

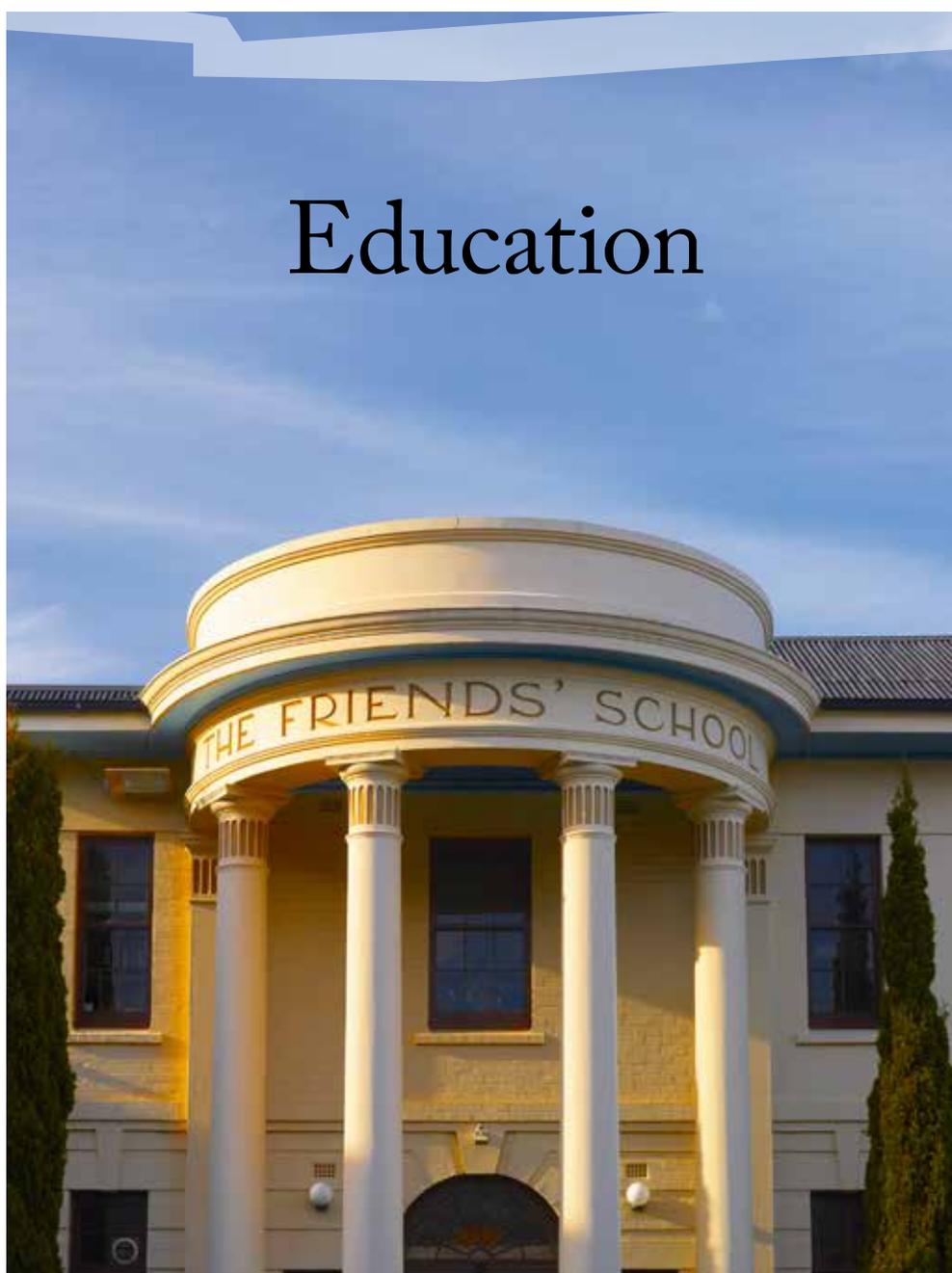
The Australian Friend

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Editorial

In this issue our theme is Education. When we asked for articles on this theme, we did not realise that Australian Quakers had so much to say on the subject. It seems that as a group we like to learn, we like to teach, and we like to learn from those we teach.

We received so many good articles that we are unable to include them all in this issue. Unwilling to leave any out, we have decided to continue the theme in the June issue. We hope that more of you will share your experiences with us.

A number of articles were received from the Friends' school where there is a long tradition of trying to match up our Quaker principles with a philosophy of education. But from David Carline in Queensland and from Margaret Woodward in Western Australia we read the same dedication to finding ways of teaching and learning that develop the whole person, and that find the balance between freedom and discipline. From an Aboriginal community in Queensland, the farms of Uganda and India, and a prison in Burkino Faso we hear of efforts to provide education that is culturally appropriate and useful.

Quakers regard themselves as seekers, not because we are never finders, but because each new discovery leads on to new learning. We have reports from our delegates to the FWCC conference in Peru, where Quakers from many traditions come to learn from each other. We hear from Moira Darling on a course run by Friends' General Conference in North Carolina.

There is much to learn, yet many Friends speak of the need to come back to the silence, without which we are unable to process our experience, or to just dwell with the Spirit in love and peace.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM

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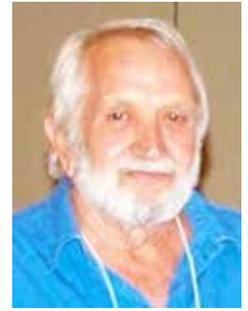


Cover: The Friends' School, Hobart

Sailing into Country:

Educator in Action

DAVID CARLINE INTERVIEWED BY PAMELA LEACH | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING



I realised at last that I was an educator when I was 50. I got a job as a researcher working at the University of Queensland. We produced a little journal called *The Aboriginal Child at School*. What I thought everyone knew about Aboriginality it turned out they didn't, but I was on the right track and was carrying the tradition. I found I knew a lot more than everyone else in the unit. My whole Aboriginal upbringing I had until then just taken for granted. I didn't realise it was not that common to really know your heritage.

Mum, whose name was Jocelyn Carline, always encouraged me to be very independent. I had travelled the world, to Ethiopia, South America, and many other places. I was a cook/steward on merchant ships for 20 years. I got deported from Aden when they were throwing out the British. It was a mercy in disguise, because I came home to see my mother and she died three months later. She was so tired, she had been worked to death.

Mum was from the stolen generation, nine or ten when she was taken. When she started looking for her people, by good fortune there was one of the Aunties in Brisbane who told her she looked like someone down at the Tweed Head camps. She turned out to be my grandmother, Emma. However, otherwise Mum never really connected or bonded with her own blood family.

I was brought up in the Brisbane city camps, where we shared everything. Mum learnt traditional ways from the Aunties at these camps so she could look after us. She would go and pick medicine from our bush environment so we had never been to a chemist's

shop. There was a lot of traditional knowledge being passed on. We had an old Uncle, Willie McKenzie, who visited from time to time, known as the "last of the Brisbane Blacks". He'd show us how to make fire rockets, use boomerangs and taught us to make spears. We'd use green saplings and shoot those spears at a thick door and they'd almost go through.

Neither Mum nor I learnt our language. . . by that time it had been lost. We use some Aboriginal English up here, and we have some words that we still remember. Dad was an American serviceman, he went back after a couple of years, at the end of the war. I don't remember him of course, I was born in 1944. I was very premature, and then I got very sick. But Mum said even though I was born a little old man I just wouldn't let go of life. The Great Spirit has looked after me all my life, I have always had a Spiritual leaning.

How did we avoid the authorities? Mum was very clever. We would be on the move, ducking and diving, until she got a job with a good white family. Judge Webb was the Australian representative at the war trials in Japan, very well respected. Forever after, if people caused her trouble she said, "I'm going to tell Judge Webb" and they would leave her alone.

I had to drop out of school during Grade 6 at the age of 13 so I could work, picking strawberries, tomatoes, shelling prawns. Kids are very nimble with their fingers. There were only two of us children; I have a sister ten years older. I did try once to find Dad in my teens, but no luck. I wrote to the Red Cross in Switzerland, I didn't even know where that was then.

Much later I was on the board for the Independent Murri School in Brisbane. At that time they couldn't get Aboriginal teachers so we gave direction about how we wanted our children to do their learning. So I was engaged in establishing curriculum guidelines on a day-by-day basis. Murri kids are notoriously difficult and teachers can't cope with them for too long. It is the result of the policies and practices of the past. The family expectations regarding education were not great. Low attention spans were part of it. A family history of drugs and alcohol didn't help many kids, for example foetal alcohol syndrome really affects their ability to focus and study. That discipline of learning in a classroom is not a natural thing. This goes on all the time. They've got brilliant recall, kids. They mostly learn by doing.

