

The Australian Friend

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Quakers in action



Editorial

We have already begun the preliminary sessions for our on-line Yearly Meeting in July, and Friends are reminded that 'at Yearly Meeting we gather together to connect with friends old and new, share ideas, seek new Light, and find ways to travel together over the coming year.' Read the article on Yearly Meeting to find more information, including on how to enrol.

We have a number of inspiring articles in this issue about the work of the Spirit in action. Jackie Perkins reflects on her 20 years at the helm of Quaker Service Australia, and Fleur Bayley writes about the new project in Cambodia, which aims to incorporate Vietnamese immigrants into Cambodian society. We hear of the work of reforestation in Southern India by our Friend Joss Brooks, and the work of education by Liz Terry in northern Africa. There is more news about the Afghan peace activists being settled in Portugal.

As we approach the referendum on providing a Voice for Aboriginal Australians to our parliament, there are articles about the distance to be travelled to achieve reconciliation with our First Nations People. This is not a new concern of course, as we learn from Michael Griffith's article on the poetry of Judith Wright, based on the course he gave at Silver Wattle.

Also at Silver Wattle, Duncan Frewin learnt from the Elder Tree the art of being a good elder. A reminder that we all need spiritual roots!

Our Australian concerns are not far from the concerns of Friends in other countries. Tim Gee's reports on the Southern Africa Yearly Meeting where they heard the call to cherish creation and one another. The theme of the gathering was Ubuntu, ad word meaning roughly 'I am because you are'.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Jackie Perkins enjoying rapt attention at the Pitchandikulam BioResource Centre in Tamil Nadu.

Yearly Meeting 2023 online!

KERSTIN REIMERS | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

At Yearly Meeting we gather together to connect with friends new and old, share ideas, seek new Light and find ways to travel together over the coming year. We are inspired by the theme of this year's Friendly School 'Integrity, Voice and Right Relationship'.

YM23 will be accessible to Friends all around Australia as we gather on Zoom.

Starting on Saturday 1st July, there will be two consecutive long weekends (Sat-Mon and Fri-Sun) with one or two Formal Sessions each day, Friendly School, Meetings for Worship, Home Groups and more.

In the middle three days there is more time to rest, gather locally together for outdoor activities, attend the Backhouse Lecture presented by Jon Watts, and select some online Share and Tells to explore.

Read more about the nine days of sessions online from 1st to 9th July at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2023>. You can check out the July YM23 timetable by

following the links on the website.

What's on in June?

There are three Information Sessions, Zoom training, and gatherings of elders and pastoral carers.

- Sat 3 June Transitions Implementation Working Group (Info, repeat) 3 pm AEST
- Thur 8 June Quaker Service Australia (Info) 7:30 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time
- Wed 13 June Quaker World Connections Committee (Info) 7:30 pm AEST

You can find the June timetable including Information Sessions in the calendar accessed through the website.

Who is giving the Backhouse Lecture this year?

Jon Watts' lecture *Fearlessly Faithful: How Stories of Spiritual Courage can Light Our Path Forward*, is on Tuesday 4 July at 7 pm AEST. Jon is a Quaker film producer from the United States. His presentation will be given at The Friends' School in Hobart and can be joined live on Zoom.

Find out more at <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2023/ym23-programs/backhouse-lecture>

Who is giving the State of the Society address this year?

Mark McLeod from Tasmania Regional Meeting will give the State of the Society address on Saturday 1st

July in the first formal session after Welcome to Country at 2:30 pm AEST.

Mark will share his insights on how Quakers in Australia are faring. This annual address draws on the latest reports from each Regional Meeting and other material, highlights trends and offers a personal perspective on the issues we face together.

What Friendly Schools are being offered? Find out more at

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2023/ym23-programs/friendly-school>

Friendly School is on Sunday 2nd July with all workshops starting at 11:30 am AEST. The theme for this year is 'Integrity, Voice and Right Relationship'.

- Integrity: what canst thou say? – Sue Ennis and Wies Schuiringa
- Indigenous Voices: CORE and WIPCE – David Purnell and David Evans
- Travelling with First Nations Peoples – Marion Hooper and Katherine Purnell
- The Life and Poetry of Judith Wright – Michael Griffith
- The Impact of Australian Quakers on Refugee Lives: where to from here? – Rowe Morrow, Dale Hess, Alan Clayton and Dorothy Scott
- Growing the Life of the Meeting – Sheila Keane

- True sustainability: how should we then live? – David King
- Cultivating a Creative Contemporary Community – Justin Simpson

Share & Tells

A wide range of Share and Tells will be offered, most falling on the middle three days of Yearly Meeting: Tuesday 4th July to Thursday 6th July. Check the website and the timetable for more information as this become available.

Will there be a Children’s Program?

An online program is being developed with children’s activities and gatherings.

How do I register for Yearly Meeting?

We encourage you to register early, so you can get involved, help us plan, and stay informed. To register, follow the links on the website.

Vidya and Jo Jordan, Yearly Meeting Organising Committee

Planning For Yearly Meeting 2024 in Adelaide!

Next year, Yearly Meeting 2024 will be hosted in Adelaide in July. It will be a hybrid meeting, with face-to-face and online meetings and gatherings. This will be the first face-to-face Yearly Meeting in Australia in five years.

Following the restrictions of Covid, many Friends have said that they are yearning for a face-to-face Yearly Meeting, a place where they feel truly gathered.

We aim to give Friends the opportunity to attend Yearly Meeting in the way which meets your particular circumstances, in person or online.

Online registration may not be able to cover all the activities which occur in a fully online meeting. We look forward to greeting all Friends whether you are with us in person or online. We invite you all to join us in this experiment for Yearly Meeting.

The YM24 planners will be present at the Share and Tell session on Thursday July 6th at 3pm AEST. We

will show photographs of the planned venue, including meeting spaces, accommodation, dining areas and the surrounding landscape. We will be there to answer questions and, most important of all, we want to hear from Friends.

YM24 will be an experiment, just as the first digital Yearly Meeting was in 2020. What are we hoping to have at our first hybrid Yearly Meeting? What do we need to retain from online Yearly Meetings? If we can’t manage to do everything, what can we let go?

Please come with your ideas and suggestions for YM24, join in the discussion with the YM24 planners and the current Yearly Meeting Organising Committee and make a note to attend the Share and Tell session on Thursday 6th July at 3pm.

Jo Jordan, Harald Ehmman and Topsy Evans, YM24 planners in SANTRM

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2023 Backhouse Lecture

The 58th annual James Backhouse Lecture, ‘Fearlessly Faithful: How Stories of Spiritual Courage can Light Our Path Forward,’ will be presented by Jon Watts, Quaker film producer from the United States, via Zoom, on Tuesday 4 July at 7pm. Jon will be hosted by Hobart Friends, and the presentation will be at The Friends’ School.

Jon Watts is a Quaker songwriter and multimedia artist. As a songwriter, Jon has toured the world sharing stories of the Early Friends and his own spiritual journey growing up Quaker in Virginia and

attending the Quaker Leadership Scholars Program at Guilford College.

Jon’s unique success promoting his music in the early days of Youtube led him to found the QuakerSpeak project, for which he spent six years traveling, interviewing Friends, and publishing a video every week. In 2021, Jon embarked on a new journey: envisioning a future for Friends and online media.

Jon Watts is a member of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, which holds his ministry under its care. He lives in Germantown, where he enjoys hiking in the Wissahickon with his fiancée and recording music in his home studio.



My time with Quaker Service Australia

JACKIE PERKINS | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Jackie with project partner staff in Cambodia

My time with QSA has been extensive, full, very varied, and, for the most part, a sheer delight. The sheer delight part, as will come as no surprise to most of you, is not the organisation, its charts, policies and endless reviews, but the people. In that I am fully in agreement with Val Nichols who, as some may know, was one of its first administrators while QSA was in its growth phase, when she said ‘QSA is not “programs” really, it is people’. And again, similar to Val, my lasting memory will be the faces and voices, the vibrant clothing, the wonderful smells of the cooking, the singing and laughter, and the delight in the faces of project participants in showing what changes they have made.

