

# Testimonies

including index of epistles

Compiled for Yearly Meeting,  
Friends House, London and online  
26–30 July 2024

Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Britain



## Proceedings

A number of documents will help us meet with hearts and minds prepared. Collectively, these are the 'Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2024'.

The full set comprises:

1. *Preparing for Yearly Meeting*, including community guidelines.
2. *Agenda and notes*, with introductory material for Yearly Meeting and annual reports of Meeting for Sufferings and other related bodies
3. *Testimonies*, including index of epistles
4. *Trustees' annual report*, including financial statements for the year ended December 2023
5. *Patterns of membership*, including the 2023 tabular statement
6. *Minutes*, which are distributed after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting.

All documents will be available online at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym). Many Friends will read the documents online, but if you need printed documents, they will be in a printer-friendly PDF format. We ask Friends to print their own copies or to seek assistance from someone in their meeting. This will help us to save costs and reduce the environmental impact of Yearly Meeting.

If you require accessible documents, please request these when booking for Yearly Meeting. If these do not meet your accessibility needs, or the needs of someone you know, please email [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk).

All *Quaker faith & practice* references are to the fifth edition, which can be found online at [www.quaker.org.uk/qfp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/qfp).

You can read about Yearly Meeting in chapter 6 of *Quaker faith & practice*. Alternatively, contact Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee on 020 7663 1040 or at [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk) or go to [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Britain

# Testimonies

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# Epistles

Friends in different yearly meetings traditionally keep in touch by writing and receiving epistles. One of the final acts of our Yearly Meeting will be to agree an epistle addressed “To all Friends everywhere”.

We used to include all epistles received from other yearly meetings in this publication. This year, however, we are printing only testimonies. This is because:

1. Recently, Britain Yearly Meeting has received fewer epistles from other yearly meetings. Instead, yearly meetings share their epistles with Friends everywhere by sending them to Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), which displays epistles on its website.
2. Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is reducing the amount of printed Yearly Meeting documents to reduce our environmental impact.

We are not ignoring the epistles. Extracts will be read in Yearly Meeting in session alongside testimonies as usual. A list of epistles received is below:

## **From Europe and the Middle East**

France Yearly Meeting  
FWCC Europe & Middle East Section Annual Meeting (May 2021)  
German Yearly Meeting  
Ireland Yearly Meeting  
Netherlands Yearly Meeting  
Norway Yearly Meeting  
Quaker Council for European Affairs General Assembly (November 2021)  
Sweden Yearly Meeting  
Switzerland Yearly Meeting

## **From Africa**

Friends Church of Uganda  
Southern Africa Yearly Meeting

## **From the Americas**

Friends Church of North Carolina  
Illinois Yearly Meeting  
Intermountain Yearly Meeting

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)  
Lake Erie Yearly Meeting  
Mexico General Meeting  
Monteverde Monthly Meeting  
Northern Yearly Meeting  
North Pacific Yearly Meeting  
Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting  
Pacific Yearly Meeting  
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting  
Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting  
Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting  
South Central Yearly Meeting  
Southeastern Yearly Meeting  
Wilmington Yearly Meeting

## **From Asia and the West Pacific**

Aotearoa New Zealand Yearly Meeting  
Australia Yearly Meeting  
Hong Kong Monthly Meeting  
Japan Yearly Meeting

You can read all epistles on the FWCC website at [https://fwcc.world/resources\\_cpt/epistles](https://fwcc.world/resources_cpt/epistles) and explore the work and witness of FWCC and of Friends around the world.

If you are unable to access the epistles online, please contact [ym@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ym@quaker.org.uk) or 020 7663 1040 for a printed version.

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## Introduction

### Testimonies to the Grace of God in lives – an enduring presence

The advice in the current *Quaker faith & practice* at paragraph 4.27 that “a testimony should not be a formal obituary or eulogy, but should record in thankfulness the power of divine grace in human life” is not always easy to carry through.

The following paragraph, 4.28, a minute from the then Hertford Monthly Meeting\* of 1780, records “the purpose of a testimony concerning our deceased worthy Friends [is] intended as a memorial, that they have walked as children of the Light, and of the Day, and to excite those who remain to take diligent heed, and to yield to the teachings of the still small voice, that they may follow them as they followed Christ, the great captain of their salvation”. Much of this expresses Friends’ interest in the writing of testimonies today, but how is it carried out?

Historically in Britain the issue of records concerning deceased Friends in the ministry began in the 17th century. “An early record maintained by London YM is now lost but a series of volumes begun in 1740 were maintained until 1872 with retrospective entries copied up from 1719. These volumes are known as ‘Testimonies concerning ministers deceased’. From the 19th century [they] contain minutes from quarterly meetings recording the lives of Friends rather than ministers. From 1861 quarterly meetings were at liberty to prepare a testimony concerning any Friend ‘whose life was marked by conspicuous service to God and the church.’” (Text typed up in Friends House library subject files c.1970).

An early American testimony written around 1690 advises “it is a justice due to the righteous, and a duty upon us, to contribute something to perpetuate the names of such who have left a fragrancy behind them, and through faith have obtained a good report” (Samuel Jennings’s testimony concerning John Eckley of Philadelphia).

Coming forward to the 20th century, London Yearly Meeting *Church government* of 1931, in use for more than three decades, stated “A Monthly Meeting may issue a testimony concerning the life and service of a deceased member whose life has been marked by devotion to the cause of his Lord and to the service of the Church. The object of such a Testimony is not eulogy, but to preserve a record of Divine Grace in the lives of (wo)men.” This last sentence bears a close similarity to para 4.27 in the current *Quaker faith & practice*. The text goes on to refer to progression of a testimony to yearly meeting “only if it is likely to be of service to the Society”. This is in line with our current practice.

In today’s fast-moving world Friends face a double challenge: to concentrate on the Divine and to write a short but rounded record. The first is not easy as it necessarily relates to our temporal experience; the second is increasingly important if posterity is to hold learning from an inspiring text in an age of complexities, speed and an increasing multiplicity of knowledge and communication. Friends can be long-winded. This puts some off from joining in our business meetings for worship.

A testimony should radiate the Grace of God as shown in the life of the Friend who has passed from this world. It differs from an obituary account of achievements, yet a few milestones in the life of the deceased will serve to illuminate the spiritual gifts bestowed.

Date of birth, date(s) of marriage(s), and date of death describe the setting of time. This is a necessary aid to living Friends. It is also a recognition of the times in which the life is set for posterity, where future Friends can relate the spiritual gifts received to the cultural context of the era. Reference to immediate antecedents can anchor the recall of a name for more distant Friends. Reference to children can demonstrate the enrichment of life.

Recognition of a spiritually lived life and its application characterises the preparation of a testimony. Worship through quiet waiting upon

God prayerfully alone or where two or three are gathered together in meeting is the hallmark of a Quaker. This does not deny the devotional or biblical emphases in other traditions. As seekers after Truth, Friends should be open to new learning as God's revelation continues in the world.

It is against this background that the application of talents, whether within the life of the Society or in witness in the wider world, are described. There is a temptation to link these to a career pattern or an extended voluntary body commitment, and hence border on an obituary. Rather, it is the spiritually inspired application of the talent for good that matters. Examples of the flowering of each talent in the life pattern of the departed Friend can then be quoted. If carefully knit together these convey an image of the whole.

Writing a testimony to the life of a departed Friend may not be easy. How far do we understand the familial and cultural background, the stresses and successes in that life? Did the light shine forth in life? Where we see glimpses of the inner spiritual life, how do these reflect in outward activity?

Were outward concerns truly a reflection of inward Grace? How does economic comfort sit easily with God's Will? Then we come back to what to include, what to leave out and how to outwardly reflect a spiritually inspired life to future generations.

Not far distant may be the expectations of relatives of the deceased. When a close relative died I had anticipated a prepared obituary in *The Friend* but instead I read a note from one who had only known her in her last years. I know a Friend now who feels hurt that no testimony was written around her partner who died some years ago. On another occasion a Friend who was to die shortly afterwards made plain that he did not want a testimony written to his life. It is difficult to know the aspirations of family members, and particularly so when anxiety and grief intrude. With a little passage of time, such aspirations, if known, should not

cloud the consideration within monthly meeting of how appropriately to remember a Friend. Such an interlude of perhaps a few months may help the meeting also in its discernment as to whether to prepare a testimony to the Grace of God in a life. It is the Light shining in life that matters.

That meetings might hold a short record of the lives of members is commendable. That these should be developed into testimonies is not necessarily the right use of time for the living. It is difficult to distinguish between the Martha and the Mary, and neither should we judge. Meetings need prayerful thought before committing the strengths of a life to a Quaker testimony.

John Melling, Assistant Clerk to General Meeting for Scotland

As endorsed by General Meeting for Scotland by its minute 15 of 11 September 2004.

Approved by Meeting for Sufferings by minute 6 of 2 December 2006.

\*Monthly meetings are now known as area meetings.

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## Moiya Bewsher (née Kelly)

28 May 1934 – 3 January 2023

Moiya found her spiritual home in Quakers as there were no limits on her exploration of spiritual paths. She lived being open to new light discerning what to take on as part of her spiritual practice by using her innate intelligence and extensive studying of the experiences of others. She totally believed in having a direct relationship with a higher presence which was not always aligned to conventional views, such as experiencing two tall dark men encouraging her to climb a mountain rather than seeing a bright light, while in hospital with heart problems several years before her death.

Moiya was born in Finsbury, London, within the sounds of Bow Bells, and grew up in London, but during the war moved around a great deal (attending 11 schools before the age of 11 – and most of these part time), settling again in Edgware after the war. This unsettled early start may account for her unwillingness to move from her later home in Bagshot long after it was practical.

She went to the local grammar school and the Aida Foster Theatre School, auditioned for the Royal Ballet but, in spite of considerable ability, was refused a place due to her short stature. Moiya had an early career as an actress, most notably playing Martha Cratchit in the 1951 film *Scrooge* (known as *A Christmas Carol* in the USA) and made her West End debut in *Master Crook* in 1959 and she continued being a performer with numerous acting roles in film and on stage.

Her family wanted her to have a more secure future and encouraged her to become a teacher, which she did and taught in numerous schools in London and Surrey Heath, both secondary and primary. She first came to Quakers while living in Edgware in the early 1960s, when she wanted somewhere to worship, enjoying the silence, the not telling people what to think or say, and the spiritual challenge. She became a member in 1976 when

she was worshipping with Farnborough Friends and transferred to Woking in 2009.

She served as an elder at Farnborough for a time and became Farnborough/Guildford and Godalming's Quaker Home Service (now Quaker Life) rep and served on this committee for many years, working on several sub committees, including the one for racism, creating a report and resources to help Friends, was involved with the Children and Young People's work, visiting JYM on at least one occasion.

Within whichever meeting she was attending, she supported lots of interest and learning groups, enjoying the challenge of debate and exploration. Her contributions to ministry could be passionate, powerful and enlightening. She was very keen to develop newer members and encouraged them to become involved with the work of central committees, believing that this would widen their understanding and appreciation of Quakerism. Hungry for intellectual stimulation, she also explored other faiths, such as Buddhism and Subud, alongside her Quaker practice.

Moiya had a love of learning and was the embodiment of being open to new light. She also challenged others to do the same with inspiring and probing questions covering a range of topics including politics and social values. She enjoyed a good laugh and would tell funny stories at her own expense, to lighten a serious situation, for example, suggesting to hospital staff when her blood pressure was very low that they should talk to her about American President Donald Trump as that would be sure to raise it.

She married Gowen Bewsher in 1959 and they had five children: Guy, Liz, James, Charlie and Charlee. The marriage did not last and she brought up the five as a single parent while balancing the demands of her teaching career and other interests, ensuring her children grew up to be independent and self-sufficient. Her funeral after the manner of Friends took place in Huntingdon on 24 February 2023.



Signed on behalf of Surrey & Hampshire Border  
Area Meeting

Held on 18 September 2023

Carolyn Baynes, Clerk

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## Marjorie Bliss

**3 August 1932 – 12 February 2023**

Although Marjorie had a Methodist upbringing, it was her parents' wish that she should attend Ackworth Quaker School as her sisters also did. This was to be a life-changing experience for her as it was there she met Michael, and also where a lifetime of service to Friends began. Those who knew Michael and Marjorie well knew the story of how they met each other at Ackworth, being placed one behind the other due to being seated alphabetically by the teacher. It was to lead to a long, very devoted partnership, lasting nearly 67 years of married life, and one which brought them together – as witnessed by those who knew them – in the close bonding and intimate way that roots do, entwining to emerge as one stem. Michael and Marjorie were truly 'two as one' and remained the closest of partners until and beyond Marjorie's death in February 2023.

Marjorie was a gifted singer and had a remarkable soprano voice, remembered by contemporaries of her younger years. Having left school, she trained as a teacher but after her marriage to Michael, her strong sense of duty led her to abandon her career and to put her family first, supporting her husband and then her son David and daughter Judith – and later her grandchildren – with love and devotion. She served Friends in a similar spirit and truly she served well. Throughout her long years of belonging to Quakers, she held many roles and responsibilities, including being Clerk of Wakefield Meeting where she served for many years, and Clerk of Pontefract (now Central Yorkshire) Area Meeting.

Marjorie and Michael had three chapters of being Resident Friends in Auckland, New Zealand – rich, memorable and life-affirming experiences, often referred to in conversations. Marjorie represented two area meetings on Meeting for Sufferings and in her later years at Pickering Meeting she gave long service as clerk, elder and overseer. She was also the clerk of the committee at Ravensworth Lodge

Residential Care Home in Scarborough. Later, Marjorie and Michael also cherished their spell as joint presidents of the Ackworth Old Scholars Association, to which they belonged for the whole of their adult lives.

Marjorie was a reliable and honest Friend and fulfilled the roles she held with a calm and conscientious spirit. She was a stickler for detail, with a strong sense of 'right ordering' which could sometimes conceal a softer, hidden side. Sometimes brusque, she spoke with conviction, defending what she believed to be the correct approach and what she believed was right. She really cared about principles, and with this forthright spirit, she attended to what love required of her. The advice she gave was sound, being rooted in a clear vision and her firm but patient approach to giving service, touched many lives, and was a source of inspiration that lives on.

In her family life, Marjorie was a hospitable host who enjoyed baking, and a supporter in numerous ways of the adventurous activities undertaken by members of her family about whom she spoke with great pride.

Marjorie loved others before herself, and gave them her full loyalty and commitment. Even when she was beset by ill health towards the end of her life, her interest in others never diminished and her integrity never wavered. This courageous spirit, shown in her sense of humour – described by one Friend as twinkling – and her cheerfulness, was never lost. She was at meeting just two days before her serious stroke, in frail health, but still a welcoming presence to two visitors who attended meeting for worship that day.

Always unwavering, Marjorie was a steadfast Friend and her life has left a profound sense of gratitude for everything that she gave, and for the spirit in which it was given.

Signed on behalf of Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Held on 11 November 2023

Dilys Cluer, Clerk

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## Sheila Bovell

24 March 1927 – 26 February 2021

Sheila Bovell was a loving Friend and respected member of Guildford Meeting whose quiet manner could never obscure her profound warmth. Her intelligent, attentive mind, her extraordinary life experiences, the clarity and sensitivity with which she regarded and related them, and her profound interest and delight in all of life and all people, were shared with all of those who had the good fortune to know her.

Sheila was born in Tiensin, China, the youngest of three girls born to parents Freer and Connie Kelsey who were educational missionaries there. She was a gifted storyteller, and it was always a delight to hear her memories of growing up in China. These included tales of time she and her family spent in Cha Pei civilian internment camp in Shanghai during the war. Despite the privations – for example her family only having a small, curtained section of a large room full of other families – she was always keen to point out how decently they had been treated by their Japanese custodians in direct contrast with JG Ballard's brutal portrayal of the Japanese in his book *Empire of the Sun*. This was typical of Sheila, to see the good in people where others might not.

In 1945 the family was released and allowed to return to the UK where they took up residence in Worthing. Aged 18 Sheila briefly attended school, which she found quite unfamiliar and strange as she was older than the other pupils, before taking a place at University College London to read English. Despite her passion for her studies Sheila left after just one year to marry Jack who had proposed on her 21st birthday. She later told her daughters that although as a rule she hated making decisions this particular decision was not only 'absolutely right' but also 'such an easy one' to make.

Sheila and Jack set up home in London where she was the breadwinner working as a secretary at Faber and Faber while Jack studied law. TS Eliot was a director of Faber and Faber and Sheila was delighted to have been given a book

of his verse by his wife who also worked there. The couple moved to Worthing to be near family where their two daughters Jane and Virginia were born – a happy time for them all – before moving to Wodeland Avenue in Guildford in 1965. Here she stayed for the rest of her life, loving both the view from her home and the community she became part of.

