

# The Australian Friend

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## Spiritual journeys



# Editorial

Our theme for this issue is Spiritual Journeys. It is clear that Quakers find food for their spiritual journey from many sources: from nature; from literature, art and architecture; from personal encounters; from Quaker worship, writings and tradition; from the Christian tradition and from the insights of other faiths. Our *Advices and Queries* asks, 'Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?' The contributors to this issue show that openness.

Many writers tell us of physical journeys, and the insights which come from seeing new places and mixing with different people. But the spiritual journey may take place even in the dementia ward or the prison cell. Sometimes the journey leads to new understandings, sometimes it brings us back to old wisdom.

We are conscious of the fact that most of the articles in this issue are written by women. We need our men to share their spiritual journeys too!

In our next issue we will be looking at issues arising at our Yearly Meeting. But if the Yearly Meeting is a success it will be because the Truth has been prospering in our Regional and Local Meetings. We look forward to receiving articles both from those who can attend the gathering, and those who could not.

The Australian Friend has been made aware that some Friends with poor eyesight would like a spoken version of the Friend. We would like to hear of anyone who could benefit from a copy, and from anyone who has relevant skills to produce such a copy.

## THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM

# Noted . . .

### **FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION – ASIA WEST PACIFIC SECTION INC. MEETING FOR WORSHIP ONLINE**

Dear Friends of Asia West-Pacific Section,

Our first Meeting for Worship online was held on Thursday 27 April at 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time. This meeting will be hosted by our Friend Virginia Jealous. Meeting for Worship online takes place on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. If you would like to join us please email Michael Searle at [michsear@homemail.com.au](mailto:michsear@homemail.com.au). Michael will send information about downloading and using Zoom for our online meeting, and a link to the meeting room.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR MFW ONLINE**

- Virginia will welcome each of us as we arrive
- As we go into silence, let us turn off our microphones and speakers
- Written and spoken ministry is welcome, as Spirit moves us. Please remember to turn your microphone on and off before and after spoken ministry!
- Virginia will close the meeting 30 minutes after its start time
- The meeting room will stay open for another 15 minutes for spoken or written

fellowship, reflection and conversation, guided by Virginia

- Please feel free to farewell and leave the meeting room when you need.

#### **ANOTHER ONLINE MEETING FOR WORSHIP**

An online Meeting for Worship is being organised at 5pm Eastern Australian Standard Time on the third Sunday of each month. F/friends, particularly isolated ones, are warmly invited to join us for a half hour online Meeting for Worship followed by a time of fellowship. It is possible to join the Meeting for Worship using either a computer connected to the internet or a normal telephone. For full details see <http://newsouthwales.quakers.org.au/online-meeting-for-worship/>

#### **THE NEW AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING WEBSITE! WWW.QUAKERSAUSTRALIA.ORG.AU**

Since Yearly Meeting 2016 the IT Committee's main undertaking has been the design of a new AYM website for inquirers.

On 1 March the web address Australian Friends have been using for the last few years, [www.quakers.org.au](http://www.quakers.org.au), was changed to <https://www.quakersaustralia.org.au> a new website designed specifically for inquirers and others who are looking for information about Quakerism - and specifically Australian Quakerism.

The site was ready and launched in March and we have publicised the new address to Friends and others in Australia and overseas.

The menu at the top of the new website has a link Australia YM site that will go to our existing information website [www.quakersaustralia.info](http://www.quakersaustralia.info) where Friends will find all the information they have been used to. (Friends might want to bookmark this new location so they can go directly to it in the future.)

The IT Committee has now started a complete redesign of the AYM information site at [www.quakersaustralia.info](http://www.quakersaustralia.info). It will eventually contain user friendly, fresh-looking, updated information as well as additional material for Friends about learning resources, meeting life and Australian Quaker perspectives.

At YM17 in Adelaide, the Information Technology Committee will present a Show and Tell session 'The new Australian Quaker websites', which will focus on the new Inquirers site and plans for the next phase, the redesign of the current information website. Everyone is invited to come along and share their ideas for this redesign!

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*The Honest History Book*  
Edited by David Stephens  
and Alison Broinowski



Cover photo: Meeting a returning pilgrim on the Camino

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## Correction:

In the article 'Indigenous spirituality and culture' in our December 2016 issue, we referred to 'Shane Mortimer from the Ngambri Mob'. Shane would prefer '... from the Ngambri People of the Guumaal language area'. Also, in the same article, 'Ngunnawal' should read 'Ngambri'.

# ‘What canst thou say?’

## *Talking about God and 1652 Country*

JENNY TURTON | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING



I came to Quakers as a refugee from ‘mainstream’ Christian churches. I had been questioning my faith and the worship within the churches I attended for some years prior to this, feeling increasingly disconnected and hypocritical in attending when I found myself disagreeing with many of the basic tenets of the Nicene creed such as the divinity of Jesus, virgin birth, necessity of Jesus’ death for the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection. I found myself increasingly unable to say the creed, sing the hymns and repeat the prayers during church services. I was also worried that I would be branded a ‘non-believer’, and so I stopped attending church. Despite this disconnection, I felt the need for a spiritual home: a place of belonging where I didn’t have to pretend to believe something that I no longer did.

I started attending Quakers in 2001, first in Melbourne and a year later in the small Geelong Worshipping Group when we moved there. I was initially drawn to Quakers by the fact that they didn’t have a creed, which enabled an acceptance of diversity in

belief, and also by the strong history of commitment to social justice. I can’t claim to have found the silent worship easy, but I persisted in attending as it felt to be a place that could become a spiritual home.

Initially I was so grateful to feel a sense of acceptance that I didn’t feel the need to understand more about the origins of Quakerism; on how this unique belief and practice came about and survived to the present day. I found it challenging to explain to friends, family and acquaintances what Quakers were when my involvement came up in conversations, and found I focused more on what Quakers were not (no creed, no church, no minister, no hymns) rather than what they were.

Over time I found myself wanting to understand Quakerism more, but it was difficult to know how well questions would be welcomed in a religious practice based on silence. It seemed that one was supposed to absorb Quakerism by osmosis. I also found that because Quakerism was such an individual response to God, any statement of faith or practice by Friends was prefaced by

‘I can’t speak for other Quakers, but for me ...’

I started the *Quaker Basics* course twice over these early years with different partners, but didn’t finish either time because of the difficulty in meeting up with differences in geographic location, having young children, and the general busyness of life. In 2014 I took on the role of Children and Junior Young Friend Coordinator for AYM, which was a wonderful opportunity to connect with Friends of all ages from all over Australia, to attend my first Yearly Meeting, and to travel to larger meetings than my own small worshipping group. In discussions about resources for young people and how to support their inclusion at the heart of the Quaker community, I started to question what was critical to Australian Quaker faith and practice, how much we should draw on the Bible and ‘traditional’ Christianity, and how much was a matter of individual interpretation. In discussions with Junior Young Friends in Hobart, one JYF asked ‘But what is it we are supposed to be worshipping?’, which led to a lively discussion about our individual beliefs and how diverse these are within the Quaker community, with the whole spectrum from Christocentric through Universalist to Nontheistic.

The timing of Helen Bayes’ first Quakerism 101 course at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre in 2014 was perfect for me. I enjoyed these rich few days of sharing, questioning and learning with other Friends from around Australia, although at the first session I didn’t think we were going to be able to move beyond discussing what we meant by



At Left: Jenny (right) with Janet Duke and Ben Pink Dandelion at Sawley Swathmore Hall, Pendle Hill



Right: Brigflatts Meeting House

the term 'God'. We could only move on after agreeing to disagree and respect one another's differing beliefs, looking beyond the words used. I gained such a greater insight from this course, that by the end of it I realised that Quakers was indeed my spiritual home, and I wondered why I hadn't thought membership to be important previously. I decided that I needed to make the commitment to myself and the Quaker community in becoming a member, and wrote my membership application at Silver Wattle.

In my research for opportunities for young Australian Quakers I discovered the 1652 pilgrimages in England for teenagers. I contacted Swarthmoor Hall, where the pilgrimages were based, to ask if there were opportunities for organised pilgrimages for adults. When I was informed that the next one was planned for August 2016 I felt led to participate in this pilgrimage. I decided that if I was going all that way then I should try to fit in as much as I could, including a course at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, walking Hadrian's Wall, catching up with a long-time friend in Manchester, and having an aardvark encounter at Chester Zoo! When I checked with Woodbrooke about the courses available over the time I was planning to attend the pilgrimage, one really captured my interest, entitled *Talking About God*. I felt that this was a perfect follow on from my explorations about how we talk about and define God to ourselves and to others, in order to make sense of

the diversity of belief amongst Quakers and to try to better understand my own belief.

