

# The Australian Friend

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## Reflections on Yearly Meeting



## Editorial

**A**t the Manchester Conference in 1895, William Charles Braithwaite made a suggestion that must have astonished many faithful Quakers – that it was possible that *‘in the fields of music, art and literature and in others, Friends may witness to the Glory of God and advance that Glory by their service.’*

Fast forward to Australian Yearly Meeting in 2016, and we find that reports of the meeting in Hobart are largely about the music, the art, the tapestries, visits to art galleries and museums – and even dancing! Our Quaker forebears, if they could have seen us through the mists of time, may have thought that we had gone ‘off message’. But perhaps we are just finding a new medium for the message.

Early Quakers never agreed on matters of theology, but at least they had a common language in which to disagree. But modern Australian Quakers come from a variety of religious and secular backgrounds, and we lack a shared language. The society in which we live certainly lacks a common language for discussing those things which give the deepest meaning to our lives. We may be finding new means of communication ‘in the fields of music, art and literature.’

A continuing concern at our Yearly Meetings is how we are to relate to our indigenous peoples and appreciate their culture. Wies Schuiringa tells us how she travelled to the Garma Festival to see what she could learn, and a group gathering at Silver Wattle celebrated the contribution of indigenous Australians to the Quaker movement.

In our next issue we want to look at Alternatives to Violence. Lately Australians have become a lot more aware of violence in our society – abuse of children, bullying in schools and the workplace, domestic violence, violence in detention centres, and violence associated with alcohol. This awareness is a hopeful sign, but what are the alternatives? We are sure that many Quakers have knowledge in these areas, and we look forward to hearing how people are trying to live, in the words of George Fox, ‘in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars’.

**THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM**

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Cover photo: Australia Yearly Meeting 2016  
Photo by Lloyd Godman



# Yearly Meeting 2016 Epistle

## *To Friends everywhere*

One hundred and eighty-two years ago James Backhouse and George Washington Walker came to Hobart Town with a concern for the just treatment of convicts and Aborigines. This week we have come from all states and territories of Australia and beyond to meet at Friends' School, Hobart.

Winter School asked us: 'How can our faith and action inspire?'

The State of the Society address asked us to consider: 'How has the Spirit moved through me this last year?'

As a Yearly Meeting we face challenges and changes. The most evident this year was the change to a winter YM.

Our Earthcare Committee encouraged us to 'walk country' in the manner of Indigenous People so we can have a sense of belonging and a right relationship with the land. We need to pray/ read/ act/ celebrate the earth to begin the healing process in our 'three minutes to midnight' world.

An Indigenous Friend acknowledged the importance of right language, but impressed upon us the reality of poor health, despair and suicide in his remote community.

Our Membership is getting older; our children, Junior Young Friends and Young Friends wish to be engaged but face the difficulties of finding their own path. We celebrate the wealth of experience and wisdom in our elders and the freshness and enthusiasm of our Younger Friends. We are enjoined to accommodate both.

Ministry in the all ages Meeting for Worship affirmed our unity in diversity - and diversity in unity - reinforcing the importance of including children, Junior Young Friends and Young Friends in all aspects of the life of our Meetings. YF remind us of our disquiet about Australia's decisions and policies in our local regions — which have directly affected human rights and freedoms, not only of refugees but also of all of us.

We are reminded in the Backhouse Lecture that the base and the nourishment for our social concerns come from the inward Light.

Faith in action is evident in the breadth and depth of peace and social justice work done by Australian Friends. We recognise the need for longer-term projects in areas of ongoing concern. We value the links we maintain with Friends in the Asia Pacific Region and the wider world. As always, we are enriched by visiting Friends from overseas.

'Everyday prophets' in our midst demonstrate courage and heroic action in answering their leadings. This requires of us willingness to change, and being prepared to go in indirect and unforeseen directions, like the sailor tacking into the wind to move forward.

Isaac Pennington said: 'When the life is at any time lost, the only way of recovery is by retiring to invisible, and keeping there, and growing up there'.

AF

## 2016 Yearly Meeting *Children's Program Epistle*

At the start of the week, Aunty Kris came and taught the children a bit about Trouwerner (also known as Tasmania). Julie came and taught us a circle dance called Smoking. The children learnt a few Aboriginal words from Aunty Kris. Mouheneenner meant river and Kunanyi was what the Aboriginal people called Mount Wellington.

Adrian came and read us an old Dreaming story. He taught about how Tasmania got the name Tasmania.

The children cooked a lot of food during the program. We cooked pikelets,

blueberry muffins, polenta cookies, pizza and pasta. Every afternoon the children would watch a movie; we liked the movies a lot.

The children made a giant mandala with Wilma. During the week the mandala evolved as things were added. It looked very interesting but we all had fun making and evolving it.

Our Penn Friends visited, that was when some of us got the chance to catch up with our Penn Friends or write a letter to our Penn Friends if they were absent.

A few times in the week Taisoo

would come and each us the Korean song, 'Our Little Puppy Dog'. Valerie came to the children's area and sang songs with us as well as played a few games.

Thistle, Cathy and Alyssa from the Pacific Yearly Meeting all the way on the other side of the world in America came and talked to us about their Yearly Meeting and the differences between theirs and our Yearly Meeting.

We had a great time.

AF

# Reflections on Yearly Meeting 2016

## *A first-timer's reflection*

CAROL THORNTON | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING

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If I was to suggest one word that best described my experience of Yearly Meeting (YM), it would be 'energising.'

Elder Michael Searle's suggestion that I attend the YM was appealing from the outset. It was an opportunity for meeting Quakers beyond Canberra, to see how others worshipped, how they aired views and how they moved forward. Also attractive was the rare opportunity of mixing with like-minded people for a whole week.

My preparations for the YM were less than ideal. My mother's ill health was highly distracting and getting

advice on what to expect at the YM was a little Kafkaesque; the clearest advice being 'don't go to every session; you'll be exhausted'. On landing in Hobart I lost my voice and it became clear that I had not successfully dodged my husband's cold. With hindsight, I think being gagged for the first few days was not a bad thing – it heightened my observing and listening faculties.