I will always remember my time in Uganda where I saw the first young child with AIDS who was so very skinny and underweight when sitting next to a cousin of similar age, an image which has haunted me very much. Another strong image is of the woman with seven or eight children who felt so sad and concerned for me because I have no child of my own, and asked me in all seriousness if I would like to

take one of her daughters to care for me? I remember the vibrant rhythm of the drumming, the strong smell of pineapples as they were being dried for export, the monkeys cheekily eyeing my bag for food possibilities, and the giggles of the women in the groups as they shared their stories with me. And I remember the 7-year-old boy who was given a pair of gumboots to safely work in the school food garden and decided he wanted to also sleep with them on he was so proud of them – Friends may remember seeing him on the Living Gifts catalogue a few years ago. Zimbabwe I remember as the place where pure water in abundance could be retrieved from beneath a dry river bed by Dabane Trust technology, and I remember the squeals of delight from students at King George VI Centre as they played chase in their wheelchairs at frightening speed but with great accuracy and without fear.

In India, surprise, surprise, my memories include the time I got to stand up very close and personal to a large temple elephant and feed her huge soccer-ball size mounds of rice and vegetables, to learn how to wear a sari

thanks to only 3 safety pins, try to walk while balancing a tray of vegetables on my head (not very successfully), and share something of my life working with herbal medicine in Australia with women doing exactly the same in exactly the same way in Tamil Nadu. This is also where I nearly lost my husband Grant as his popularity as household cook was universal among the group of jealous women. I remember school children who shared their knowledge of the local flora and fauna and laughed at my reluctance to cuddle a snake.

From Cambodia where I have made so many visits, come fond memories of the skyline at sunset, especially over the Mekong and at Angkor Wat; trying so many different types of food items but never a spider or a cockroach even if fried and dipped in sugar; and walking among small crocodiles as they squeaked in communication with each other in the compound where they were being grown as income generation. I remember learning of the many different approaches to income generation from a people still with strong memories of times of such hardship, and the beaming smiles of



Jackie distributes seeds to gardeners in Cambodia ...



... and receives a gift of eggplant from a Cambodian grower.

pride as they showed me the changes they have been able to make as a result of project training and new-found opportunities. Such experiences are firmly embedded in my memory and will stay with me for a long, long time. And I hope, with their giggles, they will remember my sad efforts to keep up with them or work alongside them, and as they tried to work out how I could not understand much of their language yet know what they were talking about!

I also value memories of the many First Nations People, and YM First Nations Peoples Concerns Committee who have shared so much with me, making me realise just how much more I have to learn to fully understand the issues.

I also feel very fortunate to have worked with some amazing colleagues, from whom I have learned a lot. We have been a small team, and experiences such as accreditation reviews build a stronger bond and sense of community which is always an advantage, and a privilege. And I do think I owe a great debt to John Dundas who for so many years has been a support, a sounding board, and a tireless worker even if his working hours as a late-night owl were so different to those of this early morning lark!

I would also like to express my thanks to the former committee in Hobart

who shared so much information with Heather Saville, John Dundas and me when in 1999 we went to Hobart to learn about QSA, the many tentacled creature for which we had so recently agreed to take on its caring. I can honestly say for myself, at that time my sense of what was in store for the three of us, and the others on the committee at the time was minute in comparison to what eventuated. And those Friends helped us to learn and grow as a committee, thank you one and all.

Over the years, it has been my pleasure to serve Friends and QSA in a number of different roles, each one enabled me to share more of my own experiences and learn so much more, and meet Quakers in other countries undertaking similar work to QSA, for all of that I am very grateful. QSA has the support of a number of very committed followers, giving of their time, energy as well as dollars. I am particularly grateful to all involved in running the Quaker Shop in Adelaide, a task of great complexity. There has also been an amazing list of Friends involved in supporting QSA over the years, too many to name individually, opening their gardens, selling jams and marmalades, running book stalls, art shows and concerts, all of which require a strong team effort. Some individuals have gone to extraordinary

lengths to promote and support QSA – Mark Deasey with his Backhouse Lecture in 2002; the stitchers in Adelaide completing the QSA tapestry panel drawn up by Robin Sinclair; and Margaret Bywater, who until recently lived in Phnom Penh, was frequently able to drop everything to help QSA when asked and who has been such a personal support to me over the years. And then there is Heather Saville, who when it was suggested an update of former QSA Convenor Bill Oats' brief history of QSA was a good idea, became so engrossed in the process and all that QSA had achieved that 'Friends in Deed' became larger than we ever imagined and the pamphlet grew to a book of 337 pages plus index!

So yes, QSA is about the people. My time with QSA's office has come to an end, but it is not the end of QSA in my heart. I have had an amazing roller-coaster ride of highs and lows, and all have been learning points. I wish QSA success in the future, and am grateful to know that it is in good hands with Pia Reiersen as Executive Administrator. There are so many issues affecting the world today, many issues for QSA to address where and when it can, moving towards the achievement of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world.

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The Elder Tree

DUNCAN FREWIN | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

At Silver Wattle beside the lake, there is an old gum tree. I don't know what kind of gumtree it is, but it stands out – bigger, older than the others around it. How old I can't guess, but it has been through a lot. Tall, but not straight like a young tree might be. Storm damage perhaps. Some of its biggest branches are dead and bare, reminders of how imposing it once was, but still reaching up.

Despite the wear and tear, the boles are strong and thick with new growth. A heavy mop of leaves hangs on the live branches. The trunk twists, swollen, leans to one side. The bark is thick, heavy, rough, blackened by leaking sap or passing fires perhaps, splitting and crumbling. Thick newer sap, startling red, pushes chunks of it off.

Under the tree a smaller wattle tree – a silver wattle! – and some saplings are growing. There is wombat poo on a stone there too. Magpies sing up on top and probably there is an owl nest in a hollow where a branch has fallen off.

A couple of years ago I spent an afternoon removing a decades-old pile of bottles and cans from under it. The Ngambri people, I'm told, call it an elder tree. People have elders, and so do trees. A witness to time passing, resilient, marking the way. A tree to look up to.

Well, here I am at Silver Wattle again after the Covid absences. This time, I've been asked to be the elder to accompany a group for a week. I said 'Yes', then ... panic! What does an elder do? How do I 'be an elder'? I found a few chores that are expected – give thanks before meals, lead evening worship in epilogues, or at least arrange someone to do that.

But what is the function of an elder in a group? No one I spoke to could really shed light on that. One thing for sure – I couldn't sit in a corner, outside the group, terribly serious. That wouldn't fit for me.

I took a walk by the lake to sort myself out before the group arrived. Not worried, just wondering what people might expect of me, what I would do. I ended up before that elder tree again. I looked up at it, admired its girth, touched its bark and sticky sap, careful not to break off any chunks of the bark, craned my neck for the tallest bare branches.

'Tell me how to be an elder,' I said, feeling foolish. I've never talked to a tree before, not even in my imagination.

The tree's silence was absolute, but still in that silence I got an answer. Perhaps it was just my imagination, but I seemed to hear 'Just be there.'

'Just be there' Just BE there.

Nothing to do, nothing to strive for, nothing to accomplish. No need to be wiser, more virtuous, more impressive than I am. Just be me the way I am, weaknesses and all. I can wear my shortcomings openly. Perhaps others can use those shortcomings, or learn from them. 'Just be there.' Ah yes. Just be THERE, not somewhere else, physically and mentally present. Stay focused on the group I'm with, on what's happening around me. Listening, watching, feeling the currents, as a tree feels the wind. I can be there, be present for the others, with my heart open to them, ready to listen, as my tree listened to me. No need for more, but already a big thing to offer. Trees do it. Just be there.

Then as I thought about that, my inner ear heard 'Keep growing'. Keep growing: put out new branches, new leaves, put down deeper roots. Stay fresh, keep truly living. A tree without new leaves is a dying tree, no matter how majestic. A living tree keeps putting its roots down further, extending its branches.

I can keep stretching my branches higher, digging deeper for my own growth, searching, praying, listening. Just being – being curious, adventurous, reaching further. I can let old branches, old thinking, old inhibitions fall off



– I don't need them any more. New branches can replace the fallen ones. There will be scars of course. Let the scars show – growth comes from the hard times. Let people see that – be honest about the hurts, the mistakes. And as the tree puts out new leaves and blossoms for the rosellas and koalas to feed on, I can keep searching, growing, putting out new leaves. For the sake of those around me, I need to make sure that I am fully alive.

