

The Australian Friend

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Yearly Meeting 2017



The State of the Society

Editorial

Following our Yearly Meeting we look inward to consider the state of the Society. What are our strengths, what problems do we face, what are our main concerns?

We begin with the address delivered by Robin Sinclair at the meeting in Adelaide. Robin looks at ‘the combination of spirituality and practicality’ which is the essence of Quakerism, and the resulting tension between stillness and busyness. Robin reminds us that our spiritual life is grounded in our meetings for worship, and Christine Venner-Westaway reminds us that this spiritual life should lead us to be ‘a presence and agent of difference in the world.’

True spirituality is not a matter of feeling good, but of doing good.

Many of the articles in this issue deal with the traditional concerns of Quakers – seeking peaceful solutions to world problems, seeking reconciliation with our indigenous peoples, helping to lift people out of poverty. Then there is the progress of our Australian Quaker Tapestry which looks back to our history and presents it in a way that is accessible to modern Australians.

Other articles deal with issues of suffering, loss and death. How do we interpret and make meaningful the harsher realities of life?

This issue contains the last of the ‘Know They Friend’ articles coordinated and written by our Friend Pamela Leach. We have appreciated the quality of the articles in this series, and feel that they are a valuable part of the *Australian Friend*. Is there anyone who would like to take on the job of finding Friends with interesting stories to tell (there are many such!) and helping them to put their stories to paper?

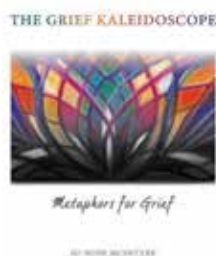
In our next edition we would like to look outward – what have we to say to the world? Do we still have a prophetic voice? What canst thou say?

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM

Noted ...

The Grief Kaleidoscope: Metaphors for Grief by Su-Rose McIntyre, published by Morning Star Publishing. ISBN: 9780648030560.

A review of this book has been published in our on-line *Australian Friend* at australianfriend.org. Lack of space has precluded publication in this printed version, but it will be included in our next issue.



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Cover photo: Yearly Meeting 2017.
Photo by Geoff Greeves, retouched by
Meryl Moscrop



Australia Yearly Meeting 2017

State of the Society Address

ROBIN SINCLAIR | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

Over the last few weeks I have spent much time thinking about what to say in this address. It's not just a list of what we have done, though that comes into it. The reports are already there in full in *Documents in Advance* for everyone to read. It's not to a formula, though there are questions which always recur because of who we are. It's more of a reflection, or even a meditation on what the reports say, and perhaps what they don't say. So that is how I've approached it.

I want to begin this report on the present by taking us back to the past. Soon after the colony of South Australia was founded in 1836 as an experiment in a model settlement with free settlers, no convicts and a policy of working in harmony with the Indigenous people, Quakers began to arrive. English Friends, wanting to support them, sent a Meeting House. In 1840 it arrived by ship, in flat-pack form. It was a modest wooden building along Quaker lines and principles and very well built. There it still sits, firmly bolted to the earth by iron rods which were included in the pack in case of unexpected weather events. Then, the Australian colonies were outliers of the Quaker community. Now we are a part of a much more comprehensive world-wide fellowship of Friends who care for each other. In a way we are still outliers, with all the other far-flung Friends groups, but in another way we are also at the heart of it, in the way that the heart is wherever Quakers gather.

Today the Meeting House sits staidly in the lee of St. Peter's Cathedral, rather like a small wooden boat being

overtaken by an ocean liner. It is of modest size, comfortably seating a group of thirty to sixty people, even a hundred at a squeeze. In 1860 there were 32 Quakers in the colony. Today in this Meeting House there are usually about twenty at Meeting for Worship, with other small meetings of about the same size scattered around the region.

So, 177 years later, here we still are. Numbers have gone up a bit and down a bit over the years, but one thing you can say: as well as being principled, we are consistent.

People can be drawn to Quakers, as I was, by the combination of spirituality and practicality and by the powerful pull of simplicity and the living out of our testimonies. There can also be a shining-eyed and unrealistic expectation of who we are and how we live, and some who come to us will fall by the wayside as the realisation comes that we are only human after all, and that what we can attain in our lives is not always what we aspire to. Quakers are still people, of our day and age. But we try.

In the middle of the nineteenth century some of my ancestors, in a remote settlement in the mountains of north-western Tasmania, joined a small local Quaker meeting. It must have been not too long after Backhouse and Walker had come that way and such meetings did spring up, inspired by them and by other Friends. After a while my ancestors stopped going along because they noticed that it was always the same person who was moved to speak. They went to the Methodists instead, where at least they could lay back their ears and have a good sing.

So we are all accustomed to people

who come for a while and then leave. Maybe this accounts partly for the decline in numbers this year. We are down by 53: 33 attenders and 20 members, some by death and some simply by drift. We like to let people find their own way. We don't push. We don't twist arms. But perhaps we should ask ourselves whether we always pay them the attention they deserve, or need.

Several things stand out for anyone reading through the newsletters, the reports, *The Australian Friend*, the web-sites. One is our very deep and earnest desire to fix things; to make the world whole; to prick the conscience of the nation. Over the last year the Clerk, on our behalf, has written beautifully expressed and deeply thought-out letters to the Prime Minister and other politicians, on subjects ranging from Same Sex Marriage to the Adani coalmine to issues involving nuclear disarmament, freedom of religious belief and freedom of speech. Jo Jordan, our Clerk, in a recent article in the Secretary's Newsletter, quoted an American peace activist of the 1960s: '*We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers.*'

So we do. Some of us are naturals in the trouble-making area and feel called to do it: the Quaker Grannies; the participants in the Silver Wattle *Peace in a Time of War* workshop over the Anzac weekend who, in the space of four days took part in the Anzac Eve Vigil, the Frontier Wars Memorial march with members of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, and a peace action at the Joint Operations Command Headquarters near Bungendore.

Others of us prefer to make our stand in a more quiet way, as in the Silent Vigils which have now been happening for many years. Others do it, as individuals, by writing letters (Quakers are good at words); or by life-style; or by being a part of groups in the wider community which may be deeply concerned over conservation issues, or Indigenous issues, or gender issues. In every Meeting there are Friends who take their concerns with them wherever they work or go. How many of us make it known that we are Quakers? Does it matter? This is a question that we must all answer for ourselves. It might matter. At a recent Meeting for Worship one of our members talked about her worry that, because of deafness, she couldn't hear or speak effectively with her grandchildren. 'What should I do?' she asked her daughter. The reply was, 'You don't have to do anything. You're Grandma!' Her message to our Meeting was that *we are our presence*. So we are.

Yes, Quakers are good at words, and we are good at talking about our Quakerliness and our testimonies. That is, within our own group. Again and again we bring them up in Meetings for Worship or business, so that an outsider might ask us, 'Why are you so preoccupied about what it means to be a Quaker?' Why are we? I think because it's important for us to remind ourselves who we are and what we stand for. We need to reinforce our identity to keep us moving in the right direction.

How do we know ourselves?

*Through the window of the story
that we tell ourselves about ourselves.'*

Excerpt from the poem *Storytelling*,
by Robin Sinclair, from *Now and Then*,
2017.

In July 2016 we had our first winter Yearly Meeting gathering. We have a new Clerk, Jo Jordan, and a new Secretary, Jacque Schultze who worked together this year for the first time at Standing Committee in Perth in February.

From the reports and newsletters I want to mention a little about each region. We have so much in common, yet each has its own particular flavour and emphasis. This is not a comprehensive account. The rest you can read in *Documents in Advance*, or, even better, find out by talking to the people involved.

Tasmania Regional Meeting

Last year Tasmanian Friends hosted the first ever winter Yearly Meeting, attended by 250 people. As it always is, it was a consuming but rewarding experience; that expenditure of energy, followed by exultation, exhaustion and convalescence, which coincide with the planning, carrying out and recovering from hosting a Yearly Meeting. And as always it was an inspiring event for the hosting community, renewing and refreshing.

Hobart has The Friends' School, and the Meeting House shares its grounds; something of great benefit and enrichment to both communities. Both enjoy and care for the Peace Garden. Both benefit from the Friends' School Community Coordinator who facilitates school Gatherings in the Meeting house, provides valuable outreach for students and others and organises a Friends in Residence programme.

Tasmanian Quaker life parallels that of Friends in other Meetings as they offer spiritual support to each other; in their study groups; and in the joyful and creative activities of art, singing, song-writing and music. Along with other Friends, they face in their Peace and Social Justice committee the problems which face us all: 'problems that are immense and seemingly intractable – inequality, injustice, racism, climate



Photo: Friends Meeting House in Adelaide.
'There it still sits, firmly bolted to the earth.'

change, militarism.' We all feel that way; and yet we keep trying, because we feel compelled to.