I came here to Cunnamulla with a leading to work with my own people, the Kooma/Gwamu. The old Aunties in Brisbane paved the way by connecting me with my own Kooma people. I am still under this leading. I ended up having a little school. I bought some shops that provided the building, and there was money from the National Numeracy and Literacy Programs, and our program was aimed at kids who were expelled or suspended for being disruptive. The regular schools often wouldn't bother to find out why the children were having trouble. One boy was in the room when his father committed suicide, so he was very disruptive. The Catholic Education Department organised the teachers and such, a few books and furniture. We had computers, and there was a program called "Successmaker". Each child



Examples of AKA, Aboriginal Kitchen Art, produced by young people in the Cunnamulla community to practice and build their confidence in painting.

was required to spend half an hour on numeracy and half on literacy each day. The program was great, it allowed you to enter wherever you are and then ramped you up. Those were our minimal academic requirements. Not too much book learning.

The other activities we did were very hands on, living skills: I showed the girls how fix up fibro walls that had been smashed in, and do other carpentry, and the boys how to take up their jeans. We provided transport in both directions to make sure they came. Cooking breakfast and lunch was a big thing; the kids needed feeding, and there was no shame because we all ate the meals. We were a community, about 15 of us altogether including the teachers. We had a lunch roster where each student was responsible for preparing a lunch for the whole school by themselves. If a student could produce a lunch for under \$15 for everyone then they would be able to have the leftover for a Coke. Soon they were teaching each other how to make nutritious and affordable meals.

We did a lot of travel, and the kids raised the money: cake stalls, car washes and QSA helped us. We went to Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney, we were treated like royalty. There's a platform where you can walk up and look into a giraffe's mouth. We couldn't get them away. When we came onto the Harbour

Bridge, one boy said "Holy shit, look at that!" They loved the ferry. These are kids who would have gotten lost in Toowoomba. This was seeing the world. I think it stimulated a natural curiosity for a whole lot more. There was an elder in Sydney called Uncle Max Eulo, he's from up around here. Lots of the kids were related to him. He arranged a minibus, Aboriginal hostels, everything we needed. It was terrific to have that connection and the children felt really special for a change. That was a new thing for many of them.

We started with the Outstation Movement, and we had the Kooma Corporation for land. At that time there were many different new initiatives. Our property is now called MurraMurra and Bendee Downs, and our company is Gwamu Enterprises. This protects Kooma traditional owners from liability. It is a company that does agisting, and we have recently purchased our own small flock (600), which enables us to run a shearing school. We've got a third of the land protected under the Indigenous Protected Area Program (IPA). We employ a ranger, run a vehicle, and maintain the fences. We can have stock on the land for a limited time, depending on the rains. The stock are useful to keep the weeds under control. There are over 30 ephemeral lakes in our IPA, which makes it a distinct and fragile natural environment. This

attracts much interest as there are many cultural sites of a wide variety.

I am a Recognised Elder and was acknowledged by the community as NADOC male Elder of the Year for Cunnamulla. We haven't got any towns in the Kooma/Gwamu lands. We got our native title for some of our land last year, this is something I've been working on, with others, for 20 years. That was a great moment.

We have Emu Fest that goes on for a week. We've got three outstations there now. Kids who need to get out of town, we take them out there. If they are playing up at home or school, or mum needs a break, we get them out in time before things get out of hand. I would take kids out on the land, show and explain to them our cultural sites, work with emu feathers, beading, art and craft programs. Spiritual practice is also shared during these times.

The Ngarrindjeri people come up from Adelaide, since we are at the top of the Murray Darling, and we perform ceremonies together every couple of years. They then follow the river down and conduct ceremonies along the way to its mouth. This water is very sacred to us, it is our blood in our veins. To see what has happened to this river makes us nearly weep. The dry means the water holes don't get flushed out. The weirs and dams just stop the whole natural flow of the river, and it gets so polluted. We talk to the young ones so they realise that everything that is living is sacred. You don't kill for fun. If you kill it, you eat it.

Another branch of my educating life grew when I took on fostering Rhys, who is 22 now. He came to me when he was 14, and I was his 150th carer. I taught him about his Aboriginality, and living skills. Lots of educating there from every angle. I learnt a lot of patience in the process, it put me in touch with reality. There are a lot of kids who've got all this baggage. I'm glad he came into my life. It made me realise what a lot of women are putting

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The Friends' School, Hobart

Quakerism in Practice

NELSON FILE | PRINCIPAL, THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL, HOBART



More than 300 years ago, William Penn fashioned a “Holy Experiment” in the newly founded colony of Pennsylvania (Penn’s Woods) based on his conviction in Quakerism. In the seventeenth-century world framed by intolerance, dogma and a rigid class system, Penn established his colony dedicated to the principles of religious tolerance, the rule of law through a written constitution, equality and harmony among all.

Penn realised that the continuing success of his colony relied upon a “guarded, virtuous and useful” education of its youth to create the “just” society he envisioned. George Fox first proposed in 1667 that two boarding schools should be established by Quakers, one for boys and one for girls, for the purpose of instructing them “in all things civil and useful in creation”.

Penn requested that schools be formed and some local Monthly Meetings, mostly in Philadelphia, took up the challenge in order to educate all children – Quaker and non-Quaker – in the new colony. Three Friends’ schools have remained in continuous operation since Penn’s request in the late 1600s – William Penn Charter School (1687), Friends Select School (1687) and Abington Friends School (1697). Currently around 40 other Quaker schools are in operation in Philadelphia. His vision was to create a just and virtuous society where all could live in harmony.

I graduated from Abington Friends School and have grown to recognise a link with Penn’s “Holy Experiment”

and our work here at The Friends’ School in Hobart, where we also seek to foster an educational environment that will contribute to the development of a “just and virtuous” society.

Like nearly every Quaker School throughout the world of the same tradition, Friends’ has a spiritual and value-centred philosophy, which we articulate through the *Purpose and Concerns*.

The *Purpose and Concerns* serves as the guiding document in all aspects of The Friends’ School.

The Friends’ School is a co-educational Quaker school based on fundamental values such as the intrinsic worth of each person, the recognition of “that of God” in everyone, the desirability of simplicity and the need to establish peace and justice.

As a learning community, we are concerned for the academic, cultural, physical, social and spiritual development of each person in our care.

We seek to help our students develop into men and women who will

think clearly, act with integrity, make decisions for themselves, be sensitive to the needs of others and the environment, be strong in service and hold a global perspective. We believe that these aims can best be achieved with the active support of all members of our School community.

By seeking to help the students develop into men and women who will think clearly, act with integrity, make decisions for themselves, be sensitive to the needs of others and the environment, be strong in service and hold a global perspective, the School is aiming to develop a community filled with positive, contributing members of society who will seek to create a more just world.

Penn's vision, which was based upon George Fox's initial concepts, was also centred on the usefulness of the education provided. To again quote Penn:

For their learning be liberal ... but let it be useful knowledge, such as is consistent with Truth and Godliness, not cherishing a vain conversation or idle mind, but ingenuity mixed with industry is good for the body and mind too. I recommend the useful part of mathematics as building houses or ships, measuring, surveying, dialling, navigation; but agriculture is especially in my eye; let my children be husbandmen and housewives... This leads to consider the works of God and nature, or things that are good and diverts the mind from being taken up with vain arts and inventions of a luxurious world.

The initial advertisement placed in the Hobart newspaper in 1887 for student enrolment at The Friends' School alluded to the practical nature of the education on offer:

*Friends' School
For Boys and Girls
Warwick Street
Under the care of a Committee of*

*Hobart Monthly Meeting
S. Clemes, Principal
The object of the Institution is to give a guarded Christian education, with a course of instruction leading up to the examinations under the Council of Education. Special attention will be given to the study of the Natural Sciences by means of a Laboratory and varied scientific apparatus. The situation of the School premises is elevated, open and healthy, and within a five minute walk of the Friends' Meeting, which the scholars will attend ...*

The Curriculum will include the usual English subjects together with Algebra, Geometry, Latin, French, Freehand Drawing, Physics and Chemistry (with Laboratory practice). Other subjects can be taught, but must specially be arranged for.

In Chemistry and Physics the lessons will be thoroughly practical, and every scholar in the upper classes will have an opportunity of learning Chemical Analysis. The girls will be taught plain needlework during the time devoted to Latin by the boys.

The Friends' School has evolved since its founding, but it has also remained grounded in its original mission of offering a broadly based education that contributes to a well rounded society. It has matured in the concept of a "guarded Christian education" to mean one centred upon Quaker beliefs.

Knowing if the philosophical basis for the School has been fulfilled can be a difficult proposition. In 2014, Old Scholars were asked in a survey to reflect upon the impact that The Friends' School ethos has had upon their life. Around 500 Old Scholars responded and below are a selection of their comments.

- In everything I do The Friends' School impacts my life decisions -"Let my life speak", "There is



that of God in everyone".... If anything The Friends' School experience has affected me too much. I believe that everyone in this world is as dedicated, as honest, is working towards the best possible experiences for others as my teachers and my classmates at Friends'; and I am often disappointed in how other people behave and act.

- Although I am not religious at all, I deliberately uphold elements of the Quaker ethos in my life: a commitment to pacifism, consensus and non-hierarchical structures. I really believe that Friends' instilled these values at a crucial time in my life.

- I am a practising Anglican, not a Quaker, but I find that certain "Quakerly principles" have remained in my thinking and blend well with my Christian faith: finding good in each individual, appreciating difference, living simply and being careful with material resources, a concern for world peace and justice, an interest in international relations and other cultures, a sense of the importance of community.

