

The Australian Friend

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Spiritual nurture and service



Artists' Retreat at Silver Wattle

Editorial

A recurring theme in this month's issue is the need to take care of ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually. The needs of the world are many, and our concerns are many. But to tackle these concerns we need the strength to carry on, and the faith to believe we can make a difference.

The report of the creative arts weekend at Silver Wattle reminds us of the value of doing something joyful. Bruce Henry, reflecting on the task of being Presiding Clerk, reminds us of the importance of community, especially in-person gatherings. And Friends continue to struggle to express their sustaining experience of the Divine.

But the practical work of Quakers past and present also inspires us to continue to put our testimonies into practice. We hear of Lilian Foxcroft and the Suffragette movement, of Aletia Dundas' work for peace, of Ro Morrow's work with refugees. Felipe Oliviera writes of counselling services to combat homelessness and violence among men, and Quaker Service Australia continues to improve nutrition through permaculture and community building. All these activities are undertaken in conjunction with like-minded friends who are members of other faith groups, or none. But to continue to play our valuable role in these fields we need to remain well grounded in the Truth.

RAE LITTING

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Artists' Retreat at Silver Wattle



Openings and closings

BRUCE HENRY | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING AND PRESIDING CLERK

Most people wonder if the job they have is right for them. Parker Palmer struggled to find his vocation. He gave up his job as a community organiser and waited to find the path right for him – and he found it!

He comments 'Each time a door closes, the rest of the world opens up. All we need to do is stop pounding on the door that just closed, turn around – and welcome the largeness of life that now lies open to our soul.'

At least twice in my career, I decided to leave my workplace. Walking away gave me the freedom to look for a new job, usually in a completely different setting. Thus, at various times I have found myself working with a group of pensioners in London, in the disability sector, with Community Aid Abroad (now Oxfam), as well as teaching. I don't regret any of these doors opening and closing.

When I was approached to be Presiding Clerk, I didn't feel up to the task. I thought of half-a-dozen others who seemed more suitable than me and thought of a number of reasons to say no.

I am in awe of Friends' wisdom as well as the love and care they show for each other and for Quaker business. How could I 'preside' over this impressive lot? I was heartened by the confidence that Nominations Committee had in me

and by a Clearness Group that searched my thinking. I was also cheered up by George Fox saying 'I had received that opening from the Lord that to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ'. For me that meant we are equal before God, no matter what our qualifications are or how articulate we are. Filling this position might be possible for me.

A number of former Clerks told me what a privilege it was to serve in this role. I accepted the opportunity to take on this new experience in that spirit. I knew that I would be learning on the job.

I and many others when offered a new opportunity have had to give up something to make it work. When we wanted to be volunteer teachers in a developing country, a friend said that Quakers do 'interesting things in Africa'. That led Elaine and me to a Quaker school in Kenya.

To open that door and enjoy the whole experience of living in a small village in West Kenya, we had to forgo some financial security. We had a wonderful experience, we became better teachers, we learnt to live simply and we discovered Quakers. This rewarded us well; we gained much more than we could give.

I feel that I have become acquainted with Quakers very slowly, by peeling back 'layers of the onion'. Each peeling back has demanded a little more commitment and raised a few more questions about my life. First, I enjoyed sitting in silence and appreciated Friends' undemanding acceptance. Then I did a bit more reading and realised the

rich wisdom in writings like *Advices and Queries*. Later, I became interested in the 'Religious' part of the Society of Friends and discovered something of the power amongst these 'silent assemblies of God's people'.

Each role that Nominations Committee invited me to take on was another opening up, and required me to lay down something else. In particular, being invited to be an elder made me think and read more deeply and enter worship with intent. How should an elder behave? What could I possibly offer to others? I enjoyed attending Silver Wattle as an elder and being part of the Silver Wattle Elder Enrichment Program (SWEEP).

I have found daily readings (for instance Henri Nouwen and Richard Rohr) opened me up to a deeper experience of Spirit. *Quaker Faith & Practice* is another wonderful resource for me.

Meeting for Learning in Brisbane 2015 was special for me. Meeting for Learning seems to me a great model for building a spiritual community. I remember in one Meeting for Worship the ministry 'Remember, you are unique, precious, a child of God'. That spoke to me, it reassured me, but I've been asking what it means ever since! It was only later that I realised it came from *Advices & Queries*!

I have always been interested in music, especially since I was a boy chorister in St Paul's Cathedral choir. I love church music and especially the harmonies. 'How Can I Keep from Singing?' is a favourite of mine, the more so since we sing it in the Victorian Trade Union Choir, of which I'm a

member. I hope we Quakers can find more opportunities to sing together!

The poetry of Mary Oliver and John O'Donohue has nourished me and I've loved some poetry workshops led by Michael Griffith. I always enjoy Andrew Brion's poems and it was good to be part of a writing group led by David Parris.

Many of us need some guidance about if and when to switch focus or take up a role. Nominations Committee might encourage a Friend to take up a position while the same Friend is saying to themselves 'That name would not have occurred to me!' (That was the case for me). So when Nominations Committee taps you on the shoulder, please give their invitation serious thought and consider saying 'yes'.

I think it's also wise that Quakers stick to set terms (often 3 years) for most appointments, to provide clarity to the person in that position and to discourage 'ownership' of the position. Three years is manageable for most tasks!

Openings and closings for the Society

Quakers, like everybody, have faced many practical difficulties as a result of the pandemic. We were not able to meet in person. Our children's gatherings were particularly hard-hit and we are only slowly starting to enjoy again the exuberance of our children. Now there's an opening – to get to know the children and support families to be part of Quaker life.

For many of us, Zoom has been a lifeline, and has kept people in touch with each other. Zoom has enabled us

to continue to worship together and to conduct business meetings, including with Friends at some distance from us. However, Zoom meetings risk cutting off those of us who, for whatever reason, are not comfortable with the technology.

Most Local and Regional Meetings are now meeting face-to-face. However, for Australia Yearly Meeting, Zoom is currently the way we do business. It is a powerful technology which encourages efficiency. But many of us feel that we miss opportunities for informal exchanges; perhaps more than ever we need reminding of the words of Isaac Pennington for our Zoom Meetings:

'Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another...'

Given that Zoom is not a 'warm' medium, can we find ways to be especially friendly and joyful on Zoom? More expressive use of hands and face might help.

Many people 'pass through' Quakers on their spiritual journey. Friends provide a safe, calm, thoughtful space for people to reflect on their passage through life. Others take to Quakers like a fish to water. However, can we be friendlier to people who come for the first time to Meeting for Worship? And follow them up? Is there an opening for more 'intro' sessions about Quakers, to which we can invite newcomers as well as regular attenders? And can we discuss our core beliefs more freely, and share our experience of worship and service with each other?

Quakers have a history of speaking truth to power. In this troubled world, there are a hundred openings for

Friends, for action both as individuals and corporately! There are peace and social justice concerns, climate priorities, First Nations concerns, asylum seeker action and issues around integrity to name a few. So the problem for each one of us and for the Society is to discern which of these to prioritise, and which to lay down. To take on too much can be exhausting and we are advised to lay things down when the time is right (A & Q 28)

For me, I feel committed to the weekly Vigil in support of Justice for First Nations people and climate action that Quakers are involved with.

Many Friends have decided to avoid flying in order to reduce emissions and I will try to avoid flying as the AYM Clerk.

It's important to cheer on and support those committed Friends who are challenging structures by taking on various types of non-violent action on a range of issues. Action to highlight the Land Forces Exhibitions in Queensland is just one of these initiatives.

I am very thankful for the work of the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee (QPLC) which opens up discussion and encourages action on a wide range of social issues. Please look out for their Action Alerts, which suggest action we can all take. The long list of documents they've produced can be found at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/QPLC>.

I hope you find that Quakers is a place of openings, a place of joy, where you are spiritually nourished, where Friendships grow and where your gifts are being used.

AF

Artists' Retreat at Silver Wattle

October 2022

JUDITH PEMBLETON AND PARTICIPANTS | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



Floral mandala made by Freya Paton, and redistributed by the winds and rain.



Brenda Roy shows one of her creations to Jen Newton while other participants look on – note the warm clothing and beanies! It can be very chilly at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre.

Travelling by car, train, and plane; around a dozen women and one man arrived at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre (Silver Wattle) to use their creative talents in grounded Godly play.

Our facilitator, Jen Newton of Tasmania Regional Meeting, arrived by car from Hobart with every nook and cranny in her vehicle crammed with creative resources – fabric, sticks, twine, wire and untold other ‘bits and bobs’.

Even before the retreat, participants who had been before were reaching out to one another – there were emails after the style of ‘Can’t wait to see you all’ and ‘Not long now. I’m arriving at Bungendore station on Wednesday’. Some participants have returned year after year, some were brand new and wondering what would be expected, but all found a welcome respite from whatever cares they may have left behind. Many had been starved of the

deep, face-to-face conversations with Friends of the type that can only be offered by a residential week-long stay.

For those who may not have been to Silver Wattle, the journey can be part of the adventure. From Canberra, participants can travel to Bungendore by car (half an hour), bus or train (limited services and a scenic journey). Bungendore, the nearest township to the Centre is an arts and crafts centre. Silver Wattle is another 20 minutes or so by car over a dirt road. On this visit, that road was bounded by water on both sides and had some spectacular bumps following recent heavy rainfall.

