



Friends in Stitches

The Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery
Australian Quaker History in Crewel Embroidery

Yearly Meeting for me, was about connecting with Friends.

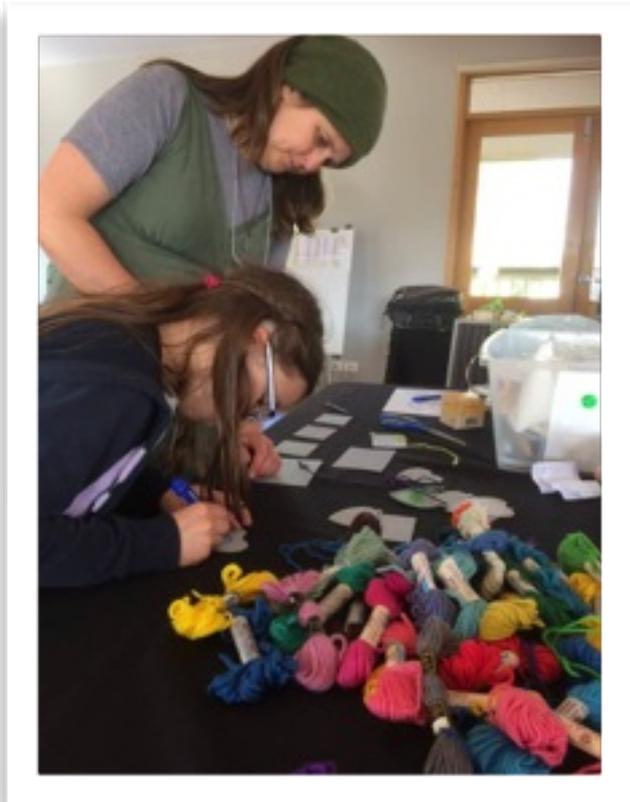
Firstly, Tessa Spratt, the first person I recognised when I arrived at the Help Desk. We have had a lot of conversations on the phone and through the email and her attendance was touch-and-go as her husband was hospitalised the week before she came. How good to hug one another at last. Our relationship is central to the embroidery project. Then curiously we were on the same plane going home and managed to sit together and continue our conversation until she walked away with her daughter at Melbourne airport.

Then Beth Harcourt from WA, the other new co-convenor, the artist and fabulously talented embroiderer. Incredibly, we discovered we are 5th cousins. I guess if you have Quakers in your family tree, it's not so surprising to learn that you are related to other Australian Quakers but for that person to be Beth, was too amazing. It still brings me out in goosebumps. She taught me a better way to do the French Knot, helped me fix up my Cherish Our Place panel and guided me to get it onto the calico. I didn't stop looking at her Walking in the Light panel and marvelling at her technique and artistry.



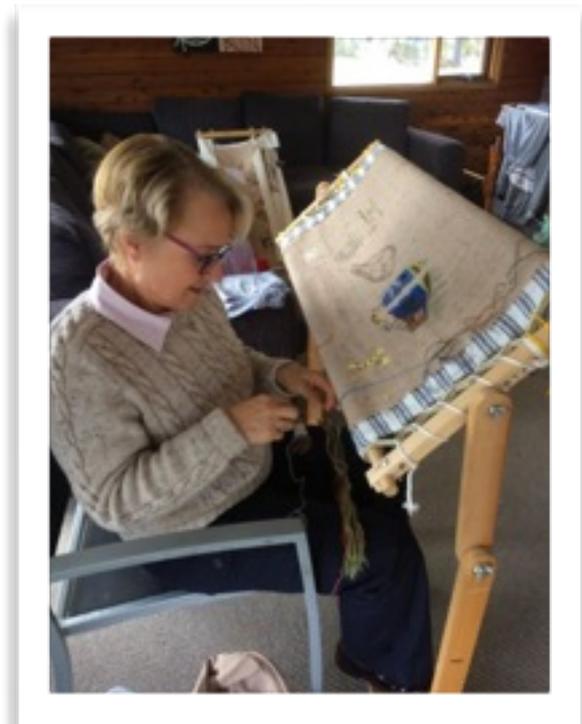
Left: Tessa ready for a swim.
Right: Beth and Sally celebrate being cousins. Note the family resemblance.

There was a lot of time hanging out in Cabin #6 where we nattered and stitched together. Judy Wollan from Queensland was working on the Werona panel. Lisa Reilly from Central Coast stitched Allawah Grove and was working on the design of the Permaculture panel.



I reconnecting with Mary Grbavac who I had not spoken to since the Friends in Stitches workshop at Silver wattle 18 months ago. Robin Sinclair was very busy with her YM responsibilities but she listened to my ideas for new panels, took away my Ballarat Meeting idea with my notes and pictures and thought she'd bring it together. We talked through the Elinor Robey idea and with her ideas and support I am confident about creating a panel for Margaret Bywater to stitch, ready for her to pick up when she comes home to Tasmania at Christmas time. And how good it is to talk to the historians, Charles Stevenson and Jim Palmer who are so supportive of the project.

Displaying the finished panels in the Meeting room was uplifting. The organisers had been hesitant, worrying about lack of



supervision but we thought that if the panels were not on display in a public place, what was the point of stitching them? So we quietly put them up, one by one, and then 3 by 3, as we were encouraged by a positive response from Friends. They looked fabulous!

For me, being a co-convenor of this Yearly Meeting committee, is all about building supportive relationships. We are scattered across a very large area, in small groups if we are lucky but often stitching in isolation. This Yearly Meeting was a golden opportunity for me to meet people and make those relationships more real. Thank you to TRM for supporting me to go.

Sally

left : Lisa and Chloe at the children's activity
Right: Judy stitches the Werona panel



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Winter School, by Beth Harcourt

Several interested Friends gathered in the Friends in Stitches bungalow. Because many of us were familiar with the process of making a panel we started by looking at the 16 completed panels with a view to clarifying the ways in which these could be tools for Outreach. We considered these stories from an audience perspective, discerning what they say about Quaker practice and what WE want to say about what we do. The Quaker Testimonies came to the fore, so we considered the story of each panel and how it fits into the SPICEE designations (acknowledging that these were developed as an educative tool by American Friends).

We found that many of the stories covered more than one area and could in fact be used to illustrate several testimonies. We thought that as the panels increased in number we may need to change the ways in which they were displayed to balance out our discussion of the testimonies, so we noted all of the testimonies we thought the story could be used to describe. This also allowed us to think about what was missing, leading to discussions about depicting Simplicity and Integrity. We also noted where the Australian stories synchronised with the Kendall panels and hope to build on this association with a view to developing this connection and possibly travelling panels to and from Kendall as our Outreach goals are refined.

Some Friends then continued to meet to stitch, learn the Quaker stitch and chat as we embroidered over the rest of the week. We had many Friends dropping in to have

incidental conversations (and cups of tea). We had JYFs join us for a short period and they were challenged to consider what they would like to say about their stories. They



were also extended an on-going invitation to contribute drawings and ideas to any panel.

We continue to talk about developing imagery to tell our stories effectively, with an understanding that the labour-intensive nature of each panel means there needs to be passion involved to complete each panel and therefore they need to be stories that people WANT to tell. Tessa Spratt is continuing to develop text and images, working with Publications Committee, to share the story of the Australian Quaker Narrative Embroidery project itself in book form.

Editor's note: look out for the full report in Documents in Retrospect, with the charts which I was unable to reproduce in this newsletter.

Picture above: The JYFs squeezing into cottage #6