



# Friends in Stitches

The Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery  
Australian Quaker History in Crewel Embroidery

February 2020

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## Letter from Bridget Guest.

Hello Tessa

You've been in my thoughts this week... all those fires and the heat you're experiencing at the moment –it seems very near to where we stayed in the Blue Mountains in 2007. I hope everyone is safe.

We did receive the book thank you so much for sending us a copy. It's lovely! We have had it out next to the Tapestry every week when we've had an embroiderer working on it and it is a big help to show our visitors the rest of the project – it's amazing.

The exhibition is closed now for the winter here and we reopen 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020. Staff are still working hard in the office preparing for next year with marketing, social media, end of year accounts and stock taking, project development and so on. We do all have a rest over Christmas and New Year though ☺

Keep sending me the newsletters please – I love receiving them from Sally and I am always eager to read news of all your progress.

With love and Season's Greetings to you, and all the very best for the New Year 2020

In friendship  
Bridget





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This Press release could be amended to suit future exhibitions. Thank you to Jacque for writing it.

## MEDIA RELEASE



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## **Exhibition of Quaker Embroideries until Saturday 29 February 2020**

**Mont de Lancey Historic Homestead**

**71 Wellington Road, Wandin, VIC 3139 <https://www.montdelancey.org.au/>  
03 5964 2088**

An exhibition of 20 embroidered panels, The Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery Project, depicting the history of Quakers in Australia will be on exhibition at the historic Mont De Lancey Homestead until 29 February. Demonstrations will be given on stitching techniques, with works- in-progress on display by members of the embroidery group, Friends in Stitches.

The Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery Project is a collection of embroidered panels designed to tell the story of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia, through stitch. The project was inspired by the 77 elaborate and intricately designed British Quaker Tapestries ([Kendal Quaker Tapestry](#)), the designs of which were in turn based on the famous Bayeux Tapestry.



Ideas for the Australian panels come from all over Australia, and depict local Quaker history beginning with the arrival in 1770 of the first Quaker, Sydney Parkinson, a botanical artist and a member of Captain Cook's expedition. Currently there are 20 completed panels, with plans for a total of 70 to be created.

The Project began in 2007 and until recently, the panels have had limited public exposure, exhibited only in Quaker settings (at local meetinghouses around the country or Quaker gatherings) and in selected public libraries. However, the 'Friends in Stitches', the group that meets to create the panels and carry on the work supporting other stitching groups around the country, is now taking the Project to the wider world, and has begun offering the panels for exhibition to Australian galleries and cultural institutions.

### *Quakers in Australia*

The first Quaker on Australian soil was Sydney Parkinson, an artist employed by the botanist Joseph Banks, sailing with James Cook. They landed briefly in 1770. English Quaker Elizabeth Fry and her helpers visited every convict ship of women prisoners. They provided them with something useful to do on the long tedious voyage to Botany Bay, such as needles and cotton and handiwork. *The Rajah Quilt* (one of Australia's most important textiles, and a major focus of the National Gallery of Australia's Australian textiles collection) was worked by the convicts of the ship *Rajah* during their voyage to van Dieman's Land (<https://nga.gov.au/rajahquilt/>)

It was not until 1832 that the Society of Friends (Quakers) first took root in Australia, as a result of a visit by two English Friends, James Backhouse and George Washington Walker. They were sent by British friends on a six-year journey around south-east Australia to enquire into the condition of the penal settlements and the welfare of the Aborigines and free settlers. They also drew together the few members of the Society in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales in regular Meetings for Worship.

The number of Friends in Australia increased during the 1850's at the end of the gold rush decade, and in 1861 London Yearly Meeting formally recognised the Meetings in Hobart,

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Melbourne and Adelaide. Later came recognition of the Meetings in Sydney, Brisbane, Rockhampton and Ballarat. By the 1880s Quakers had established The Friends' School in Hobart, the Elizabeth Fry retreat for 'fallen women' in Melbourne, and the Gospel Temperance Hall in Adelaide. The Peace Movement was launched in 1888.

Today, there are about a half a million Quakers worldwide (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/>). In Australia, there are approximately 2000 members and attenders. Quakers continue to take

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action for peace and justice for all people, and the service arm, Quaker Service Australia (<https://qsa.org.au/>), provides development assistance within Australia, Asia and Africa.

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For more information, visit. <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/>

*Tessa Spratt and Helen Bayes at the Exhibition. At least Tessa is catching up with some stitching!*

Please visit if you live in Melbourne.



## **Tessa's report on how the exhibition is going.**

It is going very slowly and very quietly. I am disappointed that Mont de Lancey has poor publicity. I am attempting to change that but it is hard work! One unfortunate thing is that their tea rooms are currently not being run by anyone – they have advertised for someone to run them but no takers yet. So they are closed.

I went up with a friend this afternoon and all my dreams came true. A couple of women came in and showed great interest. I showed them the Quaker Stitch and went around the room with them and they were SO enthusiastic – to my astonishment they bought a book. They'd asked Mont de Lancey to open up the homestead (to look at that costs \$6, everything else is free including our exhibition.) and vowed they'd come back again to have a better look another day. I have been given some more numbers to try for publicity – it is strange to me and not my favourite thing, but I am trying. I presume you saw the interview with Yarra Ranges Life TV on facebook?

<https://www.facebook.com/YRLife.tv/videos/172339970692594/>

## Meanwhile in Queensland

An exhibition is planned for the Brisbane Library. Valerie Joy, Tessa and Sally have written a brief introduction to be displayed at the exhibition, something we lacked at the Tasmanian exhibitions and which was called for. Here it is.

### Introduction to the Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery Exhibition

Before you are twenty crewel embroidered panels, illustrating Australian Quaker history from the time of Captain Cook to the present. Inspired by the Kendal Quaker Tapestries in England, the first Australian panel was completed in 2009.

The woollen backing fabric was woven by commission especially for the project by Brisbane weaver, Kay Faulkner, using naturally coloured Australian wool, sourced from Bilby Yarns in W.A. The embroidery thread used is Appleton's.

This ongoing community arts project has been developed over the last ten years. Topics and designs, created by Friends across Australia, are based on inspirational stories. After the design process, panels can take at least a year to stitch. Most were embroidered by small groups of stitchers.

Greeting cards and a hardback coffee table book are on sale at the Quaker Meeting house in Kelvin Grove or on the website [quakersaustralia.info/stitches](http://quakersaustralia.info/stitches).

A Workshop is being held at the Kelvin Grove Meeting House on Sunday 19 April from 12 noon to 5pm. Information flyers and registration forms are available here- so please take one and an extra one for friends.

**Library Tour:** On 25 March at 10am a Library Tour will be conducted by a senior librarian, with the final stop being here at this exhibition. Volunteers Mary and Rhoda will give further



information on the project, to be followed up with a free morning tea in the Red Lounge. You are all very welcome and we love chatting with library visitors about this project.

## Getting over 'stitcher's block'

Sally O'Wheel

I have returned to stitching after a long break. I was stuck. I didn't know how to move on. To help me get over this hump I decided to make a practice piece on one small section of my panel. Here is the drawing of this section. Over Christmas, at my sister's place in Brunswick, I got onto it. I didn't have to do any Christmas hosting this year so it was great to have something to do while socialising with the cousins and sisters.

Looking at it here, both pictures together, I think I need to add a bit more to the sampler, put in some more bushes between the trees, perhaps make the tree trunks come down further. The tree fern on the left could be bigger too. And the small tree fern at the back is on the wrong side! I'll add another one.

I intend to keep working on the sampler until I am happy with it and feel confident to return to my panel.

