

A TESTIMONY TO THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF MALCOLM EDMUNDS,  
24.7.1938 – 24.1.2017  
prepared by his family and Preston Quakers

Malcolm Edmunds was born in Harlow, Essex, into a Quaker family and was a birthright Friend. He was educated at Harlow College, Leighton Park School and Queen's College Oxford. In 1957, without consulting anyone, he registered as a Conscientious Objector, as he knew in his heart it was wrong to kill anyone.

In 1963 he married Janet Holmes and they had two daughters, Julia and Helen. The family lived for ten years in Ghana where they were active members of the Quaker community, and also briefly in Tanzania.

In 1974 Malcolm became a Lecturer at Preston Polytechnic – the start of 30 years contributing to its rapid change and expansion as it became the University of Central Lancashire. Malcolm came to be widely respected as a voice of integrity, calm and reason. He was never shy about expressing his opinion, and when he did, it was from a position of principle, and was carefully considered and argued. He contributed to the university's growing research reputation and to a robust ethical perspective on experiments with animals. He chaired the university ethics committee.

Malcolm published over a hundred academic papers on biological topics. He also wrote many articles for "The Friend" and in his last few months he published a collection of short pieces entitled *Our Wonderful World and what we can learn from it* (2016), in which he explored animal behaviour and its ethical lessons.

In the 1980s Malcolm joined Scientists for Global Responsibility and the Peace Tax Campaign and tried to withhold tax from the money he earned privately, but the magistrate threw out the case and he paid his tax

Malcolm was a pillar of Preston Quaker meeting and of Quakers in the area. He was Clerk of Monthly Meeting for twenty years and then managed its merger with the neighbouring area. The merger process was managed with consultation, consideration, careful attention to detail, and a thorough knowledge of the Society. He also served as a prison chaplain and Clerk of Area Meeting Trustees. He was on Britain Yearly Meeting's Sharing World Resources committee and he represented Britain Yearly Meeting at the Fifth World Conference of Friends in Kenya.

In his last few years Malcolm had progressive cancer. He accepted his condition for what it was and went on with his life, tidying his affairs. After one of his eyes was removed he wrote an inspiring piece about the things that the eye had seen over his long and eventful life.

As we remember Malcolm, what will most remain with those who knew him are his clarity of thought, his consideration for other people, his calm and quiet manner, and his lucid expression of well-considered opinions. Having listened attentively to others he could summarise a position concisely and see a way ahead that would gain the consent of all concerned. When he spoke in a Quaker Meeting for Worship, it was often from a recognition of similarities between animal and human behaviour and the lessons that

we humans could draw from how animals relate to each other and to their environment. One could not ask for a better example than Malcolm of the virtues of integrity, equality, and a simple, peaceable life – the virtues to which Quakers aspire.

#### Epilogue from Ilkley Friends

In November 2013 Malcolm and Janet moved to Otley to be near their daughters in Leeds. At Ilkley Meeting we were fortunate to welcome them as Members, whilst they also attended Otley Meeting each month. We greatly valued Malcolm and his personal contribution to our Meeting. He had agreed to serve as an elder, but, sadly he had to lay down his service when the cancer which had previously affected him returned. Although he grew increasingly ill, he remained a regular attender at Meeting for Worship for as long as he was able. He contributed greatly to our spiritual life, not only by his dignity and courage in severe illness, but also by his unique insight into the natural world and the ministry which he drew from it.

We have been inspired by Malcolm, his life and his ministry; he was such a nice man. We miss him.

End