

# NEWSLETTER

# Winter 2024



Welcome to our Winter Newsletter.

The themes this month are **Books and Libraries** – with a musical article at the end – so happy reading!



## Events for December

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> December	10.30	Meeting for Worship	Meeting House and on-line Zoom log-in: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?">https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?</a> Password: 1700
Thurs 5 <sup>th</sup> December	14.00 19.00	Social Group Meeting for Worship	Issy's house  On Zoom <a href="https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?">https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?</a> Password: 1700
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> December	10.00	Friendly Cafe	Meeting House
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> December	10.30	Meeting for Worship	Meeting House and on-line Zoom log in: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?">https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?</a> Password: 1700
Thurs 12 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1400	Social Group	Issy's House
Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10.00	Friendly Cafe	Meeting House
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> December	10.30	Meeting for Worship  Third Sunday: shared lunch and Christmas entertainment	Meeting House and on-line Zoom log-in: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?">https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?</a> Password: 1700
Wed 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	12.00	Christian Aid Advent Soup Lunch	Christ Church Methodist and United Reformed Church, Old Market Avenue, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1SW.
Thurs 19 <sup>th</sup> Dec	14.00	Social Group	Issy's house
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10.00	Friendly Café	Meeting House
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	10.30 am	Meeting for Worship	Meeting House and on-line Zoom log-in: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/5679267608">https://zoom.us/j/5679267608</a>
Wed 25 <sup>th</sup> Dec	09.30 am	There will be a Christmas Day Meeting for Worship. A Christmas Breakfast will be served.	Meeting House
Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10.00	Friendly Cafe	Meeting House
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> Dec	10.30	Meeting for Worship	Meeting House and on-line <a href="https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?">https://zoom.us/j/5679267608?</a> Password: 1700

## Future Dates

- Remember to go to Quaker.app (formerly known as QNet) for all Future Dates. For those Friends with no computer access, the Pastoral Team will keep you informed. The log-in for Quaker.app is: <https://quaker.app/>



**Friendly Quaker.app Training.** On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December after Meeting for Worship, Janet will be at the Meeting House to help Friends with any questions or problems about Quaker.app, especially uploading documents. It really is very user friendly – come along and try it!

## This month's charity is Stonepillow



Stonepillow's vision is that homelessness in our community is prevented.

"The first of our five pillars is to prevent people falling into homelessness. We know, of course, that this is not always possible. And when that is the case, we relieve, recover, resettle and restore. We give people the support, the resources and the wherewithal to make a step change."

Stonepillow operates two 'Hubs' and two 'Hostels', one each in Chichester and Bognor Regis, and one 'Resource Hub' in Bognor Regis. Working as drop-in day centres, the Hubs are a first port of call for anyone who finds themselves homeless or in crisis. They meet basic needs as well as helping people find the support they need, either with Stonepillow or one of their partners. The hostels offer bedrooms, communal facilities and are open 24/7. The Resource Hub provides health and wellbeing services, counselling and other support.

Donate here: [Donate - Stonepillow](#)

## The Earth Café



**The Friendly Earth Café** is run by members of Transition Chichester and meets every Friday morning in our Meeting House. It is a gathering place for many people interested in environmental issues, and most weeks there is a topic of interest being discussed, or an activity carrying on. This year Chichester Meeting decided to subsidise the café for the attendance of people who were unable to pay the £5 cost of attendance, the money is needed to cover rent and refreshments. Our aim was to offer a non-stigmatising warm space for people during the winter. During the warmer months attendance at the café dropped, so no subsidy has been claimed for some time.

Now, winter is coming and there may well be a need again for a warm space. The café always needs new volunteers, to open up in the morning, help clear up at lunchtime, provide light refreshments, and organise a rota.

I have been involved as a link between the Meeting and the café and I have been surprised by how much I have enjoyed it. I have made new friends and felt I was making a small contribution towards Chichester's green movement. If you have a little time to join me in this on a Friday morning, it could help the café and maybe you would enjoy it too. Let me or Debbie know if you are interested.

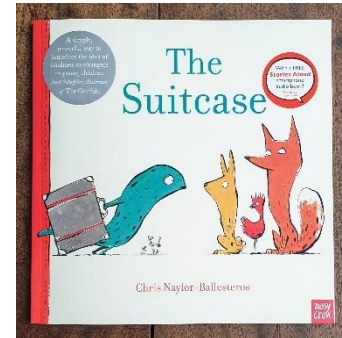
*Jenny Webb*

## HELLO FROM THE CHILDREN'S GROUP



During the course of this calendar year the Children's Group has explored the theme of 'What's Important to Me?' while linking in connections with the Quaker testimonies.

