BELIEF

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Name: Jenny Madeline and Jackie Perkins

Date: 12 May 2011

Place: Surry Hills

Interviewer: Sue Andersen

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SA:** **This is Sue Anderson interviewing Jenny Madeline and Jackie Perkins on the 12th of May 2011 for the City of Sydney Oral History Project, Belief. We're in Devonshire Street at the moment, in the Quaker Meeting House.**

So, Jenny, I'm wondering whether we could start with you, just by you saying your full name and when and where you were born?

JM: Hello. My name is Jenny Madeline. I was born in Sydney in 1946.

SA: **O.K, and Jackie?**

JP: Jackie Perkins and I was born in 1953 in a little village called ******** in England.

SA: O.K, right. Jenny, if it's O.K, just start off with a little bit of your personal history? Now, were your parents Quakers?

JM: My father, David Allen, was born into a Quaker family – he was born in 1910 – and his family on the paternal side had been Quakers going back to the seventeenth century in the north of Ireland. My mother, I think, grew up as a Catholic and then a Congregationalist and some time after her marriage to my father, a few years later, she became a Quaker by convincement, as it's known.

SA: So you were brought up in a household of Quakers. So did you automatically become -?

1.58 JM: Well, at the time I was born and I think up until the 1960s, children born into a Quaker family were automatically birthright members, as it was known - that doesn't apply any more – so actually I've never gone through the process of applying for membership or becoming a convinced friend but I did in my teens drift away from Quakers and then found my way back about fifteen years ago.

SA: Right. So what led you away from the Quakers?

JM: Well, it was in the '60s during the period of the Vietnam War and I became very active politically and I guess found that sort of met my needs at the time. I never relinquished my membership, so I always kept in touch through my mother. She alerted me often to various events and functions that I took part in. One was the celebration of the seventy five anniversary of this meeting house which was in 1978 which I attended but I guess maybe like many – I think it's quite common that people often go back to their roots, so I guess once my children were grown up perhaps I was looking for a community and found it again amongst Quakers.

SA: So did you participate? Well, you were saying that you participated in a few things but I mean did you keep like a little ear out about what was going on in the community or did you completely -?

4.11 JM: Well, I continued to receive newsletters and I guess I always felt in tune with Quaker values and beliefs and my children were brought up with those same sort of values, although not brought up as Quakers, but I continued to hold onto a belief in pacifism. My father had been a conscientious objector during WWII and was sentenced to six months in prison because he applied for unconditional exemption from service which wasn't available at the time – and I always felt very proud of him. I guess one thing that maybe took me away was during my teens I came to the view that I didn't believe in a god and that I was an atheist and I didn't feel that was compatible with Quakerism but these days Quakers are really a broad church and you can be an atheist or agnostic or you can place a lot of emphasis on the bible and Jesus Christ; there's just a really broad spectrum within Quakers and

we all manage to rub along together and accommodate those different personal beliefs.

SA: Wow. O.K, well it'd be interesting to get onto the beliefs of the Quakers because I didn't know that, that you could be an atheist and be a Quaker. But maybe, Jackie, could we have a little bit of your early history?

5.55 JP: Well, I was brought up in a family that was not particularly religious. I'm a product of a mixed marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant, Church of England, and one of the conditions of the marriage was that any children from the marriage were to be given a Catholic education and my mother agreed to that. I was a long way off from their marriage date and so when I did come along she stuck to the promise that she had made and I went along to the local convent school. I think my mother was quite comfortable with the fact that that would either turn me very much into a Catholic or very much against one and it turned me right away from being a Catholic. On Sundays I used to attend the local Church of England and that again didn't sit very comfortably with me; there was a sense that it didn't matter whether I participated or not and because everything was happening with the vicar or the priest if it was at school there was a strong sense that my presence was completely superfluous. And in the last year of my school, still at the convent, we had a very progressive religious education teacher, herself an ex-nun, and she had invited representatives from the many different faiths that were practicing in Southampton where I was at school and amongst that group was an elderly woman from the Quakers. And I knew nothing about Quakers but all the things that she seemed to be saying spoke very much to the thoughts that I was having at the time and so I was determined to find out more about the Quakers.

8.07 So I applied for some documents to be sent to my home and that caused an almighty row at home because my stepfather was a decorated military hero and to him Quakers were cowards. The concept of conscientious objection or any sort of ethical discussion about war was not tolerated and I was told under no uncertain terms that I couldn't participate in anything to do with Quakers while I was under his roof.

JM: Goodness.

JP: So I then went away to teach at a training college and I figured that I was no longer under his roof during term time so I was able to attend a Quaker meeting and I found that very significant and I felt it really mattered that I was there. I felt I was fully participating as an equal member whereas certainly from Church of England and the Catholic Church I was never going to get anywhere, particularly within the Catholic faith.

SA: When you say "get anywhere", do you mean sort of spiritually get anywhere?

JP: Spiritually but also that sense of, well you're always a lesser being because you're not able to enter the priesthood. So my gender was against me which I didn't find – I don't think I was exactly a feminist but it certainly rankled to think that I couldn't have direct communication with God, that I had to do it through an intermediary and I found that very irritating.

10.05 **SA: So from quite young you were searching for something, is that right?**

JP: Yes, yes, I was. And I don't think that was anything to do with family upbringing because really there was a sense that it was if I wanted to go to church I could, there was no compulsion to do so, although during Monday to Friday when I was at school at the convent that wasn't the case; there were all sorts of compulsory services that you attended, even though I hadn't a clue what I was doing or why but never mind, that's what you did. And so, yes, I found my first Quaker meeting was very significant and I continued to worship with friends all the time that I was at Teachers College and then when I went home for the holidays I didn't attend. I felt that that way I was being true to what my stepfather had required but I was also able to do what I wanted to do at other times and when I moved to Australia I was able to find to my great delight that there was a Quaker meeting not far from where I was living in Sydney and I continued to attend meeting although it took me some eighteen years to actually decide that I wanted to apply for membership. And that I think is quite a significant process within Quakers; it's a throwback to the early days when people were infiltrating the Quakers and causing mischief but now you still have to apply for membership in a fairly formal way.

12.06 It's a letter of application and in that letter you state your reasons why, a little bit of your background and two friends are appointed to come and meet with you to discuss your beliefs and your reason for joining and then a decision is made by the regional meeting if in fact you are to be – the decision is made by the regional meeting for you to actually become a Quaker, so it is a process. Probably the most significant part is for the applicant themselves because you make that decision that now is the time that you want to join. [break in recording]

SA: Yes, so we were just talking about the importance of membership, yes. So, Jenny, you didn't go through the membership process then?

