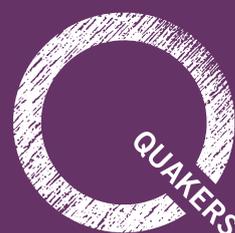


Testimonies

including index of epistles

Compiled for Yearly Meeting,
Friends House, London and online
23–26 May 2025

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 2025*'.

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 2024 (this will be published later in the year)
5. *Patterns of membership*, including the 2024 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. 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.

All *Quaker faith & practice* references are to the fifth edition, which can be found online at 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 or go to www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

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:

2025

Bhopal YM (India)
Oxford (UK) Young Adult Friends' Local Meeting
Southern Africa YM

2024

Alaska Friends Conference (USA)
Aotearoa-New Zealand YM Australia YM
Canadian YM
Young Friends' Epistle
Children's Epistle
Central European YM
Cuba YM
Epistle from New York YM Young Adult Friends
and the Quaker United Nations Office:
Learning from Each Other
Europe & Middle East Young Friends' Spring
Gathering
France YM
Friends Church of North Carolina (USA)
FWCC Europe & Middle East Section Annual
Meeting
General Meeting of Friends in Mexico
German YM
Great Plains YM (USA)
Illinois YM (USA)
Intermountain YM (USA)

Iowa YM (Conservative) (USA)
Ireland YM
Italian Friends' Gathering
Japan YM
Lake Erie YM (USA)
Monteverde MM (Costa Rica)
Netherlands YM
New England YM (USA)
New York YM (USA)
North Carolina YM (Conservative) (USA)
Norway YM
Ohio YM (Conservative) (USA)
Pacific YM/JA del Pacífico (USA)
Young Adult Friends
Junior Yearly Meeting
Children's Program
Piedmont Friends YM & Fellowship (USA)
Poland – All-Poland Gathering
Quaker Council for European Affairs
South Central YM (USA)
Sweden YM
Switzerland YM
Tanzania YM
Western YM (USA)
Wilmington YM (USA)
Epistle from an international Young Adult Friends'
Gathering in Jordans, Buckinghamshire, England

You can read all epistles on the FWCC website at 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 or 020 7663 1040 for a printed version.

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 fragrantcy 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.

Elizabeth Baker Davies

28 December 1949 – 26 July 2023

Born of Quaker parents, educated at a Quaker school, and a lifelong member of the Religious Society of Friends, Elizabeth was a committed Quaker, whose faith underpinned her desire to help others and to be of service. In her later teens, Elizabeth was seriously injured in a car accident. She spent a long period in hospital, where she recovered, but with a slight mental impairment and other health difficulties.

Nevertheless, Elizabeth's concern for others was in no way impaired. When she was twenty-one, she spent a year working at the Quaker Centre in Paris.

She had a lifelong happy marriage to David. We knew her for many years as a faithful, loving member of Derby Meeting. If she was absent from our meeting, she was probably visiting another meeting in the area.

Elizabeth always noticed what needed to be done and gave quiet, gentle and practical service, making refreshments after meeting, serving elderly or disabled Friends, visiting the housebound, arranging greeting cards for sick Friends and always being there to do the washing up. If we heard of a needy cause, Elizabeth would sometimes organise an impromptu bring and buy sale to raise money. After visiting Senegal, she became active in supporting the Tara charity, raising funds in the local and area meeting for a French organisation working to stem the contamination of fresh water supplies by salt seeping into farmland.

Elizabeth was also very active in the local community. For many years she was not only the first person in Derby Meeting to volunteer for the house-to-house collection for Christian Aid, but also took it upon herself to return to houses where there was no initial response and later helped with counting the collections. On the annual Amnesty International street-collection day Elizabeth was always either shaking a tin in the city centre or helping in the temporary office. She also supported

the Amnesty Writeathon, writing letters to governments and sending greeting cards to prisoners of conscience, and encouraging others to do the same. The Padley Centre for homeless people also benefited from Elizabeth's regular help in their kitchen for many years. Here again, washing up was a regular activity.

After the death of Elizabeth's father, Kenneth Clay, her mother Dorothy moved into a local care home. Elizabeth obtained a job at the home, which enabled her to help her mother to get ready for bed each evening.

Disregarding any troubles of her own, Elizabeth had a ready smile and a kindly word for everyone. She had a loving concern for all those in need. She was never heard to say a critical word about anyone. The love of God shone through her. We thank God for her spirit-filled life of service.

Signed on behalf of Nottinghamshire &
Derbyshire Area Meeting

Held 14 September 2024

Judith Nilson, Correspondence Clerk

Patrick Bealey

2 December 1941 – 26 March 2023

In 2021, Patrick wrote an 'Account of My Spiritual Journey' for his Friends in Castle Douglas meeting, from which some quotes in his own words have been included.

"Why write? Good question. Just that all of our journeys are different, so we can learn from one another. Just as I learned today, we all have an idiolect – the set of words and ways of saying them that is unique to each one of us."

Patrick thought his life was a bit tough until he was about 12, when he went to an evangelical Crusaders' Christian camp on the Isle of Wight. One evening, along with others, he gave his heart to Jesus. Sincere though this was, he later saw that this faith move lasted just about one day.

The spiritual and temporal sequel was more or less downhill for about 20 years, including what Patrick described as a sad marriage, mental ill health and a retreat to America. However, there was no escaping from Jesus. "He hung on tight".

Life got better, with marriage to Pat and the blessing of a son, Josh.

After some varied years, with the joy of raising a child, the hard graft of recovery, and the death of his father, the family moved to Northampton to be nearer Patrick's mother. That Easter, they went to their first Quaker meeting. Pat and Josh attended for a year, but Patrick figured he was in the right place, and stayed.

