

Three Hundred Years of Friends' School

A Four-Site Saga

When I first used this title for my Presidential address to the Old Scholars' Association in 1967 a television adaptation had made Galsworthy a little more topical than today – but those four sites are still there all right. Clerkenwell 1702, Islington Road 1786, Croydon 1825 and Saffron Walden 1879. And when it came to planning an Appeal for a 'Tercentenary' in 2002 and I was on the Committee which organised it, I had a head start in drafting its objects. I suggested "to commemorate 300 years of the oldest continuously surviving community in the British Isles providing a Quaker education".

Farrand Radley



The Committee agreed, very kindly.

But first there are a few questions to be answered. Exactly what was started in 1702 to justify a tercentenary in 2002? If, as first described, it was a 'workhouse', did it also qualify as a school – at least enough to justify the description given it by David Bolam in his book, *Unbroken Community*, published for the 250th anniversary in 1952? And if so, is there any other current Quaker establishment that has existed without any gap for 300 years or more, here or anywhere else in the world. And, lastly, was there in 1702, and is there now, such a thing as a Quaker education?

This chapter is an attempt to answer those questions.

Perhaps I ought, first of all, to state my family connections with all this. My grandfather, Alexander Radley, married a Farrand, originally a French name meaning just Smith – the maréchal ferrant (from fer, iron), that is a farrier or blacksmith. Some came over with the Huguenots but my lot definitely escorted the Conqueror! And one John, a baker, got married in 1720 at Peel Meeting House, where the Clerkenwell Boys went on Sundays. Joseph Farrand, 'last and patten maker', accepted the discharge to his care from Clerkenwell of Edward Sweatman in 1781. There were six Farrands at Islington Road and two Radleys, one of whom, Mary Ann, had, according to the Admission Register, "hardly learned anything sixteen months ago when she came to School" – a good academic start for the family!

There were eighteen Farrands and ten Radleys (including Joseph,

later Head of Lisburn in Ulster) at Croydon. A Farrand, Isabella, taught at Saffron Walden before, sadly, ending up at The Retreat. At Walden again, my father, John Charles, was the first (1883-89) to take London Matric, and was a Junior Master (1891-94); and yours truly (1927-33) was in the first Sixth Form to take Higher School Certificate.

My cousin Philip, later Head of Ackworth, was arrested at Walden as a Student Master in 1916 for being a Conscientious Objector, and always claimed to have been the first Quaker to spend a night in The Tower since William Penn. And my father came back for an Old Scholars' Weekend in 1914 and met my mother, Helen Louise Howell, who taught music and had done so before at Ayton. Not for nothing did a law firm recently write to me as Messrs H A Farr & Radley.

Quaker education up to 1702

George Fox was “much exercised with schoolmasters and schoolmistresses”, warning them to teach their children sobriety in the fear of the Lord, that they might not be nursed and trained up in lightness, vanity and wantonness”. In 1668, having also given attention to the problems of marriage satisfactorily, he passed out of London “into the counties” again and came to Waltham (Abbey), where he “established a school for teaching of boys” and “ordered a women’s school to be set up in Shacklewell (in Hackney) “to instruct young lasses and maidens in whatsoever things were civil and useful in the creation”. This had gone by 1677, alas. The boys school lasted not more than ten years after moving to Edmonton in 1679. But it taught two sons of Isaac Penington, one of Robert Barclay, and a grandson of Margaret Fell. The master, Christopher Taylor, left for Pennsylvania, as did his successor, George Keith, who, although a founder of the Penn Charter School there in 1689, blotted his copybook and was finally disowned both in Philadelphia and Britain. So that was the end of Fox’s personal contribution, though it came after an early start by George Whitehead in 1653 and at least two schools run by Friends in prisons, at Stafford and Ilchester, for their comrades there.

By 1690 London Yearly Meeting was warning Friends “not to send their children to the World’s schools to corrupt them by learning Heathen Authors and the names of their gods. Schoolmasters and Schoolmistresses (where they are capable) should take care that they train them in the language of truth and the plainness that becomes the Truth”. Leonard Kenworthy asked us in 1983 to “imagine a small group of people, many of them illiterate, starting schools in a century where education was considered a monopoly of the rich and powerful. Yet the Quakers did just that”. In 1691 there were 27 day schools in England, three in each of Scotland and Ireland, with a published list of fifteen boarding schools – “scholes kept by Friends”. One of these was Penketh, which must be examined with care, since it affects the FSSW claim to unique continuous survival, along with other contenders opened before 1702.