JM: No, because I was regarded as a birthright member that wasn't necessary although there are, I think, some Quakers who have decided that they would like to go through that process, I guess because, you know, in some other churches children are baptized and confirmed when they're quite young and I suppose birthright membership's much the same although Quakers don't have christenings or baptisms or confirmations and so I think some people have felt that as an adult they would like to go through that process but I haven't.

14.04 JP: Sometimes teenagers are asked if they wish to continue with their membership and that is a sort of, I suppose, halfway step, isn't it, for them both?

JM: Yes.

SA: Right, O.K. So maybe we should talk a little bit – well, we should talk in depth, really, about the Quakers and, yes, how it started in Australia and so on. So, I don't know who to address here.

JP: Probably Jenny, I think is the archivist.

SA: Jenny.

JM: I'm not the font of all knowledge though. Well, I guess in Australia it goes back primarily to the visit by two English Quakers, James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, who came to the Australian colonies. I think they arrived in 1832. They spent about four years travelling throughout the colonies and they were travelling under concern with respect to the treatment of convicts in Australia, the treatment of the Aboriginal population and also to meet up with people who'd come to Australia who had come as Quakers or who had Quaker connections that they were aware of. And so they helped establish a Quaker meeting in Hobart in 1833 and then came to Sydney I think in late 1834 and the first meeting for worship was held aboard a ship called the Henry Freeling, which was a ship that had been chartered by Quakers, Daniel and Charles Wheeler, who had a concern about the people of the Pacific.

16.04 And so James Backhouse and George Washington Walker travel from Hobart to Sydney aboard the ship and the first meeting for worship was held in December 1834 and then from 1835 a small community of Quakers commenced meeting regularly.

SA: Whereabouts did they meet regularly?

JM: Well, one of the people who was part of that first meeting for worship aboard the Henry Freeling was John Tawell and he had some means and he built a small meeting house in Macquarie Street which is now where, I think it's Agriculture House stands, which is next door to St Stephen's Church, and so meetings were held there for a number of years. But I think he went through a series of unfortunate circumstances and he'd never transferred title to Friends so that meeting house was lost to them and eventually they started meeting in a caretaker's cottage that was part of the Friends' burial ground, which was part of the old Sandhills or Devonshire St Cemetery where Central Station now stands. So meetings were held in this cottage for a few years from the 1850s to the 1860s and then a purpose-built meeting house was built also in the grounds of the Friends' burial

ground and that was used up until 1901 when the cemetery was resumed for the expansion of Central Railway Station.

SA: So what was the membership like of the Quakers at that point?

18.04 JM: I think it would have fluctuated. For most of that time Quakers in Sydney were actually under the care of what was known as the Hobart monthly meeting and it wasn't till 1887 that Sydney monthly meeting actually gained full status as a monthly meeting. Well, the meeting house that was built in the burial ground was in 1868 was large enough to accommodate two hundred people so obviously at that time they had confidence that membership was growing.

SA: So presumably there weren't Quakers here before – is that right – and that these people were converted?

JM: Well, I think – well right up to this day there's always been Quakers who've sort of migrated from England or from the US but I think today in the UK – and I would say it's similar here – probably no more than ten per cent of the membership would be birthright members or have come from Quaker families. Sort of the great majority of Quakers these days are convinced Quakers, find their way to Quakerism. But also in the late 1880s and the early 1900s Quakers were involved in a movement called 'The Adult School Movement' and that was sort of like a forerunner to the Workers Educational Association and so that involved, you know, some of the local population who didn't necessarily sort of go on to become Quakers as a result but it was part of, I guess, one of Quaker concerns, for adult education and assisting people in the area to become literate and perhaps to improve their situation.

20.18 JP: Quakers have never been strong on proselytizing either so there was no sense that if you came along to an adult literacy class that you had to be a Quaker or you had to be prepared to consider yourself a Quaker. That's never been the policy or strategy of Quakers, certainly in Australia.

JM: I mean, I guess in the early days, in the days of George Fox who was sort of known as the founder of Quakerism back in the 1650s, they were evangelical, I guess, and did go 'round, preaching and perhaps some of the early Quakers in Australia too were evangelical. Like, my great great – let me get this right – great great aunt, Eliza Potty, who was born Eliza Allen, she was known as sort of being evangelical or described as evangelical but I think it was partly her passion for, not necessarily Quakerism per se, but some of the concerns and the issues that she took up; I think that was partly why she was called evangelical, because of the zeal with which she worked on, you know, addressed these sorts of issues that she was concerned about. One of them was the position of Aborigines out on the La Perouse Reserve and she and some other Quaker women particularly were concerned about that as an issue.

22.08 But generally certainly these days, although some Quaker communities in other areas of the world, particularly say in Africa and South America and parts of the US, are quite evangelical. In the UK and Australia, New Zealand, Canada probably, we're not. I suppose we just feel that it's our personal faith and that everyone finds their own faith and that it's what meets our needs but it's not necessarily – I think we just feel that everyone needs to follow their own path, really.

SA: Can you just give me a bit of an international context? So where did Quakerism start, where did it come from?

JP: Well, that was from England near the Peak District, I suppose, in 1650s and from there various people have travelled to other countries and taken their faith with them. There's quite a bit of confusion as a result of that, particularly in America: "Are we part of the Puritans, are we part of the Shakers?" and a few others. That's a question you get asked isn't it sometimes, Jenny?

SA: There's a noisy motorbike out there.

JP: Welcome to Surry Hills.

SA: So there's different kind of – do you call it factions? Not factions.

JM: Strands?

SA: Strands.

JP: Strands. Yes, that sounds a good word, yes.

23.53 JM: Yes, and it's been people have gone down different paths at different points in time since the 1650s in the early 1800s in the US, different strands developed and there you have groups who have pastors and have what we call "programme meetings" which would perhaps be very similar to a Protestant Church service here, and others have similar meetings to worship to us which we call "unprogrammed" which are basically based on silence which is only broken if someone who's part of that meeting for worship feels moved to share something with everyone. There are also some groups who are very still – or are evangelical and others who are not. And I mentioned before the breadth, I guess, that encompasses Quaker belief which on the one hand you might have what's known as universalism, which I guess would be what I subscribe to, where you believe that we have much to learn from all manner of religions and faiths and where the bible is, although considered an important document, isn't necessarily the focus - you know, it's not the focus of my belief; in fact I'm very ignorant of the bible – and at the other end of the spectrum you would have some Quakers for whom the bible is central and Jesus Christ is central and who have perhaps

more dogmatic views, perhaps, than Quakers in Australia generally would have.

SA: Is that difficult? It sounds like it could be quite a challenging mix for Quakers because it's kind of quite opposing, really, isn't it?

