



September 2022 Friends in Stitches Newsletter.

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Dear Friends

In the July newsletter we announced that Tessa Spratt had laid down her role as co-convenor of Friends in Stitches. Yearly Meeting Nominations Committee was tasked with finding someone to help me drive the project into the future. Several Friends were approached but Nominations report that they have not been able to find a Friend who is able and willing to do that.

Tessa has generously agreed to continue in the role for the next period until we can find someone. There is a chronic problem across the Society of Friends. Many of us are overburdened with tasks to keep the Society afloat and Friends in Stitches is no exception.



This is a fairly dark time for us. I feel sad and I feel worried. Today I am trying to hand it all over to God and trust that Tessa and I will have the wisdom to know how to proceed, one day at a time. Sometimes I wonder if we need to lay it all down because it does not have enough support from Friends to continue. But we still have a lot of our story to tell, a lot of fabric, a lot of wools. So it isn't finished. I am not ready to lay it down at twenty five panels.

There are sparks of light to sustain us.

One bright spark of light is in the West. Following the death of Ann Walker the newsletter with the pictures of her panel was forwarded to members of her family, one of them being her sister, Sally Herzfeld, a member of WARM. She had previously thought that the Quaker Embroidery project was frivolous and indulgent and that it would be better to spend our energies sewing clothes for the homeless. However when she saw the work her sister had been doing she had an epiphany, let's say, and decided to get involved.

Not only that, but Sally and Anne Walker are both daughters of Elsie and Cyril Gare, the subjects of the Allawa Grove panel. Sally was pleased to accept this unfinished panel. She visited Allawa Grove when she was a child and recognised some of the people depicted in the panel. This was a huge relief for me who had been struggling to stitch this panel, designed and begun by Tricia Wood. It is perfect that Sally is able to take on the completion of it. Sally is a leader in AVP in Western Australia and is keen to coordinate the design and the stitching of an AVP panel, one that is clearly needed.



In August Sally and Beth Harcourt met at the Meeting House and discovered all the Friends in Stitches materials stashed away in a cupboard. Beth showed Sally how to attach her panel to a frame - the kind Beth uses, not the wooden ones and explained the need for this. She introduced Sally to Appleton's wool and gave her the samples book so she could work out what colours she needed. They intend to meet monthly, either at the Meeting House or at Beth's studio. If you would be able to join them, please contact Beth on 0407 081 047. This is all very encouraging

Another spark of light is here in north west Tasmania. Helen Wells, descendant of Friends William and Elizabeth Wells, and President of the Devonport Embroiderers' Guild, has long wanted to stitch a panel. She has a book of letters and journal entries of her ancestors. After the Exhibition in La Trobe Helen was firm that the panel she wants to stitch is one that focuses on the Wells Family, the four generations of Friends who lived in Latrobe - where Helen still lives in the house of one of them. She took our book and consulted with her brother and sister-in-law who has some kind of design and art background, and they are going to come up with a design for Helen to stitch. I am excited about this because Helen is an extremely skilled embroiderer and I know this panel will be outstanding.

So with that going on, I was free to go to a panel that has been in my head for - could it be? - years! This is a panel about the sea voyage of Quakers to Australia. Every migrant to Australia before the advent of planes, came by sea. There are many Quaker journals describing the trip, the sea sickness, the water washing into the cabins and wetting all their bedding, the Meetings for Worship held in someone's cabin and so on. So this is the panel which I have started. I am inspired and enjoying stitching.



*This much shows the horizon and the waves peaking over the rails of the ship.*

I had almost decided not to do a 2023 calendar and was going to ask in this newsletter for a volunteer to do it, or suggest that we leave it for a year, but then, between thinking that and now, I have found the mojo again and have started to design it. All the panels are still at my place since the La Trobe exhibition so I can take a whole lot of new photos of the featured panels. In fact just by writing this newsletter, my feeling of doom has lifted and I'm sure Friends in Stitches can keep going, if not growing.

Your Friend,  
Sally O'Wheel



The Steppes, Tasmania