At the end of their report they say, 'Our search for the Truth goes on.' They quote from the British Yearly Meeting's Faith & Practice: '...the Truth is a complex concept; sometimes the word is used for God, sometimes for the conviction that arises from worship, sometimes for the way of life.' Then they add, 'The Huon Worshipping group put it this way: 'in the silence of the Meeting we straighten ourselves out spiritually as individuals. Then we are able to pass 'this spirit' in our own ways to others in our daily life.'

Western Australia Regional Meeting

WA members of *Friends in Stitches* have now completed two panels, one on Eleanor Clifton, the very first Friend in WA, and one called 'The Loneliest Meeting'. It used to be the loneliest Meeting, geographically about as far from other groups of Friends as it's possible to be. Now, because of the internet, new technology and social media and faster travel we are closer than we've ever been. The three Meetings in the region support each other and stay close, in the way of Friends, yet must still feel that the rest of Australia is a long way away.

For this reason it was of particular significance to host Standing

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Committee this year, and to have visits from three overseas Friends: Margery Post Abbott, last year's Backhouse lecturer, sharing insights on Everyday Prophets; Alyssa Nelson, the Pacific YM Youth Coordinator, with a workshop on the care and support of young people; and Harry Albright, FWCC communications consultant and international membership secretary.

WA is currently hosting the Earthcare Committee on behalf of Australian Friends. Committee members are well aware that all over Australia Friends are deeply conscious of the issues and are taking action through their Meetings and in their own lives. Three times a year they produce a newsletter which goes out to all Friends through Regional Meetings, called *Earthcare Invitation* with sections called *Prayer, Read, Act and Celebrate*. It's also been of particular significance to the group to initiate and take part in a river journey, meeting every two months to explore another part of the Swan River; building a relationship with the river and exploring it in the light of Aboriginal and European stories, family history and their own experience. They report being 'energised and nourished' by it and say, 'It has inspired a surprising number of Quakers.' Maybe not so surprising because it offers a concrete and enjoyable way to illuminate our concerns, and an opportunity to connect with the land in an immediate and physical way. It's not just another committee, or another carefully worded statement. It's just being there, something we all respond to.

At the beginning of WA's report I mentioned their panel, 'The Loneliest Meeting'. *Friends in Stitches*, the narrative embroidery project that tells some of our stories, is important in this community and to all of us. It reminds us of our own history and also helps to tell people in the wider community about it. Its impact on non-Quakers can be considerable. It involves a small

but significant number of people, both Quakers and non-Quakers, in designing a stitching the panels, and is a wonderfully creative and congenial way of being together. Like the Quaker community in general, its impact is greater than the sum of its parts. We need to recognise, celebrate and enjoy it.

South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting

It's a big slice, right down the middle of the country. Like other regions with far-flung groups, staying connected has been a priority. It's been important to have at least one Friend from Alice Springs or Darwin at the RM weekend. This year's gathering was memorably energised by the presence and input of the young, including an extended Burrundian family. Wonderful music round the campfire. The theme was 'What does Love require of us?' One of the issues discussed was one which is troubling many Friends: the fact that we often have more committee positions to fill than we do members. Why is this? Are we trying to navigate by an out-of-date instruction manual? Yes, Quaker processes – how we discern, how we conduct meetings – are essential. They are what make us who we are. But have we got an over-commitment to committees? Could we be addicted to the committee, either because we have always had them, or as a way of dealing with every situation? Having a core of members who are over-worked, over-extended and over-used is not a good Quaker look. What happened to our testimony of simplicity?

Planning for Yearly Meeting has also taken a good deal of SANTRM's attention this year.

The Quaker Op Shop often gets a one-line mention in reports as a wonderful fund-raiser for QSA. It is; but as it gets ready to celebrate 50 years we should note that it is much more than that. Over the years hundreds of

people, both Quaker and non-Quaker have worked there, receiving as much in care, fulfilment and joy as they have given in time and effort. In terms of outreach the Shop is the public face of Friends in Adelaide. People who know little of our peace efforts or worship know about the Shop, and customers often ask to learn more, or take away the leaflets on the counter. It's true that somebody once asked suspiciously, 'Are you *really* Quakers?' When told that yes, we are, she said, 'But you can't be! They're all dead.' Not yet. But the best comment came from another customer who said, 'This is my favourite shop in Adelaide, and do you know why? Because you serve with love.' What better form of outreach could there be?

South Australian Friends remember with great affection and admiration Enid Robertson who died this year. She was closely connected with The Quaker Shop, and with every aspect of Friends in SA, being a descendant of those pioneering Quakers, the May and Ashby families. She said that she was both a birth-right Quaker and a Quaker by conviction.

Victoria Regional Meeting

After several years of thought and planning Friends in Melbourne have been settling into the renovated Victorian Friends Centre in West Melbourne. More work on stage two is planned. A number of new Friends have become members, and it is hoped that the Centre will be a hub for welcome and for outreach. As a result of the move two meetings have been laid down. One new one has also been formed.

Like other Friends they are much concerned with peace and justice issues, and this year they have made a submission to the Defence White Paper, advocating the abolition of nuclear weapons. In common with several other Meetings they are also offering refuge to asylum seekers.

Their March Gathering this year

took the theme of *Connection to Country*. It included an intergenerational exploration of connection to country through the senses, and featured two Aboriginal speakers and a focus on the testimonies. The *Friends in Stitches* panel on the long-standing Silent Vigil has now been completed and others are in progress.

New South Wales Regional Meeting

New South Wales Friends speak of 'a pattern of movement and renewal', as Friends relocate from expensive Sydney to regional areas. The smaller worshipping groups have grown, and in local meetings there are more enquirers and attenders, starting 'a new cycle of growth in spiritual seeking'. They also speak of their awareness of the importance of keeping in contact with some of the more distant meetings, and the devastation caused by flooding in the Northern Rivers towns.

A significant event was the inaugural Quaker Peace Prize Awards, involving high school students from across the Blue Mountains. The exhibition on the Quaker Response to World War I continues to travel and has been seen this year by Northern Rivers and Blue Mountains and will shortly move to the Hunter Valley.

The Devonshire Street Meeting House in Sydney now hosts the office of the YM Secretary, and Jacque speaks of her pleasure in being able to meet Friends from all over Australia as they pass through.

The QSA office is also at Devonshire Street. This has been a pivotal year for them, with a new constitution and the adoption of their status as 'a company limited by guarantee'. Jackie Perkins says, 'Limited by name but not by thinking!' This year they received a 5% increase in funding from the Australian Government's Dept. of Foreign Affairs. Activities have included monitoring visits this year to Cambodia, Uganda and India, and there are continuing

projects to do with Indigenous concerns. The *Friends in Stitches* panel on QSA has also been completed this year and will be on display.

Queensland Regional Meeting

As with every region there is a concern to keep members and groups in touch with each other, and this year the Clerk has visited all six groups, from North Queensland to the Gold Coast. As with other regions there is a great care for the young people and children of the meetings, and a regret that there are not more. Each region deals as well as it can with committee structures and with over-extending its members, and this year Queensland has held a Threshing Session so that they could clarify their direction: a traditional and thoughtful way of helping to resolve differences.

The Alternatives to Violence Project has a strong following among Queensland Friends. This programme was begun by Quakers in the 1970s and has since been taken up worldwide and is a recognition that issues of peace are not concerned only with conflicts between nations, but that self-understanding and understanding of others is the beginning of peace. One Queensland Friend, Valerie Joy, is a member of the Asia West Pacific Friends Peace Team, which this year has taken part in regular AVP training at Peace Place in Central Java.

Canberra Regional Meeting

Their theme for the year has been 'Embracing Diversity — joys and challenges'. They are aware, as most are, of the aging of our population, as a society and in the broader community, and attention has been paid to the needs of older people. They have also looked at the issues of palliative care and euthanasia.

As for all of us, their young people bring great joy, and among other activities they held a workshop on being adult allies to youth.

And, as for all of us, climate change and other environmental issues have been a strong concern, and the running of the Meeting House has been adapted accordingly.

The Committee of Racial Equality has continued to host a 'Sharing Stories' series with Aboriginal speakers, and these meetings have been attended by a large number of non-Quakers, a valuable and valued form of outreach.

The residential weekend had a theme of 'A Green and Meaningful Christmas': what Christmas means and how it is celebrated or not celebrated by Quakers. It was held at Silver Wattle. They conclude by saying, 'Our joys help unite us, our struggles deepen our awareness that we are all on different paths and need to work together to find common ground as we strive to let our lives speak.'

The Silver Wattle Australian Quaker Centre comes within the Canberra Regional Meeting. Eight years after its beginning it continues to grow in significance. If Yearly Meeting can be seen as representing the mind and heart of Friends, Silver Wattle is its soul. Friends who visit, live or work there become much refreshed in spirit and more assured of their direction. It would be wonderful if all Friends could visit and stay; but, as we've noted before, in terms of distance Australia is very badly designed.