26.12 JP: Well, I think one of the central beliefs is that there is that of God in everyone and so while you have that as a very strongly held philosophy there tends to be a sense of "O.K, that's how you choose to express your Quakerism, I choose to do it this way" and that's fine. But within the approaches to the meeting for worship, for example, there would tend to be a meeting that would be programmed with a pastor and a form of service. Although it still has quite a high component of silence, far more than there would be in a Protestant service, they would tend to worship separately from the unprogrammed meetings unless there is an international gathering or something like that when both approaches would therefore be used or experienced but, yes, it's that respect for the other person. And I think that's very strong in terms of accepting other philosophies and beliefs, other books that might be used as a spiritual source, not necessarily only the bible. Quite a number of Quakers would have quite a wide-ranging bookshelf, I think.

27.57 JM: I think also throughout those different strands of Quakerism, as Jackie said, there is this belief of that of God in everyone but there are also other aspects of Quakerism that have developed over time that I think we all share and some of this would include what we refer to as testimonies. One is a testimony to non-violence and peace and pacifism, another one is integrity, truthfulness, another one is - - -

JP: Simplicity.

JM: - - - simplicity. We have trouble with that one.

JP: And equality, yes.

JP: And equality or community. So, you know, you would find people trying to live out those testimonies throughout all of the strands of Quakerism. Another one which I think would still remain consistent across all strands of Quakerism is the way we do our business and for instance here at Devonshire Street we hold a meeting for worship for business once a month and there's an agenda like with most meetings. But the decision-making process is all about trying to come to a point of unity on a particular topic or a way forward so there's no voting, it's not consensus either, really, because in some situations it may be a matter that's creating some difficulty or there may be, you know, a number of diverging views but quite often we can arrive at a point where there is unity and maybe one or two people might – although they might not be in complete agreement about what's being proposed they will agree to stand aside and allow a decision to be

made that sort of reflects – it's called "reflecting the will or the sense of the meeting", so that's fairly unique.

30.15 JP: And that can be just such an amazing spiritual experience, to be in a room full of people – and I've experienced it myself many times during our yearly meeting – when we've perhaps got two hundred and fifty Quakers in a room, discussing an issue for which two hundred and forty nine are thinking one way and one friend will stand and express a different view which will be considered by everyone and on occasions two hundred and fifty people have ended up facing the same way and they have all turned to the direction that the one friend was thinking and it really is very much a meeting for worship for business and the spiritual aspect is still very strong in a meeting to discuss a business subject which might be a policy decision, it might be whether to go ahead with a purchase of a building or a piece of equipment or the colour of the carpet or something. It all is conducted in a spirit of worship so that there is no name-calling, there's no blaming, everyone is respected for their opinions and everyone is equally entitled to speak – very special.

SA: And is there like a hierarchy within the Quakers, the organisation?

JM: No, there's not. I mean in Australia there's just one paid officer who's the yearly meeting secretary and other than that with each what are called local meetings everyone's a volunteer but there'll be someone who holds the position of clerk and the clerk is a person who conducts these business meetings and there's people like treasurers and so on.

32.22 We have a number of committees focusing on different issues, like a committee to look after this building, a committee called Ministry and Oversight or some are called Ministry and Care which is about the sort of pastoral care of the membership but also the health or spiritual health of the meeting. I mean, in the early days there were some separate business meetings for men and women up until I think the mid, late 1800s but women still participated within the meetings for worship and there were travelling women ministers but they weren't like ministers of religion, it was more like people travelling under concern. To follow on from what Jackie was saying earlier, one matter that was considered and discussed over a number of years that did cause some angst with some members was the issue of celebrating what we call committed relationships which related primarily but not solely to members or attenders who were gay or lesbian who obviously still today in Australia can't get married but sought within Quakers a way of celebrating, you know, their commitment to one another.

34.11 And I think we got to a point in about 1985 where Quakers agreed that there should be provision for the meeting to recognise and celebrate such relationships and there's been a more formal process for that since about 1995 and now again we're revisiting that issue because many Quakers feel it still means that the members of the meeting are being treated differently

because Quakers have the right to carry out sort of formal marriages of heterosexual couples. So there's now a proposal, I think, that perhaps – but it hasn't been finalized yet – that maybe Quakers in Australia cease to perform state sanctioned marriages that just celebrate committed relationships and that then for the moment anyway heterosexual couples would then sort of have a ceremony through a registrar general sort of so far as a formal sort of marriage was concerned.

SA: So what were the difficulties with performing that marriage ceremony?

JM: Well, there were some Quakers friends who just didn't feel comfortable with homosexuality at all and couldn't countenance the idea of Quakers formally recognizing and celebrating such relationships. So, I mean Jackie was more part of this than I was.

35.59 JP: It was certainly a very difficult time, I think, for a number of people to get their head around the ideas and the fact that Quakers in Australia have the opportunity to conduct a legal marriage, with the testimony really of equality this was a situation that was not equal, where committed relationships of gay and lesbian couples are not treated equally in the eyes of the law and therefore in the eyes of the Marriage Act and so looking at how we may be able to bring this change about so that there is equality within the law. I think we're a few years off yet but we're still working on it. Yes, so it certainly is probably one of the more difficult issues that we have worked or are working our way through over recent years.

SA: Yes, because I could imagine there's quite a bit of dissenting kind of views on that issue, yes.

JP: Because there is no creed for Quakers to accept, you're not always clear where certain issues can be clearly defined and even where some things are perhaps a little clearer, you've got such differing viewpoints. For example, to go back to the Second World War, there are a number within our meeting within New South Wales – and I'm sure in others around Australia – where you've got conscientious objectors, you've got people who work very strongly to bring about a more peaceful society but you've also got people who've enlisted because they felt that was how they saw their part to play in what was happening.

38.26 So all of these views are able to be accommodated. It may take a little bit of discussion and time, but it is possible for that to happen and yet this issue over equality when, it's not so clear-cut because the law is saying one thing and we're wanting to step aside from that law and come up with a different position, so yes.

SA: And that's why you decided not to hold official heterosexual marriages?

JP: That's still being discussed as an option, as a way of making our feelings more broadly known. We're not very many in number and I think we don't have quite such a loud voice. If we had, I don't know, five million Quakers in Australia and we were to make a decision like this it would probably have a bigger impact. We have about a thousand Quakers and probably about a thousand who are - - -

JM: In Australia

JP: - - - in Australia and about a thousand who are known as attenders. They're people who appreciate and join with us in meetings for worship and in some cases just journeying with us, in some cases considering membership but that certainly is not being forced on them. So we're looking at about two thousand overall in Australia.

40.12 In other countries the numbers are much greater but that's all we have in Australia, so our voice is still a little bit silent. But some people have said Quakers tend to punch above their weight because we're involved in quite a number of social justice committees with ecumenical bodies, with other faith committees in the area. So we're not in isolation but that helps to amplify some of the issues we might want to raise.

