

# Quaker <sup>Tasmanian</sup> Newsletter

December 2023

**2 Peace in a world of war**

Alan Clayton

**3 Dylan Thomas**  
Steve Louis Smith

**4 News of Friends**

**4 Coincidences**  
Julie Walpole

**5 Book Reviews**

Julie Walpole

**6 Sunlight Kitchen and Garden**

Sally McGushin

**7 Quaker banners**

Sally O'Wheel

**8 Lies, Propoganda and the West's War in Ukraine**

Sally O'Wheel



Yasmeen and Habida standing behind the counter in the Sunlight Kitchen. You can see a bowl of salad but the bolanis are hidden under their kitchen towel covers. They are standing next to the bain marie. See page \* for the story behind the Sunlight Kitchen. Photo: Sally McGushin

## Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter

Tasmania Regional Meeting  
The Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Australia

**Contributions:** Copy for TQN should be sent to the editor: [rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info)  
**To be added to the mailing list,** send an email to: [rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info)



The image adopted as the logo for Quakers in Australia represents the Aurora Australis, a natural phenomenon of the southern hemisphere, associated with Antarctica, a fragile and magnificent part of the planet. The Aurora Australis is considered an appropriate logo because of its association with:

• pure light, the centrality of the Light for Quakers

- beauty, a quality many associate with God or the Spirit within
- nature, a permanent reminder of everyone's responsibility to care for the world
- the colour blue, used by the UN
- the ephemeral and intangible, a reminder that language is inadequate to describe God, the truth or the Spirit within.

## Peace in a world of war

*How do we bring about peace in a world of war and chaos? Quakers like me might have the answer.*

THE STRUGGLE for peace starts well before conflict arises – with small acts of tolerance and compassion.

Every day we are confronted with images of the horrors of war – the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Israel and the devastation in Ukraine. Then there are the myriad other conflicts around the world, including in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria.

These are matters that concern any engaged world citizen. But they are of particular concern to members of the Religious Society of Friends, better known as Quakers.

Quakers arose out of the chaos in the mid-17th century – a “world turned upside down” – as a result of the English civil war.

As a different kind of chaos turns the world upside down today, how can the Quaker philosophy guide us towards peace?

I have been a Quaker for almost half a century and it has taught me many lessons about promoting peace at home and abroad.

Quakers seek to live their lives by six social testimonies – peace, simplicity, integrity, community, equality and care of the Earth. The word “testimony” comes from that of “bearing witness”. The testimonies do not have the status of a creed, but are profound matters for individual discernment.

The peace testimony was set out in a proclamation to King Charles II in 1660. It declares: “We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons for any end or under any pretence whatever”.

In times of war, particularly where there is conscription for military service, each Quaker must struggle with their own conscience to determine how the peace testimony is to be discerned. Historically, Quakers have chosen one of two routes – to seek exemption from military service as a conscientious objector but to work in some

other role, such as in the Friends Ambulance Unit, or a path of total resistance on the basis that participation in any activity that directly or indirectly supports the war effort contributes to a continuation of war. This latter option can lead people to prison, and is often accompanied by hard labour and solitary confinement.

For Quakers, the struggle for peace must start well before a conflict arises, with the commitment to try to “take away the occasion for war”.

As the cause of many conflicts and wars is inequality, Quakers see the bedrock of taking away “the occasion of war” as being in the achievement of a more just and equal society – both nationally and internationally. Quakers pushed for the abolition of slavery and have been active in the formation of organisations for the promotion of human rights, environmental protection and disaster recovery such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Oxfam.

Where there is conflict and disaster, the Quaker response is through a stance of non-partisanship. This stems from the Quaker recognition that “there is that of God in everyone” and that you cannot privilege one set of lives over another. During the Irish famine, the significant Quaker relief efforts were directed impartially to both Catholics and Protestants. In part because of this, Quakers were able to play a mediating role in the Northern Ireland “Troubles” that ultimately bore fruit in the Good Friday agreement.

Similarly, in the widespread devastation in Europe at the end of the first world war, and the acute and desperate issue of seriously malnourished children, the welfare arm of American Quakers was involved in a mass feeding program that provided food to over one million German children each day and gained the German name of Quäkerspeisung (Quaker feeding). A legacy of this was that, after Kristallnacht in 1939, British Quakers were able to organise the Kindertransport that allowed the passage of nearly 10,000 Jewish children to safety in the United Kingdom.



