

## Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Eric Taylor 1931 – 2011

Eric was born in Clitheroe in Lancashire on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1931. Both sides of the family had worked in the cotton mills and Eric remembered wearing clogs as a child. He was the oldest child with three younger sisters. He was the first scholarship boy in his family and he went to Clitheroe Grammar School. He stayed there until the family moved to Ulverston in 1946 when he transferred to Ulverston Grammar School. He joined the Baptist Church there, later becoming a lay preacher. He matriculated from school in 1949 and was called up for his National Service. He was sent out to Trieste as a Corporal in the Intelligence Corps and he was considered so trustworthy that he was put in charge of the Officers' Mess Bar.

On his discharge, he felt he had to start earning to help the family rather than going to University. As a bright lad he was taken on at the Glaxo Laboratory as a technician and gained expertise on the new antibiotic production lines. He was sent to Port Fairy in Australia in 1955 to sort out problems at their Penicillin plant. After six months he was offered a job to stay on there but he decided to come home, having enjoyed the responsibility and realising that he needed to get a degree. He got a place as a mature student at Birmingham University reading Biochemistry. He bought a Lambretta and a good camera to ride up to his beloved Lakes where he took some beautiful slide photos.

Eric met Judith at University where they were both in the Student Christian Movement. The Lambretta proved very useful during their courtship! In 1958 Judith graduated and they became engaged. A year later, they were married in Jordans Meeting House where Judith was an attender. After graduation Eric started work with Unilever at their Food Research Centre and they lived in North Bedfordshire. Their four children – Sarah, William, Richard and Charlotte – were born in the space of five years. The family went to the Congregational Chapel. In 1968 Eric was transferred to Port Sunlight and they moved to Heswall on the Wirral.

In Heswall they found the beautiful new Quaker Meeting House and a very warm welcome. Eric knew he had found his spiritual home and so began their life in the Society of Friends. Eric served Heswall Meeting in many capacities including Elder and Clerk. He was also active in the large Monthly Meeting serving as Treasurer and Clerk. It was typical of Eric that once he had taken on a responsibility, he committed himself fully to all the tasks involved even if this meant sacrificing his own time and interests

Eric's job in Port Sunlight included product development, issues of biodegradability, and later trouble shooting all over Europe, especially on sound pollution from factories and the early application of infra-red cameras to detect the wear and tear of machinery. He was not ambitious, happy to share his experience and expertise with younger high flyers and he was well respected. But he became increasingly unhappy about some of the practices and pressures of a multi-national company and he accepted an early retirement package at the age of 57 – this proved to be a very happy decision.

So in 1991, Eric and Judith moved to Barnsley to be near at hand to help with the rapidly growing Camphill Community where their son, William, worked. Eric enjoyed helping with the gardens. When Judith retired in 1996 they moved to Churchtown, near Garstang, gravitating back to Eric's roots in Lancashire and where they were

near to their daughter, Sarah. Garstang and its Quaker Meeting felt like coming home and they had a very happy thirteen years together here, making many new friends whilst maintaining contact with their old friends. Eric became a volunteer for Age Concern taking an elderly gentleman out and helping to man the Information and Insurance sessions.

Eric and Judith both entered fully into the life of the Garstang Meeting and the Monthly (Area) Meeting. Eric served as Clerk of Garstang Meeting and Assistant Clerk of Area Meeting. He was also an Elder and a Trustee and, as a result of his knowledge of property matters, he was appointed by Britain Yearly Meeting to serve on Friends Trust Limited. Closer to home, he was actively involved in the newly set up Premises Committee at Garstang and faithfully and quietly carried out the mundane tasks such as ensuring that the heating was on when needed. He was active in the maintenance of the Meeting House garden undertaking many tasks, including cutting the grass and the naturalisation of the bulbs and other plants. It was very fitting that some of the snowdrops that he had nurtured, that were abundant in the garden on the day of his burial, were thrown into his grave.

Eric had a wide variety of interests and was very knowledgeable on most of them. His main passion was for gardening and he developed very different gardens at their homes in Bedfordshire, Heswall, Barnsley and Churchtown.

Even in his last week of life he was planning the garden for the coming summer. His other interests included garden birds, botany (especially trees and wild flowers), geology, archaeology, football, cats and cooking which he did with great relish and a scientific approach once he had retired. He was an avid Guardian reader and latterly he had enjoyed reading Dickens and Terry Pratchett. Eric and Judith had travelled widely and offered hospitality in their own home through Servas and Travelling Quakers.

Eric loved his family, taking much pleasure and pride in his children and grandchildren, always being accepting and supportive and never judgemental. One of his endearing qualities was his failure to recognise his own special talents. He was a modest man and in his last illness he was reduced to tears when he realised how many people were concerned for his wellbeing. He was a good listener and enjoyed meeting people on a one to one basis, very preferable to him than a big crowd. He was a man of few words but always spoke to good effect. He had a lovely sense of humour and many have commented on the twinkle in his eye.

Underlying everything Eric did was his deep faith and he made many contributions to the life of the Society of Friends. He will be best remembered for his quiet, loving presence and wise counsel. In the words of a Friend who knew him well, he was "A quiet man, not given to small talk but a solid rock who could be relied upon to do a meticulous job in whatever he did."

Garstang Local Meeting and  
Lancashire Central and North Area Quaker Meeting  
2011