SA: So, do you have very many gay and lesbian people within the Quaker community?

JM: I mean people don't declare their sexuality but certainly at Devonshire Street and up the Blue Mountains too where Jackie worships, you know, there's a significant number and there is a group within Friends or within – we sort of use the term "Friends" and Quakers interchangeably at times because it's the Religious Society of Friends.

SA: So that's the official name?

JP: Yes.

JM: 'Religious Society of Friends – Quakers' is the official name. But within Quakers and certainly in Sydney there's a group called - - -

JP: 'Friends of Gay and Lesbian Concerns'.

JM: - - - something like that, who sort of meet together and for instance we've participated in different ways in the Mardi Gras, either by taking part in the march or taking part in the fair in Victoria Park. I think it's, we've sort of more or less put our hand up.

42.06 JP: Yes, very much so.

SA: So that sounds like it's an important issue for you?

JP: It's still an issue under discussion but it is significant, I think, yes, yes.

JM: And I guess the gay and lesbian people who have come to Quakers have obviously been looking for a spiritual home and they presumably didn't feel welcome in the churches that they'd grown up in and I guess because of this Quaker view of that of God in everyone and I'm recognising that people look within for their own god or spirit or however people want to express it, I guess that that's meant that some gay and lesbian people have sort of felt comfortable with Quakers and they've challenged Quakers which I think is good because it's very easy for anybody to sort of go along and be comfortable with the way things have been and so, you know, they've been challenging us, you know, with respect to things like marriage and so on.

JP: But I think also it's a link in a chain that goes right back to the 1650s. Social justice and equality has always been a key component of how Quakers have expressed themselves, whether it was treatment of convicts, people in prison - people, for example, Elizabeth Fry and her work - whether it was part of the underground railway in America of helping slaves escape to Canada, the whole question of the abolition of slaves was initiated by Quakers.

44.17 The question of how businesses are run so that you get a fair price for a fair commodity, a fair product, that has also been a very strong Quaker component and I think this again is another social justice and equality issue that we are dealing with and it happens to be one of the twenty first century. Peace has also been a longstanding issue that we have addressed and I don't think we've been quite so successful with that one. We've managed to get rid of slaves but we haven't been able to bring about peace but certainly that is something that we still work very hard to bring about.

SA: Maybe if you could tell me a little bit about that because I know that, you know, it's not just in recent sort of history, it actually goes right back to, you know, conscientious objectors in WWI as well.

JM: Well, we could go further back. This year actually Quakers around the world have been celebrating the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of a formal expression of the Quaker Peace Testimony and that was when a declaration was made to Charles II in 1660 in the UK and that was within a few years of the formation of Quakerism but Quakers were being persecuted and there was still – it was sort of after the end of – I'm having a mental blank.

46.04 JP: The Civil War?

JM: Yes, it was after the end of the civil war in the UK but, you know, there was a view that the Quakers were against the king or against royalty or something and so this declaration was put together which was, as I said, an expression of our peace testimony; it was testifying against violence and

war and so that peace testimony is something that's just remained a very central part of Quakerism although, you know, as Jackie has said, at times during situations like WWI and WWII some Quakers felt that they needed to take part in those wars because I guess they saw the situation that applied at that time to be sort of a greater evil. And yet on the other hand a number of people have come to Quakers who have previously taken part in war and just found it abhorrent.

JP: And quite a number were part of ambulance work and so on in WWI and WWII, weren't they, and that was working for support for the refugees on any side. They didn't take sides; they just saw a person who needed warm clothing, somewhere to sleep and food and that's what they tried to provide. And that was the start of the organisation that I worked for which is Quaker Service Australia but the Quaker service community started work in times of war, distributing the relief to people in need whoever they were and I think that enabled quite a number of conscientious objectors to fulfill their requirements for actual service but they were driving ambulances and that sort of work and that was a good opportunity for them to participate as they felt called to do.

48.47 JM: My great uncle, Alfred Alan Junior was the architect for this meeting house but he actually during WWI in 1915 went over to the UK and he was part of that Friends War Victims' Relief Committee and he spent some time in Belgium, helping refugees and quite a number of Quakers from Australia either joined with that group or with Friends Ambulance or sort of went to Europe afterwards to help in relief work after the war. And actually during WWII here you might have heard of the Dunera Boys. Some of those people who came out on the Dunera were refugees who'd escaped from Austria or Germany to the UK. Many of them were Jewish, some were Catholic and others were Protestants and Sidney Morris who was the Director General of New South Wales Health at the time visited the camp in Hay and met with some of the refugees there and wrote a long report about some issues that had arisen within the camp and help that was required and that sort of report went around Quakers in Australia and I think was presented to authorities and that resulted in some improvements in the situations in the camp.

50.28 **SA: Yes. So you were saying before, Jackie, that the Quaker Service Australia was started. When did that -?**

JP: That was formed in 1959, so we're just over fifty now and we've been running projects overseas, development aid projects, and also supporting work with Aboriginal communities in Australia, not necessarily New South Wales but all around the country and that's very much an expression of Quakers' desire for a more peaceful and just world. And again it comes back to this social justice, this access to resources equality type of approach. So the people that are involved in the projects don't have to be Quaker, they don't have to come to Quaker meetings, they don't have to

have anything to do with that, it's more how we manage the projects with that sense of supporting individuals to achieve what it is that they want to achieve. What they see is their need rather than going in and saying "Well, you obviously need this, this and this" and being sort of dogmatic and colonial about it. So it's sitting down and listening to what the people say they want and if we can help them we will but it is establishing a relationship with them so that we're not viewed as a banker, we're not just somebody to pay for things but it's a bit of a discussion, it's an opportunity to learn from them as much as them to learn from us and that's how we try and run our overseas programmes.

52.30 **SA: And within Australia?**

JP: Same thing. That's a little bit more difficult but we try and work with Aboriginal communities to help them achieve what it is that they are looking for. There's been a strong connection with the setting up of Tranby [Aboriginal education college], for example, in Sydney but working with Aboriginal communities in Northern Territory and Queensland and Western Australia, Victoria. So, yes, whatever it is that they would like to achieve we try and help them where we can.

SA: So what about refugees? Have you got a service or is there something within the Society that kind of supports them?

JP: It's more something that individual Friends would do to help refugees get settled into Australia. There's quite a number that have worked with the detention centres and visiting there – I'm thinking of Michael for example.

JM: Right. Well, I think too, I mean we're such a small organisation that we don't have the means to, I guess, set up our own committees or run programmes relating to every issue that's of concern to us and I guess with a number of matters like with refugees, as Jackie said, individuals would probably participate in other organisations.