Susan Clarke, the Director, now sadly and unexpectedly ill, says that Silver Wattle is 'thriving spiritually and surviving financially'. Improvements to the property have been made possible by generous bequests and donations from Friends. Susan says, 'Please hold us in the Light, and better still, visit with willing hands as we continue this marvellous, impossible faith-driven experiment.'

Conclusion

So who are we? Are we what we

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Impressions of Yearly Meeting 2017

JULIE WEBB | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING



As I was not part of the organising committee, my introduction to YM began with the online registering process. Decisions needed to be made – to live in or not, to have meals or self-cater, to pay full price or concession (a typical Quakerly way based on a self-assessed ability to pay rather than whether one had any formal concession cards). In the past when YM has been in Adelaide, I have travelled from home each day. This time I decided to live in, which allows for more time with Friends, particularly in the informal, unplanned interactions. Having made those choices, I helped someone else register online and waited for the Winter School details to be posted. Summer School has always been a highlight of YM for me and Winter School this year was a valuable time to settle into the rhythm of Yearly Meeting in a small group.

Having offered to help in some way during YM, I was asked to help with accommodation. I attended two planning sessions in the month before YM as well as a visit to the Shores Resort to ask questions of the staff. The meetings were well-attended, informative and interesting and I became aware of the huge amount of work that had gone into planning YM. Most of the room allocation had already been organised before Liz Pyatt

and I took over from Yarrow Andrew two weeks before YM started. A few last-minute registrations and some other requests required a bit of juggling but were able to be accommodated.

On the first day, somewhat nervous, we waited at the Help Desk for everyone to arrive. A number of volunteers had to withdraw at the last moment due to illness but others stepped in to help and the show went on. There was the pleasure of greeting old friends and meeting new ones as people poured in to register and in some cases get keys to their cabins. Nothing is ever perfect but we did our best to deal the challenges. There were only two keys per cabin, sometimes to be shared among 6 people. Some people were sharing cabins with people they did not know well, if at all. The cabins were very comfortable, with living rooms and a kitchen, but sharing two or three to a room could be challenging. Over the next few days, changes needed to be made for various reasons and most people were very happy to co-operate. I got a lot of exercise during this time and got to know the layout of the resort reasonably well, after getting hopelessly lost a few times.

Although I hadn't initially been rostered to be on the Help Desk, I ended up doing a few shifts and found it most enjoyable. It was often the hub of activity, with the children next door

and people popping in for requests or a chat.

When the venue was first booked, it seemed as if there would be more facilities for meeting rooms, but this did not eventuate and other plans had to be made. The Sea Squadron rooms were very comfortable, and enhanced by views to the hills in one direction and the sea in the other. Many of the living rooms in the cabins were used for various purposes, including Winter School sessions, committee meetings, book sales, tapestry activities, a quiet room and Share and Tell sessions. This worked well in most cases.

Instead of the formal exchange of gifts between Quakers and the local Kurna people, as happened at the last Adelaide YM, this year's exchange was a combined, less formal occasion. As it was NAIDOC week, many Kurna people were busy with other events and Kurna elder, Uncle Lewis O'Brien, asked Peter Webb to play the didgeridoo to accompany the song (words written by Harald Ehmann, translated into Kurna language by Uncle Lewis, set to music and taught to us by Matthew Lykos).

The Backhouse Lecture was quite different this year and it was very moving to hear the personal stories of David Carline and Cheryl Buchanan.

Food always seems to be a major

issue at YM. Quakers have an amazing array of dietary issues, which can be very challenging for caterers. The only way to keep the costs of evening meals at the Golf Club reasonable was to go all-vegetarian. Friends with special needs were advised that if they did not think this would be suitable for them, they should consider self-catering, a good option considering the facilities available. Packed lunches were provided by the Resort caterers and they did their best to be 'green' in their packaging. Being one of the dietarily challenged Friends, I self-catered, but many people I spoke to were very happy with the quality of the lunches and dinners. The daily mini-bus and car services were helpful for those who wished to go to local shops to stock up.

The small number of Young Friends was a concern, not least to the Young Friends themselves. The timing of YM and changes to the lower age limit have affected YF involvement, and we became aware of the pressures placed on those who were present to nominate YFs to be on the various YM committees. Similar pressures are faced by Friends in some local and regional meetings as numbers drop and ages increase.

One of the highlights was the display of the 16 finished panels in the Quaker Narrative Embroidery Project around

the walls of the main meeting room. There was discussion about insuring and protecting the panels to preserve them for the future but these panels are also for us now, and being able to inspect them closely was a pleasure.

It is always a pleasure to see Quaker process working well and to learn from it. Jo Jordan, in her role as YM clerk, clerked formal sessions quietly, respectfully and skilfully, while other Friends clerked the preparatory sessions. Adelaide Friends appreciated the morning tea gatherings with Emily Chapman-Searle, who was able to answer questions and give advice, based on her experience at previous Yearly Meetings.

The last day arrived all too soon and things happened in reverse. Rooms were vacated and keys returned before the final formal session and Meeting for Worship. After everything was packed up, a number a tired Friends gathered at Yarrow's for a wind-down and debrief.

Adelaide Local Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning was a larger-than-usual meeting, with a number of interstate Friends present. Although there was a lot of ministry, it could not be described as a 'popcorn meeting'. It was a powerful, gathered meeting, a fitting end to a week spent in Quaker community.

AF



Grace 22/04/17

Grace may be that autumn palette
crisp rusts and burgundies oranges
flame and gold riotous dancing for the
azure heavens arms waving in unison
one organic troupe but not just that . . .

Grace may be that sparkling chat we had
the week you died gently very gently
that left me craving more of all those
warming miracles you performed
I cradle them still but not just that . . .

Grace may be the new life inside my head
chemical soup charred electrical storms
that spin gyrate my tarrying days like
gymnasts with their spiral ribbons each
a vortex of joy but not just that . . .

Grace may be the gift of the precious
stranger needing a bed ebony hair chocolate eyes
come to visit grandparents who like
daisies where they lie in Cornelian Bay
steady reliably but not just that . . .

Grace may be her passion for Richmond
not to gaze at the towering arches stone marvels
built by clever convicts but to greet her childhood
ducks don't ask if she has an appointment
it's serendipity but not just that . . .

Grace may be the gift of being a little
closer to the man who built his family a home
having left his legs one arm in Afghanistan
the ninety-some woman who's now an athlete
I feel her heartbeat but not just that . . .

Grace is growing closer to brothers
the one I have joyful funny so full of wisdom
never mind the half a brain lost in the accident
that tumbled our lives recalling missing the other
brother who left us his pain but not just that . . .

Grace is accepting when the bright light blasts
its happy disorder into this blissful hour
then accepting the blind is drawn and that's
the end of this little wonder nugget having
faith there will be more but not just that . . .

Grace is dropping a single small broken self
into the flood of too much the swell of power
strength the consuming fighting world and
finding stillness a mindful centre in which to float
and knowing the simple wonderful oneness of it all.

Pamela Leach, Tasmania Regional Meeting



A measure and message of hope

CHRISTINE VENNER-WESTAWAY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

Welcome to Kaurua Country! Welcome to Yearly Meeting – my second! Welcome to Winter School – *Ecumenism and Interfaith* – an inspired choice. The content and discussions were excellent, but it yielded a further depth in the honest sharing of each participant’s personal spiritual journey: such rich, compelling stories springing from quite varied cultural and faith backgrounds but all interestingly and perhaps tellingly, culminating in Quakerism!

That initial experience of *unity in diversity* ultimately became my week’s mantra as I saw it demonstrated repeatedly, each time we gathered. I quickly began sensing the rhythm of the daily sessions as they rose and fell in attendance, energy, passion, concern and struggle, but each resolving in an eventual state of equanimity and unity – ‘this we can say’. This rising and falling was echoed in the visible and audible ocean waves a few metres walking distance from where we met each day. A song rose within me, one that I felt led to express in a Meeting for Worship.

Ocean breath breathing, Ocean breath breathing in me

Ocean breath breathing, Ocean breath breathing in me!

Book-ending each day, each session, each small working group was of course the silence – a hallmark of Quakerism that drew me through the door in the first place and holds me still. I witnessed each session receiving the same attention to detail, fidelity to process, respectful listening and appropriation of importance, be it First Nation’s Concerns, Earthcare or Publications Committee.

Our public witness of peace as we marched in silence to Adelaide’s War Memorial in the city and handed out pamphlets and white poppies and sang, was a natural and necessary flow on from our Peace Reports, David Carline’s Backhouse Lecture, and a hoped-for legacy to pass onto the next generation.

During one of our latter nightly Epilogues we were asked to share what astonished us: ‘...that YM represented a micro example of what we yearn for at the macro level – that here in spite of,

or perhaps because of, all our differing personalities, quirks, vulnerabilities, experiences, perspectives and emotions we could find common ground, a unifying position again and again peacefully, respectfully. If we can achieve that here in this annual gathering it can be done elsewhere and by others!’