Photo: Sue Headley

Even when they think of the global, Quakers understand they must start with the local.

Building a more peaceful and just world starts with small acts. This means that where there is bigotry in the community, there is a need to stand on the side of tolerance and compassion and inclusion, and be prepared to take that stand publicly.

Allied with this is to work to strengthen bodies and institutions in civil society that promote social cohesion and form a bulwark or guardrail against conflict.

Finally, striving for peace in a world full of conflict is exhausting. Quakers recognise that there

is a need to nurture one's inner world if they are to be effective as long-term actors in the outer world, whether this be through their "meetings for worship", engagement in nature or whatever way succeeds in nurturing their inner being.

As a leading contemporary English Quaker has observed: "Quakers are not 'for peace' but rather know, in the deepest sense of the word, that peace is a holy imperative as part of a just society."

*Alan Clayton has been a Quaker for almost half a century. He is a former co-clerk of Victoria Regional Meeting and has held a number of roles within Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Australia.*

## The force that through the green fuse drives the flower

### Dylan Thomas

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees  
Is my destroyer.

And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose  
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

The force that drives the water through the rocks  
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams  
Turns mine to wax.

And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins  
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool  
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind  
Hauls my shroud sail.

And I am dumb to tell the hanging man  
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;  
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood  
Shall calm her sores.

And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind  
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb  
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

I only discovered this poem in the last month in an article dealing with climate change. Even a casual reading reveals that it has been carefully crafted, like a piece of spoken music. I am familiar only with the poet's name but none of Thomas's works so I found an essay by Thomas G Methven on the academia website \* helpful.

Steve Louis Smith (Launceston Worshipping Group)

\* [https://www.academia.edu/50768484/\\_The\\_force\\_that\\_through\\_the\\_green\\_fuse\\_by\\_Dylan\\_Thomas\\_A\\_new\\_2021\\_comprehensive\\_analysis\\_of\\_this\\_outstanding\\_process\\_poem?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/50768484/_The_force_that_through_the_green_fuse_by_Dylan_Thomas_A_new_2021_comprehensive_analysis_of_this_outstanding_process_poem?email_work_card=view-paper)

## News of Friends

- Julie Walpole recently 'found' Rudi still in the high care place in Norwood. (where Valmai spent time post rehab and before they would let her go back to her unit as a sole occupant.) Rudi's daughter was said to be getting him into a place in Melbourne where much German is spoken. The staff tell me that Rudi still hopes that Abella will organise that.
- Julie has confirmed that Robert Ballie is still living independently at Prospect.
- Patience has downsized and Julie doesn't have a new address for her, but she will find a way to send her a calendar.
- Dan & Joye have closed their PO box but still seem to be at the same residential address.
- Sally O'Wheel has been to Brisbane to attend the Ring Cycle. She stayed with Valerie Joy and was inspired by Valerie's involvement in Friends Peace Teams. She brought back a newsletter for the meeting. She attended Meeting for Worship at Kelvin Grove and was impressed with the large growing meeting.

## A series of coincidences

MY NON-QUAKER daughter was holidaying in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Their accommodation near my niece's home was on Friends Hill Road, Mosgiel. She emailed this info to me knowing I'd be interested.

Curiosity piqued, I looked at Quakers Aotearoa website and clicked the <CONTACT> button for Dunedin Monthly Meeting. I wrote my inquiry – not expecting to hear for a while.

A reply appeared almost immediately from the Dunedin Clerk, Elizabeth Duke – a familiar name as former Secretary of FWCC who attended our Yearly Meeting gatherings a couple of times. Since then we've had a stream of emails – including that Dunedin Friends are hosting the Summer Gathering at Mosgiel over New Year (29 Dec. to 6 Jan.). The climate at Mosgiel seems to be rather Tasmanian – but a bit more like the highland lakes here as far as snowfalls. I've visited the venue's website and was sorely tempted to make a trip to take in time with family plus the Summer Gathering. Hearing that I was

- Jason McLeod has been accepted into 'Teach for Australia' and has been doing an online intensive summer school. He did a prac at Latrobe High School and enjoyed it! Next year he has a job at Kingston High School and will be teaching Indonesian, among other things, but his summer school has no LOTE component. If you are a LOTE teacher in the south, he would be glad to hear from you. He will be moving south in January.