54.16 For instance, there's a local refugee centre in Redfern that I think's run by the Sisters of Mercy, maybe, and we've provided some support to them – they sometimes have meetings here – and for a while we were providing short term accommodation for asylum seekers here. We haven't for a number of years because it proved a bit problematic in that, you know, we discovered that, you know, it was a matter of more than just providing accommodation, that the asylum seekers needed a lot more support and after a while we really didn't have the means to provide that level of support and it was falling to our resident wardens to be the main support people and that was becoming a bit of a burden to them and unfair to expect them to sort of take on that role. So we haven't provided that specific support in recent years.

JP: Through the Ecumenical Council of New South Wales there's been quite a number of Quakers involved in refugee and asylum seeker support that way and helping individual families assimilate, which is quite a long term commitment and process. As Jenny said, it goes beyond providing somewhere for them to stay but it's being a support person and it's being a sounding board, it's all sorts of things as well as guiding them through the maze of social services and medical services and things like that that they need as soon as they get here because their situation has been so acute.

56.18 **SA: And then I've got a note here that you also joined forces with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom post WWI.**

JM: Yes. Like I think at different times over the years individual Friends have been part of WILPF, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. At the moment in Sydney I'm not aware of anyone who is.

JP: In Canberra I think there's quite a number, a very active group there within the Quaker meeting in Canberra that are part of that. And a dear friend who died last year was very much involved with WILPF and also things like Pine Gap and the Women of Greenham Common and all those sorts of things. So, yes, because we are small in number I think there isn't a sense that we need to invent our own wheels, we'll just look and see what other organisations are there and can we lend our support and in that way I think we can achieve far more by working collaboratively than feeling that we have to form our own committee and do our own whatever, we'd just join with others and I think that way we achieve far more.

58.02 JM: I think something – I mean, this would apply across the board but earlier this century and say during the '30s, '40s, '50s, '60s women weren't in the workforce to the extent that they are now and when you read up on the history of Quakers in Sydney there were all these wonderful women who, you know, did great work and gave a lot of their time to various issues but now, you know, many of us are working into our sixties and there just isn't the time or the energy, I think. And I guess there's just such a broad array of issues of concern to – you know, not just to Quakers, obviously to many people relating to the environment and refugees and asylum seekers and peace issues that it's all very daunting and, you know, I guess we just have to carefully consider how we will engage with those issues, whether we'll do it as a society, as sort of something that we take up as what we call a concern or whether it's an issue where perhaps we feel that we can work better through individuals and supporting individuals in their sort of contribution to those issues.

JP: There's an expression about talking truth to power and I think that started with the peace testimony, going to the head of the country, to Charles II, but even today I'm sure most of the prime ministers have quite a stack of letters that have been sent to them from Quakers, addressing various issues. The

idea of writing to a politician or going to meet them to express an opinion is something that Quakers have a longstanding tradition of doing so.

60.15 **SA: Now, lots of questions I've been scribbling down when you've been talking. Now, just maybe we should just – because we really only got up to the early 1900s about where you were actually based.**

JP: Right.

SA: We've diverged a lot from then. So where we got up to was that you were still in the cemetery.

JM: Right. Yes, well.

SA: So you had a purpose built meeting house there.

JM: Our meeting house there that was built in 1868 and that was used till 1901 and with the resumption of the cemetery the government provided compensation of two thousand pounds and then Quakers spent some time discussing sort of – well, they obviously felt the need to establish a new meeting house, a replacement meeting house, and they spent some time discussing that and in the end decided that they wanted to remain in this area and to be providing a service to people in the community and where this current meeting house was built was actually at that time a vacant block of land and there were two terrace houses next door and so with that compensation and donations from Quakers in the UK and Ireland and also from within Australia they purchased this block of land and the two terraces next door and built this meeting house.

62.02 Originally, there was a plan that caretakers would live in one of the terraces and they would be used – there was a plan to have a coffee shop in one of the terraces and, you know, they'd worked out other activities that they would use the terraces for but I think in the end the expenses were greater than they expected and so they incorporated the quarters for the caretakers within this building and they rented out the terraces and then they were sold after a few years. And over the years I keep coming across in the archives, every ten or fifteen years there seems to be a discussion about, "Should we retain this meeting house or –", because sometimes, occasionally an offer might be made to buy it or people may feel that, you know, "We don't need such a large building for our small numbers and perhaps we should sell it and buy a house in the suburbs" but we're still here.

SA: So tell me why. Why do you think that they originally thought that this was the best place for Quakers or the Meeting House?

JM: Well, I mean obviously things were very different a hundred years ago I guess with respect to the population and spread of Sydney generally but there seemed to be both a desire to be somewhere central but also this

sense of omission to the people in the area. So in the early days of this meeting house, as this history written by Vaughan Evans sets out, the adult school classes were held here and there was a girls' club run by my great aunt and a boys' club run by my grandfather Stanley Allen and there was a free kindergarten in the lower hall that was run from about 1906, I think, for local children.

64.18 JP: The story I like is that there were a number of small factories in this area and the workers had nowhere to eat their lunch, so they were actually sitting on the side of the pavement or in the gutters to eat their lunch and the Quakers made the lower hall available so that they could come in and have their lunch, sit down, have their meal in peace and safety too, which I think is a lovely story. I mean, now when you look at the area around here there are so many coffee shops and little cafes for workers to have their lunch that it's hard to imagine how it must have been at the turn of the previous century like that.

SA: Because the rag trade was very well established in this - - -

JP: Well, it still is.

SA: It still is.

JP: Yes, yes.

SA: But not to the extent that it was back then.

JP: No, no, that's right.

SA: So there would have been a lot of - - -

JP: Seamstresses around, yes, yes.

SA: - - - seamstresses, yes.

JM: I mean these coffee shops that Jackie mentioned, they seem to have just grown exponentially in the last few years but, as f recently as, maybe three or four years ago in the wintertime or at this time of the year I've seen people come and sit on the front steps in the sun and eat their sandwiches.

JP: Yes, yes, yes.

SA: And what about up the road here, the housing estate, Northcott?

JM: Right.

SA: I mean, that's been there since the '70s, is that right?

JM: Yes, maybe '60s.

SA: '60s.

JM: I remember as a teenager, coming here, and we used to have what was called Fellowship Sunday on the first Sunday of the month, so after meeting for worship there'd be sort of a shared lunch in the lower hall and then maybe a discussion or a talk afterwards.

66.13 But often there'd be local people who were obviously down on their luck, either from the housing estate or maybe sleeping rough, who'd come to meeting for worship and have lunch with us and we still do get people from the community coming along and the street stall, which is happening tomorrow, second Friday of the month. That's patronised by local people, isn't it?