Penketh was a Preparative Meeting boarding school in 1688. One of its later pupils was John Bright, better remembered as an old scholar of Bootham. But in 1834 it was replaced by an entirely distinct foundation under the joint management of Hardshaw East and West

Monthly Meetings. This lasted until 1934, when it fell foul of the Depression, though its Old Scholars Association lasted until 2000. Penketh therefore cannot defeat FSSW. Nor can Stramongate in Kendal, to which my father brought me as a child, as he did to Penketh, since he was on the Committee of both. Opened in 1698, it too died from the Depression in 1932. As the Old Scholars’ magazine, *The Old Stramonian*, movingly put it: “our school is to close, the oldest of its kind. We believe that her passing will be regretted by a wider company than ours which has known her from the inside.” In the end, the school went down fighting: “the school tradition taught the school at least – to play the game.”

Lancaster was around by 1700, operating for long in the wings of the Meeting House, until selling out to a non-Friend body in 1969. (This at least had the decency to name it the George Fox School, though it fails now to provide a Quaker education). Another non-competitor is Sidcot. Although it apparently stole a march on FSSW by announcing its Tercentenary in 1999, that was only an anniversary of its foundation as a Monthly Meeting School under William Jenkins Jun, which closed when he retired in 1728. There was then a gap of more than half a century before John Benwell opened a private school there from about 1784 to 1805. The Headmaster in 1994 confirmed that the school “ceased to exist at Sidcot for some years”. So, although it was refounded in 1808 as a Quarterly Meeting School, it loses out to FSSW on continuity. (Some personal regret here, as I have a small claim to have founded it myself. In 1935, as a Student Master at Sidcot, I played a part in Evelyn Roberts’ *Sidcot Pageant*. I was William Jenkins.)

Turning to the New World, the official list of US boarding schools compiled by the Friends Council of Education in Philadelphia traces two already operating before 1702 and still doing so. William Penn had followed in Fox’s footsteps as a thinker on education: “Let my children be husbandmen and housewives; it is healthy, honest and of good example”. Abington Friends School, Pennsylvania, of 1697, and the William Penn Charter School, Pennsylvania, of 1689, both still flourish. So, as you will see, our claim to be the oldest continuously surviving community providing a Quaker education is only valid on this side of the Atlantic.

Quaker Committee and 'Meeting' Boarding Schools

Long-term Pre-1702

Penketh I (1688-1834); Stramongate (1698-1932); Sidcot I (1699-1728); Lancaster (1700-1969)

William Penn Charter, USA (1689-present); Abington, USA (1697-present)

1702 and After

Clerkenwell (1702) – Islington Road (1786) – Croydon (1825) – Saffron Walden (1879)