In Guildford, Sheila was able to pursue her love of literature, and made friends by joining adult education classes and book groups. She worked as a marriage guidance counsellor and also looked after older people's welfare sometimes playing the piano for elderly patients in the local hospital.

It was in Guildford too that Sheila met Quakers and in about 1984 joined the Society of Friends. While she was a deeply spiritual person her early experiences at mission school in China had left her with a negative view of the type of Christianity where the Bible was used to condemn. She had read and was fascinated by John Robinson's book *Honest to God* and later met and studied with him. She shared his criticism of traditional theology and the idea of 'God up there' preferring instead the idea of God within. This ultimately led her to feel very at home with the Quakers and the idea of 'that of God in everyone'.

Sheila became an important part of Guildford Meeting. Her love of people made her ideally suited to the role of overseer and her love of English was put to good use as she compiled and edited Guildford's newsletter 'Meeting Points' and in her contribution to *Quaker faith & practice* (22.83). Many younger Friends, as well as plenty of older ones, were encouraged by her warmth and curiosity and were invited to her home to hear her stories, share their troubles and discuss the mysteries of life. Sheila had a strong empathy with people in many different situations in life, maintaining a long correspondence with a man on Death Row in Florida. She helped people to look beyond comparisons of themselves with others and to instead accept their own unique strengths and weaknesses.

As Sheila got older she lamented her own loss of physical strength and worried about becoming a burden, sometimes struggling to manage the bouts of depression which had affected her throughout her life. Yet she never lost her ability to share in the joys of others and, having learnt to use a computer in her eighties, put her iPad to work maintaining her connections with family and friends around the world right until the end of her life.

No doubt: the world was richer for having had Sheila in it. And now that she's passed into Light, the universe will surely be all the brighter.

Signed on behalf of Surrey & Hampshire Border Area Meeting

Held on 18 September 2023

Carolyn Baynes, Clerk

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# Jennifer Butterfield

11 July 1946 – 2 April 2023

Jenny spent her childhood in Holmer Green in Buckinghamshire. She was brought up in a fundamentalist, Bible-based faith which she gradually began to question. This led to her studying theology at Nottingham University where her journey towards Quakerism began. During this time she met her future husband, Douglas, also a seeker. They both belonged to an ecumenical group linked to the Student Christian Movement.

After Nottingham, Jenny went to Oxford for a year, to train as a Religious Education teacher, under Quaker Harold Loukes. Jenny and Douglas were married once she had qualified, and Jenny began teaching at Beaconsfield High School. During her time there, she and the head of department transformed the religious education syllabus into a course in human rights, which was well received.

Jenny's capacity for living adventurously soon manifested itself. She was the driving force behind the decision she and Douglas took to commit themselves to a two-year placement with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). They were sent to Papua New Guinea to work for the Catholic Mission in setting up and running a children's village, where troubled teenagers could be helped to transform their lives. This was a deeply challenging and life-changing experience for both of them. It demanded learning all sorts of new skills, and required great resilience in the face of all manner of unforeseen circumstances. It tested their faith and their commitment to its limits.

After returning from Papua New Guinea in 1975, Jenny and Douglas became faithful attenders at Jordans Local Meeting, and Jordans Monthly Meeting (now Chilterns Area Meeting) soon accepted them both into membership of the Society of Friends. In 1976 they started a family, and Jenny gave up her teaching career to commit to full time parenthood of their two sons, Chris and Nick, until both children were at school.

In 1985 Jenny and Douglas became heavily involved in the Bungoma Link, an ecumenical network connecting churches in Beaconsfield with churches (including Quaker ones) in Bungoma in Western Kenya. In 1987 Jenny organised and led a Youth Exchange that enabled 15 young people from the Beaconsfield churches to spend three weeks in Bungoma living with local families and participating in events at churches and schools. The report on the Exchange testifies how transformative an experience it was for participants from both countries, and pays tribute to Jenny for her commitment and organisational skills.

Before long, Jenny started developing mysterious symptoms which affected her eyesight and her mobility, and in 1988 she was diagnosed with Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (MS). She researched what this meant, and learned that MS was a disease which attacks the central nervous system in random ways, steadily diminishing the capacity for independence and coordination. Jenny came to accept MS as a disease for which there is no effective treatment, and which would cause increasing disability for the rest of her life. She read up how others had coped with this disease and became reconciled to the impact that it would have on her life. It made her determined to do all she could for as long as she was able.

Soon a great opportunity came her way, which she grasped with open arms. Jenny's experience in Papua New Guinea had given her a lifelong international outlook, leading her to become very interested in the worldwide family of Friends. So when in 1991 the post of International Membership Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) was advertised, Jenny applied, and was appointed to what she often described as the best job she ever had. It had a wonderful beginning too, as she was able to attend the World Gathering of Friends in Chavakali, Kenya that same year. This was another formative experience, preparing her for 11 years of devoted service.

Her principal role was maintaining correspondence with many isolated Quakers scattered throughout the world, helping their development in faith and strengthening their sense of being part of a worldwide family of Friends. Many of her correspondents spoke eloquently of the difference that Jenny made to their Quaker lives and her colleagues testified to her conscientiousness and commitment.

In spite of her developing disability, and partial dependence on her wheelchair, Jenny travelled to visit Friends in Nigeria and Ghana in 1998, who all expressed their appreciation of Jenny's visit. Jenny came home having left her wheelchair with them because she felt that they needed it more than she did. Eventually, and sadly for everyone involved, the time came when it was no longer possible for Jenny to continue with the work she loved so much. She made it clear to her family that she wanted to spend the rest of her life at home, and not accept nursing home care, and the family became committed to making this possible for her. Thanks to the combined efforts of the National Health Service (NHS), Social Services, a devoted team of carers, and her loving family, Jenny's wishes were indeed fulfilled.

For her remaining years, Jenny's ways of dealing with her disabilities were an inspiration to everyone who encountered her. She seemed to have found an inner peace in spite of her serious disabilities. She always greeted everyone with a broad and welcoming smile, even when speech became increasingly difficult. She smiled in part because she was confident in her team of carers. She smiled because she had always been a person of faith. She smiled because of the loving care of her family and the joy she took from her growing family of seven grandchildren. The clerk of Jordans Meeting had initiated a monthly worship group at the family home to support Jenny and the family, which continued for over 17 years until the end of her life, and the silent witness of her smile was cherished by all who came. Douglas took every opportunity he could to take her out in their mobility vehicle, so she could enjoy the

countryside and go to local concerts, and she smiled in pleasure and gratitude. In all these ways, Jenny's smile and serenity communicated her inner peace, and thereby she touched many people's lives.

*Advices & queries 29* concludes:

“Pray that in your final years you may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting God's love.”

Jenny surely found those ways, and showed them to all who met her.

Signed on behalf of Chilterns Area Meeting  
Held on 26 November 2023

Catriona Troth, Clerk

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# Allan George John Carr

26 September 1943 – 1 November 2022

'A man of faith': Allan's life was characterised by its outward simplicity and order, and by its inward commitment to the practices Jesus taught. He valued and nurtured his family, loved his neighbours, gave his time to help others and dwelt with consideration and learning on the significance of Christian theology.

Born in Hazlemere in 1943, he met and fell deeply and permanently in love with Winnie, who remained the love of his life till her death in 2017 at the age of 73. They married in Curbridge and their three children were brought up on Burwell farm in Oxfordshire. For 40 years Allan worked at the Rover car plant. He was known there as The Vicar, for his interest in organised religion but also for his compassionate nature. He offered friendship and support in every place he found himself, whether at work or in the numerous voluntary activities he undertook. At his funeral, reference was made over and over again to his wisdom, his smile, his kindness and to his deep but unassuming integrity.

Among his many interests were painting, Esperanto, horse-riding and calligraphy. Burford Friends Meeting, which was the first Quaker meeting Allan attended, has several scrapbooks recording among other occasions its 300th anniversary in 2007. Allan's beautiful calligraphic script gives the narrative of the meeting's life, and photographs show Allan in typically practical mode: shrub and tree pruning, rubbish removal and the preparation of the ground for a ramp for disabled access.

He always worked as part of a team and gave no thought to acclaim for himself. He appreciated beauty in many forms, including that of personal style – he was always elegantly and carefully turned out and the scrapbook contains delightful photographs of Allan in traditional Quaker dress. He developed a keen interest in the history and theology of early Quakers, attending Fritchley Meeting in the UK which has

adhered to those tenets and practices; and with the help of a small inheritance, he was able to spend time in America in a community of Plain Friends. He came to be one of those Friends for whom the immediate revelation of Christ informs the whole of their being.

He was committed to ecumenical exchange, fostering links through Churches Together in Witney, attending the Methodist Church in Witney, and assisting in the practical work of the Elim Church and its service to those in need through its Matthew's Table, a weekly provision of lunch and friendship to Witney people. Allan's response to this work was typical. The pastors from Elim, speaking at his funeral, described how he came each week to offer 'the service of the Hoover' – to do the unexciting, often unnoticed, but absolutely essential work of keeping the church clean and tidy for its visitors, a service he performed 'with love and grace'.

After he took voluntary redundancy, he found satisfaction within his family and its strong bonds, but also in a variety of volunteer activities. He was generous with his time and petrol, giving lifts on a regular basis to those without wheels or who were no longer able to drive. Perhaps the most demanding was his work as a street pastor in Witney. He would often come to meeting on a Sunday after hours spent during the night assisting young people in the town for whom a good night out had disintegrated into brawls, drugs and drink – or who just needed a pair of shoes they could actually walk home in. There was no judgement in Allan, just the offer of kindness and of directly useful support.

Although a heart bypass in 2015 improved his health immensely, and he remained able to walk up to 4 miles a day, he experienced a significant decline from 2020. With the onset of dementia, coupled with the laying down of Witney Meeting in early 2021 and the restrictions of the Covid lockdown, his links with Friends and with the wider community became slowly fainter. He died peacefully at home, with family present and with a last reading of the Lord's Prayer. At his funeral service, almost a hundred

people from all walks of life and varied faith backgrounds came together to remember with love and gratitude the life of this warm-hearted, humble and contemplative man. We can truly say of him that the whole of his life was a testimony to the grace of God.

Signed on behalf of Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting

Held on 14 January 2023

Elsbeth Wollen, Clerk

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## Kevin de Choisy

**15 February 1954 – 16 February 2020**

Kevin John de Choisy was born on 15 February 1954. He was the son of Beryl, a radiographer, and John de Choisy, a French doctor, who had met while working together at the London Hospital in Whitechapel during the war. Although Kevin was born in Shropshire, he was brought up after his earliest years in Clifton, Bristol by his mother Beryl and his stepfather Bert.

Kevin was sent to school at Leighton Park in Reading and it seems that it was here he got his first proper taste of pottery. After an early departure from school in 1971, he returned to Bristol and soon found a new place to throw pots – in the basement of the Royal West of England Academy, under the auspices of what was then the Bristol Polytechnic School of Art.

From 1973 to 1975 he studied pottery at the Harrow School of Art, where he was taught and inspired by Walter Keeler, Colin Pearson and Mo Jupp. Interestingly, his dissertation was on organic gardening; it was a passion which would sustain him all his life.

After leaving Harrow he worked at the Coxwold Pottery in Yorkshire. He also acquired a Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) licence. Returning to Bristol, he spent three happy years from 1978 to 1981 in Leigh Woods with his then girlfriend Dee and her young son Henry. He established a garden, did raku firings there and worked as an HGV driver delivering bulk animal feed to farms. He also went on a motorcycling adventure to Spain.

Next, he was off to the States, initially to research Pueblo pottery and find himself a job. He worked in Arkansas and then, in 1985, at Rowe Pottery in Cambridge, Wisconsin. The work there consisted of producing hand-thrown salt-glazed stoneware, paid by the piece, which was a tough way to earn a living.

During his time there Kevin married Annie and they had a daughter, Gemma. In 1991 he returned to England to look for work, expecting

that Annie and Gemma would follow. Sadly, though, this never happened, as the marriage did not survive. He was unable to be the main parent for Gemma that he would have liked to have been, but she visited him every year or so, at one point staying for about a year with him at his new home in Blackford near Wedmore. He did all that he could to provide support for her as she grew up and into her adult life.

On visiting the Bristol School of Art at Bower Ashton, he was invited to take up the post of head technician, where he worked for several years. Always fastidious about Health and Safety, he excelled in glaze technology and helped many staff and students develop glazes. For a while he also taught part-time students, many of whom remained lifelong friends.

Towards the end of his time at Bower Ashton, Kevin bought West End Farm in Blackford with his mother Beryl. He quickly set about renovating the buildings, establishing a pottery studio and planting a perry orchard.

In 2007 they sold the farm and Beryl and Kevin bought separate houses in Glastonbury. Kevin was devoted to his mother and they helped each other through adversity with a cup of tea (or whisky when allowed). Until her death a few years ago. Kevin built a workshop at the end of his garden to continue making, firing beautiful Chun, Kaki, Celedon and Temoku glazes.

For the last 13 years of his life Kevin suffered from Crohn's disease and osteoporosis. His illnesses steadily took over, but he fought them with an array of knowledge amassed from his scientific knowledge and supplementing conventional treatments. When his body failed to be fixed, he had to give up throwing and resort to extruding. Against all odds, he kept making, even though he could manage only an hour a day. However, he always took great pleasure in his garden and had rare aquilegia, roses and specimen fruit trees from France. When his body did not allow him to make, he turned to photography and would also bid on eBay for rare Japanese ceramics, getting treasures for a bargain.

Kevin was a member of Street Meeting, where he came to worship from the end of 1999. He served as doorkeeper, where he welcomed people with his customary friendliness and courtesy. In meeting, he was a quiet, dependable presence and treasured his experience of "contact with the numinous", as he described it. He thought deeply about his religious beliefs and was ready to share them in a variety of contexts, refreshingly free from the reticence which so many feel in that area.

Kevin became an elder for a short period of time until his worsening health forced him to give up the position. Towards the end of his life, when he could no longer sit comfortably in the meeting house, he valued the meetings for worship that were held at his home, saying that he felt the atmosphere there freshened and sweetened by the sessions.

Throughout his life, Kevin put into practice the Quaker principle of addressing that of God in everyone, never letting the fact that he was a French Count stop him engaging on equal terms with those from all backgrounds and walks of life. He had the knack of getting to the heart of things and establishing a rapport with friends and strangers remarkably quickly. His many interests included gardening, of course, motor bikes, medicine, photography, crafts of all sorts, walking with his beloved dogs and he delighted to share notes with folk about them, showing a great breadth of knowledge. You could talk with Kevin about nearly everything, from a problem with a relationship of any sort to the most economical way of boiling an egg.

He gave unstintingly of his time and energy, although it was always necessary to bear in mind that he was fired by the drive to make the very best pots he could. His sense of humour was delightful, playful and irreverent, and he could tell a whole host of anecdotes from his rich and varied life. This didn't prevent him, though, from being a man with a strong sense of justice who knew his own mind and was prepared to speak up for what he believed. He was a sensitive man, with high standards in many ways.



Outside the circle of those who knew him personally, Kevin will be remembered as one of the foremost potters of his generation. He described himself once, with justice, as one of the thirty best potters in the country; some of his work is in the Ashmolean and Victoria and Albert Museums. His aim was that his work should exhibit something of the Light and certainly his pots have a translucent quality which bears witness to that. He didn't always play by the rules; he followed his inner compulsion to create the best he possibly could. His influences were many and varied; English, Chinese, Japanese, Native American, the Minnesota Potters and those working at Harrow. He knew glaze inside out. He cared deeply about the state of contemporary ceramics and gave generously of his time and skill to those learning the craft.

Kevin died suddenly, of a heart condition which had been undiagnosed, the day after his sixty-sixth birthday. He is sorely missed by those who knew him. His work lives on, though, bearing witness to his skill and his spirit, which we continue to treasure in its place in our lives.

Signed on behalf of Mid-Somerset Area Meeting  
Held on March 2023

Kevin Redpath, Clerk

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## Rosemary Crawley

1944 – 17 January 2022

Rosemary gives a vivid and sensitive account of her growing up and subsequent life in her memoir 'Talking about Skin', completed in 2020 under the pen name of Rosa Carter. Therefore many of the details of her life do not need rewriting here and this testimony looks at how her life experience of exclusion and racism together with her experience of being loved, allowed her to love others and to become "a happy black woman".