Lake George (Weereewaa in the local language) was a swollen inland sea during our stay with black swans gliding serenely. The maze, usually on-shore, was now completely submerged. The rain had also greened the lawns, which are cheerfully mowed weekly by Jonathan Benyei on his father-in-law’s tractor-mower. Shrubs, trees and kitchen gardens were abundant and that allowed our chef, Tara Cope, to add fresh green salads to each meal. Unfortunately, Tara is moving to Queensland so Silver Wattle has a

vacancy for a flexible and cheerful chef for their retreat weeks.

Once arrived, we quickly adjusted to the Centre’s daily rhythms of worship and prayer. We gathered in a circle to give thanks (another creative experience with song, poetry and prayer) before eating, giving thanks for our food and then eating together allowed an opening of one to another with shared stories and laughter that quickly built community. The vegetarian, vegan and/or GF food for breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner was delicious and inclusive for all.

The open invitations and encouragement to ‘have a go’ at the many artistic opportunities quickly expanded the limits we may have placed on our abilities. Jen soon had her cauldrons bubbling with native cherry, privet, eucalyptus cordata and brown onion skins with iron, heated by the barbecue, an electric hotplate and an old urn in the cowshed. This became a challenge to reach over the last few days when the rain really poured, but raincoats, umbrellas and gumboots allowed work to continue!

Participants used watercolour paper



Ann Howard, (left), Freya (holding up her card) Judith Pembleton, Eileen Catanzariti, Siobhan Harpur, and Roberta Turner, (front left)



Fabric, sticks twine, wire and other 'bits and bobs'.

to make cards or dyed strips of wool or shirts – stripping off white undershirts for colourful enhancement as we began to see what could be done.

The designs were created by placing seaweed, leaves and berries in patterns then crushing the cards between two square tiles the same size and binding them tightly before dropping them into a pot and waiting for several hours for the results ('Breathe' Jen advised to slow our impatience). The results from those bubbling pots brought cries of delight as the products revealed their colours and designs and were hung up to dry.

This was Jen's third artists' retreat as facilitator. She wrote:

I do believe that the light at Silver Wattle is different and holds a space for us to create community and seek deep spiritual connection and nurture. Being able to walk freely on country in the presence of Indigenous ancestors who have cared for the country, the waterways and all who lived there, is indeed a privilege. The Artist's gathering encourages all to sink into Country, seeking that of the Divine in all and to explore the leading of their creativity in a safe space. The excitement in those present as they unwrap their first bundle from the

natural dye pot, create a small basket, paint a picture, write music, poetry or a story is contagious and is such a very nourishing experience for us all. With the generous and heartfelt support of Silver Wattle's director, Brydget Barker-Hudson, our Friend in Residence Lisa Lister (from Colorado Springs) and Marion (Marnie) James, this year's gathering was quite exceptional.

For most of us, the experience of working in groups of three on the same sheet to create a collective work was quite new. We wondered how this would work, with groups of three moving from one table to the next and adding to what was already on the paper. However, as with all the shared activities of the week, the results exceeded our imaginations.

Lisa Lister, from Colorado Springs Friends Meeting writes:

As an American Friend volunteering at Silver Wattle as Friend in Residence, it has been a joy to experience the embrace of souls gathered here for the Quaker Artist Retreat. I have been embraced in multiple ways, by laughter and levity, by encouragement and kind words, and by the passion of creating. Silver Wattle itself – its earth, lake and

sky – is embracing as well, so here we are, all cocooned together in abundant nurturing layers of gentle magnificence

Other participants expressed similar experiences, confirming that each person found joy and enrichment within this delicious week:

Friend Renee Ellerton lives in Victoria some distance from Melbourne. She expressed her experience with poetic grace:

In a rustic old stable, rolls of wool like ancient scrolls, are submerged in bubbling cauldrons full of dye. The dye is all natural and earthy. It's like a prayer you put out to Spirit. Time passes, grace happens and miracles of colour emerge. It feels like you are only partly responsible for the result. Like a prayer, you prepare your wool with openness and intention. The whole thing is hilarious. There is dancing, joking and a bunch of quirky Quakers being creative together.

Barbara says:
As we turned from the highway into the road to Bungendore, I felt very excited. Excited to be coming back to Silver Wattle, excited to be meeting

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Counselling Men Project

Ending homelessness, violence and suicide among men

FELIPE OLIVEIRA | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

The major purpose of CMP is to inspire and lead men to live an authentic life. The vision is to end homelessness, violence and suicide among men in Brisbane, by utilising our economic system toward human fulfilment and development. The main service that CMP offers is free professional counselling and trauma therapy specifically for men who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Since the project began, CMP has delivered 65 counselling sessions for 21 men in need of help. One of them is about to start a job and many others are heading in the right direction now.

However, while the real outcome is to help men to get their lives back on track and prevent them returning to a dark path, heaps of paperwork and bureaucracy had to happen to put a not-for-profit in place. The approved grant gave CMP the opportunity to contract a business consultant Marty from Orb Services to help the CMP Team to work professionally and to create a sustainable and concrete path of continuity and progression towards such a valuable cause.

In the first six months of 2021 many important items have been created and improved during many leadership meetings among the CMP Officers and Founding Members. Below is the list:

1. Website was created and is running in a professional way;
2. Digital Microsoft Share was implemented to facilitate the procedures of CMP in a productive manner;

3. Process to approve professional counsellors has been created and executed;
4. Men's Group approval process has been implemented;
5. Major Purpose, Vision and Values have been created to guide CMP now and in the future;
6. A business plan to create and execute fundraising events have been created;
7. A process to invite new supporters is in process.

So far, since CMP became an official not-for-profit (not charity registered) it has dealt with the numbers mentioned before, and since the beginning of its creation in 2019, it has helped more than 40 men, delivered more than 350 sessions.

Last year, we ran four fundraising events:

1. Screening the movie 'A beautiful day' in a neighbourhood cinema;
2. Networking event with our business consultant;
3. Networking event with a CEO that became our ambassador;
4. Community fundraising event at Quakers Queensland where we had a meal and watched a movie together.

We raised more than \$6,000 from these four events, enough for 40 counselling sessions.

Check the pictures of past events in this link: <https://www.counsellingmenproject.org.au/events>

The process of fundraising events

has provided a great opportunity to create awareness for people to live their lives authentically. A life that includes stillness and contemplation as opposed to continuing their addiction of being busy all the time for no tangible reason. All four events were quite productive as they opened the eyes of those who showed up about what is important in life: community. The feedback has been quite positive.

At the last fundraising event one of the CMP clients came along and gave his testimonial. It touches many people's hearts.

Some of the CMP's clients don't need therapy anymore. What they need is people (that are not part of their circle of friendship which is normally from a criminal life) to spend time with them, have a small meal, a coffee or simply a friendly chat in a park with their pets. CMP is hoping to include these activities in CMP supporters' lives.

Right now, CMP is looking to increase the numbers of Supporters by introducing them to the project. I encourage you to become a CMP Supporter. Your help is essential. All that is needed is to donate 1 counselling session per year, value \$150.00 - not tax-deductible. Here is the link for you to go and do it: <https://www.counsellingmenproject.org.au/cmp-supporter>

Thank you so much for the Quaker support CMP has received since the beginning. Your help has been invaluable.

AF

Where did I last find God?

AN ANONYMOUS FRIEND*

How easy it would be to begin this reflection by listing the places in which I have not found God recently. Easy, too, would be the list of where I miss going to find God. But the question is where did I last find God?

Unsurprisingly, the Light, when one looks, when one remembers, cannot be escaped. It reflects on every surface, whether it is in how the shadows and light lie between each other in a room; whether it is how the leaves glisten and shimmer in the garden; whether it is in the broad expanse of sky held by wide horizons when one gets out of town.

The Light, God, is in my heart, on my breath. I do often remember, whatever I am doing and especially if something is distressing me, to listen with focus to my breath. To remember how sacred it is, that it carries precious life.

My breath brings me into the presence of wholeness, into a space beyond the limitations of my mind and emotions. Breathing in and breathing out, I remember to let go and let God.

For complex reasons, I have been unable to attend Meeting for Worship for a very long time. How deeply I miss it. It is not the same as meditation, neither on my own, nor with another, nor Meeting online.

I want 'my Meeting'. The place that enriched, that nourished, that spiritually

empowered me to find something in myself I didn't know was there. I ache for that Meeting. But it is gone. It has changed. Not for the worse, but it is so very different and I don't know my place in it any more.

Being in groups is so hard for me when I don't have a leadership role. I observe myself feeling around for whether there is any place for me to lead as an elder in my old Meeting, for it is sorely lacking the nourishment an elder brings.

Somehow it is not time. Somehow, I suspect, I need to be there in my vulnerability and discomfort first. I need to allow myself to be humble, which is so very hard for me.

What a blessing and privilege it is to work with other elders. Yet, I am aware that as long as I feel alienated from my local Meeting something is holding me back from deepening that work. It is the way of Friends that we seek from our local Meeting the checks and balances needed to ensure our spiritual calling is true. Without that anchor I feel adrift. Surely I am not the first solitary seeker.