JP: Oh, yes, very much so. It's been running for a couple of years now, so it's a bit of an institution in the area but it is an opportunity for neighbours to come here and buy things cheaply. It's a good outreach for Quakers for this meeting, but again it's that sense of being part of the community and the verandah here is still being used, albeit unofficially, for people sleeping even in the winter months. When it's too cold on a park bench then you quite often find people sort of curled up on the front verandah, so it's obviously still got that reputation as somewhere - - -

SA: So the relevance of being here in the inner city, do you think it's still as relevant as what it was when, you know, there were no cafes and all the factory workers here?

JM: Probably not so much in that sense of providing a mission, which was not about proselytising but really about providing assistance to the local people. That probably doesn't apply so much today but in terms of its location it's very central for people who come to meeting for worship regularly and also, you know, we have quite a few Quakers from country New South Wales or interstate or overseas coming to Sydney for short periods.

68.25 Some of them stay in the accommodation or others just come to meeting for worship and so it's very easy for them to find us.

JP: Yes, I think that the location's so close to Central Station is still of relevance. It's just that the audience for whom it has that relevance has changed a little bit, hasn't it?

SA: So you were saying that at the moment there's one thousand members and around about another thousand people who are non-members but still come to worship. So what's the membership kind of change been like, you know, over the years? You were saying in the early days there were around about a couple of hundred.

JM: Yes, I think in New South Wales the membership now is between two and three hundred, I'm not sure.

JP: Yes, something. So, yes.

JM: And that's distributed between, well, people who would consider Devonshire Street their local meeting. There's also a meeting house in Wahroonga - - -

JP: And Woodford [Blue Mountains, west of Sydney].

JM: - - - Quaker Cottage at Woodford. There's a group that they don't have a permanent home but who meet in the Newcastle/Hunter Valley area. There's small groups on the mid North Coast, Northern Rivers - - -

JP: Orange.

JM: - - - Orange, Kiama - - -

JP: Lismore.

JM: - - - Thirroul, you know, quite small groups, some of them, and people – we've talked about people becoming members by convincement. Well, I mean sometimes people remain with us for the rest of their lives, other people maybe find it's not the answer for them that they thought it was and move on. So I suppose there's a bit of a turnover - I'm just trying to think.

SA: So is it levelling out or do you think it's declining?

JP: I think it's fairly stable with people coming and going. I mean, it's not static, it's fluid but I think that the actual numbers are probably fairly comparable over the last few years. They may have gone down a little but not dramatically.

JM: It's probably declining per head of population - - -

JP: Yes, yes.

JM: - - - but in terms of numbers – like, you know, there is – well, not just in Australia but in the UK and elsewhere, you know, there's occasionally a lot of angst about the future of Quakerism and will we survive, but we're still here.

JP: We've been around a number of years now.

SA: Sorry, I'm jumping around all over the place but a question, or something that I wanted to talk to you about, was this building – it's so beautiful. You were saying before that your - - -

JM: Great uncle.

SA: He was an architect?

JM: Yes, he was an architect. So he must have been asked to design it and I think it was perhaps modelled on perhaps meeting houses in the UK or I'm not sure but it's sort of hard for me. You know, people often come and they really love the building but because I've been coming here since I was a child it's sort of I don't see it as other people see it although, you know, I certainly love the ambience and particularly of the upper hall, I guess, where we have meeting for worship.

72.12 You know, yes, that's changed with the construction of the flat for wardens above but, yes, it's sort of been a wonderful home to us. And like in the UK as well, and I'm sure elsewhere in the world, every now and then there are discussions about "Should we own these meeting houses, you know, should we perhaps not sell them and use the funds for some of our concerns like working with refugees or development aid?" and so on and so I think in the UK some meeting houses might have been sold, you know, because that was how that particular community saw the way forward but I guess here it's just very good to have this sort of permanent base from which to do various things.

SA: And as a place of worship. I mean, is that an important thing, to actually have?

JM: No.

SA: No, it's not?

JP: No, because it's not consecrated ground or anything like that. Quakers can happily worship anywhere. I mean, it's convenient to have somewhere where you can leave your library, where you can leave the chairs out and all of those sorts of things, the practical issues. It's also very convenient to have a space where people can come at other times and appreciate the library or the resources that there might be but it's not essential from the point of view of the worship, meeting for worship being conducted; that can happen anywhere.

74.16 **SA: Also too I should also ask you about or get you to talk about supporting other spiritual organisations because I know that the Metropolitan Community Church ran from here for quite a number of years and is that something that you've done a lot of?**

JM: Yes, I think they commenced meeting here in the very early 1980s. I mean, it's something that's happened before with another group during WWI. The local Congregational minister, Reverend Revett, I think, took a pacifist stance during WWI and that apparently wasn't popular with the hierarchy

and I think he – I'm not quite sure how it came about but anyway he ended up finding a home here in this building and he would conduct Congregational services here in the afternoons and I think there was something in the evenings as well and apparently most of his congregation followed him; they didn't agree with the hierarchy. So, yes, I mean I think, as I said earlier, Quakers generally feel that, you know, there are a number of paths that you can go down with respect to spirituality and your beliefs and so we have no worries about, you know, providing a home and support for other groups if they're in need and we're able to provide that support.

76.09 JP: Yes.

JM: See, something else that happened here – it's refreshing my memory from reading Vaughan Evans' history – but in the '70s there were a number of important meetings here with respect to Aboriginal land rights. There was a national consultation held here in 1972 and then a state sort of land rights conference in 1976. I'm just trying to think of other significant events that have taken place here but I can't think of any at the moment.

JP: Not in terms of other churches, no.

JM: No.

SA: And before when you were saying that after the meetings sometimes there were discussion and talks, what kind of discussion and talks did you hold here or would you hold here?

JM: Like that doesn't happen regularly now.

JP: It's things like Quaker basics which would be part of a process for attenders or inquirers to find out a little bit more about Quakes, there would be discussions based on that, or if somebody is visiting from another part of the world where they're active in an environmental concern or something to do with indigenous concerns in that particular country they might give a talk to Quakers afterwards. So I mean that process of sharing of knowledge still happens, doesn't it?

78.07 **SA: And also too I guess I'm kind of curious about – I can't quite picture what a worship meeting looks like. Can you walk me through? Like if I was to come - - -**

JM: Sure.

SA: - - - what would happen? Because I notice here you have quite a different way of setting up your – you don't call it a chapel, do you?

JP: No.

JM: No, just a meeting room.

SA: Meeting room. Actually, everything's circular.

JP: Yes. There's no top to it, it's circular, so again it's that whole concept of equality, that there isn't an area that's more - - -

JM: Elevated.

JP: Yes, that's right.

JM: Although actually when I was young it was different.

JP: Yes.

JM: Meeting in the round, I think it's only occurred in the last, what - - -

JP: I've only ever known it that way.

JM: - - - O.K, thirty, forty years perhaps, but as a child the elders used to sit at the front and we faced them and elders were, I guess, respected and - - -

JP: What we term "weighty Quakers".