Rosemary was one of 2000 "brown babies" born to white mothers and African American GI fathers during the last two years of World War II. Her parents maintained no contact with each other and it was a source of great sadness for Rosemary that she knew nothing about her father, not even his name. Her mother did not place her for adoption but growing up with white people in a Staffordshire village Rosemary was treated as an "outsider within". Her experience of a great deal of exclusion and also a few friendships in her community and schools, led her to question her own worth as an individual.

Her grandmother surrounded her with love, care and affection but she died when Rosemary was six. After this the kindness and affection she received came from a few women – none of whom referred to her colour, thus denying acceptance and understanding of a fundamental part of her.

Deprived of a university education she trained as a nurse and on the first day of her training met a student from the Bahamas, the first black person she had ever spoken to. Hearing about a society where black people were in a majority, with positive affirmation of their culture, was a revelation which helped her to re-evaluate her own worth.

She returned to Birmingham where working as a midwife she became acutely aware of the support needs of school-age mothers. She married and became a mother herself, balancing

home life and bringing up three sons with her work in the Birmingham Friendship Housing Association developing accommodation, social support and community services for single parent families. Later, as the association's executive director, her empathy and compassion led her to work under concern with people who were vulnerable and marginalised in our society, managing projects in ways which enhanced the autonomy of all those involved and inspired their self-confidence through mutual respect unlimited by the formalities of their relationships.

The respect which Rosemary was generating in the public sector took her to the trusteeship of major national housing associations, the magistracy in Birmingham, and membership of the Staffordshire Police Authority – where she continued her witness to equality and inclusion.

After her second marriage ended Rosemary experienced deep depression and then life-threatening physical illness which left her in a very vulnerable state: later she said that it was the love she felt from her friends around her which was the key to her recovery.

At around that time she found a haven with Friends in Lichfield Local Meeting, whose credal-free values resonated with her own. She felt spiritually at home in the meeting for worship and her ministry was valued by friends. She demonstrated an innate understanding of Quaker witness and practices and hosted and lead discussion groups and other meetings. Her love for members of the meeting was shown in the continual small acts of kindness which she made time for e.g. keeping in touch with friends, giving friends cakes she had baked, sharing craft skills, knitting for friends, sharing her love of reading, gardening and music. Although she took life seriously, her strong sense of humour and fun shone through, and conversations often involved a lot of laughter. She cared for Lichfield Local Meeting and served effectively and wholeheartedly as clerk. It was while she was serving as clerk of Staffordshire Area Meeting that she unexpectedly died from heart failure at the age of 77.

At the Society's national level Rosemary greatly valued meetings with Friends of colour, she served as treasurer to the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN) and was an active member of Quaker Peace & Social Witness's criminal justice committee, even though there was resistance to discussing or acting on the racial aspects that concerned her. Her commitment to the Quaker practice of shared discernment in decision making led to her discomfort with the current re-orientation of QPSW's programme and priorities.

Volunteering with a particular group of women seeking asylum in Birmingham led to her setting up Women with Hope, a charity open to women at any stage of their asylum or settled status – thus continuing her witness against exclusion on any grounds. Her very practical support for its members extended from sharing her craft skills to accompanying the women to Home Office interviews which could lead to their removal back to the countries from which they had fled. She inspired shared concern and mutual support among the women who were involved in Women with Hope.

The power of love expressed through Rosemary's life also turned what could have been negative into positive witness to the Society: although feeling at one with most Quaker testimonies, the racism that she experienced in the Religious Society of Friends led to her principled decision not to apply for membership; she found the Quaker testimony to equality persistently incomplete, in particular regarding Friends' lack of understanding of the full implications of our stated commitment to racial equality. Without ever assuming the role of victim or enforcer, she combined her lived experience of racial inequality with a readiness to respond to Friends who were prepared to make faltering steps towards understanding racism. She offered a compass pointing to a path which could be the start of a journey of understanding racism without the need to inflict yet more hurt on F/friends of colour – a journey that could help us as Friends to understand and live out our testimony to racial equality.

Rosemary turned her experience of exclusion into her life's witness of compassion for those excluded from society. In retrospect it can be seen that her experience of being and feeling loved by her grandmother and a number of other women, alongside her experience of the pain of being excluded, led to her life's testimony – loving her neighbour as she had felt loved herself. During her funeral the effect of this testimony was expressed in the ministry of several of the fifty refugees and asylum seekers who journeyed from Birmingham. For Rosemary, her neighbour was each person she came across, many of whom were excluded from the privilege of our society, and the power of the love in her life allowed so many of us, “her neighbours”, to feel loved and held, and of personal worth.

Signed on behalf of Staffordshire Area Meeting  
Held on 8 July 2022

John Babb, Communications Clerk

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## Chris Crouch

21 July 1955 – 31 August 2021

Chris was a warm, gracious and joyful member of Guildford Meeting.

She was born in St Albans and had a happy childhood. She was educated in Townsend Church of England school for girls, where she resented the discipline. This was followed by a course at a College of Further Education to become a Medical Secretary.

Her first job was at a local psychiatric hospital. She enjoyed her work but found it depressing at times. Then she left home and went to work at St George's in London. Sometime later she met Stephen. They became close very quickly and married a year later on 20 January 1979. They had a very happy marriage, got on very well and loved each other very much.

Stephen's work took them to Toronto, Canada, where they lived for ten years. While living there their two children were born, Evan and Zoe.

They loved the endless Canadian wilderness and whenever they could went camping, canoeing and in winter cross-country skiing around frozen lakes and through the remote deserted forests of Northern Ontario.

They returned to England in 1991 as a family wanting to have grandparents, aunts and uncles to be part of their children's lives. That was something they had been missing for some time.

Back in England, Chris went to university as a mature student and took a degree in Sociology and Physiology while the children were still young. This was a three-year course, plus a further year on placement. She found this both challenging and fulfilling.

When the children were older, she used her degree to get a job as an Information Analyst at St Peter's Hospital, a large NHS Trust. The hospital had many and diverse information needs and Chris worked there until her retirement at the age of 57.

Both Stephen and Chris were now retired and able to spend time together. They travelled to many places in the UK and abroad, touring, hiking and seeing wonderful sights. Chris quickly filled her days with voluntary work with the Samaritans and the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Having time, they started wondering about their spiritual life and wondered if they should have a look at some of the local churches. Their first port of call was the Quaker meeting house in Ward Street. They immediately felt at home and soon became attenders. They attended Yearly Meeting in Bath, visited Swarthmoor Hall for two courses as well as 'Living the Quaker Way' in Woodbrooke. Chris took on the responsibility for the bookings for the meeting house and decided she would ask to apply for membership.

Dorothy Horswill and Eoin Stephenson visited Chris and Stephen on 9 March 2015. They noted that Quaker values and the community were very important to Chris. She was ready to take on responsibilities that membership may bring with it. They noted warmth and humour, plain speaking and respect for other people's perspectives and beliefs.

Chris took the initiative, as part of her role as an overseer (as pastoral carers were then known), to start meetings called 'Deepening the Spiritual Life'. These were once a month at the home of Sheila Bovell. Chris would give us a starting thought and we were invited to share our insights. Sheila was housebound at this point so it served the double purpose of giving Sheila some company and helping us to have some quiet thoughtful times. Of course, these ended with lovely cups of tea and chat.

Chris started to feel unwell and fall over while on walks. She saw various consultants but it took a long time before she received a diagnosis of something vaguely linked to Parkinson's Disease. The suggested medication did not make any difference. Slowly Chris became more unwell and very tired. She always tried to do what she could but in time she had to accept the slow decline in health. It was lucky that she

enjoyed watching TV when that was all she could do. Carers were not much help as Chris kept falling over and they are not allowed to pick one up. Stephen took on being her full-time carer. This was very hard but there was a little light in their lives as Zoe had a daughter named Elsie. She was a bright spark and Chris delighted in her company and watched her becoming a toddler. (A second grandchild?)

Signed on behalf of Surrey & Hampshire Border  
Area Meeting

Held on 18 September 2023

Carolyn Baynes, Clerk

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## (June) Blythe Ellis

24 September 1934 – 22 June 2022

"I first knew Blythe as Matt and Steve's mum when I was a teenager at Summer Schools and Senior Conferences. A little while later I met her as Woodbrooke warden, when I went for a term of Peace Studies, fresh from Greenham Common. Then I met Blythe at Ditchling Meeting and we sat together in worship as Friends. My memories of her speak of living adventurously, supporting others with skill and dedication and quiet worshipping presence, the embodiment of love."

Clare Robison

For Blythe\*, exploring inner worlds as well as outer ones was clearly a very important part of her own adventurous living, and from small beginnings in her hometown of Stockton-on-Tees she developed a career as university lecturer and tutor in social psychology, later training as a Jungian psychotherapist too. She taught at the universities of Birmingham, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Ghana, finding a place for her interests and skills that worked in with the academic and research posts of husband Roland and with the needs of their growing family of three sons, Matthew, Stephen, and Tim – the younger two boys being born during the family's five year stay in Ghana.

Blythe seems to have had quite an early interest in Quakerism as she chose this as the topic for an extended essay during the teacher training course she attended on leaving school. However, it wasn't until the family were living in Ghana where, surprisingly, there were four Quakers on the staff of the university chemistry department, that Blythe and Roland began to attend meeting for worship on a regular basis. On their return to the UK, it wasn't long before they were established in a house in St Albans and, having

\* Born June Blythe, she took the surname Ellis on her marriage and subsequently changed her first name to Blythe.

joined the Society of Friends, became active members of their local meeting there.

As well as her capacity for fun and laughter, longstanding F/friends Stuart and Willemina Morton remember Blythe as a woman with leadership qualities, who had a strong sense of equality and justice. This was reflected in her promotion of women's studies during her wardenship at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in the 1980s; her coordination of a series of public lectures on women's issues in turn contributed to the appointment of the first tutor for women's studies there.

Blythe also had an important commitment to racial justice and to diversity. The experience of living abroad, in Ghana in particular, will no doubt have been significant both for her work at Woodbrooke and as editor of *West African Families in Britain: a Meeting of Two Cultures* (1978), a book in the *Library of Social Work* series which offered texts that were staple reading for social workers at that time. The Mortons particularly recall Roland and Blythe's support for discussion on racial justice at a time when right wing violence was on the rise, and the invaluable support that Blythe and Roland gave to a white woman they had met in Accra who came to live in St Albans, as a single parent with three young mixed-race children. For Stuart and Willemina, as well as for that family, Blythe was a faithful and loving friend for nearly 40 years. Willemina recalls: "We both felt, and noting that I am a black African, that Blythe was a person of integrity on whom we could completely rely."

Roland and Blythe took up the posts of residential co-wardens at Woodbrooke in 1981 and were there for nine years. Roland recalls his enormous enjoyment of the wardenship role. Being constantly with groups of new people did not come so easily to Blythe however, but the quiet and skilful support she offered to staff and visitors individually was greatly valued. David Atwood (staff member from 1978 to 1988) remembers: "They were superbly suited to being co-principals... Blythe was a gentle, quiet-spoken person, but clearly someone

with a strong character who was able to help Woodbrooke navigate the way through the many ups-and-downs of those years and the challenges that any setting with lots of different people from different parts of the world and different cultures can present."

A simple, quite isolated cottage, deep in the Herefordshire countryside offered an essential source of periodic replenishment for Blythe, and it became a full-time home for them when their Woodbrooke wardenship came to an end. Friends from their local meeting in Ledbury particularly recall the warm hospitality of the gatherings at their house and the welcoming friendship extended by Blythe and Roland to new arrivals to the meeting community. Indeed, the importance of Friends supporting one another, and the way that she herself would approach this, is especially reflected in one of Blythe's two contributions to *Quaker faith & practice* (June Ellis 10.11):

"...Surely the nurturing of relationships: and the response to their breakdown will arise from the willingness of each of us to enter with imagination and love into one another's lives...Often it is just being alongside someone; listening; a gentle touch when words cannot be found..."

Being aware of the commonality of our human frailty and the positives this awareness can bring is the theme of her second contribution to *Quaker faith & practice*. Chris Lawson (staff member at Woodbrooke 1969–96) recalls, "In 1986 June was asked to introduce a session of Yearly Meeting. Her insights into community and perhaps herself were shared with much honesty. It now forms paragraph 21.14 of *Quaker faith & practice* in a section headed 'Knowing and accepting ourselves':

"...many of those who appear to cope and be strong and tireless are indeed very different behind their masks. We are all wounded; we all feel inadequate and ashamed; we all struggle. But this is part of the human condition; it draws us together, helps us to find our connectedness."

Blythe and Roland were a great source of support to each other. They first met, at a dance class, in their early teens. Roland had been very reluctant to attend the class but all that changed when he found himself dancing with Blythe; the conversation between them seemed to flow so much more naturally than with other girls. They married in their early twenties, in 1957, and more than 60 years later their obvious love and deep friendship for one another were an inspiration to those in Ditchling Meeting who came to know them there. The strength of that relationship was evident in the face of two particularly sad challenges following their move to Ditchling in 2010 – the loss of their eldest son, Matt, and the onset of Blythe's dementia. Despite the challenges, Roland looked after Blythe at home as long as he possibly could and, when a nursing home was required, visited every day to help with her care.

As these recollections from two Ditchling Friends reflect, even when she was herself so unwell Blythe still seemed to have a way of fostering connectedness and offering something special to others.

"In May 2018 Roland asked me if I could facilitate some singing with Blythe as she was no longer able to sing in a local choir and it was something that she loved doing. This is how our weekly sessions started, in Roland and Blythe's sitting room, with Blythe and two other Ditchling Friends, and me (on keyboard). The range of our musical tastes knew no bounds, Folk, Opera, Musicals, Pop, Hymns. All styles were attempted – some became favourites while others just dissolved in laughter at our failure. After about a year, Blythe's dementia required a simpler approach and we met just the two of us, by now often just improvising. At moments when she was very distressed, a note or a chord on the piano would instantly transform the situation. I will continue to remember her singing a beautiful made-up melody, with eyes shut, in a completely different world."

Jane Gray

“My first encounter with Blythe was in May 2017 when Lyle and I attended our first meeting for worship at Ditchling as visitors. I saw this very gentle, frail woman sitting in front of me who appeared to be very peaceful in her own world. There was a grace about her, a deep serenity.

When Lyle and I moved to Ditchling six months later I had the pleasure of getting to know Blythe and Roland better. Their home was always (and still is) very welcoming. My best times were the singing we did together with Vicky Darling and Jane Gray. Those are very memorable, happy times. Blythe had the most exquisite voice which gave me so much pleasure. Friday mornings were something I really looked forward to. It was suggested that this would help Blythe but I found it really helped me, too. Music was not only special to her, but sharing that music with her was special for me, too. Those Friday mornings connected us all at a very deep level.”

Connie Menezes

Many people have been touched by the loving spirit that came from Blythe and are thankful for having known her.

Signed on behalf of Sussex West Area Meeting  
Held on 16 September 2023

Chris Grove, Correspondence Clerk

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## John Gregory Evans

4 September 1945 – 7 May 2022

John Evans was a much-loved member of the Saffron Walden Meeting. He is remembered for his generous attendance, actions, words and donations.

As a child, although John's family wasn't particularly religious, he decided to attend the tin tabernacle church close to his house in Wembley. And later as a teenager he went to the United Reformed Church youth club. John and Maureen were later married there with friends and close family.

After moving to Saffron Walden John didn't attend church, apart from the occasional midnight mass. His children, Duncan and Helen were both baptised at the United Reformed Church, a decision driven largely by John as having godparents for his children was important to him. John was very close to his children and the family unit was very strong. John's introduction to Friends in Saffron Walden was down to his daughter Helen, whose Religious Education homework was to attend a religious service. She chose a Quaker meeting at Saffron Walden Meeting House and John accompanied her. Previously, at other groups John attended like the Fabian Society and the local Labour Party, he had come into contact with people he considered very admirable and subsequently discovered that many of them were long-term Quakers; this had roused his curiosity about Quakerism. John found role models at meeting. He felt that some people were doing brilliant and altruistic things in both their careers and the community.

“They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future.”

I Timothy

Quakerism appealed to John as a philosophy as much as a faith. Quakerism fulfilled a need for John and continued to do so for 30 plus years.

In family life, John was quiet about meeting for worship and didn't share what was talked about in ministry or what passages he was reading in the Bible (he had a very old and well-fingered St James' Bible which he treasured and often read before he left for meeting and always took with him). This quotation from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was tucked into the Bible:

“He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.  
He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us  
He made and loveth all.”