Asking himself why being a Quaker worked for him, he wrote: "To me the strongest thing takes me back to George Fox, and the rejection of the creed. I worshipped for ten years with Catholics, and toward the end I found I was dropping several tenets that were included in their creed. The details of a person's faith are a highly individual thing, and the Quaker way makes room for that. So that many can be comfortable with their different flavours of the faith. Discomfort meant it was time to leave

the Catholics; I can't see a time when I need to leave Quakers!"

After some years, a leading to go to Jerusalem became stronger. Pat thought it was a terrible idea, so Patrick went alone. He was there from mid-1996 to the end of 1999. It was not easy but also "amazing, fascinating, awful". The most wonderful thing was being able to move between Palestinians and Jews alike. "That Jesus made it possible at all was a miracle".

Pat had returned to America as her mother had also aged, and needed care. Pat, Josh, his partner and their baby daughter were living in Mexico, a small community in Pennsylvania. Patrick joined them.

Back in the UK, the family lived for a while on the Isle of Wight, then went to Castle Douglas. By this time Pat had a slow-acting cancer. Patrick said: "God was in it, as the NHS was simply marvellous." Pat passed away in 2014. The local meeting supported him in bereavement, keeping him occupied by installing him as clerk.

Patrick moved to Portsmouth to be near his young ones. He found a happy home in Portsmouth meeting, including "a Christian mentor here who keeps me on my spiritual toes".

Patrick willingly used technology, joining meetings for worship on Zoom, but was so happy to find a new home within walking distance of the meeting house. Sadly, this was a short stay, as a fall led to his untimely death.

Many people admired Patrick for his commitment to environmental concerns, including his vegan lifestyle. He belonged to the Green Party and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Despite the limitations on his mobility, he was active in Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion. He adventured to Lambeth Palace on bus and train and was willing to serve as a legal observer. His positive attitude in spite of disability was inspirational.

Patrick is missed and remembered with gratitude by the people of Christian Climate

Action, who met for daily morning and evening prayers on zoom; for many, Patrick was the first person they met when they joined; he prepared and shared valued daily readings.

Patrick served Portsmouth meeting and the area meeting in a number of ways, including pastorally and on the McBain committee. He was willing to give wise and serious attention to some of our issues and share his thoughts.

Friends locally and nationally have appreciated the rich ministry Patrick gave in person and on zoom, finding him thoughtful, supportive and helpful. He was engaged and took a lively part in breakout room chats.

Patrick was loved and admired by Friends in Portsmouth, Hampshire and Islands, Castle Douglas and beyond for his kindness, thoughtfulness and inspirational example. We are thankful for the time he shared with us.

Signed on behalf of Hampshire & Islands Area Meeting

Held 11 May 2024

Sue Stanek, Clerk

Michael Bliss

12 January 1932 – 22 December 2023

Michael led a long and active life, which was one of energy, enthusiasm and had several strands running through it. These included Ackworth School, active service to Quakers, a love of New Zealand and the companionship of his wife of nearly 67 years, Marjorie.

Michael was a man of principle and with a strong belief in what he felt was right and how this fitted with his view of right ordering. Alongside this was a gentler, caring side which was shown in the warmth with which he spoke about New Zealand, his family and especially his grandchildren.

Michael's Quaker life started at Ackworth School where he met Marjorie, and he remained involved with the school later serving on its Governing Committee and enjoying his and Marjorie's role as joint Presidents of the Ackworth Old Scholars' Association in their later years. He chose to become a member of the Religious Society of Friends as an adult, but after he had already been able to register as a conscientious objector, and avoid National Service in the armed forces. It was at this time Michael began his work in forestry. He often said he had not wanted to be automatically exempted because he was a Quaker. Michael's pacifist principles were a core part of his adult life.

Michael's commitment to Quakers was a living one of active service. He valued Friends who offered service and gave of himself whether it be to Wakefield and Pickering Local Meetings or Pontefract Monthly Meeting and Pickering and Hull Area Meeting. Michael served Friends as an elder, a clerk and convenor of premises groups, as well as times of being a treasurer. He served the wider family of Friends by being on Woodbrooke Council and the Swarthmore Lecture Committee. Michael brought enthusiasm and vigour to his service, and was a stickler for detail, so much so that when overseeing the retiling of

Pickering Quaker Meeting House he insisted on going up the scaffold to the roof whilst in his late 70s. It was to his local Meetings that he appeared most attached, and would attend with unwavering regularity. He was undeniably a faithful Friend. His ministry was thoughtful and softly spoken. His contributions to Business Meetings came from a place of wanting to hold on to Quaker principles and beliefs which had been embedded in him over eight decades. Sometimes a gentler approach to embracing new ideas would have been appreciated by other Friends.

The significance of the opportunities he had to meet with, and work for, Friends in New Zealand is not lost on anyone who found themselves in conversation with him in the last 20 years of his life. He appreciated the esteem New Zealand Friends had for him, following his three periods of service as a Resident Friend in Auckland. This was an important formative time for Michael as he was searching for acceptance by others having had to take retirement from his forestry role. This time of affirmation became the focus of much of the last decades of his life, with a love of all things New Zealand – from flowers and fauna to All Black Rugby Teams, from native Maori songs to Quaker Zoom Meetings for Worship with Auckland Friends. The continued opportunities to travel and visit Friends in New Zealand energised him for many years.

Michael's other great love was Marjorie and the family that they created. It always was Michael and Marjorie and even when his interests took him away from her, as a pot holer, a canoeist, an occasional poet, a hill walker and a Leicester City Fan you were always aware that his love for Marjorie was a constant. In a small community, their very strong, steadfast presence and commitment could be overwhelming for others at times, which leaves a great gap now that they have both passed away.

Michael was a man with a presence, a generous smile and flowing silvery white locks even in his 90s. Michael was a good Friend who retained a curiosity about life and for whom being a part

of the Quaker Community was so important. Michael was also a forthright, principled Friend. He was a man of integrity who was at times hard to get to know and love, but a man with a strong Quaker voice, which many can still hear.