Further words came – my words? 'Be a shelter for others'. Let the wattle tree grow. Shade the tender grasses. Be a windbreak for the saplings. Listen to others who are seeking light and respond to their seeking. Encourage them in their searching. Let the birds nest in my hair. Enjoy the passing moments with others, even those who are 'strange' or 'different'. There is room in life for them. Let the wombats dig around in my roots – the soil that nourishes me may nourish others too. Share the truth that I have been given – it may feed others. Be open to

their questions and doubts. Be honest about my own questions and doubts. Remember those who sheltered me!

And then, as I reflected further, the thought came to me: 'Give my seeds' Did those words come to me, or did I think them up myself? No matter: they resonated. Give my seeds to the wind. No fanfare – eucalypt seeds are tiny, unnoticeable. But no seeds, no new trees! The tree sends them out in tens of thousands, each insignificant by itself, but some germinate, and ensure that the bush continues. So, I can speak simply, humbly, without embarrassment or pretention, of the spirit that breathes in me, that gives me life, that has guided me to this point. Show others a path (never 'the' path), the one that has led me to a fuller more joyful life. Of course my precious wisdom may be lost on the world. Not all seeds sprout and bear fruit. No matter. In the Gospel parable, the sower scattered the seed wherever he passed. Some sprouted, some didn't. He didn't economise! Some of my precious wisdom will fall on fertile ground and

sprout, and I may never know about it. There is no need to know. Just quietly, naturally, give the seeds to the universe.

So I found my way towards being an elder. It feels right and good, a way to give back to the universe what I have been given.

But even the strongest trees come to an end. With age more and more branches fall, the trunk splits or topples in a storm. It makes way for the younger trees that bring new vigour to the bush. It dies and returns to the soil. So I too can face my own end, accept that the younger tree at my side will eventually take my place, become the next elder. Let me encourage it, enjoy it for its energy and show no regrets as it takes my place in the light. And may I return with what grace I can manage to the Light that nourished me, in hope of leaving the soil richer for the next generation.

AF



Joss Brooks

Know Thy Friend

Joss Brooks

PETER JONES | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Joss was born in Manchester to Kenneth and Helen Brooks who had been married there at Mount Street after originally meeting at Woodbrooke. Kenneth had been a Commanding Officer during the Second World War while Helen had worked at Friends' House in Euston Road.

The family came by boat to Australia in 1953 when Joss was seven – one of four boys – and lived in Launceston (Tasmania) for a year before moving to Hobart. Kenneth was involved with Adult Education and the family were regular attenders at Hobart Meeting, although Kenneth resigned his membership when he felt that The Friends' School was not taking a strong enough stand against the Viet Nam war.

Joss attended state schools in Hobart and started studying Law at the University of Tasmania. He was heavily involved in drama, read a lot and ran a Jazz Club, revelling in the intellectual ferment of ideas in the 1960s. Having decided that Law was not his calling, he made a radical change of direction by becoming a lighthouse keeper in Tasmania before moving to Western Australia. There, he resumed his studies at the University of Western Australia with a focus on History, French and Anthropology while being active in the drive to establish scholarships for Aboriginal students.

He attended Meeting in Perth till his wanderlust got the better of him and he started to explore Australia by hitchhiking around the continent until his ticket came out of the barrel to be sent to fight in Viet Nam. Not surprisingly, he opted out, evading the authorities by leaving the country, heading east as a stowaway and ending up as a waiter when his presence was detected.

He got stranded in Mexico, but The Seamen's Union looked after this

penniless draft dodger, eventually flying him to Panama to rejoin his ship which continued with him to Southampton, back to the country where he was born.

For a few years Joss moved around Europe continuing his adventures and meeting a range of interesting people, including his first encounter with the name of Sri Aurobindo in a cafe while he was living in Turkey. Sri Aurobindo was an Indian spiritual leader born in 1872 who had grown up in England from the age of seven, then returned to India in 1893. He became involved in politics till a vision persuaded him to take a spiritual path and he moved to South India in 1910 to set up what became the Aurobindo ashram at Pondicherry, south of Madras, now Chennai.

Meanwhile, a restless Joss had settled in France, working at a psychiatric clinic in the Loire Valley for two years until the events of 1968 (a period of civil unrest that brought the French economy to a halt) caught up with him – the year, as he once remarked, that Auroville was also founded!

Disillusioned with the collapse of the movement that nearly brought France to its knees in the summer of 1968, like many others, Joss headed east and eventually arrived in India. In between, he spent a year in Ethiopia where his father, Kenneth, was continuing his involvement in Adult Education.

Joss landed in Bombay (now Mumbai) but continued to Madras before heading North to live on the Ganges around Hardware (later made famous by the Beatles on their spiritual search with the Maharishi), then back south to Kerala. Finally, a dream sent him back to Tamil Nadu where he encountered the people involved in creating the world village at Auroville. At last, he had found where he belonged!

Joss has remained in Auroville ever since, as one of the early settlers at this unique community, but retaining his links with Friends in Australia, through his membership of Tasmania RM and support for his work from QSA. Auroville or City of Dawn, just north of the former French colonial territory of Pondicherry, which had joined India in 1954 but has special status there as a Union Territory, was founded in 1968 as a community where men and women from all over the world were to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. Its guiding hand was a French woman, Mirra Alfassa, known as The Mother, a companion and disciple of Sri Aurobindo who had died in 1950. She herself died in 1973 but her vision persists in the community, which today has around 3,000 residents, half foreigners from 45 countries and the rest Indian, mostly people from the local villages.

Many Australian Friends and friends have visited Joss at Auroville over the last fifty years, where he has developed his passion for ecology with the creation of a 75-acre forest – Pitchandikulam – as part of the 20 square kilometres of the Auroville area which was once a barren wasteland. He has expanded his work beyond Auroville to a nearby village as well as the southern outskirts of the sprawling city of Chennai, where a swamp has been turned into an environmental showpiece. He regularly returns to Hobart and the Meeting there – his campsite as he calls it – but travels extensively to network with other ecological experiments around the world. Pictures of Pitchandikulam Forest can be found on the QSA website (<https://www.qsa.org.au/>) and Joss welcomes visitors as well as invitations to share his work with Friends around Australia.

AF



Transferable skills

JUAN ROBERSON | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

I put this compilation together for the non-Quaker Chairman of the company I worked for some years ago. In addition to my role as CFO, as Company Secretary I also had the job of writing the Minutes of Board Meetings.

As I observed to the Chairman at the time, the processes of the Quaker Business Meeting and the way decisions and minutes come about would, I felt, transfer perfectly well to other places. The substitution of 'for the good of the company' for 'Divine Will' would make these quotes eminently applicable to any Board Meeting in the commercial world. They would also work well for Committees in the not-for-profit sector (a tennis club, a Rotary club etc.).

You may have already observed these processes in evidence elsewhere – when adopted by those with an inclination towards consensus, whether Quaker or not. In any event there are some perceptive comments here – and the occasional wonderful turn of phrase – that make it worth sharing these with a wider audience.

1. From The Quaker Bedside Book (1952)

... Two original features of Quaker meetings for church business will help to define what this deliberative system is.... There is no chairman or president; only, in front of the Meeting, a Friend sits at a table with a minute book in front of him. He is the 'Clerk' of the Meeting – not a chairman, not exactly a secretary, and hardly a clerk in the usual sense... Decisions are reached without vote, unanimous or otherwise, and yet are regarded as united decisions...

The Meeting has begun with worship in silence...as in a Meeting for Worship. In this phase the members are seeking to draw nearer to God and asking that his

will may be known for all matters that are to come before them. There should then develop a relaxed, waiting mood, a 'sitting loose' to one's own will on the business, a readiness to see God's infinitely wiser view triumphant. When the business begins to be examined this waiting mood has not to be shaken off for the effort of speaking and listening; it should continue underneath. A question is broached; various, perhaps quite contrary, views upon it are expressed with restraint, because no one wants his opinion to prevail if there is a better way. All the time the Clerk is listening to the discussion, and maybe setting down some parts of it that seem to him to have special significance in the light of what all are seeking - 'not our wills but thine'. If a point of fruition seems to have been reached there is a pause – still of worship – while he drafts a statement which he thinks might express the 'sense of the Meeting'... The draft is read aloud to the Meeting... usually the draft is accepted, with any amendments proposed and considered and agreed upon, as a Minute of the Meeting.

Again and again it is one's experience in such Meetings that, although one came in with an opinion quite contrary to that which becomes embodied in the minute, one can accept it wholeheartedly as being the right decision for the Meeting, and can make it one's own.