- Martha Sheldon has moved to the Mersey Rehab and it is easier for Kevin to visit her there.



getting a new knee in November, Elizabeth pointed out that the site is sloping and has many steps and stairs so it looked like I lucked out there.

Elizabeth also queried what our Worshipping Group were planning for World Quaker Day on 1 October. Dunedin Friends were going to watch the video UBUNTU from FWCC, which is a six-minute introduction to the August 2024 Friends World Plenary in South Africa.

<https://fwcc.world/living-the-spirit-of-ubuntu-in-2023/>

*Julie Walpole*



Dunedin Meeting House

## Book reviews

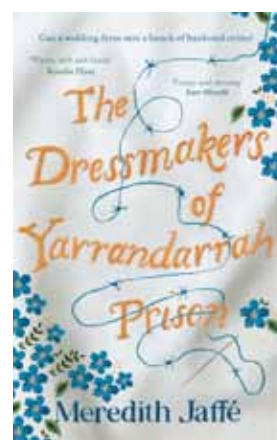
### ***The Benevolent society of ill-mannered ladies*, by Alison Goodman, 2023, HarperCollins, 464pp (In Libraries Tasmania)**

Lent to me by my Quaker daughter. This is book one of a planned deliberate trilogy. Set in Regency England, this story is of unmarried high society 'ladies' (amateur detectives) who team up with a highwayman to rescue various other 'ladies' who are victims of the gender and of the time and of the men responsible for their care and wellbeing. I didn't notice any Quaker links in the early pages, but Quakers certainly come into the story by the end. Are we surprised that Regency feminist activists are in contact with Friends? Read it for pleasure but there's also some Quaker info in there – and it checks out for accuracy. [Allison has also written a young adult trilogy in a similar vein the first book being *Lady Helen and the dark days club* which I'm currently reading.]



### ***The Dressmakers of Yarrandarraah prison*, by Meredith Jaffe, 2021, HarperCollins, 368pp (In Libraries Tasmania).**

I was attracted to this book partially by the fact that the cover was a piece of embroidery – in fact someone was commissioned to embroider the cover. I don't know where I found it – probably in a free book exchange/street library. I had to look at Friends in Stitches webpage to check that it wasn't Quaker Stitch used for the title!



This story revolves around a dysfunctional family where dad, Derek, is in prison, mum won't speak to him, and the teenage daughter is not receiving any information about him. Derek's sister-in-law arrives at visiting time after six years of no visitors. She announces that the daughter is about to be married and Dad's presence/absence needs to be acknowledged at the wedding. Derek decides to embroider a cushion as a wedding gift. His fellow stitchers convince him and the sewing tutor that between them all they can make a wedding gown for the bride. Various complications inherent in family life and in prison life arise as the story progresses. There are several issues encountered in the book which could make it seem like a young adult book perhaps – but hey it's a work of fiction and I enjoyed it. N.B. Yarrandarraah is an invented prison. But there is in Melbourne a Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve. Currently in the UK, embroidery and stitching are offered as diversional therapies learnings for prisoners. This is not currently the situation in Australia – particularly for male prisoners. Now here's the twist: At book club discussion, I found out that Meredith is Tasmanian. Her (mother? aunt?) is also an author and actor, Merridy Eastman. And Merridy's ancestry includes Nan Chauncy – who we all know to be a Masterman. Although Quakers don't appear in the book, the themes are certainly Quakerly.

*Both reviews by Julie Walpole*



Photo: Sue Headley

## Hobart refugee stories: Part 2 – The Sunlight Kitchen and Garden

IN LAST month's *TQN*, we told the story of Mohammad Hanif Iqbal Zada, a young Hazara man, who travelled as an unaccompanied minor from Quetta, Pakistan, and was rescued by the Australian Navy while embarking on his sea voyage from Indonesia.

Kerstin Singleton who has kept in close touch with Hanif as he has progressed through his studies and work experiences, also developed close ties with the wider Hazara community in Hobart, especially the women whom Kerstin recognised as needing alternative ways of supporting themselves to settle into life in Hobart. Kerstin has always been doing something – including homework groups, English conversation, helping with forms, attending Hazara celebrations, encouraging gardening cooperatives, and arranging work experience.