Quakers over the centuries find themselves isolated periodically. Sometimes by geography, other times by virtue of our faith being one of conviction.

Some among us find ourselves at odds with our local Meeting if we feel

called to speak out against something that's happening there which we can't abide. I do long for retreat.

Retreat is not an easy space for me to occupy, but it is a necessary discomfort for me. Finding the words to articulate what that call is about is hard. A ministry is being called out of me. It is my habit to fight it. It is my habit to strive and argue and apply my egotistical will.

When one practises surrender deeply and frequently enough, there is no question about whether one will align oneself with Divine Will or not. It simply happens. What remains is for us to foster openness and devotion.

It has been my lot in life to repeatedly observe that while a contemplative order and rhythm to one's days creates momentum and facilitates surrender, my temperament does not submit readily to the discipline.

So I am left to reassure myself that this is not a sign of unworthiness or incapacity. I am left to seek out those wispy tendrils of Light, to remind myself often 'where did I last find God?'. And go there, and go there again. Think not on whether one goes often enough or close enough.

Questions like this simply vex the mind and waste time that could be spent more fruitfully in peace and joy.

AF

**The Australian Friend does not normally publish anonymous contributions, but the committee felt that this obviously honest article could not be published unless we agreed with the writer's request for anonymity.*



Candle, kingdom and consciousness

GERARD GUITON | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

Imagine a candle nearing its end. The flame is about to go out but it continues to flicker nevertheless. However, you need light so you get another candle. You light it from the flickering flame. You now have two candles for a very short time before the first one finally dies. This is repeated until it becomes a kind of cycle of renewal—something dies only to be replaced. But the night remains.

This is Quakerism today. It's flickering to its end. Should we let it die? Should we try to renew it? We opt for renewal but the old practices, the old cycles, are not working. Decline continues. We try harder. New ideas come up. For a time the flame gets strong. But we know the candles themselves are old. The cycle itself is repetitive and ageing. So where is the true and constant light in this dark night? Does it exist? William Penn in his *Reply to a Pretended Answer* (1695) said this:

this word consciousness supposes a knowledge, together with something else that gives us that knowledge ... And what is that but that Divine Light which gives light to the candle for a candle cannot light itself.

The candle cannot light itself. All organisations flicker. Sometimes they die. But sometimes they can be renewed and continue to give light. Their life is thus extended, and it's OK that it is. However, they need outside help. Better still, they can get help from the inside. Help that is new though it appears old. Help that is already tested. Help that is waiting to get going. What is this 'help'? Back to Penn.

The idea of 'consciousness' was going the rounds in the 1690s. His friend, John Locke, had published *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689/90). It was instantly influential and, among other things, dealt with consciousness. He was not the first to do this in England. The Cambridge Platonists (they were mostly Anglican clergy) and their friend, the Quaker Anne Conway, were also keen on the subject. But it was Penn who saw consciousness as equalling the Inward Light.

Another name the early Friends gave to the Inward Light was the 'Kingdom of God'. An enormously high proportion of their tracts (90%+) mention the 'Kingdom' at least once, some many times over. It was their central focus largely because it was also Jesus'. It was pivotal to their daily

life. The outward manifestation of the 'Kingdom' or Inward Light was their 'Lamb's War'.

The Inward Light or Divine Consciousness is an ancient idea—the *Rg Veda* sang its praises 3,500 years ago!—but it is forever fresh. Here is the help that is definitely old but new. Why is this? One reason is that in God-Consciousness there's no time. Hence the Light is always in the present (where there's no time); the present immediately disappears into the past. So the Light is always in the *now*. And thus always new (as well as old). This Light resides in all of us. It is old *and* young which means we can give our Light, *the* Light which is always new, to the flickering light of Quakerism because the candle of Quakerism cannot light itself. It needs us.

So what *kind* of Light do we bring? Answer: Kingdom = Consciousness. Study this oneness and you'll be amazed at what you'll find. You'll light your own candle and then that of our ailing Society. Together, our Light will be bright indeed and will shine its peace, justice and compassion gloriously in the world. It'll be 1652 Pendle Hill in the present, now. Thus a newly and greatly gathered Quakerism will have old *and* new Light, a common purpose and language that speaks to the times. It will be alive and well, and attractive to new generations. And it will grow. Imagine that!

AF



Know Thy Friend

Aletia Dundas

PETER JONES | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Although Aletia has frequently been thought of as a birth right Friend, her parents only joined Wahroonga Meeting after hearing about Quakers on a radio programme, when she was three years old.

With her younger siblings, she then grew up in the Children's Meeting there along with other families at a time when there were many other children so as time passed, she could participate in Junior Young Friends camps and what she referred to as 'Youth Groove'. Many of these camps were at Werona, the Quaker rural bush property in Kangaroo Valley, south of Sydney.

Growing up in Sydney, Aletia went on to Macquarie University to study psychology, creating new friendship groups as she got older, and finally applying for membership of the Society of Friends in her early twenties. Her first job after graduation was as a Human Resources assistant, still in Sydney, but drawing up employment contracts wasn't fulfilling a more spiritual urge to do meaningful work. So, maintaining her Quaker involvement, she took part in a Young Adult Leadership Development Programme for seven weeks at Pendle Hill, the American Quaker college near Philadelphia. Immersed in a Quaker community, working as part

of the grounds crew and volunteering with marginalised communities in Philadelphia, she gained a stronger sense of the direction of her life's work. This set her off thinking more deeply about Service involvement so her next job was as an administrative assistant with Christian World Service, the aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. Meanwhile her further pursuit of academia led her on to do a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies.

In 2006-2007, Aletia lived in Geneva, working as a programme assistant at the Quaker United Nations Office there, with her focus on involvement in the Peace and Disarmament Programme, while a developing interest in Restorative Justice led her to conduct research into that subject. While in Geneva she participated in discussions in the early days of the Peacebuilding Commission, organised the famous Quaker House lunches, took classes in French, and also co-organised the summer school in August 2007.

Back in Australia, she commenced work as a Project Officer with Quaker Service Australia, operating out of the Devonshire Street Meeting House. Here her focus was on indigenous programmes which led her to visit projects in Western Australia and Queensland.

From QSA, Aletia moved on to work for several years with APHEDA (Australian People for Health Education and Development Abroad) again as a project officer, but this time travelling overseas, particularly to the

Solomon Islands which she visited on a number of occasions. This career path led her on to her next job with the Uniting Church where she took on several roles, including as an International Programs Manager with UnitingWorld where she frequently visited projects in Papua New Guinea. In 2016 Aletia spent three months in Palestine as an Ecumenical Accompanier, providing protective presence for those nonviolently opposing the occupation. As the Disaster Preparedness and Response focal point, at UnitingWorld, she says she met some inspiring individuals in the region including those at the Pacific Conference of Churches, which is based in Fiji.

This in turn led her to her current position with Act for Peace as international partnerships and programmes manager. Act for Peace is the new name of Christian World Service, the same organisation where she had begun her journey in the aid and development sector almost 20 years ago, and the organisation that hosts the ecumenical accompaniment program, so it felt in many ways like a coming home.

Although she grew up in Wahroonga Meeting, as an adult, Aletia is now more involved with the Devonshire Street Meeting, though she acknowledges the sustaining value of the bush setting she visited regularly as a young person. Her wealth of experience with Friends, led to the recent invitation to deliver the State of the Society Report to the most recent Yearly Meeting, albeit delivered on ZOOM.

AF



Gender specifics *and being a Quaker*

JANICE BLAKENEY | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

As a Friend for whom being a Quaker has meant finding a spiritual path that makes not just sense but gives me a better sensibility of all the living beings on our planet, it was a personal question for me recently to make ‘sense’ of the need to be gender specific in everyday conversation with people.

It’s now important to find acceptable forms of address that – to be honest – wasn’t a question when I was growing up. This isn’t to say my education or life experiences was either right or wrong, but it wasn’t so fraught with unintended slights nor a source of stumbling over what pronouns were appropriate addressing people I didn’t already know.

I think everyone should be addressed as they wish. No question. I prefer people use my birth name. ‘Janice.’ It is who I am, it is how I see myself and apart from being a linguistically recognizable ‘feminine’ form of the old Christian first name ‘John’, I have not given how people address me a second thought (unless of course it had been deliberately rude!).

As a Quaker, I am committed to equality and integrity. No issue here.

Equal is how our loving Creator God made all beings, all of them. Equal means equal.

Lately, however, society has been asked to think along gender specific lines when using pronouns if we speak of someone or refer to ourselves.

Pronouns

In my school days (yes, back in the age of dinosaurs!), pronouns were defined as ‘words that take the place of nouns, such as in ‘He thinks’ or ‘She sings.’ No one gave a thought how these words were to be applied. It was obvious ... or was it? Worldwide society has been alerted to the reality (which was always there in truth) that humanity is many things gender-wise, sometimes at the same time in the same person, sometimes transitionally, but diverse. Again, no question.