One of things that really did help me understand the YM agenda was my regular attendance at Canberra's Meeting for Worship for Business; such attendance meant I had some understanding of the discernment

process. I did enjoy the diversity of topics covered in the YM: Earthcare, Quaker Service Australia, Friends World Committee for Consultation and so on. Having worked in Aboriginal affairs for many years it was wonderful to connect with others of similar experience and interest.

The social life around the YM was exceptional. I had a wonderful host in Maxine Barry who, for the whole week, flexed her domestic arrangements around my presence. Maxine, thank you heaps for the companionship, the bed, and transport and for sharing your wonderful mix of colours, fabrics, paintings, hangings and poetry! Knowing I was a new attendee at YM, Rosina Wainwright suggested I join her in seeing the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) for the unscheduled afternoon. Having company who knew about the exhibits made this a most worthwhile visit. At sunset, outside the Museum, I joined others from YM in experiencing the light works exhibition by Quaker, James Turrell.

By week's end I had met and enjoyed talking to Quakers beyond Canberra and seen how issues were raised, discussed and decided upon. But most importantly and unexpectedly, I was left feeling energised and refreshed, with a sense of somehow being in the right place; I had met people I felt at home with and looked forward to meeting again at next year's YM, in Canberra's weekly Meeting, and on my travels.

AF



# Building a tradition of creativity among Friends

KATHERINE PURNELL | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING



Edward Hicks (1780-1848) painted 64 versions of 'The lion shall lie down with the lamb' based on the Bible text from the prophet Isaiah, partly because he needed to persuade nineteenth-century Quakers that it was permissible for Christians to be practicing artists. But Hicks also wanted to express his hope in the biblical promise of peace on earth.

In his Backhouse Lecture of 1982 J. Ormerod Greenwood told us:

*Ours is a dark time; tragedy is part of our destiny and catastrophe is always possible by earthquake, fire, or human stupidity or wickedness. We Friends do, and have always done, our part in comforting the afflicted, the sorrowing, the homeless and the refugees; we have done our part in the struggle against injustice, though we could always do more. But what is required of us also is to say 'Yes' to life; to love its fun, its*

*beauty and its strangeness, and to be ready to celebrate what our London advices used to call 'The life of joy and victory to which we are called'.*

(Celebration: A Missing Element in Quaker Worship, J. Ormerod Greenwood, Backhouse Lecture 1982).

It has taken quite a time for modern Friends to overcome a reticence about doing and showing art in the context of our own community (See Beyond Uneasy Tolerance, [quaker.org/fqa/uneasy.html](http://quaker.org/fqa/uneasy.html) Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts (UK)). There has been a feeling that artistic creativity is 'less worthy' than doing good works. In spite of this, many Friends have been quietly expressing themselves in photography, painting, sculpture as well as in literary, musical and dramatic spheres. Often these works of the heart have not been shared with fellow-worshippers – there hasn't been a regular forum for them.

Several Australian Meetings have

had Creative groups where practitioners have shared and given support to the way that many need to delve into the expressive, even mystical, deep part of their beings.

Our worship encourages being in touch with the Inner Life, and this can take many forms. For many it is a continuation of a love of the natural world, the joy of creating, experimenting with media and expressing joys, fears and frustrations of life.

The Australian Quaker Tapestry is an on-going project that has been inspiring – bringing together a sense of our history, values, artistry and tenacity. There have been a number of art shows at Australia Yearly Meetings over the years, and this year in Hobart we wanted to continue the opportunity for sharing.

Hilary Dawkins suggested a pop-up art show, which limited the size of canvasses to 5x7 inches, so Friends



Part of the mosaic wall at YM16 – Photo: Lloyd Godman

from interstate could bring them easily in their luggage. The theme 'Everyday Light' echoed the Backhouse Lecture topic 'Everyday Prophets'.

When they arrived from all parts of the country these small works were displayed in the form of a mosaic in the foyer of the Farrall Centre, where morning and afternoon teas were served. During the week young people from the Children's program and JYFs added their pictures until collage, paintings, 3D, photos and drawings formed a significant and colourful display, each of which showed an interpretation of light.

At the same time – on three other panels – Tasmanian Quaker artists were able to show again some of the art which has been part of the Boa Vista room Art Wall over the last two and a half years.

Many Friends have been willing to 'fess up to their creative side and each

display has been hung for two months. In this way too we have been able to see the world through their eyes and also uncover the works of some Friends who have died. Not surprisingly Tasmanian landscape is a recurrent topic for many of our artists.

Other forms of expressing the deep parts of ourselves occurred during Yearly Meeting. The Welcome to Country this time included an original song in local language by Kartanya Maynard. This foreshadowed the intense interest throughout YM16 in exploring deeper connections with First Nations peoples, including creativity.

JYFs shared a lovely song led by John Coleman, who has included it on the AYM website as well as on a new CD.

One of the Share and Tell sessions gathered about a dozen Friends who want to continue sharing the confluence of their creativity and spiritual life. This

group is called Quakers in the Arts in Australia, and will communicate by electronic means.

The Festival on the last night of YM16 began with lighted lanterns carried by the children and reminded us of their theme 'Winter Light'. Participatory music, song and dance bonded us. We shared Korean songs that children had learned, a mystical experience of meditative movement given to us by Jong Hee Lee the FWCC visitor and a circle dance based on Aboriginal lore.

I believe we have passed the time of discomfort with 'the arts' and are able to see them as a considered part of our spiritual life together, to be relished and encouraged.

AF



# Afterwords

VIRGINIA JEALOUS | WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

**H**ow can the absence of spoken words have such a tangible presence? It's the quality of silence that draws me in I think, that gathers me into the net. There's an *embodied* sense of expectant waiting when a hundred or more people are gathered for Meeting for Worship and it's quite different from my usual experience.

By 'embodied' I mean it feels intensely physical to me; I am wholly present to myself, body and mind, in a way that is rare for me. When this

consciousness that is literally beyond me. It recognises that of God in me and in all those in the room. It invites and allows God in.