John's love of books and reading extended to his professional life, he founded and co-ran a successful book distribution company Books Express alongside his wife Maureen and son Duncan.

John gained strength from his attendance at meeting and from reading and studying the Bible. Having been involved in local politics, most notably the local Labour Party, John was not afraid of standing up and ministering in meeting. His ministries were often rallying calls to action but always founded in reading and knowledge and strongly based in Quakerism. John sought and worked for justice, freedom and truth, peace and unity with one another. John and Maureen supported the peace movement and the campaign for Nuclear disarmament (CND) and worked together for those causes which often overlapped with the work of the meeting. Despite occasional doubts, minor irritations and some disagreements, John never stopped attending meeting for worship and never seemed to doubt his Quakerism.

John was well known for his cheerful conversation and stock of amusing stories and yet this did not disguise that he was a faithful Friend and a true illustration of commitment to Quaker values, practices and sincerity of purpose. He tirelessly served the meeting practically and spiritually and was a constant presence around the town and the meeting

house. John's effusive readings from the works of 'our Friend Fox' and from St Paul are well remembered and missed.

John was a strong socialist not only in the political movement but also in his kindness and concern for other people, for fairness and equality. His commitment to the meeting and to Friends was demonstrated latterly by his work, not in his own interest but to ensure the survival of the gifts from another Friend for the benefit of the local community and a resource for people in need. His work over a number of years, plus very many hours, days and months of hard work in the allotment behind 2 Springhill Road, leaves a physical legacy now that he has hung up his fork and spade.

During his illness, John said that he didn't expect to get cancer and didn't have the feeling that he would die, he talked only about life moving forwards. John was planning a George Orwell tour of Spain and busying himself on the allotment right up to the end. He was always an optimist and looking ahead.

Can a garden grieve?  
Can the soil miss the touch of a hand?  
Can the grass miss the gentle tread of boots?  
A flurry of falling blossom could be tears.  
Or a painful reminder of something eternal...  
That abundance holds hands with death. That  
growth holds hands with decay.  
They both walk forwards together, hand in  
hand.  
And John's hands.  
Those hands that held the soil... and buried  
into it... to strip and to sow.  
Those hands loved the soil. Loved this earth.  
With a hunger to dig...  
Dig for stories, for wisdoms... buried in time.  
He knew that treasures could be found  
there... in the soil. For him, for all. He dug, he  
sowed and he shared his harvest joyfully.  
John's busy hands in the soil will be missed.  
His silent footsteps will echo deep into the  
earth.  
In my sadness, the empty garden cradles me  
and the leaves whisper... "There, there"  
"We will live"



“we will die”

“And so it is... And so it is”

(A Poem for John by Joanna Eden)

Signed on behalf of Thaxted Area Meeting

Held on 7 December 2022

Margaret Somerville, Clerk

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## William Martin Gibson

19 September 1926 – 7 February 2023

Religious believers exercise their faith to validate their search to understand the mysteries of life and the universe. Scientists require proof. It is remarkable that many scientists have religious convictions when they know that scientific proof of God's existence will remain elusive. Martin Gibson saw no contradiction in his spiritual journey and his work as a particle physicist, to unravel the fundamentals of the universe. Until his death at 96, Martin maintained the inquiring mind that was present in the inquisitive child.

Martin was born in Repton, Derbyshire, where his father taught modern languages. He was one of four children, three boys and a girl. Their father, who suffered from bipolar disorder, moved the family when Martin was three. He became headteacher at the Liverpool Collegiate school, which Martin attended. The school was evacuated to Bangor in North Wales during World War II. With the encouragement of his parents, Martin developed a love of walking in mountains. This culminated decades later in the rental and eventual purchase of a beloved remote Welsh cottage, Gelli, enjoyed by the family to this day. Cycling became another passion.

Martin described his parents as old-fashioned, disagreeing with him over many things, but he said they respected his independent streak. With his older brother, Martin attended the Quaker meeting in Bangor with their mother. He was fascinated with all things electrical. His much younger brother, Humphrey, tells how Martin was always making things, and allowed him to join in with the inventions.

Martin left home aged 17 after obtaining a state and college scholarship to study natural science at Cambridge. It was wartime: Martin's convictions led him to register as a conscientious objector. He attended a tribunal in London, accompanied by his tutor, Francis Bennett. Francis advised the panel that it would be better

for Martin to continue with his science studies rather than do 'land work', the usual alternative. The tribunal agreed, allowing Martin to continue his degree. He graduated in 1946, going on to complete his PhD in Nuclear Physics.

Cycling and classical music appreciation was a pleasant adjunct to the rigours of study. Martin experienced heightened liberation with the purchase of a motorbike, which took him on regular trips to the Welsh mountains and once to the Scottish isles. Attendance at Jesus Lane Meeting in Cambridge was an important part of Martin's university years. It is where he met Joan Parris in 1947. Martin describes how they shared ideals and aspirations, as they did the similar experience of being brought up with a bipolar parent. Assured by doctors that the condition was unlikely to be passed on to any children, they married at Jordans in 1949. Increasingly clear conviction led Martin to apply for membership at Jesus Lane Meeting that year.

Martin's religious thinking was influenced by Arthur Eddington, the noted quaker scientist, whom he knew from his attendance at Jesus Lane. Martin was continually contemplating his relationship with belief and its connection or not with science. He said that, For as long as he could remember, He was always examining his beliefs – saying He could claim not to have believed in believing. He became convinced that, as he put it, "we should not subscribe to a system and then feel we ought to believe things". Martin asked: "Where does one get the authority for such a conviction?" He was always drawn to seek and build on points of unity rather than divisions.

Shortly after Martin's PhD was approved, he got his first paid job, at Bristol University. He and Joan bought their first home in the city. Appreciation of the wider world came with a brief research project in Norway. Failure to get a permanent post at Bristol led to an offer at Queen's University, Belfast.

He and Joan moved there in 1953, shortly after the birth of their son, Stephen. They continued to attend Quaker meetings in both cities, and

wherever they lived subsequently. While at Belfast, he and Joan, together with Charles Carter, were involved in the setting up of South Belfast Meeting, following theological differences among local Quakers. They also developed a deeper understanding of Northern Ireland's wider problems.

Martin taught engineering students there, coupled with a series of research collaborations with colleagues using accelerators in Birmingham and Liverpool. International travel bloomed with an enlarged family – daughter Penny was born in 1955 – when Martin was invited to a position at the fledgling European nuclear research organisation, Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN), in Switzerland. From 1957 to 1960 he led a new particle physics team there. He drew a distinction between his own work and CERN's other nuclear research. His pleasure at being exposed to life in Geneva and more languages was surpassed by the ready access to Switzerland's mountains.

Martin came perilously close to death in 1959, after suffering two bleeds to an aneurysm in his brain. Much of what befell him was only related to him upon recovery. CERN told Joan that Martin could have any neurosurgeon in the world to treat him. As Martin put it, she wisely chose a young and relatively unknown local surgeon. With the resources available then, Aloys Werner performed three innovative but risky operations, which he warned, would likely save Martin's life but leave him paralysed on one side. In a book many years later, Aloys wrote warmly of the sustaining love, courage, and pragmatism Martin and Joan displayed throughout the long ordeal of surgery and recovery. He spoke movingly of the unreserved trust they placed in his hands. The three maintained contact until the doctor's death some fifty years later. Martin often ministered and related in other tender terms about how Joan's loving support, sustained by her faith, helped him overcome his ordeal. Quakers at Geneva Meeting and Martin's colleagues also rallied around.

A year later, Martin decided to return to Britain, in part through the belief that CERN was not set up to deprive Europe's universities of their best brains. Life in Britain wasn't without inconveniences. Unlike Switzerland, Martin was forbidden to drive for a decade, until he came off his post-surgical medications. Regular cycling around Bristol resumed, as did research, with teaching and the supervision of postgraduate students. Stints back at CERN – including with his family in 1971 – punctuated university work. Martin also wrote several well received and popular scientific books.

With Stephen and Penny's increasing independence in the 1980s, Martin and Joan took adventurous birdwatching holidays abroad. In the mid 1980s, the opportunity arose for Martin and Joan to broadly synchronise their retirement, though Martin was appointed an external examiner to Makerere University in Uganda, which involved several weeks there over three years. A desire to give their time to voluntary work abroad led to a joint application to the Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO). This proved unsuccessful, but a trip from Uganda into Kenya, and with Quaker support, led to Joan's year-long appointment to run a disabled children's clinic in Malava. Martin taught physics at a local secondary school for girls there, a job that came with a house.

Upon their return to Bristol, Martin and Joan decided to move to Saffron Walden, where they spent the rest of their lives, not very far from Stephen and his children. They became well-loved members of Saffron Walden Meeting. Martin served as treasurer from 1994 to 2010 and both he and Joan were elders. Their taste for Gelli and foreign birdwatching and other holidays, including one to Antarctica, remained undiminished until, as Martin noted, their energy ran out before the money did.

When Joan's health began to fail, Martin became her loving carer for several years. After her death in May 2017 aged 98, he gradually became increasingly frail. This was not helped by enforced isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Penny and Saffron Walden Quakers helped him to

attend meeting for worship again as soon as was possible. Martin died in February 2023.

He wrote at length about his thoughts on being a Quaker, saying: "Now Quakerism The Society of Friends has provided the framework within which I can live with a good mixture of freedom, shared insight and support, moral and practical, when needed, and freedom always to make my own way, untrammelled by thoughts and half-held beliefs. As the Society finds its own way forward, every thirty years or so it assembles a new version of its book *Quaker faith & practice*. It is a great joy to find in each of these new issues, evidence that one's own personal journey has not been alone, that the limbs one has gone out on along have closely matched those which others have been finding, that private heresies have in fact become new understanding."

At his memorial meeting, we heard Martin's words that "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived", which all present thought was an eloquent summary of his life.

Signed on behalf of Thaxted Area Meeting  
Held on 10 September 2023

Margaret Somerville, Clerk

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# Roger Howitt Gillett

25 August 1938 – 2 May 2022

Roger Gillett was a Quaker through and through. Faithful to his light throughout a long life of service to others, he played a significant role in the life of his local, area and regional meetings, serving at various times in roles such as clerk, elder, trustee and on Premises Committee.

He was a quiet and gentle man, generous in spirit, somehow always there when needed and constant in his attendance at meeting for worship, usually arriving early and preparing the room. His spoken ministry was rare but always profound. At meeting for worship for business his considered and clearly spoken contributions, tempered with a warm sense of humour, moved the business forward.

Roger's understanding of Quaker ways was extensive, his knowledge of the Bible deep and his intellect acute. He wore these gifts lightly, yet always to the benefit of the meeting. This went hand in hand with a clear discernment of what was and what was not in 'right ordering'. He was able to gently set the meeting back on track when necessary. Within both local and area meetings he championed the work of Britain Yearly Meeting, offering regular reminders of the need for Friends to support it. He was also a keen supporter of the Friends' World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).

Roger was born in Eastbourne into a Quaker family that goes back centuries. During World War II he was evacuated to inland Sussex and then to Devon, followed by education at Leighton Park School where he noted that "Quakerism lightly pervaded the whole school. Played a lot of rugby. Woodwork."

His skills in carpentry taught him patience, remaining a hobby all his life, while he absorbed the Quaker ethos. When he introduced Poole Children's Meeting to woodwork, they said it was "their best ever session". One Friend's favourite remembrance of him is with a bag of tools topped with a Bible.

In 1954 he attended a Christian rally led by Billy Graham at White Hart Lane in London. He wrote: "Profoundly moving experience – committed my life to the service of God." In the same year he went to Junior Yearly Meeting in Birmingham while his parents were at residential Yearly Meeting. He subsequently took part in Quaker Work Camps in Britain and all over the world. At a work camp in Edinburgh participants included an Israeli, a Palestinian and an American Jew – his first insight into the Arab/Israeli conflict. During the 1956 Christmas holiday he did refugee relief work near Vienna. Unsurprisingly he got bad grades in his mock A levels.

The same year he received his call up papers (as the Suez crisis was brewing) and registered as a conscientious objector. A break between school and university was spent in a term at Pendle Hill, a Quaker college in the USA, and he found it very rewarding. Following that, at a Mexican work camp, participants were tasked with piping water to a remote village. The villagers did not want it, so instead they built latrines. Roger said this taught him the importance of listening closely to people.

During medical training at Cambridge, Roger was an active Young Friend. Someone who was at medical school with Roger remembered the joy of his uproarious laughter. This was toned down by the time most of us met him, but his sometimes ironic sense of humour remained strong and the twinkle in his eye and a bit of gentle teasing were very much part of him. His medical elective was spent in Kenya and Uganda in 1963. He later had three further visits to Uganda at later stages of his career as a doctor. In 1964 he qualified as a doctor and the following year he married Celia, a nurse, and they moved to Bournemouth in 1968. They had much in common including the importance of prayer and the scriptures, but different ways of worship were right for them. Theirs was a large family and their children formed a significant part of a flourishing children's meeting in Poole. Friends were regularly welcomed to their home and beautifully kept garden and their joint hospitality was legendary.

When Roger came to Poole Meeting, Friends were renting a room in Lagland Street that incorporated the barn-like structure built soon after George Fox visited Poole. Roger was instrumental in locating, fundraising for and converting 52 Wimborne Road from a boarding house to a meeting house, opened in 1975. The shelving and storage areas of the library were handmade by Roger and are a feature of the foyer.

Roger's medical work was not restricted to general practice. He was the NUM doctor in Bournemouth during the 1984 Miners' Strike. He visited South Sudan in 1999 to advise the government on health care provision and in 2002 went on a study tour of Swaziland to see how HIV/AIDS affected the country. He was Medical Officer at The Sanctuary (an HIV/AIDS respite centre) in the 1990s and served as Clinical Assistant in the HIV/AIDS department at Royal Bournemouth Hospital. He continued there one morning a week until 2004 when he retired from hospital and locum general practice work and devoted himself to his family (18 grandchildren at last count) and beautiful garden.

In his declining years his support for the meeting never wavered. He attended meeting for worship whenever he could, and with the support of Celia and, sometimes, grandchildren, welcomed Friends to worship at his home when he could not. A Friend said: "He was the best friend you could possibly have and so discreet you would never know who else he was befriending."

On hearing of his death, a Friend wrote: "He was one of the warmest, friendliest, most helpful and charismatic Friends and one of the most practical people I have ever met, and also someone who had love in every utterance he made. He knew so much about living adventurously and was a Quaker in every essence of his life. I was in awe of his intellect and learning, a man of wide knowledge and warmth, whose sense of humour was sharp too."

A light has gone out in our community, but the Light remains. It is for us to be faithful to it.

Signed on behalf of Bournemouth Coastal Area Meeting

Held on 18 March 2023

Penny Estall, Clerk

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## Beryl Daphne Hibbs

21 December 1933 – 17 November 2022

Beryl Hibbs epitomised what a life spent walking cheerfully over the world seeking that of God in everyone can be, and what it can achieve. Her Quakerism was the core of her being and its driving force. It underpinned all she did, in a life that encompassed teaching, bookselling, establishing a school, rescuing semi derelict buildings and replacing them with a successful complex of small, ethical shops and a café; and restoring and reviving Mosedale Meeting in the remote 'back o' Skiddaw' country of the Lake District National Park. In all of these she created positive and mutually supportive communities, and powerful outreach.

Beryl did not come from a Quaker family nor was she born in England. In June 1940, aged six, she was evacuated from Guernsey with 5,000 other school children. She travelled with 1,300 of them by boat to Weymouth then by train to Glasgow. She did not return home until after the war.

Beryl read English at Bristol University before joining the staff at Sidcot. She taught until 1978, firstly at Friends' School Sidcot then as Senior Mistress at Friends School, Brookfield, Wigton before starting a school in Carlisle, Overwater, in 1970 with her friend Coryn Clarke. They had met at Sidcot where Coryn taught science and where their partnership began. They shared unusual childhoods – Coryn's in an internment camp in Shanghai. Both had lived adventurously and continued to do so throughout their lives.

Beryl's teaching was an inspiration to many of her pupils. They have vivid memories of engaging and stimulating lessons. One wrote: "I would say that her aim was to activate individual thought, interest and imagination. She looked to extend awareness beyond the confines of the school and curriculum to wider social issues.

"Beryl was interested in developing thinking about the aims of a good education and how best to achieve these. She was not interested in dedicating efforts solely to exam technique and

parrot learning. She did recognise the importance of passing exams but kept in perspective the amount of time dedicated to this. Beryl was forthright and could be scary if she thought you had done something stupidly thoughtless or against the rules that existed. She was also deeply thoughtful and kind to pupils, especially some with disorganised home backgrounds."

