

# Quaker <sup>Tasmanian</sup> Newsletter

January 2024

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Summer harvest from the Forth Estate (Sally O'Wheel's home)  
Photo: Sally O'Wheel

## 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.

## Let Quaker women's lives speak

ALAN CLAYTON in the December 2023 *Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter* lists the social issues for which Quakers are famous: 'the abolition of slavery ... the formation of organisations for the promotion of human rights, environmental protection and disaster recovery such as Amnesty International, and Oxfam'. He lists our actions during the Irish famine, after WWI, and Kindertransport, rescuing Jewish children. This is all true, good to remember and to share with the wider community.

However, it irks me that our record of standing up for women's rights is not included in this list of good deeds. Let us not downplay it! Women make up over 50% of the population and we matter. It is part of our oppression to put ourselves last but we Friends can value our women and our 350-year struggle for equality.

Quakers always thought, unlike most people in the 17th century, that women had souls and so had as much access to God as men did. Therefore we could minister in Meetings.

One of the Valiant 60 was Mary Fisher. She and Ann Austin travelled in the ministry to the New World, Barbados and Boston. They were arrested in Boston, stripped naked and their bodies examined for signs of witchcraft. They tried to starve them but they were supported by the local innkeeper who was converted to Quakerism. They were deported after five weeks.

Not discouraged by her experiences, Mary Fisher then joined a group of six Friends and travelled to the Ottoman Empire. The English Consul in Smyrna tricked the Friends into going

on a boat to Venice but Mary realised they were going the wrong way and asked to be let off on the coast of Greece. From there she travelled alone across Macedonia and Thrace until she reached the Sultan (Sultan Mehmed IV) who was camped with his army. She was able to arrange a meeting with him, describing herself as 'an ambassador of the Most High God'. The Sultan received her ministry and according to her, 'testified to the Universal Light'. She declined his offer of an armed escort and made her way to Constantinople and back to England on her own.

The work of Margaret Fell was probably the reason why Quakers have such good administration and survived, while other 17th century



Sultan Mehmed IV – Wikipedia website on Mehmed IV.



Elizabeth Fry from: <https://www.biographyonline.net/humanitarian/elizabeth-fry.html>



groups, like the Ranters and the Diggers, fell away. (Indeed, I may be a re-incarnated Ranter or Digger!)

Another Quaker woman in that period was Mary Dyer who was martyred in Boston in 1655. 'She did hang as a flag for others to take example by', said an official of the General Court.

The examination as depicted in a 1853 painting by T. H. Matteson – Wikipedia website on Mary Fisher.

In the 17th century, women Friends also took up women's issues. They had good reputations as midwives, and Margaret Fell's daughters were strong supporters of mothers breast feeding their own babies, and not handing them over to a wet nurse.

Equality in education and co-education schools were issues taken up by early Friends.

Elizabeth Fry, who suffered dreadfully from postnatal depression and had eleven children, was lead to prison reform. She worked tirelessly in English prisons and travelled widely in Britain and the continent, lobbying for her cause. She had a particular concern for women prisoners, pioneering single-sex prisons where women were safe from rape and where they could be educated to earn a living outside of prostitution.

American Quaker women, active in the anti-slavery movement, took up the issue of women's suffrage, seeing the connection between their own oppression and that of the slaves. There were ructions in the anti-slavery movement because some people thought that raising the issue of women's rights detracted from the anti-slavery message.

On the UK Quaker website it says:

*The Women's Suffrage Movement in the USA is widely considered to date from the First Women's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York State in 1848. This meeting was instigated by five women who had been closely involved in the abolition of slavery, all but one of whom were Quaker.*

Later, in the 1920s, another American Quaker, Alice Paul, took up the struggle for women's suffrage and saw it through.

However, for all that, women Friends have sometimes had to complain about the place of women in our Society. This is not unlike other liberation struggles where sometimes our practice has not met our aspirations. I salute my cousin-three-times-removed, Mary Jane Godlee, (aka Cousin Nina), described as 'one exasperated female', who complained that the Women's Meeting was 'chiefly occupied with reading aloud extracts from the Book of Discipline to fill up the time till men Friends come out; some reform is certainly needed'. She went on: the state of affairs was 'very curious and ... rather painful to those ... who may have believed in the theory that women Friends have always had an equal place with their brethren in the Church'. Mary Jane Godlee, was an elder and overseer of Ratcliff and Barking Monthly Meeting.



Cousin Nina – Mary Jane Godlee, Elder & Overseer of Ratcliff & Barking Monthly Meeting

Nevertheless, although we do not live in a perfect Society, Quakers have lived the testament to women's liberation over a very long period. It is one of the strong reasons why I joined.

Women's rights matter. Let us not hide our Light under a bushel.

*Sally O'Wheel.  
(Ranter)*

## Tasmania Regional Meeting Care Committee

JUST AS we are all ministers in our Quaker community, we are all carers. A great deal of caring happens across our community all the time. Individual F/friends care for and support each other in all sorts of ways.