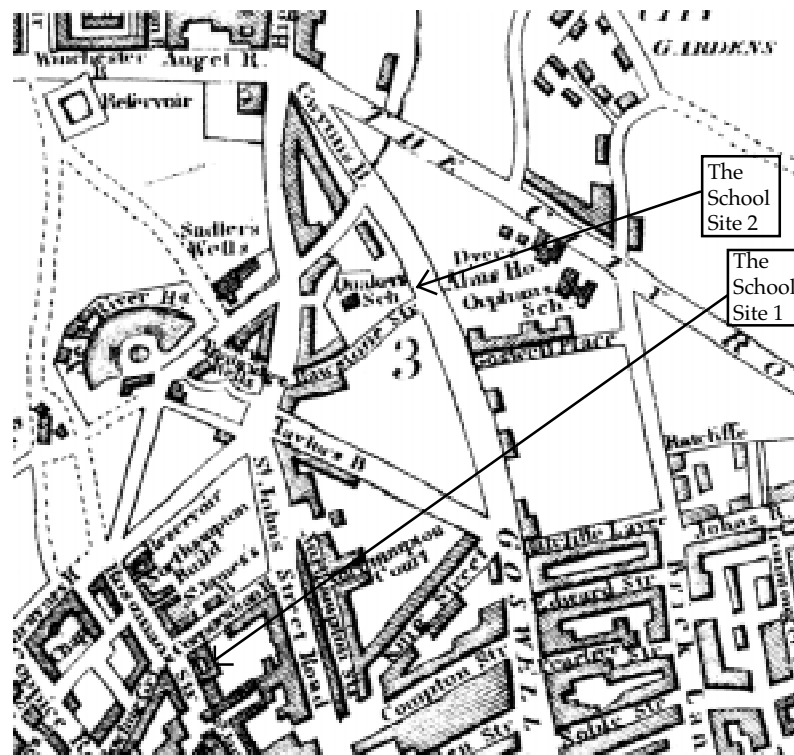
Leeds (1756-1838); Gildersome (1882-1815); Lisburn, Ireland (1774-present); Ackworth (1779-present); The Mount (1784-1814; 1831-present); Mountmellick, Ireland (1786-1921); Newtown, Ireland (1798-present); Ipswich (1790-1800); Sidcot II (1808-present); Wigton (1815-1984); Bootham (1823-present); Rawdon (1832-1921); Penketh II (1834-1934); Brookfield, Ireland (1836-1921); Ayton (1841-1997); Sibford (1842-present); Newton-in-Bowland (1884; 1868-1911); Leighton Park (1890-present)

In the year 2000 there were 73 in USA, 7 in Great Britain and two in Ireland. (Source: Friends House, London. Library Guide 7 – Quaker Schools in Great Britain and Ireland)

CLERKENWELL 1702 – The First of the Four Sites

The key name here is John Bellers (1645- 1725). He was a Quaker cloth merchant, a philosopher and polymath who was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1798 (eight years after his son!). Bellers has been described as “one of those who never sees a wrong without wanting to smite it down – whose minds are ever engaged in shaping schemes for the regeneration of humanity – schemes, alas, too often incapable of being realised”. He certainly smote, anticipating the European Union, the National Health Service, fair parliamentary elections, and turning his mind to a scheme to provide “Profit for the Rich, a Plentiful Living for the Poor and a Good Education for Youth”. These last were his *Proposals for Raising a Colledge of Industry of all Useful Trades and Husbandry* (1695, with a second, and definitive, edition in 1696).

Bellers had already had experience of working for the poor in Bristol and now sought a wider field, presenting a version of his proposals to London Yearly Meeting on 29 May 1697. They were



recommended “to the further consideration and amendment of the morning meeting and our Meeting for Sufferings” and on 19 June 1699 were finally approved. London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting was entrusted with implementing the project. After being gazumped for one site and rejecting “a vinegar house to lett in Islington”, they found a “hous in Clerkenwell” which, on 18 August 1701, was felt to be a “very proper and convenient hous”. A lease was signed by John Bellers, Merchant, and John Hopes, Cornfactor, from the executors of Sir Thomas Rowe, who had run ‘The College of Infants’ in part of the property from 1686 until his death in 1696, something that obviously endeared it to Bellers. It had been a Corporation Workhouse from the 1660s, paid for by local parishioners and accommodating 600 paupers, and a County House of Correction – something Bellers was anxious not to replicate – but had been closed in 1673 as too expensive. It has been described as “a commodious and airy building, ideally suited to the use of which it was put”, ie at the minimum to house the ‘Antient Friends’ and teach the children trades which would help them to be apprenticed and provide saleable articles; all in one community.

Was it a workhouse or a school?

The terms of the 2002 Appeal were carefully chosen. FSSW celebrates 300 years of a Community, a word used in case any challenge should be raised that the establishment at Clerkenwell – at least at the outset – did not fall under the description of a School. Mind you, in the 200th anniversary booklet written in 1902 by James Backhouse Crosfield, Clerk to the School Committee, it was categorically quoted that on 27 July 1702 “two women aged 83 and 75 were come in from the Bull meeting” and “John Staploe give account one boy from the Peele is come in”, this being taken to indicate the date of commencement of the original School. It was a claim echoed by Campbell Stewart in 1957: “this school (FSSW) had its beginning in 1702, a very oblique result of the remarkable suggestion of John Bellers. It was St James Workhouse in Clerkenwell, London, refuge for a few old and infirm people and a boarding school for some young children.”