In giving thanks for the Grace of God as shown in his life it is helpful to return to one of Michael's most loved quotes from Isaac Penington (*Quaker faith & practice* 10.01)

“Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying for one another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.”

Signed on behalf of Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Held 14 July 2024

Dilys Cluer, Clerk

Barbara Cairns

27 July 1933 – 8 November 2023

Barbara Cairns joined the Religious Society of Friends in 1991 when she was in her late 50s. Born in 1933, some 20 minutes earlier than her twin Priscilla, she and her sister came from a Methodist family. Their mother had been an English teacher, and their father a barrister and later a High Court judge. Barbara and Priscilla were both good at maths, and – inspired by a musical maths teacher – learnt viola and violin respectively while at school. They both read maths at Oxford University, and were members of the Oxford Congregational Society. But they differed in both temperament and interests. In the words of their younger brother Anthony, “Barbara was the quiet, studious one, who went on to a successful career as an actuary, first with Equity & Law and then with Bacon & Woodrow, and always kept meticulous diaries and journals”. Unlike her sister, Barbara remained single all her life. But, though single, she was remarkably outgoing. She was indeed by nature a loving and giving person, ready to help anyone. As young as 14, she engaged in public speaking on behalf of her father when he stood as a Liberal candidate for Parliament in Epsom.

At 28 Barbara qualified as a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries – the first woman in Britain to do so – and ten years later became a Share Partner. At 38 she left her parents and moved to Wimbledon, and five years later to Epsom. Always interested in doing good, Barbara took early retirement at the age of 55 and gave time to voluntary work: the Women’s Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Mid-Surrey Mediation Service; prison visiting through the New Bridge; and church work at Christ Church (Congregational), Leatherhead, then Trinity (Presbyterian), Wimbledon, and later at Epsom United Reformed. She was one of the mainstays at Epsom local meeting, serving both as an elder and in pastoral care, and also of South London Area Quaker Meeting (formerly known as

Purley & Sutton Monthly Meeting), where she served as clerk and, later, treasurer. She was, as one Epsom Friend wrote, “passionate about ‘right ordering’, and Epsom Meeting benefited enormously from her clear mindedness and intellect. It is perhaps because Epsom Local Quaker Meeting is so small, combined with Barbara’s quiet and unassuming modesty, that so few Friends in the rest of the area meeting were aware of her many gifts and talents.”

Barbara always lived simply and economically, and felt it right to share her income with the many causes she believed in. At 60 she bought a former vicarage in Epsom so that she could rent spare rooms to needy tenants. Although a naturally shy person, when she chose a charity to support, she often got actively involved. Some of her favourite causes included Age Concern, Boom Credit Union, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Equality Trust, Ethical Consumer, Green Party, Greenpeace, the housing charity Hope Into Action, the local Inter-Faith Forum, Opportunity International, Prisoners Abroad, Lifelines (writing to prisoners on Death Row in Texas), and the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network. In her mid-80s she was still travelling into London for Quaker Yearly Meetings or for demonstrations. Five years ago in a short account of her life, she wrote that she found that, compared to her work as an actuary, managing her time and her giving used her mathematical skills less, but her organising skills more.

And, regardless of all the amazing achievements reported at her memorial meeting, she added: “I have been disappointed that I have never done anything noteworthy”. One Friend adds “Her close family have told me that, thinking back, they never felt she was a happy person, which saddened them”. One might perhaps think that she gave so much of herself to others that she had little time to pay full attention to herself. Nevertheless, she made full use of her talents. She was a good cook, and Epsom Friends especially enjoyed the scones and fruit buns which she made for them when they met at her house for Sharing

meetings. Barbara had an allotment and she went there almost every day. Red and blackcurrants, tomatoes, grown from seed, and courgettes were often brought to meeting and distributed among local Friends. She also expertly knitted jumpers and cardigans, of which one Friend said “No pattern was too complicated and the finished article was so evenly knitted, it could have been machine made.”

Barbara liked peace and quiet, and disliked noise and background music. She loyally supported local classical concerts given by the Surrey Philharmonic Orchestra, Epsom Chamber Choir and her brother’s chamber choir AntiphoniA. She liked reading, crosswords, Scrabble, gardening, growing produce on her allotment, and making jam and marmalade. She became a pescatarian, having always enjoyed her food, especially fresh fruit and puddings. She was an active member of the Arts Society; the University of the Third Age (U3A) Book Club, Coffee Club, Walking Group and Bus Pass Group; and the Ramblers, and went on many walking holidays with Holiday Fellowship.

Concluding her memorial meeting, her brother Anthony said “Linking her fondness for music and for the outdoors, we thought we might listen to a few minutes of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony, from Barbara’s modest collection of CDs”.

It was an appropriate finish for a model Friend who will be long remembered and greatly missed by so many people.

Signed on behalf of South London Area Meeting

Held March 2024

Pam Sellman, Clerk

Wilf Fenten

23 February 1945 – 7 August 2023

Wilf Fenten was born in Germany towards the end of the Second World War. His mother gave birth, during an air-raid, in a crowded bunker without a doctor as none was available. His father had been conscripted into the German army and was stationed at the eastern front and then spent two years in a Soviet prisoner of war camp. So Wilf’s early years were in the aftermath of the war and living in a devastated environment and in a society scarred by conflict. He was christened Wilfried, which in German means ‘wills peace’. This name turned out to be prophetic as he was soon imbued with a strong desire to promote peace and a strong commitment to serving society.

Wilf was attracted to Britain and all things British. In the early 1960s he moved to London and trained as a translator. He became a much-valued expert in German/English translations and was renowned for a high ability in the use of English. He was a stickler for the proper and clear use of the language.

When he was called-up to serve in the German Bundeswehr, Wilf chose to stay in Britain and avoid conscription. This led to him acquiring British citizenship. In 1968 Wilf married Hilary and within a few years they had two sons, Aidan and Frank. His job as a freelance translator allowed him to work from home and help raise the family. It also meant that he could be selective in who he worked for and could avoid doing translations for arms manufacturers.

