

Why was there a Quaker School in Saffron Walden?

Tony Watson

This article is prompted by the closure of Walden School, formerly the Friends' School, in July 2017, and addresses the question as to why there was a Quaker School in Saffron Walden. The history of the school is largely recorded in various publications produced to celebrate anniversaries and which are acknowledged below. As the school was originally founded in 1702, in Clerkenwell, London, it has a long history and this short article cannot do justice to its record in educating both Quaker and non-Quaker children. There is a brief note of the three preceding sites of the school covering the period 1702 to 1879, before trying to answer why the school was in Saffron Walden for 138 years.

The Society of Friends was founded, among others, by George Fox in the middle of the 17th Century following the English Civil War. By 1660 its members numbered 35,000, drawn from all social classes in an England whose population was about five and a half million. In the then Quaker organisation local groups ('Preparative Meetings') were linked to wider groups ('Monthly Meetings'), several of which together formed 'Quarterly Meetings'. One of these, London & Middlesex Quarterly Meeting, became the first to develop the teaching of children.

Earlier sites

Before coming to Walden, the school existed on three earlier sites:

1702 Clerkenwell: John Bellers proposed in 1695 the formation of 'a College of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry', which eventually resulted in the formation of a Workhouse in Clerkenwell, opened in 1702. This involved the boarding of both old people and young children and included their education.

1786 Islington: The children were moved to a new site in Islington and this became exclusively for the boarding and teaching of children. The Clerkenwell site remained for adults for many years. By 1815 pupil numbers varied between 100 and 150 and children came not only from the original Quarterly Meeting area but from East Anglia as far north as Norfolk.

1825 Croydon: The expansion of north London led to health problems. The school was moved to Croydon where education was developed. John Sharp was appointed Superintendent, and served from 1844 to 1853. He recorded the following ideals for the classroom which formed a part of the foundation of the school's ethos:

1. *Never do a thing for a scholar, but teach him to do it for himself.*
2. *Never get out of patience with children; or rather never get out of patience with anything, but especially with dullness and stupidity.*
3. *Cherish an interest in all scholars and aim equally to secure the progress of all.*
4. *Do not hope, or attempt, to make all your pupils alike.*
5. *Assume no false appearances as to knowledge or character.¹*

In an attempt to improve training of teachers, in 1850 a sub-committee on education drew up a more systematic timetable to provide for studies in Latin, French, Euclid and algebra. As a result, the quality of teaching slowly improved. In 1873 non-Friends were introduced as pupils, which led over the next century to larger numbers of non-Quaker children, but without any change in the manner in which all pupils were taught. However, the development of Croydon again led to problems of health. Serious epidemics were recorded in 1839, 1841, 1852, 1858, 1859 and 1864. Finally in October 1875 an outbreak of typhoid fever was reported. As a result in April 1876 the London & Middlesex General Meeting

(L&MGM) was asked to find a new site. This meeting was a successor to the London & Middlesex Quarterly Meeting: 'Many visits were made in search of new premises. Even a brewery was inspected, however the buildings were unsuitable though the water excellent!'²

Move to Saffron Walden, 1879

John Woods, former Head of the School, wrote in 1979 a history of the hundred years at Walden:

It started with typhoid. In October 1875 the Superintendent, George F. Linney, reported to a special meeting of the Committee (L&MGM) at Devonshire House, London, that there had been an outbreak of typhoid fever. The immediate task was to secure the health of the family, first, by supplying filters for the drinking water and then, by facilitating the withdrawal of children by their parents. But within a month discussion had taken place about the question of the desirability or otherwise of the removal of the school from Croydon. The threat both to health and to numbers demanded consideration of more radical solutions. A committee was appointed to collect information and report. Within two months this committee had assessed the value of the Croydon property at £22,000, estimated the cost of new building elsewhere and had its attention specially directed to Saffron Walden.³

Why in the end did the school move to Saffron Walden? Because George Stacey Gibson would not be denied. The School

Fig. 1. Friends' School at Saffron Walden, when it first opened in 1879.



wanted land; he gave them 6¼ acres. It was objected that the Town meeting-house would be too small: he doubled the size.⁴

Figure 1 shows the school as originally built on the site partly donated by George Stacey Gibson and Deborah Gibson and other land purchased by L&MGM. The Trust deed of 1877 gifted the land to L&MGM as Trustees for use as a School with residue to L&MGM. Thus, any surplus funds from sale of the land and buildings belongs to the successor of L&MGM. Although the land was donated, the buildings were erected by the School Committee with the proceeds from the sale of the Croydon School at a cost just under £29,000. The architect, Edmund Burgess (1847-1929), was appointed in November 1876, plans were approved in January 1877 and construction commenced on 25 June 1877, with completion scheduled for the end of 1878.⁵ Following the usual delays caused by poor weather and lack of materials, the school was handed over to the committee in August 1879. The first intake of 58 boys and 32 girls were installed in the new buildings which, as Figure 1 shows, had been a 'green field site'.