SA: Weighty Quakers.

JP: Weighty. Nothing to do with their kilos.

JM: The more just sort of seasoned, what you'd call seasoned Quakers and they were usually members of the ministry and oversight committee, I imagine, as well. But even then there was still a sense that people participated in the meeting for worship in an equal basis; anyone, if they felt so moved, could stand up and share something.

80.03 JP: Yes, so anyone can come in. As it is set up now, as soon as one person walks in and sits down then the meeting for worship has started and others will come in – and the expression is "with heart and mind prepared" so they will come in, they will leave their everyday worries, if you like, behind them, come in and sit down in silence and begin a process called "centreing", which is just being in tune with the spirit. It's sort of worship, it's more than meditation, it is a much deeper and more focused process – wouldn't you say, Jenny?

JM: I think it's just about looking inside yourself. I mean it would be different for everyone but I guess just I tend to reflect on my life and, I don't know, way perhaps.

JP: It's a hard thing to describe in words but I think because anyone is welcome and if they feel moved to speak then they stand and do so and it might be something that they've read or a thought that's coming through to them. Occasionally, because so many are escapees from other faiths, so somebody may stand and sing a verse from a hymn that has been running through their mind that's relating to what they've been contemplating that morning,

81.59 And the meeting for worship lasts for an hour and at the end of that time the elders will shake hands as an indication that it's over and then everyone else will shake hands. It could be that the meeting for worship is completely silent, that no one feels moved to give vocal ministry, and that too is very special but perhaps is more common in the smaller meetings.

SA: So there's nothing to do, really? I mean like if I was to come and sit in there wouldn't be any instruction that I would - - -

JP: No.

JM: We have a little brochure out the front which is 'Your first time in a Quaker Meeting' and we have a welcome who'll be sitting just there who will shake hands with people as they arrive and if they suspect that this person's here for the first time or the person indicates that they'll offer them this leaflet which, you know, gives an idea of how it all works. And we have, on the central table there we'll have copies of the bible but also a British publication called 'Quaker Faith and Practice' which is a sort of collection of – sometimes it's minutes from very early yearly meetings or it sort of covers different topics like the Quaker testimonies and just how Quakers are organised. And we have our own book that we put together a few years ago called 'This we can say', so people can see it and read, you know, take a copy and just sit and read if they feel more comfortable doing that.

SA: So are you connected – I mean, I know you say that there's lots of different people that come to Quakerism and, you know, some have read the bible, some like you, you know, don't know that much about the bible, so like how do you get to the spiritual kind of essence of whether it's God or the god within you, like how do you get to that, I guess without any ministry, without any - - -

84.26 JP: Ministers.

SA: - - - ministers, yes, or pastors.

JP: Well, I think the books that are there will help you to centre but it is that inward looking because Quakerism is a very experiential: it's "What have you experienced, what has your life shown you so far that explains or demonstrates that of God in your life, in your family, how has it been manifest to date?" And it's a question of appreciation of that as coming

from a spiritual base rather than a materialistic one or something like that; it's looking for that spiritual component in everything that you do in the people that you meet in your way of living.

JM: So I guess for someone who's new or exploring Quakerism I guess it's a matter of both reading books or booklets about Quakerism or different aspects of Quakerism, coming to meetings for worship and experiencing those, I guess getting to know other Quakers. At the end of meeting for worship, actually after the shaking of hands we have the usual announcements but then every week in advance someone's asked to do a short reading from something and more often than not it's from some publication that's got nothing to do with Quakerism but, you know, that's spoken to this person.

86.23 There's something else that I always find quite inspiring at yearly meetings before every formal session there'll be a reading of what's called the testimony to the life of a Quaker who's died within the last year and it doesn't happen in every case but if, say, someone dies in our meeting and they've been part of the meeting for a long time and they've become reasonably significant within the meeting a testimony like an obituary but sort of a bit different from an obituary is prepared and these are sort of read out at yearly meeting and they're really inspiring. And sometimes, that person mightn't have attained great things in their life but just because of the role they've played in the meeting, they've been quite significant.

JP: Yes. Sometimes with those things too it's sad because you get to know an aspect of that person after they've died, you didn't know it at the time. But the testimony to the grace of God in the life of that Friend, it has ties to an obituary in that it talks about their life but it's how the spirit has moved through that person's life, what has been spiritually significant to them, what things did they talk about, what expression did it have, did they follow up on particular concerns or something like that and it really is very uplifting to hear these stories.

88.19 I mean, sometimes it's of somebody who was a feisty so-and-so but they had channelled that into their concern for prison rights or refugees or something like that and you can hear how their whole life has been to bring about a change in that social injustice that they had seen and, yes, very, very special.

SA: Sorry, I keep pushing this point but so there's no ordination of any - - -

JP: No.

SA: So there's none of that hierarchy at all?

JP: We have, as Jenny had explained, we have a clerk of the meeting who deals with the business of actually clerking the meeting but our clerk is the

servant of the meeting, they are not in any way a privileged position, sometimes far from it. And also the sense of equality is that this role is open to men or women, the same with our presiding clerk who has the equivalent of head of church in Australia, can be male or female and quite often at head of church meetings to do with the National Council of Churches in Australia Quakers and perhaps the Salvation Army would be the only two that would have a female head of church.

90.08 JM: And within each meeting and also at this, what we call the yearly meeting level which is Quakers throughout Australia, the method for choosing people who'll fulfill certain roles like clerk or being on various committees is through what's called the nominations committee. And so the nominations committee might consider or be searching for a suitable person to fulfill a role and then they'll bring that recommendation to the business meeting, so everyone needs to be in unity about, you know, the appointment of this person or that person to a particular committee, so sometimes ……

JP: And that too is a spirit led process.

JM: It can be a bit tortuous at times.

JP: Yes.

SA: Can I ask you, do you believe in like a God, like a him, a physical god or is it some kind of spiritual kind of essence that lives within you?

JM: I think it'd be much more the latter, just an essence or a spirit or potential within everyone and I think then really it's – I don't know, maybe, there's this ongoing struggle within yourself to live up, I guess, to the idea of that spirit too. So it's not something that's some creed or some expectation that's imposed on you externally but it's sort of, you look within yourself and, yes, struggle.

92.08 JP: Yes, for me it's along similar lines too and I think all the years when I was growing up in the convent with some very stern God, the Father, paintings that were on the walls, and that sense of retribution and stern dogmatic sort of presence, it didn't strike a chord for me at all, whereas the idea of the spirit within which is much more open, uplifting, helping you achieve your potential presence far more than the negative "you must be punished" sort of idea that didn't sit well with me at all.

SA: We've talked about quite a few changes that have happened over the years. So I guess kind of finishing up now, just rounding off, so the significant changes for Quakers in Australia, so what do you think they've been over the years, just in summary?