Wilf and Hilary were active in the peace movement and it was this that led them to start attending Quaker meetings, first in London and then in Yorkshire, where they found their spiritual home and became members in the early 1990s. He believed strongly in helping others and was renowned for his generosity – often putting himself out to assist those in need. For instance, he would befriend homeless men in London and help them with alcohol addictions.

It was whilst raising his family that he found a love of nature, taking his young sons hiking around the country. He developed an affection for the north of England, walking both summer and winter in the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District, and twice walking the long-distance Pennine Way.

In 1989 the family moved to Selside in Upper Ribblesdale surrounded by the Yorkshire Three Peaks. It was here that his passion for peace was extended to embrace environmental sustainability and community development. He was a parish councillor and chair of planning for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. He worked to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. He was outspoken against unsympathetic planning applications which he felt would not benefit local people and might harm the landscape. He felt that the unique geography of the Yorkshire Dales spoke to him like no other and this led him to have deep connections with the local community. He used his skills and experience to actively help the conservation charity, Friends of the Dales.

Wilf's work for peace and sustainability found its spiritual basis in the local Quaker community. He was active in local meetings and served as Clerk of two meetings. It was at Airton Meeting that he found his spiritual home. He was part of the small group which revived the meeting after decades of inactivity. His enthusiasm and drive helped to put the meeting house and bunk-barn accommodation on a more sustainable footing, although occasionally this enthusiasm led to isolation from others. He and Hilary were often at the meeting house to give a warm welcome to visitors and make them feel at home.

Wilf showed through his life how Quaker worship and witness are inter-related so feed off each other; and can be promoted and sustained by practical action. This found expression in his love for the natural environment. He used his skills with language to promote European wide sustainability. His influence on national parks across Europe

has been significant. His strong belief in the European community of peoples led him to champion sustainable tourism and advocate the joys that natural areas can bring to both tourists and residents. He travelled throughout Europe advising national parks on sustainable tourism. He contributed extensively to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Wilf was generous with his time in helping those with difficulties or in need of care. His warm smile and positive outlook on life helped them feel lovingly supported. He also had a strong belief in the value of fairness. He supported those who he felt were being treated unfairly, believing that fair treatment was ethically and morally right and was a fundamental outcome of the Quaker testimony to equality.

Wilf died suddenly whilst out walking with his family in the Yorkshire Dales. It was a great shock to everyone, but he was surrounded by a family that meant so much to him and in an environment that he loved and cherished.

Signed on behalf of Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

Held 10 February 2024

David Heslop and Chris Skidmore, co-clerks

Pamela Gould

18 May 1928 – 21 March 2024

You always knew when Pamela was present at Meeting for Worship. She seemed to wear an invisible cloak of presence which matched her authoritative awareness of the meeting's need for unity and right ordering.

Throughout her Quaker life she commanded respect and admiration for her ability to handle responsibility through the acts of clerking and leading. An essentially practical Quaker, she saw service to Friends and the wider community as an extension of her inner spiritual life.

She frequently clerked meetings at local, area and national level and quietly left her mark on many key issues in Quaker affairs.

Her spiritual commitment to Friends included trusteeship, responsibility for burial grounds, treasurership, Meeting for Sufferings, eldership and oversight. Among her practical contributions to Quaker business meetings was a short, concise and definitive paper on keeping oral contributions to meetings relevant, brief and effective.

More than one Friend could share a memory of being quietly "eluded" by Pamela. Her words could be memorable and surprising, if not a little sharp, but were usually accepted with no hard feelings. Her eldership revealed a deep inner commitment to getting things right and steering others to a clearer understanding of the role of the spiritual in everyday life.

Pamela's first local meeting was that of her parents in Kingston-upon-Thames.

One of Pamela's favourite stories of Kingston meeting, happened one Sunday morning, before meeting, when she welcomed everyone. A tall young visitor arrived, attending Meeting for Worship for the very first time. He introduced himself as Kenneth Gould. They were both teachers and shared a variety of interests including music and poetry. Their love became a life-long marriage.

Pamela and Ken created a loving home for their children Kate and John, their shared faith and Quaker outlook to life bringing a rich foundation for them all.

When Ken retired from teaching, they moved to Somerset. Pamela found a new orchestra to join and they both thoroughly enjoyed participating in local groups and events. Pamela's love of craft activities led her to volunteering with a group in Yeovil which offered a weekly knitting and craft group for people who were partially sighted or blind.

She did not shirk from responsibilities that did not appear enjoyable as with her help in initiating the very first Community Speed Watch team. Almost secretly, she was a keen follower of motor racing. Her interest in motor vehicles even led to perhaps a slightly un-Quakerly activity of driving a tank amongst other vehicles at a charity 'Have a drive' day!

Her deep Quaker faith saw her through the tribulations of a life of deep commitment and service, which continued even when her increasing deafness and lack of sight meant that much changed for her. Pamela died on March 21st 2024.

Remembered by many as a "good friend", as someone they knew they could turn to, knowing they would be heard. Pamela is greatly missed for her keen sense of humour and her ready laugh, often combined with what looked like a knowing smile.

Signed on behalf of Mid-Somerset Area Meeting

Held 14 September 2024

Andy Hall, Clerk

Elisabeth Margaret [Elma] Harland

3 March 1929 – 10 July 2024

Our Friend Elma came to Quakers in Skipton in the early 1960s, after she and her husband Richard came to live in Grassington. She brought much to the meeting, having a strong Christian Quaker faith which was grounded in the Bible and in a deep knowledge of the faith and practice of Friends.

She had, too, an attentiveness and openness of character and an instinct for hospitality which drew people to her.

An early memory of Elma's, and one she ministered about more than once in meeting, was the price paid by a Congregational minister in her home town for his conscientious objection in the First World War. This had led to social and professional isolation but Elma was clear that the principle he had proclaimed was a necessary, godly one and worth the price he had had to pay. In her Quaker life, and beyond, Elma sought always to support and promote activities for peace.