The first Head Master at Saffron Walden was George F. Linney, supported by his wife Lucy. He had been Superintendent at Croydon since 1869, but the school committee decided on the title change to Head Master.⁶ There began a long and slow development of education. The first pupils were all boarders and were taught separately. In 1880 the first music lessons were given, followed in 1881 with the first entry of pupils to the College of Preceptors' examinations. The year 1890 saw the retirement of George and Lucy Linney and the appointment of John Edward and Anna Phillis Walker (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. John & Phillis Walker, pictured in 1905.

In 1892 the chemistry laboratory was opened, followed in 1896 by the first cookery classes. The first Whitsuntide gathering was held by the Old Scholars' Association, founded in Croydon in 1869, in 1894 and these continued into the late 20th century (Figs 3 & 4). The photographs from Whitsun 1934 show former pupils wearing the Old Scholar blazer, an example of which has recently

been donated to Saffron Walden Museum. In 1898 music rooms were opened, followed in 1900 by new classrooms and a workshop on the girls' (west) side of the school.

20th century expansion

After the Board of Education was established in 1899, the 1902 Education Act opened the way for secondary education. The same year, the school celebrated the Bicentenary of its founding with the opening of the swimming pool and gymnasium (Fig. 5). The pool was believed to be one of the first provided by a school, and preceded the Saffron Walden Town Pool which was opened in



Fig. 3. Whitsun weekend gathering at Friends' School, 1934.



Fig. 4. Old Scholars dancing in the dining hall, Whitsun 1934.

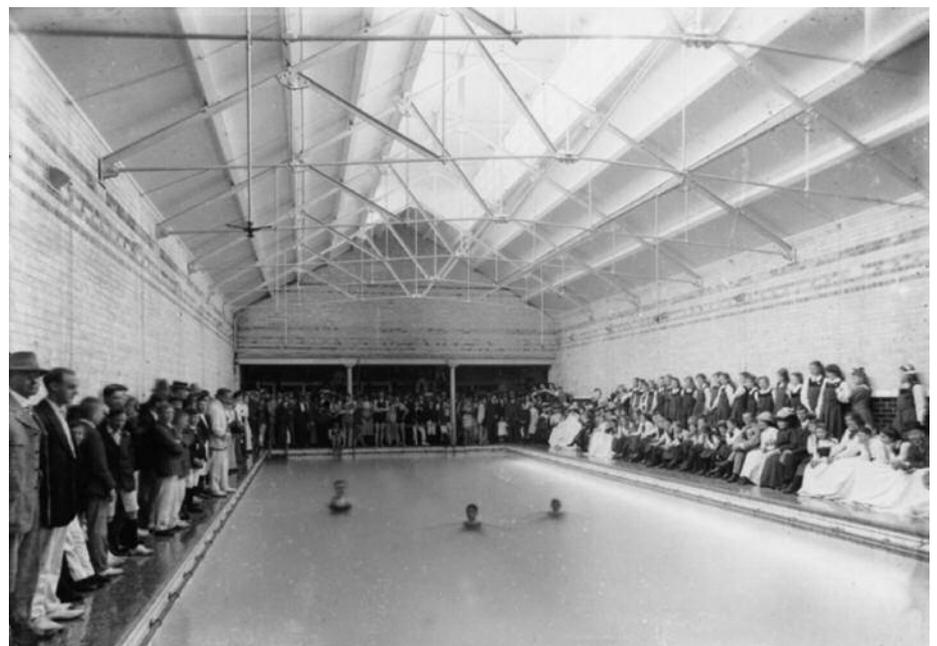


Fig. 5. Opening of Friends' School swimming pool, 1902.

1910. The roof was renewed to celebrate the Tercentenary in 2002.

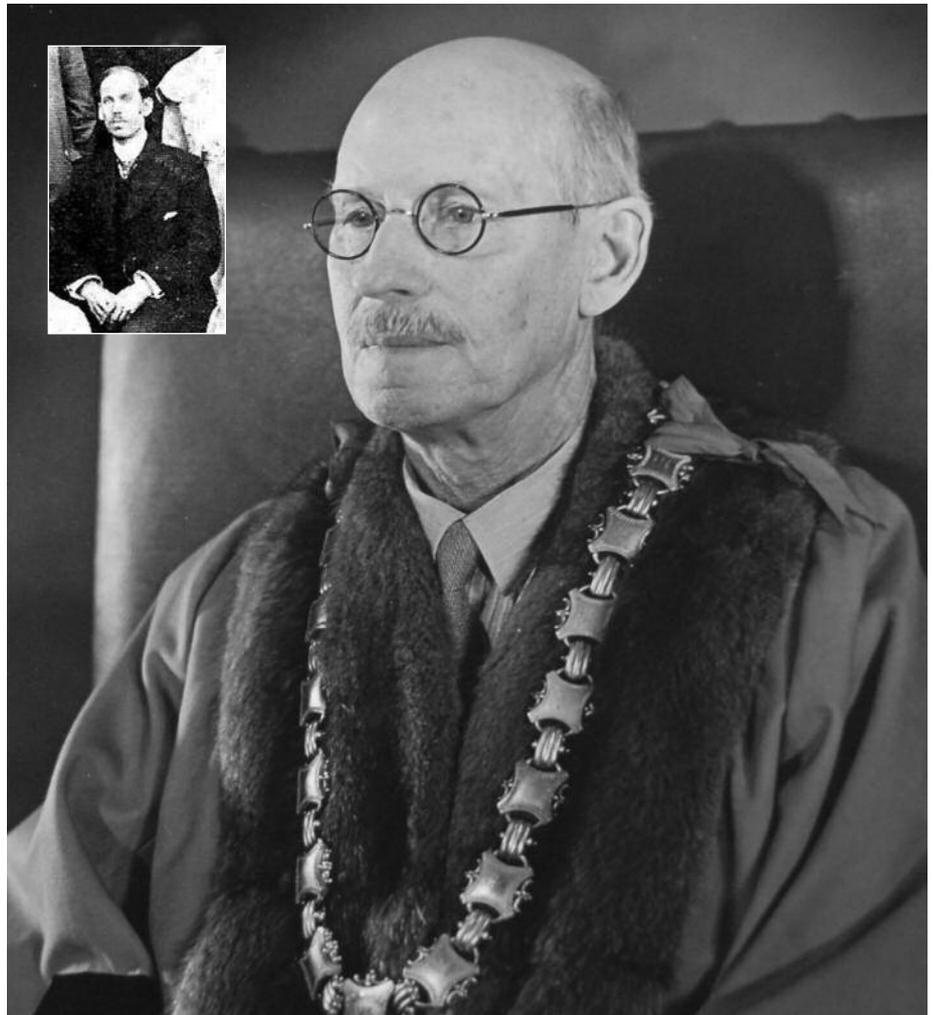
A block of Masters' studies followed in 1903. In 1906 the first 'School Tramp' of organised walks for senior pupils and staff was introduced, and these continued for the first half of the 20th century, discontinued by the Second World War.