Yet the actual title of the community at its beginnings was undoubtedly a Workhouse. In the minutes of a ‘Meeting for the business of the poore’ a reference to ‘the hous in Clerkingwell’ is noted in the margin as simply ‘Worke Hous’. And Richard Hutton, a Lancastrian who was Steward from 1711 to 1737 and kept a voluminous ‘Complaints Book’, refers habitually to the ‘hous’ but has the management committee of thirty meet at “the workhouse of the people called Quakers at Clerkenwell”. By 1739 Maitland’s *History of London* made a distinction between the ‘Quaker Workhouse, being both an Hospital and Workhouse’ and the ‘Quakers School’ (belonging to it!) and in 1746 another book, by Timothy Revan, is called, ‘with the full support of the Committee’, *An Account of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the School and Work-house maintained by the people called Quakers in Clerkenwell*. A committee minute of 2 December 1772 simply refers to ‘the Charity called the Quakers School and Workhouse situate in Clerkenwell’. And every boy on leaving after 1775 was given a paper: ‘Advice on quitting the Friends’ School and Workhouse at Clerkenwell, London’.

This would have pleased Bellers, who never liked the word ‘Workhouse’ and already in 1718 had written in an epistle to the Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex that he “felt it necessary to change its name from a Workhouse to either an Hospital or a College, but rather the latter: because some parents will not put their children to so Contemptible a place of Education as a Workhouse or an Hospital, the first sounding too much like a Bridewell (the local Prison) and the second like an Almshouse, whereas a College bespeaks a more Liberal Education”. Unfortunately, his suggestion was not taken up.

Was the Education a Quaker Education’?

John Bellers, like Penn before him, had practical views on education: “beyond Reading and Writing a multitude of Scholars is not so useful to the Public as some think”. But his biographer, George Clarke, writing in 1987, feels that “his proposals regarding education were the most serious attempts made during the late 17th and early 18th centuries to provide for a full and caring education for all children, rich and poor”.

The children went to Meeting at PeeI, in St John’s Lane, which, until it was destroyed by enemy action in World War Two, was London’s oldest Meeting House. A schoolmaster and a schoolmistress taught them the three Rs in two-hour periods, and the Committee was able to report, on 1 January 1707/8 for example, that “the children have a suitable education”. As David Bolam writes: “the fundamental aim of all teaching was religious. Both the technique and aims were the same as those of the contemporary charity schools except that the catechisms used set forth a distinctive Quaker interpretation of life”. The material included questions like this: “Q. What saith the Apostle of the Righteous undergoing Tribulation? A. We must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God. Yea, and that all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution”. This must have spoken closely to the condition of children with parents under duress or in jail.

A Committee Order of 1709 asks “for the benefit of the Family and the advancement of Piety and Godliness therein, that after the boys are dressed at the direction of the Steward they read as many chapters in the Bible as he shall see meet. The same also to be observed in the evenings, and as often as may be, to be called together to wait upon and Worship God”.

Clerkenwell Assessed

John Bellers was highly regarded as a social economist by Karl Marx. In *Capital* (1867) he sees him as a “veritable phenomenon in the history of political economy”.

This opinion must have received a greater world-wide circulation than anything published by Quakers, and it is hardly surprising that the contemporary Russian academic Tatyana Pavlova adds her tribute. She does, however, ascribe his lack of recognition in his own lifetime and his “assignment to oblivion until Marx” to “his tragedy in attempting to fuse two incompatible things, maximum advantage for the rich and welfare for the poor”. He did not “think in terms of undermining the pillars of the existing set-up”, but she

gives him credit for his pedagogic ideas, which were “more democratic and humanistic than those of the contemporary philosopher John Locke”.

Bellers’s first scheme was certainly ambitious. Children were to be educated in the college, a simple book education being combined with training in handicrafts, but, as Ruth Fry pointed out in 1935, “his later editions omit mention of children and the place becomes a labour colony”. And George Clarke finds the Workhouse, both in name and application, “a pale shadow of Bellers’s all-embracing concept”. The Board of Education Report on its 1905 inspection of FSSW is rather dismissive: “it was originally a Workhouse School for poor London children, but in this form it does not seem to have been very successful.”

