

# Quaker

Tasmanian  
Newsletter

June 2024

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'Quakers demonstrating for peace at Franklin Square.'

Date: 1 January 1962. Photo: Unidentified Creating Agency (XX1). Source: Tasmanian Archives

## Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter

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

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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.

## The Rajah quilt

CURRENTLY THERE is an exhibition of quilts on display at the National Gallery, A Century of Quilts. The most cherished quilt in their collection is the Rajah Quilt, created by convicts with the support of Elizabeth Fry's British Ladies Society, a Quaker women's group. They were prison reform activists. On the 29th of May, along with over 800 others, I attended an online presentation by the National Gallery: The Rajah Quilt Up Close. You can see this presentation on You Tube. There is a link to it on the QA Facebook page. It was hosted by Georgia Stynes who spoke with the curator of the exhibition, Simeran Maxwell and the National Gallery head conservator, Debbie Ward.

These are some of the things I learned. Firstly, the quilt is very large. Much larger than a regular bed quilt and it is not meant to go on a bed. It was made to present to Lady Franklin as a memorial piece. The presenters thought that probably other quilts would have also been stitched on the voyage, and on other convict ships, which would have been designed for use. These quilts would have kept people warm in Hobart and they wore out and have not survived. The reason this quilt survived is that it wasn't used as a quilt but was packed away until it was found in 1987 in Scotland. No one knows how it got there.

Because it is so large, and so fragile, it has to be displayed on a slope so that its weight doesn't pull down on it and damage it. It has to be very carefully packed away so that there are no folds or any fabric touching.

I noticed Jan Blakeney putting in a plug in the chat for the quilt to be returned to Tasmania but all this detail about its conservation, made me think that it would be better off remaining in Canberra, which probably has better funding and is a safer environment. Also it really is a heritage for all Australians. While I understand it has special significance for Tasmanians, I see little prospect of the National Gallery giving it up. It has national significance as thousands of Australians are descended from those Rajah convict women.

There were a lot of questions from the audience about the sewing techniques evident in the work. As I am not a quilter, some of this was over my head. But basically this is a work of appliqué, where cut out shapes of fabric are stitched onto a backing. These fabric pieces would have been off cuts from Quaker cotton businesses in England, dress fabrics. I

found that very interesting, the idea that the Quaker business community had supported Elizabeth Fry and the British Ladies Society in this practical way.

They gave a pretty good rap about Elizabeth Fry although there is so much more one could say about her! Yes, she had eleven children but they didn't add that she suffered from postnatal depression. Her husband was very supportive of her ministry and it should also have been noted that it was not uncommon for Quaker women to travel in the ministry away from their domestic arena. The Society encouraged it.

I thought they should have mentioned one of the big prison reforms that Elizabeth Fry achieved which was sex segregation of prisons. Prior to her activism there were no single-sex prisons for women, who were greatly at risk of assault. They had to sell their bodies for food. Elizabeth achieved a massive reform when special women's prisons were established. All the other reforms that Elizabeth Fry pursued came after they had established a safe environment in a single-sex prison. It was basic.

All in all though, I watched the presentation with some Quaker pride. How lucky are we that this work has survived, that it has been acquired by the National Gallery and is so valued by the community. How marvellous to think that Quaker women enabled these convict women to produce something so very gorgeous. They could tell from the stitching that some of the convicts were skilled needlewomen and others were not. You can see the names of some of these Rajah women on the bricks in the footpath in Campbell Town. I feel a deeper connection to them now.

I am curious about Kezia Hayter who was paid to accompany the 180 women on the Rajah. She was a member of the British Ladies Society who paid her fare. Presumably she organised the creation of the quilt on board. It was she who presented the quilt to Jane Franklin. Was she a Friend? Apparently she didn't remain in Tasmania. What did she report to Elizabeth Fry about the conditions in Tasmania of women convicts? What became of her? Women's history, often elusive.

The exhibition will be at the National Gallery until 25 August.

*Sally O'Wheel*





Kezia Hayter, Unidentified women of the HMS Rajah convict ship, *The Rajah quilt*, 1841, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, gift of Les Hollings and the Australian Textiles Fund, 1989

## News of Friends

KEVIN HAS been able to return to Meeting in Deloraine and we are all very happy to see him. He is getting respite care to come. Life for Kevin and Martha is very challenging, but Martha is excited because a physiotherapist is coming to visit her for the next 10 weeks with the aim of enabling her to

transfer to the car. Kevin has sold two motor bikes and bought two, so situation normal.