One of the first plantings in 1879 had been an avenue of trees which became, on Sundays, the opportunity for brothers and sisters to meet, not being able to do this during the working week. The Avenue has always remained the core of the school, and was later extended to the south and around the playing field. A part became the Hill Development of 'The Avenue' in 2008–12.⁷

In 1910 the Committee agreed to the co-education of pupils, with both boys and girls taught together for the first time throughout the school. As a result of this change, the Senior Mistress, Lucy Fairbrother, became known as Headmistress. Previously, the Superintendent/Headmaster's wife had undertaken this role. Concern for health was always a constant source of anxiety, not surprisingly, with the history of the school at its previous sites. Following outbreaks of tonsillitis, influenza, ringworm and scarletina, a separate Sanatorium was constructed, opened in 1911.

In 1913 the first scholar passed the London Matriculation examination, and Old Scholars arranged their first Lecture Weekend. Then came the First World War and, for a short period from December 1914 to March 1915, the school was requisitioned for Army use.⁸ The war presented both staff and senior pupils with the dilemma of conscientious objection. Many Quakers ended up in prison for refusing to serve, while others joined the Forces. Stephen Walker, son of the Headmaster John Walker, joined the Royal Flying Corps and was killed whilst training at Duxford. It was during this period that the Quaker movement developed the Friends' Ambulance Service which looked after the wounded in both world wars.⁹

In 1921 the school was recognised by the Board of Education and more boys' classrooms were added. The following year, the Walkers retired and C. Brightwen Rowntree was appointed Headmaster. He had been a member of staff in 1905, so was well aware of the task he undertook. Following his retirement in 1934, he became well-known in Saffron Walden as a councillor



Figs 6 & 7. C. Brightwen Rowntree when a member of staff in 1905 (inset), and in retirement as Mayor of Saffron Walden.

and later Mayor of the Borough, and a historian, compiling with Cliff Stacey an acclaimed book on the town, *Saffron Walden Then & Now* (1951). (Figs 6 & 7)

Among pupils attending during the 1920s was Charles Kohler, who later recorded his memories of some of the school staff at this time, including Messrs Beer, Morris, Smiley and Whitlow (see p.12).¹¹

In 1930 the decision was taken to again accommodate young children. During the early years at Clerkenwell, pupils had left for employment around the age of 10. During the 1920s children came to the school at age 11 and left at 14. The new 'Junior House' would take pupils at age 7, to join the senior school at 11. Flint House, on the corner of Debden Road/Mount Pleasant Road, was purchased and classrooms and a junior head's flat were erected at the rear. In the summer term of 1931 there were six boy boarders, two day-boys and five day-girls. The number of local children attending as day pupils was increasing.

The space between the Junior School and the main school drive had originally

been used for growing vegetables, but in 1931 was developed with a new Assembly Hall and the original meeting room in the main building converted into a Library. In 1934 Gerald Littleboy was appointed Head and he was charged with the development of the Sixth Form (now years 12 and 13), and he promoted the link with the Essex Education Committee with the increase in day scholars recommended by them. A new building programme provided specialist rooms for biology and geography, and the construction of the Assembly Hall enabling the original lecture room to be converted to a library.

With the coming of the Second World War, following another short period of requisition in 1940, the school made room for girls from Tottenham High School for one year before they found other accommodation locally. The author joined 'Junior House' in January 1944, and remembers the ground floor bedrooms supported against ceiling falls with pine posts between the boarders' beds, and windows taped to protect against glass damage.