- Respect for others no matter where they originate. The philosophy of the Society of Friends has impacted on my life.
- I have found that the Quaker principles of community, simplicity and integrity have carried through

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A Quaker in Residence at The Friends School

ZÉLIE GROSS | SOUTH WALES AREA MEETING, BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING

It was a real pleasure for me to spend time with students of different ages, from Kinders through to Clemes, in class settings as well in Gatherings – and finally out in the bush. In just four days (September 7-10 2015) I felt I had gained a good sense of the way the school works as a community, and I am impressed!

I was especially struck by the Quaker ethos as such an evident feature of school life. And yet I knew that a small minority of staff were Friends and very few students came from Quaker backgrounds. By Quaker ethos I mean the ways people relate to one another (staff and students alike) and a culture that clearly expresses Quaker testimonies. At first I wondered what on earth I could contribute by way of a “Quaker presence”. I was in the presence of Quaker practice in every situation I found myself, and the questioning around Quaker faith was very recognisable as the same kind of questioning I meet in young people at Meeting and at Quaker events – young people who are choosing to identify themselves as Quaker.

So what was the difference? Only that many of the young people I spoke with during my stay seemed to be of the impression that they didn't know much about Quakerism, and that if they did know more they would disagree with it. And I found that puzzling. It was as if

they believed that being a Quaker meant signing up for beliefs and practices that would jar with their worldview or their preferred ways of living their lives. And yet as far as I could see they were being wonderfully Quaker in their attitudes, their outlook and their actions. I wanted to say, “Don't struggle with it, just enjoy and value who you are and go on enjoying and respecting others being themselves. That's it in a nutshell.”

I did say this in conversation with several young people, and also pointed out that their Gatherings were meetings for worship (in all but name) – you enter quietly and are greeted at the door, you settle into stillness, someone speaks offering a thought to reflect on, you listen with an open mind and reflect in the stillness and after a while one or more others might be moved to stand and speak, you settle back into the stillness, and the Gathering is closed by the shaking of hands.

- “Yes, we do all that, but our Gatherings aren't the same as a meeting for worship – they are always on a theme.”
- To which I would say, “And so are most children's and young people's meetings in my experience, and adult or all-age meetings for worship are occasionally structured that way too. Having a theme helps us learn – and enjoy – the practice of silent reflection. It's just a way in,

and if in the stillness we experience touching something in or beyond ourselves that's deeper than simply thinking, or we feel more connected with the people who are sitting in stillness with us, then we have found something very valuable indeed. But that kind of experience isn't compulsory, or even expected of us, and we aren't failures as Quakers if it doesn't happen.”

So went a number of conversations with thoughtful, open-minded students who nevertheless believed there was something to resist here. And I saw no signs that the school was in some way “forcing” Quakerism on a reluctant community. (I'm trying to imagine how Quakerism and force could be compatible!) I also observed to staff members that I had met Quaker Meetings that felt less Quaker than this school, troubled Meetings where Friends struggle to recognise that of God in one another and have few strategies for coping with disappointment or conflict. Most Friends today were not brought up in Quaker families or educated in Quaker schools, but found Friends first as adults and often without the advantage of an early grounding in caring, equal and respectful ways of relating – of the kind that Friends' School students inhabit every day. We all need the life skills that such grounding promotes, and they can

be a lot harder to acquire later on.

One example: a group of Year 9 boys misused the opportunity of their Gathering to indulge in some barely restrained silliness that may well have spoiled the experience for other students. They were kept behind for a few minutes at the end and spoken to by teachers who made it quite clear that their actions were unacceptable and pretty selfish. And it could have ended there, but then they were offered practical suggestions for avoiding it happening in the future, from an assumption that they would naturally choose to behave better if they could find a way of resisting the urge to act as a group rather than as the well-intentioned individuals their teachers knew them to be. I witnessed that approach on several occasions and saw its effects in de-escalating incidents and offering students accessible ways of moving on. The teachers concerned – mostly not Quakers – were putting into practice the principle of meeting “that of God” in the other and therefore teaching the practice and principle at the same time.

Other practices and behaviours I observed that I felt contributed to the school’s Quaker ethos included:

- Asking for a brief silence at the start of class, and ending a class in the same way
- Students meeting up with their tutor at the end of the day in their tutor room (an apparently small but significant practice of care)
- Calling for the class’s attention not by raising the voice, but by raising a hand and lowering the voice (brilliant!)

- The practice of using first names – equally as staff and students
- Providing small and achievable steps towards completing a task that enabled students of any ability to keep pace
- A policy and structure for consulting students on matters that affect them and truly listening to what they say
- Teachers giving students genuine acknowledgment as well as challenge in their conversations with them about their work
- Students routinely helping each other, consulting each other and taking a real interest in each other’s work and achievements
- Classroom walls colourfully alive with reminders of expectations and strategies for achieving them – in the form of invitation rather than instruction
- Students’ ease in relating to adults as equals, with respect on both sides
- Students’ ease with silence as a brief but regular practice in their daily lives
- Students’ ease with the discipline asked of them in their Gatherings (of all ages), including feeling able to speak in a Gathering
- At camp: the practice of silence at the start of meals; the focus on respect, concern and practical care for the environment; the encouragement of social skills and building community (including gentle private reminders to anyone engaging in excluding behaviour)
- Staff regularly praising students’

good/cooperative behaviour (“thank you for being awesome”)

- Students’ ability to empathise with an adult bewilderingly lost on a vast split campus, and without exception asking if I’d like them to accompany me to my destination!

Did I contribute anything to this strongly Quaker culture by my presence? I think I may have helped students reflect on the possibility that they knew more about Quakerism than they had assumed, and I offered some older students an angle on their art work they might not have considered before, and introduced a useful process of silent brainstorm and reflection to Year 5 teachers and students. Oh, and I may have encouraged a student scared of heights to climb a fire watch tower (apparently made of nothing more than meccano) by quelling my own vertigo to do the same... and then being honest when another student observed “You were scared, weren’t you?”

I came away with a question to reflect on from a serious 4-year-old who had sat during the Kinders’ Gathering, not with my gentle contribution on how helpful children had been when I was lost on campus, but with a puzzle about the practicalities of travelling half way round the world: “How many different things did you bring, and how many of each different thing did you bring?” And I was given an even more practical thought by a wise 5-year-old: “What you needed was a map.”

Thank you, Friends, for a lovely, memorable and valuable few days at The Friends School.

AF

Student-centred learning

MARGARET WOODWARD | WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING



After doing teacher training, I had to put my plans to turn around the education system and solve all the problems of the world by the time I was twenty-five years old, on hold. I married – an unforgivable condition for female teachers in Western Australia in the 1950s. I decided I'd need to wait for ten more years. I had my sixth child when I was thirty-one and realised I'd need to hurry, with only four more years to go. In the intervening years I had done a Grad Dip specialising in Learning Difficulties and Reading, I met some very dedicated educators and educationists and we started a Remedial Clinic. Yes. We even called it that to start. In 1969 that was acceptable.

In our Remedial Clinic, we started working with children having difficulties in school, after hours on Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons. Basically, we wanted to have an environment where children could play and create together, at the level of their own ability, encouraged to learn the skills required to learn how to achieve the goals each child set, being accepted and loved just as they were.

Within a week, the children had renamed the group Kids Klub and it became more inclusive, starting with siblings of the founding children, then their friends, extending to anyone who heard about us and wanted to join. By week four, we had grown from 15 to 45. We had to start a waiting list.

The teachers, psychologists and trainees involved as staff had many searching discussions and explorations of different ideas and philosophies, goal searching, consultations and hours of conversations with the parents and children involved. We agreed that in broad terms, humanist philosophy was fairly close to summarising our ideas. Humanistic Education refers to an educational philosophy that believes human beings are, by nature, self-developing creatures. An educator's primary responsibility is to create an environment in which students can do their own growing. Humanistic educators have a broad understanding of the knowledge that children acquire as they grow, and highly value student's affective and social development as well as their intellectual development. The goal of humanistic education is

to contribute to the development of energetic, positive, self-respecting, caring human beings who can meet all challenges.¹

Humanist philosophy is expressed in open education where:

A. The student has some say in deciding her/his curriculum course and activities.

B. The student has some say in her/his time tabling.

C. The student has some say in who s/he works with.

Our school started in 1975. We used to claim quite proudly that the ABC at KIDS School stood for Accepting, Being, Caring. We hope it still applies. On the surface it sounds like a fairly light-hearted statement, but we have found that Accepting is a very deep and difficult step. Often, it is even quite difficult to even accept ourselves. Society puts so many values on us, we find ourselves doing some quite strange things to conform to some outside expectations – like shaving hair from quite delicate parts of our bodies, even hot-waxing to remove the hair from its follicle, people with curly hair straightening it, people with straight hair curling it, to name just a few examples. The curriculum now states that Being is a very important part of what school offers. Quite hard to define Being, but I liken it to the statement “sometimes I sits and thinks, but sometimes I just sits”. Being is a bit like the Just Sits bit – where the student has time to just BE – not doing, not thinking, not telling you thoughts – just being. Caring seems obvious, but it isn't as much as it would seem. The Caring bit embraces the student-centred zone.

