

Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Eileen King

8th July 1929 – 26 May 2018

This is the testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of Eileen Francis King who was known by so many in the Ackworth community as 'Miss King'. Eileen King was born in Bath on 8th July 1929 and much of her life was linked with schools and education, caring for the young people in her charge. As she grew older Eileen also had to come to terms with increasing bouts of asthma and associated health issues although her determination and fortitude meant that she was able to maintain so many activities to the end of her life.

Eileen was born into a Church of England family and this was the basis of her spiritual life in her early years. Her contact with the Religious Society of Friends was brought about by her appointment to the staff of Ackworth School, an appointment that she took up in January 1964. Whilst she eventually became a member of the Society of Friends she never lost her interest in other church groups and her service to Ackworth Churches Together and her work at Traidcraft brought her into the wider community that she loved and supported.

After an initial career in educational administration Eileen made the career changing decision to qualify as a teacher and on qualification joined the staff at Ackworth School as a teacher of Domestic Science and Needlework. There were also house staff duties and it did not take long before Eileen was appointed mistress in charge of Girls School House where she looked after young people until her retirement in 1993. Eileen King made her mark as both a teacher and a caring house mistress. It says much for her professional standing that Eileen retired after some years as a highly effective Senior Mistress.

Eileen King was always fair but strict; she learned the lesson from teacher training when advised to be 'firmer with the girls'. She sought equality for all, important in her dealings with the boys as well as girls at Ackworth. Whilst her Quaker faith grew at Ackworth it was on the firm basis of her personal characteristics of responsibility, faithful and conscientious duty and loving loyalty. Although she never married Eileen King always cared for children: her nieces and nephews, the children or even the grandchildren of friends and colleagues and as a guardian to overseas students at Ackworth. She was well known for her love of animals especially her small, barking dogs and Bandit and Popeye, her donkey and pony who were found a home on the School campus.

She was also a great fan of Somerset cricket, especially in the era of Viv Richards and Ian Botham, both cricketing knights, and she remembered with great pride the occasion when her brother opened the batting for Bath Lansdowne with a young Viv Richards.

The interests that developed during her working career were to sustain Eileen through retirement and where her indomitable spirit came to the fore and broadened her links with the Ackworth community. She volunteered on a weekly basis at Nostell Priory and was a very active member of several social and women's groups, like Breatheasy, a group for those suffering from asthma.

Ackworth Local Meeting is part of a scattered rural and urban Central Yorkshire Area Meeting with at least two quite remote local meetings. Only illness prevented Eileen from attending Area Meeting or various committee meetings. It was amazing, but hardly surprising given her tenacity and connections, that a lifelong non-driver could find a means of always being at her meetings at the right time on the right day. It was her responsibility and duty as a faithful Quaker to attend meetings on behalf of Ackworth LM as well as carry

out a number of roles for the Ackworth meeting. She was a regular attender at Bible readings and discussion groups.

For all of these groups Eileen's skills of hospitality and her love of baking, jam and chutney making made meetings and events eagerly anticipated and appreciated. Her character can be understood when we realise that people who were of her own age and with a similar professional status referred to Eileen as 'Miss King'. She had her standards, and increasingly there was an awareness by us not to allow those standards to slip. Her support for so many was reciprocated to provide love and support to Eileen when her health let her down, allowing her to continue her work and live an independent life almost to the end of her life. For someone of so small a frame there was an inner strength that took Eileen King through many challenges in her long life. We are glad to have known her.

Ackworth Local Meeting
Central Yorkshire Area Meeting – 11 November 2018