ROBIN WILKINSON is home from hospital and in good spirits.

## Listening into Being report

WHAT IS it to listen? We listen at many levels – out of courtesy, to acknowledge, and to enable others.

Thirteen listeners gathered at the Meeting House on Saturday 25 May to explore what can be called ‘sacred listening’ – the listening of enablement. Our workshop was built around writing of Douglas Steere :

*To ‘listen’ another’s soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.*

And further built around the access each of us has to our Inner Teacher and creating safe space for it to emerge.

We spent the day exploring elements that build our capacity to offer this service to others. We explored creating safe space, the importance of deep confidentiality, and the vital importance of listening without advising, saving, fixing or correcting – each a temptation for listeners. Open, honest questions offered us a tool for drawing out the invaluable wisdom of our Inner Teachers.

Our day was a mix of brief inputs and practice. We practiced ‘walk and talk’ an alternative to sitting face-to-face to listen. As the day progressed, Siobhan Harpur created a visual record – which is included below.

We closed with a sense of the value of the practice of sacred listening to building our Quaker community.

From one participant, new to our community: *I will hold this way of being in my heart and continue to practice. Everything, from the poem, the invitations, the activities, the handouts and quotes, the flow, the deep listening walk, the triads, Siobhan visualising, made space to deepen. It was lovely, and like an unfolding. By the end of the day, I noticed a dropping-in, like a much longer retreat had occurred! I loved that it was broken down into practical tangible morsels.*

Ministry is intending to move forward from this to inviting you to a weekend workshop on Meetings for Worship for Clearness, which utilise sacred listening.

*Drew Thomas and Tara Ulbrich*

### Gratitudes

I offer great gratitude to those who supported us out-of-towners in delivering our workshop. To Sally for accommodating us, Felicity for eldering us, Siobhan for illustrating us, and Siobhan, Jen and Margaret for being our feet on Hobart ground.

I especially acknowledge the gift of working with Tara, only recently among us, whose wisdom and clarity, and shared leadership were invaluable.







Siobhan Harpur's illustrations of the workshop.



## Know one another – Jenny Seaton

JENNY SEATON'S second job was working for a mining and oil exploration company in South Africa. When she left that job she travelled with a group of other young people through Africa and at last found herself looking for a spot to put down her towel on a Nigerian beach. Nowhere was free of black globules of oil, discharged by the oil tankers in the bay. That was the moment Jenny decided that she didn't actually want to work for oil exploration companies. What's a girl to do? Why not try teaching?

Deciding not to risk her life crossing the Sahara in a shonky truck she flew to London with £20 to her name, needing £25 to get her luggage out of storage. In the queue at Australia House, picking up her mail, someone she met suggested she try for a teaching job with the Inner London Education Authority Office across the road. With no teaching qualifications but a degree from New England University in GeoPhysics and Maths, Jenny was posted at a school that very afternoon. She has hair-raising stories of teaching in London.

Jenny lived in London for three years and during that time she met Delton, a handsome American hippy, a youth worker. Fifty years ago in June, they left the north of Holland on their bicycles to ride to Athens, planning to travel overland to Australia from there. From Athens to Alexandria to Kenya by trucks, by boat to Bombay, across India by train, to Burma, to Laos, to Thailand. The plan from there was to get to East Timor and fly to Darwin. But Cyclone Tracy intervened and that became impossible. So they flew Kuala Lumpur to Sydney.

Jenny brought Delton to her childhood home in Tasmania. Jenny's mother was descended from apple orchardists in Kettering. Her English father had been sent to boarding school in Australia during World War Two by his father, a rubber plantation manager in Malaya. Jenny had been raised in New Norfolk and as far as the end of grade 7 had attended New Norfolk schools. Then her father got a job in Armidale and they moved there. A university town was a good place to spend her teenage years and she studied geophysics and maths at university. She actually wanted to study geology but she didn't have Chemistry<sup>1</sup> so that was ruled out.

Now back in Tasmania, Jenny and Delton lived in a group house in Mortimer Avenue. Then Delton, with his background as a youth worker, got a job at Ashley Boys Home teaching woodwork. They moved to a rented house in Montana, near



Jenny in her garden at Berriedale.