The book-ending of days with Meeting for Worship and Epilogue is deeply nourishing; it's calming and challenging in equal measure. I am envious of Friends to whom this disciplined Meeting for Worship is the norm.

(That's 'discipline' as defined in *Quaker Faith & Practice*: 'Discipline is not now a popular word...but its

happens I think *stop! stop! you're being too self-conscious* but it's a sort of revelatory self-

roots lie in ideas of learning and discipleship...[and] consists for the most part of advice and counsel, the encouragement of self-questioning, of hearing each other in humility and love.') I am apprehensive at the prospect, again, of not having this. I wonder how I can share this nourishment with Friends at home; I wonder if and how I can, literally, keep the faith.

Everything that we are as a body of Friends AYM comes from worship and returns to worship. Heartfelt decision-making. Winter School and share-and-tell sessions. Interest groups and committees. The hospitality of our hosts. Those teatime cakes, baked with love. What a joy to inhabit that body, to grow with it towards the Light.

AF

## Impressions as a first-time participant

MAXINE BARRY | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

**I**t was such an enriching experience – I was going to say 'beyond my expectations', but in fact I had no idea what to expect. As a 'junior' Quaker (since 2010...?), I had no idea how AYM business was conducted – that was interesting in itself and being involved deepened my sense of belonging to this community.

The people I met – their diverse and rich experience and deep consideration of the things that really matter – the sense of gathering in the meetings for worship – the age range – the interesting

diversity of Regional Meetings and what that brings to Quakers nation-wide – the wonderful experience of getting to know my 'billetee'...

A highlight was the forum 'Clothes are a Quaker Issue', for which Rosina Wainwright had prepared a fascinating and challenging paper to aid our discussions. It could have gone on for another couple of hours!

I had a wonderful day of 'extra-curricular' activity too, meeting with a group of like-minded and First Nations people at the Tasmanian Museum

and Art Gallery, where Uncle David Carline got his wish and had a pie for lunch (albeit an Thai chicken and curry one!), after we took him to the Baha'i Centre where he admired the work of Kris Schaffer and met with her. This all took place on the spur of the moment with minimal planning.

I suspect that experiences like those are not unusual at AYMs where providence or synchronicity draws us to the people we need to get to know.

AF



# Reflections of ‘not-quite-a-junkie’

ALLAN KNIGHT | WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING



I have attended about seven or eight Yearly Meetings (so not quite a YM junkie) but it had been about four years since I last attended before Hobart this year. YM gave me the gift of connecting with Friends I had not seen for some time and to get to know others I had not previously met. I was enriched by the opportunity to get to know these people more deeply in both things eternal and temporal.

An unanticipated gift of attendance at YM was to hear the testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of Friends who had died in the preceding year which were read at the start of each formal session. To hear the many ways in which Friends had let their lives speak to answer that of God in themselves

and others was inspiring and gratifying. Sharing the witness of Friends in this way is something we should continue to value.

A wow moment for me was when I first saw the completed tapestries set up side-by-side. At previous YMs I had enjoyed the quiet contemplative act of adding some stitches to one of the tapestries and had found that a wonderful space to find some stillness during the business of YM but I do not think I really appreciated the power of the tapestries to tell our story until I saw all those thus far completed displayed together as they were in Hobart.

Another of the things that I carry with me from YM is the generosity of spirit with which Tasmanian F/friends

welcomed us – whenever I needed a question answered (which usually was because I had not read information carefully enough) I was met with a smile and a kind response. A great lesson in patience.

I also came away from YM affirmed in my confidence that Friends’ way of making decisions is powerful and one of the gifts Quakers can offer the wider community. Our process of listening to each other and for the spirit which informs the vocal ministry in Meeting for Worship for Business and our discernment as to the way forward in a matter seems to me to lead to decisions that are more life affirming than might otherwise be the case.

AF

# Experience and wisdom of Young Friends

JOHN COLEMAN | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

For over 30 years I have been on a rich and intentional spiritual journey – one that led me three years ago to become a part of the Quaker community here in Hobart. Like many I suppose, I have been sustained, attracted, refreshed and challenged by the silent worship that feeds us individually and corporately. For me, no matter whether Meeting for Worship feels centred and blissful or distracted or anything in between, I always leave the Meeting refreshed in spirit. A year ago I was invited to offer music/songwriting



experiences to JYFs in our local meeting and have found these monthly intersections nourishing – and our music has been woven

into various Quaker events over the year. I was hesitant to accept the role of convening the JYF program for Yearly Meeting because having never experienced a Yearly Meeting and as a relatively new Quaker, I felt very under-prepared. And over the course of many months as we met to prepare I confess to wondering privately why I ever said ‘yes’. But my experience of Yearly Meeting was one of deep and surprising blessing.

I was touched by the assistance I received from Viv and Alex, the two Young Friends who helped to lead various sessions. Their experience and wisdom was an amazing gift. They were able to model a way of relating and sharing that called the JYFs to respond in kind. And the JYFs themselves in all their diversity were inspiring to me – and they knew how to laugh! I was touched by the way they so comfortably

could move into and out of silence. We had an ‘urban plunge’ experience and I was touched by the way they related so joyfully and respectfully to the people with disability in L’Arche and the Choir of High Hopes – how they gave and received an exuberant burst of life. I was touched by the practical assistance received from adult Quakers who saw when I was struggling and were there to help steady the ship. I found the communal mealtimes nourishing. Conversation around the table fed me with an appreciation of the diverse and interesting fabric of our Quaker membership. Most memorable for me was the final celebration when we gathered, all ages, to dance and to sing – to celebrate exuberantly our essential unity. I felt and still feel, so very fortunate to have stepped into the waters of Quakerism.