It was with great anticipation that I flew to Manchester in early August, travelling to Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre the day after I arrived. Despite the jetlag, I immersed myself in the experience of being at Woodbrooke, meeting Quakers from around the world, enjoying the beauty of the grounds, walking the labyrinth, exploring the artwork around the centre (I particularly enjoyed the Quaker meeting sculpture by Peter Peri, which is depicted on the cover of *Quaker by Convincement* by Geoffrey Hubbard), and enjoying the nutritious and plentiful food. The *Talking About God* course ran over three days and was led by Rhiannon Grant and Janet Scott, a tremendous team that facilitated learning from listening, worship, reflection, and small group discussion. Sessions included 'Tradition and source' (the origins of monotheism), 'Branching out' (learning from other religions), 'Imagining God' and 'God and story'. There was a strong connection to others on the course based on the fact that we were all Friends (from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Australia and America), and all questioning how we talk about God. During the first session we were invited to say something about ourselves that others might not know by looking at us. I was astounded when Cath from Scotland indicated that her first time at Quaker Meeting for Worship was in Lusaka, Zambia.

When it was my turn I indicated that I had also attended Meeting for Worship in Lusaka. On talking afterwards we discovered that her brother had been in the same class at school as my husband!

A few of the interesting thoughts and learnings I came away with from the course were:

- Should we use nouns, verbs or adverbs when talking about God? Should it be more about what is done than about what is?
- There are three levels of talking about God. The lowest level is cultural (symbols and metaphors), the middle level is tradition (connection to community) and the highest level is spiritual (this includes silence, as there is nothing you can say about God that is adequate).
- Muslims have 99 beautiful names for God.
- In thinking about God language, we could respond to the question 'Would I use this word for God?' with 'Yes', 'Sometimes', 'No, I don't know it', or 'No I don't like it'.
- Smart has defined seven dimensions of religion: mythological, doctrinal, material, ethical, cultural, social and experiential. The experiential is at the heart of the framework formed by the other six dimensions.
- Practice (going to Meeting for Worship) is at the heart of being a Quaker.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

- I realised that I feel most comfortable thinking and talking about God in universalist terms, as the light within us and all living beings.
- I have no problems with using the term 'God', although I know that many Quakers do.
- This course reassured me that it is OK to struggle with our belief and how we articulate it.

Whilst the Woodbrooke course was extremely rewarding in terms of being part of a Quaker community and learning through sharing, the pilgrimage was unique in that it drew on the physical locations that early Quakers inhabited. This 5-day pilgrimage entitled *In Fox's Footsteps* was held at Swarthmoor Hall in Ulverstone which had been Margaret Fell's home after she married Thomas Fell. Although not all of the furniture in the house was the original furniture, it was all from the mid-17th century in the style that would have occupied the Fell home, and some of the items were personally owned by George Fox (including his 1 ton 'travel bed' and the chest in which he kept his belongings shortly before he died in London), Margaret Fell and other early Quakers. The pilgrimage was enthusiastically led by Jenny Foot and her dog Cathra, both of whom had led many of these pilgrimages previously. It was very atmospheric to be sleeping in a room in this house and to be able to explore the hall and the grounds, and particularly to have Meeting for Worship in the room that George Fox and Margaret Fell and many other Quakers worshipped in. Swarthmoor Hall was our base, from which we travelled out to the surrounding countryside to see the historical and more modern sites of relevance to Quakers. There were 10 other Friends in the group, including Janet Duke from Melbourne.

Our exploration started at Pendle Hill, the significant landmark that George Fox climbed in May 1652 from which he saw a great people to

be gathered. We were to have met Ben Pink Dandelion at the original Sawley Meeting House, but Sawley Friends had just made the difficult decision to sell the meeting house and relocate to nearby Clitheroe where the meeting house could be better utilised by the local community and have better outreach, so we met him and his daughter Florence at the village hall instead. Ben is a very inspiring speaker about Quakerism, and it was particularly significant for me to meet him given that his Swarthmoor Lecture was the focus of the VRM gathering in 2015 and we connected to him via Skype to discuss our responses to his lecture. Pendle Hill is a long hill that rises above the surrounding land. It was a memorable (and steep!) experience to climb the hill, survey the surrounds as Fox would have (although we couldn't see Morecambe Bay as he did), have a picnic and a short Meeting for Worship before descending to the bottom. We stopped off for a tea break at Settle Meeting House, where the warden Alison gave us an overview of the history of the meeting house.

On the next day we departed for Brigflatts Meeting House, where we had the history of the meeting house and surrounding area explained to us by the warden, and had the opportunity for Meeting for Worship. This meeting house dates to 1652 and it was extremely special to worship where so many local Quakers had for so many years. I had a profound sense of peace and stillness during this worship, together with the question 'But what canst THOU say?' based on George Fox's words: 'You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?'. Down the lane from the Meeting House is the home that belonged to Richard Robinson, one of the prominent Seekers, where Fox stayed whilst in the area. An amusing anecdote is that after sitting up late talking with Fox, Robinson became alarmed that he appeared a bit scruffy

and may have planned to rob the house, and so he locked Fox in his bedroom overnight.

From Brigflatts we travelled to Sedbergh Church, the site of one of Fox's earliest ministries and disputations. He preached under a yew tree, and when challenged as to why he wasn't in church, he responded that the church wasn't a building. Then on to Firbank Fell, which is where Fox had a major preaching success: his preaching here can be considered the start of the Quaker movement. It was very atmospheric eating lunch under the outcrop termed 'Fox's pulpit'. We stopped off at the Kendall Tapestry Centre, which is part of the very large Kendall Meeting House. It was fantastic to see all of these wonderful tapestries side by side, depicting Quaker faith, practice and history. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a similar national home for our Australian Quaker tapestries!

The following day we visited Sunbrick Burial Ground where Margaret Fell and over 200 early Friends are buried, a small grassed enclosure without any grave stones, as these were considered unnecessary by early Quakers. We also travelled through beautiful purple-hued heather to Marsh Grange, Margaret Fell's childhood home, overlooking the Duddon Estuary. This day was also a day of contemplating other faiths. We visited Conishead Priory, which was part of the Catholic church prior to the dissolution of the Catholic Church by King Henry VIII, and is now the grounds of the New Kadampa Buddhist Temple. We also passed the ruins of Furness Abbey, a significant Catholic site that fell into ruin following the dissolution. We also encountered a small stone circle at Birkrigg Common, which points to a much earlier faith. This made us realise that there have been many different faiths in this area where Quakerism developed, and highlights the important Quaker practice of supporting multifaith dialogue and activism. The man who

greeted me at the Buddhist Temple stated that 'All rivers lead to the sea' when talking about different Buddhist traditions, and this metaphor could also apply to different faiths. Whilst the sea for him was enlightenment, for me it would be God. We also travelled to the city of Barrow in Furness, which is a socially disadvantaged area, and home to one of the UK's largest arms making plants. This was a prompt to question how our faith leads to outreach and action. The evening included Taizé singing at Swarthmoor Hall, which was a new experience for me.

On the final day we walked a short distance to Swarthmoor Meeting House, which Fox had built so that local friends could worship there in case Swarthmoor Hall was no longer available. The upstairs room had been a school room, and interestingly had a 'raked' or sloped floor.

### Some thoughts and learnings from this pilgrimage were:

- Quakerism didn't develop in a vacuum. It formed at a time of tremendous upheaval and uncertainty during the civil wars, and was one of many alternative religious groups forming around this time. It developed in the north because this was an area rich in religious non-conformism.
- I realised that George Fox was a prophet, and I hadn't before thought of prophets occurring after Old Testament times. He had a new vision of how we could have a direct relationship with God without intermediaries.
- I often use my head rather than my heart, but our faith is about our experience rather than thinking things through.
- Quakerism survived persecution in the 1660s because it had a strong base, largely due to the considerable organisational support of Margaret Fell.
- Ben Pink Dandelion indicated that Quakers have certainty in the following ways: 1. We still worship



Above: Fox's pulpit, Firbank Fell

expecting direct encounter; 2. Silence and stillness is a practice that works well; 3. Our way of doing business works; 4. We live out our testimonies; and 5. We are certain of being uncertain, and don't feel we have all the answers.

- This pilgrimage also brought home to me that Quakerism grew out of Christianity, and so we shouldn't ignore our Christian roots.
- I was very moved by the strength of the early Quakers, who were prepared to suffer for their beliefs during a time of persecution.
- We are asked 'What canst thou say?' It doesn't matter what others think, believe and say, but what we do, and this is experiential.

It was fortunate timing that the online course *Radical Spirituality. The Early History of the Quakers* occurred shortly after I returned home, which furthered my thinking about Quaker history and theology.

### I have also found the following books to be enlightening reading following my travels:

- *The world turned upside down* by Christopher Hill
- *The cradle of Quakerism: Exploring Quaker Roots in North West England* by Arthur Kincaid

- *In Fox's Footsteps. A journey through three centuries* by David and Anthea Boulton
- *Rooted in Christianity. Open to New Light. Quaker Spiritual Diversity* by Timothy Ashworth and Alex Wildwood

The following quote from TS Eliot's poetry resonates with me regarding my faith journey:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time*

Perhaps I have come full circle to realising that I am no closer to knowing what I believe and what God is, but that is OK. Faith is after all a journey throughout life. The experience of connection with God is what is important.

Participation in the courses at Woodbrooke and Swarthmoor Hall greatly enriched my spiritual practice and deepened my understanding of the historical origins of Quakerism and of being part of the worldwide Quaker family.

