

A Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Jean Asher; 4 Oct 1940 - 4 Dec 2024

Jean lived a life of sincerity and quiet service. She was unassuming, working diligently and efficiently behind the scenes, so that F/friends were not always aware what an important contribution she made to the ongoing life of the Meeting. However, she *was* known for her friendliness, for the warm, inclusive, welcome she gave to those attending Meeting, whether newcomers or established Friends and for the way she kept in touch with people. Her empathy and attentive listening put the focus on others and she tended to be quite self-contained but there was no sense of her hiding herself, merely a certain reticence.

Childhood had not been a very happy time for Jean but she was bright and resourceful and she managed to live a very different life as an adult. She met and married John, finding the respectful and loving relationship she needed and she determinedly set out, with him, to give her own children a happy experience of growing up. Jean's love spread beyond her beloved husband and children to many others, both Quakers and non-Quakers, and through her work and interests, to pupils, clients, colleagues and friends.

Jean had deeply held values and beliefs, honed over time by extensive reading and spiritual reflection and she was committed to living according to these values in all areas of her life. Her professional life was important to her: she spent 25 years in secondary schools, teaching English and Latin, before re-training as a Relate Counsellor, and later supervisor, in Blackburn. She then worked there for many years both for Relate and in private practice. She was able to change many people's lives for the better, as demonstrated by the little note pressed into her hand by a former client which said, "Dear Jean, Thank you, you helped change my life. I have a new life now, Love,---". The young woman had signed it but, of course, Jean kept her identity confidential.

As a counsellor she was insightful and kind and she was also very organised and thorough. As a supervisor she had high standards for herself and others and was not afraid to confront issues that she felt needed addressing. An ex-supervisee remembers Jean's disapproval when she had not prepared properly for supervision! Maybe her background as a teacher was useful preparation for that. Although Jean was a serious person, she had a good sense of humour and exhibited the 'twinkle in the eye' asked for in one of the prayers she once cut out of a newsletter and put in her commonplace book. Her unexpected, wonderful, quiet sense of humour was often very helpful to others.

Jean was fascinated by local and family history and this led to service, too: teaching for The University of the Third Age; researching the Quaker heritage of the Settle area and diligently responding to queries from those with ancestral family connections to Settle Meeting, welcoming any who chose to visit. The efficient organisation of the Meeting records is also due to Jean's careful work – a task that is typically barely noticed if done well, like some other aspects of Jean's service.

Jean's life was lived with integrity, care and love. As an ex-colleague put it, 'She had a lot of love to give and she gave it – her care for people was infectious and she brought out the best in people'. Her life, indeed, reflected the grace of God working in our flawed but beautiful world.

Signed on behalf of Craven & Keighley AM; Area Meeting, Airton, Saturday 11 July 2026

David Heslop, Clerk