Deloraine, with its magnificent backdrop of the Western Tiers. They craved a back-to-the-land existence and checked out the abandoned and derelict church nearby. It wasn't for sale.

With baby #1, Orion, in tow and pregnant with her second baby, Jenny and Delton decided to spend a year in America. They went to Delton's home in Portland, Oregon. One day a telegram arrived from Australia from Kim Booth informing them that the Montana Church was up for sale. It was going to be auctioned, should he bid for it for them, and what was their price? They said \$3,000. In the end they paid \$2,200 for it and the money was put up by new Jackey's Marsh residents who had never met Jenny and Delton. Such was the new world we were building!

It was during the Montana years that Jenny and Delton began meeting with Friends. Delton had had positive experiences with Quakers during the Vietnam War when he was considering conscientious objection. He was drawn to Quakers because of their pacificism. They had attended a Meeting for Worship in Hobart. But the death of a young friend in Deloraine had them seeking spiritual connections and comfort. They started regularly attending the new Deloraine meeting. I will always remember Jenny arriving with soup and flowers.

From here Jenny's involvement with Quakers grew and grew. She has had numerous roles both in the Regional Meeting and Yearly Meeting. She was



the Newsletter Editor in the time when she used to save it to a floppy disk and get it printed and sent out in the post. She has been the Membership Secretary for a long time and now she is on the finance committee and the Care committee of TRM.

She and Delton, now residents of Berriedale overlooking the Derwent, still love to travel overland

and now they travel in style with a comfortable fancy camper. When at home Jenny is busy in her garden, with her grandchildren, sewing and knitting and keeping healthy by swimming at the Aquatic Centre

*Sally O'Wheel*



Jenny and Delton on the day they set off from Holland on their bikes. Photo supplied by Jenny Seaton.

## Meeting for stitching in June

ON SATURDAY the 8th of June, Margaret Bywater and Sally O'Wheel met for stitching.

Margaret was able to assemble the stitching frame and started to attach her panel to the frame. We were talking so much that she initially sewed it on sideways and had to start again. She is now ready to begin stitching the Elinor Robey panel.

Pat Mavromatis called in and she and Margaret reminisced about Linor Robey. They had both been close to her and also to Margy Robey. Pat brought out her mother Nancy Hewitt's booklet of a history of Tasmanian Quakers and we discussed the idea of getting this reprinted. There are a lot of people featured in that book who would make suitable subjects for an embroidered panel, including Pat's ancestor Henry Propsting, who was a convict. We agreed that a panel about Quaker convicts is needed.

Sally was working on her 'Quakers at Sea' panel and has finished stitching the ship's railing. She had to decide on some writing to go down the bottom. The original quote which was about the long distance they had to travel – From the Cape twice the distance as the distance from England to America.



Margaret and Sally enjoyed refreshments after the Meeting for Stitching!

Sally was not feeling satisfied with this and had read a selection of other Quaker diaries describing the sea voyage. She consulted with Margaret who liked 'The ship was a cloud of canvas ...'. The other contender was, 'Farewell to the old year (1838) in which I have taken the most important step in my life'. Watch this space.

*Sally O'Wheel*

## Thriving through crisis: Skills for self and country

MANY OF us feel powerless in the face of the unfolding climate emergency, species extinctions, and global chaos. This course affirms us in the capacities we have and helps us become more skilful in responding to these interconnected crises. The course draws on Quaker, Buddhist and Permaculture practices. As Quaker William Penn wrote, we each have within us a guide to show us what to do, and we each have been given the ability to follow that guide.

The course will take a practical and spiritual approach to ways of responding creatively and constructively to 'the end of normal' insofar as the crises of our time touch our own experience directly. The course will include the practice of deep listening and understanding the Self, the Other and the Landscape; as well as a deep practical understanding of how connecting with and listening to the Earth can empower us to live effectively and joyfully in a world of disintegration. The course will be structured so that there is a balance between guided class work and rest, and allowing ample connection with the landscape around Silver Wattle.

Cost \$720 single room/ \$550 per person twin share (COVID restrictions may apply)

Friday, September 13, 2024 3:30 PM to Thursday, September 19, 2024 2:00 PM

Silver Wattle Quaker Centre 1063 Lake Road Bungendore Australia

This course will only run if more attendees sign up! So apply [here!](#)