She became a stalwart of Mothers for Peace, an attempt – in the chilliest days of the Cold War between western governments and the Soviet Union and its satellite states – to build relationships across the political and physical barriers between those two blocs. She corresponded with women in Bulgaria, visited that country and Russia and attended an international peace conference in Bulgaria. Remarkably she and Richard were able to build a community within the small Dales village of Grassington which supported those bridge-building activities and joined in the creating and fostering of individual friendships. Years after Richard's death and Elma's illness the life of the Grassington Peace Group remains a testament to her work and character.

Elma was welcoming, encouraging, accommodating and hospitable. Her home, Four Winds, on the outskirts of Grassington

was a place where the activists of Mothers for Peace could gather to reflect, discuss and recharge. But it was often visited by others: neighbours, and Quaker and non-Quaker friends who had a concern to reflect on, who were uncertain of next steps or who simply hoped for companionship. In the local meeting Elma often served in caring roles, ensuring that all Friends and attenders were known, and supported where that was needed.

For many years her home was the site of a summer garden party (if the Yorkshire weather allowed) for those connected with Skipton meeting. Elma understood that her Quaker life and that of others grew when it was given care. To that end she supported and participated in study groups over the years, some of which would gather at Four Winds. When there were painful disputes in the Area Meeting over property issues Elma was part of the Healing Hurts group which sought to listen to all affected.

Her love of music, singing, and dancing at a good Ceilidh was close to the heart of her. She knew and embraced joy in those activities and wanted to share them with others, a secret joy was not one with any attraction for her.

After Richard died in 2013 it became clear that Elma's intellect was weakening, her grasp on affairs lessening. She would spend the remainder of her life in care with less and less understanding of the world around her. However, those who visited her could say of her – as was said of William Penn in old age – that she was, 'as near the Truth, in the love of it, as before' and she retained her 'very loving deportment to all that came near'.

Signed on behalf of Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

Held 9 November 2024

David Heslop and Chris Skidmore, co-clerks

Paul Honigmann

13 September 1933 – 12 February 2023

Paul was born in Breslau, then a German city, in September 1933, the year the Nazis came to power in Germany, and six years before the outbreak of the Second World War. The family was German-Jewish on his father's side. His mother had the insight and courage to know that the family had to leave Germany quickly. Paul came to England as a small child with his parents and two older brothers.

Paul's father, Hans, was a zoologist and secured work as a scientist at Dudley Zoo after a brief internment on the Isle of Man as an enemy alien. He died when Paul was ten years old. For his secondary education, Paul attended Friends School, Saffron Walden, where he was introduced to Quakerism – a faith that stayed with him for the rest of his life. He made lasting friendships at school and continued to value friendships deeply throughout his life. Later in life, he served as a governor of the school.

As a young man, Paul was a dedicated solo traveller, heading for Europe at every opportunity, visiting his German cousins, and hitchhiking through North Africa. He was introduced by a mutual Quaker friend, Gerald Wakeman, to another keen traveller: Margaret, a languages teacher. She had been brought up a Baptist but had found her way to the Society through the Student Christian Movement and participated in Quaker work camps in what was then Yugoslavia. Margaret was and remained a trailblazer – the first of her family to go to university. Paul and Margaret were married in Jesus Lane Meeting in Cambridge. They settled in Beaconsfield and had a happy life together with their children, David and Jo.

Jordans Meeting was an important part of all their lives. Paul and Margaret were actively involved in numerous committees across all aspects of the Meeting and beyond – helping lead Children's Meeting, nativity plays, participating in the historical play 'Til Light Arise' and several concerts. They went out

of their way to welcome newcomers to the Meeting. Paul and Jo sang in The Gates of Greenham, a Quaker oratorio by Alec Davison and Tony Biggin, performed at the Royal Festival Hall. Jo was married at Jordans, with Paul deftly brokering a merging of Quaker and Anglican traditions. Two of the grandchildren – Jasper and Alice – were welcomed by the Meeting.

Paul and Margaret were also very active with Shelter in its early days, a local group that raised money to purchase and furnish a property for a family in need. Once the family was settled, the group continued to provide friendship and support as needed.

Margaret died in 1995 after a long illness, bravely borne. Many people attended her Memorial Meeting at Jordans, including former colleagues and pupils.

Some years later, Paul met Valerie, his second wife, on a Ramblers' holiday. They lived for many happy years in Beaconsfield. Paul was much loved by his family and enjoyed getting to know Valerie's family and friends.

Paul studied Law at University College, London, and was articled at Waterhouse & Co., a major London solicitor's firm established by the Quaker Waterhouse family. Paul became a partner of the firm, and later of the merged Field Fisher Waterhouse. Two significant clients were the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council. Paul formed a team of former Criminal Investigation Department (CID) investigators to scrutinise the work of medical practitioners accused of unprofessional behaviour, such as unacknowledged alcoholism, and took appropriate action where he was an experienced advocate. Many charities turned to him for advice. He retired as the firm's senior partner.

As a committed Quaker, Paul often gave legal advice to ensure that Meeting Houses survived and flourished. He was a trustee of several charities over the years, including the Quaker-founded Edith M Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust, which gave grants to various Quaker and

non-Quaker projects, including the rebuild of Jordans Meeting House.

On one occasion, giving his legal advice led Paul to resign his Quaker membership. Trident Ploughshares was launched in 1998 as a Christian peace campaign to disarm the Trident nuclear weapons system in a non-violent, open, peaceful, and fully accountable manner. Unfortunately, three activists were so determined that they climbed onto a nuclear submarine at Faslane and caused damage to the equipment.

The Society sought Paul's opinion as a Quaker lawyer about the alignment of the Society with Trident Ploughshares. Paul's concern, and his legal advice to the Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, was that Trident Ploughshares encouraged participants to commit unlawful acts (criminal damage), and that by supporting and funding the campaign, the Society of Friends would become an accessory to the crime. Paul felt strongly that his professional standards and integrity would not allow him to remain a member of the Society in those circumstances, and he resigned his membership.