Overwater school was not a success financially. After its closure in 1978, Beryl and Coryn put their energies into running a book and wholefoods shop in Wigton, first restoring the premises. It too proved financially unviable. Undeterred they tackled another run-down complex of buildings, this time in Caldbeck. This was the Priests Mill, where the restored buildings provided a café and some specialist shops. One was a bookshop and another a wool cooperative. It provides to this day affordable ethically managed units for local crafts and cooperatives. All the work was undertaken under Coryn's supervision and most of it by carefully guided amateurs, with tradesmen only used where safety required professional oversight. The Priests Mill remains a vibrant community hub, as is an overtly Quaker project Beryl and Coryn undertook: the physical restoration and spiritual revival of the meeting house and local Friends' meeting in Mosedale. This was restored by volunteers at a number of work camps over the years. Run as a coffee shop during the summer months, it is known and loved by many Quakers and by many for whom it has provided a first introduction to Quakerism. Under Beryl's skilful guidance its mission was established as outreach.

Throughout all this time Beryl gave substantial service to the Society of Friends nationally and locally. Nationally she was a member of the Friends Education Council from 1964 to 1969; a member of both the Home Service and Administrative committees; Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings from 1982 to 1986; and then clerked the second half of the 1986 to 1994 Book of Discipline Revision Committee (BDRC). A colleague on this last, writes: Beryl deserves much of the credit for our holding together as a well-concerned and productive BDRC. She

set the tone. Her calmly reassuring authority inspired confidence and helped us to remain on course and in unity, as we laboured on behalf of the Yearly Meeting (and its very vocal membership pressing us from all sides with their suggestions) to a successful conclusion.” When the new BDRC was announced, Beryl said “I wonder if they’ll have as much fun as we did”. In all she did she followed the *Quaker faith & practice* advice on marriage – things are “to be taken seriously but not in grim earnest”. Her work for peace was practical and active, as well as spiritual. Peace camps were held at Mosedale and she and Coryn took part in many demonstrations as well as writing carefully crafted letters to politicians and opinion formers. As Clerk to Meeting for Sufferings she represented the Society in the courts during the unsuccessful bid to obtain an alternative for pacifists to paying tax for military purposes.

In Cumberland, later Cumbria, Beryl clerked at every level: Preparative Meetings, Monthly Meeting, and General Meeting. North Cumbria Area Meeting saw her skill in clerking when she steered a safe passage through treacherous waters at a difficult Extraordinary Area Meeting during the upheaval over the sale of Wigton Meeting House. Her people skills were remarkable. She was at the heart of a Gifts and Discoveries group of people from all over Cumberland General Meeting which met for several years in each other’s houses. She gathered people around her and inspired them, and enriched their lives.

Beryl had a rare and powerful spiritual grace, lovingly and unstintingly shared. She was valiant for truth, peace, justice and the integrity of creation. She was a wonderful mentor, a dearly loved member of the local community, and in every sense an outstanding Friend who faithfully carried out Fox’s instruction “that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them.”

Signed on behalf of Cumberland Area Meeting  
Held on 10 June 2023

Christine Sutherland, Clerk

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## Neil Jameson

**25 November 1946 – 24 April 2023**

“Something inside so strong  
I know that I can make it.”

These lines from one of Neil’s favourite songs exemplify the kind of person Neil was. He was passionately committed to social justice, a Quaker and a loving family man with a good sense of humour.

He was born in 1946, in Newcastle. His mother died when he was young and he spent ten years in a boarding school. An early example of his radical beliefs was his decision to turn down military service at school in favour of community service (one of only two boys who did this). He met his wife Jean when they were both involved in a school production of Christopher Fry’s play *Curtmantle*. When he proposed to her, a condition was that she accompany him to Sudan for a year doing voluntary service there. She agreed. They married in 1970.

Neil trained as a social worker and later worked for Save the Children and the Children’s Society. However, these jobs didn’t satisfy his strong belief in the need for social change, and so in 1977 he obtained a Churchill Fellowship to go and study community organising in the United States. He returned, determined to introduce it into the UK. Many people were sceptical about this and said it wouldn’t work in the British culture but Neil would not be put off. He obtained funding from the Barrow Cadbury Trust to start a pilot scheme in Bristol and then later moved with his family to East London where he set up TELCO, The East London Communities Organisation. Community organising involves consulting local people and organisations about the issues they feel most strongly about and poverty came out as the most pressing issue facing that community. So the idea of a living wage began to take shape, targeting organisations directly about the wages they were paying which were impossible to live on. At HSBC’s annual meeting in 2003, one

of the bank's cleaners politely confronted its chair, Sir John Bond, telling him: 'We work in the same office but we live in different worlds. We receive a whole £5 an hour, no pension and a miserly sick scheme. Our children go to school without an adequate lunch.' Initial successes included HSBC and other banks which agreed to pay the living wage and later Ken Livingstone adopted it as a minimum for municipal workers. Neil's work on the living wage changed the lives of millions of people. More than 13,000 employers are now accredited by the Living Wage Foundation.

Neil believed strongly in reviving political assemblies in order for democracy to flourish. Citizens UK, the body which Neil set up to organise this work, became known for well attended, entertaining, lively political meetings in locations such as Methodist Central Hall and even the 6,000-seat Copper Box in the Olympic Park. Citizens' Assemblies are a tool for people to show their power; they build community through shared experience and they build relationships with elected officials in public life. The joyful diversity in the room is unparalleled: young people, nuns, Jews, Muslims, school children, clergy, cleaners, care assistants, Quakers, sixth formers. Not simply observing, but truly engaged, organised citizens, because the agenda has been built over months of listening, training, and preparation. Neil would never be on the stage, but could be seen standing discreetly at the back, championing others to use their voices for change and developing young community organisers. He was gifted at building purposeful relationships across all communities. There was an especially deep admiration of Neil among Muslim communities. The day after the 2005 London bombings, Neil and many others stood outside mosques in solidarity with Muslims who were facing a spike in hate crime.

Citizens UK spread and launched other campaigns on housing and work with refugees, leading to the setting up of independent organisations such as Safe Passage, which campaigns for the rights of young and unaccompanied refugees. His work with

Citizens UK was nationally recognised when he was awarded the CBE in 2016.

A key principle behind community organising is to develop leadership skills in people who have never had a say in decisions affecting their lives. A community leader in the East End said that Neil didn't come in like others, wanting 'to do something for the East End' but instead drew something out that was already there. This characteristic was borne out by others who described Neil as a wonderful listener and someone who cared deeply about the people and communities he was working with, giving them tools to use and pass onto others. He showed how successful campaigns can be when people organise together and take their demands to those who make the decisions in a clear and focused way. He was fond of the quote from Martin Luther King that 'Action leads to hope, not the other way round.' Campaigns to support refugees were a key part of Citizens' work and Neil initiated the first schemes of community sponsorship in this country along Canadian lines, where local communities welcome refugees to their areas. By 2020 more than 200 groups had sponsored and welcomed over 500 refugees in the UK.

In 2021 he retired from his job with Citizens and moved with Jean from London to Walkhampton near Tavistock in Devon. However, he didn't stop campaigning and set up a new organisation called UK Welcomes Refugees, reflecting his strong commitment to working with people who were forced to leave their country of origin and seek a place of sanctuary. He and Jean acted as hosts to a Ukrainian family and set up locally a body called 'Tavistock welcomes refugees'. He was an active member of the Green Party and was due to stand in the local elections in May 2023 as a Green council candidate.

Neil became a member of the Society of Friends in 1988 when he and Jean were attending Clevedon Meeting in Somerset. A fellow Quaker there described him as someone who had "a great depth of spiritual understanding as well as a tremendous drive



to make a difference, and whose ministry was always thought-provoking and gave glimpses into his wider concerns”.

Quaker meetings gave Neil structure and grounding for his life and in particular his social activism.

When they moved to London, they joined Westminster Meeting and immersed themselves in its life, Neil becoming an elder. Comments included:

“It’s not just the amazing things he did but the way he did them, with kindness, humour and helping to find solutions.”

“During the memorial meeting five children were lined up on the bench and I’ve never seen them sit so still. They understood. They knew Neil in part thanks to all that Jean did for the children’s meeting.”

“Going for dinner at Jean and Neil’s involved a go-round so that everyone was able to speak and was truly heard.”

In Devon, Neil and Jean joined Tavistock Meeting. An elder in the meeting said:

“Neil was appointed as an elder and soon began to change us towards doing things more correctly. Somehow he seemed to have a way of getting us to change in a way that didn’t upset anyone or tread on people’s toes. His quiet approach seemed to get things done. Many of us felt that we learnt a lot from Neil in those two short years and we are left with a sense of what might have been.”

“Neil’s strength was his humility and tenacity combined with great skill and experience.”

Neil was a devoted family man. He and Jean had four children: Ben, Ella, Will and Charlie, and seven grandchildren. Their granddaughter Molly spoke at the Citizens’ Memorial Service. She said she was proud of his achievements although was never quite sure what exactly he did! She quoted a line from an Elton John song that Neil was fond of – ‘how wonderful life was when he was in the world’. Their grandson

Fergus spoke about how Neil had always found time for his grandchildren and left them with precious memories. And their youngest son Charlie described how his father had always fought against fear and in his life ‘he had let love flow’.

Neil believed in a better world and brought it into being. He was a visionary who enabled, motivated and succeeded against all the odds. The many changes he achieved are a testament to his faith, inner strength, conviction and determination. He had enormous energy and drive. And he believed in and supported others who organised the campaigns. He allowed them to take risks and innovate. Enabling others to develop was a key element of his leadership style.

His love for others was the force that drove him in everything he did. ‘Can you feel the love tonight?’ was another of his favourite songs.

His death came suddenly. He died of an untreatable cancer that was diagnosed a week or so before his death. It was a terrible shock to his family and friends, and tributes came flowing in. A funeral was held in Walkhampton with tremendous support from the village, followed by a memorial meeting at Westminster Meeting. A Memorial Service was organised by Citizens UK on 30 June in Conway Hall in Central London, where people from different faiths and backgrounds came together to celebrate his life with personal testimonies and songs.

In the words of William Penn:

“The truest end of life is to know that life never ends,  
And he that lives to live ever, never fears dying.  
And this is the comfort of the good; that the grave cannot hold them  
For death is no more than a turning over from time to eternity.”

Signed on behalf of Devon Area Meeting  
Held on 16 December 2023

Barbara Sharrock, Clerk

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## Gerard (Bobby) Locke

21 February 1928 – 1 April 2019

Friends who knew Bobby from his later life will remember a Peace campaigner, and a man of great integrity. He married Edna on 31 May 1952 at Rawdon Meeting House, a very close partnership that lasted more than 66 years. They had two daughters, but they had the deep sorrow of losing Sally, the older one, in 2014.

Bobby's father was an engineer involved with decommissioning munitions from World War I in France and later manufacturing shells in Leeds. An older brother was in Popski's Private Army operating behind the lines in North Africa during World War II. Gerard himself was a schoolboy during the war but did National Service shortly afterwards and was posted to military intelligence in southern Austria, where, at the age of 19, he had to interview refugees arriving from the Balkans; later he was expected to report to the British authorities on what the occupying Americans were up to. 'Bobby' was a code name he used at this time for reporting. What he saw as corruption and lack of trust disillusioned him with the army.

On his return home he went to a meeting of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Leeds. It was a great relief to realise that he was not alone in his feelings. There he got to know some Quakers and joined Rawdon Quaker Meeting. He went on to serve on the Northern Friends Peace Board and he wore a white peace poppy all year round.

Early in their marriage Bobby and Edna looked after many foster children. Later they ran a home in Basingstoke with 12 children's places. Bobby had a liberal attitude to absconders. He let them go with a little money, on the understanding that they had to keep enough money for a phone call home when they were ready and they were not to accept lifts. Bobby became an adviser on homes and childcare in Portsmouth for ten years. He was sometimes a bit of a thorn in the side of those who held power but was much appreciated by the

workers on the ground whom he supported very well.

He lived in Argyll after early retirement in 1982 until December 2018. He was a faithful participant in meetings for worship held outside the gates of the Faslane Naval Base, where the British nuclear weapons are based. Together with Edna he sustained Argyll Meeting during the two decades that we knew him. Bobby drove large distances to attend meetings in far-flung parts of Argyll, and sometimes held meetings for worship in the homes of house-bound members. He was an active participant in the "fraternal", a meeting of Christian ministers in mid-Argyll. He was also active in local organisations that provide service to others, helping set up and run Argyll's Advocacy Service, and being a regular volunteer driver taking patients to hospital appointments in Glasgow 80 miles away.

A deeply principled man, always true to himself, he was often at odds with authority and bureaucracy, people and organisations that were pompous or rigid, those that held themselves in high regard rather than existing for their service to others. This did not, however, mean that he came across as serious-minded all the time; far from it, one could not have a conversation with Bobby without experiencing his wordplay – there was always a joke, often a quick one-liner at the end of the sentence. It was important, in his view, that one should not take oneself too seriously.

His surviving daughter, Wendy Cadman, writes:

"...I thank him for his teachings and values and love and, through these things, he lives on in me... It is not the recalling and sharing of memories with others that is the legacy we leave. It is the way we conducted our lives, the way we treated others, the way we valued that of God in everyone. And my father did this so very, very well!"

Signed on behalf of West Scotland Area Meeting  
Held on 5 December 2022

Alastair Reid, Clerk

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# Edward Hyslop (Ted) Milligan

27 March 1922 – 26 July 2020

Our current book of discipline, *Quaker faith & practice*, includes 18:20, a description of the faithful lives we have seen in the Society that speak of how the Spirit motivates us. "George Bradshaw made railway timetables to the glory of God...", it declares, indicating how we might live in fullness if we bring our all to where we are. There is no author quoted, but this passage was highly influenced by our Friend Edward H Milligan, sometime London Yearly Meeting Librarian. His ability to use lyrical expression enlarges us, and the passage continues:

"But then in honesty we should have had to reveal also the extent of our failure; the light dimmed in narrow hearts and creeds, the baptism of grace lost in timidity and torpor; the corrosion of arrogance and self-satisfaction – for we have known these, too. May the light prevail over the darkness; may those who are here, speak for all the children of the Light, to the needs of other times as well as to their own."

18:20 gives us so much of the man himself. Ted (as he was latterly universally known) was not often enamoured of our efforts in writing testimonies to the Grace of God as shown in the lives of deceased Friends. He felt that it was difficult Friends, who but for the grace of God would have been impossible, who made the best examples. He was quite clear: "Testimony should help others to live better." That injunction hopefully guides us as we reflect on his life.

Edward Milligan was born in Coventry, the third child of parents who were themselves convinced Friends, so that he described himself as a birthright Friend, but not a dynastic one. His maternal grandparents were Welsh and his paternal ones lowland Scots. He felt that these disparate Celtic roots contributed, one to his passionate nature and the other to his attachment to good order and proper

procedures. The family moved south when he was five and, after a short time in Maidstone, set up home in Reading which became the settled centre of his life.

For much of his life's journey Ted was accompanied by the encouraging strength of his older sister Mary. For many years they lived together, giving each other mutual care and support, until Mary's death in 2001. They were kindred spirits, intellectual and spiritual companions, with Quakerism and their delight in a shared knowledge and love of literature running like threads through the fabric of their daily lives. They shared many friendships – notably with the writer Elfrida Vipont Foulds and her family – and in Ted's separate life and work Mary was ever a source of counsel and sympathetic support. She assisted him in his research work, but the extent of her contribution will never be known. Ted certainly celebrated her part in choosing apt quotations that gave to their Christmas cards a unique and topical message likely to bring an affectionate smile of recognition to the large and widespread circle of friends who received them.

In the mid-sixties they bought the adjoining house to accommodate Ted's library and study. Later, they had to move, as the houses were purchased for demolition. Visitors to Ted in their new home would find him regarding the visit as being for the benefit of Mary, who by that time was increasingly housebound.

Theirs was a Quaker upbringing with a distinct evangelical flavour and included attendance at monthly meeting from age seven and, for Ted, a spell as a boarder at Ackworth School from 12 to 16. In a late recorded conversation, he expressed a wish to have got his father and mother's personalities down on paper as he owed everything to them.