I am grateful to VRM for providing some financial support towards participation in these courses.

AF

# Shepherding resistance

## *A journey of steadfast persistence*

ALETIA DUNDAS | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Seated on a bag of flour placed on top of an upturned bucket in an isolated tent on the rocky fields of the West Bank I listen as Jibrin, a kind-faced Palestinian man, talks of his religious convictions and his troubles. I'm in the West Bank as part of a World Council of Churches program, to provide protective presence and monitor human rights.

Jibrin's tent is all he has in the way of shelter. His grazing fields, crucial to his livelihood, stand less than a kilometre from the Israeli settlement of Susya. Frustrated by settlers who set fire to barley and wheat fields and attack his sheep, soldiers who turn a blind eye, and unjust arrests for crimes he didn't commit, this shepherd is determined to remain on his land, no matter the cost.

And the costs have been significant. I wept as he spoke of his brother's death at the hands of Israelis in the late 1960s. Ever since, his life has been marred by violence, injustice and fear. One nearby settler, who goes by the name Son of Mudahai, had come by just two days earlier with a gun and a big knife. A while back a neighbour was arrested and given a 20,000 shekel fine and 7 months jail time. Yet, Jibrin, a Muslim

man, waxes lyrical about the similarities between the three main religions, and how, despite everything he has experienced in life, he still believes in the inherent goodness in others. His faith seems to give him courage and hope.

Jibrin's home is in the Palestinian village of Qwawis where less than half a dozen families remain. In order for his sheep to have a healthy diet, he must regularly take them out to his fields for the day. What was once a relatively straight-forward journey is now fraught with danger. Multi-lane highways connecting settlements with cities now cut through Jibrin's usual shepherding route, and I hold my breath as the sheep veer perilously onto the road. Settlements have appeared atop the hills where his sheep are accustomed to graze. As he speaks the odd and abrupt directives to his beloved sheep, Jibrin always has one eye on the settlement nearby.

My role as a human rights monitor and accompanier was to provide protective presence to people like Jibrin. During those three months I accompanied a number of shepherds, and activists, and children, all of whom

were seeking to have their basic rights observed. And in many ways, they accompanied me on my own journey of understanding and insight. As I wandered alongside a flock of sheep, or carried trees to be planted by activists, or walked with children to and from school, I reflected on what it must be like to continually live under occupation and with human rights denied.

In my final week in Palestine, the worst happened. Jibrin was arrested on my watch. The ordeal began with the arrival of a settler who with a mobile phone in one hand and a pistol in his back pocket began hurling abuse at Jibrin. Jibrin remained firm. Our visitor retreated, only to make some calls, and not long afterwards the army showed up. Three army jeeps, plus the Israeli police and the civil administration appeared to respond to an unarmed shepherd whose only crime was to defiantly and persistently watch his flock on his family land that the administration seem to have now declared a closed military zone.

Suddenly I was receiving calls from our field officer and a local activist, both of whom were advising me to leave the scene, and advising Jibrin to leave too.





We were both hesitant to follow those orders, but in the end I left and Jibrin remained. As his sheep meandered back onto the road, and had to be rounded up by his wife, I looked on helplessly as Jibrin was taken into the police vehicle and detained for the rest of the day. It felt as if I had failed him.

Jibrin is someone that I think of as a resistance shepherd, because the simple act of taking his sheep out to graze is his way of nonviolently resisting the occupation and all its impacts on the existing inhabitants. Each time he goes out, he doesn't know what troubles he will face, but he sees it as a small but important role that he plays in nonviolently resisting an unjust system. Up until his recent arrest he was determined to continue shepherding on his land until they killed him. Now his *sumud* (steadfast persistence) is somewhat deflated. The last time I saw him, he told me he'd rather be killed quickly in Syria than slowly in this way. Then he burst into tears.

As we bid goodbye under these traumatic circumstances, I promised to share Jibrin's story with others. I was struck by the differences between our two life journeys, and yet how we are forever connected through this shared traumatic experience. As Jibrin's journey will inevitably take him and his sheep along that well-trodden path between his tent and the grazing land where he never knows what kinds of challenges he will face, my journey has taken me back to the familiarity and comfort of a home not under threat. But I will never forget Jibrin, or the way that he saw the world.

*Aletia Dundas recently returned from 3 months in Palestine and Israel with the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment programme. She was observing and reporting on human rights abuses, and providing protective presence to those nonviolently resisting the occupation.*

AF



Jibrin in his tent



# Walking the Camino

ACEY TEASDALE | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

**I**n the 1950s my budding-atheist brother, incongruously, adored a particular song. It went:

*Oh the place where I worship is the  
wide open spaces  
Built by the hand of the Lord.*

Both of us grew up on the expansive Wimmera plains of Western Victoria. An unencumbered horizon can nourish an expectation that anything is possible, any experience can be out there. Nothing is obliterated by stuff standing in the way.

Including the experience of the Holy.

And the unknown beyond that horizon beckons with excitement, and there is always a dirt road out there to entice.

So, in 1995, when I took myself off to a day-long seminar on the Camino de Santiago, when the first speaker opened his mouth I knew I had found my element for pursuing the Holy.

Camino means 'path' or 'way' in Spanish. It can be a walking track, but it is also the term used in Jesus' statement: 'I am the way and the truth and the life'.

The Camino de Santiago is one of the three great Christian pilgrimages of the middle Ages: to Jerusalem, to Rome and to Santiago de Compostela which is in the middle of Galicia, Spain's far

north-west province.

Jerusalem and Rome make sense, but why the far corner of Spain?

Well, according to one source it might simply be because of a patch of bad handwriting in an ancient manuscript about the lives of the apostles! Pilgrims on the Camino are journeying to what was believed to be the site of the tomb of the Apostle, St James. But other ancient texts report that James was buried in North Africa.

Some have suggested that, in sloppy Latin handwriting, the line 'St James preached in Rome' can look like 'St James preached in Spain', and one can picture a careful, copying monk muttering to himself: 'Fancy! I never knew he went to Spain!' and carefully inscribing the divergent destination, thus creating a legend.

Soon the idea grew accretions. It had always been agreed that St James was executed in Rome by beheading. It now emerged that his friends decided that he would probably like to be interred where his missionary work had been. So they loaded his head and trunk on a miraculous stone boat and transported his body around the Mediterranean and up the coast of the Iberian Peninsula, into the estuary of the River Ulla to be moored at the town now known as Padron. All in 24 hours!

A bridegroom riding to his wedding observed the progress of the stone boat and was so astonished he lost control

of his horse which reared and threw him into the surf. When he emerged he was covered in scallop shells. This account is the most common of several explanations of why the scallop shell is the symbol of the Camino.

Eventually they buried St James with his two devoted followers where it was thought he had preached and where the city bearing his name now stands. The exact location slipped out of consciousness.

In the year 815 a hermit called Pelayo, as a result of a vision, and guided by a star, led his bishop to a spot in a place called Libredon, where he believed the saint was buried. On digging they discovered three skeletons and the bishop pronounced them to be those of St James and his two followers.

Well, they did happen to be digging in a cemetery.

The bones of St James now repose in Santiago de Compostela (the former 'Libredon') in a silver ossuary in the crypt of the Cathedral. The word 'compostela' may refer to the concept of decomposition, it is from the same root as 'compost', but it could also mean 'field of the star'.

And consequently hundreds of thousands, some report millions, of pilgrims began to make the journey to venerate the bones of St James. Why?

I like to think that most of them walked to commune with the best of themselves and with the best in

the people they encountered, and consequently to experience their connection to the Holy. But there were a plethora of reasons for 'doing' the Camino.

You could be sentenced to do the Camino. In early times justice was often a prerogative of the church, and miscreants could be sentenced to walk the Camino. You might be reformed by the experience. At least it got rid of you for about a year. Recently this concept has been revisited with selected young offenders. There are moving accounts written by some of them. But the project was abandoned. Some of the youths could be too much of a handful.

Many people walked to expiate a sin, and I was once asked on the Camino what sin I was walking off (mind your own business!). Absolution was achieved at Santiago. Approaching the finish, at Villafranca del Bierzo, the frail who weren't going to make it to Santiago could achieve this absolution.

Henry II of England, it is said, considered making the pilgrimage to expiate his unintended contribution to the murder of Thomas a Becket. Instead he built a pilgrim hospital. Its site is still called Hospital Inglis, though no traces of the buildings remain.

And such is the way of the world that there came a time when one could employ someone to carry your sins to Santiago for you.

Great honour and kudos accrued from completing the Camino. Your 'Compostela' certificate in some countries entitled you to a stipend for life. You could adorn your escutcheon and your tombstone with a scallop shell.

The Camino could also be a political statement, especially as it consolidates all of Christian Europe (as it does now). It was the era of the crusades and of Moorish expansion. St James' iconography is not limited



**The long road ahead**

to his image as a humble pilgrim; he is also presented as Matamorus (the Moor slayer) on horseback slashing off the heads of Moors. In the wake of the 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the mighty Matamorus statue in the Santiago cathedral suddenly sprouted adornments of flowers, quite obscuring the rolling Moors' heads at the feet of St James' horse.