Before a break over the summer holidays we had two sessions in June and July. The first of these focused on the importance of our homes and the comfort, security and shelter they offer. We considered similarities between the Good Samaritan story from the Bible and Chris Naylor-Ballesteros' storybook *The Suitcase* that poses questions about how we respond to refugees who have not only lost that sense of shelter and wellbeing but who might also not be being treated with a sense of equality.



Our July session literally focused on our senses – so very important to us all!! Games of blindfolded challenges to identify the direction of sounds or the source of different smells led us to a discussion of the work of the Sightsavers charity. For many years, and for relatively small amounts of money, it seems the charity has been restoring the life chances of many children in a number of African and Asian countries by treating eye conditions, in particular the devastating infection trachoma that can lead to blindness ... A highly practical way of restoring equality indeed.



The Sightsavers charity became the focus of craft activities in our September and October meetings. We enjoyed stencilling cards and stuffing lavender bags to 'sell' for donations at our charity sale earlier in November. The baking skills of the Hopkins family ensured there were some spectacular cakes to sample on the day as well! With the generosity of F/friends we were delighted to raise the fantastic sum of £170 for Sightsavers.



Many thanks from the Children's Group to everyone who contributed.

Psst... Extra news re January.....!

The Children's Group are booked to go on a trip to see the show *Captain Sandy and the Sea Monster* at the Puppet Theatre Barge in London in early January. See [www.puppetbarge.com](http://www.puppetbarge.com) We hope to report back...

*Jill, Jenny and Fanny*

## Our library



The good news is that Maria and I are now well on the way to sorting out the library. We have taken quite a few books to Oxfam, mostly books that are well out of date. We have also put quite a few more books upstairs, mostly Quaker biographies and autobiographies. They are unlikely to be of interest to many people, but are too important to be disposed of.

We have recently acquired several new books that were on the reading list for the Quaker Way course. They are now easily available, on the bottom right-hand shelf of the library. The black book in which to sign books out is just underneath them.

If you come across a book which particularly impresses you, do let the rest of us know about it. You can mention it after Meeting, and put it on the table in case someone else would like to borrow it.

Janet has very kindly offered to produce a digital list of all our books, which will make it much easier for us to search for them. However, as things stand, we have no written up-to-date list for her to work from. We need some volunteers to make a start on the list. Would you be able to help? If several people could contribute, it shouldn't be too onerous. Please contact me if you are able to spare a little time.

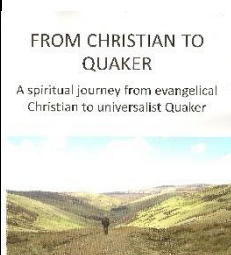
Jenny Webb

## Quaker themed books

Friends would like to share recommendations of Quaker themed books which they have enjoyed.

***From Christian to Quaker*** by Anthony Philpott recommended by Cheryll (Pitt) who says "It helped me a lot when I re-joined (and his Quaker Universalist group)".

A review of the book summarises it in this way:

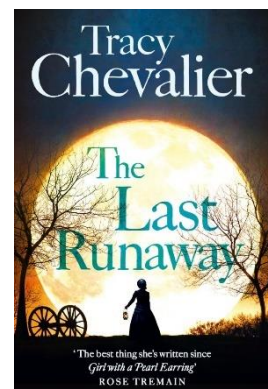


Tony Philpott

It is an account of a spiritual journey from evangelical Christian to universalist Quaker. It explores en route how atheism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, paganism, mysticism and liberal Christianity attempt to answer the big questions relating to truth, the self, time, God, life after death, meaning and purpose in life, and behaviour. The book illustrates the emotional and intellectual impact on adult life of teenage years immersed in evangelical Christianity. Tony's journey, recounted so beguilingly, is archetypically the journey of all awakened contemporary questers, breaking out from ossified moulds and heading for new destinations. As well as being the record of an inspiring personal journey we feel that the book has much to say about the Quaker way today.