Perhaps it is important to point out and underline that student-centred does NOT mean student-controlled, nor that there are little self-centred

darlings who will be permitted to do whatever they want no matter how ridiculous or selfish, just because they have thought of something to do – or not to do.

The start is with consultation. A conference type dialogue works quite well, with some framework put in place which enables the students, no matter what age, to give their ideas about things. By the time kids are at school, they have already experienced many conditions in their lives where they have been expected to please adults, so in a school setting, it is really important that we try for their ideas first. If we present our ideas first, it doesn't work, because then there is the danger that they will go along with our ideas because they think we want them to agree with us. Research has shown that most teachers wait for 3 seconds for students to respond in a school situation. Time that for yourself. It isn't very long for you to think of something, work out how you want to say it, tune in to see if it's good timing, gird up the courage to put your views to the group or person you are talking to, etc. As a result, traditional teachers are inclined to say that they tried for a discussion but the kids don't respond. If it is necessary to present ideas to get the discussion going give three or so completely different sets of ideas then let them choose, or add others as they happen – and allow time

for this to happen.

It is not possible to use every idea put forward by the students. There needs to be some discernment from them, so discussion and thinking go hand in hand. Often, staff need to give some guidelines, such as pointing out that there might be some over-arching restrictions – like the laws of the country, the already expressed wishes from parents, the philosophy and ethos of the school, respect for the thoughts and feelings of other students who have already expressed opposing views. Sometimes staff need to be Socratic type questioners – not the leading questions such as “Don't you think it would be a good idea to ban Coca Cola from the shopping list?” But the ones to give the thinking back to the students – “Do you think that will help to achieve the purpose?” Or “What are we hoping to achieve?” Or “How will we go about putting that into action?” or “Does that take care of the opinions already expressed by everyone else?”

Sometimes, we have a concerned and caring parent present at such a meeting. We avoid that when we can because even parents who have been asked to wait for something from the kids usually can't manage. Never mind 3 seconds! 3 nano-seconds, maybe. Then they often leap in, using intimate and private knowledge from their child to say things like “Why don't you suggest the things you were telling me yesterday?” And then continue to say what they are. Often the kid is shocked! A conversation with their mother, the person they tell lots of things to that they don't tell anyone else, is being repeated here in public! Or worse still, some parents, even the caring ones, interject their own ideas with some kids being too polite to disagree.

To give an example, sometimes at school

a situation might arise with the Mathematics Programme, in seeking for the maths that is fun to do, challenging, problem-solving, hands on, and relevant to real to life situations. So many maths books concentrate on using rote type learned facts, straight memory work and not much else. Most of the kids couldn't have suggested something like the Mathletics Programme² because they didn't know it existed. We presented the idea to them, asked if they would be willing to give it a trial for a term/semester, then evaluate its success or otherwise when they knew more about it. Sometimes that needs to be our role, as facilitators to enable and enhance opportunities for students to learn. That's the part we play in the process. This is not the type of education that some teachers want to be involved in. If the adults – parents, teachers, community members – believe that the main way children learn is by being taught by an “expert” i.e. teacher, then student-centred learning is not for them.

That is not saying that in student-centred learning teachers can't teach anything. They can, but the emphasis is taken away from the teacher teaching and is placed on the student learning. When the student asks for help, the teacher then shows the student how to – NOT do it for them. There is respect for the integrity of the student and faith in their ability to learn.

From this background of a school-based student-centred learning, it is a relatively small step to look at student-centred learning in an adult/Quaker setting. We are accustomed to group situations where there is a facilitator/co-ordinator – terms we choose to use rather than leader/teacher because we are trying to establish our belief in the value of the input of each participant as being of equal worth.

So for a Quaker group, the facilitator may use different ways of working – reflective listening by repeating

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‘Living the Transformation’

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) World Gathering

TAISOO KIM WATSON | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

I feel very honoured representing the Australian Friends and attending the FWCC Plenary program at Pisac, Peru, from 19 to 27 January 2016. And I am thankful for the funds provided by AYM and the Thanksgiving Fund. It would have been very difficult to manage the registration cost and airfares without this financial assistance.

The daily program was very full. I was asked to be on the Pastoral Care group, which involved rostering ourselves to be on duty in the Pastoral Care Room and also always wearing a green sash so Friends could seek help at anytime, anywhere. This was a good opportunity to meet Friends individually who dropped in for cups of tea and talk. I have made a special connection with a few Friends through Pastoral care and Choir. When there are over 300 Members from nearly 40 countries, it is not easy to make connections with all.

I was so eager to hear the news from Korean Friends, I tried to sit with them at breakfast time. Also it was a good opportunity to make some suggestions to the itinerary of Lee and Kim who will be visiting AYM in July. It was lovely to hear the Korean bamboo flute played by Kim and the three of us sang a Korean folk song.



Taisoo Kim Watson & Cho-Nyon Kim from Korea

Home Groups were decided and compulsory, but we were encouraged to participate in other groups such as Consultation. I joined as many as I could manage until I developed a terrible cough.

I chose the FWCC Constitution Review Consultation Group as I have some experience working with constitutions and also I felt strongly that some issues needed to be reviewed. One recommendation was to hold World FWCC Gathering/Plenary sessions at least once in every 12 years instead of the current practice of every 5 years. The rationale was that FWCC has to find financial and human resources to plan and organise the World Meetings, but every gathering puts FWCC in great financial hardship. There are smaller numbers of full paying Friends and growing numbers of Friends needing help. The Meeting reached a kind of unity to hold it every 10 years.

The North American Section predicted a 15% reduction in contributions to FWCC in the near future. The British Friends are able to continue to support FWCC at the current rate because of their endowment/investment, and some increase from the European and Middle Eastern Section. But as we see the numbers of this Section, we should not expect a great deal more. The registration cost for some YMs/MMs in Asia West Pacific Section was over A\$2000. No Members from Japan Yearly Meeting attended. Two Korean Friends received financial assistance from their Monthly Meetings.

Our Group studying the Constitution also have acknowledged that other important works need to be done by FWCC other than organising World gatherings/meetings. We will be celebrating 100 years of FWCC in 2037.

I quote a part of the section Equipping FWCC:

...serving the world Quaker community, developing flexibility to face challenges while maintaining organizational integrity and sustainability, looking at meeting requirements and governance changes...

I always valued the early morning silent meeting for Worship. The program noted clearly “un-programmed Meeting for Worship”. I do not think some Friends from evangelical and programmed Quaker churches understood what Silent Meeting for Worship means. On the first morning, a Friend started to sing very energetically, and then another Friend started praying in Spanish. A Friend had translated every sentence to English. We did not have much silent time left. I changed to the Bible Study, led by Janet Scott. I have learned much from these early morning Bible studies. It was rather moving to share the Lord’s Prayer in Korean at the end of one study session.

When I was attending the AWPS gathering in India, a number of Friends expressed concern that we had very little quiet time. I have received some concerns again during this FWCC gathering: there was not enough quiet time.

It has been exciting to meet cousins and distant cousins from many places of the World. We have different ways of worshipping, in many different languages but we came together in spirit.

I feel more strongly than ever the importance of FWCC in the lives of world Quakers.

FWCC needs all our spiritual and financial support to meet the challenges of the next 20 years and longer.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FWCC World Plenary

JO JORDAN | SOUTH AUSTRALIA & NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

In the fertile valley at Pisac in Peru, nestled between enormous Andes mountains, 320 Friends met from 19 to 27 January 2016 for the FWCC world plenary, held for the first time in Latin America.

Friends were there from 39 countries and 77 Yearly Meetings, from many cultures and speaking different languages. Throughout the conference a number of very talented Friends provided continuous interpretation in English, Spanish and French. I was surprised how many Friends were fluent in both English and Spanish, and how many had personal experience living and working in Latin America.

On the first day we were welcomed to the large plenary room by local Friends and a lively, six-piece Peruvian band. We joined in singing a hymn composed for the conference, "Vivir la Transformación" by Noé Alanguaia Canaza, clerk of the local arrangements committee.

The theme of the conference was "Living the Transformation", with reference to Romans 8:19 "Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God". Throughout the conference there was frequent spoken and sung ministry on the theme of transformation. A recurring hope was that we may eventually inhabit a world

worthy of "the Children of God".

It was disappointing that 39 Kenyan Friends arrived three days late because of difficulties with visas. This was particularly upsetting because most of us did not need visas at all. When the Kenyans arrived they were cheered and welcomed with loud applause.

Some significant highlights for me were the friendships formed during the conference, at home-group, during workshops, study groups, worship or while waiting in the dinner queue. Faith traditions ranged from evangelical, in the style of a church revival meeting, to our familiar silent meeting and everything in between. Many of us found some traditions surprising and challenging, and the organisers warned us that this would be the case. Most of us found common ground in our shared Quaker testimonies and in open-hearted acceptance of each other's experience.

We were allocated a home group comprising about 20 Friends from different backgrounds, age and experience. My home group, Grupo 7, struggled with differing expectations and language. Gradually, with time, discussion and good will, the difficulties gradually fell away.