Powerful Christian rulers travelled the Camino in state. For instance the Holy Roman Emperor, father-in-law of England's Empress Maude, progressed to Santiago and was presented with the saint's left hand. Thus that little piece of skeleton was initiated into an astonishing career of its own.

Knights Templar patrolled the Camino, living to the letter their *raison d'être*: to keep the pilgrim routes open and safe. They left their enigmatic temples on the Way for us to wonder at.

But there were rogues and thieves and malevolent opportunists too, and such a surfeit of ladies of the night in the woods near Palas de Rei that the church hierarchy corresponded angrily with one another about whether it was sufficient just to cut off their noses. Perhaps they should excommunicate them as well.

I am informed that a dubious pilgrim has long been a stock character in Spanish literature, soaking up kudos and freebies in a community, but somehow never seeming to move on ...

In the 21st Century people are still on the Camino for a plethora of reasons. When I first walked in 1997, 25,000 pilgrims received a Compostela certificate for completing the pilgrimage. The restored Camino was only a few decades old.

The Renaissance and The Age of Discovery changed religious expression and pilgrimage lost its relevance and relics lost their allure. The Camino disappeared. By the 20th Century the very routes were no longer known. In the second half of the 20th Century, a Spanish Catholic priest devoted his life to reconstructing the routes. Immediately a few tough stalwarts emerged. The 20th Century, it seemed, was beginning to resonate to the spirit of pilgrimage with a gusto to rival the middle ages.

For the first of these new, latter day, pilgrims there was minimal accommodation and few services. By my time the original stalwarts, if you ever met them, were scathing about we softies in cosy 'parochial' and 'municipal' refugios, *they* had slept in barns and haystacks!

Even I have slept on the stage of one picture theatre and the foyer of another, on the turf under the stars in the ruins of a convent, and and in a wedding marquee pitched in the paddock of an outback petrol station next to the petrol station's bull ring and enclosure

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# Going to prison in Darwin

*with AVP*

ELIZABETH KWAN | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

The high mesh walls, and inside, the confusing security system scrutinising our irises, were intimidating. As were the red-buttoned duress alarms we had to wear, and the long walk, punctuated by further checkpoints until we reached the maximum security Sector 5 for men. To Sally Herzfeld, a West Australian Friend who had joined a prison workshop to train in the Alternatives to Violence Project and had facilitated workshops in many prisons since then, the experience was not unusual. For me it was, though I welcomed it, having heard Sally speak of her prison experiences when she had come to Darwin to help our small AVP group facilitate workshops in the refugee centre and the general community. Another Friend, Sabine Erika in the Blue Mountains, who had begun the first AVP workshops in Darwin in 2007 and many since then, had also spoken of her experiences in New South Wales women's prisons. But my family were uneasy about me being involved, especially when they learned that AVP workshops did not have a prison security officer present as an observer.

Several months before the new prison was to open in 2014 at Holtze, 30 minutes outside Darwin, the Northern Territory's Department of Correctional Services (DCS) had invited a variety of community organisations and industries to a forum to provide information about the new prison. The DCS aim was to build safer communities through reducing recidivism. To that end it sought a

successful community partnership', connecting inmates with the wider community, as well as providing them with training and work opportunities. AVP Darwin's work had at first been workshops for the general community, and later for Melaleuca Refugee Centre, rather than for Darwin's old prison at Berrimah. But when cutbacks in government funding ended the refugee workshops, AVP Darwin began to consider workshops in the prison.

The Director of Offender Services, Programs and Indigenous Affairs in the DCS, who had been an AVP facilitator interstate, had suggested AVP Darwin be invited to the forum. Subsequently she referred me to the prison's Manager of Offender Development. Before the interview I had sent her a short paper with a covering letter to explain the Alternatives to Violence Project and its workshops, and the research evidence for the effectiveness of these workshops in prisons. Kathryn Tomlinson's research was especially useful and is available on line.[1]

At the interview was also the security officer in charge of Sector 5, who had recently come to the prison from corrective services in New South Wales. Several questions were discussed: about me, AVP and Quakers, the workshops, the high percentage of prisoners of Indigenous background (some 85 per cent). But it seemed that their main interest was because AVP workshops' small size, groups of up to 15, made them suitable for inmates in Sector 5. If held there, workshops would allow some dangerous prisoners to mix with

inmates from other less secure sectors. However, workshops for Protected prisoners in Sector 5, convicted paedophiles, could not be mixed – they had to be protected from mainstream prisoners. These restrictions had meant that high security inmates were considered last rather than first in being offered programs. Both staff members were keen supporters of reform.

It seemed from the discussion, that an officer would be present in the workshop for security purposes, with a quiet joke about whether it should be one who opposed such workshops or not – the first hint of the dismissive attitude to AVP workshops held by some prison staff. (Later, after I checked AVP practice, I pointed out that AVP workshops can include administrative but not security staff in prison workshops, and they should be participants, not observers.) In our first workshop we were to find that the two officers who had helped set it up were to join it as participants. They were Prisoner Support Officers in Sector 5, who had good relationships with the prisoners. Sally and I had hoped to involve a male AVP facilitator to provide some gender balance in our team, but none was available. At the time the prison was about to employ an Indigenous Cultural Officer. We thought perhaps he could join the workshop in that capacity, since most prisoners had an Indigenous background, but that didn't happen.

Would we be perceived by workshop participants as two older ladies who knew nothing about violence? We



remembered the words of Robert Martin, the tall Afro-American man with a rough past, who tried a workshop while in prison a second time. He had doubts anything would work for him, and seeing 'a group of Quakers, men with their baggy shorts and pink knees' walk in, wondered why he had come. He was disruptive during the workshop and left determined not to return. But one of the Quakers, a short man, spoke to him, acknowledging the hard life Robert's comments in the workshop had revealed. He returned to his cell with a handout about conflict resolution, decided to complete the workshop, and did two more levels. Once released from prison, Robert as a facilitator joined Steve Angell, US Quaker, an early founder of AVP and 'one of the most dedicated carriers of the AVP message' around the world. [2]

But first Sally and I had to apply for access to Darwin prison, have police checks, and eyes and fingers measured. An induction explained what clothes and footwear were appropriate. Videos showed how easily prisoners could manipulate staff and visitors. Then we learned to negotiate the automated security system, an ongoing dance with staff as the system continually refused to ignore our hip replacements. Finally we were asked to document them, so whichever staff members were on duty could make alternative arrangements with the machines. One of the more thorough security officers also found that we had not been asked to lodge at the security desk a list of all items we brought into the prison for the workshops. A packet of jelly beans, used by participants as individuals and groups to estimate numbers in a level two exercise for making decisions by consensus, caused a particular problem for a senior security staff member, who eventually passed the packet.

The first AVP workshop in the prison at the end of June 2016 'was an historical occasion and enjoyable', our report noted, 'as the men were very appreciative and respectful

and participated very well'. We also commented that 'The role plays on facing temptations from family after release brought out valuable discussion. As did...conflicts that were solved peacefully, and other exercises which gave the opportunity of talking about how violence is normal but doesn't need to be.' All the men wanted to continue with the Advanced Workshop. They gave feedback on the range of exercises, discussions and games during the 2½ days, and at the end, both kinds of comments became part of the report, which then informed our planning of future workshops.

The evaluation sheets at the end of the workshop invited participants to comment on what they liked about the workshop. Prisoners enjoyed seeing everyone participate, getting to know and getting along with each other, learning new skills, being part of a team and seeing things from a different perspective. They found the workshop helpful in understanding where violence comes from, and how it offered a chance to find peaceful, rather than violent, ways of solving their problems. They had fun.

In terms of what they learned from the workshop, participants wrote of the importance of respecting others, thinking before acting, of 'putting myself in another person's shoes', of being aware of the consequences which may follow actions. Some found they learned most from the deep sharing of stories by others in the workshop.

Participants found the facilitation team polite, kind, patient, easy to understand, caring and willing to share as members of the workshop, and to make it a joyful experience for all. Other comments were that the two facilitators were 'very informative, experienced, ideal for delivering this program in this environment'.

Answers to the questions 'Is there anything you would like to see changed' and 'Are there any other comments you would like to make?' revealed a tension which had marked the sessions,



The high mesh walls. Photos by Anna Kwan

between those who 'had a lot of fun!!!' and others who wanted more quiet time with more serious activities. There were calls for more workshops at the prison and more days in each workshop to avoid rushing them (the result of always having to catch up after men were late in being released from their units in the morning and the afternoon). Almost all were willing to recommend an AVP workshop to a friend, one writing that he would 'recommend it to everyone'. They gave permission for their comments to be used anonymously for publicity purposes.

The experience confirmed for me why and how these workshops can play such an important role in prisons, and why the impact for prisoners is so much greater if they complete all three levels, not just the introductory Basic. (See, for example, 'Nick's Story' in This we can do, or on AVPWA's website home page. [3]) Maybe there are some advantages in older women facilitating these workshops in prison! 'They reminded me of my grandma', more than one wrote or said. Staff members no longer find it necessary to be in our workshops. The experience educated not only me, but also my family. I realised more fully, too, why these workshops have become such an important part of Sally Herzfeld's life.