However, we also have a Care Committee that takes on various roles providing pastoral care to our community. We can provide support for friends who are unwell and/or needing assistance, including help with visits at home or hospital, shopping, food, transport, lawn mowing, respite for carers ... We also organise gatherings, such as Friendly Fridays, where friends can socialise and get to know each other better, as well as learn more about the very diverse

range of activities about which friends are passionate. If you have any suggestions for a gathering, we'd love to hear from you.

To offer support, we need to know there is a need. If you, or anyone you know is unwell, or could be supported through the Care Committee in some way, please contact one of us:

**Kay Allport:** 0408 906 153 (prefer text message)

**Dagmar Wilson:** [dwillson@gmail.com](mailto:dwillson@gmail.com)

**Adrian Robertson:** 0475 780 492,  
[robertsonadrian984@gmail.com](mailto:robertsonadrian984@gmail.com)

**Jenny Seaton:** 0488 695 150,  
[jennyseaton85@gmail.com](mailto:jennyseaton85@gmail.com)



## News of Friends

- Martha Sheldon is still in rehab but is expected to come to live at Kevin's place in about two weeks. Kevin will be her full-time carer. He is in the process of rearranging his house so that the hospital bed and other necessary items can be fitted in. Martha will be in a wheelchair.
- Other new attenders at the North West Meeting are also facing challenges. David Palfrey has diabetes and was told he would have to have his toes amputated after they became gangrenous. However, his toes have been saved. He is being visited daily by the community nurse and is making good progress. It hasn't stopped him coming to Meeting.
- Angeline Drury is temporarily camping at the caravan park at Quamby Corner and hoping to find a place to live soon.

*Derwent River, Hobart. Photo: Sue Headley*



## Peace memorials in Tavistock Square

ON A sunny August morning in 2018, I walked through London streets, a favourite habit over the years.

This morning my plan was to see Tavistock Square where I had read there was a memorial to Gandhi.

As usual the square was planted with large plane trees and, as I entered, the first notice said Virginia Woolf had lived there.

Then a memorial to the first woman surgeon in the United Kingdom, Louisa Aldrich Blake 1865–1925. She must have been a tough lady to get into Medical School then, never mind endure all the years of training to become a surgeon. It was difficult enough in the 1950s when I did it!

Next a statue of Gandhi in a garden with rosettes and flowers of thanks for his example.

Further along the path is a flowering cherry tree not in flower of course but a reminder of those in Japan. Planted in memory of the victims of Hiroshima by the Honourable Mayor of Camden, Councillor Mrs Millie Miller, J.P., 6th August 1967.

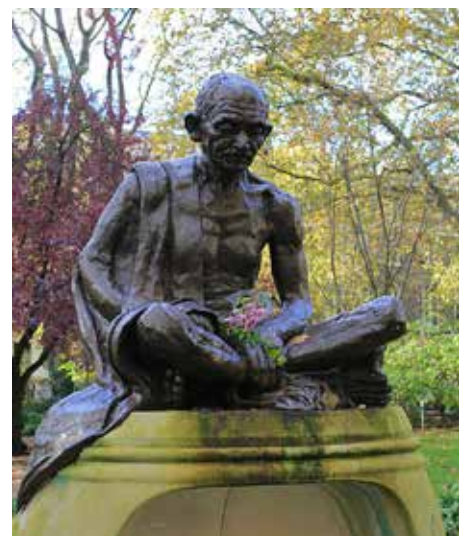
At the end of the park, a large grey rock with carved words 'To all those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill – their foresight and courage give us hope. To commemorate men and women conscientious objectors to military service all over the world and in every age. Placed by the Peace Pledge Union, president Michael Tippett

on International Conscientious Objectors Day 15 May 1994.

Several benches dedicated to special people, one to 'grandmother and friend'.

And out of the park but taking a large corner of the Square is the British Medical Association Headquarters, designed by Edwin Lutyens. It was the site of a terrorist bus bomb in 2005 and the last memorial is to the victims of that bombing.

*Jenni Bond*



Statue of Mahatma Gandhi by Fredda Brilliant, in Tavistock Square, London, UK. This statue was unveiled in 1968. Image: Stu's Images, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0

## 65030 We are all connected to Campbelltown



Acrylic on canvas. 2m x 3m – Blak Douglas 2018

IN 2018 the Campbelltown Arts Centre in NSW celebrated its 30-year anniversary with a special exhibition. I was living further south at the time, about a 40-minute drive away, so it was easy for me to attend.

Many of us now know of the artist Blak Douglas from the 2022 Archibald Prize. Not so widely known in 2018, his contribution *65030 We are all connected to Campbelltown* was on prominent display. The title of the work is an immediate challenge to the viewer and to the Arts Centre itself. Standing in front of the work, my first thought was the central image was an abstraction of a giant mining machine. On further being present, with the 'presence' of this confronting piece, I saw it as the external architectural profile of the building I was standing in, and the ambiguity of my first impression was the deliberate intention of the artist.

So all of us who viewed the work got a bit of a 'telling off'... but there was something like a palimpsest hidden behind the work. The artist had painted graphic images of flora, fauna and serpentine dots in clear acrylic; only visible if you waited long enough for the light to change or changed your viewing position.