As to its influence, commentators differ in their assessment of this early experiment in inspiring imitations or affecting the general course of Quaker education. But Campbell Stewart praises “the minority of schools founded 1695 to 1725” for “playing a vital part in the educational history of the Society in keeping alive the spirit of an earlier enthusiasm during the period of decline around the 1720s”. This was caricatured in a cartoon of the day showing a Quaker leaning on two sticks marked ‘Sinless Perfection’ and ‘Infallibility’ – the caption was “Quakerism Drooping”! At that time, John Wesley and his followers were enjoying the kind of popular favour which George Fox had had in the previous century, and from him comes perhaps the strongest tribute of all. He is quoted as saying that he regretted time did not allow a visit to the Quakers’ Workhouse but that it was said “to be the best to take a plan from of any in London”.

The Clerkenwell Site after 1786

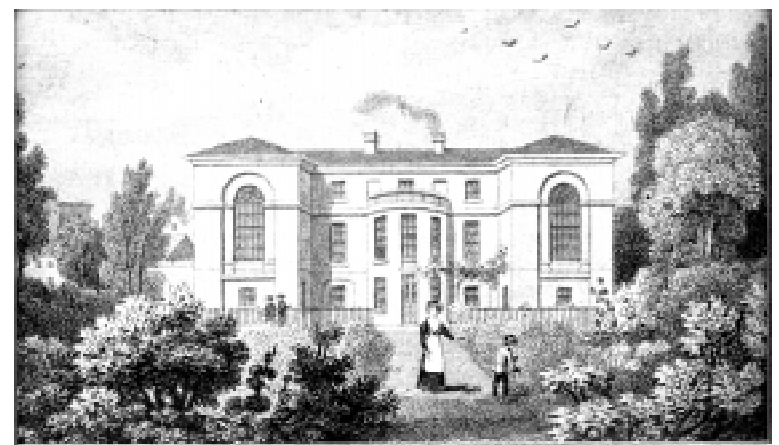
When the Committee decided to find a new home because the numbers of Antient Friends were felt to be inhibiting the development of the children’s school, the Clerkenwell premises suffered neglect, and by 1803 were described as the “ruins of the Quakers’ Workhouse” which had “fallen into decay many years past, and what remains is let to poor occupants at very low rents”. Two years later these ruins were pulled down and the site was used for a series of prisons. There had been a Bridewell in Clerkenwell since 1616, hived off from the original at Blackfriars, and this was replaced first by a New Prison in 1775 and then by a new New Prison in 1818, which became the Middlesex House of Detention from 1845 to 1877. It was this building that was the scene of a terrorist incident in 1867 – the outer wall was blown to pieces in an attempt to free some Irish Fenian prisoners and a row of houses opposite destroyed. The

ringleader of this Gunpowder plot, Michael Barrett, was the last man to be publicly executed in this country.

The site was subsequently cleared for a new London Schools Board Secondary School, opened in 1893 and named after Hugh Myddelton, whose nearby New River of 1616 was a pioneer enterprise in bringing fresh water to London. Nearly a hundred years later, in 1981, the school started sharing premises with the Kingsway Princeton Further Education College, which got into debt, and by 1998 both had to vacate the site and sell it to developers, who started turning the building into luxury flats and offices. Only an Infants school at the Woodbridge Street end of the site survives as the Rosemary School for special needs. The dungeons, which had been taken over for School staffrooms, photographic darkrooms and the like, became for a short while a tourist attraction as the ‘House of Detention 1616-1990 – London’s Underground Prison’. Now this too has gone, not even its impressive doorway remains. One thing John Bellers would have applauded – at least the site was occupied for a time by a College!

ISLINGTON ROAD – 1786-1825

You would think that Islington Road means the road to Islington. And so it did, but the best contemporary map-maker, John Rocque (1744-46), shows several roads with that name, and they include St John Street and Goswell Road, both in Clerkenwell. Between them lay our second site. Although the School Report of 1817 calls it Islington Road, both Crosfield (1902) and Bolam (1952) put just



FRIENDS' SCHOOL, ISLINGTON.
(PLAN BY AUGUSTUS J. HARRISON)

Islington on their title pages, adding the word Road in the text. And without question the site was Islington Road Estate on Hermitage Fields, in the area of present-day Rawstorne Street.