In August that year, nine of the eleven Basic participants did the

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# Journeying to Soul

ANNE ZUBRICK | WEST AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

Each major religious tradition has ‘journey’ stories. Themes include strong personal commitment, fears, loss, regrets, heartbreaks, – and unexpected gifts. As a child I heard many stories of youths (or a girl in the *Wizard of Oz*) setting off to find a special something or someone, only to come full circle. Had the central character only paid attention, what was sought was available, right there, all along.

The year I turned 45 I had a journey dream which affected me profoundly, and remains with me.

*I am in a small car travelling by myself through the most beautiful countryside. The day is perfect and the driving is easy – except for one thing. I am in Korea (career) and I know in myself that I have to find my way to Seoul (soul) but I don't know the way or the language or what to expect when I arrive there. How will I find my way to and around this unknown place?*

*I come to sign after sign along the road and slow each time to examine the written patterns hoping to discern similarities and meanings among them hoping to find a direction and the distance to my destination.*

*I come to a very simple building and stop there to take stock of where I am hoping to find out in which direction to travel next. The people I meet welcome me, bring me food and drink, sit and share it with me. It is truly a time of ‘communion’. We say nothing to one another for I do not share their language. However,*

*I feel we share an understanding and I leave feeling deeply refreshed. I continue the journey confident that I will be able to find my way.*

Jungians would describe my dream as typical of mid-life – a wake-up call to change direction for the second half of life – time to focus on the inner life of the Spirit. Recognising the value and importance of this dream, I began to explore and to more consciously live what it might mean for me.

Attending to and staying in the present moment is a challenge for me. My natural inclination is to anticipate the future and look to others as I seek answers and directions. The dream calls me to trust my *own* inner guide – to pay attention to the signs and patterns of Godde in everyday life and relationships. The dream opened a call deep inside me – a direction yet to be found – the way not yet evident.

At that time I was living and working in Hong Kong and had only recently started to attend Hong Kong Meeting. This began my connection with Quakers.

I had started to learn Chinese. I was especially fascinated by the processes needed to learn to read and write characters. It took practice and discipline to recognise a host of character ‘radicals’ – recurring patterns and their symbolic meaning with no clue to their pronunciation. However, once I could recognise a set of frequently used characters, I became increasingly able to discern overall meaning.

The dream images suggested to me that my spiritual learning might be somewhat akin to learning to read Chinese. Pay attention to recurring

signs and patterns and deeper meaning may emerge.

As I approached my sixtieth birthday I began to consider deeply where my education and life experience might lead and endeavours to further my personal and spiritual growth. My discernment led me into my current deeply enriching work in the spiritual accompaniment and care for older persons, especially those living with dementia and mental illness.

Over the past decade, I've been especially drawn to writing and reflections about late life, by men and women *in* late life. Biblical Judeo-Christian writers celebrate long lives as time that both brings out and bestows character. Old age (should we privileged to experience it) is a time to gradually uncover the *essence* of ourselves. Here we finally make sense of the tangled web of our lives, extract perhaps the single strong thread of who we really are and who we have become. Extended lives provide opportunities to review and refine meaning in life, to seek forgiveness and/or make amends, to transform memories into stories, to mentor younger people, to strongly speak out against injustice, and to heal the planet. Rather than giving back, we might increasingly *give forward* in later life.

I am drawn to Quaker Faith and Practice 21.45, *Getting Older*, and Evelyn Sturge's words:

*We must be confident that there is still more ‘life’ to be ‘lived’ and yet more heights to be scaled. The tragedy of middle age is that, so often, men and women cease to press towards the*

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*goal of their high calling. They cease learning, cease growing, they give up and resign from life. As wisdom dawns with age, we begin to measure our experiences not by what life gives to us, nor by the things withheld from us, but by their power to help us grow in spiritual wisdom.*

Much of my own approach and understanding about late life comes from the experience of watching each of my parents face the experience of ageing, illness and death. Each of them had a remarkable openness and ability to share their lives as well as a deep serenity as they approached death. Neither of them wished to be younger than they were. Both continued to offer their time and skills, as energy allowed, until just days before they died. They enjoyed the simple comfort of home, solitude, reflection and company they chose.

My father had cancer and a major heart condition which he knew could well result in sudden death. About two weeks before he died he rang me to say 'something fundamentally different is occurring inside me'. He could not be more specific. This was a new inner sense. I travelled immediately from Perth to New Zealand (where my parents were living) and was with my father and mother over a few days. The evening before father died we had a wonderful time and lively conversation together. He had a massive heart attack and died early the next morning.

Earlier that week a friend had come to see my father. After the visit my father said 'Through his gentle conversation Bill prepared me for death.' I know no details of what the two men shared. I can only conclude that it was a rich time of shared presence. My mother afterwards observed that sometimes the caring visitor brings exactly what

is needed. I draw on her insight in my own work with older people, especially those living with dementia, who need compassion, hope and love.

At a Symposium on Dementia and Love in Ballarat in March 2017 I had the privilege of some deep conversations with several men and women living with different forms of dementia. Many of them were able to share with me stories of how they were learning to let go: letting go of fear, and discovering the experience not of a lost self but a journey towards a true self—a deepening inner self that is truly who they are. They spoke of the deep power of being held, and a confidence that they will continue to be held, in Love, no matter the future.

Letting go and letting come. That's the theme of my ongoing spiritual journey to soul.

AF

#### GOING TO PRISON IN DARWIN – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Advanced, and seven then continued with the Training for Facilitator. After an interview, five became apprentice facilitators and one an assistant, hopefully to begin work as part of our team in future workshops in the prison, or, on their release, in the community. By the end of June this year we will have given 12 or 13 workshops at Darwin prison and hope we can continue into next financial year.

There is a great hunger in the prison for these workshops. Fifteen men, for example, have registered for a Basic course being given in May this year, too many with the additional five (apprentices and facilitators) to fit into the Sector 5 room. After checking the participants for any contra-associations with others who may be using the Education Centre in Sector 2, prison staff approved our use of a larger room there for this workshop. We need

more people in our community who are willing to do the three levels of workshops and become part of a team in gaining experience in facilitating workshops, whether in the prison, the community, youth groups, or schools.

You can find out more about these workshops by joining the one in July 2017 towards the end of Yearly Meeting in Adelaide. Continue training in a series of workshops in your state or territory, and become part of a facilitator team offering workshops to others in Australia and around the world. In the Asia-West Pacific region, AVP facilitators are currently working in Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines, in communities, pre-schools, universities, refugee camps and settlements.

Registration forms for the July workshop, with details of where, when and how much, are available when you scroll down at <http://avpq.org>.

<http://avpq.org>. Please complete the form and return with payment as soon as possible to the address given.

[1] A review of the literature concerning the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), July 2007, [avpbritain.org/alternatives-to-violence-project/](http://avpbritain.org/alternatives-to-violence-project/),

<http://avpwiki.wikispaces.com/file/view/Tomlinson%2C%20Britain%20Lit%20Review%202007.pdf/39397220/Tomlinson%2C%20Britain%20Lit%20Review%202007.pdf>

[2] Sally Herzfeld and Alternatives to Violence Project members, This we can do: Quaker faith in action through the Alternatives to Violence Project, The James Backhouse Lecture 2015, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, 2015, pp. 6-7, 4, 9.

[3] Herzfeld S. et al., pp 47-49; <http://avpwa.org/>

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# QSA Notes

## The journey of an idea!

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Learning how to grow azolla and its uses. Photo credit Vasandham Society

Many people, aware of QSA and its development work, would think that ideas travel to new community groups via the training classes given to groups of people. Yes that is true, whether it is about new ways to grow food or how to weave cloth. Small groups receive an explanation about the new skills, then a chance to practice them for themselves, and it's the application of the new ideas which reinforces the skills. But that is not all.

Visits are often arranged for the group to meet people who are already proficient in these new skills, so that they can see for themselves what is possible. These visits can be so very helpful to demonstrate how things can be done in the home setting, giving them ideas of different techniques, and the confidence to give it a try themselves. Seeing is often believing.

But not all new ideas are enhancing their practical skills. It might be a different way of thinking, such as when groups are given new information about ways of reducing domestic violence, or what it means to have human rights, especially for women attempting to

set up a business in the local market, or how to protect children from harm. Each of these ideas requires a change of ideas and thought processes, and they are not so easy to see. This is how the trainers themselves can be so helpful, as role models. It is one thing to talk about equality within a committee, and it is another to hold a discussion in which everyone is given the opportunity to express their ideas – the idea of equality is learnt from the experience of being treated in an equal way.

Sometimes ideas come from a different community that has had different experiences and ideas, and think they might be helpful to share. Sometime this works, sometimes it does not. One example of where it has worked is in Tamil Nadu, South India where Vasandham Society has been successful in growing an aquatic plant called azolla which is used for cattle fodder. When I visited them on a monitoring visit, I was very impressed with the results, and having been told by Guna and the farmers using it that it improves the overall health of cattle and increases the milk yield from cows, I took some

azolla plants with me when I visited Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Centre. Guna was able to supply some technical information sheets in Tamil which helped the new farmers understand, and now azolla is flourishing in ponds in another part of Tamil Nadu and more cattle are benefitting from it.