Most recently, Kerstin has been the driving force behind The Sunlight Kitchen and Garden, an initiative of the Friends of Refugee Communities (Tasmania) FORCTas, a not-for-profit organisation that also involves our Friend Peter Jones. The garden has been established in the vacant block adjacent to the former St John's Rectory, New Town. It is a safe place for people to come together, garden and socialise, and it is always looking for additional volunteers to come and support the work in the garden.

The Sunlight Kitchen is just across the road from the garden in St John's Ave. It operates out of the Kick Start Arts facility on Fridays between 11am – 2pm. This is the former girls' orphanage building to the (Hobart City) side of St John's Church, at the top of the Avenue. Entry is around the back of the building and that takes the visitor into the beautiful courtyard or walled garden that has been redeveloped during Kickstart Arts tenure. The entrance is always well signposted during Sunlight Kitchen hours.

At the far end of the old orphanage building is the entrance to the canteen come dining, come social come classroom facility that Sunlight Kitchen runs on a Friday. There are kitchen facilities where women prepare food for sale either as a sit down lunch or take away. The menu varies from week to week but there is always a vegan option (and rice) and at least one meat option (plus rice). There are always bolanis (also vegan), which are a delicious stuffed flatbread. There may be some meat wraps and salad



The Sunlight Kitchen sign inside the courtyard or walled garden, from which you enter the Sunlight Kitchen. There is a lovely place to enjoy your lunch when the weather is nice. That is Gerry McGushin in the background.  
Photo: Sally. McGushin

on offer. Usually there are cakes or sweet biscuits too and freshly made chai (served with or without sugar, depending on your taste). There are also soft drinks for sale, and sometimes there might be other delicacies such as carrot jam and Afghani chutni.

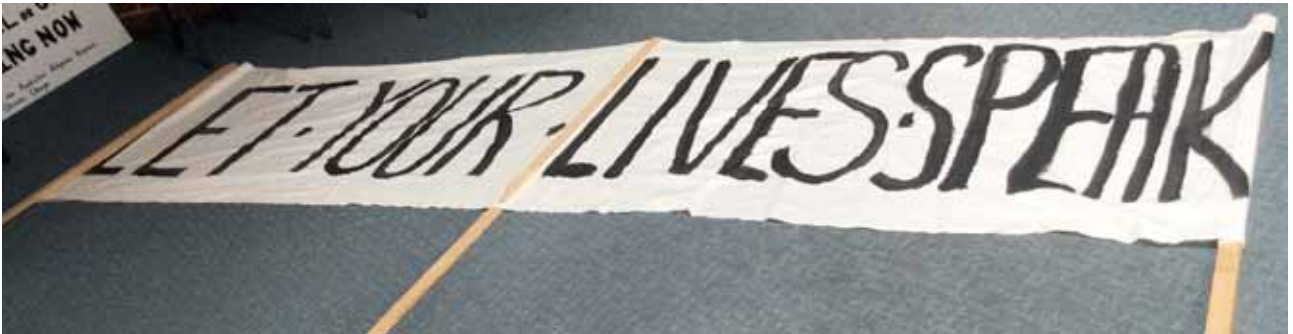
Working in Sunlight Kitchen gives the refugee women (mainly from the Hazara community) experience in food handling, both preparation and serving, retail experience and English conversation. It is a large dining room and patrons may eat inside or out in the sheltered courtyard or they can take away their food. Meanwhile one-on-one literacy classes may be held in parallel as the room is large enough to accommodate many activities. There is always something happening there with people coming and going, as well as general but not noisy chatter, and this must add interest to the literacy and conversation classes.

Again, Sunlight Kitchen always welcomes volunteers who would like to support its largely informal education classes: e.g. literacy and conversation. It welcomes donations and customers. See Peter Jones for further information or google 'The Sunlight Kitchen and Garden', or 'Friends of Refugee Communities (Tasmania)'.

*Sally McGushin*

## Quaker banners

BANNER 5: Let your lives speak: this is such a terrific message. Ideally it should have three people to support it. However two reasonably fit Friends should manage it.



BANNER 6: Vigil for Peace: this is a more specific message. It is light enough to be hand held by two people without poles. It can even be laid out on the ground/floor; in that case, one Friend could manage it very easily.



BANNER 1: Cry Freedom West Papua: this is not a specifically Quaker banner but there are a lot of Quaker sympathies for West Papua, and supporters of West Papua would love it to be displayed at every appropriate opportunity.