2. From Edward Burrough (1633 - 1663)

Being orderly come together you are not to spend time with needless, unnecessary and fruitless discourses, but to proceed in the wisdom of God... not in the way of the world, as a worldly assembly of men, by hot contests, as if it were controversy between party and party of men, or two sides violently striving for dominion... not deciding

affairs by the greater vote... but in the wisdom, love and fellowship of God, in gravity, patience, meekness, unity and concord.

3. From London Yearly Meeting (1925)

As it is our hope that in our Meetings... the will of God shall prevail rather than the desires of men, we do not set great store by rhetoric or clever argument. The mere gaining of debating points is found to be unhelpful and alien to the spirit of worship which should govern the rightly ordered Meeting.

Neither a majority nor a minority should allow itself in any way to overbear or to obstruct a meeting for church affairs in its course towards a decision. We are unlikely to reach either truth or wisdom if one section imposes its will on another. We deprecate division in our Meetings and desire unanimity. It is in the unity of common fellowship, we believe, that we shall most surely learn the will of God. We cherish, therefore, the tradition which excludes voting from our Meetings and trust that clerks and Friends generally will observe the spirit of it, not permitting themselves to be influenced in their judgement either by mere numbers or by persistence. The clerks should be content to wait upon God with the Meeting, as long as may be necessary for the emergence of a decision which clearly commends itself to the heart and mind of the Meeting as the right one.

4. From Duncan Fairn (1951)

The extraction of sense from some Meetings calls for no little skill. It is not just a matter of counting speeches for and against. The silence of some is often of greater significance than the speech of others. But the salient point

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Young Afghan peace workers *on their way to safety*

DOROTHY SCOTT, VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING, IN COLLABORATION WITH DALE HESS, VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING, ROSEMARY MORROW, NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING, AND ALAN CLAYTON, VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING



. They prepared this parcel of land below for planting in April, planted in early May...



and this is how it looks now. It's full of beans, tomatoes, egg plants, sun flowers, basil, corn... and much more!

Australian Friends have enthusiastically responded to the call from an international network of peace activists and permaculturalists to find places of safety for a group of young Afghan peace workers whose lives were seriously endangered after the return to power of the Taliban in 2021. At that time the Australian Government promised humanitarian visas for vulnerable Afghans. This never happened.

For more than a decade our Friends Rowe Morrow, Martin Reusch and Dale Hess have been working with and supporting this group of young people in Kabul doing humanitarian work. When an opportunity arose in Portugal in the city of Mértola with the environmental group Terra Sintrópica (which works to meet the challenges of desertification and depopulation in the region), the Afghan Refugee Project was born.

Eight young Afghan peace workers arrived in Mértola in March 2022 and the project has been hailed as an innovative model based on mutual benefit to both the refugees and their host community. It is based on permaculture principles, with the young Afghan friends restoring the

land and acquiring practical skills while learning a new language and receiving comprehensive support to promote their successful integration. Our Portuguese partners told us:

'We have been working at the farm daily. Our friends are having practical and theoretical sessions about Agroecology, Permaculture and Syntropic agriculture with António (the farmer), Eunice and Pedro. They are gaining new knowledge and skills every day. And the farm regeneration work is evolving rapidly due to their dedicated help!'

This pioneering and holistic approach to the resettlement of refugees offers a model for other cities and countries. The Portuguese High Commissioner for Migration has taken a special interest in the program and was so impressed with what was occurring in Mértola that he offered to make additional visas available. This led to a new partnership with InPulsar, an NGO in Leiria in central Portugal. And that is how a door opened for a group of 17 young Afghan peace workers who had escaped to Pakistan and who were living under deteriorating conditions (including the risk of imprisonment or being forcibly

returned to Afghanistan for those unable to obtain Pakistani visas).

Raising the funds for their travel to Portugal and for an intensive, twelve-month resettlement program was a major international effort. A number of North American organisations and individuals contributed to raising these funds, and generous support was received from the company Lush Cosmetics. Australian Quaker organisations have also been instrumental in helping to make these projects a reality, and we give thanks to the Thanksgiving Fund, the Quaker Peace & Social Justice Fund, the Nancy Shelley Bequest Fund, the Victoria Quaker Fund, Quaker Service Australia, and individual Quakers who have generously supported our work. We are also deeply grateful to the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice & Community Education for their support.

On 18 February this year, the group of 17 arrived in Portugal, with their friends living in Mértola travelling to Lisbon to warmly welcome them.

Rowe Morrow subsequently received this message from one of the young men.

We are glad that we are safe and able to pursue our dreams here in



The Afghan Team from Mértola joining the new arrivals from Pakistan for Sunday lunch in the park in Leiria, Portugal.

Portugal. We also appreciate how being in a developed country can help us contribute to Afghanistan in different ways. We are honoured to be among the few people in Afghanistan who understand the importance of permaculture, and we will continue to promote its principles wherever we go. Permaculture teachings have been life-changing, and we are forever grateful for this knowledge shared with us. We were happy to help with the evacuation efforts from Pakistan, and we are proud to have been a part of the effort to bring people to safety. It was a challenging experience, but it was also a reminder of how we can come together as a community to support one another.

Where to from here?

Another 29 Afghan former peace workers are desperate to follow in their footsteps. We are now working closely with the Asociación Yaran, a civil society organisation in Spain's north-western province, Galicia, dedicated to helping Afghans resettle in their region, with the goal of resettling them there.

The plan is for them to be part of the Avada Sociedade Cooperativa Galega, a multidisciplinary cooperative dedicated to education through organisation of summer camps, volunteer programs, language immersion projects, workshops,

sports events and international cooperatives. The Spanish Government, influenced by the success of the projects in Portugal, has indicated its willingness to grant student visas to the group of 29 young Afghans, but to secure the visas we need to raise the funds to get them to Spain and to support them for their first twelve months.

We are now asking individual Friends if they could help make this happen. Tax-deductible donations can be made to:

Account Name: Edmund Rice
Community Services Limited
Account: 10059009
BSB:062128
Reference: Afghanistan Refugee Project

Please also send an email to erc@edmundrice.org with deposit details, the Code ERCJE 2023 – 115, and your name, address, and telephone number for receipting.

If Friends have any questions, please contact Dale Hess (d.hess@ozemail.com.au), Rowe Morrow (rowemorrow2450@gmail.com), Alan Clayton (alan@avonsfield.com.au) or Dorothy Scott (dorothy@avonsfield.com.au).

Sustaining Hope

The young former peace workers and humanitarian volunteers still waiting to go to a safe country have endured a great deal – the loss of their families and homeland, and for most, persecution due

to being Hazaras, a Shia minority among the Sunni majority in Afghanistan. They have suffered a long period of uncertainty while the international group works hard to find a pathway to a peaceful place for them. This is taking a heavy emotional toll on them.

To support this remarkable group of young Afghans through this ordeal, a 'buddy system' has been established so that regular contact and emotional support can be offered on a one-to-one basis. This is very much a two-way process and those of us participating in this feel honoured to develop deep inter-generational and inter-faith friendships with such inspiring young people.

Alan Clayton and Dorothy Scott recently had a conversation with the young couple they support and who have been in hiding, waiting in Pakistan for over a year. They recited in Persian their favourite quote from the thirteenth century poet Rumi, in the language in which it was written.

*In this earth
in this soil
in this pure field,
Let us not plant any seeds
other than seeds of compassion and love.*

Eight hundred years on, the words of Rumi speak to our condition.

AF



Liz Terry's African adventures

JUDITH PEMBLETON | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

As a 21-year-old geography graduate, Liz Terry (Queensland RM) imagined going to Africa to explore her fascination with the desertification of Africa's fertile agricultural lands but then she received an offer too good to refuse – the chance to go to Central Sudan with her airfares paid and a house provided by the Sudanese government plus a small salary on a one-year English teaching contract.

Her preparation for her teaching post was one weekend of intensive training and a small text, *The Nile Course for the Sudan*, Volumes 1 to 6, which became her guide in her early days of teaching west of the African Rift Valley.

Two weeks before she flew to Khartoum to begin her contract, Liz was watching the BBC late news with her 80-year-old grandmother when news of a coup in Sudan was shown, with bombing and clouds of smoke on screen. Liz's grandmother said: 'You won't be going anywhere near there, will you?' And Liz assured her that she wouldn't, as she would not be in Khartoum for long – she was determined to head for the mountain villages as far from the city as the contract would permit so that she could get to know the people and their ways of life.

