

Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Marjorie Bliss

Born 3rd August 1932. Died 12th February 2023

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

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

Marjorie and Michael had three chapters of being Resident Friends in Auckland, New Zealand – rich, memorable and life-affirming experiences, often referred to in conversations. Marjorie represented two Area Meetings on Meeting for Sufferings and in her later years at Pickering Meeting she gave long service as Clerk, as Elder and as an Overseer. She was also the Clerk of the Committee at Ravensworth Lodge Residential Care Home in Scarborough. Later, Marjorie and Michael also cherished their spell as Joint Presidents of The Ackworth Old Scholars Association which they belonged to for the whole of their adult lives.

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

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

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

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

Pickering and Hall Area Quaker Meeting

November 2023