Ted's education was interrupted by the war, during which he registered as a conscientious objector and worked with the Friends Relief Service, first in London, where office work, putting on film shows for children and fire

watching were among his duties. From 1942 to 1946 he worked at Killeaton House, Co Antrim, a hostel for elderly people evacuated from the bombing of Belfast: this was the beginning of Ted's lifelong interest in and attachment to Irish Quakerism. Ted's involvement with Irish Friends was maintained throughout his life, not only by his warm personal relations with numerous individual Friends but also by travel, by train and boat, and attendance at Ireland Yearly Meeting. In particular he felt an attraction for Letterfrack in the West of Ireland, where Friends had been active in relief work since the Great Famine of the 1840s and which had family connections with the founder of the Edith Ellis Trust, which he later served as trustee.

Although his father, uncles and elder brother were all engineers, Ted was mystified by things mechanical and, following formative experiences in school libraries, decided on a career as a librarian. He worked in Dr Williams's Library – initiating another lifelong attachment which led to service as a trustee for 40 years – at the University of Southampton and then at Friends House Library where he was librarian from 1957 to 1985. It was during the late 1950s that he started on the studies that led to the invaluable collection of research tools which eased work for those who used the Library in the days before the internet – in particular the typescript *Dictionary of Quaker Biography*. His research culminated in his *Quakers in Commerce and Industry 1775–1920*, published in 2007. In 2009 Ted was awarded an Honorary Degree by Lancaster University in recognition of this publication. The University website refers to the historic value of the inclusion among its over 2,800 entries of “many Lancashire cotton spinners, printers, grocers and brewers”.

For Ted, history was centred on people. He was apt to speak of Friends of the past as if they had just left the room and of events a hundred years or so ago as if he had himself been there – they were alive to him. His interest was for sharing and was placed generously at the disposal of all who consulted him; at the service of the present with an eye to its use

for the future. Ted was blessed with a retentive memory and a sharp intellect which made his historical judgments wide ranging, helping others to understand Quaker experience. His distinctive high-pitched voice and slightly hesitant delivery engaged and drew us in. The Friends House Library itself was like an extension of his home, especially during Yearly Meetings when he and Mary welcomed Friends to share tea or lunch with them, under the stairs down from the Reading Room.

Ted's ministry was distinctive, often consisting of memorised quotations from scripture, hymns or poetry, though he was among those few who feel able to offer extempore prayer. He was a great supporter of funerals – his own was planned down to the last detail – and he would frequently minister appositely towards the end.

During his long and active life, many individuals, and the Society of Friends as a whole, enjoyed long-lasting benefit from his learning, wisdom, warm friendship and encouragement. These were often expressed in the many handwritten letters (often, with Quaker thrift, written on the back of draft minutes or on outdated headed notepaper) that he so enjoyed writing. His letters are vivid; a joy to read; full of humanity, and wit: reading them you share his sheer exhilaration in finding the right turn of phrase or an apt quotation.

A Friend from Maidenhead Meeting summarised Ted's gift for friendship well when he wrote: “We remember how real he was with everyone. There was no pretence in him whatsoever and the way he related to you was as if there was nothing that could possibly distract him from the encounter in that present moment. He seemed to have a way of having a particular affection for each individual he encountered.”

Often, he was approached as a good person to speak to about personal problems or problems arising between members of a Quaker meeting. On occasion it would be about someone who was gay before society's outlook on these matters started to change. Such conversations

might open with words along the lines of 'You won't know anything about this subject, but we/I have a problem ...' The irony of this was not lost on Ted, who was himself homosexual and grew up at a time when homosexuality had to be hidden. This may have strengthened his empathy but it also gave him determination to live independent of what others thought. Ted was very private about himself, with only some close friends seeing what was behind his outward persona.

Within the last decade or so of his life, Ted made a significant new friendship through reaching out to a man from whom he bought the Big Issue. While invited to share in his delight, Friends were dismayed to find that through his efforts to support this man and his brother, Ted became subject to their controlling abuse and exploitation: an initially joyous enrichment became a sad diminishment in vulnerable old age. It was as if his strengths, of generosity, steadfastness and the desire to live adventurously, had been turned to his harm and consequently to the harm of others through the drug dealing networks in which the brothers operated.

A Reading elder, professionally aware of the risks to his safety, alerted Social Services who, in time, arranged Ted's move to sheltered housing and for his affairs to be managed by the Court of Protection.

The treasure of Ted's life and friendship shines out from beyond that darker time, yet to deny the intervening darkness would be to deny a reality of his life and also deny others the opportunity to learn from it.

Ted was regular in attendance at meeting for worship. Although living in Reading he rarely worshipped at Reading Meeting in the last 30 years of his life: he was led to go to smaller meetings in the area meeting, often by public transport. He was one of the founders of Bracknell and Ascot Allowed Meeting (1997–2005) and faithfully worshipped there, agreeing to be their librarian; the library consisting of two suitcases, containing chosen core Quaker

books. He and Mary were active in supporting the connection of Leighton Park School with Quakerism for many years, by visiting the school, keeping up acquaintance with the Head and staff and regularly attending Sunday evening meetings for worship.

Ted gave great service and support to meetings for worship for business – he was clerk of Reading Monthly Meeting more than once but also of Berks & Oxon General (formerly Quarterly) Meeting – its Ministry and Extension Committee was his particular care – as well as many Quaker bodies throughout the Yearly Meeting. He was involved with the development of the Quaker Tapestry from its earliest days and clerked the management body of the Quaker Tapestry Scheme between 1990 and 1993. His love of the railway led him to include personalised train times information with his invitations to meetings. He was often to be found at travelling exhibitions of the Tapestry and played a key part (with Anne Wynne-Wilson and Ruth Finch – the originators of the whole thing in 1981) in negotiating the establishment of Kendal FMH, from 1994, as the permanent base for the Tapestry. Ted revised and prepared the text for the 1998 edition of the 'Pictorial Guide' to the panels. This is typical of his written work, including a detailed, but readable commentary on each panel, biographical notes, references and an explanation of the grouping of the panels according to the structure of the 1994 book of discipline.

Ted had a strong sense of right ordering and an encyclopaedic knowledge of the practice of clerking, which he was generous in sharing with others. He had a unique and careful minuting style, which echoed the Quaker traditions of his youth and former ages. His contributions in meetings for business, and particularly at Yearly Meeting, were few but often offered in a spirit of concern for unity as suggestions for how a difficult situation might be resolved. They were offered with a quiet authority that Friends could accept.

From 2003 to 2012 he travelled under concern among Friends in Ireland supported by a

minute of liberation from Reading Monthly Meeting. This was a time when Ireland Yearly Meeting was revising its book of discipline and discovering conflicts in doing so. Ted's presence among Irish Friends was valued because rather than bringing something to say, he came and listened, offering advice by example. In this period he travelled across the whole country and encouraged others to accompany him. He was happy to be present when the Yearly Meeting finally adopted *Quaker Life and Practice*.

As he aged Ted began to let go of involvement in meetings. Firstly Yearly Meeting, then Monthly Meeting, and finally even his membership of the Society. They were tools he no longer needed, yet he remained always a Friend, a living embodiment whose very vulnerabilities spoke to others as much as his wisdom and knowledge. He always allowed us, encouraged us, to be our own selves and work from there.

It might have been thought that Ted's spiritual outlook was orthodox but he spoke of himself as a dualist and indicated that he thought of a mystery rather than God, rejecting the idea of an omnipotent creator, and quoting TS Eliot with approval: "I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where." Nevertheless he acknowledged the reality of God – heavenly father was his preferred usage – as a redeemer, "bringing the power of love to overcome the world of evolution which is based on violence and competition".

There is much in *Quaker faith & practice* in which you can hear the echoes of Ted's inimitable style of writing, particularly in those extracts which survive from the 1968 revision of *Church Government*, with which he was much involved. His only credited entry is at 21:20, from an article he wrote as a young man. It shows that his spiritual centre was already focussed – he speaks of times of spiritual darkness when light is brought to us by the simple actions, often unconscious, of Friends "... because they were sensitive to God's leadings" and finishes with an exhortation to which he himself certainly responded.

"Isolation of spirit... comes to most – perhaps all of us – at one time or another. There are times in our lives when the tides of faith seem far out, times of dryness, times when we do not feel the comfort and guidance of God's hand. At such times we may stay away from meeting feeling that it does not give us the spiritual help that we need; or it may be that we continue to go and are to outward appearance actively engaged on the meeting's life and business, while, within, we feel the agonies of isolation and the longing for light to lighten our darkness. I can think of Friends who have brought light to my darkness – perhaps a single sentence, a friendly letter, a walk on the downs: their help was perhaps given unconsciously, but it was because they were sensitive to God's leadings that they were able to do it. Do we seek to be the channels of God's love and caring? 'Caring matters most.'"

Edward H Milligan, 1951

Signed on behalf of Mid-Thames Area Meeting  
Held on 11 October 2023

Amanda Griffin and Angela Mason, Co-clerks

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# Alfred Lucas Moon

31 December 1921 – 17 March 2022

“A warm welcome from us all to us all” was the lovely greeting that Alfred used when standing to read notices at Uxbridge Local Meeting or when closing the meeting as an elder. As a Friend commented, the death of Alfred has “left a large Alfred-sized space in the meeting”. *Quaker faith & practice* 4.24 guides us to record in thankfulness the power of divine grace in human life’. Alfred’s life speaks to that divine grace.

Alfred’s role in the meeting was to be a consistent figure who, week after week, and year after year sat quietly and absorbed the sense of the meeting and often, towards the end of the meeting, would rise, and stand silent for a few moments before ministering. Alfred often ministered in a way that touched the minds and spirit of those in the room. He had a deep perception of what was happening to Friends and between Friends and so often was seen as being ‘gifted with the spirit’.

Alfred came to Friends from a very active involvement in the local Congregational Church arising from his family’s long association with that church. Alfred was proud that his parents were closely involved in the purchase of land to build the Congregational Church from the local parish church, an unusual arrangement for the time; an exercise in collaboration between the established church and the local dissenters. This must have laid the foundation in Alfred’s mind for his openness, interest in, and welcome to those of other faiths.

During the war, Alfred registered as a conscientious objector and was able to persuade the tribunal that his faith in the Gospel of Love could not be reconciled with military activity. Joining the Christian Pacifist Fellowship Land Unit, he spent the war working on the land and experiencing some tough conditions. This didn’t prevent him writing and appearing in a pantomime in the local village and winning over the local community initially suspicious of the ‘conchies’. It was during this

time that Alfred forged some lifetime friendships with Quakers serving with him.

Post war, through to retirement, Alfred continued to work for the Fleet Street family business selling advertising space in the national and regional papers. As a sign of the respect he was held within that profession, Alfred served as President of the Press Advertising Managers Association.

Outside his career, Alfred led a full and rich life having married Helen and raising a family. Despite his unwavering commitment to family and church life he found the time to continue the amateur dramatics, very often associated with fund raising for Shelter. He also found the physical and the spiritual energy to set up and chair a branch of Amnesty and when it was established was an early volunteer for the local Samaritans group. His involvement with both groups was lifelong.

Alfred came to Quakers in the 1980s after the long digestion of Quaker ideas and thoughts, first introduced to him all those years ago during the war.

Uxbridge Local Meeting equally benefitted from this physical and spiritual energy, but it was never displayed in a frenetic, ‘let’s get things done’ manner. Alfred was the quiet continual presence, supporting, encouraging, advising. His ‘mot juste’ would often help resolve a tension in a business meeting or elsewhere, or he was able to sense and crystallise the unspoken; using words that weighed heavily with Friends.

We all knew that this gift came from a deep spiritual place inside Alfred that was nurtured by his extensive knowledge of the Bible and his wide reading of other inspirational works, especially poetry. His exceptional memory allowed him to often quote from the Bible or other inspirational works in relation to his ministry, delivered with a voice that was profoundly engaging to listen to. In particular Alfred was a student of St Paul and would often remind us of a passage from one of Paul’s letters that seemed an apt response to the ministry that had already been given.

Alfred also had a twinkle in his eye. He had a subtle sense of humour and sometimes was able to use humour to gently challenge a Friend who needed it. But it was always used with a love for that person, a respect for them and a sincere interest. When a new person ventured into the meeting it was often Alfred who would greet them after meeting and made them feel comfortable while telling them just enough about the meeting and Quakers as well as letting them tell their story and so ensuring they went away valued and recognised.

After being determined to recover from a stroke a few years ago, Alfred managed to return to the meeting and while not ministering as much as he did, but when he did – it was always as it had been. For many Friends it was just so reassuring to have Alfred with us, and to know that such a valued spiritual resource was still there.

Alfred was nearly 101 years old when he left us. His sense of humour was present when he said that “the secret of a long life is having been born a long time ago”. Remembering Alfred, Uxbridge Friends will continue to say, “a warm welcome to us all, from us all”.

Signed on behalf of London West Area Meeting  
Held on 22 January 2023

Jonathan Lingham, Clerk

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## Gerald and Beryl Moss

**Gerald: 26 November 1928 –  
26 September 2022**

**Beryl: 30 January 1931 – 25 October  
2022**

Gerald and Beryl Moss were a close couple who enjoyed a long life together. They were married for 69 years and died within a month of one another. Friends in South London Area Meeting have been deeply moved by their passing and we are pleased to place on record our appreciation of the part that they played in our meetings.

Gerald Moss was born in Dulwich. He was 11 at the start of World War II and their home was bombed twice. After an attack by a flying bomb he courageously went into a damaged house to turn off the gas supply. Throughout the war he was at Alleynes School doing lessons and exams during the bombing. He was a keen runner and a first-class marksman. He and Beryl met through the Crusaders when he was 17 and she 14; they became good friends. Gerald did his National Service and spent time in war-torn Hamburg. He taught English to Latvians, Yugoslavs and other people who were trying to get out of Germany. He took up horse riding and went to the opera and cinema. After his National Service he became a pacifist and first joined the Methodists and then the Quakers.

Gerald and Beryl married in 1953 and they had two children, Jonathan and Candace. Gerald could have gone to University but elected to go into industry. He later studied at London University and qualified as a chartered shipbroker. At that time the Westminster Bank was advertising for mature students. He got a job there and moved his way up to become a branch manager. This meant that by 1961 the family were able to move from a small property in South Norwood to a bigger house in Wallington. He became a school governor and later a magistrate, continuing until the mandatory retirement age of 75 and specialising in children's and family courts.



Beryl Northcott was born in Lambeth. She was proud of the fact that her grandfather, who was a stonemason, had built the Stockwell memorial which honours soldiers lost in World War I. Her father was in the police and she recalls going with him to examine crime scenes. She was evacuated to a farm in the West Country where she enjoyed country life and made friends with other evacuees. Back in London she passed her School Certificate exams and then joined a Radiographer training course at Kings College Hospital, qualifying in 1951. When Jonathan was born she became a full-time mum until both children went to secondary school after which she took a part-time job in histopathology at a Sutton hospital. Beryl was a keen needlewoman and played the piano.

Gerald and Beryl first went to meeting in Croydon, then in the 1970s to Sutton. For over 45 years they have been at the centre of Sutton Meeting, each in their own way adding greatly to the spirit of the meeting. On Sundays we felt more comfortable when Gerald and Beryl were there with us on the front row. We recall Gerald as tall and upright, both in stature and integrity. He had a serious disposition but also a sense of humour. We remember him most for his spoken ministry in meetings for worship. He spoke briefly and clearly; his main themes were Jesus and God and his ministry was distinctive and important. Beryl seldom spoke in meeting but she took a close interest in all its activities. She seemed to know everyone, especially the families and children, serving as an overseer. Gerald and Beryl both had a gift for friendship and engaging with others. When visitors came to meeting for worship Beryl and Gerald were frequently the first to cross the room to welcome and talk to them with genuine interest and warmth.

Gerald and Beryl were faithful members of Sutton Meeting's Tuesday Discussion Group for over 30 years. Studying the Bible was a major feature of Gerald's life and he led many evenings under titles such as The Sermon on the Mount, the Authentic Voice of Jesus and Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship. Sutton

Meeting is the poorer as we no longer hear his strong Christian message, often expressed through short poems written by Gerald himself. We are grateful to Gerald and Beryl for their service over a number of years as the meeting's representatives on Churches Together in Sutton and Cheam. When the Sutton Steel Band was formed in 2006 Gerald and Beryl were founder members.

Over the past ten years Gerald had to give up driving and began to show signs of dementia. This was particularly hard on Beryl who herself had a range of serious medical conditions and her eyesight deteriorated. She cared for him lovingly. Gerald had a succession of periods in hospital and Beryl then reluctantly allowed him to be taken into Ryelands Care home in Wallington. It was difficult for her to visit him because of Covid and transport problems. Beryl was lonely and very sad.

We look back over the time we have known Gerald and Beryl Moss with deep gratitude for lives well lived. They contributed greatly to the spirit of Sutton Meeting and South London Area Meeting.