Many years later, when this was no longer a live issue, Elders wrote to Paul to ask him to consider rejoining, but he declined. Nevertheless, he remained committed to his Quaker faith and continued to attend Quaker Meetings and remain involved in many aspects of Quaker life that did not require membership.

Paul was always interested in European affairs, and for many years reported to Jordans Meeting on the work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), founded in 1979 to bring to Europe and its institutions the vision based on Quaker commitment to peace, justice, and equality. Paul spoke about events in Europe in an interesting and informed way: the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the ending of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany, and the enlargement of the European Community.

Paul served as Clerk to the management committee of *The Friend* for a while and frequently wrote articles for and letters to

the magazine. He served Jordans Meeting as an elder for many years, and then as the clerk of elders. His ministry was always articulate, thoughtful, and helpful.

Paul clerked the committee tasked with fundraising to enable Jordans Meeting House to be rebuilt after the devastating fire in 2005. He showed great leadership and effectiveness in challenging members of the Meeting to dig deep into their own financial resources, saying that we could not ask others for funds unless we could demonstrate our own commitment. Paul was always helpful to individual Friends with legal advice where he was qualified to give it. He was skilled at mediating in situations of conflict.

Paul was a keen tennis player and gardener, an enthusiastic amateur actor and writer of plays and verse. His grandchildren were especially touched by the poems he wrote for each of them for every birthday, and he even wrote at least one novel. He also wrote a play for the Local Meeting to enact, which drew out the difficulties of the peace witness and got his audience thinking about how they would respond.

Paul's last Quaker meeting was only nine days before his death. He was, as usual, ironically humorous about how old age was creeping up on him and making life harder. He kept his sense of humour to the end. We gave thanks for the grace of God in Paul's life at the well-attended memorial meeting, which reflected on fascinating insights into Paul's Quaker and non-Quaker life, noting particularly his integrity and service, and the way that at work he made opportunities for people where others would not.

Paul was a very committed Quaker, a loving husband, father, grandfather, and friend. His kindness, warmth, wisdom, and quick wit are deeply missed by us all.

Signed on behalf of Chilterns Area Meeting
Held 25 September 2024

Catriona Troth, Clerk

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 10 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 Citizens 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 amongst 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 5 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 is when you're 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 June the 30th 2023 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 of us over
from time to eternity.’

Signed on behalf of Devon Area Meeting
Held 16 December 2023

Barbara Sharrock, Clerk

Iain Haig Oughtred

15 September 1939 – 21 February 2024

The Testimony from a Memorial Gathering

A testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of Iain Haig Oughtred, born in Melbourne, Australia, 15 September 1939, who died in his adopted home the Isle of Skye, Scotland, on 21 February 2024 at the age of 84.

Gathered together online on 28th March (or 29th for those of his family in some international time zones), we comprised members of his family, his fellow Quaker friends of North Scotland Area Meeting and beyond, those who are part of the boatbuilding and sailing fraternities and of communities of music and the many arts. We assembled in shared presence “after the manner of Friends” (i.e. Quakers) to remember Iain’s life.

We listened to testimony on behalf of the family from one of Iain’s brothers, Rick Oughtred. (Oughtred had been Iain’s variation of the family name). Rick’s time zone meant him sharing at 4am on Good Friday morning from Brisbane, Australia. He told of the passion that both he and his brother David have for sailing, and how Iain augmented this with passion for music and nature. He spoke of Iain’s love of his mother, Jeannie Henderson, who had been a lass of Scottish provenance. In recent years, Iain and his sister Liz (or Elizabeth) had been working to recover their father Douglas’ war service records in the Mosquito Squadron that was seconded to the RAF during World War II. In this, Douglas was a fast bomber navigator. Wounded, and affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from the horrors that he had witnessed in the war, he returned to Australia somewhat traumatised. This sat uneasily with his trying to be a good father. Rick shared the family’s joy on seeing all the love and support that Iain received from the wooden boat fraternity in the UK and from his local Quaker friends.

We heard testimony from those gathered with us. There was the story of Iain building a boat

inside Jane and Roger Kelly's living room, and having to take the window out to ease it out. This was not the only such deconstruction. When he was young, he had built a boat under the house, and his father Douglas was none too pleased when a wall had to be knocked out to get it out. We heard from seafaring groups including from Govan in Glasgow and Portree in the Isle of Skye; the way that Iain helped them to design and build their boats, making poetry of woodwork and leaving a sense of enduring gratitude, for Iain was an artist of wood, wind, water.

We heard from those with whom he had designed boats, for "there was only one person" they could go to for the St Ayles Skiff: a self-build design which has opened up boat building and rowing to communities across Scotland, and now, across the world. The beauty and functionality of these vessels has brought people together in local communities who would not otherwise have known each other. Iain's biographer, Nic Compton, said that of the many books that he has written on boats, this was the only one so much about the person; for Iain was such a very lovely man.

He was, we heard in ample testimony, a man of gentleness, of sincerity and of pronounced humility. As a Quaker, he was like a boat upon the ocean, for he enjoyed being among people but was an entity unto himself. He lived a very simple life. When working with him on a project, you could feel like you were the only person, and the only boat, that really mattered during the time when you were with him. Witness to what his boats mean to people was borne in a reading, from the Isle of Skye, of Morag Henriksen's poem, 'Launching the Skiff'. It is appended hereto, noting especially its line: "a home-made gift for the community."

Iain also loved aircraft, and used to build model airplanes. In short, his work, like his love of porridge, was of the greatest delicacy: yet if push came to shove, he was capable of coming out with a line like, "When all else fails, use bloody big nails!"

What a legacy his life has left!