AF

# Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting

– *Open, independant and optimistic*

PERI COLEMAN | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING



**T**ravelling before a Yearly Meeting, rather than after, means that you could turn up while people are very busy getting organised for Yearly meeting, but the Aotearoa/NZ Clerk (Murray Short) neatly sidestepped that pitfall by arranging for me to attend the Junior Young Friends Camp on Waiheke Island. I landed in Auckland on a Monday afternoon and was met at the airport by Claire and Linley Gregory, who whisked me off to the ferry terminal down at the harbor and sent me across the water into the darkling evening armed with a shopping bag of herbs and vegetables and not much else. I sat on the open deck of the ferry, snug in my coat and woolly scarf and gloves, watching the lights of Auckland brighten as they shrank astern. It was well dark when we landed at Waiheke, but the locals are friendly and loaded me onto the correct bus. The driver

knew where the 'red shed' was, and would tell me when to get off. He did. And drove away. It is surprisingly dark on Waiheke Island. You may have laughed at me, using the 'torch app' on my phone to determine the numbers on the letter boxes! Barely three minutes and probably 30 metres elevation later I found myself at the top of the steepest driveway, welcomed into the warmth and light by a tribe of happy young folk who had been holding my dinner for me.

What a busy few days followed. Wonderful company. We did a service project in the forestry, armed with razor-sharp 'sharkeys' (Japanese grass sickles) on a remarkably steep slope, planted trees and weeded round Friends House, visited the local eco-village of Awa-awa-roa, played on the beach... We listened to talks about FWCC and carbon reduction, made button badges, chatted with visiting Friends and played games during Epilogue. I felt thoroughly welcomed and had so much fun. Huge thanks to Sue and Anna for finding me a bed and making sure I had three 'squares' every day.

It was still dark on Thursday morning when I slipped out of Friends House Waiheke, trundled down that vertiginous driveway and waited by the red shed for the bus, ready to reverse the journey of Monday night and spend the day in Auckland at Friends Centre, preparing for Yearly Meeting.

So what was similar and what was different in Aotearoa/NZ Yearly Meeting? John Greenleaf Whittier's hymn speaks of Christ's sharing with us 'The silence of eternity interpreted by Love' and I truly saw that in action in Auckland. Laughter punctuated many of the business sessions, reminding me that these are indeed Friends.

Young Friends were vibrantly alive to the need for taking action in the face of climate change, with Jimmy Green presenting on Generation Zero and the proposed Zero Carbon Act, actions Friends enthusiastically endorsed. At the same time, Thomas Owen spoke of the 'lost generation' of younger adult Friends, a feature common in Friends' Meetings here in Australia as well. Aotearoa/NZ Yearly Meeting was dedicatedly bicultural, with Maori language used for much more than mere introductory remarks, as well as for singing and dancing. And Aotearoa New Zealand's strongly non-nuclear and locally focused approach to



JYFs on Waiheke Island

military matters was brought to the front of my mind by Marion Hobbs' feisty Quaker Lecture 'A Peaceful World – How Can We Make It So?' I saw an air of openness, independence and an optimistic approach to making a difference in the wider world – there is no fearful talk of 'border protection' here, in any part of the population.

It was fascinating to see the practical work being undertaken by Esther Cowley-Malcome, funded by Quaker Peace and Service Loxley Award, to assist families raise children in non-violent ways. The result of the project is a freely available smart phone app called 'Play Kindly'. It is targeted initially for Pasifika families who may

be bringing children up isolated from their extended family networks, but is much more widely applicable. A great example of taking resources directly to where they will be accessed.

In common with Meetings worldwide there is a concern for energy – both that of individuals undertaking Friends' work and also the environmental issue of energy profligacy. On the 'individual energy' score, A/NZ YM is discerning deeply its future Meeting structures. They are exploring whether four overarching YM committees may encompass the work of many of the current YM appointments, committees and groups. There is, as a concurrent concern, unity about the

need for stronger spiritual support and spiritual learning opportunities. In relation to the wider concern about 'carbon footprints' we heard about the decision of the Friends Worldwide Committee for Consultation to reduce the frequency of its gatherings. The FWCC Asia West Pacific Section is working towards using digital technology to ensure that the linkages between Friends in different nations that have been forged over time are not lost.

This visit to our neighbouring Yearly Meeting was fun, but importantly it has given me much to think on. Thank you Friends, for the opportunity.

AF

# The Garma Festival

*29 July – 4 August 2016*

WIES SCHUIRINGA | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



The Garma Traditional Culture Festival is held annually in Northeast Arnhem Land on Yolngu land. The Festival is held under the auspices of the Yothu Yindi Foundation established in 1990 to promote Yolngu cultural development with community leaders and persons of authority from five regional clan groups. The leadership and innovative program development of the Foundation are considered significantly positive forces supporting Indigenous cultural maintenance, not only in Northeast Arnhem Land, but throughout the country and internationally. Yothu Yindi has several meanings: mother and child, where salt water and fresh water meet, fire and smoke. It is also the region where the Yothu Yindi folk/rock band came from.

About 2500 people can attend this annual festival. This is the limit of the facilities on a large property owned by the local people and paid for by the royalties of the local bauxite mine. Non-Aboriginal people are encouraged to come. The ABC broadcasts from

the Festival and I had been interested to attend for many years. What I was hoping to experience was the wide range of current Aboriginal cultural and political expression, organised and owned by Aboriginal people. We often get caught up in the politics and difficulties of Aboriginal communities and I was looking for identity, strength, hope and optimism.

The Festival included morning and afternoon panel discussions with national and local Aboriginal leaders about the current state of affairs for Aboriginal people. Many of these panels were chaired by Professor Marcia Langton. It was a great line-up: Pat Dodson, Mick Gooda, Jackie Huggins, Noel Pearson and many local leaders who I did not know so well. Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten spoke well; he stayed at the Festival with his wife and youngest daughter. Fred Chaney played a role. Actor Jack Thompson is a long-time supporter and has been accepted into the Yolngu nation. Journalist Stan Grant recorded a lot of material for

NITV. The Northern Territory Chief Minister, Adam Giles, did not deliver his speech. The TV programme about the mistreatment of young inmates at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre had just been aired, and he was not going to make himself vulnerable. All speakers mentioned the program and the deplorable state of affairs.