Before the conference I had been asked by the Secretary of FWCC, Gretchen Castle, to help by coordinating epilogues



Jo Jordan, Patricia Macgregor and Taisoo Kim Watson at FWCC World Plenary at Pisac, Peru.

for six of the seven evenings of the plenary. Although I only knew a few Friends from Australia and New Zealand who would be there, the Secretary forwarded a list of people from different sections who might be happy to contribute. I sent off five emails in English and one in Spanish but, by the beginning of the conference, I had received only three replies. After I met each of those Friends in person, all were willing to accept the challenge. It was a great pleasure to present the first epilogue with David Hobson, a pianist and pastor from North Carolina, and to support each presenter on the following evenings.

A central part of the program was a time of worship lasting one and a half hours, organised by each section of FWCC in turn. There was an additional worship

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Quakers around the world

For your information, I have listed the YMs and MMs and the numbers of Members. (Ref. FWCC Finding Quakers around the World, 2012)

Bolivia (22,300), Canada (1,300), Colombia (10), Costa Rica (90), Cuba (900), Dominican Republic (110), El Salvador (1,600), Guatemala (19,620), Haiti (1,000), Honduras (2,500), Jamaica (2,100), Mexico (1,400), Nicaragua (200), Peru (3,500), United States (76,360),

Albania (380), Belgium (40), Croatia (50), Czech Republic (10), Denmark (30), Estonia (10), Finland (20), France (70), Georgia (20), Germany/Austria (340), Greece (10), Hungary (4000), Ireland (1,600), Italy (20), Latvia (10), Lebanon/Palestine (70), Lithuania (10), Malta (10), Netherlands (120), Norway (150), Poland (10), Portugal (10), Romania (920), Russia (30), Serbia (50), Spain (20), Sweden (100), Switzerland (100), Ukraine (10), United Kingdom (15,800), Congo(s)

(10+3000), Ghana (10), Kenya (146,300), Madagascar (20), Nigeria (20), Rwanda (4,200), Tanzania (3,100), Uganda (5000)

Australia (1,000), Bangladesh (475), Bhutan (800), Cambodia (410), China (100), India (4,300), Indonesia (1,800), Japan (140), Korea (50), Nepal (6,000), New Zealand (660), Philippines (2,500), Singapore (10), Taiwan (5,000)

AF

Teaching and Learning

under the Hot Breath of the Spirit

PAMELA LEACH | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

As a student, Friends invited me into making regular visits to detention centres. In truth, I had never given those hidden away from society more than a moment's thought until then. But of course it was a perfect way to live out my deep belief that there is that of God in everyone. Soon I was a weekly visitor to a Syrian woman in maximum security, and a close friendship ensued over several years.

After completing an education degree, I was off to the West African country of Burkina Faso to volunteer for two years. I had dreamt of idyllic living in a small village, perhaps teaching healthcare to women or working in the local school. But the Mennonite Central Committee convinced me of the real need for a seasoned prison visitor who spoke French and could learn a local language to work in the high security prison in the capital city of Ouagadougou, population about one million. There up to forty children were incarcerated, mixed in with the adult population.

My role was to take over the literacy program, run through the schoolhouse in the prison grounds. Within days it became apparent that much more was needed than literacy. These children, aged 8 and up, were in a sorry state, lacking food, clothing, medical care, and above all, tender care. Most had been gathered up from the streets by the authorities, having come into the city in the hope that they might find work or food. The Sahel villages were suffering from constant drought, having to choose between eating and planting

their remaining millet and sorghum. Some were on self-imposed rationing, one meal every third day. Some children had turned to petty crime, stealing cutlery or other small items in order to feed themselves, but none found steady work. The notion that city streets were paved with gold was dashed in the red dust. But in prison they would be longing for that dust.

I decided a week living in detention would give me a better picture of conditions there. Crowding was intense, in a prison built for 400 that was busting with close to 1000 inmates. We were fortunate in the women's cell, with only eight of us. During the day, most prisoners were free to be out in the compound. I soon found the brutality horrifying, abuse of the children occurring regularly, and that in dark corners of the prison entirely inhumane conditions existed. I became light-headed from lack of food while my stomach revolted at the filthy water we were all drinking. But I was immensely fortunate, even as a prisoner.

Under the roof, in a 2 x 4 metre space, was the punishment cell, where 20 or more men were crowded. Some had been tortured, and even the dead could remain there for a day or two before removal by the guards. The rest took turns sleeping and sitting or standing. Food was irregularly provided, and only then a thin porridge, and a bucket or two served as toilets. It was always over 40 degrees up there, and sometimes into the 50s under the corrugated roof. Late one night when no one could sleep, in the oppressive heat and smell, we were soothed by

beautiful singing and drumming from those in the punishment cell. I was stunned and humbled that these men who had less than nothing could find a gift to give. Yet again, I was reminded of that hidden seed in each of us. I never forgot these men and visited them daily through a narrow grill. In their nakedness and filth, they were still delighted that I came, and could pass through malaria pills and other medication when needed. I never experienced a harsh word or anything but kindness from any prisoner, despite the fact that others before me had been assaulted and experienced repeated theft.

It became apparent that the prisoners were going to educate me as much as I them. Some children were from a nomadic background, and had been taught that formal schooling would alienate them from their religion and identity. So I began to get them to care for the sheep and goats roaming around the prison compound. These had been seized from around town, where people continued to keep them and let them graze freely, just as they had in the village. Most people lived in a maze of mud huts and the gaps between provided good fodder, but there was a law against this. The children were delighted, and demonstrated significant skill with the animals. This allowed for a vegetable garden to be planted by others, because the nomads would tend their flock to stay away, although sometimes at night the animals took advantage for midnight feasts after lock up time for humans.

In the classroom, the needs were



great and various. The children came from up to 30 language groups, none of which had written literatures, and while some needed basic literacy, others had enjoyed some schooling and were keen to progress. It was time to bring in the reinforcements. I had identified a good number of political prisoners, many of whom were on false charges of embezzlement to pass under the radar of Amnesty and international bodies. Indeed, the government was celebrating for “stamping out” such crime while in fact it was rife. These, mostly honest teachers and professors but dissidents of the authoritarian regime, were delighted to assist with tailor-made learning plans for each of our pupils. I worked with them to help them transition from the very harsh and authoritarian colonial-style they knew toward student-centred learning.

Unfortunately, we were endlessly challenged in our efforts. The warden had obviously had a broken life that made him into the worst of bullies. He wanted me gone. Almost daily we were “treated” to the torturing of inmates who had “misbehaved” right outside the classroom window. I suspect this may have been an attempt to get me to leave. But I am a “stayer”. We could close the metal louvers, but nothing except the eventual unconsciousness or death of the victim would silence the howls that gave me shivers in the heat of the day. There being no food provided by the prison, except American grain that had spoiled; it was evident that hungry tummies were overriding any capacity to learn. A local woman gladly accepted the daily work of preparing huge

cauldrons of rice and stew at home. I brought these stacked on the back of my little motor bike to the prison each morning, held on by “occie” straps. A good feed did wonders to enhance the focus of our pupils. Likewise, medication as needed brought their health to a much better standard and regular involvement in school activities and games became the norm.

Having a staff left me free to lead a series of discussions with the Attorney General and his staff about conflict transformation and moving from punitive to restorative justice. Eventually, after my time there, a separate centre was built for the children. I felt perhaps it had taken time for many factors including my repeated conversations with the Justice Department staff to sink in.

I was also able to put much of my energy into helping the youth as they were released from prison (often just by a request from me, as most had committed no real crime). Among the life skills I taught was the process of enrolling in night school and how to run a small business. For example, buying a package of biscuits and selling them off individually, and then understanding how much of the profit needed to be kept for reinvestment versus how much could be used on daily needs. Unfortunately they often turned this knowledge to selling cigarettes, which sold far more profitably on a “one-one” basis on the streets, but I never found any of them smoking.

Some of the children got work with my reference, and I was able to return many to their villages after negotiations

with families and village elders. “He has been in prison . . . he is dead to us now” I would so often be told. I would be able to respond with news of individual progress. “No, he’s a good boy, he helps others, and he’s been studying so hard at school” etc. This was a learning experience for me and them, as we tried to unstitch the punitive colonial logic. It became impossible for them to contradict the “Mama Mineur” or mother of the minors! But the essential was that they were willing to change their minds; they wanted desperately to have a reason to forgive, to have their child back in the fold.

Education inside and outside the “box” is never what we imagine beforehand. Each day brings as much or more new learning for the “instructor”. I went on to be an educator in the form of an urban planner, doing public consultation in which the public taught me about the kind of waterfront they wanted for the city of Toronto, while I initiated them into some of its lesser-known secrets. I then spent fifteen years as an academic, but found that all the lessons I had learnt in Toronto and more profoundly in Africa led me to teach “outside the box” in many ways. I am now so fortunate to have, through social media, almost daily contact with so many of those who have taught me even as I tried to show them how to learn to love and recognise the ever-surprising doors of life-long learning. And surely the greatest of these are our fellow humans and the movements of the Spirit.