The community took over the remaining 148 years of a lease from the owners, the Worshipful Company of Brewers, in 1786. The new site was in an academic area. The Hermitage from which the fields took their name was a 10 acre estate that had belonged to Dame Alice Owen and on which she had built almshouses and a school in 1613. The Dame Alice Owen Boys' School moved to a new building in the 1840s and, in 1886, was joined by a Girls' School, blitzed in 1940, rebuilt in 1963, and now, as the Dame Alice Owen Building, a department of the City University (the former Northampton Poly). Both Dame Alice schools moved out in 1976 to Potters Bar.

The building was beautiful, with a Robert Adam style bay window. According to an 1803 description it "had the appearance of a villa, surrounded as it is by pleasure grounds, gardens and trees". Although only just around the corner from the old Workhouse it was in a Spa area with Sadler's and Bagnigge Wells nearby. And it was here that emancipation took place, both from the Antient Friends (only seven of them left by then) and from the name of Workhouse. In 1811 it became the 'Friends School, under the care of the Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex' – even the local maps changed its description from 'Quaker Workhouse' to 'Friends Schools'.

Despite the earlier account of a building in which "the ceilings (sic) were remarkably high, and the windows large, consequently the rooms are perfectly dry and well aired", it may not have been entirely satisfactory. An 1828 history of the area tells a different story: "The ceilings of all the rooms are not remarkable for their height, and it is a fact that the Society have been induced to remove the institution to Croydon, in Surrey, partly, at least, on account of the dampness of the lower apartments, and their fears for the health of those who occupied them. This removal took place at Midsummer 1825, since when the structure has been deserted." The Committee had given a building lease to one Christopher Cockerton, who pulled the building down and constructed a labyrinth of streets and slums, the rent from which helped sustain the school at Croydon. And when the 148-year lease was up, in 1934, there was enough of a windfall to enable the School, by then at Saffron Walden, to have a new Assembly Hall and to get Paul Mauger (architect and Old Scholar) to turn the old Lecture Hall into a Library.

If you go back to the Islington Road site now you will find a Friend Street on its northern boundary. Is that a memorial? Well yes, but to one George Friend who ran the Finsbury Dispensary for

the Poor on the corner there! The Brewer's Society, the ground landlords, are still evident in the line of restored 19th century tenements along Rawstorne Street.

CROYDON – 1825-1879

The Committee took over another beautiful house in Croydon, and one nearly as old (1708) as the date we started from. But they had learned: a minute of 1824 says "it is desirable that the rooms in the wings (the new additions to be built) be not less than thirteen feet in height and those of the dormitories not less than twelve feet". Some splendid glass negative pictures taken before it left in 1879 by Bedford Lemere (Old Scholars' President and Architectural Photographer to Queen Victoria) show its spaciousness and that of the beautiful long garden stretching away into the distance.

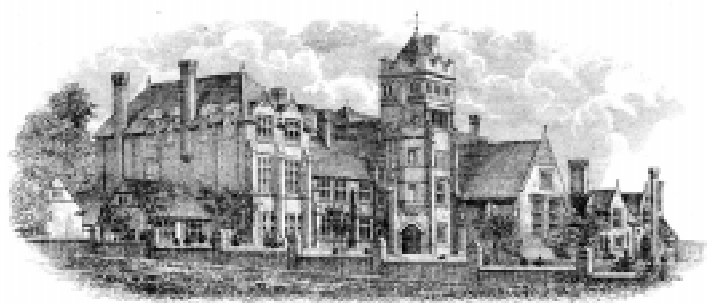
My uncle, Alfred Alexander Radley, who later emigrated to Canada and became President of their Methodist Conference, was there and wrote to me of his experience as a child "during five years (1867-72) in a boarding school under the control of the Society of Friends. Games were encouraged. Cricket, football, shinny, paperchase and others. Nature study was stimulated by long walks into the country and the collecting of specimens: plants, butterflies, shells, birds' eggs. Budding literary genius found its opportunity in the 'Select Society' to which the older boys were admitted on the approval of the Teachers' Meeting. All of which was good. But



over against this put the fact that we had no organised physical drill or athletics; anything like the Boy Scouts or Cadets would have been frowned upon; dramatics were taboo, as also was the singing of secular songs (and even hymns for a while); no music, vocal or instrumental, was taught or even allowed; novels were absolutely forbidden; theatre-going and public entertainment (except lectures) were not to be thought of and anything like games of chance, such as cards etc, were equally regarded."