Every afternoon there was dancing by the Yolngu clans of their song lines accompanied by singers, clap sticks and didgeridoo. White people, the balanda, were always invited to join in and they did. (I finally established that the word balanda is derived from Hollander. The Macassans who traded with the Aboriginal people in the north introduced this word to identify all white people.) Then there was a lot of modern music performed by mostly local bands. Archie Roach also performed. There were corporate groups from e.g Telstra, CBA, Westpac who needed to understand better how to relate their business to Aboriginal people. There were First Nations people from Canada who spoke and performed. I caught up



### *Sustain Survive and Share*

They say we will have 10 billion  
or more  
traipsing over the earth,  
high-rise housing in cities tall  
where office work is done.

Is there room to journey the land,  
revive the spirit and mind  
feel the wind, love the earth,  
sunshine, and the rain?

Smog lies over the cities  
refuse clogs the streams,  
the oceans collect the litter,  
no longer are they clean.

The sun sends energy a  
thousand times o'er  
the needs of human kind:  
it starts off clean let's keep it  
clean  
to serve each soul and mind.

Work to be done to sustain us all  
is to dispose of our litter and  
mess  
in a way that is safe, in a way that  
is clean:  
cooperative success.

The missing link spelt in one  
word  
backed by love and concern,  
a simple word, a word of care  
that simple word is – share

David Evans

**South Australia and Northern  
Territory Regional Meeting**

with the executive officer of the Mental Health Council of Australia. There were school groups from Brisbane and private school boys from Melbourne.

There was an art exhibition, organised by the local, not-for-profit Aboriginal art centre. It was a bit like the Quaker Yearly Meeting and it was easy to get talking with others about our reasons for being there as well as our reflections on what we were experiencing. About half the people at the Festival were from the local clans and I had no interaction with them. They all spoke in their own language and we seemed to keep our own company. Representatives from a land council in Northern Queensland socialised more with the white people. Something to be more mindful of and pro-active about if I ever were to go again.

There was a village of tents and, being a non-corporate attendee, I had a small tent for an individual. I am glad that I go to an exercise class as the crawling in and out of the tent, on rocky ground and balancing on a wobbly air mattress required some 'Garma yoga'. (At the QSA study tour in India, we did 'Toyota yoga': awkwardly clambering in and out of a Toyota people mover.)

After deciding that 2016 was going to be my year of attending the Garma festival, I then had to decide how I was going to travel to the Northern Territory and how long I would stay. I decided that to get the full experience of the Festival, I needed to spend more time in the Northern Territory to absorb the context of the Aboriginal people in their region. I spent six weeks in the Northern Territory, four of them in Darwin and the rest travelling. What can I say? At times it is a matter of 'the

more you know, the more you realise you don't know'. As a tourist, it seemed to me that the parallel communities of the white people and the Aboriginal people seemed to continue. The tourism industry is mostly run by backpackers and the only Aboriginal people I saw were sitting under trees in the parks or on foot paths. The colonisation of the Northern Australia started in the mid-1800s and because of the remoteness there were still instances of 'first contact' in the mid-1900s. This is very different from the Sydney area and my experiences in Sydney with Aboriginal people. The 50-year commemoration of the Wave Hill walk-off happened while I was in the Northern territory. At the Garma Festival I saw both worlds: the extensive dancing with strict protocols of how the dances were to be performed, called in the local language and performed by people who speak little English, as well as competent, forward looking speeches by national and local Aboriginal leaders about Constitutional recognition, economic development on traditional lands, health care and models of education. What I have taken away from my experiences is a stronger realisation and affirmation that the Aboriginal community is very diverse with different ambitions, opinions and ways of behaving. This requires my respect.

NB: During the Garma Festival, the term 'First Nations People' was only used in reference to the Canadian visitors. The words Aboriginal and Indigenous seemed interchangeable. I think that in different Aboriginal circles, different words are used

AF

# An experience of 'Holding the space'

TESSA SPRATT | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING



When Alyssa Nelson visited Australian Friends, her Elder, Cathy Walling, was unable to stay for her full visit and it fell to me to act as Elder for her workshop *Becoming Allies to Youth* in Melbourne. I had not performed this task before, though I am very aware of how Elders during Yearly Meeting assist with the smooth running of business and I had considerable experience of Cathy Walling acting as Elaine Emily's Elder on previous visits to Australia.

My most helpful resource was Cathy and Elaine's Pendle Hill Pamphlet *Spiritual Accompaniment* and I re-read that on the eve of the workshop. I also rang Christine Larkin who acted as Alyssa's Elder at the Canberra

workshop, so I felt reasonably prepared. What I was not prepared for was the depths to which I sank during that time. It was like a spirit filled Meeting for Worship that lasted all day. During the concentric circles, I could not hear any of the conversation and just sank below it all, holding the space. I did not feel uncomfortable, nor did I want to wriggle – I just felt I had been given an incredible gift. Even interruptions did not change this feeling – we had a young mother who needed to change her daughter's nappy and Alyssa was concerned when she quietly slipped out and asked me to check on whether she was OK. The atmosphere in the room where our two children and two carers were seemed like an extension of

the workshop – amazingly peaceful. I slipped back and reassured Alyssa and sank down again. In the afternoon, role plays were impossible not to get involved in, but still I felt that sense of holding the space to be very powerful. I wonder if we have realised the power that is unleashed by that simple act of 'Holding the Space'. Alyssa was also grateful and said she herself felt 'held' and able to run the workshop smoothly. For Alyssa, it was incredibly necessary to have that support as she has never held so many workshops so close together and without the support, I think she may not have had the stamina to keep going with such energy.

AF

# Smoking ceremony for Waratah

MARDI NAULTY | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING



Left: David Carline conducts the smoking ceremony.

Above: The memorial plaque.  
Photos: Susan Clarke



At the ceremony: Back row: David Liversidge, Dick Field, Jim Palmer, Tony Etherington, Reg Naulty. Front row: Helen Bayes, Jeanne Klodahl  
Photo: Susan Clarke

A smoking ceremony was recently held to remember Waratah Rosemary Gillespie and to launch Waratah's Peace Garden at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, Bungendore.

Rosemary, who later took on the additional name Waratah, died in 2010 after a life of activism in the law, human rights and social justice. She never let controversy stop her from doing what she saw as right for humanity.