Signed on behalf of South London Area Meeting  
Held on 19 March 2023

Pam Sellman and Michelle Dumont, Co-clerks

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# Robert Parsons

12 April 1933 – 29 March 2022

Member of Hemel Hempstead Quaker Meeting from 1965 until his death in 2022.

He was led by his Quaker beliefs to become a Probation Officer; a Save the Children Officer; and the Founder of Hope for Children.

Bob said: "Being a Quaker has been an important part of my life. I have found that the belief that there is that of God in everyone is important. The relationship between faith and witness are inseparable. I find the testimonies to peace, equality, integrity, and simplicity provide the way I try to conduct my behaviour and actions towards making the world a better place."

Bob was born on 12 April 1933 in south London during a time of high unemployment. Regular work was difficult for both his Scottish mother and his Londoner father. Love was showered on Bob, an only child. At age 10, evacuation with his school to Sussex taught him the anxiety of a child who feels lost without a parent. Throughout Bob's life, he was especially sensitive to the plights of children.

At 16, Bob became a trainee manager in a local print works. His parents' delight that he would have a job for life was Bob's greatest fear. A friend arranged a day observing the work of a Probation Officer. Bob became aware of people many regarded as a useless underclass. Helping to better the lives of others was the challenge Bob wanted.

Bob married Ann Baker in 1960 and became a Probation Officer at Watford, under the guidance of Tom Burk, a splendid senior officer who was a member of Hemel Hempstead Quaker Meeting. Over the next 20 years, Bob worked with adolescent boys who had known poverty and deprivation all their lives. Bob and a friend organised camps for these boys. Their success was proven when a missing boy was found hiding up a tree, refusing to leave.

Bob felt that Quaker principles spoke to him and helped him keep in mind the importance

of looking for the best in everyone. In 1965, he and Ann started to attend Quaker meetings in Hemel Hempstead, where they remained as members.

In the early 1980s Bob began something new: a two-year contract in Sri Lanka establishing Child Care Training for the Save the Children Fund.

Bob thought he had seen every kind and degree of deprivation in the UK, but in Sri Lanka, it was so bleak, the children had stopped crying or complaining. Sri Lanka was on the way to civil war. On the surface, the Tamil and Sinhalese populations got along with each other. But tensions flared with open fighting between the two factions and there would be thousands killed. Bob continued to distribute food and milk powder.

Bob needed to rescue his Tamil cleaner, Manium, and his family. He was stopped on the way but his white skin and shouts of "I work for Save the Children" saved him. On the return, the crowd realised he had passengers. Bob's well-known driving – put your foot down, sound the horn and get through – got Manium and his family back to safety.

With continuing violence and food in short supply, the Save The Children Fund listened to Bob and distributed flour, bread, rice and sugar. Chris Patten, UK Overseas Development Minister, visited, followed by Margaret Thatcher. Five million pounds was granted to Save the Children for improving conditions for children.

Bob learned the importance of a charity being present and able to assess and meet needs immediately.

Bob's two-year contract had become eight years – Bob returned home. Bob continued with the Fund as Regional Director for Asia, commuting daily from Hemel Hempstead to London. There were trips to troubled areas of Asia and some personal danger, particularly in Burma when settlement of conflict and violence was not satisfactory.

Bob became Save the Children's Tracing Consultant in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

Tracing the families of 100,000 children who had fled Rwanda resulted in many reunions. In Rwanda, the concept of Hope for Children was born: Bob met Maisie. About 50 years old, illiterate and penniless, she had lost her entire family. Instead of giving up, she took in two orphaned children. More children arrived – 50 in all when Bob met her.

She had no source of money to house and feed the children. Bob put his hand in his own pocket, but that was not enough. No funds were available for Maisie from well-established UK charities. Maisie herself was not a registered charity. There was minimal help from small charities, but no solution. Bob returned to the UK disillusioned and disheartened.

Just before Bob's father died, he asked Bob: "In your last moments of life, will you be able to say that the world has been a better place because of your presence?" When Bob had left a safe job for the Probation Service, his father had said "you must be bloody joking". Bob thought he never approved of his choice and that his final words were a challenge.

At the Probation Service, Bob had befriended Jim Ward, a shy, inarticulate man, released on licence from prison after being sentenced for murder. Upon Jim's death, he bequeathed Bob £5,000 to help children. With Jim and Maisie both in mind, Bob said to Ann: "I am going to start a charity that supports disadvantaged children."

Bob intended to help smaller projects around the globe which had difficulty finding funding from the larger charities. Hope For Children stood for Handicapped, Orphaned, Poor and Exploited. Bob and Ann's own home was turned into an office and a small extension built. His next-door neighbour became the treasurer and Ann the secretary. Volunteers rattled tins in the streets. With a new fundraiser and a local events organiser, the income grew.

Bob flew back to Sri Lanka to look at the centre for street children which he had set up years back. With his friend Tyrell, funds were found, children continued to learn, and lives

were saved. In Zambia, AIDS had wiped out a generation of people, leaving grandparents to care for the children. HOPE arranged interest free loans of £100 to each grandma. They bought sewing machines, goats, chickens, to make and sell goods in the markets. Their income bought food and education for their grandchildren. The repaid loans were used to lend out again.

Special events raised money for HOPE – marathons, quiz nights, concerts, sponsored swims, parachute jumps, the HOPE Ball in London (with Bob in his kilt). Some projects were big – HOPE was in Sri Lanka within hours of the tsunami; others were small – a washing machine for a woman in South Africa who cared for children orphaned by AIDS or £200 for a local branch of Home Start.

Bob worked tirelessly for HOPE for 27 years and always acknowledged his friends and helpers – particularly Ann. Bob and a supporter were on a train before 9am, aiming for the start of a sponsored walk at the Albert Memorial. Ann was there already, selling goods to raise money for HOPE.

Ill health dogged Bob over his final years, and he died in April 2022 aged 89. His ashes are buried in a sunny place in the Hemel Hempstead Meeting garden.

Bob is known best to Luton & Leighton Area members from their time with him at camp. Kerry Yeoman Woollon wrote: "I have known Bob all my life, both in meeting for worship and in attending camp each year. Although he travelled the world through his work with Hope for Children, he still managed to attend Quaker Camp with his grandchildren."

Each year he would organise a popular camp cricket match. His grandchildren and daughter have continued to be very involved in camp activities. Bob was much loved by children and adults. In the last few years, although becoming frail, he continued to attend camp, pleased with being the eldest camper. He will be greatly missed.

Bob was interested in what each person said. In conversation he made everyone feel welcome and included. His stature was that of an ordinary, very kind, modest, cheerful and chatty man, very proud of his Scottish ancestry. Bob never wasted any energy in complaining about what other people did or did not do. His focus was on what should be done, and how it could be achieved.

Hemel Hempstead Meeting members also remember Bob for playing the ukulele, being a ventriloquist with groaners of jokes, and for his dream of playing football for Chelsea. The memory of a modest man with a deep belief in Quaker principles and a loving zest for life is left with HOPE and with Luton & Leighton Area Meeting.

Signed in and on behalf of Luton & Leighton  
Area Meeting

Held on 14 May 2023

Linda Wood, Clerk

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## Jim Pym

5 January 1941 – 20 October 2020

Jim was born in Hastings to elderly parents. He left the Catholic church while still a teenager, remaining grateful to it for “giving me questions to answer”. In his twenties he found in Buddhism, Quakerism and spiritual healing the practical and experiential qualities he valued in religion.

Jim Pym was a steadfast man until such time that his physical health deteriorated. He then remained steadfast in every other way until his death. He touched so many lives through his work, his writing and teaching, his support and love. He was a Quaker by conviction and an ordained Buddhist priest (in the Japanese Jodo Shinshu, or Pure Land, tradition). In his later years, he supported his close companion and partner, Annie Miller, on her Basic Income work, teaching her how to edit, sharing his experience of publishing and helping her to campaign more effectively. He was the author of several books. *What kind of God, What kind of Healing?* (1990) is still in print. His conversational style in *Listening to the Light*, *The Pure Principle* and *You don't have to sit on the floor* made Quakerism, other faiths seen from a Quaker perspective, and Buddhism, accessible to readers unfamiliar with these traditions.

“Some years ago, in early seeking, a friend suggested Quakerism might be what I was looking for. I bought a book to find out more – that book was *Listening to the Light* by Jim Pym and it changed my life. I was struck immediately by the beauty and strength of Jim's words, and the sense of pleasure, discovery and personal exploration he conveyed when he spoke about faith and religion. I carried this book around with me for a good number of months, sneaking paragraphs here and there whenever I could. It was because of Jim's words that I felt inspired and encouraged to make a visit to a meeting.

You only had to walk into a room where Jim was to feel better and more peaceful. His

peace aura was very strong, and he shared it with everyone.

While going through a very difficult time that had sapped my confidence Jim taught me always to come from a place of love. If you come from a place of love you can do no harm. You need to come from a place of love especially to those who are doing you harm. Jim changed my thinking, changed my attitude to life, changed my life. His memory will stay in my soul forever.

I met Jim in person less than a handful of times, mainly in Edinburgh Meeting House. Each time I felt that I was in the presence of someone with huge meaning to me. He had unknowingly had such a positive impact on my life. I enjoyed the sense of calm he was able to combine so easily with profound wisdom and I listened eagerly to any contribution he made, whether in ministry or in discussion. I never told him the impact he had on me, and he would not have known my face or name.

Jim was one of the kindest and most empathetic men I have ever met. Among his many noteworthy personal attributes, he possessed a deep and impressive understanding of Buddhism and was himself a deeply spiritual person.

One of his real gifts was the ability to connect with other people through his sense of humour. He would share memories of remarks or incidents from many years ago, and then together we would explore amusing analogies and life experiences. Hearing his views was not just interesting but was always instructive and gave one a way to appreciate something important from a new perspective.

To be in his company was to feel unreservedly affirmed. No topic was off-limits, nothing you said could affront him. Though he might offer a different, insightful perspective, he never judged. A chat over (excellent) coffee and classical music was thus a time to be treasured – you left feeling hopeful, re-grounded. That ability to be with you in the

moment, that sharing of souls, always offered with the lightest touch, without pretension or fuss, was at his essence.

Jim Pym's presence was one of profound Gentleness. It was a modest and deeply spiritual gentleness in which lived unbounded compassion, understanding, healing, knowledge and wisdom, which when needed he was always quietly and gently willing to share."

Some of Jim's legacies to us emanated from: his work at the Quaker bookshop in Friends House; his healing work; and his teachings and writings on comparative religion and ecumenical matters, especially his interfaith work.

### **Friends House**

"I met Jim Pym in 1986 when I became the assistant manager of Friends Book Centre, where he was the manager. I am not sure when he had become the manager, but he inherited a shop that mostly sold remaindered bargains with Quaker books in the corner and changed it into a vibrant Quaker bookshop with many other liberal Christian and other faiths books in stock that were hard to find elsewhere. It became a wonderful lively place where Quakers of every different hue, programmed, unprogrammed, plain dressing, outrageous, non-theist and christocentric from all around the globe came and found books that developed and expanded their religious journeys, as well as historians, theologians and sociologists. He was visited by bishops, priests and lay members of all the Christian churches even the most obscure, monks in brown and orange robes and in plain clothes, Hindus, Sufi, Imans. He knew them as friends and valued all their insights as well as stocking the special books of their religious callings. Friends Book Centre became a very special place under his care."

"I was appointed as an assistant in the bookshop in 1987 and worked with Jim until he retired. There are never enough good men and women, and Jim was the best of men. He

was kind and caring, dedicated to peace, an excellent bookshop manager and a talented writer. He kept in touch with the always welcomed Christmas letters until relatively recently. Working in the bookshop was a privilege and an education and Jim was part of that."

"I was delighted to join Literature Committee in 1978, a most fulfilling and thrilling role in my Quaker life. The books sold well, were read and discussed and quoted. Many Quaker committees were difficult, and could not recruit members, then there came an era of laying down committees. Literature Committee never, as I recall, had that problem of failing in its purpose. It was a fruitful committee that worked, and the bookshop, Jim's vocation, was essential to its success."

"I met Jim Pym at Friends Home Service Council (FHSC), in the autumn of 1976, when he hosted the richest and enticing book stall. I'd only been worshipping with Quakers since 1970, I made the commitment of membership in 1974: the book stall both satisfied the hunger I had to explore but stimulated the urge to know more. Over the years, I appreciated Jim's assiduous marketing of books and stuff, to those interested in Quakers, not only the FHSC and Yearly Meeting book stalls but also the book boxes to preparative meetings and conferences. He would recommend books to me, but also he would offer subtle guidance to me in my writing."

"One day a man ran up to the counter: 'Tell me about these Quakers,' he said, 'my bus comes in two minutes!' Jim just picked up a few leaflets and put them in his hands."

## Healing

"I first encountered Jim when he was a trustee for a small healing charity in Edinburgh and appreciated the sense of 'pause and listen' he brought to meetings. I enjoyed several of Jim's meditation workshops where he made the practice simple and humble. One session, Jim played Bob Marley's *Three Little Birds* to

end the meditation, and now I always think of Jim, and his unique quality of Jimness, when I hear: 'Don't worry about a thing, 'cause every little thing gonna be alright...'"

"His writings on healing influenced me significantly. He was down-to-earth and very practical about healing – there was nothing magical about it. Once, when I had a difficult family peacemaking task in front of me, a local Friend suggested I look again at Jim's writings, and his advice leapt off the page: 'Don't go back over old stuff. Healing comes when we're open to the present moment. That moment is a gift to us – be glad of it.'"

"He was valued for his healing work, but he never made a parade or a show about it – he just got on with it. I cherish my copy of his book *What kind of God, What kind of Healing?* It is simply written but is obviously based on years of experience and thought. He was a modest man, quiet and settled in his own heart and mind, and he was loved."

"It was sometime in 1998/99 that I first met Jim, at a Friends Fellowship of Healing (FFH) gathering at Charney Manor. Later on, I had the great privilege of sharing and working with him on FFH healing courses, and I learnt a lot from him."

"I first got to know Jim at Annie's garden parties and started to attend his healing support groups which led me to offer my service as a healer when he and Annie offered healing once a month in the little chapel in St. John's Episcopalian church at the West End. I was quite new as a contact healer but Jim's quiet support was such a big help and his advice to always remain open to the Spirit was the best advice I have ever had. He became a healer in my FFH Postal Prayer group and gave so much, not only to clients but also to all of us engaged in Absent Healing. He touched many lives, empowering all with his gentle, quiet wisdom. He is a sore miss."

"I first met Jim at a spiritual retreat in St Andrews, organised by the National Federation of Spiritual Healers for trainee

healers, of whom I was one at the time. Jim was a powerful, knowledgeable and inspiring guest speaker and leader.”

“In the last years of his life, he became one of a group of planetary healers who met to send healing to planet Earth.”

### **Comparative religion and ecumenicalism**

“I first met Jim Pym when I attended a course at Woodbrooke on Buddhism. I found his ability to hold Buddhism and Quakerism in tandem immensely encouraging. His knowledge of religion was encyclopaedic but always seeking a universal truth. For many years he was a contributor to *Universalist*, the journal of the Quaker Universalist Group, and he was a most excellent and insightful reviewer. He is sadly missed.”

“I considered Jim as my spiritual mentor. A great soul who helped me reconcile my Christian upbringing with my interests in Eastern spirituality. A true guru. But also, and most importantly, I remember his wonderful sense of humour. I felt honoured to have become his Friend. I think of him always.”

“From Jim I learned to widen my theological and spiritual horizons. I recall talking with him about a dying Friend, wondering if she wanted a visit. Jim was kind to my ignorance of death and said simply that ‘her horizons were shrinking’, as she did the work of completing her life here. ‘Horizon’ became an important word to me – a horizon is both a limit, as far as one can see, and a promise that there is more beyond.”

“Jim was wise. He was very well-read in areas that interested him, particularly the spiritual basis of different religions and their commonality. How does one appreciate what underlies religious belief? Jim found solace in both Buddhism and in Quakerism: he was not a fervent advocate of one or the other – rather he looked for strands that spoke to his own condition.”

“I was curious about his dual membership – both a Buddhist and a Quaker. As I have dual

nationality, which needs managing, I wondered how it was for him and I remember ‘When I am a Buddhist, I am only a Buddhist, and when I am a Quaker, that’s what I am!’”

“His knowledge of comparative religions and spirituality in general was impressive. He always displayed his learning with humility and lack of ego.”