YM 2017 was an altogether blessed time that I was encouraged, led and supported to attend. I am heartily grateful. The world’s need for active peace-making, love and understanding is overwhelming and without individual, national and international co-operation, impossible. However this band of *peculiar people* with whom I was honoured and humbled to walk, talk, eat, sing, laugh, march, and listen and silent-sit with, has proved it is possible, that as Light bearers and holders we have the awe-full responsibility to be a presence and agent of difference in the world – a measure and message of hope. My bonnet is in the ring!

Thank you

AF

AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING 2017— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

believe and aspire to? Only if we carry it out in our lives. The wider community sees what we do and, sometimes, hears what we say, but we’re more than our deeds and our words. Our lives must speak. We are our presence.

And what is the state of the Society? Much as it’s always been. But I think there may be a danger of losing our way

in a preoccupation with ‘much doing’ and possibly unnecessary busyness. Let’s take a deep breath and centre ourselves, and remember that at our heart is our Meeting for Worship, and allow ourselves to be aware of the Light within.

The Meeting for Worship is at the core; that stillness and silence which

centres us. We each sit in our own small pool of silence and gradually the pools join to become a lake.

A couple of years ago I wrote a poem in which I tried to express what happens in a Meeting, so I will conclude with it:

*In the Meeting stillness holds.
Alone we seek the space within,*



The Dimensions of Life

JAN DE VOOGD | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

Death cannot conquer.
God teaches us ever that love is supreme,
Good people do not die. Their lives are as the tearing of the veil, they show
us something of that which is eternal. . . *John Wilhelm Rowntree, 1905*

In 1658 George Fox said 'Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou will feel the principle of God turn thy mind to the Lord God'.

Yes, we probably are all aware that we need to stop our over active minds to reach 'the inner Light'. We need to pause before we can really be open to Christ's promise of the 'Spirit of truth'. Here I will quote from the Gospel of John XV 15-17 (the J.B. Phillips translation),

If you really love me, ... I shall ask the Father to give you someone else to stand by you, to be with you always. I mean the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot accept, for it can neither see nor recognise that Spirit. But you recognise him, for he is with you now and will be in your hearts.

I have a profound awareness that 'the Dimensions of Life' are much greater when I am open to the 'promptings of love and truth in my heart'. When I am open to being led by the Spirit I feel blessed and know that guardian angels are looking after me. Messages may come from 'the other side' by those 'they say' have passed on. These experiences make me feel that the Spirit may transcend death. As I begin to follow

the leadings of the Spirit I am opened up to the needs of God's children and his planet.

Here is a section of a letter Susannah Brindle sent me in November 2012 in which she illustrates some of the dimensions of Life. Yes! There are many dimensions to Life.

Thank you for contacting dear David Carline. He was one of the earliest to phone me on the last of his mobile and to begin the flow of love and prayer that upholds me now. I have never felt so filled with love as I am now - as if a faucet of this has been left on and all I can do is receive and overflow with it myself.

Dying is wondrously beautiful. I feel so happy, so full of peace and joy. Dying has brought me untold miracles of reconciliation, laughter, an extraordinary ability to prioritise and be creative...

I don't know how long my physical life will endure, (but I've never known a second of grief, fear, or sadness).

You write that you hope we will meet again on the other side. My dear Friend we are on the other side right now for there are no sides. Just as the amount of colour we see is not the full Spectrum of Light by any stretch

of the imagination, so the period we think of as Life (from birth to death) is by no means all of Life. Dimensions upon dimensions make up our physical and non-physical life,---not in a linear fashion, not in order to teach us lessons, not even so that we can be 'better people'- but rather so that we, with all that we call 'good' and 'bad', can grow Life into greater and greater glory. Those we have felt we have had to hate (our Hitlers, Stalins, Pol Pots etc.) have held energies for us to learn how to respond to. They have given us so much. Do you remember how Mother Julian of Norwich assured us that 'Sin is behovely' because it brings us closer home to God? I don't believe we are EVER separated from 'God'-or as I like to refer to it - from Life. With every breath we are in God, in Life, and who is it but the plant kingdom that does this for us.

I am hoping to live long enough and travel far enough to be at the birth of my next grandchild. I am having a lovely time concocting my own funeral for which I shall be priest! All is so well. Lots of love to you. We are together in the 'Dimensions of Life'
Susannah

AF

AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING 2017— CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

*together find it.
Moth-like our memories and thoughts
obscure the light we seek.
They settle, and the space that's left
begins to fill
with living stillness.
Words we bear or speak float briefly
and fall back into the silence.*

*The heart of it, the stillness
at the beginning and the end of all,
the velvet hush that holds within itself
the seed of life,
the tiny space that holds the universe,
the quiet that contains all speech,
all song,
all wild exuberance of sound,*

*the nothing yet made up of everything.
The heart of all, the stillness.*

Excerpt from the poem 'The heart of it all', by Robin Sinclair (from *Now and Then*, 2017)

AF



50 years after the Referendum

25 years after Mabo Decision: Notes from an old campaigner

BARRIE PITTOCK | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

The 50th anniversary of the 1967 Aboriginal Referendum, and the 25th anniversary of the Mabo Decision on Indigenous land rights was celebrated by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on 24th – 26th May in Canberra. That department arranged a series of events in Canberra and elsewhere, inviting a number of the surviving activists to take part. As one of the few surviving Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists I was invited, together with Diana.

My involvement goes back to my student days at Melbourne University in the late 1950s and early 1960s when I was involved with the Aboriginal Scholarship (Abschol) organisation, which raised money to provide scholarships for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to go to Universities. We quickly found that initially there were no applicants as no Aborigines in Australia had completed high school.

Following a radio documentary by ABC journalist Alan Ashbolt (18 June 1957) on racial attitudes in Moree (NSW), another student, Phillip Boas, and I decided to go on a tour of inland NSW and southern Queensland to see for ourselves what might be the problem. We quickly found racial prejudice and discrimination and a pauperisation that made it impossible for Aboriginal kids to get through secondary school – often communities of a hundred or more Aborigines, living in makeshift shacks the other side of the river or railway tracks, with no electricity and maybe a single cold water tap!

That experience radicalised us and Abschol, and led to my involvement in Aboriginal affairs via the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League, and then the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (later the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders – FCAATSI). This led me on to the Executive Committee of FCAATSI in the late 1960s and early 70s with a particular interest in land rights. I was also strongly influenced in the 1950s and 60s by Ian Spalding's periodical *On Aboriginal Affairs*.

When I got my PhD in physics at Melbourne University in 1963, I chose Boulder, Colorado, for a Post-Doctoral visit of two years. This was partly because there was a new laboratory doing work related to my thesis re atmospheric science, and partly because Boulder was the home of a Flathead Indian writer and sociologist Darcy McNickle whose book *Indians and Other Americans* influenced my thinking.

I spent my last three months in America touring around looking at American Indian conditions, particularly in the southwest of the USA, including largely self-governing Tribal Councils with their own police forces and commercial enterprises. On the way home I stopped off in New Zealand for a few weeks in December 1964 to look at the Maori situation. A lot more could be said about that!

Back in Oz, I was an invited speaker at the FCAATSI Easter Conference in 1965 (where Diana and I met). I soon became convener

of FCAATSI's land rights committee, and in 1969-70 was involved in the movement for Indigenous control of FCAATSI policy. This was advocated by mostly younger Aboriginal and Islander activists, in part inspired by the American Black Power movement. While opposed to the violent rhetoric of some advocates, I did support the idea that only people of Aboriginal or Islander descent should be allowed to vote on policy issues, and moved a motion for a constitutional amendment to that effect, for consideration at the 1970 Easter conference.

This motion, one suspects deliberately, was left for consideration as 'other business' right at the end of the meeting when many Aborigines had to leave to catch buses home to far areas. Constitutional change required a 2/3 majority, but the vote gained only about 50-50 and so was lost. This led to two senior elders, Doug Nicholls (who later became Governor of South Australia) and Kath Walker (the Aboriginal poet), calling its supporters to one side, where the National Tribal Council (NTC) was formed. I was appointed as its non-voting Convener for Land Rights.

Unfortunately the NTC only lasted for a few years due largely to a lack of funding and resulting poor national communications, which in FCAATSI had been facilitated by free mail and telephone from the offices of associated Labor Party MPs. Despite that, many other Aboriginal and Islander groups did survive and grow, especially Aboriginal legal and medical services, and later local and regional groups.

I continued in pro-Aboriginal rights groups in Victoria for some years, but later became pre-occupied with environmental issues related to my scientific work with CSIRO. This included destruction of the atmospheric ozone layer, the possible climatic impacts of a nuclear war.