In fact, Liz said, the coup made little difference in Khartoum or rural Sudan. Two weeks later there was a new government in place and with a good season for growing the country continued as it had done for decades under a mild version of Islamic Rule. Tensions between those in the south and those in north Sudan continued – those in the south would make

incursions north during the wet season and move back when that ended.

Her initial journey to her teaching post was undertaken in the rainy season – travelling on top of sacks of sugar in the back of a truck and hearing sniper fire close by. Everyone remained calm and just advised her to keep her head down on the sugar sacks. Although the goods provided some seating for everyone, sugar becomes very hard to sit on after a few hours and this journey took over three days.

While it was sometimes frightening, Liz seems to have had a charmed life in the Sudan and learned to love the lifestyle and the people. As a woman teacher in the pay of the government and an international traveller, Liz had status in the community which also offered some protection to some locals with whom she travelled and spent her time.

Liz was concerned about taking a job from a local teacher, but soon discovered that village teachers tended to head for Khartoum and not return and also learned that students in country schools who could not learn English would be denied the chance for higher education, a remnant of Sudan's colonial past.

Flying in with 40 other teachers, Liz was allocated to the 'peanut capital of Africa', En Nahud, in North Kordofan. This was a vibrant trading community centre where peanut growers brought their produce by camel and Liz was delighted to be allowed to ride camels as part of her exploration of her new home.

As an educated woman teacher, Liz became an 'honorary male' and could participate with the men in meetings and could eat with the men – an unusual

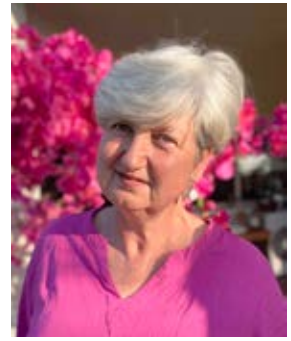
privilege in a Muslim country where women and children ate in the kitchen separate from the men who were waited on in the more formal eating room.

However, Liz could also join the women in the kitchen, which was much more informal and cooking was always a noisy, lively, enjoyable time with everyone pitching in. They would eat slowly, using the right hand only as required by custom, and then lie back on cushions for a nap. The best morsels were picked out for the children. At night, the children would be part of the kitchen meals and eventually would fall asleep and someone would move them to a cushion at the edge of the room – there was no 'bedtime', bedroom or before bedtime bath and stories – and everyone in the family was responsible for the care of all the children. Even distant relatives might notice a child needing something and simply take care of it or correct the child if appropriate.

Liz learned to communicate in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic, a simplified form of classical Arabic but understood throughout the Arab speaking world. After loving the lifestyle sufficiently to sign up for a second year, Liz could read the headlines of the newspaper and communicate in the spoken language with colleagues and villagers.

Liz said, 'No one else in the village spoke English and the other teachers loved that I wanted to learn Arabic and were happy to teach me the days of the week, or the numbers, etcetera in our lunch breaks'.

Liz said she was very naive and was very fortunate in her experiences in male-dominated 1980s Islamic African society. As a young woman on her own, Liz was adopted by a local family. The



Liz Terry today

father was a merchant and the family were what we might call reasonably well to-do. One of the daughters married during her time there and Liz joined in the preparations for the wedding, including helping to peel a washing basket size quantity of garlic. The dancing, feasting and festivities lasted for three days but the preparations had been intense over more than six months.

Liz said 'I saw Islamic culture at its best. What mattered was that you had a religious faith, not what faith it was – we could discuss the similarities between our beliefs'. At that stage, Liz came from a traditional Christian family and she was not yet well acquainted with Quakers.

Although she had attended Quaker meetings in Durham, UK, as a student, it was only on her return to Hereford Quaker Meeting in England that she felt at home in a Quaker spiritual community. From that time she has attended Quaker meetings wherever she has lived, apart from three years in Brazil where she worked with the Padre Redemptoristas. Their following of Paulo Friere's teachings, social action and Liberation Theology was most akin to her Quaker understandings in a strongly Catholic country.

In her second twelve-month contract in Sudan, Liz wanted to teach in the western mountains of Jebel Marra where she had taken a hiking holiday. She talked to the headmaster of a boys' school at Zalingei and offered to teach English when the new academic year commenced. She was gratefully accepted; having a second English teacher was much appreciated and she became the first woman to teach in a boys' school in Sudan.

Whether teaching in boys' or girls' schools, Liz found high levels of motivation to study by students who appreciated the sacrifices their parents were making to allow them to continue at school. While she taught only at government-funded schools, it still cost money and deprived the family of a worker at home.

At the boarding school, the Ministry of Education provided board and lodging, a handful of textbooks and some school equipment but the family had to provide the uniforms, stationary and meet travel costs.

Liz said the community was a moderate Muslim community. There was a high level of respect for older members of the family who would be cared for at home as they became aged or infirm – no one would think of sending them away to be cared for by professional carers. Liz never spoke to any woman who had been abused, unlike in some other communities where she worked later in her life.

Women's lives in the African village were decided by the men in the family, including where they could travel and who they might marry, so Liz was asked how her dad could have let her come so far away and whether she had quarrelled with her family to have moved away independently. She assured them that she loved her family dearly and wrote regularly and the Sudanese loved to see her family photos.

They were concerned that she was left on her own to choose from 'all those men out there in the world' when their families arranged marriages between members of families who had probably known one another all their lives. For Muslim brides, they married

into a family, not just the one person who was to be husband or wife, so the possibilities and negotiations were extensive and the numbers involved in decision-making large.

In the holidays, Liz took a donkey to travel to the villages where her students lived and to fulfil her desire to see more of African places and culture. Fortunately, her contacts within the community meant she would always have someone make arrangements for her stays so that there was always a meal and a bed waiting for her and brothers, cousins or uncles to accompany her on her onward journey.

Liz was aware of a Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) vaccination program in the nearby villages and as she spoke Arabic, she offered to help translate. She saw the long treks women were willing to undertake to get their children vaccinated and undertook a study of compliance rates and cost effectiveness.

Working with MSF she saw two kinds of malnutrition -- the kind in which children were stick thin and the kind with swollen bellies. MSF used an armband to measure their nutritional status and to determine who required additional feeding and care. She also saw food drops from charitable organisations being delivered in ways that failed to deliver assistance in timely ways to those who needed it most, and saw much wastage. The famine had killed off many of the old, young and weak and those who were left were discouraged from farming as the food drops took away their reason for growing crops.

She saw the ways these food drops could have been much more effectively

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



QSA Notes

Peacebuilding in Cambodia: Reducing inter-ethnic conflict and building connections

FLEUR BAYLEY | QSA PROJECT MANAGER, CAMBODIA

It's just over 12 months since the start of this project, designed to reduce conflict and strengthen collaboration in ethnically diverse Cambodian communities, but already it is achieving encouraging results. The project aims to build mutual understanding and exchange to reduce conflict and enhance cooperation among ethnic Khmer-Vietnamese communities in Kampong Chhnang province, central Cambodia, enhancing community relations and providing learning opportunities for children and youth to improve their prospects.

QSA successfully applied for funding along with its implementing partner, Khmer Community Development (KCD), from the Jan de Voogd Peace Fund. Jan, a Quaker peace activist, died in 2021, leaving his estate to be spent on projects which foster peace and social justice.

Background to the problem – the situation of ethnic Vietnamese

Most of the Cambodian population is ethnic Khmer. Still, up to 10 per cent are ethnic Vietnamese who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, denied citizenship and the right to own land, and without access to services like education and healthcare. They are considered migrants, despite living in the country for many generations. This community experiences significant discrimination and deep-seated historical resentment of the Vietnamese. Despite friendly ties with the Vietnamese Government,

politicians fuel anti-Vietnamese sentiments during election campaigns, and political activists, academics and civil society representatives contribute by exacerbating prejudices against the Vietnamese.

A Vietnamese community relocated from houseboats to nearby land subject to flooding, where they had to rent land and build makeshift homes.

Ethnic Vietnamese are concentrated on lakes and waterways where they fish and live on the water or nearby.