An example of an idea which did not work so well happened in Cambodia in Kandal Province where they wanted some sort of water filtration device to remove the naturally occurring arsenic from the water supply. An idea had been shared with them by a visitor from Europe who suggested clay filtration pots which had been seen to be used successfully in other countries. A test was set up to confirm the results but the opposite happened – when following the instructions, the arsenic levels increased the more it was used, so the filter was not able to remove the arsenic levels from the water before it was stored.

There is an old saying, attributed to a number of diverse people over the years, which is still appropriate to this idea of shared ideas :-



**'Give a person a fish, and you feed the family for a day. Teach a person to fish, and you feed the family for a lifetime.'**

Sometimes ideas are shared by simply giving them space for this to happen. Quakers have a long history of doing just that, whether it is a shared meal after meeting, discussions over the washing up, or the more structured meetings of politicians and advisers at the Quaker United Nations Offices in Geneva and New York meeting together away from the spotlight and press, for a free and open discussion of an issue.

### **The time of year**

Friends, the end of the financial year is fast approaching, and so now is the time of year to consider making a tax deductible donation to QSA. This can be done by sending a cheque made out to Quaker Service Australia to our office at 119 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 or by direct credit to our CUA account in the name of Quaker Service Australia, BSB 814 282, account number 50585902. Please include your name in the reference section of the direct credit and send an email to [donations@qsa.org.au](mailto:donations@qsa.org.au) to advise us that the donation has been sent and whether you would like your donation to go to our General Fund (not tax deductible) or to one or both of our tax deductible funds, Overseas Aid Fund or Aboriginal Concerns Fund. Thank you Friends, you will be contributing to the sharing of ideas among communities in Australia, Cambodia, India and Uganda.

AF



Watching, looking and listening how to make compost.  
Photo credit – Department of Women's Affairs,  
Kampong Thom, Cambodia



Sharing ideas in Cambodia. Photo credit:  
Department of Women's Affairs, Kampong  
Thom, Cambodia

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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# My spiritual journey

ROSEMARY TURLE | WEST AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

A spiral is the visual symbol for my expanding path towards what I have come to know as my truth. It helps give a shape to all the learnings and realisations of what my true identity is. It started long ago now if we are thinking in terms of years. But right now I am sharing thoughts and facts which are really far beyond facts and have become what I am, and how I experience my life on planet Earth. And where shall I commence this revisiting and rethinking of my spiraling life?

With my parents. Both so spiritual and loving life and letting their five children be part of the wonder of nature and its English seasons in our Sussex countryside. That is the county on the south coast of England where William Penn was born. Nature has always played a major role in my path whether I lived city or country. The Sunday prayer time with readings from the Bible and the visits to the village Anglican church shaped my infant and childhood days. The war and its complications for the daily life which challenged the country made me conscious of Germany and air raid warnings when one ran for safety to the shelter, or hurriedly got under one's bed. Blackouts meant not letting any light be seen from our windows because of the danger of enemy air attacks. The doodlebug V2 that landed in a field next door killed only a fox and a rabbit but it resulted in the five children of my family being evacuated to safer homes on the west coast of England for long periods of time. One place I remember clearly was a vicarage with beautiful gardens. We hugged our rations of sweets and of sugar to our hearts and I certainly had not learned yet the importance of giving and sharing.

Peace came and life returned to more normal times with the war ended, and soon after my family suddenly all moved to Australia. The spiral pattern moved my

heart soul and thirteen-year-old body to a new continent that was far away and very hot. We were leaving our seven acres of dearly loved land and school lives and friends. Also I left my black cat and my bicycle. It was to be the realisation of the huge ocean and a lifetime relationship with water. It is only seconds ago that I stood in my mind's eye on the deck of the *Orcades* and remembering how I had gazed in disbelief at the rock of Gibraltar. Why such a strong memory? It was because it was so different from any land that I had ever seen and it startled my eyes used to English trees, plants and flowers; also it was because I had never imagined a world that had so much ocean of water. It is such times when my whole being says 'Oh, there is more to what you know and think and believe!' It was more acute when I saw Arabs and camels at Port Said. 'Oh people are different colours, wear different clothes and they have different animals'.

We disembarked in Western Australia and it became a new way of life in Perth. Of course it would be a private school because of the expectations of the class system. It would be Anglican of course because my father was extremely critical of the Roman Catholic church. My parents had met as Christians through the Beach Movement and shared a deep spirituality which as a child I did not yet understand. In a new city they did not know which church to attend, and it all depended on liking the teaching and the sermons of the minister; this resulted in me experiencing Methodist and Baptist congregations as a teenager. We suddenly made an even greater move to live in the goldfields. 'We did not come to Australia to live in a city,' my father said. 'We came here to LIVE!' I understood that living was tied up very much with being on the land and part of the land and suburbs did not offer that feeling of closeness to nature.

This meant leaving the four year course of art I had started in Perth. It meant leaving the poultry farm and the dog and new Australian girlfriends from school. We packed up two vehicles with tents and gear and a number of poultry and drove via Kalgoorlie north-east to Menzies. It was gold business that had brought my father to move into the freedom of the Australian way of life and its wonderful blue skies. So we experienced tent life with looking for snakes before one got into the sleeping bag at night, and walking on wild open red country with brumbies and kangaroos became a new experience. It was an added closeness to nature but nature with different things to teach me. I learned the precious value of water and the disappointment of the water being brackish at our land. I found out the birds dived down at my head if I was near their nests, the flies and insects were incessant. But I was happy, inside myself I felt immensely grateful to wake up each day to a vast and seemingly empty but red-earthed outback and feeling so free without schooling and to be able to just read, roam and live in a simple way without any set program.

That episode only lasted months because of the brackish water and we moved to Donnybrook far south of Perth to an orchard outside the small town famous for its apples. I went to Methodist youth club and Anglican church and peer pressure had me feeling that I should get confirmed. My mother said that would mean I would have to be baptised first! In fact baptism was not the custom for my free thinking parents who felt such practices were not necessary, because when we got to be adults we would take responsibility for our own decisions. So I got baptised and confirmed, but inside of me I knew that something very significant was at stake: that although I was doing this from peer pressure to be like other people, it meant something much more.

But I had not yet learned what the 'more' was.

I do not understand how the spirit in one grows, but it does as wonder and knowledge and experience mould the years. It is affected by situations but also so enormously for me by the people that I have been privileged to meet and know. Difficult and ugly situations also become such huge learning times. I can return to such precious life-changing moments which are beyond words and which have had such meaning on my life and have made me change opinions or open up new beginnings in my journeying.

One such occasion is at Rasulia, the Quaker farm and community, in north India. One has to get in a cart to arrive there! One day after sitting under the Banyan tree with Marjorie Sykes and a group I go looking at everything. I am following the Partap Aggarival who is pointing out the neem tree and telling Harry Holloway about trees, plants and the fields. He stopped at a nondescript bush and said, 'This is not happy here, we will have to move it elsewhere.' Never before had I thought about plants having feelings! Another big surprise was in Esperance at the Seaman's centre when looking at Rev. Frank Roe's big paintings with the written words from Job saying 'Where were you when I made the heavens and the stars?' It staggered me to know that I had always been in existence, even if it was at a quite different level of consciousness.

Spirit knows only Light and it is for me a constant opening to the light that guides me. The term Light affected me more strongly when I found the Society of Friends as an attender in 1971. What a blessing that was! My mother in Western Australia wrote to me in Sydney when I was still recovering from divorce saying 'And if you are lonely do not forget to go to the Quakers!' My four-year-old child came with me to a Meeting soon after that advice. So another turn of the expanding spiral brought me in contact with wonderful people and some became friends in my life in a very significant way,

such as important times with Margaret Barnard Kettle. She shared with me importance of seeing both sides of the Vietnamese immigrant situation.

Attendance at Devonshire Street Meeting was a joy and I had visits to Kangaroo valley and became friends with Ed Stanton who impressed me with his life in nature. My child and I slept in the cottage bedroom with its festoon of spiders which importantly kept insects away and we ate the red coloured Mexican corn he grew and we coped with the outdoor shower! He slept in his doorless A-frame structure in the fields where cows walked around and where he stored his big jars of preserves. One Easter the weather turned unexpectedly hot and the group staying decided to swim naked in the river. My girlfriend asked Ed if we could borrow the Bible to learn how to put on fig leaves!

Light continued to remain a strong and meaningful concept as I grew in Spirit and came to understand the depth of George Fox's words, 'You do well to pay attention to the light that shines in the dark place, until day breaks and the morning star rises in your heart.'

The spiral of awareness of love and light increased with working in London and Spain. The journey there via Indonesia and Thailand with a seven-year-old daughter was immense. Living a month cheaply in a *losman* (home with a family accommodation) in Bali before we moved on to Java and the cities of Yogyakarta and Jakarta. It was a realisation of how close our continent was to Asia as I experienced the Hindu and Moslem religions and culture. My spiral found me with different thoughts and tastes and sights and I can still see myself in the temple of snakes in Penang manoeuvring myself very deftly. Much later, on visits to India, I understood the auspicious meaning of snakes and managed to get away from the biblical myth of the Fall. My interest in mythology was increasing.