In 2003 she went to Iraq as a

'Human Shield' where she videoed the stories of ordinary Iraqi citizens and sent information home to Australia and the world. Her first book was *The Invasion of Iraq, an Eyewitness Account*.

A founder of the Bougainville Freedom Movement, in 2009 she wrote about the struggle of indigenous people of Bougainville against a mine which was destroying their environment and defied a blockade numerous times to take medicines to the people. Waratah was passionately committed to the

well-being of the First Peoples of Australia, and used her writing skills to campaign for their dignity and rights.

Waratah joined Canberra Meeting in 1999 and was active in the Society writing and speaking in the fields of peace, justice and Aboriginal concerns. A simple bush garden at Silver Wattle, Waratah's Peace Garden, has been created as a quiet place for reflection and to remember Waratah and her life's work.

AF



# QSA Notes

## Climate change and caring for the environment

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Workshop in Prek Chrey, Cambodia.  
Photo: Khmer Community Development



Participants in the workshop  
Photo: Khmer Community Development

**H**ave you and your family, or you and your Meeting had discussions about ways of working to help reduce the impact of climate change and improve your local environment? It's a discussion which many groups are holding, and agreeing to make changes. This is also true for QSA's project partners. One such community in Cambodia was asked these sorts of questions, at a workshop set up to commemorate World Environment Day in June.

This rural community does not have the luxury of many of the services we take for granted here in Australia, such as recycling services and garbage collection so their answers may surprise you. Before the workshop they were asked how they would get rid of plastics and metal cans – over half said they would throw on the side of the road when travelling, some would burn the plastic (such as bottles, bags and wrapping) and bury the cans. Old, rotten food or

dead animals, most people said they would throw into the river. The river is close by, is swiftly flowing and quite wide, but its uses by others downstream for drinking water and cooking helps explain the spread of disease at times. The river was also the most likely place for a range of items no longer needed, such as old motor oil, clothes, batteries, and some of the tyres with the rest being burned. There was already a trend to sell old computer and electronic equipment to recyclers, and other household items would be given away or swapped. The workshop facilitators had a big task ahead of them to change some of these ideas to more environmentally aware ones. They began with a discussion on climate change, what accelerates the process, what changes had they already noted in the climate (such as a dropping of the water table, rains less predictable in terms of timing, wind strength and volume of rainfall) and what did they

think about the appearance of their community and had there been any problems already with rubbish on the ground. Everyone commented on the piles of rubbish everywhere and the smell and flies associated with this, of the danger to the freely-roaming animals from eating the plastic bags with food scraps in them, and many people had cut their feet on hidden tin or glass among the rubbish. Gradually the discussion moved on to different ways of disposing of rubbish, and recycling took on greater prominence when it was realised that some people make an income from selling on specific items such as bottles, plastics, electronic equipment etc. Some community members are learning about organic farming methods, including how to make good compost so they too were able to add these ideas to the discussions. What started out as a sad workshop quickly became very exciting and lively as ideas were discussed and adopted.





The results of a hard day's work.  
Photo: Khmer Community Development

Methods of sorting recyclable items were worked out, what could be sold, how the poorer members in the community would be able to use second hand clothing (I will be sure to share some photos of the Quaker Shop in Adelaide and the monthly stall at Devonshire Street Meeting during my next monitoring visit), and how some items such as dead animals could be buried instead of being thrown in the river. Following on from the workshop, 36 students from the local school with help from 80 adults collected all of the rubbish from around the community, and everyone was encouraged to plant more trees in the area – so far 222 trees have been planted, most of which are trees which will provide something tangible such as fruit which can be eaten and surpluses sold, which reduces the risk of the trees being cut down for firewood after only a few years. And everyone has greater pride in their community and it's one more way of the community coming together to address problems.

AF



Fruit trees ready for planting. Photo: Khmer Community Development

#### **New banking arrangements for QSA**

Friends may be interested to learn that QSA has now opened an account with the Credit Union Australia (CUA Bank). Donations to this account in the name of Quaker Service Australia Inc. are always welcome, the new numbers are BSB 814 282 and account number 50585902.

The next edition of the Living Gifts catalogue will be available on line ([www.qsa.org.au](http://www.qsa.org.au)) and in paper form by mid-September – look out for further announcements about this.

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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# Donald Groom Fellowship friends

*a 30-year reunion*

JOANNA HAYTER



**I**n 1985 I met Noriko Toyama during her six month stay in Australia and New Zealand as a Donald Groom fellowship recipient. The following year I was to reciprocate this in Japan. My experience over those six months remains one of the most important and inspiring chapters of my life. Noriko and I became sisters. Machiko Yagihashi and I also became sisters. We have sustained our friendship for 30 years. I am proud to say I have a Japanese family.

Noriko, Jo and Machiko

When the frogs return, people will know the land is recovering.



A few months ago I realised I was nearing the 30th anniversary of my Japan adventure and peace building fellowship. I thought this was an awesome milestone and wanted to make a bit of a fuss about it! So recently a wonderful group of peace makers, anti-nuclear activists and scholars, environmentalists and community leaders all met again in Yokohama for a very, very long lunch. The restaurant was 29 floors above the train station and we had a tofu banquet (about 20 different types of tofu prepared in ways I had never heard of or seen of before – green tea tofu is the best!). My husband and son were with me to share this wonderful day.

We reminisced about the actions we had shared three decades ago. From the massive union-supported anti-warships protests in the harbour of Nagasaki (Sasebo) and Yokohama (Yokosuka) to the many rallies and marches to demand the closure of air bases, nuclear facilities, nuclear power stations, and US bases and prevent further militarisation in Japan wherever it threatened to expand. We remembered the community events and exchanges across the islands of Honshu, Kyushu and Hokkaido focused on the women's movement, recycling, organic land care and food cooperatives, which were to become the foundation for a

Green movement which has grown stronger and bigger than ever before. We caught up on where people had moved, how their families had grown or changed and paid respect to those who have passed, including the honourable Susumo Ishitani, a scholar, Quaker and survivor (Hibakusha) of the Hiroshima bombing who taught me so much and shared his wisdom with all.