The natural world has endless variations on the theme of life. So how is it that ‘suddenly’ society has to tie itself into knots trying to find pronouns that do not unfairly categorise another person or diminish their sense of being an equal member of the human family?

I wanted a basis for understanding the pronoun question both for myself and with reference to a shared understanding of indigenous people’s knowledge. This focus grew from my participation with a group of Friends meeting each month on Zoom to explore First Nations history and knowledge to better appreciate the story behind the oldest continuously extant human culture on our planet.

I started with some personal education about using pronouns as a gesture of respect at ACON’s ‘Pride

Training’ website. ACON (Aids Council of NSW) offers community based ‘training’ for any sector of Australian society seeking to learn to incorporate gender-respect. I recommend this link. It answers the basic question: why pronouns are important to the LGBTQI community.

<https://www.pridetraining.org.au/blogs/news/are-pronouns-important-to-the-lgbtq-community>

If I needed a guide to the how and whys of using pronouns to show acceptance and inclusion, then ‘Pride Training’ had it covered.

Next, I sought more information on how – or if – Indigenous peoples have used gendered third-person pronouns and what practices indigenous cultures both here and abroad are customary for non-binary people.

Claire G. Coleman <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-feminism-and-gender-writing-for-the-Victorian-Government's-website>, for example, explains that ‘Many, if not all, Aboriginal languages in Australia do not have gendered third-person pronouns.’

Coleman continues, ‘Gendered pronouns appear to be largely a characteristic of Indo-European or most of European languages and Afro-Asiatic (North African and the Middle East) languages.’

‘In many dialects of Aboriginal English, ‘him’ has long been a substitute for the original non-gendered third person pronoun; it is, in fact used identically to the singular ‘they’ in English (or the older gender-neutral use of the male pronouns in older versions of English).

'I cannot even imagine,' Coleman writes, 'speakers of an Aboriginal language or Kriol complaining about the rise of the singular 'they' in the English language. The use of 'him' as a non-gendered pronoun suggests that people for whom an Aboriginal language was the only language as a first language had difficulty with giving those pronouns a gender. This is in stark opposition to the English speakers having trouble with a singular 'they.'

Another source I found reiterated this view.

Maggie Munn (they/them) a Gungarri person and campaigner for Amnesty International Australia, wrote in her article on 'Non-Binary People's Day (15 July)', that observing pronoun etiquette was for her a foreign experience.

Maggie says, 'I never had a language to describe how I felt within myself in terms of my gender or sexuality. Terms like non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender diverse were foreign to me until recently and once I learned what they meant I knew it was me. I never came out as non-binary, or queer for that matter – I just am and the people around me know that.' <https://www.amnesty.org.au/non-binary-peoples-day-is-about-more-than-pronouns-blog/>

I personally resonate with Maggie's conclusions: '...the fight for understanding, for justice for my fellow non-binary babes is about more than pronouns and dismantling the expectation of androgyny, it's about love and care that is affirming and validating.'

Going further, past language etiquette and its powerful character of affirmation, safety-making or acceptance is the ongoing need for society to work with more diversity.

I found more information about gender diversity and how native cultures have lived within its changing definitions over the millennia.

I learned that in Native American Indian culture, non-binary people were described as 'two-spirit people' – a positive term. As such, Two Spirit people were recognised as not just 'different' but 'Special.' They held a gift that others did not and were honored for it.

Closer to home, I found the 'Transhub Mob' at <http://www.transhub.org.au/trans-mob> who say that First Nations cultures have always recognized and integrated much richer and diverse concepts of gender than Western cultures. Tiwi Islander people have the largest trans population in the Pacific, fully 5% of the population identify as trans.

First Nations use the terms Sistergirl and Brotherboy.

Sistergirl is used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community, including looking after children and family. Many Sistergirls live a traditional lifestyle and have strong cultural backgrounds.

Noongar Sistergirl, Aunty Vanessa, member of Tekwabit Giz (a working group of the National LGBTI Health Alliance), wrote on the Trans Mob page:

'My understanding and acceptance of who I was and where I come from as an Indigenous Person first and foremost, and the fact I am descended from the oldest surviving civilisations on Earth – that is who we are as a race of people.'

Brotherboys is a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community. Brotherboys have a strong sense of their cultural identity.

In broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, the Trans Mob group writer continues, 'the terms 'Sistagirl' and 'Brothaboy' are used as terms of endearment, for women and men respectively, with no reference to gender diversity.'

If these examples can be taken as typical analysis of the gender diversity present day society is addressing, then it would seem those of us with European backgrounds have been out of step for quite a while.

By this research, I have been enlightened as well as encouraged by going within this subject. As a person of faith, it matters that I understand my fellow humans and can address them in a way that is respectful of their own view of themselves. I expect no less in return and that's the outcome, I submit, that Friends as a society would find truthful.

AF



Reflections on a visit *to countries bordering Russia and Ukraine*

TIM GEE | GENERAL SECRETARY, FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION

Tim Gee is General Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation. Tim, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge and Jeremy Routledge visited Central Europe in August 2022, and the statement was drafted afterwards.

When I close my eyes, whether to sleep, rest or pray I find my mind going to Central Europe, in particular to a ship docked in Estonia's principal port, where 2000 Ukrainians, mostly women and children, wait to work out what's next for them.

It wasn't that the conditions were bad. It was clean, there was a playroom for the children, free food, free medicines and professional support to access the social system and to help find employment and accommodation.

It's more that, it brought home to me, powerfully and symbolically, the long, tense wait that millions of people now face as they hope and pray for an end to the war in their home country.

I had spent the last week alongside Friends Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, Director of the Geneva Quaker United Nations Office, and Jeremy Routledge of Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, visiting Central Europe, where upwards of 375,000 soldiers stand 'pre-positioned' for war. This is also a humanitarian frontline, which countless people have escaped to or through.

Quakers in the region are sparse but spirited, and thanks to the generosity of Friends around the world donating money, a group nominated from the Central European Gathering has been able to distribute funds to places and projects where they know it will make a difference.

As part of a talk requested by Friends in Warsaw, Nozizwe quoted one of her Quaker United Nations

Office predecessors, who helpfully summarises Friends' peace testimony as the refusal to kill, relief of suffering and responding to the call to be peacemakers by building the institutions of peace and removing the causes of war. We saw every one of these being manifested in Central Europe.

Firstly, refusal to kill. There are not Quakers that we know of engaged in fighting on any side of this war.

The second part is relief of suffering. In Warsaw we met Friends who described feeling strengthened by Quaker meetings for worship and community to help with sign-language translation, provide pro-bono legal support and distribute hand-made toys made by Friends in North America.

In Krakow, we met with staff from a charity assisting refugee families with special needs to access the support they need, supported financially by Quakers. In Estonia, Friends have been helping with distributing essentials to newcomers, with providing access to free activities like ice-skating, and helping establish new institutions to welcome people including a school.

We also heard some tragic stories highlighting fixable problems in European governmental systems for welcoming newcomers. Another set of sad stories concerned relations between newly arrived, traumatised Ukrainians, and ethnic Russians living in the bordering countries.

Friends in Tallinn are already working with an established psychotherapeutic drama organisation,

to organise local-level sessions promoting intercultural understanding, with the hope that this could be replicated elsewhere. On a small scale at least, this is part of building institutions of peace.

On a larger scale, our global Quaker peace institutions are oriented towards the UN. At the time of writing, direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine have broken down. We have been asked though, by grassroots Friends to do what we can to encourage conversations about shared security between the states in the region, leading towards a settlement that meets each country's needs.

There are military routes to an end to the present fighting, but all would result in avoidable death. Quakers may be unusual in how consistently we have held to Jesus' teachings of peace, but we are by no means alone in our concern for a just peace and the negotiated settlement of conflict.

There are about six Friends in Estonia, four in Latvia, even fewer in Lithuania and a few more in Poland and the other Central European states. Proportionate to their size the work the Central European Gathering is supporting is extraordinary.

We went asking questions about our peace testimony, and returned certain that it is needed now as much as ever. How it manifests in this climate is still emerging. What is certain is that our vocation is to make peace, which the world sorely needs right now.

AF

Statement on the Peace Testimony and Ukraine

Quakers are a people who follow after peace, love and unity. Our peace testimony is our witness to the Truth as we experience it.

Our testimony manifests as a cumulative set of actions, continually tested and added to over centuries. These actions are diverse in form, but have been broadly united by:

1. Refusal to kill
2. Relief of suffering,
3. Building the institutions of peace, and
4. Supporting peacebuilding and removing the causes of war.

At the onset of the full scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Friends World Committee for Consultation issued a Christian Call for Peace, affirming that invasion and occupation are the opposite of Christ's universal call to reconciliation and unity, and echoing church statements in many countries, including Ukraine, calling for an immediate ceasefire replaced by a peacemaking dialogue. This call would echo the Golden Rule (treat others as you would want to be treated) which is a foundational value of all major world religions, has the potential to eliminate violence, and helps us to recognize one another.

Almost by definition, peacemaking often involves engaging with people making war and understanding the reasons they do so. Nevertheless, our vocation as a peace church is to seek and make real the peaceful alternatives to armed conflict, which with God's help, are possible, and to ensure that the long-lasting human costs of war are not forgotten or neglected.