My main concern re Aborigines and Islanders in later years has been that they should benefit economically from land rights. Back in the 1960s and 1970s I had argued that land was not only a spiritual base for Aborigines and Islanders, but also an economic base and no compensation had been offered. Early on I saw tourism and arts and crafts as part of that economic base, but by the 1990s it was clear to me that renewable energy, especially solar power, was a major economic possibility that could benefit remote communities enormously. A difficulty was how to transport the created energy to buyers to provide income to the communities. I suggested using renewable energy to generate hydrogen or ammonia as energy carriers for export, for use in distant generators or vehicle propulsion.

So, to cut it short, when the Prime Minister's Department planned the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Referendum this year they invited a number of surviving activists on Aboriginal and Islander affairs to Canberra for the celebrations. Many of the activists have passed away, but I seem to have been one of only a few non-Aboriginal and Islander people invited.

Our being hosted by the PM&C department included sitting in on a special meeting of the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition referred to and met with those present who were the original campaigners for the referendum and those involved with the Mabo decision. I was able to quickly mention to the PM the opportunities

for renewable energy on land owned by Aborigines and Islanders in their own communities.

The busy schedule of events included media interviews and a lunch, with a group photograph taken at Old Parliament House. Sadly, many old campaigners were missing after 50 years. Senator Pat Dodson spoke eloquently at the lunch about the work yet to be done following the Mabo decision, including dealing with 'extinguishment' of land rights and Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), yet to be clarified.

In the evening at the National Museum of Australia was a panel discussion we attended which was broadcast on Radio National. Four Elders explored various current Indigenous issues, from health in remote areas to education and other matters which have developed after a long difficult history. The next afternoon we spent time in the NMA exhibition, *A Change is Gonna Come*, a moving and clever display on Indigenous activism. Included in it is a red head band that I wore at the FCAATSI meeting at which the National Tribal Council was born.

Before the NMA visit, I was rushed into a large meeting with the assembled staff of the PM&C Department where I was asked to speak with about 5 minutes notice. I gave an off-the-cuff speech not unlike the above article, recounting my involvement and ending with a strong plug for enabling renewable energy development on remote community land. (Fortunately, this is already happening in one area in the Pilbara, Google renewable H2 Australia on the web. This more sustainable technology for transporting energy is developing rapidly.) Senior staff there who focus on remote communities were pleased to talk further about such developments, and we remain in touch.

Our daughter-in-law, Cath,

conducted us on a visit to the ANU Art School Gallery and showed us old Indigenous art and artifacts owned by ANU. Some of these were collected by ANU staff and anthropologists many years ago and are therefore quite significant. In the foyer there was a delightful exhibition of fabrics from the Babbarra Women's Centre at Maningrida. Some were in a more traditional style while some were more contemporary; all colourful.

On our third morning the Indigenous Art Triennial at the National gallery of Australia was a treat before flying home. It is extensive and significant, with a large range of styles, some demanding, some beautiful, all skillful, some on which to meditate, and others to acknowledge the grief of the history shown.

Our three days were full and rewarding and yet there was more we could have seen. There were exhibitions at the National Library (which holds my archives), the National Archives and the Museum of Australian Democracy (which holds some of Diana's collection of campaigning badges). Canberra certainly excelled itself in recognising the two anniversaries.

Then on Saturday in Melbourne was the PM&C Department's Melbourne lunch acknowledging the anniversaries of the Referendum and the Mabo decision. This was followed by the 'Long Walk' from Federation Square to the MCG, which we could not manage after our tiring, but appreciated, time in Canberra. On all occasions we were hosted with care and thoughtfulness by PM&C Department staff.

AF



A spiritual journey to weetapoona

HOBART LOCAL MEETING | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Some background

Bruny Island was home to the Nuenone people who cared for this land for thousands of years, hunting and gathering.

We honour the traditional custodians by respecting the land and minimising our impact on it. We leave undisturbed all heritage sites. It is through these heritage places that Tasmanian Aboriginal people today connect with their ancestors and reconnect with the land. This connection is both our past and our future.

This country symbolises the continuing links between Aboriginal people today and a rich, ancient culture stretching back over 60,000 years and 2000 generations.

On behalf of our ancestors, we welcome you.

The weetapoona Aboriginal Corporation is a group of local Tasmanian Aboriginal people who work toward 'reconciliation'. This is achieved by forming positive working relationships with local community groups to promote Tasmanian Aboriginal culture.

The wAC acts as the cultural advisory body to the Indigenous Land Corporation on issues of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and heritage with regard to Murrayfield Station on Bruny Island.

Successful land regeneration efforts at Murrayfield Station on Bruny Island are being studied by Parks and Wildlife rangers.

www.weetapoona.com

On Saturday 13th May 2017 some Quakers and friends went by bus to Bruny to weetapoona which is owned by Tasmanian Aboriginal people. We met Rodney Dillon who was our host for the day. He spoke to us, going across on the ferry, about how the Aboriginal Land Council acquired the land; also the purpose of the property which includes having a viable farm and to teach young people farming skills to certificate level.

A beach on the western shore is part of the extensive property. We ate a succulent native plant, which was growing at the edge of the beach, quite salty but tasty, part of the Aboriginal diet which is now being harvested as a garnish for a Hobart restaurant menu.

On the beach quarry were many discarded tools, which had been fashioned from local chert by a harder stone, brought by reed canoe from the opposite shore. Some stones were especially interesting, hollowed to be used like a vice.

We were also shown a sheltered camp site off the beach. That area had a peat base – indicating it had been a pre-historic forest. Rain never lies on this surface, making it drier and warmer. Fires could not be lit in this area so they were always made on the nearby rocks.

We went to another area of the farm where there was a grove of grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea*) that could be many hundreds of years old. They were beautiful; I do not believe I have seen

such a prolific growth of grass trees. A real delight!

Jo Petrov

The visit to weetapoona was inspirational. The weather was kind enough to us in the morning so that we were able to make the most of Rodney Dillon's hospitality and illuminating talks, as he showed us parts of the property. It was fascinating to walk through the beachside quarry area and wonder about the stone tools lying everywhere – possibly for tens of thousands of years. I presume these were the ones that were discarded when other rock shards presented cleaner, sharper edges!

Next we viewed the extensive, fenced off protected grass tree area, the largest, most southerly stand in Australia. We would also have gone to see the church built in 1830 but weather did not permit. Rodney pointed out that the management of the property includes taking care of the landscape, the Indigenous heritage, and the early European heritage as well.

Morning tea and lunch in the shearing shed gave us the opportunity to learn about the sheep station aspect of the property – it has just received certification for Responsible Wool Production from the body based in New York that has inspected weetapoona. Training for Indigenous youth has led to successful careers in agriculture for several young people so far.



weetaipoona *Xanthorrea* grove

Rodney was generous with his time and knowledge, and warmly invited us to return and stay overnight - I think all who came would like to see and hear more. I feel I have a more nuanced and vivid ongoing experience of my life in this state with its long, long history of careful management by its Indigenous inhabitants.

Maxine Barry

My paternal grandmother was born on Bruny Island in the mid 1890s. I enjoyed visiting the quarry site and learning that its large surface is evidence of family bands of 70 or so people coming to the same place for tens of thousands of years. It brings new meaning to 'Sense of place'. Human circadian rhythm and biological metabolism are linked to one climate, site and local diet.

I also enjoyed learning from Rodney that the purpose of people lying under the bushes, as still as possible, is to listen intently to birds - to discern which birds had returned, at what time of year, how many, or which calls were missing, or that ocean birds have come inland (storms) and that this was

helpful hunting information.

Growing up, all discussions of Indigenous connection were hushed, shushed and subdued, if not denied, out of fear I suppose; fear of racism and how it was acted out in Australia. My father taught me to listen to the birds as a teenager, lying down under trees stone still, in the bushy dunes at Carlton Beach (river end), but I never knew its intensity had a purpose, or from whom he learned the listening.

Maree-rose Jones

The bus trip to weetaipoona took me closer to understanding the knowledge, life and ways of the Aboriginal peoples of Bruny Island. But for me it held a bonus from Rodney who shared some deeper understanding of an Aboriginal artefact given to my father in Alice Springs by an elderly Aboriginal man during WWII. After he died it was passed on to me and I carry it with me most of the time. It is a round wooden stick, with markings. It allowed people to pass through neighbouring lands, like a modern day passport, but Rodney added that the markings denoted the song line of this Aboriginal man and

the stick could take him as far as the markings indicated.

This knowledge has added to the meaning of this 'right of passage stick' and the preciousness that is being cared for by our family.

Maggi Storr

Hobart Meeting supported this visit as part of our journey of discovery of the Aboriginal presence here and now. As we become aware of the ways in which the Nuenone peoples (Mouheneener sub-group around Hobart) listened to and cared for the land we are invited to share and learn. We are also prompted to look more deeply into the knowledge that we bring from our heritages and rediscover the depths of spirit that the modern age has taught us to discount.