In the poor Kampong Chhnang fisher communities, anti-Vietnamese attitudes are a latent issue that quickly surfaces if adverse circumstances arise. Friendly but distant relations exist between neighbours, but language barriers, remote living locations and the fear of hidden structures benefitting the ethnic Vietnamese persist. Khmer people have little awareness or empathy regarding the existential concerns of ethnic Vietnamese, and ethnic Vietnamese keep a low profile to avoid being targeted, often relocating their houseboats rather than addressing the issues they confront. This results in fragmented communities where escalation is possible anytime, often in derogatory language. Neither Khmer nor Vietnamese openly speaks about this latent conflict.

Elements of the project

It is politically difficult to talk about peacebuilding in Cambodia concerning ethnic Vietnamese, so this project focuses on education,

particularly language skills, as the vehicle to build collaboration and reduce conflict. There are two elements:

Getting communities together

There is widespread resentment and little or no interaction between ethnic communities, even those living in the same village. Underlying conflicts and prejudices must be addressed to achieve inclusive community development and improve social cohesion and advocacy. This project includes events and activities to promote understanding and bring the communities together.

Children and parents/guardians receive awareness training in child rights and non-discrimination. In addition, the different ethnic groups are involved in workshops designed to encourage them to collaborate to address their community's needs. In addition to formal workshops, KCD is organising activities and events so the communities can meet, such as celebrating International Children's Day in the Vietnamese community.

A shared language

KCD has demonstrated how language skills training can promote inter-ethnic peace in other locations. A shared language is a critical prerequisite for promoting understanding between these diverse ethnic communities and enhancing the life opportunities for ethnic Vietnamese children excluded from school and employment. This project provides ethnic Vietnamese children with the language skills



A child reads on the roof of her flooded home, October 2022



A Vietnamese community relocated from houseboats to nearby land subject to flooding, where they had to rent land and build makeshift homes

they need to overcome many of their current disadvantages and provides opportunities for children from different ethnic groups to work and play together.

Two hundred ethnic Vietnamese children from four schools joined Khmer language and life skills classes and activities designed to increase attendance, reduce dropout rates and improve life opportunities. New Peace Clubs and Children's Councils enable children and young people from ethnic communities to learn and explore social and life skills together. In a series of workshops, 100 Khmer and Vietnamese children and young people will collectively discuss visions for their communities.

KCD is a long-standing QSA partner with over 15 years of experience in peacebuilding. It has robust project design and execution capabilities and close connections with the communities in which it works. As a result, communities are involved in all aspects of planning and

implementation to achieve their goals. In addition, KCD staff have training and experience in peacebuilding, including Vietnamese speakers, teachers and facilitators.

The project so far

Initially, the project focused on identifying key representatives in each of the communities, activities to support schools, starting Khmer language classes, and preparing Khmer language resources for ethnic Vietnamese. Training in child rights was also provided to 400 children and adults in both communities.

With the start of Khmer language classes, most Vietnamese children are learning Khmer for the first time. In addition, more children attend school after the child rights training, and school directors say some new parents have enrolled children. As a result, they report children are building more confidence and are now thinking about their dreams.

The project area suffered severe flooding in October 2022, with

Vietnamese families the worst affected. Many lost their houses. However, they received no support from local authorities. As a result, project activities were postponed to avoid risks to children. Since then, some adults had difficulties participating due to their focus on rebuilding houses and businesses following the floods and the ongoing impact of COVID-19. Despite KCD's long experience working with Vietnamese, some aspects of the project have taken longer than expected. For example, they've needed longer to build relations with some ethnic Vietnamese communities and to secure approvals from local authorities.

A two-year project is very short when working with different ethnic communities, but KCD is confident of achieving good results. They are already working to secure another donor to help support ongoing work in these communities.

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.

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Reflections on Poetry and Spirit

Judith Wright: Environmental, Indigenous and Spiritual Concerns

MICHAEL GRIFFITH | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

In early March this year I was fortunate to be able to lead a Silver Wattle week-long workshop/retreat on this topic.

Judith Wright, Australia's greatest woman poet, founder of the Australian Environmental movement and visionary supporter of the Aboriginal quest for a Treaty, was nominated during the Whitlam years as Governor General of Australia; but her severe deafness led to that possibility never being realised. However, her life and her concerns, in poetry, in social action and in her sensitivity to the needs of the Aboriginals and to the needs of the Australian spirit, were a wonderful focus in this workshop for celebrating much that is central to the vision of Silver Wattle and to Quakerism more broadly.

The most immediate aspect of her relevance to Silver Wattle is that so much of her writing (poetry and prose) emanates from the landscape and environment of which Silver Wattle and Lake George is a part. Judith lived for two decades at the cottages, called The Edge, she built deep in the bush on Half-Moon Road, not far from Braidwood, overlooked by Mount Budawang. In her last years, when she was less able to manage in the bush, she spent time living in the town of Braidwood.

Our week-long retreat incorporated an excursion to The Edge and to Braidwood as a way of physically engaging the group in the physical and natural landscape that meant so much to her. In Braidwood we lunched at

the Café Altenburg in the grounds of which she lived in a converted stable. The owner remembers her – totally deaf – spending much of her time in the café reading and writing.

The period of her life in and around Braidwood is explored especially in the poetry of her last years, the form of which is inspired by the short two lined stanzas of the Sufi Ghazal, a poetic form that is often devotional, dedicated to Ali or the Beloved, and often reflecting the pain of separation. It was with these poems – and our excursion to the location of their origin – that our week-long engagement with Judith began.

In the poem 'Summer', for example, she reflects on her immediate landscape around *The Edge* and its tragic history:

*This place's quality is not its former nature
But a struggle to heal itself after many wounds.*

*Upheaved ironstone, mudstone, quartz and clay
Drank dark blood once, heard cries and the running of feet.*

*Now that the miners' huts are a tumble of chimney-stones
Shafts near the river shelter a city of wombats.*

*Scabs of growth form slowly over the rocks.
Lichens, algae, wind-bent saplings grow...*

*In a burned-out summer, I try to see without words
As they do. But I live through a web of language.*

Judith's wish to transcend the boundaries of language, to touch the

ineffable beyond words, is a constant theme throughout her work. Indeed it is this impulse, to break through the restrictions of words, to see, through silence, that links her to the Quaker way of engaging with the truth.

In this context it is worth observing that explicit Quaker connections in Judith's life provide a rich context for her orientation to nature, history, politics and the sacred: in 1934 on enrolling in Arts at Sydney University she became politically active and increasingly left-wing as she observed the impact of the Great Depression and saw the rise of Nazism in Europe.

It was at this time that she was inspired by the strong social conscience of the Principal of Women's College, Camilla Wedgewood, whose Quaker inheritance led her – with the Jewish scientist Rudi Lemberg and his wife Hanna – to assist Jewish victims of Nazi Germany to come to Australia.

It was Rudi and Hanna, now Quakers, who built and dwelt in 'The Sanctuary' at Wahroonga. It was here that they held Quaker meetings until they built the Meeting House next to the Sanctuary which, with its parcel of land, they gifted to the Quakers for their help in supporting Jewish refugees.*

Rudi and Hanna's close friend, Camilla Wedgewood was also instrumental in turning Judith's interests towards P.K. Elkin's and W.B. Stanner's course on Anthropology, focussing on Aboriginal culture and society. This was the only such course in the Southern Hemisphere. Judith's Quaker sympathies continued in later

years when she became a friend of Jo Vallentine, the West Australian Quaker who was to become Australia's first Green senator.

With this rich cultural background, and building on the direct observations of the damage done to the landscape and its native inhabitants by her own settler, pastoral family in the Hunter Valley and in New England, Judith became a passionate advocate for restoring the damage done to the Australian natural world (for example the Great Barrier Reef) and especially for seeking justice for the original inhabitants of this land, who had lost nearly everything that underpinned their sacred experience of the world.

The New England tableland became for her a haunted land, emptied of all its sacred places, showing signs of occupation stretching back thousands of years.