At that point, for me, the painting gained a vertical dimension, it became memorable. With a wry smile the artist was asking me: 'Can you wait long enough for the light to change? Are you able to change your view from a point, to another viewpoint? We have a gift we wish to share with you, can you accept it?'

These are questions which have remained with me. Here is a photograph of a section of the 'hidden' part of the painting that I was able to take.

*Steve Louis Smith*



This is a link to a short interview Blak Douglas gave after winning the Archibald prize in 2022 for the work *Moby Dickens*: <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/art/watch-listen-read/read/blak-douglas/>

## The JanYM24 Experiment: A success

ACTUALLY, A vibrant collage of successes. Was it perfect? – No. Some concerns are to be worked on if we discern to hold a similar event in the future.

JanYM24 was organised by a Task Group operating under YMOC (the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee). It was offered as a response to a commonly expressed want from Australian Friends to gather more often to better sustain our community. And to engage a wider group of Friends in corporate discernment of our community's way forward.

As the Task Group wove together the want for more frequent spiritual development and community engagement, our QA Coordinator identified our venture as a 'holy experiment'.

More complete details of our experiment will appear in report proceedings and Minutes.

The actual Quakers Australia AGM, around which the program was built, attracted 84 people. Perhaps twice as many gathered online over the two days and two evenings together.

Included were: two Friendly Schools; worship (including an all-ages Faith and Play session); information sharing sessions; a preparatory session; and two formal sessions. We had opportunities to

meet Cressida Hall, the new QSA Manager; Esther Hill, the newly appointed Principal of Friends' School; and Holly Dhyes, the new QA Communications & Publicity Manager. Plus a concert. And much more.

With a generous amount of free time between sessions, Friends were delighted to be seeing people online that they had not caught up with since Covid lockdowns struck in early 2020.

The weekend's final reflection session by participants captured a great deal of delight, and some pointers for the future. The final meeting of the Task Group last Tuesday also captured contributions to success, noting the broad involvement of Friends in elderring, technical support, coordinating pods, visual note taking, leading summer schools, and clerking sessions.

As further documents emerge, I encourage all Friends to explore them. In my judgement, a highly successful experiment. Our thanks to all who contributed and participated.

*Drew Thomas*

*On behalf of JanYM24 Task Group (YMOC)*

*25 January 2024*

Article reprinted from *Streamlines*, with permission.

## Feeling creative? Ready for a challenge?

THIS YEAR, the Quaker Tapestry Museum in the UK is putting on an exhibition to coincide with George Fox's 400th Anniversary, launching at the end of March:

'Alongside this we are inviting children and young people to submit their artwork for a digital exhibition to go on our website.

'Everyone who submits will have their artwork added to the website and additionally, 1st 2nd and 3rd place will be awarded book vouchers. The winners will be chosen by our Curator. The deadline for submission is the Thursday 15th February at 11:59 PM. All entries should be emailed to [info@quaker-tapestry.co.uk](mailto:info@quaker-tapestry.co.uk)

'The brief is to create an artwork inspired by the teachings of George Fox or by the Quaker Tapestry. This could be designing your own tapestry panel or, for example: drawings, crafts, photos or poems. We are trying to be as non-specific as possible to inspire creative responses!'



More information at:

<https://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk/2024/01/29/george-fox-digital-exhibition-competition/>





## Quaker banners

TRM HAS a number of banners that are available for Friends to use at appropriate events. There are large ones that are best displayed by tying them along a fence or similar such as the 'Quakers for Peace and Justice and much, much more. [www.quakers.org.au](http://www.quakers.org.au)'. However most can be held or carried. There are some that can easily be managed by one person but the medium-sized ones need two or even three people. If they are to be held, or carried for a longish period, it would be useful to have a rotating team of Friends to assist.

The banners are kept in the Children's Room, (Hobart Meeting House) on top of the shelves by the door. One person can get them down but it is much easier with two so that one person can reach up and pass each banner down. A tall person will need to use a small step ladder to reach to the top of the shelves. The small step ladders are usually kept in



Image shows where the banners are kept in the Children's Room and the A-frame step ladder that Sally uses to access them.

the store room off the foyer near the main entrance door. A shorter person (like me) actually needs to use the A-frame step ladder that is also kept in the store room. It can be especially handy to have a second person to help move this ladder from one room to the other.

The banners have been collected over the years. Essentially the Peace and Justice Committee is the custodian of the banners but there is no formal process. The banners are available to anyone who can put them to good use anywhere in Tasmania. They were made to be displayed.

The collection keeps growing and for the most part the banners just sit on top of the shelves.

*Sally McGushin*

Apologies to Sally McGushin as the second part of her article was published in the December *TQN* by mistake and with an incorrect attribution.



This banner, made by Maxine Barry, is a nice, light-weight environmental poster that can easily be handled by one person. However it is not that strong and it may get damaged relatively easily. That is no reason not to use it. It won't be any use staying on top of the shelves.



This is the largest banner and it reads 'Quakers for Peace and Justice and much, much more. [www.quakers.org.au](http://www.quakers.org.au)'. It would be great to see it hung up on display somewhere.