***The Last Runaway*** by Tracey Chevalier recommended by Sue and David (Hibberd)

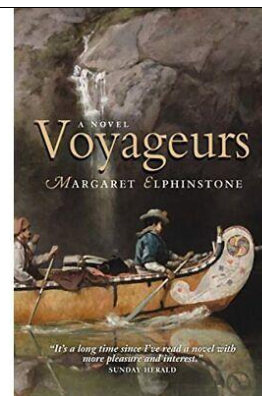
Set in the 1850s it tells the story of a young English Quaker, Honor Bright, who goes to America with her sister. Her sister sadly dies soon after arriving in America leaving Honor alone, but she decides to stay in Ohio and the Quaker community she joins. The novel centres around the response of that Quaker community to slavery. They oppose slavery in principle, but do they have the courage to break the law and help runaway slaves trying to get to Canada and freedom. Just how much are they willing to risk for their beliefs?



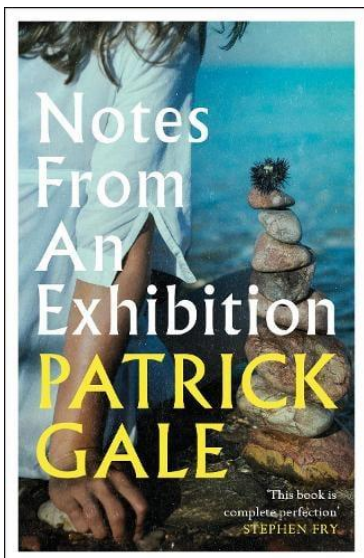


**Voyageurs** by Margaret Elphinstone (also recommended by Sue and David)

Set in the early 00s the novel tells of the adventures of Mark Greenhow who leaves his farm and Quaker community in the Lake District to go to Canada in search of his sister who has gone missing. The novel tells of his exciting search for his sister in early 19th Century Canada.



**Notes from an Exhibition** by Patrick Gale (recommended by Janet (Beckett))



An interesting and powerful book about Rachel, an outgoing talented young artiste, meeting Antony, a shy young Quaker. He manages to secure a date with her, but within a fortnight of them meeting, she has tried to commit suicide. For Rachel is a manic depressive - with bipolar disorder. Dutifully doing what he finds right, Antony takes Rachel to recuperate down in distant Cornwall, where he lives simply with his grandfather. Almost immediately, a lifelong relationship forms, and the first of four children are on their way.

Over the years from then to current times, the ride is never smooth but we as readers enjoy travelling it, with the family. Over time the youngsters, saddled with uncommon names one and all, can engage with their mother's illness in a comfortable way, and all find some level of succour with Antony's Quaker religion.

The author writes well about life in Cornwall and paints a vivid picture of Rachel – a volatile artiste, but loving wife and mother. His engagement with Quakerism (apparently he is not a Quaker himself) is a thread which goes through the book.

Some favourite quotes of mine to give you a flavour:

“When Rachel went to her first Meeting for Worship and she witnessed the potent quiet contemplation, she found herself marvelling that Quakerism had not become the dominant world faith. It seemed so accessible and sane.”

“When he was old enough to join the adult Meeting and to sit in silence she (Rachel) had quickly divined his horror that one or other of his parents might suddenly feel moved to speak. Once or twice she tormented him by clearing her throat as though about to stand, then smiled wickedly as his eyes widened in horror. Antony was not amused. She always shied away from serious discussion yet something in Quakerism spoke to her – given her unquiet soul it was its ideal of stillness.”

At Rachel's funeral “.... a woman he had never seen before stood up. He knew at once she was not a Quaker. She was not used to any of this .... She reached awkwardly down for something .... ‘perhaps we could pass it around?’ She sat down abruptly. Nobody ever passed things around. It broke the silence in the wrong way, creating little currents of sociability and expectation. But Quakers forgive everything and, besides, it was a funeral so the uninitiated were an expected seasoning to the occasion.”

Trevor shares his thoughts ...

## THE COMPANIONSHIP OF BOOKS

*“Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations.”* – Henry David Thoreau, Walden



‘Still Life with Bible’, Vincent van Gogh

I shall let you into a secret of mine. I have an irresistible urge to peer into any book case that I pass. So, I present before you just a peak of the book cases of various well-known people.