We continue to uphold the right to refuse to kill. We stand with conscientious objectors on all sides of this conflict, with the people in Russia who stand up against their leaders' belligerent actions, and the people in Ukraine employing creative forms of nonviolent civil resistance.

We continue to help relieve suffering and hold that all nations must radically improve their approach to welcoming refugees, to fully honour the United Nations' Refugee Convention and ensure that all displaced people—no matter their origin—have access to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. We will continue to press for this.

We continue to seek to build the institutions of peace. Justice with peace requires binding frameworks of international law and restorative justice, as well as global investment in violence prevention at the community level. We know that all of these have been insufficient to prevent the injustice in Ukraine, and must be strengthened to win peace.

And we continue to support peacebuilding measures. We call on the governments of Ukraine, Russia, neighbouring countries, the United States, NATO, and the European Union, to explore all avenues—whether public or private—for a renewed conversation to address the human security needs of all the peoples and countries in the region, to help provide the basis for long term peace.

Whichever way this war ends, we are realistic that healing and sustainable peacemaking will in all likelihood take more than a generation, and will only be possible through inclusive and sustainable processes from the international to the local. That process must begin now.

We are ready to play our part.

Signed by,

Timothy Gee, General Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, Director, Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva

Sarah Clarke, Director, Quaker United Nations Office, New York

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Joyce Ajlouny, General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee

Jennifer Preston, General Secretary, Canadian Friends Service Committee

Tracey Martin, Director, Quaker Council on European Affairs

Oliver Robertson, General Secretary, Quaker Peace and Social Witness



QSA Notes

Reflections on the 2021/22 project year Highlights and priorities

FLEUR BAYLEY | QSA PROJECT MANAGER, CAMBODIA



Women of the tailoring unit, Tamil Nadu, India SOURCE: PBRC

QSA is a long-standing partner in the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, the Australian Government's longest running and largest NGO program. Each year, QSA submits a report highlighting aspects of our activities that reflect the Federal Government's development priorities. The following extracts from the 2021/22 report provide information and some examples from our projects.

Focusing on groups whose needs are greatest

QSA's work primarily aligns with the first and second of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: No poverty (SDG1) and No hunger (SDG2). Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked, and food security initiatives aim to address immediate and long-term issues.

In Uganda, QSA's partner, St Jude Family Projects, works with the poorest subsistence farmers and their families with less than 1 acre (0.4 ha) of land. Most farmers are women who are

subject to multiple social, financial, and other constraints. For example, nationally, women earn, on average, 40% less than men.

St Jude's projects involve building and strengthening skills in permaculture and other organic, low cost and low-tech farming methods, enabling farmers to establish home food gardens and grow nutritious food year-round. By the project's second year, most participants produce a surplus that supplements family incomes and pushes them above subsistence. Training is interdisciplinary and supports a social and environmental safety net involving ecology and climate adaptation, nutrition and health, community-based initiatives, social inclusiveness and leadership.

Demonstrating inclusiveness

Khmer Community Development (KCD) in Cambodia has clear objectives for inter-ethnic peacebuilding, social justice and community development, goals concerning disability rights and

the rights of ethnic communities, and programs to promote involvement in projects.

KCD works with the Phnom Penh Centre for Independent Living to support the elderly and those with disabilities to improve their project participation and social inclusion. Having identified members of the target communities, they provide equipment and motivation to increase involvement in social activities, education and employment. KCD also works with local authorities to raise awareness of their needs and invests in strengthening staff KCD capability.

In Kandal Province, ethnic Vietnamese suffer significant disadvantages and discrimination. For example, they do not have citizenship and cannot own land. KCD designs activities specifically for ethnic Vietnamese who tend to live and work along waterways, engage in fishing and fish farming, and focus on business, unlike their Khmer neighbours that work in agriculture. To promote inclusion, reduce conflict



Water pit construction in Uganda SOURCE: St Jude



A productive home garden in Pursat, Cambodia SOURCE: QSA

and improve economic outcomes, KCD recruits Vietnamese-speaking staff and actively encourages cultural awareness activities, including arranging for staff to live for short periods within Vietnamese communities to understand their issues.

Focus on localisation

QSA favours community-initiated projects, working with existing community-based or civil society organisations. Many of QSA's partnerships originate from Australian Quaker networks and historical connections. As far as practicable, QSA plays a consultative role in project ideation, concept and design to ensure and encourage that the local partner, together with their community, are actively involved and that projects are relevant to the community's expressed or felt needs and interests.

Strengthening the capacity and capabilities of QSA's partners as local community-focused civil society organisations is another aspect of our approach. For example, this year, we supported St Jude Family Projects and Pitchandikulam BioResource Centre staff to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation skills

and experience through joint efforts with external evaluation contractors.

Approach to safeguarding

During the year, QSA vetted all new project partner personnel (including staff, contractors and volunteers) with referee and background checks. We also continued to encourage partners' policies and processes for safeguarding and risk management.

All St Jude Family Projects staff completed specialised disability training with a local expert from Uganda's National Action on Physical Disability organisation. The training included devising disability-inclusive practices, ways to achieve equity in service provision, and access to resources and opportunities for people with disabilities. QSA provided follow-up and support for project partner Pitchandikulam BioResource Centre in India to review and update their policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, child protection and counterterrorism, including screening and recruitment for project-related personnel, complaints handling and reporting.

Unable to complete all their planned training sessions on gender, role-sharing and empowerment due to COVID restrictions, Khmer Community Development worked with an external consultant to develop a video. As a result, they can now deliver gender training when they can't go to the field, for example, during flooding when they cannot provide face-to-face training. Addressing gender issues helps to promote a safe and inclusive environment while reducing the likelihood of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

These projects are supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) (<https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/who-we-work-with/ngos/ancp/australian-ngo-cooperation-program>).

Follow QSA on Facebook to see more photos and stories [facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia) or <https://www.qsa.org.au/resources/newsletters-and-notes/> to view previous issues of QSA Notes.

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

Find us on Facebook for more photos and stories: [facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia).

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ACFID
MEMBER



A letter to Friends

A community larger than me

ROWE MORROW | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Rowe with the integrated final class.

Dear Friends:
I learned that I have a community larger than me, than us, seeking to have the same common future: of hope, peace and fair share!

I want to write to you as a tribute to your continuing a Quaker tradition of supporting refugees in Australia prompted by our testimonies of equity and peace.

I have just returned from Mertola in Portugal where your financial support and convictions enabled eight people to begin new lives after fleeing Kabul where they were young, Shia, Hazara and peace activists – all these factors putting their lives in danger.

There are several innovations in these projects you are supporting through various Australian Quaker funds. Some of these funds were willed to Quakers by former refugees.

Firstly, we have been able to assist people to move in a group to freedom and this was accepted by the Portuguese government who, once you allocated the funds, and with the help of peace activists in the USA, Canada and UK, issued visas and after three months in Portugal everyone received the same rights and benefits as Portuguese citizens.

This is remarkable in a world where refugees are increasingly stigmatised and rejected.

The Mertola group resettlement of refugees, as this innovative project is called, is being widely followed by others in the global permaculture, peace and refugee support communities and by the Portuguese government who has followed the project closely and is very pleased with its outcomes. Now the government is about to issue visas for a second group of 19 young people among them some young women at risk. This time, a regional city, Laitiara, has several organisations who combined to accept to support this next group through its first year.

Secondly, the project has been successful because it:

- The host community assured work for everyone on a land restoration project who are also their hosts
- Introduced the young people to others in the town by video clips in which they spoke of their lives and needs while they were in Pakistan awaiting visas.
- Demonstrated a clear budget which listed all the necessary items for successful resettlement from housing to psychosocial support.
- Brought a group who staying together, could continue to exchange experiences and news of home, while also talking easily in their own language and feel comforted by others who shared their experiences.

In 2016 and 2018 I was able to teach permaculture to most of them and then maintain contact with some as they developed their own projects, so catching up in Mertola was a rich and happy experience. It was also challenging.

The young people, some of whom had been 16 or 17 years old at the time,



Multicultural group assessing soil samples



Young Afghan students learning sophisticated computer techniques for identifying contours in their village back in Afghanistan.

are now responsible mature young adults. They worked right through a searing drought over the Portuguese summers. They learned and continue to learn Portuguese, they joined the local soccer club and childcare groups. They belong to the library. They shop locally and are known and liked by local people. They are seriously considering their futures – making them very thoughtful.

I had several provocative conversations with Ali about being a refugee and he is profoundly grateful for the opportunities ahead of him and will profit from them and so will Portugal. (I wished Australia had been foresighted enough to see what a gift they would be for this country.) He said, 'I am fortunate now to live in a peaceful country but my country Afghanistan should be peaceful and prosperous too'. I found this truthful and sad.

A permaculture design course was held as part of their program, and it was also attended by people from Germany, Colombia, Hong Kong, Brazil and France with the young Afghans. It was heart-gladdening to see them converse in English, participate in group activities, dance and sing together on an equal basis.

They had matured socially and emotionally since we last met in Kabul and I could see how supporting them had also developed special qualities. As we discussed their futures, they mentioned how one result of reaching safety and having opportunities only strengthened their desire to assist in bringing peace and hope to Afghanistan.