In Spain, working for Inlingua in Zaragoza, such a wonderful old city, opened up my spiral in a different way.

It was a chance to enter into friendship with Roman Catholic life. First it was the Mother and Sisters of the little school my seven-year-old attended and I helped with English language for a class of children and privately for a nun. She told me lots about her personal feelings. Before marriage I had visited Spain and learned some language to cope with being a visitor in a seaside village. The annual blessing of the vehicles had been a surprise joy and the lovingness of the village folk. But going to guitar mass in the church and the conversations in class with my students from their Seminary was much more meaningful because I was truly listening and learning from lives with a different perspective. A student lent me the poetry of the mystic monk or priest St John of the Cross and he deeply touched my soul. I read Teresa of Avila. The woman who gave us accommodation was very devotional and one evening I came home to find her praying with a carved figure of Jesus in a wooden box. It had come to her home as part its journey from house to house. I had never had icons or such devotional objects as part of my life but I could see with her how important it was for her.

Like everyone, I have my friends from the world of literature and they have become part of my thinking and feelings and enormous influences. They are from Krishnamurti to Thomas Merton, from Rilke to Ram Dass and wonderful and inspiring Quaker literature, both old and contemporary, as well as the artists, philosophers and poets from all over the world. I feel an enormous gratefulness for music and literature. As a long-time member of the Theosophical Society I have been able to access world religions and scriptures. I suppose that it was my mother who started my love of books by her reading to me Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* and Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*.

The physical world of Nature has been a supreme friend. I leapt in my heart when I read Thoreau's *Walden* as a

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teenager. Even now when I visit big cities I notice every tree and plant and am aware of the sky and sun and clouds. For years I taught English as a second language at Bondi Beach school just to be near the sea. That started in 1975 on my return from Europe and I became a member of the Society in Friends with the blessings of Margaret Watson and Ruth Haigh. The world of water is beyond words but I need to be near it and feel that element to which I belong. Here in Albany it is amazing as its contact with the land with its ancient Gondwanaland connection makes for incredible beaches, bays, inlets and islands. Also it has an incredibly rich flora and fauna. Living on this continent I experience the Dreamtime of the original inhabitants and have felt and shared that oneness with the earth when I was working with them as a teacher on a settlement in Gippsland and then later in life as a welfare officer in Broome.

I believe in following my heart when I manage to evade limited thinking that gets in the way of callings from deep inside me. It resulted in my move to Western Australia to live with my ageing mother and four hundred residents at the tiny sea town of Hopetoun in 1987. It was a big decision to leave teaching and the wonderful city of Sydney and my friends and the Quaker meetings, but I did. I did it the slow way by bus across the Nullabor and stopping at each night at accommodation and getting a new bus the next day. I learned about being old and about huge distances and about self-reliance from the community who were mostly pioneer types and had brought up children on farms and knew hardship and courage. They called me Mrs Turle's daughter and let me into some very precious friendships. But it was also lonely at times. My mother missed mining days with my father who had died, and for memory's sake we boiled the billycan on her indoor fire and went on little safaris to listen to birds and endlessly we talked about rocks and insects and cloud formations. Finally I was in a state

of freedom where I could paint all day or just beachcomb or just listen to my mother tell me of her favourite writers like Robert Louis Stevenson, Richard Jeffries, William Hudson and the war poet, Edward Thomas. I grew to love Mt Barren East when we sometimes visited the amazing Fitzgerald River National Park with its massive number of botanical species. One naturalist friend took me to look and listen for the endangered ground parrot. She said it is so important, and I replied but what about all the Ethiopians dying at this famine time. She said 'We cannot help them' and walked away from me; on her return she said to me. 'Perhaps we can'.

My mother died in 1996 and I wondered where to live next. But first, my of personal pilgrimage in 1997 to places and people of importance to me. It started with relatives in Thailand and then three months in Bangladesh helping at a centre for rehabilitation of spinal injury patients and experiencing Eid, the feast at the close of the Ramadam fast. Then I had time with to a friend in France and the joy of Easter where I lived in the countryside where the nuns and monks sang nearly all day in their beautiful old churches beside the monastery and the convent. I went again to Spain which had had such influence on my life until I found India with its more ancient spirituality and wisdom. Then the magic of seeing the gypsies in the south of France when they come from all parts of Europe with their caravans to be in the seaside village of Les Deux St Maries. They celebrate the story of the two Biblical Marys being saved from drowning, with dressed up statues being driven around the village and then the white Camargue horses leading the procession to the sea.

The bus took me to relatives in Cornwall and for the first time to Chester staying with my Quaker friend Hazel Lawson who invited me to be with the conference of Women for Peace in Wales. Finally I had got myself to the Findhorn community and I was deeply touched

by a written message pinned on the wall asking everybody to make birthday cards for Eileen Caddy. That centre of light continues its work with people from all over the world experiencing the true meaning of loving community.

I had my first time in Ireland, and at a home outside Belfast I had the huge experience of how it felt to live in fear as was demonstrated by my hostess who had gone through traumatic years. It was a time to understand her and to feel compassion. It was joy in happy Dublin; I went to a Quaker meeting and as a tourist I learnt so much from Celtic spirituality to their very sad history and the inspiring richness of their poets and writers.

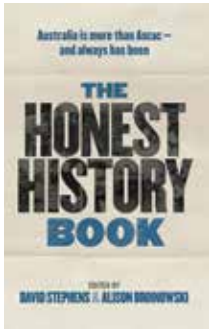
There was a hiatus in the expanding circle of my life on my return to Australia because I did not know where to live.

It seemed that after years in the west that it would be best to stay there, and I bought my one-and-a-half acres of land outside Albany with the intention of forming a retreat centre. I had wanted five acres and a running stream but that was not my possibility! It is beautiful bush and only a three minute walk to the estuary with its tides, pelicans and seagulls.

So fascination for understanding how we each grow in spirit and wisdom became my two year study with an international interfaith seminary in New York. It was by correspondence, but I went there for workshops and graduation. Meanwhile many celebrations took place here where I live, as well as the group who come here to meditate and discuss and be happy. We do the 'A Course in Miracles' and most importantly we celebrate nature and walk the labyrinth and gather in the tepee if it is up. It is too wet in Albany for the canvas in winter. Sometimes Quaker Friends from Denmark and Albany have come out to 5th Sunday Quaker meetings here to circle on the grass or in the studio. My friends come for events which celebrate the full moon or the seasons or the poets Rumi or Rilke, or they come to paint or share other creative activities. The

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## The Honest History Book

EDITED BY DAVID STEPHENS AND ALISON BROINOWSKI

Published by NewSouth Publishing, 2017.

This is a very timely book of essays from a variety of writers about many aspects of Australian history and current trends, and edited by David Stephens and Alison Broinowski. Its primary focus is the way in which Anzac and Australia's war experiences have been amplified and distorted so as to crowd out the much wider stories of Australia's progress as a nation and culture. As Julianne Schultz says in the Foreword, this book 'sets out the complications arising from the many threads of our national history that we need to know about and try to understand – the environment, immigration and multiculturalism, the economy, inequality, the role of women, settler-Indigenous relations, and our lingering ties to the monarchy and to large countries in the northern hemisphere'.

In their Introduction, the editors point out that all historians select evidence, but an honest approach requires interpretation 'robustly supported by evidence'. They say that there has been a significant emphasis on military history and that it needs to be balanced by recognition of the other sources of Australian identity. The elevation of Anzac, in particular, has become almost too 'sacred' to be subjected to alternative views. As a result, for example, the conciliatory words commonly

attributed to the Turkish leader Ataturk – 'those heroes that shed their blood...' – have become myth, and there is no evidence they were actually said by him. Similarly, Charles Bean's vision for a memorial to those who served in World War 1 has come to emphasise the militaristic aspects of our history, and used to justify all kinds of different developments at the Australian War Memorial. This is a refreshing and stimulating read. The first part of the book goes into considerable detail about the real events that have shaped us as a people. There is a chapter about the Armenian genocide that occurred under the Ottoman Empire around the time of Gallipoli and has been largely ignored in subsequent relations between Turkey and Australia, despite active efforts in Australia at the time to offer relief to the Armenians. Another chapter shows the deliberate injection of government funds into war history and commemoration at a very substantial rate in recent years, so that for many young people war has become the most important part of our national tradition. When students come to Canberra on school visits, the inclusion of the War Memorial in the itinerary enables a subsidy of costs for the visit.

The word 'Anzackery' refers to the tendency to exaggerate the importance of 1915. The transfer of remembrance from the private to the public sphere has led to much sentimentality about 'heroes' and excessive rhetoric linking Anzac exclusively with Australia's story. It gives little weight to the horrors of war experience and the awful legacy of

trauma that follows for individuals and families. It also discourages asking the question – was it worth it? It thus sets up future generations to be drawn more readily into a military response to crises. The second part of the book traverses other aspects of Australia's story – the environment's impact, the changing face of immigration, the economic challenges from boom and bust cycles, the myth of the 'fair go' in relation to the realities for many minorities, the frontier wars, and the hidden place of women's role in the records of leadership. It identifies the current dilemma of militarism versus independence in our foreign policy.