*“I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book. When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library.”*  
(Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*)



A visit to Chawton House, which was bequeathed by the Knight family to Jane Austen’s brother (Edward Knight), revealed an enormous collection of books, although a little bit of a cheat here. The House is also a research centre: *Novels-On-Line* is an ongoing project making freely accessible full-text transcripts of some of the rarest works in the Chawton House library collection. These texts, which explore such broad-ranging themes as satire, slavery, marriage, witchcraft and piracy, signal the rich texture and innovative character of women’s writing in the period 1600 to 1830. These little-known novels are available to a wider audience and to encourage critical scholarship of some of the more obscure texts and authors represented in the collection.

Bronze figure of Jane Austen by the chapel adjacent to Chawton House

Chawton House is also home to the *Knight Collection*, which is the private library that belonged to the Knight family, the owners of Chawton House for over 400 years. This Collection was compiled over generations, with books dating from the early 1500s, though the majority date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *Knight Collection* includes various books with annotations. Jane Austen’s brother Edward, was one of the previous owners of this collection, and thus it was a library known to have been used by Jane Austen herself. The collection includes *Fordyce’s Sermons* that is referred to in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The collection was documented in catalogues: one dated from 1818, and the second 1908. Both are held at Chawton House. The 1818 catalogue is of the Godmersham Park Library; Godmersham Park was Edward Austen Knight’s home in Kent.

### The Libraries of Vita Sackville West and Harold Nicholson

Victoria (Vita) Mary Sackville-West (1892-1962) was a prolific fiction writer, prize-winning poet, and gardener. Her husband, Harold Nicholson, was a diplomat and important diarist.

Vita and Harold purchased Sissinghurst Castle in 1930, a then run-down Elizabethan mansion in Kent, and began immediately to renovate both house and garden.



*The Long Library at Sissinghurst Castle*

The Long library had once been a stables and saddle room, and Vita and Harold nicknamed it 'The Big Room'. It was used to house almost 4,000 books and as a drawing room for entertaining guests, including the writer Virginia Woolf, politician Sir Winston Churchill and artist Rex Whistler.

Since both partners were writers, it is appropriate to surmise that they were intensive readers over a wide range of topics pertaining to their different interests. It has not been possible to verify the contents of the Long Room library. Vita, for example, was much influenced by the theories promoted by sexologists, not unnaturally, since both had relationships with same sex partners. She was a passionate gardener and wrote books and articles on horticulture; she had an interest with the Romani people; and her epic poem *Solitude*, published in Oct 1938, contains references to the Bible, Paracelsus, (a Swiss physician and philosopher); Ixion, (Greek mythology); Catullus, (Latin poet of the late Roman Republic); Andromeda, (Greek mythology); the *Iliad* (Homer); and a Sabine bride, (ancient Roman legend).

At this point, a brief moment of reflection. I refer you to the title of this article. Until now, I have regarded books and libraries as congenial and comfortable, and relatively innocuous. Books can make us mentally strong improve our vocabulary and enhance the horizon of our knowledge; they are enjoyable to hold and read and they can be our guide. Regrettably, this has not always been so.

For example, Sulla, the ancient Roman General, paraded the looted library of Aristotle through the Rome streets. In his book, "The Book at War", Andrew Pettegree argues that books have often been used as a 'tool of war' promoting particular political ideologies for example, during the Reformation when Europe was divided between warring Protestant and Catholic parties, books were perceived as tools of evangelisation.



The Nazi book burnings campaign during the 1930s  
The books in both Germany and Austria, targeted for burning were those viewed as being subversive or as representing ideologies opposed to Nazism.

Although often regarded as uneducated, **Stalin** was a lover of books. In the Kremlin and his dachas, he assembled and curated a library of 15,000 books. A proportion of the books that have survived contain detailed annotations. He would edit such major political writing projects on the history of the Communist party, the foundations of Marxism, "Problems of Leninism", and "Dialectical and Historical Materialism", as well as school history texts. The destruction of books and libraries has also been associated with attempts to obliterate an entire cultural heritage.

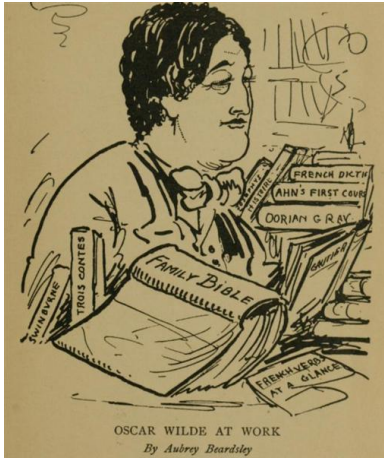
Do you remember **Chairman Mao's** 'little red book'? With a seemingly innocuous title – "Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung", it became an icon of China and Communism as well as a work of propaganda.