LAUNCHING THE SKIFF 9.9.23

Sleek black shape
beached on the high-water mark,
clothed in black plastic,
mystic, wonderful.
Is it a porpoise,
a torpedo
or a whale?

Eager hands rip the wrappings.
Eager eyes and cameras watch.
It's Christmas for us all; a home
made gift for the community.
"It's your boat now".

And there she is,
revealed,
pristine, beautiful and bright.
Fix the tiller.
Ship the long oars.
Let her feel the water.

Willing hands in wellies
slide her to the sea.
She's our boat now.
There's satisfaction on the waterfront
at a good job done.

Strike up the music.
Pass round the food. The
spirit of An Tuireann still
carries on in ATLAS.

The poem, by Morag Henriksen, was given to Iain as a gift at the request of Rosie Somerville on the occasion of his last birthday, a week or so after the launch of the Portree St Ayles Skiff. An Tuireann was a gallery and cafe space in Portree.

A recording of the memorial gathering can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/oughtred-memorial> (family photos, 24 mins in)

Signed on behalf of North Scotland Area
Meeting

Held 18 May 2024

Piers Voysey, Clerk

Sara Ann Packer

20 August 1951 - 14 October 2023

Our Friend Sara Packer died on 14th October 2023 aged 72. Sara was accepted into membership of Warwickshire Monthly Meeting on 17th April 2007. She attended Hall Green Local Meeting for many years before transferring to Cotteridge.

Sara grew up in Moseley with her mother and two brothers, Mark and James. Her father died when Sara was young, and she went away to boarding school for her secondary education – Christ’s Hospital girls’ school in Hertford. She said in later years that she had been happy there; she believed that the ethos of the school had taught her the importance of service. She and Andrew met at Keele University and married in 1976.

Her initial training was in social work, and she also worked as an Early Years teacher and later with vulnerable families through Birmingham’s Portage Scheme, which provided a home-visiting education service for pre-school children with additional needs. The service’s model of working with families to develop quality of life and to learn how to support their own children sums up Sara’s aims in all her own relationships. She always wanted to make people’s lives better, showing sympathy for those who were suffering or who were in any way in difficulty. She put in far more energy and commitment than was required of her, both at work and in her friendships and activism.

While she attended Hall Green Meeting for several years, along with her young family, she contributed greatly to the life of the Meeting particularly in establishing links with other churches and faith groups and in working for peace. She also encouraged the Meeting to invest a legacy in ethical funds at a time when such a practice was quite innovative, and Friends were very grateful that she led the Meeting in that direction.

In the early 1980s she campaigned with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and was

a reliable and enthusiastic organiser. She was a frequent weekend visitor to the women’s peace camp at Greenham Common. After visiting the West Midlands Peace Education Project in 1997, admiring their work and the fact that the project had grown out of a Quaker concern, she joined the committee.

Her deep sense of compassion, which was infectious, was strengthened by her own losses and challenges following the death of first her niece Lucy then her daughter Anna. She helped her Meeting support others – she always knew what practical support could be given to work together to help others. Her life was certainly a “pattern” and “example”.

She valued the stability provided by regular attendance at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting for Worship and, rather than face the demands of serving on committees while mourning her daughter, she found a ‘safe space’ and a role for herself in collecting and sorting donations for the various charities she was involved in supporting: Hope House in Selly Oak; BIRCH (Birmingham Community Hosting) network which offers support and friendship to people in danger of destitution; and Brushstrokes community project in Sandwell, again supporting families and vulnerable people. Her response to injustice, disadvantage and to people who needed support, meant her concern rapidly turned into practical action; she had imagination and energy to make things happen. She joined people where they were in their lives, without judgement or criticism.

Her creativity was incredible. She made the world more beautiful for herself but more importantly for others. Sara volunteered as part of a group of Quaker women who supported female asylum seekers in the Hope Project. Sara brought a discerning compassion to all of her interactions with these women, no matter how difficult things became. In the planning of activities for the group, Sara’s initiative, enthusiasm and practical skills were invaluable, but she was not content to sit back; she needed to be doing something. Nothing was impossible and nothing too much trouble ...

and so blossomed hope and love.

Sara was a devoted mother, wife, sister, daughter, grandmother and showed others, beyond her family, this same level of care. She was generous, cheerful and kindhearted with a talent for friendship – ‘one of life’s givers’. Her partnership with Andrew, her husband, was supportive – equality in all its senses – and she showed constant commitment to and love of her family, but particularly during challenging times.

Andrew supported her quietly and together they provided the stable home they created for their three daughters, Ruth, Elizabeth and Anna. After Anna died in 2009, they were supported by Edward’s Trust, and later Sara became an active volunteer with them. They have told us that “her energy, enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to the work of Edward’s Trust in supporting bereaved parents such as herself showed so much strength and compassion. It was a privilege to have had the opportunity to meet and work with Sara and it is with fondness and respect that we remember her”.

As she started to become more active and outward-looking again after Anna’s death, Sara took up French classes in the city centre as a first gentle step, then started doing some of the beautiful needlework at which she was so proficient and prolific, producing quilts, throws, cushions for family, friends and others, as well as knitting, crochet and drawing. She was creative and imaginative and applied her abundant energy to all her projects. She delighted in the company of their four grandchildren, and it was hard when Covid restrictions meant she could be with them less while shielding during her illness.

Her energy and concern for others continued throughout her life, even towards the end, when she became more frail, and she faced her illness with extraordinary courage and lack of self-pity during four years of demanding treatments for cancer. She concentrated on how she could go on living as well as she could,

making as much difference as she could. On the noticeboard in her workroom was the quote from St David which she found inspirational: “Be joyful, keep the faith, and do the little things that you have heard and seen me do”.

She was always good to talk to, whatever the circumstances. Her presence supported others in their own spiritual lives and she was deeply interested in other people’s welfare. Her Meetings have been fortunate to have her presence with them. In all, it was a very rich, creative, passionate and committed life devoted to people (and animals: generations of cats and hens), a life well lived.