This book fills in many gaps in knowledge about our past, raises questions about our interpretation of our heritage, and the imagines our future. Authors included in the book are Peter Stanley, Larissa Behrendt, Paul Daley, Joy Damousi, Mark McKenna, Carmen Lawrence, and Stuart Macintyre, among others. It is a comprehensive analysis, and invites reflection and conversation on many aspects of Australian life.

flush

DAVID PURNELL

*Canberra Regional Meeting*

Editor's note: An extract from the book, with some interesting comments, can be found at <https://dailyreview.com.au/anzac-anzackery-australians-normalised-war/59134/>

of fighting bulls.

Softy or not, the ‘Municipals’ and ‘Parochials’ had firm criteria defining a genuine pilgrim. You didn’t get a bed unless you had walked *all the Way* there. Bicycle or horse pilgrims were legit, but they only got a bed if all the foot pilgrims had been accommodated. You didn’t get a bed unless you carried your own pack. *All the way*. And if you broke these rules, or took liberties with the route or had a support vehicle, you not only didn’t get a bed, you didn’t get a Compostela certificate at the end either. There was a row of grim priests at the Camino office in Santiago to inspect your pilgrim passport to make sure its stamps revealed a complete journey and that you had walked for religious or spiritual reasons.

And you most certainly couldn’t book ahead, first come first served.

The recent explosion of interest in the Camino has changed all that. The tiny, pay-by-donation ‘Parochial’ and ‘Municipal’ refugios, couldn’t cope with the numbers. Private ‘albergues’ sprang up in their hundreds. Some are absolutely amazing, some a little less. But they have in common that they don’t care how you got there. There is a thriving business in taxi bookings, transportation of packs and fun experiences like horse riding up to the top of the steep bits. And the jolly volunteers in Santiago who check out your pilgrim passport are not fussy either. But you no longer get a replica of the 14th Century ‘Compostela’ with your name in Latin. You get a colourful modern certificate.

At first I was outraged.

In 2010, the most recent ‘Holy Year’, (a year when the feast of St James falls on a Sunday), it was rumoured that the Church and the government of Galicia were aiming to get 500,000 pilgrims to Santiago all having walked a minimum of 100 kilometres. They got 272,135.

That last 100 km of the Camino was a misery. Some people saw it as the

world’s longest pub crawl, many knew nothing at all about the Camino (‘who’s this St James bloke?’) Some likened it to a Guinness book of records event (‘Look at me! I can do 45 km every day!’). The traditional yellow arrows pointing out the route were unnecessary, One just followed the litter. Stalwart Camino recidivists declared they’d never walk again. In 2016, not a Holy Year, just under 278,000 pilgrims received a Compostela.

Holy Year 2010 totally poked fun of my ‘Holier than thou’ pretensions. It reminded me that the Camino is complex and it’s certainly not about being judgmental about what we imagine is going on in other people’s heads.

Aboriginal spiritual elders have ruminated on the great, ancient, spiritual pathways of other parts of the world, e.g. the lay lines of Britain, and have pondered whether they resonate or connect with the song lines of aboriginal tradition. There are many differences, but also similarities. I’m inclined to support the idea that the Camino is so connected.

Like the aboriginal sacred places in which I have experienced a positive sense of wellbeing, the whole Camino feels ‘blessed’ to me, with one or two occasional places that I don’t want to hang about in at all.

And I believe there are particular sacred sites with a higher intensity than even the Way. Speaking personally, the tiny, octagonal, chapel of Santa Maria de Eunate, resting in its wheat field, a couple of kilometres off the beaten track, is the holiest place on the Camino for me. I have been known to sit in there for an hour, thinking five minutes had gone by. It was built by the Knights Templar and no one understands its arcane architecture and ornamentation. I feel similarly about the even tinier, garage-sized, 12th Century Ermita del Socorro at Poblacion de Campos; with its ancient tombs and enigmatic

pictures of the Green Man, it similarly strikes me with wellbeing. And then there is Samos, and Hospital de la Condesa and more and more.

**Enigmatically, the Camino is noted for its spooky coincidences.**

Some are quite simple.

My daughter arrived in the huge city of Burgos clearly at the wrong venue for her planned rendezvous with her sister. Phoning the convent for information and not having Spanish, she was handed over to speak to a by-standing ‘English lady’. The ‘English lady’ *turned out to be her sister*.

**Others can be mind-boggling.**

I was on the Camino when my brother was being treated for liver cancer. His treatment involved a catheter. Should the catheter detach there was a dangerous risk of lethal infection, and he must be rushed to hospital. Consequently an alarm was attached to the catheter. One day in Spain, my mobile jiggled in my my bum-bag, turned itself on, and phoned the last number I had rung, which was my sister-in-law’s phone in Australia. Grumpily she answered this call from me in the middle of the night only to hear footsteps and me chatting to my friend. Then she suddenly noticed that John’s alarm had gone off but hadn’t been loud enough to wake her! I didn’t even know my phone was saving his life!

**Or they can be just nutty.**

My friends and I were tramping along on the Camino talking about wild life, I remarked that I’d never seen a snake in Spain. Immediately a little one wriggled across the path right in front of me.

The Camino sets up situations. Special people fall into step beside you on the Camino and thinking about them changes you. Some who impacted me:

The elderly German gentleman lovingly leading his blind wife across

# Landcare at Silver Wattle

## 25–29 September 2017

RAINA EMERSON | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING



Out standing in their field. Raina Emerson, Elizabeth Edwards, Mardi Naulty and Helen Gould break for a chat during weeding.



Miles Bray and John and Daniel Emerson display their bravery.

Landcare at Silver Wattle is now in its fifth year and you can see the results. Our first plantings around the orchard and campground are now sturdy trees, providing shelter and habitat. Our paddock plantings are growing up to meet the acacias marching down from the ridges and along the gullies. It's Earthcare in action.

Bill Cady and Raina Emerson are leading the Landcare program and implementing a plan developed with Greening Australia.

This spring we have 100 trees to plant and protect. We will also be caring for previous plantings, developing Waratah's Peace Garden, and adding to the bush food garden.

Elizabeth Edwards, elder for Landcare in 2016, writes

'Working in the environment is always uplifting and especially so at Silver Wattle. No prior knowledge is needed. You learn on the job and work at your own pace. Tools are provided.'

Children and families are especially welcome at this school holiday time. Last year the children planted some trees and also ranged over the property, exploring, racing leaf boats down the creek, observing kangaroos and wombats and building forts.

Come along and contribute to Earthcare in a practical way. Contact Raina Emerson ([raina.emerson01@gmail.com](mailto:raina.emerson01@gmail.com)) for more information.

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### WALKING THE CAMINO – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

the Camino by the hand. They would picnic with a starched table cloth on the grass, greeting their fellow pilgrims as they passed by.

Pierre, a 21 year old French youth on his fourth Camino. He'd started his first as a thief, shop-lifting his way across Spain. Blundering into a Cacabelos church, he'd felt a positive force reaching for him and he scurried out. At the next supermarket he got arrested and humiliated while shoplifting his dinner. Jolted, he has now turned himself into a reflective Camino devotee with complex opinions about the Way.

The young, Buddhist South Korean, just out of the army, who enlisted as it

was the only place you could learn how to defuse land mines. At the age of 14 he had seen a documentary on the toll of land mines in the demilitarised zone, and he felt he had to do something. Having served three years defusing mines he was now on the Camino to decide what to do next. He blushed when I asked about his options. My hunch? he was going to become a monk.

Maurice, the Englishman, who, like the mediaeval saint San Roc, got adopted by a dog ('Hi Maurice! how's your dog?' 'He's not *my* dog! He's just following me!'). Maurice's grandfather had been Muslim, and Maurice, in a crochet white skull cap and whiskers

was walking the Camino to decide whether to rethink his life and follow his grandfather's faith. One learned a lot about human nature by reactions to him. I don't know what decision he made. But he's still got the dog.

I invite you to check out whether the Camino impacts you in the way it did me, or totally differently. But be assured it will lead you to exactly the right learning for you.

*Ultreia!*[1] *Buen Camino!*

[1]Camino Salutation: Old Latin for 'Beyond'.

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# The Australian Friend

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- 1 May for the June edition
- 1 August for the September edition
- 1 November for the December edition.

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### MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

last event was the recent world Earth Day and we were part of the Oxford-based University of the Trees which is a mobile university. My Steiner friend led us in deep listening of nature and to deep listening of each other as each participant told of their intentions for helping our planet.

I do not know where next I will be led on my spiral but I endeavour to listen for divine guidance and am learning to surrender to Spirit more and more every day. The retreat where I live is open to anyone wishing to stay here for time with nature

and for silence, peace and many kinds of activities. It is only fifteen minutes drive out of Albany. It welcomes Servas visitors and all pilgrims, and you are very welcome to come and share this sacred space with me.

This is an abbreviated version of Rosemary's article. The full article can be found on line at [australianfriend.org](http://australianfriend.org).

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