Katherine Purnell

AF





QSA Notes

At year's end

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Chum Sam Oeun in her garden with grandchild. Photo: QSA

June 30th marks the end of the tax year. For QSA it is also the close off date for funding applications to be received by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Ai Leen and I have been working hard to complete these applications, getting information and comments from the project partners in Cambodia, India and Uganda. From DFAT, QSA will receive \$363,250 towards the \$633,048 total cost of the nine projects planned for this year. It is anticipated that a total of 8,878 men, women and children will be assisted as a result of these projects. Only 60 of these are urban participants, the rest from a range of rural communities. QSA recognises that women are disproportionately affected by poverty, so addressing cultural and social constraints to women so that they have an equal share in accessing resources are key components to these projects. Women and girls make up 62% of the project participants. We plan that each of these projects will receive a monitoring visit during the

coming year, to address project specific terms of reference and to assess the project's impact on the community. This visit will include meeting with the project participants to learn what changes they have been able to make in their lives as a result of their involvement in the project activities. This is always a special time to share ideas across cultures. Sometimes there is not a shared language, but project partner staff are on hand to help with this, and so much can be seen of the changes made, people being so pleased to be able to show their achievements. The other side to a monitoring visit is making sure the records kept by the project partner are verified; working with project partner staff to share project management ideas and develop a sound working relationship. Sometimes a monitoring visit cannot take place, and disappointingly for Ai Leen, she will not be able to visit one of the projects in Uganda as it is in an area to the west of the country which DFAT have now declared a 'do not travel' area, so other

plans will have to be made. She can, however, visit the other two project partners in Uganda (including Josephine Kizza who many of you will remember from her visit to Australia a number of years ago).

Some of the people I met during a visit to Cambodia in January this year included Chum Sam Oeun, a 64 year old widow living with her six children. They have a well still producing water at the end of the dry season. Where plants are not growing, the soil is sandy with small stones, whereas areas under cultivation have had compost added to replenish the soil and add to its water holding capabilities. Chum Sam Oeun was trained by another NGO a few years ago to implement an irrigation system, and she has successfully combined irrigation and soil improvement to have a very productive garden. During my visit, a number of eggplants, basil, and several varieties of beans were growing (and she told me she had sold 30 kg of long beans the day before to her neighbours), also cassava, pumpkin, cucumber, cashew nut



Jackie Perkins (centre) with project partner staff during a monitoring visit in Cambodia. Photo: QSA

trees, banana, avocados, mango, jack fruit, palm trees from which she makes palm sugar to sell, and kapok (for filling cushions and mattresses). She had trays of seeds ready for the next planting and a large number of plastic drink bottles which she hangs on poles and into which she plants her seedlings before they are ready to go into the ground. It was a very productive garden, and Chum Sam Oeun was so happy to show me all of her crops. A near neighbour, Phalia Von and her husband Phy Pheap had a smaller garden which was also very productive, with the soil benefitting from six pigs to add manure to the compost. They had a similar range of crops and an extensive and well stocked fish pond for added dietary protein. On the way to another

village we passed a police road check, looking to make sure produce is not being taken from the old forests. This is because the Cambodian government, in its climate change policy, is concerned about maintaining tree growth and stopping the logging of old timber. Hin Huoun is one of few men who are trainees, but his garden was not as productive because he had been in hospital recently. He was very apologetic about his garden, though it still had a range of different fruit and vegetable plants ready for harvesting for his family, and as he explained, his family will need to sell a lot of produce to cover the costs of his medical bills. His family is fortunate to have a rice field some distance from the house, and as at the

end of the season they still have several large sacks of rice left, it must be quite productive. I also met Sung Sor and her husband Sok Sar, who have a smaller garden from which to feed themselves and their three sons. Sok Sar can earn up to US\$4 per day as a labourer, but this is not every day and is very hard work usually digging potatoes or cassava. Sung Sor successfully grows mushrooms which bring in a good income in the local markets, but they cannot be grown when the weather is too hot or too wet. Sok Sar had a number of bamboo traps which he explained he uses to catch eels in the drainage ditches or ponds around the place; they are eaten by the family or sold in the markets.

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery

Brainstorm, Hobart

SALLY O'WHEEL | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Introduction

There are two panels so far representing the Tasmanian Quaker story: Francis Cotton and The Friends' School. I wanted to consult with Tasmanian Friends about other possible stories we need to tell. As I don't live in Hobart and didn't join until 1993 I wanted to meet with older Hobart Friends and come home with a list of possible panel themes.

Preparations

The week before the lunch I went through the list of members and attenders with the membership secretary. We made two lists: people with knowledge of history, and artists. I personally invited, by telephone, anyone who had been a member for a long time or knew about Tasmanian Quaker History. I wasn't able to reach a number of Friends and of those who I did reach, only a few of them were able to come or were interested. But I did learn quite a lot from doing that and there are people who I will contact again and arrange to meet with them personally to have a conversation in person.

I re-read Bill Oat's book: *A Question of Survival*, and in particular the chapter about Tasmania. This was a very useful preparation.

The Trip down: A Tasmanian journey

It is a four-hour drive to Hobart from my place. I left early so as to have time to show my face at the Knitting Nannas: ('Free the Children, Bring them Here'), in the Hobart Mall and bring greetings from our Devonport Knitting Nannas group.

There are two things to note about the trip down. First road works. There are always road works in Tasmania.

The Midlands Highway is a death trap and is lined with crosses and flowers marking the places where people have died. At the last state election the Liberals said it was 'nothing but a goat track' and promised to spend millions of dollars up-grading it. No one suggested putting in fast, cheap and user-friendly public transport, so really the only way for me to get to Hobart is to drive. It would be cheaper to fly to Melbourne than to catch a bus.

The other specifically Tasmanian note about the trip down was the smoke. There was smoke almost all the way: almost the whole state covered in pollution. This is caused by 'regeneration burns'. Old growth mixed aged forests, some of them having never seen fire before, have been cleared and the residue set alight in hot fires to create an ash bed in which to grow new eucalyptus forests. These forests, all the trees the same age and the same species, will become fire traps during bush fires in the future. The hot regeneration fires turn carbon sinks into carbon emissions, and create polluted air which is very bad for children, the aged and anyone like me who suffers from asthma. These are the kinds of fires that pollute Indonesia and Malaysia on a regular basis. I became increasingly angry as I drove south through the haze.

The Meeting

Who was there?

We were 11 women Friends, including me. How much is the Narrative Embroidery a Women's project? Why? Can it ever include men and what would that take? I had telephoned quite a few men because this event wasn't about stitching, perhaps seen by some as a female skill, but about history and stories. I was sorry that there weren't any men there, but I will go after them!

Bill Oats – (he would have been there!) – said that the early Hobart Friends meeting was composed of three groups: the Convicted, the Convinced and the Disowned. Our lunch time meeting in Hobart represented those groups. Pat Mavromatis is a direct descendent of the convict Quaker, Henry Propsting. Backhouse and Walker met him in Macquarie Harbour and he became a convinced convicted. He went on to have 28 children – so one would assume that half of Tasmania is related to him! Veronica Mather married into the Mather family who were one of the first Quaker families in Hobart, converted from the Wesleyans to Quakerism by Backhouse and Walker. There has never been a time when there wasn't a Mather at Friends'

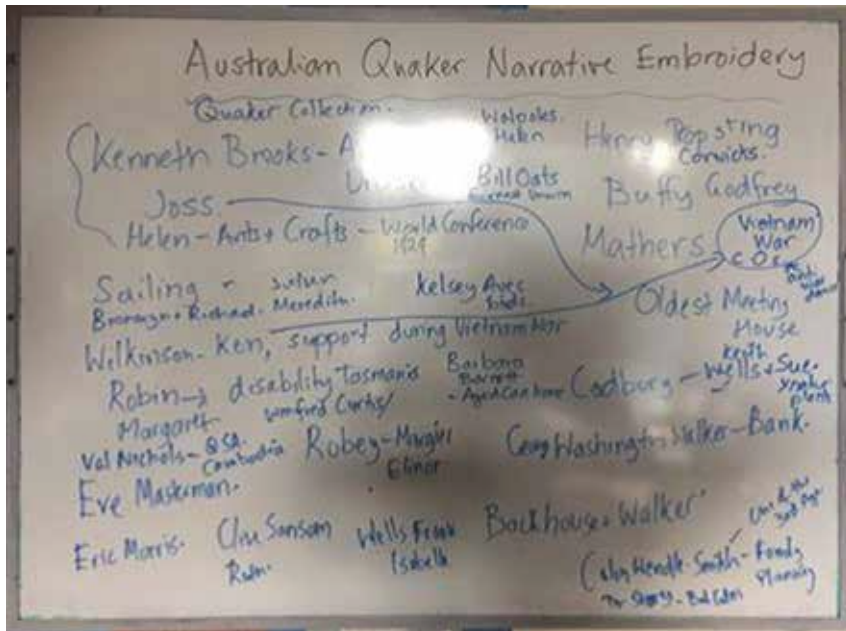


Photo above: Brainstorm

Photo right: Sally O'Wheel (L), handing over her 3x great grandfather's notebook to Wendy Rimon at the Quaker Collection at the University of Tasmania. Above them is the photo of the 1927 Yearly Meeting.