Memories of Friends' School Staff 1924-28 by Charles Kohler

It was on a Thursday in April of 1924 that I was taken by my mother to Liverpool Street railway station... At last the long train (known as the London Squash) chugged into the platform... emerged panting, at Saffron Walden station... followed the crowd up the hill... a man was standing, welcoming each child... It was Mr Rowntree, the headmaster, known to us as Chas. A, a short, erect man, he looked at you through pince-nez glasses that magnified his blue, blinking eyes. He always wore a black jacket, high stiff collar and striped trousers... In the nineteen-twenties the school was very much a Friends' school. The governors were all Quakers, the staff nearly all Quakers and most of the children came from Quaker homes. Many were "birthright members" of the Society and children of old scholars. We were much more enclosed, isolated from the activities of the town and from the presence of our families. In a sense the school was a protective community, almost monastic in its seclusion. But Quakerism was never preached or taught or even explained and no one told us what was supposed to happen in a Meeting for Worship. It was assumed we had imbibed the atmosphere from early childhood and that the school was an extension of the Quaker family. What influenced us most was the quality and dedication of our teachers. They exemplified Quakerism better than any books or precepts.... The school seemed to attract unusual characters, most of whom shared with us their special interests and enthusiasm. They stayed at the school for decades:

perhaps because they were happy and not over ambitious: perhaps because headships were scarce. Whatever the reasons, staying-put gave the school stability... They found fulfilment in sharing their hobbies with us and enjoying our confidences. We lived in a community of acceptance and toleration with few age or authoritarian boundaries...

Mr Beer (Booze), the long-haired history master. In the Great War he had suffered imprisonment in Dartmoor as a Conchie, so was understandably drawn to a Quaker school on his release. It's unlikely that he would have been accepted by, or acceptable to, a traditional public or grammar school. He was a man of many gifts: a humorous entertainer, a talented pianist, a teacher who used original and imaginative props. Above all he was a person of exceptional charm. If you opened a door for him, he always bowed and said "Thank you". The fact that he was hopeless at games endeared him to us.

George Morris, or Moke, was a very different character. I recall his shaggy, leonine head, his shambling walk and his untidy, unbuttoned clothes. Erratic, fiery-tempered, enthusiastic, his voice would rise with his emotions... Moke wasn't an outstanding class teacher and because of his temper he had to put up with a lot of ragging... He opened up Natural History and Geology to many boys and girls. I think that he was most effective as a teacher on excursions into the country with a small group of attentive children. Fossils in the chalk railway cutting or ancient burial mounds roused his enthusiasm and brought out his stores of

learning. He was one of those who could read and interpret the landscape.

Mr Smiley (Jock), the wee Scots laddie who took us for carpentry and for gym. He had been a pilot in the RAF during the war, was unmarried and a bit of a loner. I don't imagine he held high teaching certificates. But Mr Rowntree must have spotted some concealed gifts, because Jock settled into the school and gave a lot to games and friendships with older boys. I have a hunch it was the first time in his life that he had been accepted and found a supportive community.

Mr Whitlow (Fishy or JPW)... was a bachelor, then about fifty five years of age and... an avuncular character with unfeigned affection for boys... He had been educated at the Friends' School, Ackworth, gone on to university with other Friends, then settled down as a teacher at the Friends' School, Saffron Walden. His relatives, his acquaintances and his interests all lay within the Quaker community. He never married, taught mainly English literature and did not rise above the grade of senior master. His only break-away occurred in the 1914-1918 war when he went to France with the Friends' Ambulance Unit. But despite-or because of-this concentrated life he impressed by depth and stability... drama and games were his passions and he was fortunate that his gifts could be so easily and fully exercised at Walden. Generations of boys-perhaps girls, too-look back on him with affection and respect. He was, truly, a good man.¹²

Post-war change

Following the end of war in Europe in 1945, the 1944 Education Act came into force. This was a major change in the development of education, funded by taxes, for the first time creating government responsibility for education. Previously, responsibility had rested with local and county councils through education committees, and secondary education had been provided largely through grammar schools founded in previous centuries, with funds provided by charities or other foundations. This change made the Friends' School Committee concerned for the future. In 1942 the Committee had agreed to increase the Essex County Council provision for girls to 25.

From 200 scholars in 1943 the school

almost doubled in size to 373 in 1957, due mainly to a growth in the proportion of day scholars. This development arose from the Committee's desire, expressed in 1944, to cooperate with the local authority as closely as may be possible while safeguarding the prime purpose of the school being a Quaker school... Officially encouraged to consider applying for Voluntary Aided status, this possibility was considered in 1945. In the end this was not proceeded with, partly because the school's endowment did not make the arrangement financially practicable and partly because of hesitations about making this denominational school the sole grammar school for the locality.¹³

The school did agree to offer both day and boarding places for Essex County pupils, two Essex representatives were

appointed to the school committee, and alterations to the fee structure were agreed. A result of the increase in pupils was the closure of the Junior School in 1949 to provide extra classrooms and boarding accommodation, the building being renamed Croydon House. The Junior House staff, led by Jeanne Barrie, opened a Junior School next to the Meeting House in the High Street, later moved to Audley Road. Although this was independent of the Friends' School, its trustees were Quakers and its pupils usually moved to the School at the age of 11.