AF



QSA Notes

people, places & projects

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Photo Left: Spirulina tanks belonging to the Keseva Nayakkau Palayam Village group, photo credit QSA

Photo Below Students visiting Nadukuppam Forest to learn about their environment and the medical plants collection, photo credit Pitchandikulam Forest



When you hear the word education does your mind immediately go to a classroom you remember? QSA would like to tell you of a different interpretation of education and share with you some of the practical applications responding to the needs of the project participants. Most of the “classrooms” used by QSA project partners are in fact outside – in the field as people learn about growing crops or how to get a better yield, or what’s a good crop to grow to feed to cattle (answer: azolla, an aquatic plant grown in Tamil Nadu, south India and

part of the training given by Vasandham Society), or outside in the forest where students visiting Pitchandikulam Forest in Tamil Nadu learn which indigenous plants are in fact medicinal and therefore useful plants.

Sometimes the education is more basic – literacy and numeracy skills for example, to enable the women who operate a milk group to keep accurate records of how much milk has been collected by each of the members with their small herd of cows, so that at the end of the month the profits can be allocated proportionally. For women who at the start of the project possibly could not write their own name, the notion of keeping these records is such a matter of pride for them now, and all in the group take a turn in record keeping so that everyone can be sure it is accurate. It sounds a small thing, but to the women themselves, it’s a huge leap forward, as often their

schooling was limited due to being required to help in the fields during planting or harvest time, or child-minding if there were younger siblings to care for while parents were hard at work. Also in Tamil Nadu, the women in the Keseva Nayakkau Palayam Village group needed specific training to enable them to grow spirulina successfully. Because spirulina is an alga, the chemical composition of the water in which it is grown must be carefully and regularly monitored. The impact of amount of the sunshine affecting evaporation rates, and rainfall diluting the concentrate means measurements need to be taken regularly and compensating chemicals applied. Mathematical skills are important or the whole crop will be less productive, which affects everyone’s income so the pressure is on everyone in the group. One of the jobs of monitoring a project is to look at the records being taken in the field, and



Students in Uganda working in the school's food gardens, photo credit QSA

the women were so enthusiastic to show me their record books because they were so proud that they can keep these records for themselves.

In Uganda, one of QSA's project partners is St Jude Family Projects, and over the past few years with funding support also from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, agricultural support and training for food security has been given to groups of rural women. Now in addition, it has extended the training to children in over 30 schools. One class per school, with two teachers, learn from the St Jude trainers how to make their school grounds more productive with vegetables which are harvested to supplement the midday meal. This gives an opportunity to teach maths, geography and

meteorology, biology and new topics such as organic pest management, water storage and distribution methods. This is a classroom topic which is having huge impacts at home as the students try to encourage their parents to grow vegetables in land around the house. Frequently the home food garden only consisted of some banana trees whereas now the student can teach their parents how to grow other crops beneath the banana trees. And another strong result from this project, which came as a surprise to Josephine Kizza, the director of St Jude Family Projects, was the way agriculture is now being viewed by the community. "Previously a form of punishment in schools was to be given a spade and told to dig the ground, now

everyone can see the value in making the ground productive and it is not a punishment, they are so eager to be allowed to work in the gardens." So no, QSA does not undertake projects which provide classrooms, desks, books and equipment, but it certainly supports the notion of teaching and training. A well-known often quoted proverb says "give people a fish and you feed them for a day; teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime". This is certainly along the lines of what QSA tries to do in its development and training with communities in need in projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

AF

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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The Language of Peace

DAWN JOYCE | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



Recently I watched the film *The Man Who Saved the World*, a true story about a Russian man who trusted his instincts rather than a computer and thus avoided a nuclear catastrophe. The film was also about the man's personal journey, and I was in a position to confirm the interpreter was doing a rather good job, having studied Russian language, literature, history and culture in the eighties.

After the film, members of a panel spoke briefly and responded to questions. One question was: What were you doing on 26 September 1983? I was in Europe for five months, where a strong anti-cold-war sentiment was evident. One telling poster I photographed in West Germany showed the US and USSR flags merged and reproduced on each sheet of a toilet roll! It was explained that the caption "Austreten!" was a play on meaning – "Get out!" as well as "evacuate". When Australia won the America's Cup that year, the German people enthusiastically



The retired Soviet officer Stanislav Petrov, who allegedly averted World War III in 1983, honoured with the 2013 Dresden Prize.

cally celebrated this tiny win against a belligerent superpower.

As a young girl, I had found it remarkable that while German sausage was consumed with enjoyment, the guttural tones of the German language were a source of ridicule: German was still regarded as the "language of the enemy". Studying a foreign language was the accepted norm and the local high school offered French. Although my focus was science, French became my favourite subject. And a new enemy appeared: the Russians.

When I first heard the protest song *Russians Love their Children Too*, it struck a deep chord: loudly and clearly, it was telling us that people are the same the world over, whether we view them as enemies or as friends.

In the mid-eighties, I decided to enrol in a second degree at the University of Queensland. Einstein famously said the splitting of the atom changed everything except man's mode of thinking. Unfortunately that seemed to be epitomised in political science studies and I exited in disgust after one semester. Happily, I discovered a Russian department that was vibrant and welcoming. Australia had begun selling wheat to the USSR, but meanwhile no one at the Port of Brisbane could read the shipping documents! It was a crazy situation and I relished this opportunity to learn the language of the so-called enemy. When I visited Russia,

I ended up acting as interpreter for a somewhat dysfunctional English-Korean group on tour at Lake Baikal.

A little Arabic phrasebook came in very handy indeed when I was stranded in Egypt. My editor quipped: "When all else fails, forget the script!" I later completed one unit of Arabic, but find this language quite challenging. As I work with students whose first language is not English, I try to learn at least to greet them in their own tongue; and I am ever grateful that English is the first language of the academic world.

Not everyone has a facility for languages and not everyone has a facility for peace, least of all the tortured hero of the film. But it is important that we help each other as we struggle to learn the Language of Peace. Because ninety per cent of meaning is conveyed by tone and gesture, our everyday actions can speak for us even when we say little. The language of peace also includes cultural exchanges; celebrating areas of common interest; fair trade; and generous sharing of sustainable technologies.

Peace is possible. We still have much work to do and this film is a welcome contribution to the task. *The Man Who Saved the World* will be in mainstream cinemas soon and I would urge you all to take the time to learn about this story of courage. The film is subtitled.

Born on Wakka Wakka land, Dawn Joyce (photo above) is a freelance writer and editor. She identifies as a citizen of the world and as a Quaker Universalist.

AF

Mystical Experiences

MOIRA DARLING | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING



In statistics the pieces of data that are unexplained and vastly different are called outliers, and they are deleted from the data set because they affect the results. I wonder if this is also the way we treat our mystical experiences – letting them go because we can't explain them, knowing that they will affect the patterns of our lives if we give them agency. What would happen in our lives and the world if we expanded the frame to allow legitimacy to these unexplainable experiences?

I went to America to attend the course "The Mystic's Experience: Communion with the Divine" led by Elaine Emily and Joe Garren¹. When I attended this course I did not expect that I would be the mystic whose experience I encountered. It was surprising for me to recall the many small and large experiences of the mystery that I have had and to recognise these as the movement of Spirit in my life.

Some of the most profound of these experiences occurred at times when I did not have a formal spiritual practice or community to engage with. It was shocking for me to recognise pivotal times and decisions when I turned my back on the call of Spirit in my life and to see the deeply painful results that ensued. I wonder what decisions I might have made if I had been able to recognise the sacred that was so active in my life at these times, to be enabled to express leadings and be supported by a community into action. How might I have been able to work with Spirit in the unfolding of my own part in this life?

Being lovingly held in the extraordinary space of this course as others listened deeply to my experiences enabled me to recognise the sheer

number and magnitude of spiritual encounters in my life. A small range of them includes...

- Feeling like a sardine can opened and spilling love over all. An intense experience over 2 to 3 days lasting for about 3½ weeks in total, with impacts for 6 months until I stopped the flow with a decision counter to the "still small voice inside".
- The synchronicity, in response to an unrecognised prayer, leading to meeting the love of my life and current husband.
- Feeling the infinity and boundlessness of God and the interconnectedness of all whilst in Worship.
- The miraculous healings that have occurred in my own life and the lives of others.
- The surprise of giving ministry and hearing the relieved response of the gathered meeting as it deepened.
- Bewilderment at feeling the "Light" pour down into me as I held others in loving attention and at other times during worship as I have struggled with deep internal conflicts.
- Being in the "power of the Lord" with words flowing through me for the consideration of others and the fearful knowledge that this was also a call to action for myself.
- The feeling of being "held" by the loving attention of my Quaker community in times of brokenness or when engaged in deeply spiritual work.
- The experience, when feeling reluctance and reticence, of being prompted by the ministry of others to deliver my own ministry.

- The surprisingly easy outflow of words that occurs when I follow the prompting of Spirit.