School. Veronica though doesn't identify as a Quaker. I represent the disowned because my first Australian Quaker settler ancestor was, like many hundreds of other Australian Quaker men, disowned for marrying out. Henry Popstring was disowned for marrying out but he appealed and won.

What we did

We went around the group, introducing ourselves and giving a potted personal Quaker history and a few words about any previous involvement with the embroidery. There were three birthright friends – two of them English migrants (Barbara, Ruth and Pat) and they mentioned the ambiguities that come with that territory. Four of us are 'Convinced' Friends (Felicity, Sally McG, Rosemary and me) and all roughly from the same vintage. There were two are newish attenders, (Karen and Ali), keen and interested.

After introductions we started to brainstorm ideas. We ended up with a list on the white board. Now these ideas have to be somehow clumped together into themes.

After the Meeting

One of the topics on our list of panels is the 'Quaker Collection'. This collection is held at the University of Tasmania, on the 5th floor of the library. I had a personal reason for going there, but I also wanted to check out the collection with the idea in my mind of doing a panel.

I had in my possession a small booklet entitled *Recollections of Early Life* by John Godlee. This memoir was written down by the daughter of John Godlee (1762-1841) in his 76th year and a copy was made by his son, my 2nd great grandfather (1815-1891) who migrated to Australia in 1838. This copy was made for the Australian family in 1888 and has been passed down to me. I wanted to donate it to the Quaker collection as it tells the story of an eighteenth century Quaker mariner. The women at the Collection were delighted to receive it. We had a photo taken of the hand over under the picture of the first Australian Yearly Meeting, 1927.

I was shown the shelves of minute books and other Quaker memorabilia

and was overwhelmed. They said they had just received the Bill Oats archive. Apparently a lot of material is available in digital form and so it is an invaluable resource for Quaker historians everywhere and to embroidery panel designers in particular. The catalogue can be found here : <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/research/special-and-rare-collections>

Now

I drove home through the smoke, going over in my mind what I would write in my report, trying to link ideas from our brain storm into panels, and creating lists of more people to contact to build our Tasmanian section of the Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery. I will now continue to try to contact people on my list and talk to them about the project, try to inspire them and see if more ideas come forward. Watch this space.

AF



Know thy Friend

My Spiritual Journey

MAGGI STORR | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

A significant 'aha!' moment occurred while I was walking down a street in Florence. I was suddenly filled with joy, moving through me like ecstasy. It was like a casting fell off my heart and opened to all-encompassing love. It was a profoundly spiritual experience. It has connected me to that city and particularly the Duomo and Piazza. When I go there tears roll down my cheeks.

I felt that opening of all-encompassing love some years later when I was led to a New Age community, De Lightberg (The Light Mountain) in the south of Holland where I lived for eighteen months. The all embracing altruistic love by its members showed me this was 'my chance' to experience a richness in my life that I had not realised was missing. I wish all could experience the wonder and joy of being connected in this way.

We had a beautiful biodynamic garden. I had not worked with those gardening principles before. Planting and reaping are deeply guided by the phases of the moon. Guiding all activities in the garden was the deep caring respect for nature, from the preparation of the soil, the plantings, and care for our tools. No machine touched the earth. To plant with respect, harvest with respect and eat the produce with respect nourished my Spirit, mind and body. At the time I realised that I and the Spirit of Nature were connected and I had been taken to De Lightberg to begin my spiritual journey.

Because I could not speak the language I gardened and spent many

hours with Divine Grace and silence. The wonder of silence was deeply revealed to me. One time while weeding the peas in the glass house I begged God to speak to me repeatedly, but I was disappointed for I was seeking words. Then I heard a little noise and a bigger noise and then a crescendo of crackling; I could hear the peas growing! I was deeply humbled and cried with the revelation that God speaks to us in many ways.

When I was a little girl my parents had a market garden and I ran barefoot through it, picking strawberries and pulling carrots. My mother had a strong influence on me. During that time in the mid-forties we were surrounded by Greeks and Italians, new migrants. Conditions were basic. My mother circulated a petition amongst all the people of the area and we got electricity and the road sealed. She had that heart of wanting to help people, her community service caring spirit ran naturally through her veins. Later she had a fruit and vegetable shop in an inner city suburb in Adelaide. The new migrants, refugees and Colombo Plan people would come round. She would help them with whatever they needed, such as paper work they couldn't understand, often disrupting our family tea time. That was really Love and Spirit in action. I realise now what an enlightening example she was to me.

While I was living at De Lightberg community, I met a member of Sukyo Mahikari (Original True Light). It is a spiritual Japanese practice focusing on the healing qualities of the Light and the deep understanding of Spirit first, mind follows and body belongs. During the

next eleven and a half years the practice and service of radiating True Light to purify and heal the Spirit was my life. In 1987, over a period of eight months, I felt led to visit Mahikari Centres and isolated members in fourteen countries. That service was powerful and I am still in touch with some of those people. It showed me when you are led to Divine Service boundaries melt away.

What drew me to Friends was the culmination of many things I had experienced previously, the care and commitment of community, the service of social justice, peace and healing through the Light, and the coming together in the silence for the words of the Spirit to be spoken. I am a Quaker by conviction. I was nurtured and cared for by Maroochydore Meeting on the Sunshine Coast and those loving members. Through this I could live and enrich my life with Friends. I became a member in 2008.

Being a new Friend from the mainland to Tasmania I am deeply grateful for the care and opportunities to mature spiritually that I have found here. It has brought many loose ends together and strengthened my spiritual foundation. My life been graced by the land of the Mouheneener people and my connection with Religions for Peace, going to places where Aboriginal Communities, other peoples and nature have suffered, offering prayer, healing, apology and respectful silence; this too has been an enriching service I have shared with others.

It is an amazing time of my life.

AF

A Marshall Islands voice

at the UN nuclear ban treaty negotiations

GEM ROMULD | ICAN

Earlier this year the Quaker Peace and Social Justice Fund provided funds to ICAN (International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons) to fund a delegate to the UN negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban treaty. In response, ICAN has provided the following report.

Many have dismissed the idea of a treaty to outlaw the ultimate weapon of mass destruction as idealistic. Seventy-two years since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this idea has become a reality. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by 122 nations at the United Nations on 7 July, 2017. The Treaty outlaws the possession, stockpiling, development, testing, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. It is a powerful document, establishing a new international norm that rejects any role for nuclear weapons in our world.

Central to the Treaty's goal of total elimination is an awareness of the totally catastrophic impacts of nuclear weapons. The intergovernmental conferences that led to the ban treaty negotiations crystallised our understanding of what the weapon is designed to do. Nations have heard the testimonies of Japanese hibakusha and people impacted by nuclear testing in awful detail. The experience of Indigenous people in Australia and across the Pacific provides ample evidence to pursue abolition with great urgency.

With the support of the Quaker Peace and Social Justice Fund, a powerful voice from the Marshall Islands was able to attend the ban treaty negotiating conference in July. Abacca Anjain-Maddison was born on Rongelap, an island that was evacuated

after the 1954 US nuclear test on nearby Bikini Atoll due to widespread contamination. The Rongelapese were not evacuated until three days after the bomb. The physical effects of nuclear radiation and the ongoing displacement of the Marshall Islanders are common elements in Abacca's testimonies.

Abacca is a former Senator of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and is the President of Iju in Ean, a non-profit organisation owned by Rongelapese women. While in New York, Abacca liaised with Pacific Island delegations, participated in media conferences and delivered a final address after the Treaty's adoption on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Abacca said to the assembled delegates, international media and campaigners,

'For those in the Pacific and around the globe who have suffered from nuclear weapons, this treaty has special meaning.

'We are overjoyed that the international community has at last acknowledged what we have always known: that nuclear weapons are abhorrent and immoral.'

The new Treaty acknowledges the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons activities on Indigenous peoples worldwide. It also contains provisions compelling states parties to assist victims of nuclear use and testing, and to take measures to remediate

contaminated environments.

Pacific Governments have played a pivotal role in achieving the Treaty. The Australian Government's boycott of the negotiating conference has made us increasingly isolated from our regional neighbours.

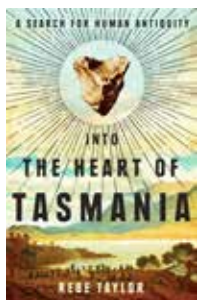
Our world remains threatened by the 15,000 nuclear weapons that are still held between nine nations. More than \$100 billion is spent each year on maintaining and upgrading these deadly arsenals. The new Treaty is not an end in itself, but a powerful tool to apply pressure on states to reject nuclear weapons and disarm. The Treaty stigmatises the weapon and sets a new global standard, to which all nations will be held accountable.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will open for signature on 20 September 2017. We must advocate for all nations to sign on and pursue the Treaty's goal; the total abolition of nuclear weapons. As Abacca reminded us when the Treaty was adopted, 'We must not stop until we have eliminated nuclear weapons completely and forever.'