In 1944 Jennie Ellinor was appointed as Headmistress, with responsibility for the girls' education. In 1946 the first Bursar, Eric Brown, was appointed, much to the relief of the Headmaster, Gerald Littleboy who, like previous Heads, had to carry

responsibility for the finances of the school. In 1955 new chemistry and physics laboratories were provided, which promoted the development of science teaching, despite a fire in the newly-erected chemistry lab! The photograph shows the staff in 1959 (Fig. 8).

An application in 1961 for admission to the Direct Grant list was rejected, and the committee accepted that independent status was the only way forward. The County were prepared to assist re-development with grants. A new classroom block with art room and staff common room, at an estimated cost of £40,000, was built for £35,864, with £25,000 of this coming from an ECC grant. This block was named 'Essex' in acknowledgement of the grant.

The impact of change in society affected political and educational philosophies. As the nation wrestled with the principle and consequent reorganisation to provide secondary education for all on comprehensive lines, Essex could no longer use the facilities of a small school with selective admission. In March 1962 the Committee learnt that Essex wished to continue to reserve boarding and day places. A year later Essex had made and implemented the decision not to send boys to the school and then gave notice that they were unlikely to send any girls after 1971. This swift reversal of policy broke the happy development of cooperation between school and local authority. It also indicated



Fig. 8. Friends' School staff in 1959: back row - ?, Olga Miller, John Evans, Sister, Edith Woorral, Anne Morley, Kenneth Whitlow, Miss Kerrison, Ivan Crane. Second row – Gladys Marshall (housekeeper), Philip Houlder, ?, Mary Merer, Kenneth Plan, Robert Hudson, Miss Lloyd, Kelvin Osborn. Third row – David Lewis, Sara Price, Richard Sturge, Jean Thomson, Donald Benson, Mary Cuthbert, Brian Gelsthorpe, Margaret Kenningham. Front row – Cyril Mummery, Joy Ashford, Richard Wright, Jennie Ellinor, Kenneth Nicholson, Bernard Jacob, Jean Stubbs, Alison Reynolds, Iorwerth John.

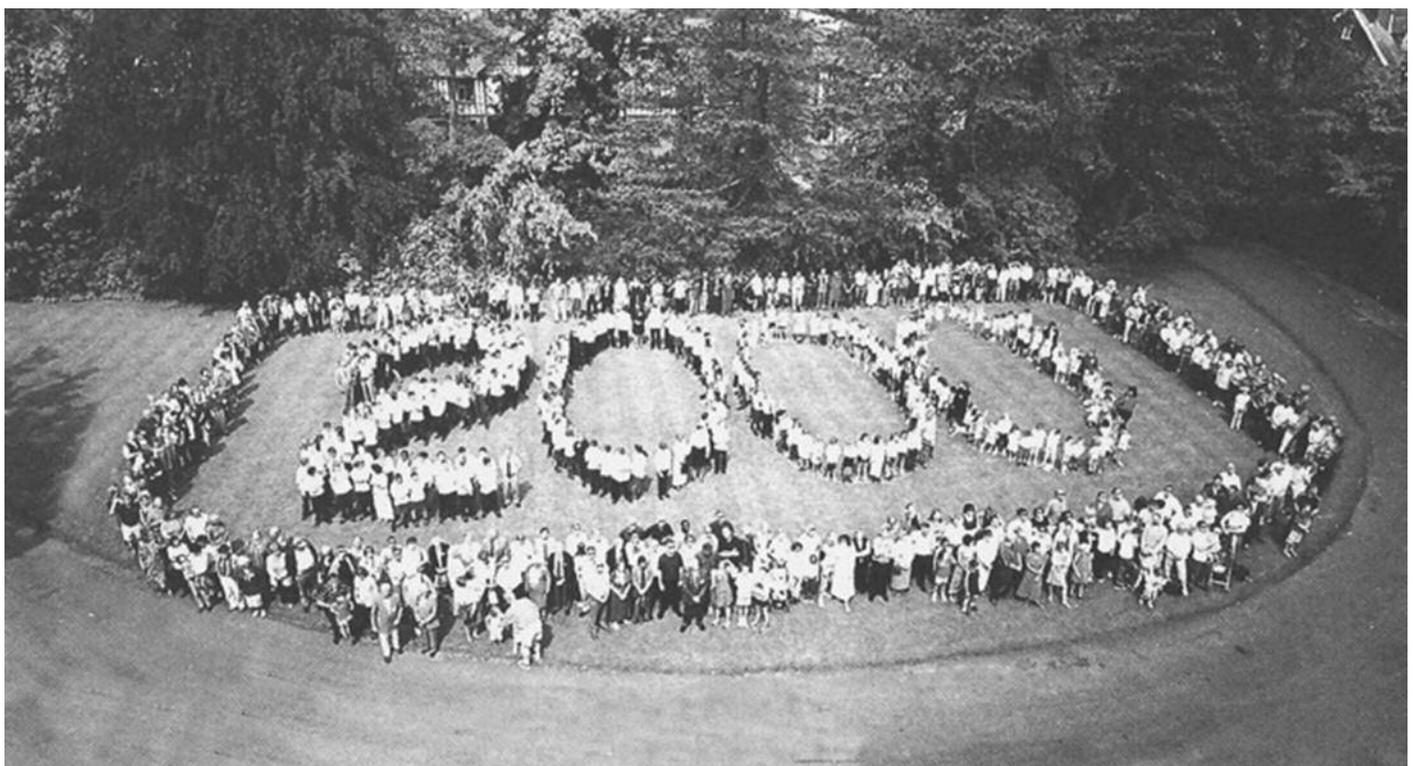
*how closely the school's fortunes were allied to conditions outside its control.*¹⁴