The gift of this Mystic's Experience course held in the loving crucible of Friends General Conference has been the widening of my own frame to validate, normalise and incorporate the mystical as part of my daily life. I now deeply know the importance of loving, faithful community in recognising and acting on the call of Spirit in my decisions. I am incorporating a more conscious engagement with my faith community, opening myself to be lovingly tested, strengthened and supported in courageously stepping out in response to the call of Spirit in my life. I am exploring the richness of deeper engagement with Spirit and my spiritual community and appreciating the transformation in my life and the lives of those around me.

"Living life at the edge of the village" was one of the descriptions of the mystic's life that resonated deeply with us all in the Mystic's Experience course. Maybe it is time now for us all to explore the edges of our own village, reclaim the outliers of our experience and find a way to mainstream the mystery in our own lives. I look forward to engaging in more conversations about our spiritual experiences as we practice our faith in sacred community.

1 The course "Mystics Experience: Communion with the Divine" was one of the offerings in the program at Friends' General Conference (FGC) that ran from 5 to 11 July 2015 in North Carolina, amid the Smoky Mountains. I was strongly supported by my local meeting and the Thanksgiving Fund to go to the course and was richly rewarded. **AF**

session for Latin America. Friends from throughout Peru and Bolivia were invited to join us on that day. It was a surprise for me to discover that most Friends in Peru and Bolivia are indigenous people from the high Andes and that their first language is Aymara, not Spanish. The Latin America worship was led by a Guatemalan pastor who spoke with great emotion in his native language, Aymara, and his ministry was warmly welcomed by local Friends.

It was a surprise, and an honour, to be asked to be one of nine elders during the conference. The elders were asked to sit together, to hold the clerks and office bearers in the light, to step in to help where necessary and to organise grace at meal times. It also meant wearing a distinctive red sash, while the pastoral carers wore a green one. After the first day I realised it also meant that it was not possible to take an "early minute". However, it was a privilege to get to know the other elders and to be able to seek their guidance when I needed it.

Another honour was being asked to speak during the time of worship for the Asia West Pacific Section. We were asked to offer something typical of our style of meeting. Ministry in the form of song was offered by New Zealand, India and the Philippines Yearly Meetings, and Hong Kong YM offered readings and a moving poem. Trying to reflect on the personal experience and silent worship of our meeting, I told a brief, personal story about how I came to Friends 40 years ago, read para 1.18 by Max Raupach from *This we can say*, then introduced a time of silent worship.

There were few opportunities for silent worship during the FWCC plenary, and this was a challenge for many Friends from our region. Friends from programmed traditions seemed uncomfortable with lengthy times of silence, and quickly filled them with sermons, reflections, hymns and songs.

An important part of the FWCC program were the "Consultations"

on four specific topics: "Ministry and Leadership", "Living Ministry Communities", "Sustaining Life on Earth" and "Equipping FWCC". The Consultations met four times during the week, and everyone was asked to commit to just one topic. I chose the topic "Sustaining Life on Earth" and I was most impressed by the large number of Friends who attended and also by the facilitation team of three Friends, Jonathan Woolley and Rachel Madenyika from QUNO and Charlotte Gordon a Young Friend from New Zealand. A number of small, focused brainstorming sessions led to wide-ranging discussion and finally a central statement. This statement, together with recommendations for action, was accepted by the final FWCC business meeting. I look forward to seeing this excellent statement widely discussed among all yearly meetings.

During the conference there were FWCC meetings for business which approved the appointment of office bearers, amended the FWCC constitution and considered the frequency of future world gatherings. After much discussion, the final decision was that world gatherings be held less frequently but no more than ten years apart.

A highlight for me was the daily, early-morning Bible Study conducted by Janet Scott. I found these sessions enlightening and uplifting. It was reassuring to find that the passage chosen as the theme for the conference has puzzled Biblical scholars for centuries. With an extensive knowledge of Biblical scholarship and history, Janet cast new light on central words in this passage, The Lord's Prayer and the creation stories of Genesis.

A number of workshops were offered during the conference. I attended the workshop on "Faith and Play" which Jenny Turton demonstrated to us during the SANTRM residential weekend in October last year. I met Melinda Wenner-Bradley who writes new Faith and Play stories for publication. She demonstrated a story on the theme of

Meeting for Worship using the poetic narrative style and simple props of this storytelling technique. I was grateful for the references that she provided and I hope to explore this method further for our children's meetings.

This was the first world gathering of Friends that I have attended. A number of other people I met had attended one or more earlier conferences. Many said that the smaller size of this gathering created a friendly atmosphere, less overwhelming than a bigger conference. To me the atmosphere felt very similar to that of an Australia Yearly Meeting, and I felt very much at home.

There were a number of physical challenges posed by the site of the conference. Some Friends had difficulties with the high altitude of 10,000 ft. I had no problem with the altitude but found that I kept running out of breath when trying to sing. Others struggled with stomach bugs, sometimes lasting several days. There was a constant stream of Friends visiting the doctors, who kindly set aside time each day to attend to the sick.

I now have a better grasp of the work that FWCC does, and a better understanding of the place of AWPS within FWCC. It was wonderful to be able to meet some of the 30 representatives from the AWPS section and to feel a connection with them. The worship session of the AWPS section drew special attention from all Friends and we were bombarded afterwards with requests for photographs. I think our cultural diversity and the large number of young people in our section created much interest.

I am most grateful to Australia Yearly Meeting and to the Thanksgiving Fund for the opportunity to attend this amazing gathering of Friends, at a very beautiful location. I will never forget the many inspiring people I met, Friends who are leaders in their fields, courageous in their commitment and friends to all. This has been an experience I will treasure always.

AF



Merdeka and the Morning Star: Civil Resistance in West Papua

Jason MacLeod

Merdeka and the Morning Star: Civil Resistance in West Papua by Jason MacLeod, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland: 2015. 284 pp. AUD \$39.95. (Also distributed by Penguin Books Australia.)

Although West Papua is only about 125 km from Boigu Island, Australia's northern point, very few Australians know much about it. It is a beautiful land, but it is shrouded in secrecy. Part of the secrecy arises because it is currently under military occupation by Indonesia. The Indonesian Government has enforced a policy to keep foreign journalists out of West Papua in an effort to prevent stories of human rights abuses, economic exploitation, and lack of health and educational services, which are being experienced by indigenous Papuans, from reaching the outside world. The Indonesian authorities do not want others to know of Papuan struggles to achieve merdeka (independence, liberation, identity, human dignity, self-reliance, material and spiritual satisfaction).

Jason MacLeod, a Quaker educator, organiser and researcher from Queensland Regional Meeting, has written an astounding book in which he gives an in-depth analysis of this struggle, the most protracted violent conflict in the Pacific. He writes from both an academic and a practitioner viewpoint. He tells that as a 19-year old he dropped out of university and travelled to Papua New Guinea in search of adventure. In a remote area on the Keram River he collapsed with cerebral malaria, and it was

only because of the efforts of two Papuan health workers that his life was spared. This experience led him to a life's journey of solidarity with the Papuan people. His research is based on 14 years of interviews with over 150 groups and individuals, participant observation and dialogue, on facilitating skill-building community workshops on strategic nonviolent action with over 450 Papuan activists, and is informed by current theory of civil resistance.

He begins by relating the historical and political background to the conflict. Belatedly in 1961, the Dutch created a Papuan national legislature, and the Morning Star flag was adopted by the Papuans as their symbol. These events led to an invasion of West Papua by Indonesia, and in 1962 the Kennedy Administration brokered the New York Agreement and Indonesia took over administrative control of West Papua. The Papuans were not involved, nor consulted, in this process. Under the New York Agreement, a referendum for self-determination was to be carried out, but instead of allowing universal adult suffrage, Indonesian authorities handpicked 1025 participants, and then the military terrorised villagers and executed those who dissented. The result was declared 100% in favour of integration with Indonesia. This result was not challenged at the time or later. The Indonesian Government interprets their control of West Papua as being sanctioned by the United Nations, while the overwhelming majority of Papuans feel the process was a sham and they have not been given a chance to choose whether or not they wish to be part of Indonesia.

Resolution of the problem is very complex because besides the denial of self-determination, the issues of racism, state violence (over 100,000 Papuans are estimated to have been killed), economic exploitation (e.g. large-scale projects like the Freeport-McMoRan/Rio Tinto mine, and logging) and migration (estimated to reduce Papuans from 96% in 1971 to just 29% of the population by 2020), added to interactive layers of direct, structural and cultural violence. MacLeod quotes

research by Chenoweth and Stephan (*Why Civil Resistance Works*) which shows that nonviolent campaigns are more than twice as effective as violent campaigns to achieve national liberation, democracy and equal rights. But secession struggles against occupation are more difficult and chances of fully achieving success for either violent or nonviolent campaigns fall dramatically.

After exploring the dimensions of problem, MacLeod outlines the sources of Indonesian power in West Papua and the strategies employed to maintain state control. This perceptive analysis of the root causes of the conflict, the opponent's sources of power and their strategies of rule provides essential information to develop civil resistance strategy.

Papuan civil resistance has a long, largely unknown, history stretching back to the 1850s. Making these stories known, stories that give a collective identity to Papuans and strengthen civil resistance, was a prime reason why MacLeod wrote this book. He provides a critical analysis of the strategies, the successes and failures, of case studies, missed opportunities, and the evolution from sporadic protests to unified campaigns. Over time there has been a transition from armed struggle in the mountains or jungles of the interior towards unarmed resistance in urban areas, carried out by younger Papuans. MacLeod provides an analysis of the dynamics which has led to these shifts, a transition that is still going on.