The School was one of a motley collection of educational establishments in Croydon, from the Military Seminary of the East India Company through a Dame School, a 'School of Industry' (very much up our street), a Ragged School sponsored by Lord Shaftesbury, and the Warehousemen and Clerks' School similarly by the 1st Earl in 1879. After a series of lesser schools in the building came the solid prep school, St Anselm's, in 1904, which pulled down the wings but left the 1708 core and added a Memorial Hall for World War One. And then, in September 1940, it all went, along with the Head's House and the Friends Meeting House. Providentially the school had by that time been evacuated.

What happened was this: the Germans had dropped a landmine captured at Dunkirk from British stores and, out of respect for its origins, it refused to explode on landing; but on removal it did, though luckily no-one was hurt. Of the property the only survival was the 1708 front gate, which had allowed the blast to whistle through it. And it was a notable survivor, very likely the work of Thomas Robinson, who was responsible for work at St Paul's Cathedral and for two local masterpieces at Carshalton Park and Beddington, both now in the USA. The Beddington Gates were



Friends School, Saffron Walden.

replaced by a replica, insisted on as part of the deal, and they share with our gates a U motif, which certainly points to ours being by Robinson. He has been described by the ironwork expert Raymond Lister, in his 1957 *Decorative Ironwork in Great Britain*, as "representing the greatest achievement of pure English blacksmithery".

During the war the gate had been carefully guarded by Ernest Allen, a Croydon Friend. But when it came to its reinstatement, there was nowhere to put it. Croydon Council had built its new high-rise municipal offices on the site, and the Meeting House had lost ground through a road-widening scheme, which includes the delightfully named Friends Road. So the gates ended up at Saffron Walden. A plaque commemorates their 1976 re-opening by Duncan Fairn, Clerk of London and Middlesex General Meeting, in the presence of two former Clerks of London Yearly Meeting, Redford Crosfield Harris and Godfrey Mace (an Old Scholar), and the acknowledged pioneer in tracing these four sites, George Edwards.

SAFFRON WALDEN 1879

Sir William Temple Bt (1628-99), a diplomat and contemporary of George Fox, wrote of this successful medication: "The spirit of Saffron is of all others the noblest and yet the most innocent virtue. I have known it restore a man out of the very agonies of death when left by physicians as wholly desperate." It's doubtful whether this old opinion weighed with the choice of a more healthy location, but in a way saffron has always been with the School. There is a Saffron Hill in Clerkenwell, and the very name of Croydon has been defined as the valley where the wild saffron or crocus grows. The market town of Chipping Walden was saffronised in the mid-14th century, and saffron was cultivated here to the mid-18th, adding extra wealth to the wool trade. For it remains one of the most expensive herbs, needing a whole field to make a pound's weight because only the stamens are used for the yellow colour. Though the Old Scholars' badge of the 1930s had the flower itself yellow, the saffron on the 2002 Appeal has gone for the more correct purple.

When Croydon became too unhealthy from typhoid, and even a death from rheumatic fever, the Committee had explored other locations, among them Alton and Chelmsford, both – like Walden – outside the area of London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting, the School's owner. But, in 1876, came an irresistible offer from a Walden Friend, the banker and former Mayor of the town, George Stacey Gibson, of a site – and a free one too! "It is beautifully situated . . . on an open breezy hill above the town, near the railway station and within a very easy distance of the Meeting House." And what clinched it, after the Croydon experience, was that it had "a good supply of water from a deep artesian well".