“Jim would say a short phrase after each session (meditation, healing, and lecture). ‘NAMU AMIDA BUTSU’ (the Name of the Buddha). Shitoku A. Peel, in his *A Short Presentation of Shin Buddhism*, expresses it thus: ‘In the Name, we find the expression of the unity of beings and Enlightenment, of subject and object, of the world of suffering and the Pure Land, of illusion and Truth. In the Name every adversarial, dualistic and discriminating thought comes to a halt.’ ... it is an act of pure gratitude.”

Thank you, Jim, for the profound depth of your spirituality, your gentle humour, your ever-ready kindness and your innate Grace. Thank you, Jim, for working tirelessly to make awareness of our spirituality part of our everyday experience.

Signed on behalf of South East Scotland Area Meeting

Held on 16 January 2023

Alastair Cameron, Clerk

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# Audrey Regan

7 December 1933 – 12 June 2020

Many of us over the years have been greeted at Leigh on Sea Meeting by our Friend Audrey with her warm and cheerful smile, and felt better for it. Her enjoyment of other people shone out through her ready sense of humour, the interest she took in their lives, through encouragement, support, listening to their problems, and rejoicing in their achievements.

Audrey passed away suddenly on 12 June 2020, aged 86. This was early in the Covid pandemic when mourning together and normal funerals were restricted, yet we remember her with much affection and gratitude for her life with us.

Audrey joined Friends along with her husband Dan, and over the years Audrey became an active Friend taking on most of the roles of responsibility in local and area meeting. Her vocal ministry was wise and thoughtful, and sometimes challenging. She was not shy of 'plain Quaker speaking' if she saw the need, and her views and guidance were clear and helpful in business meetings. She much enjoyed attending Britain Yearly Meeting and the family conferences at High Leigh, with her beloved family and later with her precious grandchildren, being always ready to join in the fun.

Audrey brought her caring and problem-solving qualities into her teaching career, the school, classroom and the staffroom, earning her much respect and many good friends. Audrey was practical and creative; she experimented with recipes in the kitchen, cooking delicious vegetarian dishes, which many of us enjoyed. She initiated our 'Soup Sunday' once a month after meeting for worship, particularly for Friends who lived alone. Welcoming folk into her home and providing hospitality, for coffee mornings, social gatherings, and meetings, was a way Audrey saw for the enriching of communication in a happy atmosphere.

Audrey was very courageous in her life often stepping up to the plate in difficult times, and showed a commitment to 'championing the

underdog'. When a group of Afghan refugee boys were brought to Southend, Audrey and Dan saw this as an opportunity to offer them friendship. They gave the boys practical help, emotional support and confidence to cope in a traumatic time in their lives, and they soon became, and continued to be, family friends, reflecting her strong sense of humanity and justice.

Later in her life she felt she could no longer accept the Christian philosophy, feeling more comfortable with Quaker non-theist views. Quakerism was always at her heart, and she continued her work and involvement with Friends: our quiet hour on Sunday mornings meant so much to her.

Audrey's deeds bore out the Quaker testimonies more loudly than words. Her life was suffused by actions to give testimony to and uphold peace, equality, simplicity, and truth. Audrey was completely true to herself and her values. Her warmth, friendliness and mischievous sense of fun made the person that she was so accessible and enheartening to others.

Signed on behalf of North East Thames Area Meeting

Held on 16 July 2023

Jo Law, Clerk



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# John Arthur Rose

13 December 1934 – 9 May 2023

John was brought up as a Methodist, and attended Ilkley Grammar School and the local Boy Scouts, which could be where he got his love of hills and walking. At Leeds University he studied engineering, a subject which continued to fascinate him throughout his life. At Leeds he also played the trumpet with a jazz band.

As a conscientious objector John had hoped to be granted exemption from National Service which would have meant he could have continued his career in engineering, but his mother persuaded him against the idea fearing he might end up in prison. John therefore accepted conditional exemption and worked as a porter in Broad Green Hospital in Liverpool, which he found enlightening.

He met Christine Thornton Smith at a Fellowship of Reconciliation meeting. She had been brought up as a Quaker and had attended a Quaker school. To compromise, they worshipped alternate weeks at a Quaker meeting and the Methodist Church. Eventually they both chose to join Friends and were married at Mount Street Meeting in Manchester in 1959.

John had various jobs including one with Angus Fire in Bentham, at which time he and Christine lived in Ingleton, where Andrew and later Elizabeth were born. The young family attended Bentham Meeting. John's work then took him to Knaresborough, where they became active members of Harrogate Meeting, John playing his part in the Children's Meeting. After some years John was asked to go back to his old job at Angus and they returned to Ingleton but joined Settle Meeting, where there was a regular Children's Meeting. Later they bought a house on The Mains in Giggleswick and became very active members of Settle Meeting, John being remembered for his very inventive times with the children. One example was when they made parachutes, launched from the gallery onto the Friends below, to demonstrate how

food and medical aid was distributed in hard-to-reach places.

John saw life as an adventure and was always looking to move forward. Adventure continued in his life when, in September 2001 they moved to Pendle Hill Study Centre in Philadelphia where he and Christine were Friends in Residence for a year, playing a full part in the spiritual, practical and academic life. A key interest in John's life was supporting the development of children, especially encouraging excitement, which he saw as helping a child to grow. He really enjoyed building models for them and continued to invent and build working models to the end of his life

He was a kind, thoughtful, generous man with a love of literature and poetry, always finding ways to help others with his practical skills. His panache for invention and his engineering background made him an ideal member of REMAP, making and altering equipment for disabled people to make their lives easier. Mending and repairing were very important to John and whenever he moved house, one of the first questions he raised was where would his workshop be? He was not known though as a home decorator or gardener, preferring the challenge of machines. He delighted in his workshop and inventions. An example was his lawn mower which he tied to a tree in the middle of the lawn, allowing it to mow in ever decreasing circles as it neared the tree while he watched from a chair by the house.

John was a quiet person, not usually the first to speak but taking everything in and coming up with wise words as a result. He cared deeply and his ministry could at times become emotional. His interests were many and varied, helping the local organic grower when it started out, promoting a farming charity in Africa, supporting Christine in her work with Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), jazz, poetry, literature, and helping as a steward at the local theatre. In fact he seemed to take an interest in anything new that crossed his path. As a member of the meeting he took a full part in discussion groups, shared meals (his

contribution was always ice cream) and walks. With other Friends he inaugurated the annual walk on New Year's Day. He served as convenor of the Premises Committee, and as an elder. He was immediately available whenever a practical problem arose, whether for Settle Meeting, other local meetings or for local people. Life with John around could be fun, not only for his many jokes but for his simple faith in the idea that if there is a problem there will be a solution. His discerning ministry was always to the point, might include poetry and could often be aimed at the children while they were still in the meeting.

After Christine died he was lonely and started searching for a companion. His loneliness was exacerbated by lockdown during the Covid pandemic. He was at last happy when he met Anne, who for a time provided care and friendship. Ultimately, this arrangement didn't last and before long he was back in his beloved workshop and with his inventions. In his final years he was inevitably the first person to arrive at meeting and would go straight in, sit in his seat and start the meeting. By now very bent, he walked the hilly half mile to and from town for his shopping or to meeting but was willing to accept a lift as he had so willingly offered lifts in the past. He was a man full of character and life, with a deep and gentle sense of humour. It was his personality that enriched the life of all those he came into contact with and he will be remembered as a man who made a difference.

Signed on behalf of Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

Held on 9 September 2023

Chris Skidmore, Clerk

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## Rod Sladen

**25 October 1948 – 15 February 2022**

Rod Sladen was a central figure in Nottingham Local Meeting, and in the Area Meeting too. He was what used to be known as a birthright Quaker; born to Quaker parents in Birmingham in October 1948. He and his wife Anne moved to Nottingham in the mid-1970s, and from that time to his sudden death on 15 February 2022, he was involved in Notts & Derby Area Meeting, and particularly in Nottingham Local Meeting. He and Anne had three children, Paul, James and Helen, and Rod lived to enjoy his two grandchildren.

His encyclopaedic knowledge ranged from a deep understanding of Quaker procedures to the quirks of the meeting house boiler; from the intricacies of who was buried where in Nottingham Friends Burial Ground to a comprehensive knowledge of the work of Trustees, of which he was clerk for a time; from the finances of his local meeting to detailed work on the meeting's archives. For over thirty years he was a central figure in Quaker campers, a national organisation. And so much more.

He was a man of great curiosity and had many interests beyond his steadfast commitment to the meeting. He walked in all weathers, he loved geo-caching and he collected maps, all of which he plunged into with infectious enthusiasm. Writing poetry as part of a Quaker-leaning group (and by all accounts making it great fun) was another of his interests; we have some of his haikus, which show great sensitivity and skill. His knowledge of local train and bus timetables was legendary.

His extensive knowledge died with him, and in this we are again and again sharply reminded of how much he is missed. ('Rod would have known...'). But it is also in much wider ways that we as a community find ourselves brought up short when we realise he is no longer with us, no longer just there, ready with an answer and a friendly quip. He was a caring and tactful

pastoral friend, and he was good company too. His kindness and his humour, sometimes impish, sometimes dry, and his deeply conscientious participation in meetings for worship for business (while occasionally exasperating!) came from his commitment to the Quaker approach to life. A man of great integrity, he was wise and he was knowledgeable – a true resource that we all drew on in countless ways.

For these many personal qualities he was loved and respected by the meeting to which he gave so much. He was irreplaceable.

Signed on behalf of Nottinghamshire &  
Derbyshire Area Meeting

Held on 9 September 2023

Judith Nilsen, Correspondence Clerk

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## David Solloway

24 March 1930 – 31 July 2022

David Solloway was a lifelong Friend who lived out his faith through worship, witness and service, born in Woolwich, London, into a family with a long heritage of Quakerism. His grandfather having been a founder of Woolwich – now Blackheath – Meeting, he attended Sunday school and meetings for worship from an early age.

His education was disrupted by World War II. Bombings in London meant he was evacuated three times. One time he stayed with his uncle, Duncan Fairn, who was Assistant Governor of Wakefield Prison and he recalled waving to prisoners from the window. The last evacuation was near Newark, where he attended the local Grammar school, and used to trainspot in his lunch hour. This led to a lifelong interest in railways. He decided on a career as a civil engineer and achieved qualifications while working for Southern Railways. On being called up for military service he applied to be a conscientious objector, but because of his work on the railways he was granted exemption.

In the 1950s he took part in the activities of London Young Friends and was notably involved with arranging visits overseas. He helped organise an exchange visit with a youth group in Poland at a time when visiting Eastern Europe was not easy. He also attended an ecumenical conference in Switzerland and this steered him to have a continuing engagement with ecumenical activities, often representing Quakers on ecumenical bodies. He also helped to organise workcamps. There was a scheme for prisoners and Young Friends to decorate houses for destitute people and this involved collecting prisoners from jail and returning them at the end of the day.

David married Stella in 1961 and they lived in Croydon where they attended Croydon meeting. They moved to Sheffield in 1964 where David worked first for the railways and then for local government as a bridge engineer. The

family were born and brought up in Sheffield – Christine in 1965 and Nicola and Paula in 1967. David took an active part in the life of Quakerism in Sheffield and in Yorkshire. He was one of the clerks of Yorkshire General Meeting (now Quakers in Yorkshire) in the 1980s.

He was an ardent campaigner for peace all his life, taking part in the Aldermaston marches and many other events promoting peace. He and other Sheffield Friends ran a peace films group for many years, showing films to groups around the city. He was also a campaigner for Amnesty, writing letters, and belonging to the Sheffield group.

In 1988 David took early retirement and he and Stella became Wardens at Glenthorne Quaker Guest House in the Lake District where they provided a friendly welcome to guests and promoted a peaceful atmosphere including holding worship at the start of each day.

After five years they enjoyed a happy retirement near Kirkby Stephen where David continued his ecumenical and peace witness. He started an Amnesty group which met at their home and ran for several years. He took an active part in the life of Kirkby Stephen Local Meeting and Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting. When he clerked, he is remembered for the thorough way he prepared for, and followed up on, meetings. He combined a deep understanding of Quaker procedures with a practical approach to solving issues. He did a lot of work producing guidance to help Friends make preparations in good time for their preferred funeral arrangements and helped to ensure that funeral and memorial meetings were smooth Quaker events.

He became a trustee of the Quaker Tapestry, based at Kendal Meeting House. There he gave enthusiastic support both for the Exhibition in Kendal and for the annual roadshows held at various Cathedrals around the country. He was closely involved in contributing to a Special Exhibition showing how many Quakers had been part of the early history of railways and highlighting this through the tapestry panels.

David and Stella became essential members of the small Kirkby Stephen Meeting. Social events were often hosted by them at their home, which became familiar to other members of the meeting and the local Churches Together. David was always good at running things properly and making sure that things got done. He was active in helping to maintain meeting house premises and led the way installing solar panels on the meeting house roof when such things were still very new. His interest in railways continued. Around his garden he ran a live steam and electric powered railway, complete with a tunnel. He was a volunteer steward on the nearby Settle-Carlisle main line railway. The role included talking to travellers and pointing out the interesting features to be seen from the train.

David and Stella moved to Skipton in 2018 to be near their family, so that they could support each other. They became valued neighbours who helped to foster a warm sense of community. Many neighbours commented on his energy and zest for life.

Worship was core to the whole of David's life. He went to meeting whenever he could and much missed worshipping at Skipton Meeting House during the Covid pandemic. He loved to meet people face-to-face and invariably made them feel welcome. He was keen on 'right ordering' and making sure that others could appreciate why it was valuable to do even simple tasks well. His legacy will long live on among family, friends and Friends.

Signed on behalf of Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

Held on 11 March 2023

Chris Skidmore, Clerk

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# Richard Taylor

16 July 1928 – 4 January 2022

Richard Taylor was born into the Quaker family of Jack and Ethel Taylor in Scarborough. At the age of 6 years, he was sent to a preparatory boarding school in Arnside. After this he spent a few terms at Ackworth Quaker School and then completed his schooling at Bootham Quaker School in York. 'Dick', as he was known at that time, missed a year's schooling through illness, but integrated so well that he was chosen by his fellow pupils at Bootham during his School Certificate year to be a 'reeve' (prefect). One of his lifelong Quaker friends explained that this was unusual for younger pupils, but the staff eventually allowed him to serve, and he made an excellent reeve, respected by his peers.

After school, Richard started work in the family grocery business, and he then spent much of his working life as a Multiple Grocery Buyer for many companies in the north east of England, becoming a Master Grocer in the Grocers' Institute.

Richard was active in Young Friends where he met Ann Scaife and they were married in 1958 at Clifford Street Quaker Meeting (now Friargate) in York. They had three children, nine grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Family and friends were always of great importance to them. Jane, their eldest daughter, reported "I have happy memories of different people continually visiting our Taylor family home. Everyone was always made incredibly welcome, especially for Sunday lunch where there were always a number of extra places set around the table."

Many groups and Quaker bodies benefited from Richard's quiet wisdom, together with his knowledge and business experience. He was a director of Cober Hill near Scarborough for around 50 years. As part of his service there he compiled a history of this pioneering residential educational centre with a Quaker ethos. In retirement at Kirkby Lonsdale, he

was for many years company secretary at The Quaker Tapestry in Kendal and also served on the Swarthmoor Hall committee. He was a devoted supporter of Ann in her work for the Gatesfield Quaker Housing Association in Windermere.

As members at Brigflatts Local Meeting, Richard and Ann brought a deep spirituality to the Quaker community, both locally and to Kendal & Sedbergh Area Quaker Meeting. Richard gave devoted 'hands-on' service while he was clerk of the area meeting properties committee.

Richard's memorial meeting was held at Barbon near Kirkby Lonsdale in July 2022 and about 60 people attended this moving meeting. The tributes to Richard, a 'gentle gentleman', were numerous. Family and friends spoke of his thoroughness and commitment to anything he undertook; his exemplary ethical standards; his love and care for his family, friends and Quakers. Ann, by then very frail, was able to speak at this meeting only a few weeks before she too died. Their loving partnership of nearly 65 years brought joy to their family and great benefit to Friends.

Signed on behalf of Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting

Held on 18 March 2023

Meg Hill, Clerk

Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Quaker unity is based on shared understanding and a shared practice of silent worship – a communal stillness.

Quakers seek to experience God directly – internally, in relationships with others, and with the world. Local meetings for worship are open to all who wish to attend.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity. This means speaking truth to all, including people in positions of power. The Quaker commitment to peace arises from the conviction that love is at the heart of existence and that all human beings are unique and equal.

This leads Quakers to put faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violent conflict.

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