I am seeing someone in Bristol, for a two hour session which allows for intense depth, and for various reasons there are more gaps than either of us would choose. The good thing is an hour on the top of a double decker bus, each way. Space with no responsibilities and I get to see the view (crossing the Severn). Generally I am driving.

Mair has bought a house in Southern Germany, before the Brexit vote, which just like the American election shows a totally divided country. When in Spain working on a camp site Mair commented that the people holidaying there showed no interest whatever. Anyway, she is delighted with her house, with garden and fruit trees, and having acquired another degree, this time in modern languages, she is busy translating both French and German - and thinking about another degree....



Catrin and Pete are now Australian citizens, and reckon they have made their last trip to the UK for a bit – so draining with small children and no sleep. However I caught up with them in Lincoln in Carole's house which she opened to them, so I got to see Pete's family also..



In January, provided we are not snowed up, I am having a much needed break – in Wantage! I expect we will all need a break by then.

Have a lovely Christmas and wishing you lots of blessings for 2017. Love from Lizzie/Elizabeth