*"There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all", Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray.*

Wilde's statement is considered one of the most famous and frequently quoted about the moral responsibility of artists. It expressed his belief that works of art are only subject to aesthetic judgement, not moral judgement. Wilde also believed that artists should create good art, but that the public should be the ones to make judgements about it.





I think it only fitting, therefore to conclude on the library amassed by a prominent and colourful person of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – **Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde**.

Often derided, characterised, despised even, Oscar was, nevertheless, an erudite and voracious reader of books winning several prizes whilst at Oxford University. For this section I am greatly indebted to Thomas Wright’s book: “Oscar’s Books”.

Oscar’s library was situated in the front room in his house set in fashionable (naturally!) Tite Street, in Chelsea, London, a street in which famous artist and writers lived. The room faced east, in accordance with the view of the ancient Roman Architect Vitruvius, who held that libraries ought to make the most of the morning sunshine for reading and warmth – the advice that many Victorian architects followed. I wish I had space to describe his library room, a room which he personally designed every nook and cranny, but suffice to say that his friends described it as: “Eastern, Turkish, or Moorish, in character, on account of all the hangings, lanterns, baskets, and ottomans.,” and carpeted with a Persian carpet. Above the doorway was inscribed in red, blue and gilt:-

*“Spirit of Beauty! tarry still awhile,  
They are not dead, thine ancient votaries,  
Some few there are to whom thy radiant smile  
Is better than a thousand victories.”*

Extracted from his poem “The Garden of Eros, it articulates the devotion to beauty espoused in many of Wilde’s works.

On entering the room one journalist was struck by the abundance of books, periodicals, manuscripts...on all sides. Oscar’s collection amounted to about 2,000 volumes. It would have very much reflected his family flare for both Celtic literature and poetry; mythology, folk tales, and early epics of various cultures.

Oscar’s Classical education at both Trinity College, Dublin, and at Oxford, spilled into his later life - philosophical writings such as the Plato Dialogues, Aristotle, the Greek classics, poetry and drama. He loved European literature, which included French (he was fluent in the language), Italian (well versed in the language), Russian. Volumes of Shakespeare criticisms; politics and social issues such as the ‘*condition of England*’ issues, Irish home rule. Such a collection would also have contained books donated and signed by other authors and, of course, copies of his own books and articles being a fervid writer himself.



As can be judged from the above list Wilde’s taste was prolific and wide ranging and it has been impossible to give a complete list. Alas and alack, such a vast collection has been lost to auction at Oscar’s imprisonment to offset his debts, notably the legal fees incurred from the Marquess of Queensberry’s law suit. Much insight to the collection has been gained by a surviving copy of the auction sale catalogue, the odd publisher’s list and copies bought by friends from various booksellers.

Wilde’s prodigious appetite for books did not cease with his imprisonment. In Wright’s book several pages in an appendix has been devoted to Wilde’s requests for books to the Prison Governor. I quote the shortest list from one page, although not all the books requested were necessarily agreed to:-

**St. Augustine**, Confessions, The City of God; **Pascal**, Thoughts; **W.Pater**, Studies in the History of the Renaissance; **T.Mommsen**, The History of Rome (5 vols); **Cardinal Newman**, The Grammar of Ascent, and Defense of his Life, Two Essays on Miracles, and The Idea of a University.

I leave you with this thought .....

**‘A room without books is like a body without a soul.’ - Marcus Tullius Cicero**

*(Trevor Beckett)*



## The Library at Friends House, London.



Did you know .....? The closure of Friends House due to the pandemic in March 2020 offered the opportunity for a long overdue overhaul of the Library. When it re-opened in 2022 it was close to its original design when Friends House opened in 1923.

Larger pieces of fitted furniture were removed to create a more flexible and accessible space for a variety of users, and carpet tiles were lifted to reveal the original wooden floor which has now been restored.

The Library staff commented that it has been a "huge game of Tetris" to fit the collections back into the room and basement storage.

This Library is the repository for one of the most important collections of materials in the world relating to Quakers and their activities. As well as covering Quaker history and thought, the collection covers topics in which Quakers have been active such as peace, anti-slavery and relief work. The Library also holds the central archives and records of Britain Yearly Meeting.