Signed on behalf of Central England Area Meeting

Held 22 October 2024

James Bradbury, Clerk

Marian Penny

28 May 1936 – 19 August 2023

Marian was born in 1936 as one of twin girls, joining an older sister. Her early life was spent in Radcliffe and she left school at fourteen to start work in the office of a sweet factory. She learned shorthand and typing and took up a post as an assistant for an accountancy firm in Manchester.

Having an enquiring mind, Marian attended Workers' Educational Association (WEA) classes and was encouraged to apply for a scholarship at Hull University, where she gained a degree. Most of her career was spent in social work and education thereafter. Her final appointment was as Principal Training Officer for Lancashire County Council.

These brief notes go nowhere in describing Marian's attributes as a person. She was unassuming but sure of her ground. Always a calming influence in Meeting, she made things happen efficiently and without fuss during her tenure as clerk of Blackburn Meeting.

At her funeral one of her ex-colleagues said "Marian didn't practice what she preached!" True, she never preached and spent her life being a person of integrity, rather than assuming a role. Her way of life came from within rather than an acquired stance.

She was the least judgemental person Blackburn Meeting ever knew and Meeting is sure that she never realised how loved and respected she was by all who knew her.

May she rest in peace.

Signed on behalf of Pendle Hill Area Meeting
Held 10 February 2024

Pip Swancott, Co-Correspondence Clerk

Andy (Andrea) Stoller

25 October 1949 – 25 October 2022

Andy Stoller was born Andrea Lewisohn on 25 October 1949, into a liberal Jewish family in London. She and Tony were married in the Liberal Jewish Synagogue on 13 July 1969. They were prompted to consider their own spiritual leanings when their children were exposed to a strong Christian message at a church primary school, and as a result they attended Reading Quaker meeting in 1983. Andy had then the often-documented experience of "feeling at once at home". They moved to the smaller Newbury meeting which provided Andy with an immediate spiritual home. She became a member of the Religious Society of Friends in 1984 and although in later years she became closer to her Jewish roots, Andy remained a faithful Friend until the end. The Stollers moved to Southampton in 1983, and to Winchester in 1991, and in both communities Andy played an active and inspiring role.

Andy's service to Quakerism and to the wider community took myriad forms. Everyone remembers her beautiful smile. She was a compassionate listener. She worked on The Friend for over 9 years as assistant editor and contributed thoughtful pieces relating the spiritual to her everyday life, in true Quaker tradition. She continued to write book reviews for the magazine even when that job had finished. She completed the Woodbrooke 'Equipping for Ministry' course, where she 'found her voice', and in due course became a Trustee of Woodbrooke for 7 years. She became a tutor for other Equipping for Ministry students, and also facilitated various courses including journaling.

She served Britain Yearly Meeting on the Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee for a triennium from 2014 and brought much depth to their discernment. She also served on Yearly Meeting Epistle-Drafting Committee for the Yearly Meeting Gathering held in Bath in 2014. She became a facilitator for the 'Quakers Sharing Experience' initiative initiated by Geoffrey

Durham where her ability to connect with her audience was remarkable. Later, Andy became a Spiritual Director and brought to this new role all the qualities of wisdom and compassion she had brought to earlier commitments.

Andy's involvement in the wider Quaker community did not stop her from serving her local meetings with commitment and warmth. She was in Newbury during the Greenham Common protests, which split Newbury Meeting. Although Andy did not get personally involved, she was deeply affected by the disharmony in the Meeting, and this experience contributed to her ongoing concern for Meetings as communities. She was an elder and overseer at both Southampton and Winchester Meetings, and was active in the life of each meeting in turn.

In the wider community, Andy served as both a supporter and a governor of Shepherds Down School. The children at Shepherds Down have many different disabilities, some being totally adult dependant, some with severe autism, some with emotional difficulties, and others who find it difficult to absorb education. Andy brought her qualities of warmth, compassion, commitment, common sense and a sense of fun to the governing body. Where appropriate, she joined in the activities of a group of pupils with whom she was linked, going on trips, being in class from time to time, gaining a deep understanding of the difficulties they experience in learning. She was a special governor.

A mere recital of dates and roles, however, does not begin to reflect Andy's life. She had a profound and deep faith and saw beyond the boundaries most of us observe in faith communities. She saw beyond dogma and strictures to the reality all faith seeks to explore: the love that is at the heart of the divine. It was this perception of love that shaped her life and made her such a remarkable and deeply influential person. Her sense of the spiritual never seemed compartmentalised into a separate area, but rather rooted and earthed just as much in the more worldly, physical life.

So, talking with Andy on spiritual and indeed Quaker matters never felt like some sort of 'elevated', dual discussion subject alongside the more mundane, everyday matters of life. It all flowed, inter-mingling and mutually enriching.

She brought to all her service a kindness and a genuine interest in those around her. She supported her Equipping for Ministry students through their personal explorations of spirituality and ministry, offering tutorials which were both loving and fulfilling. Her presence was full of joy and energy and enthusiasm. She had an open and generous spirit. She was able to communicate a spirit of complete acceptance of others and this was a real gift to any group in which she found herself. When she was in the room, there was quality of lightness, not frivolity, perhaps it was just love.

Andy was always especially warm and welcoming to the many people she invited into their home. She had an ability to put people at their ease. She enjoyed looking her best. Andy had a gift for hospitality, and shared generously of the delicious cakes she had baked, and for which she became well known.

Andy shared a love of music, dance, art, theatre and sailing with Tony and with many of her friends. She was a member of a mini Appleseed Group. The group would meet in each other's homes six weekly to follow the Appleseed tradition of linking Art with Spirituality. She liked to swim and to go for walks with friends. She had a special love for Brandon, in Southern Ireland, the place where she felt uplifted and closest to her God.

She is greatly missed.

Signed on behalf of Hampshire & Islands Area Meeting

Held 11 November 2023

Sue Stanek, 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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