AF

Photo: Abacca Anjain-Maddison speaking at the conference. Photo: Ralf Schlesener





Into the Heart of Tasmania *A search for Human Antiquity*

BY REBE TAYLOR

Published by Melbourne University Press, 2017.
204 pp, ISBN 9780522867961

I picked up this book by Rebe Taylor in the library because I was intrigued by its subtitle: 'A search for Human Antiquity'. On reading I discovered it was the story of a Quaker, Ernest Westlake. Ernest was a passionate, even obsessive, collector of stones which he believed had been used as tools by ancient peoples. He collected stones in France and Spain, and was particularly interested in the people who preceded the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age. The tools of the Palaeolithic age have obviously been made, but there are older stones which appear to have been used. Did they come about by mere chance, or were they modified by people? Hearing that the Tasmanian Aborigines were the most primitive people of recent times (in 1908, when Westlake decided to travel to Tasmania, they were regarded as extinct), Westlake decided to go and collect tools from that country for comparison. He collected tons of stones, which he brought back to England. He intended to compare them with the tons of stones he had collected from Europe, and to write up his findings. He never did this, the First World War intervening. Various other academics looked at his stones after his death, but they do not seem to have come to any important conclusions. Some archaeologists thought it was useless to seek for information about ancient Europeans by studying a completely different culture. Others complained that he did not collect the best tools, but collected too randomly.

If his stone collecting was not particularly useful, why is Westlake worth writing about? It is because he also collected stories. He began by interviewing Europeans who had seen Aboriginal people making tools, incidentally collecting information about the frontier wars. Then he heard about the descendants of Fanny Smith, probably the last surviving full-blood Tasmanian Aboriginal woman. (She claimed to be of full Aboriginal descent, but many Europeans doubted this. The reason seems to be that they thought all Aboriginal women were ugly, and Fanny Smith was quite a handsome woman!) Later he went to Cape Barren Island to interview the descendants of Aboriginal women and sealers. He went to ask about the use of stone tools, but whatever bits of information he received he wrote down. His notes are some of the earliest records of how the Tasmanians lived.

It is clear that the survivors were unwilling to share cultural information with an outsider. However, as Westlake was not a threatening person, and as he wanted nothing from them apart from information about stone tools, they told him somewhat more than they were willing to tell others. It was clear that the Aboriginal mothers had passed on language and culture, and that the children had been taken 'on country'. They recalled making fire and catching fish – activities which some claimed the Tasmanian Aborigines were not capable of. They talked about the native plants which they ate, of making rope and baskets. They spoke of the importance of the stars, and how they were used to tell the change of seasons. They also spoke of the use of ochre.

The author seems to have regarded Westlake as a lapsed Quaker, as he had been influenced by the evangelical revival, believed in evolution, had a passing interest in spiritualism, and looked for God in nature. But to me he is quintessentially a modern Quaker! He lived adventurously and simply – partly because he was not very good with money! He was a life-long pacifist. He sent his children to a Quaker

school, although he worried about them having to sit for long periods in silence. His hatred of injustice is seen in this letter to his children, written from Melbourne:

As I came out ... from the Victoria Coffee Palace ... the Town Hall was full of people singing 'tell me the old old story of Jesus and his love'; but ... the words coming from such a quarter jarred on me. The only text I cared to hear expounded was 'Hast thou killed and hast also taken possession!' So I withdrew noticing by the way that the foundation stone of the Hall had been 'laid by the Mayor William Cain Esq' (stones sometimes speak the truth).

And after talking to the family of Fanny Smith, Westlake decided that the Tasmanian Aborigines were Quakers!

I seem to have discovered what was missed by those excellent Friends, Backhouse and Walker in their reports on the Tas Blacks, ie that the Blacks were themselves Quakers, in that they sought for the guidance of the Spirit, and lived more or less in the light of it. Certain it is that Mrs Smith, who had come under Christian influence, was a Quakeress of excellent quality.

On returning to England at the outbreak of World War I, Westlake and his son became unhappy with the scouting movement which they found very militaristic, and decided to form a pacifist substitute. This was known by the wonderful name of The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry. It was open to boys and girls as well as adults. Westlake was supported by the Quakers, though the Pagan aspects of the Order alarmed some of them! For example, at the first children's camp of the Order they celebrated the Feast of Lammastide, the pagan festival of the harvest.

Dressed in cloaks the colours of the seasons, seventy members lit their ceremonial fire. Westlake led the opening invocation, calling for 'beauty of the inward soul'. He had decided upon a new name for himself, Jack-in-the-Green, after the traditional English May Day figure who

represented new life and spring.

After Westlake gave up leadership of the Order it was taken over by Henry Byngham, described as ‘an enthusiastic naturalist’. This led to the removal of many children from the organisation!

Apart from telling the story of Westlake, the book touches on other aspects of the sad history of Tasmania’s original people, and pays credit to their survivors.

I had never heard of this quirky Quaker, and think that others might enjoy making his acquaintance.

RAE LITTING

New South Wales Regional Meeting



Tales from the Table: *Stories from the Indigenous Hospitality House*

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

Independently published in Melbourne; 149 pages

Hospitality is a rich word. It is a concept, it is a practice, it’s complex and simple, profound and mundane.

Tales from the Table: Stories from the Indigenous Hospitality House makes this rich, big, slippery word come alive through poetry, storytelling, reflections and essays. Its various contributors are all current and former residents or partners in the Indigenous Hospitality House (IHH), a Settler/non-Indigenous household in Carlton North that opens its doors to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people visiting Melbourne hospitals.

The project developed in response to calls from health care workers at various Melbourne hospitals for more accommodation options for Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander people visiting town. Since opening in 2001 the IHH has received over 1750 guests, and has sought to provide a peaceful and homely atmosphere for as long as each guest needs while in Melbourne. The house is occupied by between five and seven permanent residents and has space for about six or seven guests. While the house serves as a place to stay for guests, its other, equally important purpose is to make space for Settler/non-Indigenous people to explore the issue of identity on stolen land. This is something residents participate in through daily life, but also includes volunteers who help out with the evening meal, and participants in monthly learning circles and other events.

The book traverses topics such as getting enough personal space in what can be quite a large and changeable household, to reflections on feminism and the didgeridoo. A common thread through the entire book is the way it tackles topics familiar within academic and policy circles in a down to earth and personal manner. This is a key aspiration of the IHH: a place where truth-telling and reconciliation becomes personal.

One illustration of this is the way the IHH has dealt with a key question: “how can non-Indigenous people offer hospitality on stolen land?” This is a common criticism when people first hear about the project, and, as this book makes abundantly clear in a gentle way, is based on a false understanding of true hospitality. As Chris Booth writes, reflecting on God’s hospitality in contrast to our own:

often we’re used to hospitality as an exchange... [and] if we are going to think about hospitality in terms of exchange, it is actually we Colonist Peoples who have been doing most of the taking... Yet most of the time we have still received so much welcome from our guests at the IHH... this can be a good reminder that it is actually we who are the guests.

Another way the book simply illustrates a commonly ignored concept is when it

talks about ‘whitefella business’. When we talk about ‘reconciliation’ we often talk about things Indigenous Australians do, or ways they need to ‘catch up’ with the rest of Australia. But that is to demand that the majority of change and work take place in, be done by, and sometimes with, only 3% of the population, while the other 97% carries on. It is to neglect the fact we are beneficiaries of the theft of this land and that we, the 97% need to understand *our* relationship to this land, its first peoples and its history not as ‘normal’ but as a set of relationships built on theft.

We non-Indigenous people have unfinished business of our own. And while this term can sound menacing, threatening or uncomfortable, the heart of the Indigenous Hospitality House, as this book illustrates, is to make reckoning with that business personal. It involves sitting with grief, coming face to face with suffering and seeing our own need for healing. Ultimately, this enriches us and informs our discipleship in this time (post-colonisation, post-apology, pre-treaty) and this place (Australia, Narm, Melbourne).

Tales from the Table is gentle, relaxed and sometimes humorous. It demands to be read alongside a good cuppa and offers insights big and small to all people. It is not a book to pore over like a textbook, but to soak up like a rich, down to earth conversation. We at the Indigenous Hospitality House hope that this book will help people to think about their identity on this land, in this society. We encourage people to use it not only for personal reflection and entertainment but also a conversation starter in wider circles.

BY TOM ALLEN

Indigenous Hospitality House.

Please contact the Indigenous Hospitality House: Ph: (03) 9387 7557 Email: house@ihh.org.au. Price is \$30 for pick-up from the house and \$35 for postage within Victoria. Other postage options negotiated as necessary.

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