

## Jean Elliott

27 February 1925 – 1 November 2019

Jean Constance Elliott was born in Manchester and became a birthright member of the Society of Friends, attending Alexandra Park Meeting with her parents Samuel and Gladys Edmondson. In 1933 the family moved to Cleckheaton and their membership was transferred to Scholes Meeting, where Jean remained for the next 87 years. At her memorial meeting held at Scholes, her contemporaries remembered being very impressed by her long thick chestnut plait as a small girl. Jean always looked immaculate and still had beautiful hair in her 90s.

In 1945 she married Alan Elliott and together they became much more involved with Yorkshire Friends. Her passing has left a large gap in Brighouse Area Meeting, where Jean was active in many roles, official and non-official. However, she is especially missed in her own small meeting of Scholes, where for several years Alan and Jean adopted the role of voluntary caring wardens, working tirelessly to bring the meeting house back to life, both physically and spiritually after a temporary closure during the early 60s. When asked for her memories of Jean, one contemporary merely said: "We loved Jean."

Jean was a fantastic resource. She knew both the family and Quaker history of everyone at Scholes Meeting as well as many in the area meeting. She had an immense wealth of knowledge about Quakers and how things needed to be done, which was especially valuable in her roles as elder and overseer. In those roles, Jean was keen to maintain 'right ordering' and was not impressed with lack of commitment or 'cherry picking'. She firmly believed in the discipline required to be a Quaker. She was not afraid to elder on the occasions she felt it right to do so, but it was done with humility and love. Jean was always willing to share what she knew, and on many occasions when a business meeting was in need of wisdom, it was Jean who spoke exactly the right words to get everything back on track and ensure that correct Quaker procedure was followed. Two of her favourite pieces of advice were: "Whatever you plan or do, always consider the consequences for others" and "One should neither give offence, nor take offence. It is the latter which is the more challenging." This humorous touch of realism, said with a grin, made the expression really meaningful and helped many of us to deal with the real issue to be addressed.

She would often say meeting for worship was like having a bank account, and you could only earn interest if you put something in. She had a gift for ministry and could often get to the heart of the spirit of the meeting and bring healing and unity. However, she was not stern or unapproachable but possessed of great humility, warmth, quiet dignity and patience. This makes Jean sound a very worthy Quaker, and she was. But she also had an enormous sense of fun.

Her warm laughter and sense of humour made others relax, laugh and enjoy themselves too, whether at Area Meeting Glenthorne Weekend or just over coffee after meeting for worship.

Both Jean and Alan welcomed visitors to their home and were always happy to host meeting events, often focussed around food and fun. They provided a safe space for Quaker newcomers to discuss what Quakerism was really about, without putting pressure on them to become involved if it wasn't to be their path. However, they were both willing to encourage and support those who wanted to be involved and

were generous with their time, energy, knowledge and books. A generation of Scholes Friends learnt from Jean that it didn't matter if their minds wandered during meeting for worship: what mattered was to be present and centre down to the best of your ability and then meeting will take you where you need to go. She, together with another member of the meeting, arranged many trips both locally and more widespread, which were greatly appreciated by all who attended. These introduced the coach parties to other Quaker meetings, and visited places such as the Quaker Tapestry for fun and outreach.

As well as serving as clerk, treasurer, elder and overseer, Jean was involved with Young Friends when she hosted many popular weekend trips to Airton Quaker Hostel. She was always prepared to work for Quakers to the best of her ability and served on national committees such as Quaker Home Service, The Retreat in York and the former Elizabeth Fry Home, also in York. Yearly Meeting was also a 'not-to-be-missed' event whenever possible, and she often undertook long journeys, well into her later life, to attend. All this was part of her Quaker duty, and she considered it to be her responsibility to live adventurously as part of her Quaker witness. As part of this witness, in 2002 she wrote a book about the history of Scholes Meeting and how much her life was bound up in the worship and families who attended.

It was meeting for worship that was of overriding importance to her life as a Quaker. She was a constant presence, even as her mobility declined. She was welcoming, honest and truthful, open to the diversity amongst us, always smart, generous and a loyal friend to many. Jean certainly was a natural Quaker who "walked cheerfully over the world", answering that of God in all with whom she came into contact.

Signed on behalf of Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting

Held on 14 November 2020