In his last chapter MacLeod offers a framework for nonviolent liberation. He argues that success hinges on increased movement participation, enhanced strategic skillfulness, greater unity, the ability to attract greater support from within Indonesia and also internationally, and taking advantage of political opportunities. He admits the immense difficulty of the task, but civil resistance has already achieved some notable advances in Papua, as he documents.

In a moving Epilogue, MacLeod presents testimonies of Papuans, telling of the great suffering they have experienced, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

with me into my university studies. I try to make sure that these principles guide all the decisions that I make.

- It wasn't until later in my adult life that I came to appreciate how much the Quaker ethos had permeated my value system and strongly influenced important decisions in my life. In particular, I believe my strong interest in environmental sustainability and social justice can be attributed in a large part to my Friends' School experience.

Not all comments were positive, however, as there were some alternate views offered:

- Not at all.
- It hasn't.

- Very little.
- Yes. I will never be a Quaker.
- Not really.
- It hasn't made much difference.

The contributed comments by the Old Scholars were about 9 to 1 positive/neutral to negative.

I have heard that criticism exists within Australian Friends that The Friends' School charges fees for its students' education. We as Quakers live "in the world", not separate from the world as other religious groups might. As a consequence, The Friends' School is also "in the world". As such, the School has expenses it must meet – teacher and staff salaries, curricular materials, utilities, insurance, care and renovations of buildings, etc. If the School had a large enough endowment where no

student fees were required to meet the operating costs, then I am confident the Board of Governors would be happy to charge no tuition fees. However, that is not currently the case.

Is it not better to have an institution within Australia where Quaker beliefs and traditions are put into practice on a daily basis in the hopes of educating generations of students that might strive to make the world a more "just and virtuous" society?

I will close this essay with a final quote from William Penn:

If we would mend the World, we should mend Ourselves; and teach our Children to be, not what we are, but what they should be.

AF

STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

a suggestion that has come from a group member, in the same words or maybe different words but as close to the original meaning as possible; creative listening by using the basic idea in a suggestion but maybe adding or subtracting a factor which may change slightly but keep to the main idea of the original suggestion; appeal to other members of the group to add or subtract; ensure there is agreement before making final decisions. When there is agreement the facilitator might then suggest a search to see if there are already study materials or programmes that could be suited for the purpose, adaptations that may need to be made.

The important bit for the facilitator is to ensure that each group member feels consulted and part of the final agreement. I think it is amusing that one of the most difficult bits of this process is finding suitable times for each member.

Occasionally in an adult setting, there may be people who have had experiences not shared by other members in the group – e.g. attendance at other yearly meetings, courses studied at one of the Quaker study centres. In these cases, it may be appropriate for them to share their knowledge, as with teachers who know about Athletics programmes.

A degree of objectivity from the sharer needs to be maintained so other members feel they are still being given choices. When decisions are made in this way they have a lustre and health of their own, adding great value for each person who has been part of the process.

1 Here is a very lengthy and interesting description and reference to concerns us decision making, well worth reading for those interested. <http://www.seedsfor-change.org.uk/consensus>

2 Athletics:- a computer programme for use in schools. www.mathletics.com.au

AF

SAILING INTO COUNTRY — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

up with. He's doing quite well at the moment. He's got a child and he's being a good father, he's really trying. He had some hard knocks along the way, but fortunately he's bounced out of those rough times.

AF: So, it seems learning runs in the veins of Aboriginal men and women who are close to their roots. It is a

responsibility, part of embracing who you are already. You don't really belong to your country until you can share its wisdom, its secrets. The emphasis is as much on respecting that identity as demanding transformation. "Live the skin you're in", we might say. It sounds like a great way to think about any kind of education, leading us to be true to

ourselves. Without facing that truth, our capacities for violence, for peace, for love and being loved, to allow ourselves to belong, we are lost. Would you agree there, David?

DC: Yes, honesty to yourself is at the centre of it, no matter who you are.

AF

No, science doesn't work that way

DAVID SWAIN | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



In the December 2015 issue of *The Australian Friend* Reg Naulty had an interesting article titled “A parable about science for our time”. I don't want to argue about Reg's main point, ways of finding God, but he makes some observations about science which call for comment.

Reg says “What makes scientists suspicious, are claims surrounded by controversy. That doesn't happen in science, it is claimed. Scientific methods yield unanimity.”

That's not how science works¹. Firstly, scientists rarely make definite, black-and-white statements. Rather, scientific statements have a probability attached to them. Look at the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change². Its statements carry qualifications such as “it is very likely”, “it is unlikely”, “confidence is low”, “confidence is medium”. Only rarely does the panel make a definite statement: “It is certain that atmospheric burdens of the well-mixed greenhouse gases targeted by the Kyoto Protocol increased from 2005 to 2011”.

That's all highly frustrating for the non-scientist-in-the-street. “Is it or isn't it?” they cry, or more often “Is it safe?” The scientist can only answer “There have been no significantly adverse effects in experiments done to date, but perhaps there may be some situations where it may be unsafe.” This is why there has been a long-standing conflict between scientists and journalists who want simple answers.

And unanimity? Unanimity would be the death of science. If scientific methods led to unanimity we would still be using the Ptolemaic earth-centred model of the universe, or the phlogiston theory of burning³. Karl Popper⁴, one of the best known philosophers of science, stated that for a scientific statement to be valid it must be falsifiable. Scientists must be continually questioning the model of the system they are studying, modifying it where necessary, or abandoning the model completely for a new one – something that philosopher Thomas Kuhn called a “paradigm shift”⁵.

Even when there is apparent agreement in areas of science, scientists still have differences of opinion on the details. For example, although 97.1% of climate scientists agree that humans are causing global warming⁶, there is still robust debate about which models give the most accurate predictions. And, although the theory of evolution is universally accepted among biological scientists, in 1972 palaeontologists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge put forward the concept of punctuated equilibrium, suggesting that rather than evolution proceeding at a uniform rate, there were periods when there was little change, interspersed with periods of rapid formation of new species. This concept has not been widely accepted⁷.

But perhaps most importantly, science does not make normative statements. It will say “If you do A, the result will probably be B.” It will not say that you should, or should not, do A. It will try

to explain how the universe works, but will not suggest a meaning or purpose for it. That field is left to religion and philosophy.

In return, science only asks for religion not to impinge on its field, and gets a little annoyed at people like the Special Creationists and Intelligent Design proponents.

1 A great explanation of how science works was given by Rudi Lemberg in his 1966 Backhouse Lecture http://cymcdn.com/sites/www.quakers.org.au/resource/resmgr/_pdf/JBhL1966_SeekingInAnAgeOfImbalance.pdf

2 <http://www.climatechange2013.org/report/full-report/>

3 Geoff Pilliner gives more details on the phlogiston theory and its possible spiritual analogues in Pilliner, G. 2015. Phlogiston and stuff. *The [British] Friend* 21 August 2015.

4 There's a good article on Popper at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Popper

5 Kuhn, T.S. 1962. *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

6 Cook, J. *et al.* 2013. Quantifying the consensus on anthropogenic global warming in the scientific literature. *Environmental Research Letters* 8 (2): 031003.

7 Dawkins, R. 1998. *Unweaving the rainbow*. London: Alan Lane

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BOOK REVIEW— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

sharing insights into how they survive and hold onto hope.

The drama and excitement of events leading up to the United Liberation Movement of West Papua application for membership to the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) are captured in a thrilling post-script.

Membership in MSG represents internationalising of the West Papuan issue, which is exactly what Jakarta was trying to avoid. This is a very valuable study, filled with penetrating insights, by someone who is both a participant and an academic. It deserves a wide readership and I highly

recommend it. It gives a discerning overview of the current situation in West Papua and provides a vision of the potential of nonviolent civil resistance.

DALE HESS,
Victoria Regional Meeting

AF

The Australian Friend

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Noted ...

This is our regular feature in which we briefly record interesting publications and websites that have come to our attention.

Inclusion of an item in this format does not preclude a possible longer review in a later issue. We welcome suggestions for inclusion.

REGISTERING FOR YEARLY MEETING

Michael Searle, Membership Secretary, reports: "I'm very pleased to tell you that the YM2016 registration system is up and live. Friends can now register for YM2016".

The URL is <https://aym-rego.org>

Friends who eschew computers should approach an internet-savvy f/Friend for assistance in registering.

WEBSITE FOR ASYLUM SEEKER ACTION

Jill and David Parris, Attenders at Northern Suburbs Local Meeting in Melbourne, have put their concern for

asylum seekers into action by creating a group named "Fulcrum."

Fulcrum is a single-issue pressure group that seeks to persuade voters in the upcoming and subsequent elections to vote for candidates according to their views on refugee and Asylum Seeker policies. Candidates will be ranked according to their answers to questions ranging from the detention of children to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention.

Details can be found on their website fulcrumaustralia.com. AF