

**Testimony to the Grace of God as seen in the life of our Friend  
Alan Russell who died on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024 aged 88yrs**

Alan brought so much joy to us all. He was blessed with an extraordinary ability to see the very best in everyone he met, and by some kind of instinctive ability to respond to just what that person needed.

To some of us he sent jokes, crazy headlines or little cartoons; to others it was just a few words spoken or written on the back of one of his many, many photographs. I'm sure quite a few of us still have these tucked into books or drawers at home.

His first contact with Quakers was in his teens in Croydon, and later he was active in the lively Cambridge Young Friends group, which is where he met Kathleen.

Born in 1935, Alan was among the last group of young men to be called for National Service and Alan spent two years with the Friends Ambulance Unit before starting his university education at Jesus College, Cambridge.

Language was always a great delight to Alan and his degree was in French and German which led him into teaching, first in the East End of London, and then at Glossop School.

Both Alan and Kathleen loved life in Hadfield, where they moved in the late 60's - the friendliness, the gentle pace and encircling moorlands. After ten years as Head of Lower School, he transferred to the English department and delighted in the opportunities it offered. In his own words:

"You could get them thinking and talking and writing about aspects of their own lives, which included their individual thoughts and experiences, their individual and social development. You were contributing to their growing up... Just think about that!"

Alan was able to draw out the very best from his pupils, cherishing their uniqueness, which they responded to. Many parents told him of the difference he had made to their children, and colleagues remember him with affection. One young adult simply said "he was kind to me".

Alan greatly valued and supported the voluntary work Kathleen was undertaking, which sometimes included late night trips to and from the airport when she was travelling abroad. He recognised that we each have different gifts and talents, and that service can take many forms.

He was also endlessly generous in his own service to Quakers, over the years taking on almost all of the key roles at both of his local meetings, Low Leighton and Marple and also many within the Area Meeting. He was Trustee for a residential centre run by the Friends Fellowship for Healing, and copy editor for Quaker Voices. Alan loved attending Area Meeting, and also the companionship of shared car journeys that this often involved.

He was deeply in tune with Quaker ways, with wide knowledge of Quaker history and witness in the world, and his spoken ministry was often profoundly moving. He responded with deep compassion to the needs of the world; often quietly, but sometimes his voice would shake with emotion and tears would fill his eyes as he spoke of some suffering that had touched him.

Alan's courage and calm acceptance of the reality of old age was absolutely part of who he was. He accepted the restrictions of mobility, memory and energy with good humour, and he and Kathleen continued their simple life together in their flat until very shortly before his death.

When travelling to Marple for meeting was no longer practical, he and Kathleen joined the online meeting, and we loved to see him on the screen, sometimes asleep, but still so much part of our meeting.

We miss his gentle presence and unstinting kindness. We miss his humour and unique take on life. We have been greatly blessed to have known Alan and give thanks for all that he brought us.