One comment was:

'I learned that I have a community larger than me, than us, seeking to have the same common future: of hope, peace and fair share!'

Towards this, over the next three months they will spend one day a week together writing the first permaculture manual for Afghanistan in Dari and we have offers from others to translate it into Pashtu. This is desperately needed now. We also have the means to transmit the manual widely over phones, computers and other media in Afghanistan.

Other young peace activists waiting to find countries of final settlements have assisted in writing 'Emergency' papers on food gardening and first aid for sending back on social media to Afghanistan.

If ever it is safe, some would like to return as assist in rebuilding a new and brighter country. As originally peace volunteers, the experience of being refugees has not changed their belief that peace is of primary importance for all people and lives.

With the other global peace activists in the USA, and the UK, our small informal group has managed to send another family of five people to Brazil, some to Germany and Canada, and get others out of immediate danger in Kabul to Pakistan and living in a safe house.

But Pakistan is now severely stretched by its floods, loss of crops and housing and is no longer a safer place than Afghanistan.

Of the original group of peace volunteers we have contacted most of them, and supported some in Kabul in addition to those in Portugal. We hope to recommend some for Germany under their new humanitarian visas for Afghans.

It was a young Portuguese woman, Eunice Neves, who knocked at the doors of her Immigration Department and put this project to them. She couldn't see why it couldn't be done. It has been.

We would like to have the Mertola model of group refugee resettlement accepted in Australia as a fine working model. With Mark Isaacs, Martin Reusch of Blue Mountain Local Meeting and Dale Hess in Australia we have learned more than we ever wanted to know about humanitarian visas, flights, problems, delay and the joys of working in such a program together. Now we have been joined by Alan Clayton and Dorothy Scott.

We have developed a buddy system for being in friendly contact with people in danger and letting them know we care and are interested in their lives. The buddy system has enriched both 'buddies' and developed real friendships.

Australian Quaker funding has enormously facilitated getting people to safety and to new lives. This is such a long and rewarding Quaker tradition and gives me such profound peace and trust to be one with you.

In Peace
Rowe

AF



Lilian Foxcroft

An almost forgotten Quaker

LIZ FIELD | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING, FORMER MEMBER OF TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

For some years, I have been interested in the Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography (DAQB), my interest in it being aroused some years ago in Hobart in the 90s, when I read almost the entire dictionary aloud to Margaret Wilkinson, who was blind. Back then, each Regional Meeting had one copy, in six or seven enormous files. I was permitted by our librarian to take them out one volume at a time.

Since then, the DAQB has gone digital and is available to us all on our Quaker website, a huge amount of work to get it there! It has, however, quite a few gaps, and I have made a list of about a dozen that I know, all in Tasmania, the only RM of which I have enough knowledge to do this.

I have recently been researching one such Friend, Lillian Foxcroft, who I remember as an elderly Friend at Hobart Meeting when I was a young Friend in the mid-sixties. My information comes mostly from Western Australia Regional Meeting, Trove digital newspapers, and from other online searching.

Lilian was born Lillian Norbury in England in about 1884, and clearly grew up to have a strong sense of social justice, and a desire for equality for men and women. My earliest information about her is that she joined the Suffragette movement which included the Pankhursts, and in 1910 was arrested for smashing windows of the Liberal Association. She was found guilty and sentenced to fourteen days hard labour along with other Suffragettes. She continued her protest in gaol, refused to eat and was force-fed.

Her embroidered signature is found on a quilt commemorating 80 suffragettes who suffered the same punishment, and which is in the Museum of London.

Lilian married Gilbert Foxcroft, a school teacher, in 1911, and soon after that they migrated to Western Australia. They had not been there long, when events leading to the Great War had Lilian writing long impassioned and eloquent letters to the editor of the West Australian daily newspaper.

They were printed in full, as were a few responses to them. One was from a man whose previous ill-informed letter about hunger strikers had produced a strong rebuttal from Lilian, and included 'This has brought upon my poor devoted head a typical, feminine fulmination'

Needless to say this brought yet another response from Lilian which included 'At the risk of being accused of feminine pertinacity, I must again emphasise the point, that this gentleman did not know what he was talking about.'

Her letters in 1914 and 1915 were on warfare, not surprisingly; and she was strongly against the idea of conscription, and through the Anti-Conscription League of WA, urged people to vote against the referendum. Her lengthy argument against the referendum was published in the Perth Sunday Times, which attracted an also long rebuttal from the Editor.

She also lectured publicly in Kalgoorlie against the referendum; but this got her into trouble with the law once again. She was charged with 'having, on December 12 made statements likely to cause disaffection

to his Majesty'. Lillian was fined £15, a huge sum for the time. She was in good company, as another person accused of such offences was John Curtin, a future Prime Minister.

Moving forward a few years, I find that Lilian applied for Membership of the Society in 1937. Her application spoke of her becoming ill at ease in her Catholic Church, as she felt that the ritual tends to lift from the members of the Church, the personal responsibility which she believed should be shared by all. She was accepted into membership in 1937, and her membership, with that of Gilbert's, was transferred to Hobart when they moved there in 1955. Gilbert died in 1962 at the age of 71, and Lilian died in 1969 at the age of 84.

Few of us now amongst Australian Friends have memories of her, but Charles Stevenson remembers ministry from Lilian at 1957 General Meeting when she spoke of sunshine suddenly entering her drab prison cell, just as Spirit can illuminate our humdrum lives. Stephanie Farrall tells me that immediately after she and Lyndsay married at the Hobart Meeting House, Lilian gave Lyndsay the important advice: that gratitude must not only be felt, but voiced. Good advice indeed!

I hope that something of Lilian's life can now be entered in the DAQB, and that Friends from various RMs might be inspired to fill in any gaps from their own meetings.

Lilian's letters of 1914-15 can be found in 'Trove' digitised newspapers and are well worth reading.

AF

Noted

This is our regular feature in which we briefly record interesting publications and websites that have come to our attention. Inclusion of an item in this format does not preclude a possible longer review in a later issue. We welcome suggestions for inclusion.

Welcoming Friends Peace Teams Europe

Since 1994, Peacebuilding-UK promoted nonviolence, resilience, and trauma recovery in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan of the North Caucasus. The Little Star team of psychologists in Grozny, Chechnya used The Power of Goodness from Friends International Library (FIL) among other materials. When FIL closed in 2013, Friends Peace Teams-Asia West Pacific took Power of Goodness under our care. It has not been an easy 'fit', as the

time differences make it difficult for FPT-AWP members to attend their meetings.

Little Star brought The Power of Goodness (PoG) to the Odesa Regional Mediation Centre after Russia invaded Eastern Ukraine in 2015. Facilitators from all over Ukraine were trained and now serve as vital supports given the armed conflict in Ukraine.

Australia Friends encouraged Friends Peace Teams to reach out to European Friends to support this work in their region. Particularly since the war in Ukraine, Friends in Australia and

elsewhere are interested and involved in how the work of peace is approached.

Thus, Friends Peace Teams is organising a new section under the name of Friends Peace Teams Europe in partnership with Peacebuilding-UK to share news, raise funds, and oversee Friends Peace Teams' work in Ukraine, North Caucasus, and other peace ministries in the region.

To subscribe to news or donate, visit FriendsPeaceTeams.org/Europe.

AF

A&Q:

Do you care for your body?

HELEN GOULD | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

Learn to listen to your body. It is through our bodies that we experience the sacred. Caring for your body benefits your family, community, and the earth.

Be in Nature whenever you can, knowing that you are not separate. Attune yourself to Nature's rhythms, welcome the night sky, the moon and the stars, the rain wind and sun. Receive the dawn with gratitude. Spending time in the morning light will improve your sleep and reduce any depression. Attune your sleep patterns to the rhythm of night and day. Sleep neither too little

nor too long.

Practise regular exercise and relaxation, out of doors if you can, knowing that these practices benefit your whole being.

Develop the discipline of mindfully, gratefully eating healthy food. Food is the gift of the whole of nature, the sharing of other forms of life, and many people have worked to create your meal. If you suffer from addictive behaviours, humbly ask the Spirit to show you the next step, in order to release you from this suffering.

Occasional fasting is good for us.

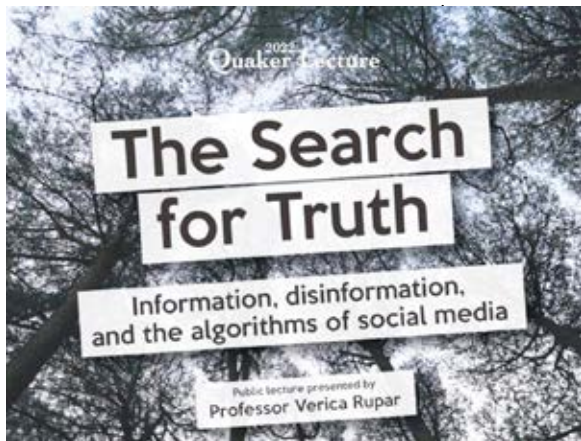
When you are hungry or too full, prayer and meditation may ease mental distress.

Hold in the light all those for whom hunger is not a choice.