JP: I think the fact that we're here at all. The support in the early days from Britain and Europe and other places, supporting the fledgling meeting, so I

think without that support I'm not quite sure that we would actually have such a presence in Australia. Do you think?

34.21 JM: And I think, I mean I guess we've also mirrored what's been happening in society generally, I guess, with people's standard of living improving and I guess issues that we are concerned about have changed or that are more to the fore have changed over the years so that Quakers are very much concerned now, as are lots of other people, with environmental issues and climate change and energy use, what's known as "right sharing of the world's resources", whereas in earlier days it perhaps was more bread and butter issues. I guess it's a struggle to live up to some of our testimonies such as simplicity in a world such as today.

SA: Is it?

JM: I find it a struggle.

SA: So when you say simplicity, what do you mean by that?

JM: Well, it can relate to sort of material types of things as in just possessions or travel or it can be more sort of within, simplicity within, I guess, the busyness of your lives but I think we're all much more conscious now of issues like energy use and, I don't know, the destruction that we're wreaking on the planet and the loss of biodiversity and I'm sort of passionate about birds and bird watching and that's something you're very much aware of, just the impact on birds of just the way we live our lives at a very personal level but just as a population.

96.56 **SA: And what do you see as the future for Quakers and maybe the challenges?**

JP: I think for many faiths it's a question of keeping yours relevant to those who come along and because I think Quakerism has evolved, it is picking up new strands, new ideas, that relevance is there. Still, we need to accept that society has changed and move with it, rather than thinking back to Fox's time and "O.K, that's how it was done in 1650, that's how it must always be done", that we need to move and I think pick up the new ideas about social injustice and what is the role for us. Is there in fact one, and if not let's accept that too and find where we have a place, where there is something that we can effectively bring about a positive change.

98.29 **SA: O.K. Look, I think that I have gone through – no, there was one thing that I noticed in the notes that you sent me, that you used to have sewing circles.**

JM: That was another relative of mine, my great aunt Mary Magini – she was born Mary Allen. I don't really know much about that other than what I've read in the history written by Vaughan Evans but I think it was something

that may have initially involved some of the local community but also members of the meeting.

JP: I think it was also giving them an income too, wasn't it, teaching them some skills for which they could not only make do and mend their own clothes but would be able to make something which they could then sell. I mean, it's the same sort of thing as Elizabeth Fry giving the convict women bundles of fabric, needles and thread as they were transported to Australia; it's the same sort of thing, teaching skills so that you can earn an income.

SA: So they were pre WWII, the sewing circles?

JP: Yes, yes.

JM: Yes, I think it was in the '30s, yes.

JP: Yes.

SA: Jenny, it must be amazing having such a long history of Quakerism because how many generations do you go back?

JM: I think it's about eight, something like that. But I only became aware or discovered this in the last few years, really, when I started researching family history. Like I knew my grandparents on my father's side were Quakers but wasn't really aware of anything beyond that and I suppose as a child you sort of tend not to be interested in your ancestors, really.

100.33 But, you know, just in the reading that I've been doing and my great grandfather, Alfred Allen Senior, was actually disowned by this meeting because in the 1860s there was contention about Quakerism and how it should be expressed and he was part of, I think, an evangelical group who wanted to go back to the roots or wanting Quakers to be living the Quaker testimonies and I think another group who I think he considered weren't really living up to those testimonies and there were various ructions within the meeting and he was disowned because he was a pretty obstreperous sort of person, I think, but eventually he was readmitted. And actually going further back members of my family were disowned because they married out because up until about 1858, something like that, you were automatically disowned if you married out, but that changed.

102.00 **SA: And did Quakers traditionally live in communities?**

JM: No, I don't think so but, I mean, I guess before motor cars and so on to get to meeting for worship they obviously had to live within a reasonable distance of the meeting houses, although I think some of them travelled quite some distance.

SA: But you weren't allowed to marry outside?

JM: No, and there was quite a tortuous process for applying for permission to marry. Like both sets of parents had to be interviewed and agree to the marriage and I think this is even if people who wanted to get married were over twenty one.

SA: Is this like early 1800s?

JM: Yes, and earlier than that, yes.

SA: Right.

JM: Well, even current marriage certificates there's a form of words and then everyone present signs their name on the marriage certificate and initially that was before Quaker marriages were, I think, considered legal by the state but it was all about showing that, you know, these young people had been married in the presence of all of these people and it was recognised and accepted but that sort of tradition of having those sort of certificates has sort of carried on.

JP: Yes.

SA: So it's fine to marry outside of Quakerism now?

JP: Oh, yes, yes.

JM: And you can still be - - -

JP: And we've both done it.

JM: And you can be married, you know, within. You know, you can have a Quaker marriage service even if both people aren't members.

JP: Yes.

SA: I wonder why or have you got any thoughts about why the evangelical kind of approach to Quakerism wasn't embraced in Australia? Is it not Australian to be evangelical, do you think?

104.08 JM: Well, I think we sort of tended to have stayed closer to Quakerism as it's evolved in the UK, whereas in America these different strands have developed much more and I don't know whether that's because of the influence of perhaps the Puritans and so on who went to America and some strands tended to sort of, I suppose, move more towards that form of expression of religious faith. So I don't think it's particularly Australian.

JP: No, no.

JM: Maybe – yes, not sure.

SA: O.K. So now I think I'll stop talking or asking you questions now but I'm wondering whether there's anything that you would like to finish off the interview with, a saying or if there's something that we haven't covered in the interview that you'd like to point out.

JP: Gracious, we've covered quite a wide range of issues and aspects of Quakers in Australia, yes.

JM: I mean, I suppose one thing that may have came out or that wasn't specifically addressed was that within Quakerism today, within this broad church that is Quakerism, there would be some who wouldn't even consider themselves or Quakers to be Christian because they wouldn't see the bible as their primary source, I guess, of inspiration or wouldn't see Jesus Christ as – I mean, all of us would see Jesus Christ as a very significant person in history but we would also see other people as very significant as well but we still manage to be part of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council and the National Council of Churches.

106.22 JP: Yes, I think the number that don't see themselves as Christian would be in the minority.

JM: I mean, they would all acknowledge that Quakerism grew out of Christianity.

JP: Yes. I mean, we're still called the Religious Society so I think there is still that strong component in there – I think they would be in the minority. It's not something that – you don't have it stamped on your forehead somewhere so I mean it's hard to know unless you've had a conversation with many people.

SA: So you would both call yourselves Christians?

JP: Certainly I would, yes.

JM: I'm not sure.

SA: O.K. Well, look, I'll thank you both for doing the interview today. It was really interesting, thank you.

JP: Thank you.

JM: Thank you.

Interview ends