It was this background that underpinned much of her poetry with its quest for a sacred anchor drawing from many traditions (Universalist, Buddhist, Sufi, Christian...). In her poem 'Unknown Water', with its allusion to the wellsprings of the indigenous world and the Christian story of Jesus offering 'living water' to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:11-12), Wright speaks to an old pastoralist, remembered from her childhood:

*Old man, go easy with me.
The truth I am trying to tell is a kind of
waterhole
never dried in any drought...
...Your own sons and daughters
have forgotten what it is to live by a
water
that never dries up. But I know of
another creek.
You will not understand my words
when I tell of it...
I am helping to clear a track to
unknown water. (The Gateway, 1953,
CP 109-110)*

This poem is a powerful revelation of her deepest intentions, carried on throughout her poetic life, her life of action for the environmental and for indigenous communities. This was profoundly deepened through her close relationship with indigenous poet Kath Walker/ Oodgeroo Nunnucal. In her poem 'Two Dreamtimes', Judith celebrates all she has learned through her contact with Kath, and seeks remission for her part in the erosion of the deepest sources of Australia's spirit, the Dreamtime. In the same breath, Judith acknowledges how the focus of her own culture, 'progress and economics... doomed by traders and stock exchanges' has eroded so much of what sustains a deeply grounded, meaningful life for all Australians: a sensitivity to nature, to poetry, songs and stories, to the spirit that underpins our humanity:

*My shadow-sister, I sing to you
from my place with my righteous kin,
to where you stand with the Koori dead,
'Trust none – not even poets.'*

*The knife's between us. I turn it round,
the handle to your side,
the weapon made from your country's
bones.
I have no right to take it.
But both of us die as our dreamtime
dies,
I don't know what to give you
for your gay stories, your sad eyes,
but that, and a poem, sister.*

After exploring the writings of her maturity, the workshop explored the following core themes in Wright's work:

*The purposes of art and poetry
and their role in celebrating and
mourning the natural environment;
The world of the Spirit: Haiku, Word
and Ghazal; Wright's relation-
ship with Aboriginal people; finally
Wright's response to the current global
situation.*



Judith Wright

Each theme was underpinned by a rare archival film on and about Judith Wright's life and work. These included: *National Archive Interview with Judith Wright* 1963; *Shadow Sister* 1977 directed by Frank Heimans; *At Edge* 1981; Australia Council: *The Archival Film Series*, 1985)

The days were structured around morning group discussions of her poetry and prose, followed by afternoon time for reflection and creative written responses to the landscape of Silver Wattle and/or to Judith Wright's poetry. All such responses were show-cased on-line in a dedicated Web space and provided further opportunities for sharing our responses to Wright's work mediated through our own creative understandings.

There will be an on-line Friendly School on the Life and Poetry of Judith Wright from 11.30 am to 4.30 pm Yearly Meeting School on July 2nd. This will be an engagement with some of Judith Wright's most important insights as expressed in her poetry. The content will draw substantially on the material presented during the Silver Wattle March workshop/retreat.

It is hoped that there will an opportunity to run this workshop/retreat again sometime in the next two years.

*For further details about the Lembergs and their long and creative association with the Sanctuary and the Wahroonga Meeting see: <https://www.science.org.au/fellowship/fellows/biographical-memoirs-1/max-rudolf-leMBERG-1896-1975>

AF



Ubuntu

Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation and one-another

TIM GEE | FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION

I began this year as an online participant at Southern Africa Yearly Meeting. Physically I was just south of Manchester in England. Mentally and spiritually though I was in South Africa, with the Friends gathered there.

I was glad to be taken aback by how connected to the week's proceedings I felt. Perhaps it was because I was in a different place than usual. Perhaps it was because hybrid technology keeps improving.

But there was also a certain power to the conversations there exploring the depths of meaning in the word ubuntu.

I had some prior familiarity with the word, especially thanks to anti-apartheid leader Desmond Tutu whose writings helped both form and inform the socially engaged Christianity I try to live by.

This event though, gave a more specifically Quaker insight into the profound way ubuntu is practiced by Friends in Southern Africa and beyond.

In the Zulu language, ubuntu means something like 'I am because you are' or 'we are because you are'. It's a word that emphasises interdependence, mutuality and environmental protection.

For Friends there is a clear resonance with the belief in that of God in everyone, as well as the 'Golden Rule' as expressed by Jesus - to love your neighbour as yourself.

It goes much further though. In a panel on the theme, Quaker UN Office director Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge shared the way the idea of ubuntu helps illuminate each of the Quaker testimonies and values. Friend Sophie Nsimbi pointed out ways Friends practice ubuntu through projects for peace and equality and others spoke of work for a universal basic income and climate justice.

Later on Duduzile Mtshazo - former FWCC clerk - spoke about her first experience of Quakers, which also forms part of Living Adventurously - the book of faith and practice in Southern Africa:

The warm embrace of acceptance, just as I was, was moving and magnetic...I found my humanity and humanness through those Friends who saw that of God in me and affirmed that.' Elsewhere in the book, ubuntu is described as being rooted in 'the invisible circuit of connection between us all.'

All of this gives me hope. The understanding of the concept of ubuntu shared by Friends in Southern Africa aligns closely with what FWCC seeks to foster globally.

The theme of both World Quaker Day in 2023 and the next World Plenary Meeting in 2024 will be Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to

God's Call to Cherish Creation and One-another.

For our part, the planning team for the World Plenary Meeting are trying to make decisions in a way that reflects ubuntu too. As the first ever World Plenary to take place both on-site and online, it will be more sustainable than previous such events, with whole Quaker communities able to join from their own Meeting Houses & Friends Churches.

We're also aware that if any Yearly Meeting is excluded on grounds of cost, we will not be a fully gathered community.

Accordingly we're preparing to subsidise more than half of the places by 90%, with a further fund to support participation online. This will require a significant amount of money, which we are seeking to raise, and go forward in faith that Friends who can will share to enable the participation of all.

Something I've found most inspiring about conversations about ubuntu is the insight that it is not just a word or idea, but something profound that we live by, as we seek to live in God's spirit.

I look forward to keeping learning more and trying to live it as a community together.

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LIZ TERRY'S AFRICAN ADVENTURES - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

delivered and more fairly distributed to the most needy and she felt a great anger at the injustice and the unnecessary suffering of the people which impelled her to let others know.

She spoke to a journalist to try to get the food agencies to think about how to deliver fairer distribution of their food parcels. Currently many organisations

have a policy of employing local staff who are much more aware of the local politics of food and medicine distribution and have a much better understanding of the holistic picture than fly in fly out emergency international teams.

Her experiences with delivering health services led to a change in direction in Liz's work and study - instead of

returning to university to complete a doctorate in desertification she went back to the UK to study Tropical Community Medicine and Health where her study of compliance rates and cost effectiveness of immunisation provided some real-life data for her studies and an understanding

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Australia/Invasion Day

MICHAEL CORBETT | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

At the beginning of the Standing Committee Meeting on the 21st January, I offered my own words from heart as follows.

In 5 days' time it will be the 26th January – Australia Day – celebrated to millions but not by me, I recognise this as Invasion Day.

I don't blame the First Fleeters, they were under orders to invade, conquer and settle. This was before human rights, land rights and social justice – the terms had not been invented. The blame and shame of this invasion rests with the countless generations that have followed, from the First Fleet to today. Friends, we share this blame.

I then read the Acknowledgement of Country from the Australia Yearly Meeting Handbook of Practice and Procedure which reads:

Quakers in Australia acknowledge that we live and worship on the land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, country that gives them physical and spiritual identity and is filled with the spirit presence of their ancestors. We acknowledge:

The sovereignty of Australia's First Peoples over the land we inhabit.

That land was taken from them at devastating cost, with no just resolution.

That this trauma is ongoing and diminishes us all.

That our testimonies call on us to be in right relationships with all people, the land and our environment.

Therefore, we seek in our daily lives: To educate ourselves about the history and the present reality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and uphold their right to self-determination.

To acknowledge within ourselves, and bring into the light, that which contributes to the debilitating effects of racism, lack of awareness and misrepresentation.

To work towards justice and peace, and healing or us all.

I am convinced that any acknowledgement of Country should come from the heart, not just a 'token' offering similar to what one sees on TV, just before the news. It is almost mechanical and without any feeling.

I did receive comments of support for my offering and it started a reaction from our Friend Liz Field of NSW RM. Liz had been to an exhibit in a museum and sent me a copy of the secret instructions given to James Cook in 1768 by the British Admiralty before his voyages of 'discovery' into the South Pacific, and was used in her giving an Acknowledgement of Country. I thought you would be interested to read this.

You are likewise to observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of Natives, if there be any and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such trifles as they may value inviting them the

Traffic, and Shewing them every kind of Civility; taking Care however not to suffer yourself to be surprised by them, but to be always upon your guard against any Accidents.