With deep sadness, we discussed the terrible last few years in Japan. From the tsunami and Fukushima disaster to the earthquakes. Kindly, Meguro-san had travelled up from Fukushima to join us. She is now working in a family care centre that treats children with thyroid cancer due to the radiation from the nuclear reactor meltdown. She lives with her brother and his family who are farmers about 50 km away. It is a heart breaking story, balanced only by the courage and conviction of those who are with these communities as they rebuild their lives. Meguro gave me a little textile frog. This is the symbol of hope for this region. When the frogs return, people will know the land is recovering.

To my Friends at Quaker Service Australia and to all Friends who supported me and befriended me as a young woman, I wish to thank you all over again for giving me the

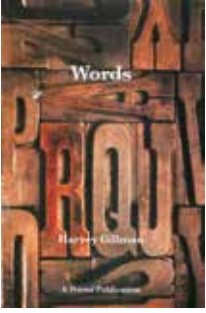
opportunity to be a Donald Groom Fellowship recipient in 1986. I have remained committed and connected to peace building and human rights to this day. The time I spent in Japan was life-changing for me. It was the first step in a career that was to remain in international relations for ever more; it saw me move from Perth to Melbourne after my return from Japan because that was where I saw the political heartbeat of Australia. My first job in Melbourne saw me become a Field Officer in Africa for Australian Volunteers International for the next seven years. It set me on a professional course of engagement with international development and humanitarian work. I went on to live in Vietnam and Burma. My present role as the CEO with the International Women's Development Agency is profoundly fulfilling and I believe of great importance if our world is ever to attain peace, justice and equality.

The Quakers opened the windows to the world for Noriko and me. The Donald Groom Fellowship was life changing and empowering.

*I will be forever grateful. Thank you.*

In peace and love, from Noriko and Jo.

AF



## Words

**HARVEY GILLMAN**

The Friend Publications Limited, London. ISBN: 978-0-9954757-0-0

This book is available for £5 + £2 postage from Penny Dunn, email subs@thefriend.org Telephone +44 20 7663 1178

The Friend, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

This is a collection of articles by Harvey Gillman, originally written for the independent weekly Quaker magazine *The Friend*. The bulk of this booklet consists of eleven articles around words commonly used by Friends – words such as *Worship*, *Spirit* and *Mysticism*. *The Friend* seems to have had a strict word limit; each word is explained in a maximum of 2 short pages, requiring a truly heroic brevity. Sometimes I wished he had been allowed a bit more space!

In an Afterthought, Gillman tells us: 'I have spent most of my life as a teacher of language, a communicator, a writer, a would-be poet. ... I love words, but I know they have a life of their own, lives of their own, and will not be pinned down. They can only be offered. We are responsible for how we offer them but we cannot be responsible for how, if at all, they are received by other people.' Gillman chooses his words carefully, and often comes up with a felicitous turn of phrase which sticks in the memory. He usually begins each article with the origin of the word, thus linking an abstract word to a more concrete one – so *Spirit* comes from a word meaning 'breath', and *Mysticism* from a word meaning 'to be silent'. Then he tries to show how words have changed their meaning over time. In the article on

*Church* he says: 'Whenever I hear the phrase, 'Friends have always believed/said/claimed...' I pause, gulp and wonder how true that it. Our understanding of Christianity and the church has changed throughout our history. It is changing still.'

I found many passages in this little book which speak to my condition. I like his distinction between a Religious Society of Friends (pilgrims) and a Society of Friends (tourists). I like his distinction between prayer (a form of words) and prayerfulness (an intention of the soul, even when words fail). And I love this comment in *Minister*: 'I do not like to hear people say 'I am not spiritual, just a drains and pipes man' (it is usually men who say this) or self-deprecatingly, 'Well, at least I can bring some cakes round for Area Meeting tea'. The ability to look after drains and cakes and finances; the gift of welcoming people at the door; the arrangement of flowers; the sitting in silence week after week; and the nurture of younger Friends are all forms of ministry.'

After the section on words there are some other articles, covering themes such as light and darkness, and the relationship of Quakers and Jews. And there is one poem, which starts:

*We met in silence, the cows and I  
in the long wet grass, in worship they,  
ruminating I ...*

This is a book which needs to be read slowly, and thought about. An excellent source of short, daily meditations.

**RAE LITTING,**

*New South Wales Regional Meeting*

## Quote ...

It's wrong to assume that when the voice of God speaks in a human mind the result has to be on the scale of a Hollywood epic like the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt or the Prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca or Martin Luther's attack on indulgences in Wittenberg. Sometimes the voice commands something so personal it's a surprise anyone remembers it. Yet it can change history. That's how it was for George Fox, one of the most attractive figures in the history of religion.

Richard Holloway  
*A Little History of Religion*



# Close Pine Gap

DAWN JOYCE | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

The Quaker Grannies, Helen Bayes and Dawn Joyce, are prepared for action again.



Pine Gap. Photo from [closepinegap.org](http://closepinegap.org)

Pine Gap will be the focus of the Australian peace movement from 19 September to 3 October, with a Healing Camp, nonviolent civil disobedience actions, and a public forum and conference hosted by IPAN, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network.

Pine Gap is a joint United States-Australia military spy base located on Arrernte country near Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Pine Gap is one of the most important US military bases outside of USA, used in both surveillance and military operations. Although much secrecy has surrounded the base, information about its purpose has slowly come to light through leaked documents and research.

Pine Gap was originally built during the cold war to collect information on the testing of Soviet missiles. Today surveillance and intelligence gathering is still the major function of the base, including the interception of cell phones and satellite communications. It is thought that the US controls all of its spy satellites from Pine Gap.

US military and intelligence operates overtly and covertly on many fronts globally. The Australian government is complicit in the deaths, injuries and displacement of many people through its involvement in US-led coalitions in war zones, and in the facilitation of execution-style drone strikes. The Australian government has allowed the US military, along with its private

war industry contractors, to embed in Australia, on land that was never ceded by the traditional custodians. More information at <https://closepinegap.org/what-is-pine-gap/>

World Beyond War is hosting a conference titled *No War 2016: Real Security, Without Terrorism* at American University in Washington, DC from 23 to 25 September. The Close Pine Gap convergence is listed with peace initiatives across the globe at this time. The International Day of Peace is 21 September. Peace is possible.