### Books and pamphlets

The Library has over 80,000 books and pamphlets, including a unique collection of 17th century Quaker and anti-Quaker material. It is a reference collection, although it will sometimes loan duplicate copies of books less than 75 years old to registered readers in the UK only.

### Periodicals

Over 200 titles are regularly received that are mainly Quaker related. They range from academic titles such as Quaker Studies and The Journal of the Friends Historical Society, to special interests such as Towards Wholeness (Friends Fellowship of Healing) to the newsletters and journals of other Yearly Meetings. We have complete runs of many titles, plus older titles that no longer exist.

### Archives and manuscripts

The Library houses four broad categories of archival materials. They are:

- the archives of Britain Yearly Meeting and its committees. These are committees responsible for the work of Friends in Britain and overseas.
- the archives of London & Middlesex Quaker meetings
- the archives of Quaker organisations that are not part of Britain Yearly Meeting, such as Friends Ambulance Unit; and a few non-Quaker organisations, such as Central Board for Conscientious Objectors
- manuscript collections and papers of a wide variety of significant Friends, such as Margaret Fell and Elizabeth Fry.

Most collections are subject to a 50 year closure period. Some collections may be closed for longer in line with Data Protection legislation or other issues of confidentiality.

### Visual Resources

The Library's visual resources collection includes photographs, lantern slides, paintings, drawings, prints, posters and some museum objects and costume. Subjects consist mostly of group and individual portraits of Friends, meeting houses and aspects of Quaker work at home and abroad.

## Bognor Regis Music Club; A hidden gem



In the heart of Bognor Regis there lies a delightful secret. The music club has existed for nearly fifty years giving a friendly space to both professional and amateur musicians, an intimate environment where music can be shared and enjoyed. It is affordable and offers the gift of live music performed to a high standard.



When I first came to the club, it was in the upstairs room of 2 Sudley Road, a beautiful Georgian building, and the room was beautiful too, I particularly remember the balcony, which had the word 'Love' inscribed on it. At the club I was introduced to music, mainly classical, but sometimes other genres. It was a brilliant place for amateur singers like myself. There were wonderful accompanists who were willing to give their time to rehearse with us and perform with us for free.

Me and my friend Steph often used to perform with our accompanist Rex Latter, who quickly became a lovely friend as well. We practiced in his flat which gave a good view of the sea, and he and his wife Helen made us very welcome. Rex was not only a talented accompanist on the piano, but a composer, arranger, organist and singer. It was not until his funeral two years ago that I began to appreciate more fully the contribution he had made not just to the club but to the world of music in general.

When I first came, the chairman was Derek Debus, but when he sadly died, Chris Coote took over the role of Chairman. When Rex's wife, Helen became secretary, I agreed to be minutes secretary. I had had some experience of something like this with my role as a note taker at the university. We used to have committee meetings in Chris's large house in Tangmere, a beautiful large room with a grand piano, where of course, me and Steph would also often rehearse with him. When Chris tragically died of cancer during lockdown, Helen and other members of the committee were left with the problem of what to do. In the end we decided to move out of 2, Sudley Road and join forces with our friends at the Regis School of Music down the road. Ian Clarke became the new chairman and Louise Russell; Secretary.

It is thanks to their tireless work, in particular the work of Louise Russell, that the club has managed to keep going. But alas, members of our club are getting older and numbers are starting to dwindle. We need a younger audience, or at least, an audience that is prepared to travel to Bognor. We have had concerts with students from the university, but perhaps because of their large workload the students haven't stayed.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of attending many concerts, too many to list here, but as well as hearing brilliant pianists and singers I have been introduced to more unusual instruments, such as our friend Francis Kelly (or Fanny to Quaker friends) on her harp, Martin Smith on his euphonium, and a few years ago a concert on xylophones performed by a friend of Patrick Moore. However, my favourite evenings are the members evenings because this is when I can perform with other members of the club. On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December we have just such an evening, and I will be singing a lovely selection of Christmas songs.

In this age where small affordable venues for live music are getting more and more hard to find, the Bognor Regis Music Club is something very precious. I am trying to make the club not so much a hidden gem but as a treasure for all.

*For more details, please contact me, Rebecca: [grovekindred@gmail.com](mailto:grovekindred@gmail.com)*

**A peaceful and happy Festive Season and New Year to all Chichester F/friends**

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook Chichester Quakers (Meeting of The Religious of Friends) | Chichester | Facebook



Society