You are also with the consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the name of the King of Great Britain: Or: If you find the Country uninhabited take possession for his Majesty be setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discovers and possessors.

National Library of Australia.

In Liz Fields' words, 'Sadly, we know that the country was inhabited but the was no consent given: so in the words of a Darug Elder

TAUKIN-IDY
TAULIN-WAL
BARUNG
DARUGA
PEMUL

These words mean 'Always was, always will be Darug land'.

Liz went on to say that these words have been reiterated in many First Nations lands and languages around Australia. We acknowledge the truth of these words and hope to continue to stand alongside Aboriginal people as they seek justice, acknowledgement and restitution for the harm done to them and their country by colonisation.

AF

LIZ TERRY'S AFRICAN ADVENTURES – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

of some factors involved in this vital work.

When Liz began her health studies it was with the expectation of returning to Africa to work with MSF or a similar

charitable organisation. Instead she was offered the chance to work on a United Nations funded leprosy and tuberculosis control project in the Amazon jungle of

South America. So that led naturally to her next overseas adventure and a very different working experience.

AF



Truth -Telling

BY HENRY REYNOLDS

Published by New South Books, February 2001,
ISBN: 9781742236940

Published in 2021, Reynolds' latest book on our Aboriginal history provides an excellent backdrop into the current national conversation on 'The Voice'. Like Reynolds, many Australians have not heard details of the actual possession of the Australian continent. His research into early documents from the time of James Cook, provides the answers to what actually took place.

Unlike other conquests, Britain made 900 treaties with indigenous people of what is now North America and in Aotearoa New Zealand about 300.

So, why the neglect of treaties in the colonial history of Australia? Reynolds puts forward some suggestions – firstly *Terra Nullius*, no one was here, which was flagrantly untrue. Also, that advice from the British Government to the early Governors that no land was to be stolen from the natives.

Reynolds keeps reminding us that on the one hand Aboriginals were/are British citizens, but on the other, that they were naked, had no recognizable territory, did not till the land nor erect dwellings, that treaty making was not a possibility – in the sense that they understood Treaties.

Especially in the atrocities conducted in Northern Australia, he says regretfully that making Treaties would have been difficult, but there would have been less bloodshed.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders map is an excellent resource, containing some 360+ separate nations – each with their own culture, customs, language and laws. 'Country' is the term used to describe the land, waterways and seas to which they are connected. It contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, languages, cultural practice, spiritual belief, material substance, family and identity.

The colonial practices of the past 200+ years have seen destruction of much of indigenous identity and their ancient sovereignty. The 1967 referendum allowed the census to begin counting Aboriginal peoples. Legal requests to the High Court were dismissed – using Lord Watson's 1889 assertion that there was no land law in Australia.

Only since Mabo in 1992 and Wik in 1996 are some Land Rights in place and soon hopefully a Voice to Parliament.

During the 19th Century anti-slavery movements, Christian thinking challenged the killing of Aboriginals – and one theory was that they were not fully human, so restraints about homicide could be cast aside – or that they would die out naturally.

1901 saw Federation in Melbourne, but in far away northern Australia, white men had barely been seen – with deserts, wetlands and rugged country stopping their progress. This was unlike British occupation in Africa, India, Canada etc., where their laws and administration were in place.

In 1926 three propositions were put forward by M.F. Lindley regarding the

sovereignty of lands inhabited by native people. Unlike in other countries, his proposition was that native peoples did possess sovereignty could not be established. This was defined as the will and the ability to exclude others from their homelands.

As awareness of human rights grew, more indigenous challenges were on the horizon – between 1976 and 1994.

A dawning appreciation commenced with the Bicentennial Celebrations in 1988 – 200 years of white occupation stirred consciences as to the legality and morality of our treatment of First Nations. Yothu Yindi's 'Treaty Dance' rose to top the charts in 1991. We were aware of New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi but could not see its applicability here.

Who would Australians make a treaty with? This exercised minds which shattered 'The Great Australian Silence'. Early negotiations might have provided tea, sugar and flour in return for peace from violence, but it quickly moved into dispossession where black people were turned into submissive and biddable servants – on low or no wages. Treaties could have been made by the power of the state, but this was never done – unlike in Canada. The failure to use a treaty mechanism meant a lack of respect for First Nations peoples which still prevails today.

The Australia Day holiday on 26 January is only recently contentious, as Indigenous voices and those of their supporters become louder, calling it Invasion Day. Some Councils have changed the date of when they

celebrate Citizenship Ceremonies from 26 January.

Locke's philosophy was that the three natural rights were for 'life, liberty and property' and that no government could take away these rights without consent. These were ignored by the British on entering Australia – called 'Settlement' – which was not consensual and did not in any way settle the issues. In 1979 Justice Lionel Murphy described the idea of a peaceful settlement as a convenient falsehood.

Reynolds describes the differences between internal and external sovereignty. The latter is the relationship of a nation with other nation states. The frontier wars are all about internal sovereignty. These can never be forgotten by Indigenous peoples but are almost unknown by the rest of us. Almost all of Arnhem Land is now under traditional law.

Burial poles and works of art are in all our galleries. In the 1880s the conflicts and the high slaughter rates were well reported. Reynolds describes our current lack of information as a 'great forgetting' with other stories such as

ANZAC, Gallipoli etc. taking place as our national stories.

Reynolds could uncover little in his teaching of history about our violent frontiers. But he found in *The Queenslander* writing in 1880 'The way we civilize,' reports of the killing times and a hard-bitten realism that violence was inescapable in colonising.

The British government created conditions under which violence was unavoidable. Aboriginals were British subjects but did not come under the protection of the law. White officers were instructed to 'disperse' large Aboriginal gatherings, i.e. to shoot to kill.

We can now see that our advancement into the heart of Australia was enabled by Aboriginal guides who knew the bush, then by becoming competent stockmen and women domestics. Children were taken from their families. We can use truth telling to make our story as a nation much richer and more complex. Aboriginal resistance to an invading enemy could be re-described as great valour and patriotism. The Canberra War memorial which exhibits

our involvement in overseas wars could be expanded to show a more truthful story of our nationhood.

There is a stirring in the nation with the desecration of statues of early white leaders. The example of early leaders being commemorated, e.g. Griffith who oversaw great bloodshed, can be reexamined. Reynolds suggests that funding for research into Griffith's role could be undertaken by Griffith University and annual Griffith lectures renamed.

Truth telling is the ultimate gesture of respect – needing a willingness to listen and to learn and to incorporate these stories into our nation. These are stories of warfare – unknown by us, and yet in the US they list all of their wars to include little known Indian frontier wars. Now 32% of our continent has been returned to traditional owners, with over 1,000 outstations occupied permanently or on a part time basis. Redress needs to be ongoing and a new dawn to arise on this continent.

VALERIE JOY

Queensland Regional Meeting

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

is that, throughout, the proceedings are conducted in the spirit of a Meeting for Worship, all seeking, however great may be their differences, to know and to do the will of God on the matter before the Meeting.

Differences can be and are expressed freely, though the mere scoring of debating points is discouraged, and gradually the judgement of the Meeting emerges from the exercise. Majority has not gained a victory over minority. All have contributed to a decision represented by the Clerk's minute which is submitted in open meeting and subjected to correction before being finally accepted. Long experience has given us a number of competent Clerks and an astonishing faculty on the part of Friends when

assembled together to grasp, amend and sometimes re-fashion minutes altogether... But the Clerk has also his moments of relief... the experienced Clerk knows that when X or Y rises to speak he can go ahead with drafting of his minute undisturbed; not all Friends are equally gifted with a sense of relevance.

There are disadvantages, naturally, in this way of conducting business. It can sometimes be slow. A Meeting must wait for the way forward to be opened. Occasionally the discussion on a subject must be adjourned when the Meeting is not ready to come to a decision.... It was a wise Friend who remarked that it is easy to deal with the Devil when he went about as a roaring lion; but not so easy when he sat on a Quaker committee and asked for

a time of silence when the committee was just about to come to a vital decision!

5. From London Yearly Meeting (undated)

The method of holding our meetings for church affairs under a sense of Divine guidance should be carefully explained [to a new applicant] together with our concern that Friends should work with one another in a humble and loving spirit, each giving the others credit for purity of motive, notwithstanding differences of opinion, and being ready to accept the decision of the Meeting even when it may not accord with his own judgment.

AF

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- 1 May for the June edition
- 1 August for the September edition
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