It was breezy all right. Early photos show it in splendid isolation with nothing even remotely near it. The architect was Edward Burgess (1847-1929), who also built the local Grammar School in 1881 and a Training College in 1884. None of these counted for much with Pevsner, who wrote in his *Buildings of England*: “the three educational buildings are of red brick, in a Tudor style, and have little to recommend them architecturally”. But Croydon had bequeathed its 1872 clock, which had graced the garden front, and can now be proudly seen from The Avenue, in the view immortalised in the Quaker Tapestry panel depicting all the Friends’ Schools of its day. The School also inherited the Barometer, one of the group given to all the Friends’ Schools in 1871 by the first Quaker MP, Joseph Pease. But the real treasure remains the 1787 clock, made two years before the French Revolution, and that came from Islington Road in the famous clock-making district of Clerkenwell.

The School’s Old Scholars’ Association, of which my grandfather Alexander Radley had been a founder member in 1869, played a large part in the Bicentenary Appeal of 1902. The tangible result was the Swimming Pool, and the main target of the 2002 Appeal is its refurbishment. It is of some sorrow to me that there is no possibility of restoring one of its main pleasures, the diving board, officialdom having proclaimed, long ago, that the depth of the pool was too shallow. But no-one ever had an accident from it, and we are deprived of that most magnificent sight – a weighty Friend doing a Honeypot off the top board and splashing everyone near!

An article in *Past and Present*, the only magazine ever to cover all the Friends’ Schools, commented in 1907 that the “premises are splendid, though I am told that if anyone wants to benefit the School there is still lacking a forge, an art room and a separate hospital”. The art room came in 1921 when Fred Rowntree built one over the new Boys’ Teaching Block, and the Sanatorium, again by Burgess, was completed in 1913, again with help from the Old Scholars in providing furnishings for the convalescent wards. It is now the flourishing Junior Branch, Gibson House, for Infants and Juniors. But we still await the forge, which would have given me, Farrand, the maréchal ferrant or blacksmith, a unique chance to shine!

One of the extra things for which we have to thank the donor of the site was the enlargement of the 1791 Meeting House in the town to allow the School’s participation en bloc every Sunday morning. During World War One it became, for a while, a canteen for troops, who also took over the entire School for a few months in 1915. The Committee were advised to put in a large bill for damages in the expectation that they would get half; in the event they submitted what they considered a strictly fair estimate, and got it in full. Of the other alterations since then, one charming detail stands out

as typical of the care shown over all this time for human, even Quaker, values. When Burgess was called back, though in his seventies, to make additions, he built a new spur, housing the boys’ music cubicles. They were far enough away from the main block to be almost sound-proofed.

QUAKER EDUCATION NOW — HOW DOES SAFFRON WALDEN STAND?

Does the School still ‘provide a Quaker education’ and thus justify the Appeal wording in every respect – if you allow that I have satisfactorily dealt with the claim to be ‘the oldest surviving community’ doing just that in the British Isles?

The Old Scholar John R Reader, who became Head of Ayton, delivered the Swarthmore Lecture in 1979 with the title *Of Schools and Schoolmasters*: “The point has been made that Friends have not produced a distinctive philosophy of education throughout their history and that they are divided in their views today. They have always been clear, however, about the spirit in which education should be practised even if they have fallen short at times in the way they have expressed it.”

Britain Yearly meeting is now actively concerned with establishing Quaker Values in Education, and the former FSSW Head, Sarah Evans, was a speaker at a recent Conference. She had already, in the Annual Report of 1994, declared that “at the heart of the School’s aims is to see that of God in every one”. And London and Middlesex General Meeting, which must surely have the last word, minuted in 1996 that “despite a minority of Friends on the staff and among the scholars or residents it maintains a distinctive Quaker ethos which all who become involved recognise. There is a palpably happy atmosphere and a determination that everyone within the environment should be treated equally: it is seen to be essentially Quaker.”

Based on the Presidential Address given as a Magic Lantern Lecture during Britain Yearly Meeting, 28 May 2000, and printed in the Friends’ Historical Society Journal, Vol 59, No 2, 2001.

I have always nursed my private definition of education as e-duc-at-ion, the art of extracting ducats, or cash, out of parents. And if you look at an old wall board at Walden you may indeed wonder what the parents of ninety years ago thought they were paying for. The board bears the names of (boy) Senior Scholars (including my father) and Athletic Champions from 1885 onwards - until 1910, that is, when it just said ‘Co-education’, drew a line and ended. So, with no more studies and no more sport, were they just paying to get their offspring into boarding care?