There are more banners, but I thought that this would start us off.

*Sally O'Wheel*

## Lies, propaganda and the West's war in Ukraine: A review

IF WE imagine that the main motivation for going to war is to protect the freedom and livelihoods of foreigners, we would be misguided. That is not how the world works, yet it is what our media would have us believe. Britain and then Australia entered the First World War to protect 'Little Belgium' from German atrocities. We went to war in Iraq to liberate the Iraqis. And so on. We know the script. So it has been in Ukraine. We support Ukraine due to an 'unprovoked invasion' by the modern Hitler, Putin.

I must admit I was taken in by the propaganda about Ukraine. So it is eye opening to read a pamphlet by Chris Nineham, a founder and current vice chair of the UK Stop the War Coalition, *Lies Propaganda and the West's War in Ukraine*.

He says there are six steps to selling the war. The public doesn't want war and so quite a job needs to be done to get us on side. The six steps are: Make it about Civil Rights; Prove the Enemy is Pure Evil; Make it a War for Freedom; Bury the Background; Demonise Dissenters; and at last, Explain that Peace Means War. In his pamphlet Nineham elaborates on these steps.

I was gobsmacked to learn that the US has funded Ukraine, largely for the military, to the tune of \$US63 billion, which makes my eyes glaze over. To put that in perspective, that is 40 times the amount spent over 20 years in Afghanistan. Europe has seen the biggest transfer of armaments to Ukraine since World War II.

And was it an 'unprovoked invasion'? This is explored in the chapter about burying the background. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia disbanded the Warsaw Pact and asked that NATO be likewise dissolved since Russia and the West were no longer at war. But instead, NATO has expanded, thirteen Eastern Block countries have joined NATO in the last three decades. The West kept pushing Russia into a war.

The West has gone to war with many world leaders who they have called 'the new Hitler'. Hitler personifies Evil; World War II is the only twentieth century war which retains universal legitimacy. But, as Chris Nineham points out, this is 'wildly inappropriate'. Nazi Germany was an overwhelmingly powerful state, the second biggest economy in the world, whereas Russia is a declining regional power. It produces 1.32% of global GDP, compared to 40% of the US and its allies. Three US states have bigger economies than Russia. In 2021 the US spent 11

times more on its military than Russia. While Putin is a ruthless and authoritarian leader, the tag 'New Hitler' is used as a tool of propaganda to lead us unquestioningly to waging war. Anyone who says otherwise is open to criticism as an 'appeaser'. 'As unpalatable as it may seem

... the only major military power on earth capable of assaulting, invading and occupying foreign territories effectively ... threatening other countries in the way Germans and Japanese threatened their neighbours ... is the United States.'

'Russia is the target of one of the most ruthlessly effective proxy wars in modern history' wrote a professor at John Hopkins University, Hal Brands, a supporter of the war. 'The key to the strategy is to find a committed local partner – a proxy willing to do the killing and the dying – and then load it up with arms, money and intelligence needed to inflict shattering blows on a vulnerable rival.'

This is an enlightening pamphlet. As you can see I have started quoting huge slabs of it and I have to stop!

In the end we know that no-one can win this war. It is taking a catastrophic toll on Ukraine and also world trade as Africa starves. Meanwhile some people are getting rich selling arms.

The pamphlet ends with a call for people to join the Stop the War Coalition and get involved in protests. 'As the world becomes more dangerous, we must become more active.'

*Sally O'Wheel*

**Any thoughts on this argument? Feel free to start a conversation:**

**[rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:rmtasnews@quakersaustralia.info)**

**Here are a few words to spark discussion:**

Very interesting review. I still don't know what Ukraine should have done when invaded by Russia.

Also, I think it's likely that NATO doesn't want to invade Russia, particularly if Russia is economically weak – and Russia would know that.

If Wikipedia is correct, although Russia may be economically weak:

*The Russian Armed Forces maintain the world's largest stockpile of nuclear weapons, and possess the world's second-largest fleet of ballistic missile submarines; they are also one of only three national militaries (alongside those of the United States and China) that operate strategic bombers.*

So Russia is still a military threat to European countries and I think would benefit more in economic terms from invading nearby economically rich countries, such as Ukraine, than vice versa! Just a thought!

*Sue Headley*