In 1964 Jennie Ellinor retired after 20 years' service and the Committee revised the senior staff structure. A principle of a single Head of the School, supported by a Deputy Head and a senior mistress as Head of the girls' side, was adopted. Further developments continued in 1967, with changes to governance, the committee was replaced by a Board of Governors, building development

brought a girls changing room for the pool, a smaller sanatorium to enable the creation of a Junior boys boarding house (Gibson), a four classroom block (Crosfield) and accommodation for staff - there were now about 390 scholars aged from 11 to 16/18.

In 1984 an appeal raised funds to provide the Sports Hall and an excess of funds also enabled a Music Centre to be built. In 1992 the Board agreed to re-open a Junior School in the Gibson building and later in the smaller sanatorium, with health covered by a

Fig. 9. Staff and pupils celebrating the Millennium in 2000.



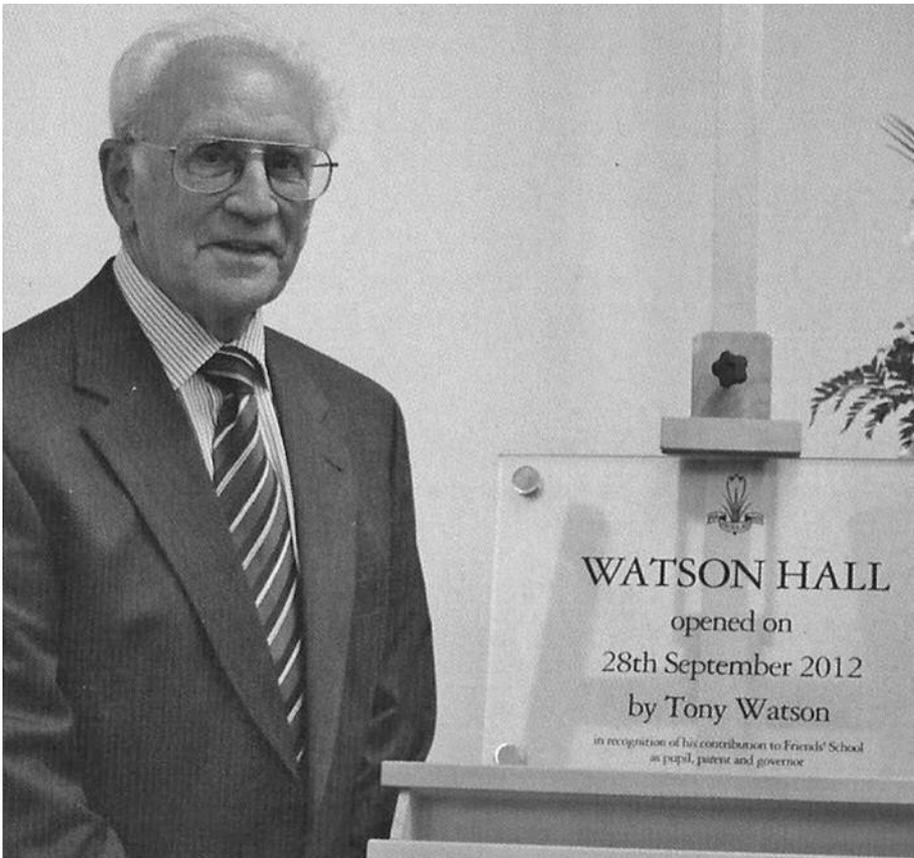


Fig. 10. The author, Tony Watson opening the Watson Hall in 2012.

2,000 visitors, including a procession to the grounds of Saffron Walden Museum, led by the new heads and children in clothing from different eras. An appeal raised sufficient funds to re-roof the swimming pool, a fitting gift a century after its construction.

When the Governors reviewed the tercentenary, the Head Andy Walters, asked for a development plan for the 21st century. After various meetings and consultations the Board agreed to re-develop the school on its existing site. Its primary aims were to provide new Junior School buildings, improve boarding facilities with the desire to also provide a new small theatre. The funding could only be obtained by a sale of surplus land to the south of the main school, and this eventually became an award-winning housing development. After a long planning process, plans for two new Junior school buildings were approved. A contract with a developer was agreed with the sale of land, the construction of the two new buildings, a nursery and early years block including a library and school hall, funded by one-third of the proceeds of the sale. The remaining two-thirds were to be used as capital for the future development of the school. The New buildings were formally opened in September 2012 (Fig. 10).

Pupils and staff

The history of the school so far recorded relates only to the buildings, governance and leadership. It tells nothing of the ethos of the school. What made a Quaker school different? Although the principles of Quaker education were led by Quaker Committees and later Governors, and carried out by the various Heads, the real basis of the school was the dedication of its staff and its effect on its pupils. This can be best explained by just a few notes of various staff members and former scholars.