We practise our faith together. How can we help each other to be healthy?

It is through our bodies that we experience the sacred. Can we truly discern a way forward for our beloved Religious Society of Friends, if we do not meet bodily?

AF



The search for truth. Information, disinformation and the algorithms of social media

THIS IS THE 2022 QUAKER LECTURE, AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

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Verica Rupar is a professor of journalism at the School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, and chair of the World Journalism Education Council.

She reminds us of the social importance of journalism. At the end of the story, she writes, journalists are truth tellers, neutral interpreters of events. This strong belief is the essence of journalistic values defined as professional norms of accuracy, fairness, balance and objectivity. Moreover, journalists' responsibility towards the public takes precedence over any other, including the responsibility they owe to their employers and public authorities.

The big picture which emerges from the lecture is that the power exercised by journalists is shrinking and is being engulfed by social media which has no commitment to accuracy, fairness, balance, or objectivity. Moreover, it is beyond the power of journalism alone

to redress the situation. That is up to society as a whole.

The influence of print journalism has been diminishing since the advent of TV and is in danger of becoming extinct. And television news now has to compete with social media.

Even in the good old days of print it was never easy for journalism to live up to its ideals. The owners of newspapers and television networks not infrequently wanted their papers and channels to reflect their opinions, which the public soon came to recognise. Governments were quick to adopt a hectoring mode when they felt some bias against them. Governments came over more heavily in war. For example, the Australian Government would not release the truth about casualties lost to Japanese bombing of Darwin in World War II. In Russia to-day, there is the prospect of 15 years imprisonment for spreading 'fake news' about the war in Ukraine. The use of the word 'war' is forbidden. The phrase 'special operation' must be used instead. No mention is allowed of heavy artillery use against civilian targets. The Russian public, long used to deciphering official news releases, will soon figure that out.

Social media is a huge purveyor of information and disinformation. It played a constructive role in the pandemic, conveying educational material to millions during the lock-down, enabling meetings otherwise impossible, providing an

ever-available market, and so on. It has also been efficient at spreading extremist views, gathering extremist groups together, and getting them into the streets.

Given that it is the journalists' role to convey the truth to the public, it was inevitable that Rupar would discuss the 'post-truth' world, which, in a stroke, puts journalists out of business. The discussion of truth and reality draws Rupar over some old philosophical quagmires. What is truth, after all? The most direct answer is 'correspondence with the facts'. A belief or statement is true if it corresponds with the facts. To ascertain whether a statement is true, we need evidence. Collecting that puts journalists back into their element. We need them to convey important truths to society. Who will assist them?

There is one group that Rupar might have looked to for support: lawyers. At law school, they have to study a subject called 'the law of evidence'. What counts as evidence and what sort of authority does it have? Trump's effort to nullify the last election as fraudulent, collapsed. There was no evidence of votes being rigged. That line of defence held.

This lecture is not easy to master. It may have to be read more than once.

REG NAULTY

Canberra and Region Quakers

Stories of life and its experiences – Earth and Nature.

Do you have a story to tell?
 All of us have a story to tell, but perhaps we have not realized it yet.
 Share your stories.
 Stories are for sharing. We need to hear each other's stories.
 Stories bring us together. It is an experience, a feeling of belonging.
 This spiritual awareness is comforting as we are together as one.
 We are spiralled along by these stories, in a space beyond our imagining, but at the same time with our imagination.

Listen ----hush, in the quiet and with an open readiness to hear the story –
 Listen for there is truth.
 Stories teach truth to us, if we listen deeply and link spiritually.
 We are not alone, we are never alone when a story is being told and shared, we become one.
 Stories are part of who we are.
 Children know this intuitively, and love people who can tell them stories in all kinds of inspiring ways, with music rhythmical
 movement, dance, mime, sounds, colours and more.
 There is a feeling of warmth, excitement and anticipation for the story's journey.
 A change is happening inside each of us, as we listen.
 Something amazing is evolving which is vital and important.
 We are creating through our imagination, which is part of life and living.
 A breath of fresh air and a sense of freedom, like a dawn awakening within us that frees our soul.
 We learn to empathize and gain understanding of each other and a respect for all living things who have their stories too.

Tell your stories, encourage other people to share their stories.
 It is the beginning of many beginnings.
 Trust in the strength of sharing stories.
 Find a time and place to become one.

Una Marion Newlands

Marion Newlands is a Canadian Friend. The poem was submitted, with Marion's permission, by Inga Tolley of South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting.

up with dear friends again, excited to have a week of art and spirit together. Being with others on a similar journey of art making and spiritual exploration is always surprising, affirming and exciting.

Textile artist Freya Paton says: *This is my second Artists Retreat at Silver Wattle. I have come back because I really enjoy the friendship, depth of sharing, creativity and relaxed days. These are soothing for my soul. There's no TV, radio, or talk of the outside world, just the sister-hood of women of all ages, praying, playing and enjoying the time in this lovely retreat space. This morning, I watched the sunrise over Lake George and that added another blessing to my retreat.*

Matt Pearse, VRM, was the only man and younger by decades than most of the participants. He writes:

*Thanks again everyone for a lovely week. I found a natural dyed woollen scarf... for \$200 on the Wednesday as I was going home -- and it wasn't even close to being as nice as the things we dyed! I bumped into [Presiding Clerk] Bruce [Henry] at Meeting this morning and we joked about being in the minority at our Artist Retreats. I've been working on my watercolours and cross stitch since I've been back - It's been fun. Hope you all got home safely,
The token male, Matt*

Canberra Friend and artist Nancy Tingey writes:

To spend time with like-minded friends is a gift. To connect with like-minded Friends is a double pleasure. I remember that on the artists' retreat held in May last year I felt exhilarated by the way ten people who hardly knew

one another before meeting in Silver Wattle bonded so lovingly. There has been much sharing of skills and stories, singing and laughter. We have been guided and inspired by Jen's imaginative program, held in the light by Marnie [Marion James], embraced by Brydget [Barker-Hudson] and comforted by one another. I have been working on a series of watercolour studies about this mystical part of the world for several years. For me it resonates with the Morecambe Bay area of northwest England where I lived many years ago. Every visit deepens my understanding of the landscape and I marvel at the opportunity to be embraced by this deeply spiritual place.

I live in Canberra - near a popular suburban cafe run by Tara who hails from Goulburn. I asked her how she felt about having to travel long distances each working day. She replied that she enjoyed the route, particularly the stretch along Lake George/Weereewa. She went on to say she had another job along the lake's shoreline, at Silver Wattle. I explained my connection and it turned out that she would be catering for our artists' retreat!

Author and historian Ann Howard is rather isolated, living on Dangar Island in the Hawkesbury River where she writes her books (and now, scripts for Netflix) as well as running a B & B. She writes of the retreat:

My first experience of communal silence. I found it very powerful.

Eileen Catanzariti was a non-Quaker at the retreat. She writes:

After a day of silence we walk down to the sacred fire. The fire is lit and as the wood burns, a gritty earthy smell is released. The wind sweeps down and picks up a cloud of whitish, grey smoke.

I am engulfed in a melancholy wind that drifts towards me. Out of the depths of sadness, new growth emerges. Energy, Movement, Direction, Regeneration.

Brenda Roy, WARM, writes: *My granddaughter, Abby, loved her wrist band. ... My dyeing efforts were much admired, especially the colour from the native cherry.*

And expressing the thanks in all of us, Brenda writes:

Thank you, Jen, for all the work you put into the planning and to everyone for your companionship and sharing over the week.

Some references

Some of the deepening meditations and prayers of the week that Friends may wish to visit:

- Neil Douglas Klot: Prayers of the Cosmos (a translation of The Lord's Prayer from the Aramaic)
- Meditation from Sandtalk by Tyson Yunkaporta (caution, some Friends found they had to switch off to protect themselves, others found it profound):

Music

1. John Coleman
Shade Tree Place & Heard a Rumour
2. Monk in the World: Songs for Contemplative living, By Abbey of the Arts
3. The Soul's Slow Ripening: Songs for Celtic Seekers, By Abbey of the Arts
4. Earth, Our Original Monastery: Singing our way to the Sacred, By Abbey of the Arts
5. Follow the Sun from Spirit Bird album by Xavier Rudd
6. Circle of Life; The Lion King album
1-4 can be bought and downloaded to your phone or iPad from Bandcamp. 5 + 6 are available on Spotify.

AF



Future proofing

SUE PARRITT | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

Mark and I have been making plans together since the late 1960s, when we visited Australia House during our 3-day London honeymoon to apply for assisted passage. Over half a century later, as retirees living in bayside Victoria, we were considering the pros and cons of ‘downsizing’ by visiting local retirement villages and perusing real estate advertisements. So, imagine our surprise when a chance phone call to Martha’s Point Retirement Village resulted in an unscheduled relocation! We viewed the only vacant villa on a Friday, paid the deposit on Saturday and sold our house privately on the following Tuesday!

Some friends thought we were mad; others endorsed our, to us, hasty decision. There followed a spate of sorting, packing, and divesting – to local charities and Op shops – including the selling of Arthur, Mark’s 1959 Morris Minor panel van that he had lovingly restored ten years earlier. Arthur was

purchased by my nephew, Peter in Queensland and now shares a garage with Valerie Valiant.