AF

# Junior Young Friends Epistle

*(12 –17 year olds)*

Our JYF experience ran from Saturday 2nd – Saturday 9th along side the July Yearly Meeting 2016 in Hobart. On Saturday 2nd July we met together with our parents in the room that would become our space for the week. We heard introductions to each other and the program, though not everyone was present at that stage.

On Sunday we began with icebreaker games, name games, getting to know you activities in the morning. We then had a session with David O'Halloran, Ronis Chapman and John Coleman about areas of service to which they had been led. Later that afternoon we had a bus trip to MONA to see the Turrell light installation.

On Monday we started the morning with a games led by Thistle and Alyssa, which helped us get to know each other more. We had reflection on YM our experience so far- everyone was really positive about being reunited with past Friends and by getting to know new Friends. People were struggling with early mornings and cold weather- all were looking forward to the JYF Camp.

We heard from Alyssa and Thistle about their jobs working with young Quakers in the US and about the Pacific Yearly meeting JYF program, what they do, and their leadership structure. Their program was very JYF driven. In the afternoon we spent time with the children learning the Indigenous circle dance - later shared at the Festival on Friday night. We also spent time painting our interpretations of 'the light'. In the evening some JYFs attended the Backhouse Lecture.

On Tuesday morning we listened to Alyssa's talk about Indigenous issues and the role of Quakers in building relationships and understanding between groups. We referred this back to our own educational experiences regarding indigenous issues in Australia. Although there is still a way to go, given the reflections of the Australian Friends present with us during that discussion, it is worth noting the education in this area in Australia seems to have improved.

At lunchtime we walked to the Town Hall and listened to the Choir of High Hopes and a Sing Australia Choir, a concert held for the Festival of Voices. We then assisted with a workshop practice for the Choir of High Hopes. That afternoon local JYFs shared the Salamanca area with visitors.

For our evening meal we spent time with the L'Arche community. We sang songs, shared a meal, and made stones into beautiful objects to remind us of our own power to transform something negative about ourselves into something beautiful.

The JYF Camp was on Bruny Island from Wednesday to Friday afternoon. On the way to camp we went to Murrayfield walked over the property; we heard from Rodney Dillon about how Indigenous culture is able to coexist alongside the business venture of a wool farm. For us the highlights of the camp were that we cooked together, played games, and some of us walked the highest mountain on Bruny.

We enjoyed spending time in the school hall playing games. We got to get to know each other really well.

We all felt included despite the need to split the group into two shacks and different age groups. There was much un-programmed time; it was really relaxing. This time away gave us the opportunity to connect as a group, we laughed, shared some memorable moments and things about ourselves. We had discussions and hopes for a JYF Summer Camp because we couldn't bear the thought of not seeing each other for a whole year!

We sang together and shared the experience with other Festivalgoers on Friday night.

We are grateful for the support of John Coleman for running the JYF program and to past JYFs Alex and Viv, who helped co-ordinate the program. We are also grateful to other Australian Friends who helped support us during the week and those who planned the program before Yearly Meeting. Thanks to Michael, Maddy, Kirsty, Viv and Alex whose supervision made camp possible.

Although we were tired, emotional and smelly on Friday night we still can't wait to do it all again.

So to end, as the L'Arche community taught us, because we kept an open mind throughout the week we were able to transform any stones in our hearts into beautiful objects.

AF

# 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.*

## **JOHN COLEMAN'S NEW CD SHADE TREE PLACE**

(in collaboration with the poet Noel Davis) is being launched in Sydney on September 19, Canberra September 27, and Hobart November 13. The link below will take you to the song Nothing More, Nothing Less, a reflection on the Quaker Spices. It was sung by JYFs at Yearly Meeting. John Coleman is a long-term member of L'Arche and currently employed in a pastoral role by the Uniting Church in Hobart, working closely with the Choir of High Hopes. He is a singer/songwriter of songs that explore spirituality, land and story.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pcr6z0n11z4d302/AAAn-x1StsXGfau0PwxIjBUha?dl=0>

## **WAR ON TRIAL AT THE GLOBAL PEACE FILM FESTIVAL**

After pedaling across an airport tarmac on a red tricycle, Bryan Law, accompanied by Graeme Dunstan, smote a military helicopter with a mattock. This protest, in the tradition of peacemakers to 'beat swords into ploughshares', led to their arrest. Facing a long sentence but encouraged by supporters and socially networked friends around the world, Dunstan decided to put the government and the helicopter on trial. *War on Trial* documents this story of peacemaking in an era of perpetual war in the belief that 'Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore'.

This movie had its world premiere during Australia Yearly Meeting on 6 July 2106 and was partly funded by the Peace and Social Justice Fund. It will be shown during September at the Global Peace Film Festival, held in Florida, the main festival for peace and justice films in the world.

## **SOME WEBSITES FOR THE MORE ADVENTUROUS**

[www.nontheistfriends.org](http://www.nontheistfriends.org) This website is a rich source of writings by contemporary American and British non-theist Quakers, but contains wisdom for everyone.

<http://www.nontheist-quakers.org.uk/> A collection of the thoughts of British non-theists. It includes two major articles: *Where do Nontheist Friends Stand in Relation to the Quaker Christian Tradition?* by Hugh Rock, and *Being Quaker Now*, in which Michael Wright gives a personal response to the views put forward in the 2014 Swarthmore Lecture by Ben Pink Dandelion.

<http://transitionquaker.blogspot.com.au/> I'm not sure of the origin of this site. It is British, despite its Australian address. Nevertheless, it contains a lot of writings describing the wide spectrum of colours of Quakerism.

<http://www.sofn.org.uk/> The Sea of Faith Network started in 1984 as a response to theologian Don Cupitt's book and TV series of the same name. It describes its theme as 'Exploring and affirming religious faith as a human creation...'. The website contains many writings from the non-theist and non-realist school, including some from the non-theist Quaker David Boulton. You can download his book 'A Reasonable Faith: Introducing the Sea of Faith Network'.

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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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