The First World War challenged many Quakers, one notable being Stanley G. King Beer, imprisoned as a pacifist and sent to France to be shot for disobeying orders within the hearing of the firing line; the order was, however, rescinded by the intervention of Quakers and an MP. He was then nearly starved as no provision was made for vegetarians, resulting in his discharge to prevent the scandal of his dying in prison. He became a member of staff in 1918, taught history

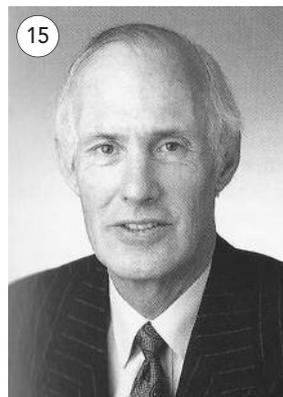
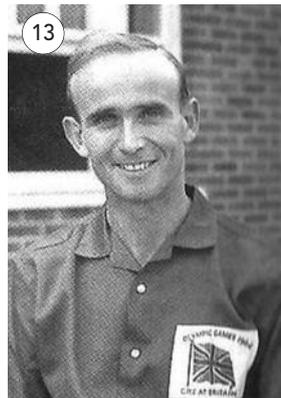


Fig. 11. S.G. King Beer.

Fig. 12 Reg Reynolds.

Fig. 13. John Cadman.

Fig. 14. Tom Robinson.

Fig. 15. Sir Anthony Newton.

health centre in the main building. This re-started in September 1992 with 15 pupils and by September 1994 numbers had risen to over 100, with seven classes and a nursery.

A new century brought a new head, Andy Waters, a new head of the junior school, Andrew Holmes, and also the

author as a new governor. A group photograph of pupils formed the number 2000 with the last nought being the junior school (Fig. 9). The circle comprised staff, old scholars and parents.

Plans were being made for the tercentenary in the autumn of 2002 which resulted in the school hosting



The Magazine of the Friends' School, Saffron Walden.

Fig. 16. Title page of the Friends' School magazine, *The Avenue*.

to generations of students and died in 1939 (Fig. 11).

There was Sarah Dorothea Waring who, from 1919 to 1947, was boys' matron - she saved all her charges in the influenza epidemic of 1919, and taught generations how to 'wash, brush teeth and be clean'. When she died, she left Rose Cottage to the Old Scholars' Association. After the Second World War, pupils were inspired by teachers like Cyril Mummery in history, Richard Wright in mathematics, 'BBJ' Jacobs in geography and Richard Sturge in music.

Notable Old Scholars include Edward Bawden, at the school from 1918, a famous local artist and, with Eric Ravilious, a major contributor to the Fry

Art Gallery. Reg Reynolds (Fig.12) left school without a career to follow, he spent time with Mahatma Gandhi, took up left-wing politics, supported the anti-fascists in Spain, became a conscientious objector, but joined the Chelsea Civil Defence as an ambulance driver, and later trained to handle tracker dogs searching for victims of heavy bombing. He was a devout follower of Quaker principles which took him to Africa, America and Australia in support of the oppressed. He published an account of his time at the school, recalling one of his contemporaries, the artist Edward Bawden (see below).

Ralph Erskine became one of the best-known architects in the world. After attending the school from 1925 to 1931,

he qualified in 1936 as an architect, and in 1939 as a town planner, married an old scholar and set up his own architectural practice near Stockholm. He was involved with the 'Byker' estate in Newcastle, with a housing estate in Milton Keynes and the Millennium Village in Greenwich. The nearest example of his work is Clare Hall College in Cambridge. He received the Institute of British Architects' Royal Gold Medal in 1987.

Former students of the school often returned to teach. John Woods became Head in 1968 and John Cadman, Head of PE 1957-64, later gained 27 Great Britain and England caps in hockey, including the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo (Fig. 13).

Tom Robinson and Imogen Heap became well known as rock musicians (Fig. 14). More details can be found in *The School on the Hill*, referenced below. Tony Newton left the school in 1955 for Oxford and a career in politics. He was President of the Oxford Union before being elected MP for Braintree in 1974 (Fig. 15). He had many appointments in Government, eventually Minister of Health, Leader of the House of Commons and in 1997 became a life peer.

Sally Tuffin left the school for the Walthamstow School of Art in 1954, then went to the Fashion School Royal College of Art and won a Silver Medal. Sally started a dress company with her friend Marion Foale which became famous as 'Foale & Tuffin'. She later founded 'Tuppence Coloured' in Somerset, started a pottery company and took on the renowned Moorcroft pottery to save it from being wound up.

Closure 2017

An independent fee-paying school receives no support from the state and is dependent for its survival on the support of parents. Throughout the history of the school, reports refer to the numbers of pupils and the rise and fall in financial success as a result. The financial crisis of 2008 had no immediate impact but the pressure on parents' income made the provision of fees ever more difficult.