We are delighted that Arthur remains in the family. Fortunately, we were able to keep Mark’s other 1959 Morris Minor, Muriel, now residing in our villa’s double garage alongside my 2001 Toyota Celica, Cecily. My first car was a 1937 Austin Ruby and our first car in Australia was a 1953 Morris Minor, which may explain our enduring love of elderly vehicles.

Following an unforeseen problem with settlement of our Prince Street house – the best laid plans etc. – we moved to Martha’s Point on May 20. Mark refers to our downsizing as ‘future proofing’, which to him meant ensuring we were settled in a home and location suitable for our twilight years, before we became too old to face the upheaval.

Four months later, we have no regrets, our new home is comfortable and easy to care for, our courtyard garden blooming following renovation.

Gregarious Mark has joined the Green Thumbs Gardening Group and enjoys chatting to fellow residents over a glass of wine in the community centre, or anyone passing our house as he works in the garage. I have taken up aqua

aerobics, a surprise to a sedentary author who spends solitary hours in the study pursuing her retirement career of creating novels. Despite the Martha’s Point pool being 4 feet deep throughout – I am about 4’ 9’ these days – I find the exercise beneficial and enjoy the camaraderie with other participants.

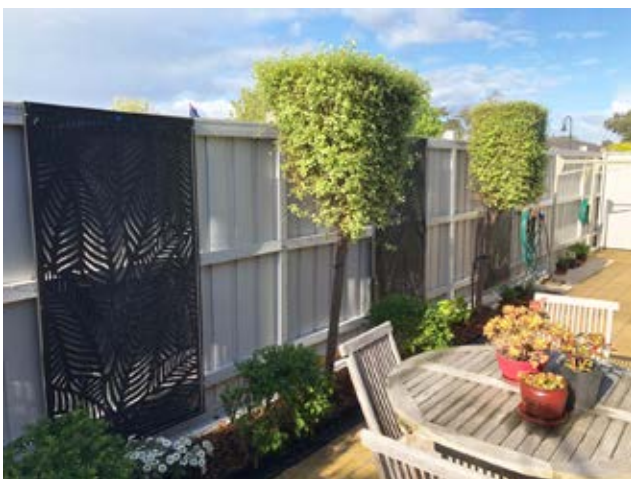
A monthly book club enables me to meet other bibliophiles, while movie afternoons and the occasional lunch or dinner in the community centre also prise me from fictional worlds.

Another blessing is that Mornington Friends can continue to meet for worship in our home. I explained to the village manager that Quaker worship is mostly silent, having no hymns, sermons, or communal prayer. However, I didn’t mention the noise level during morning tea, but so far there have been no complaints!

I have always found the Advices and Queries helpful guides to living the Quaker way. I joined the Religious Society of Friends in 1967 as a sixteen-year-old and have tried to take heed to the promptings of love and truth in my heart, to live adventurously and let my life speak. So, when making relocation plans with my beloved husband of 52 years, I took heed of Advice #31, believing it is wise to approach old age with courage and hope....

Pray that in my final years I may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting God’s love.

AF





Such is life

DAVID SWAIN | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

When a person possessed of an active mind explores nature, or ponders in imagination the broad range of organic creation, no single one among the manifold impressions that occur to him has so deep and powerful effect as that of the ubiquitous abundance of life. Everywhere, even near the ice-capped poles, the air rings with the with the songs of birds or the drone of buzzing insects.

Alexander von Humboldt, 1859¹

We are called to consider the world as an enspirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes.

Australia Yearly Meeting Quaker Earthcare Statement, January 2008

Everyone needs something to be in awe of. Something so big, or complex or incomprehensible that it's impossible to get your mind around. Something 'spiritual' perhaps. It may be art, it may be music, but I don't know of anything more awesome than Life – biological Life.

Throughout the entire, perhaps infinite, universe, with its billions of stars and possibly trillions of planets, our little insignificant planet circling a middle-sized unremarkable star is, as far as we know, the only place where life exists.

And it seems probable that life has only developed once – or only once successfully – on our planet. We are all related to every plant and animal on Earth.

So how did the first life come into being? Scientists have not been able to create life, although they have been able to create simple proteins, the building blocks of life, from inorganic chemicals. We know the basic requirements of the first simple proto-cell: it would need a collection of proteins wrapped in a fat-like layer to separate it from its surroundings. Most importantly, it would need a chemical which controlled the way the proteins were formed and fitted together. And vitally,

this controlling chemical must be able to replicate itself so more cells could be formed. This controlling chemical in our cells is DNA, but in the primitive cells was probably the simpler RNA.²

This was the first natural marvel – or miracle if you like to think that way – in the pathway to life as we know it.

So the first cell started replicating and produced many offspring. But the replication system wasn't perfect and made a few mistakes. If the makeup of the new cell was worse than its parent, it probably didn't survive, but occasionally the system chanced on an improved version. This may have, in time, replaced the original type. In this way a wide variety of single-celled bacteria and the even more primitive archaea evolved.

I suspect if life is ever found on other planets, it will be similar to these – particularly successful in their way, and very long-lived lifeforms, but they won't be sending out coded messages from other planets that we can look for. They are a bit inconvenient at times, but we couldn't survive without them.

The second natural marvel – or miracle – was the advent of multi-celled lifeforms. This seems to be related to the appearance of mitochondria, small bodies within cells. We don't know for certain where they came from, but

one widely held theory is that they were once free-living organisms that somehow became entrapped within the cell of another organism. They are the major sources of energy for the cell, and it seems that this extra energy was needed for the formation of multi-celled forms.

Multicellular creatures may have initially been just mats of similar cells, but exciting things happened once different types of cells evolved, able to work in teams. The multicellular living things that we are familiar with are made up of these teams of cells.

Look at a simple leaf, for example. It has one type of cell, the epidermis, covering the outer surface, separating the leaf from its surroundings. The epidermis has small holes in it to allow carbon dioxide to come in and oxygen and water vapour to move out, but these holes are controlled by guard cells that close them to slow down water loss if the plant gets dry. Under the epidermis are the cells that contain chlorophyll for photosynthesis – and photosynthesis is a marvel itself. Then there are the cells that transport the sugars made by photosynthesis to other parts of the plant, and the cells that act as minute pipes to carry water from the roots to the leaf.

In our own bodies there are about 200 different types of cells.

From there evolution took over, producing in time the amazing myriad forms of plants and animals we know today. So let's leave evolution to proceed for many millions of years, and pick up the story with a group of ape-like creatures. These creatures included a number of species we now call the genus *Homo* (man), who spread all over the world. While all other species sought for increased fitness by growing larger teeth, claws or muscles, one originally insignificant species evolved by developing their brains. We now call this species *Homo sapiens* (that is, us).

As their brains developed, *Homo sapiens* learned to make tools, to invent language. They also were able to develop abstract thoughts – a stage that Yuval Noah Harari³ calls the Cognitive Revolution. After this our ancestors, as well as understanding lions and mangoes, could invent entities that had no physical existence. As history went on, these inventions included spirits, gods, nation states and limited liability companies. And once these inventions were incorporated into the culture, they became 'real' and essential to life. Whatever we feel about the United States of America, we cannot deny its

reality, even although it's only a mental construct. And without this ability to imagine the non-existent, we would not have the awe-inspiring art and music from my first paragraph.

Now to the crunch. If, as far as we know, Life in all its wonder exists only on one planet in the possibly infinite universe, and there is only one species that can appreciate its awe-inspiring wonder, and that's us. We are also the only species in the universe that has the ability to preserve or destroy large parts of it. This thought should inspire all our Earthcare activities.⁴

Life has had some pretty narrow squeaks. There have been some five mass extinctions which have each destroyed 70 to 95 percent of the species existing at the time, and evolution had to start practically from scratch working from what was left. So it is from pure optimistic faith that I predict Life will go on in some form for ever, or at least until the sun runs out in about 5 billion years, or some other cosmic accident intervenes. All individual living things, however, have limited lifespans, from a few minutes to hundreds of years. When my time comes to leave the wondrous phenomenon of life, I'll be amazingly thankful at having been lucky enough to have been part of it.

1 Von Humboldt, A , 1859 *Views of Nature*. Translated by Mark W. Person, edited by Stephen T Jackson and Laura Dassow Walls, Published by University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2014 ISBN-13: 978-0-226-92318-5

2 See, for example, Maddox, J. 1998. The likelihood of life In: *What remains to be discovered*. Macmillan, London. ISBN 0 333 65008 5

3 Harari, Yuval Noah, 2011. *Sapiens: A brief history of humankind*. Penguin Random House, London. ISBN 9780099590088

4 'If one had to isolate a single all-consuming idea which has taken hold of the human race in the post-political era in which we now live, it is the interrelatedness of natural forms – the fact that we are all on this planet together – human beings, mammals, fish, insects, trees – all dependent upon one another, all very unlikely to have a second chance of life either beyond the grave or through reincarnation, and therefore aware of the responsibilities incumbent upon custodians of the earth.' A. N. Wilson *The Victorians*. Page 230. Arrow Books 2002. ISBN 0 09 945186 7

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