Following a change of name to re-brand Friends' School as Walden School, the Governors were faced with the loss of viability. Douglas Kent, an Old Scholar nominated Governor, gave a report to the Old Scholars' Association at an Extraordinary General Meeting in May 2017, which detailed some of the efforts made to find a way to keep the school open. However, the school was closed in

Memories of Friends' School 1917-22 by Reg Reynolds

I was sent to a co-educational boarding-school, a place full of legendary heroes (and a few villains) known to me from the stories of my two sisters, one of whom was still there. From 1917 to 1922 my home for the greater part of the year was at Saffron Walden – the place to which that ancient foundation of 1792 (sic) known then as Ye Friends Workhouse, had eventually moved in the course of its slow evolution as a co-educational school, singularly enlightened by the standards of my childhood days. One of the best things, from my point of view, about the Friends School, Saffron Walden, was that even in 1917 it provided a fairly good life for the misfit. I was twelve when I went there, and already becoming uneasily conscious of being an oddity... I found life at the school more than tolerable... Not every misfit at Walden managed to make himself as comfortable as I did. My contemporary, Edward Bawden, had assets which I envied. He was already showing

outstanding ability as an artist, enjoyed the special favour of the Headmaster (an artist himself, who gave Bawden a great deal of useful advice) and – above all he had to his credit a set of wicked caricatures which he had devised, representing several members of the school staff... the 'Buddha' as we called him, failed – if he ever tried – to make an individual niche for himself in the school's peculiar hierarchy of Notables, in spite of the respect we were all to feel for him later.... So I ambled through those five years... The heavily cultivated Essex landscape... became very dear to me eventually during those years. In my endeavours to escape from those gregarious enthusiasms which I so disliked I became a great walker... Humanity is now the enemy against which I fight and the thing I fight for; and I can fight it and love it at one and the same time all the better for that memory of my last winter at Saffron Walden.¹⁰

July 2017. The author is not aware of all the reasons for the closure, but in 2010 there were nearly 400 pupils in the school, and when it closed, this had dropped to 280 - with a staff of 100, it was no longer viable.

The Friends' School had a history of three or more generations of pupils. Many local families had three generations at the school. There were also generations of local families who worked for the school in bedding, catering and maintenance of both buildings and grounds. Although the school is now closed its former scholars are all members of a strong alumni, Friends' School Old Scholars Association. Many of its members are active in year groups and a number of these have an annual or more infrequent meetings. Its legacy lives on.

References

1. Bolam, D. W., *Unbroken Community' The Story of the Friends' School Saffron Walden 1702-1952* (1952), p. 114.
2. Bolam, *op.cit.*, p. 116.
3. Woods, J.C., *A Hundred Years at Saffron Walden 1879-1979* (1979), p. 7.
4. Bolam, *op.cit.*, p. 116.
5. The architect Burgess was also employed by Gibson to design the Teacher Training College building, and the mock Tudor extension on the front of the Town Hall. At Friends' School, Burgess also designed the school sanatorium. In addition to enlarging the Friends' Meeting House, an additional platform (the south one) was constructed at the railway station, with direct access onto Debden Road, to facilitate the transportation of building materials for the school.
6. The head teachers of Friends' School from its opening in 1879 to its closure in 2017 were: George Linney 1879-90, John Edward Walker 1890-1922, C. Brightwen Rowntree 1922-34, Gerald Littleboy 1934-55, Kenneth Nicholson 1955-68, John Woods 1968-89, Sarah Evans 1989-96, Jane Laing 1996-2001, Andy Waters 2001-06, Graham Wigley 2006-13 and Anna Chaudhri 2013-17.
7. Hill Developments Ltd purchased the land on which The Avenue development was made and in exchange they built the new Junior School buildings in 2010-2012. The school magazine was named *The Avenue* (see Fig. 16).
8. See *Saffron Walden Historical Journal* No 27 (Spring 2014), pp 24-25 for an account of the military taking over the school, taken from the Friends' School magazine, *The Avenue* Vol VI. During WW1 20 Old Scholars of the school lost their lives.
9. See *Saffron Walden Historical Journal* No 27 (Spring 2014), p. 19 for an account of conscientious objectors in Saffron Walden during WW1
10. Reynolds, R., *My Life and Crimes* (1956), pp 37-39.
11. See *Saffron Walden Historical Journal* No 26 (Autumn 2013), pp 3-5 for an article and photograph of 'The Squash' train which brought them to school.
12. Kohler, C., *Unwillingly to School: memoirs of the Friends' School, Saffron Walden, 1924-1928* (1985).
13. Woods, *op.cit.*, pp 24-25.
14. Woods, *op.cit.*, p.31.

See also:

Hockley, H. (ed.), *The School on the Hill* (2002).

Watson, T. (ed.), *A History of the Friends' Junior School* (2012).

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All images by courtesy of the Friends' School archives. Copies of these books are held by Saffron Walden Town Library and are available on the Old Scholars Association web site www.oldscholars.com

Note

The author was associated with Friends' School for a total of 71 years. A pupil at Friends' School from 1944 to 1952 and subsequently, in addition to being an Old Scholar, married Margaret Pilgrim, another Old Scholar. Following qualification as a solicitor in 1965, he became a legal advisor to the Governors, a parent and grandparent of pupils, and a Governor 2000-10, serving as Clerk (Chairman) 2005-9.