

A calendar of the main events in the history of  
**A COMMUNITY THROUGH THREE CENTURIES**

**The story of Friends' School, Saffron Walden 1702-2002**

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This drawing was used on the cover of the first issue of the school magazine, "The Avenue" in 1910 and for many year's after.

The foundation of what is now Friends' School Saffron Walden occurred 55 years after George Fox, the originator of the Religious Society of Friends' (Quakers), started his mission of preaching to the people and 50 years after the start of the Society.

In 1702, in Clerkenwell, a combined work-house and school was established. This followed in some respects the principles, of a "College of Industry" as suggested by John Bellers (ideas later taken up by Karl Marx). It was not the first Quaker School but is the only one in England to have survived for 300 years without a break. At the time of the opening, education for boys was very limited, and for girls almost non-existent. There was religious persecution then, nonconformists, particularly the Quakers were imprisoned for their unauthorised meetings for worship.

The initial premises were close to the edge of the built-up area of the City of London which 40 years earlier had been seriously affected by the plague and great fire. A schoolmaster was appointed in 1707 and a schoolmistress in 1716.

Having children and old people in the same establishment caused difficulties and so when the school moved a short distance to just off Islington Road, in 1786, the "Ancient Friends" moved elsewhere. This proved to be expensive and the old people rejoined the children until the workhouse function ceased in 1811. Education, initially intended to enable boys to become apprentices and girls to become apprentices or domestic servants was progressively improved.

In consequence of the great increase in the number of houses in the neighbourhood of the institution, the premises became by degrees unsuitable for their function. After deliberations a move to Croydon, then a small free-standing town, was agreed. A house and grounds were bought, the building extended to take 75 boys and 75 girls and occupation commenced in 1825. Education and living standards continued to improve but health became a serious problem in a rapidly growing town. This led to the search for a new site. Saffron Walden was chosen. This was influenced by a gift of land. The newly built schools opened in 1879

During the years 1898-1903 extensive additions were made. These included laboratories, handicraft rooms, music rooms, studies gymnasium and indoor swimming bath. Later a sanatorium was added and at various times more classrooms, laboratories, bedrooms, assembly hall, sports hall and music school were provided.

In parallel with these physical improvements have been significant advances in the curriculum and a corresponding high standard of results. At first there was separate teaching for boys and girls but from 1910 a co-education scheme, devised by the teachers has operated. A wide range of out of school activities have also been available and music, drama and sport have flourished. For many years there was close collaboration with the Essex Education Authority when Friends' School provided accommodation for many local pupils. With over 300 years of achievement, rightly celebrated, the school looks forward to further progress within the Quaker tradition.

## **THE MAIN EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY IN CONTEXT**

**Sources of information:** For the period up to 1952 the dates and events are mostly taken from David Bolam's book "Unbroken Community" (text, appendices & his notes).. Other sources are School Annual Reports to London & Middlesex Quarterly/General Meeting, Old Scholars Association Annual Reports and copies of "The Avenue". The table was originally



- 1783-86 Steward: Josiah (d. 1784) and Elizabeth Collier  
**1786 Removal of School to Islington Road (Rawstorne St.) (but not the Elderly)**  
 1786-1792 Steward:= Elizabeth Collier  
 1787 Clock (now at SW) by Wagstaff (a member of School Committee) in stalled at Islington Road premises  
 1789 *French Revolution*  
 1792 "Ancient Friends" move to Islington Road  
 1792-1808 Steward:= John & Ann Withers  
 1795 1d per week pocket money given  
 1799 First systematic school timetable introduced for boys

## **START OF NINETEENTH CENTURY**

- 1808 *Sidcot Friends' School founded, Winscombe, North Somerset.*  
 1808 "Steward" becomes "Master" [Office of Steward & Schoolmaster combined]  
 1808-9 Master = Thomas Salter  
 1809-16 Master = Edmund Gower (at times assisted by his wife Mary)  
 1810 *British & Foreign Schools Society founded*  
 1811 *National Society founded to provide schools*  
 1811 School re-modelled: children from southern QM's, no more elderly  
 1815 Boys' Juvenile Literary Society begins?  
 1815 *Wigton Friends' School founded in Cumbria*  
 1815 Name change to "School" only  
 1818 Single Juvenile Literary Society formed  
 1816-18 Master = William and Mary Baker  
 1818-25 Master = Abigail Binns  
 1823 *Lawrence St / Bootham Friends' School founded in York*  
**1825 Nov Removal of School to Croydon (Park Lane)**  
 1825-33 Henry & Edith Dymond appointed Superintendent  
 1830 First known school magazine - "The Monthly Packet"  
 1831 *The Mount Friends' School founded in York*  
 1833 *First State Grant for Education*  
 1833 *Slavery abolished*  
 1833-38 Superintendent = Edward & Elizabeth Brady  
 1837 "Girls' Society for the Improvement of the Mind " founded  
 1837 Friends' Education Society begins  
 1838-42 Superintenden = Elizabeth Brady  
 1841 *Ayton Friends' School founded in Great Ayton North Yorkshire*  
 1842 *Sibford Friends' School founded in Banbury, Oxfordshire*  
 1843-53 Superintendent = John and Anna Sharp  
 1848 Regular annual holiday of one month decided upon  
 1850 *North London Collegiate School for Ladies started (Girls in 1871) Founders promoted the cause of schools for girls.*  
 1853-54 Superintendent = Charles and Sarah Fryer  
 1854-60 Superintendent = Sarah Fryer assisted by William Robinson  
 1855 Publication: "The Monthly Gleaner" established  
 1856 Names of children started to be used instead of numbers  
 1860-69 Superintendent = William and Mary Ann Robinson  
 1862 Children allowed to talk during meal times  
 1862 *Schools legislation provided for payment by results*  
 1863 First external inspection of School (by British & Foreign Schools Society)

- 1869-90 Superintendent = George & Lucy Linney  
 1869 First meetings of former pupils leading to start of OSA  
 1870 *Forster's Education Act created School Boards to provide elementary education, compulsory from 1880, free from 1891*  
 1872 Clock now facing The Avenue first installed at Croydon  
 1873 Non-Friend children admitted  
 1875 Drawing first taught  
 1875 Two serious outbreaks of Typhoid Fever at the School resulting in decision to leave Croydon  
**1879 (Aug 19th) Removal of School to Saffron Walden** into new purpose-built boys and girls schools on present site  
 1880 Teaching of music introduced as a voluntary subject for girls  
 1881 Friends' Central Board of Education established (a recommendation for co-education not taken up by School Committee)  
 1881 College of Preceptors exams first taken  
 1883 A Scheme of Trusts approved by Charity Commissioners  
 1886 Day scholar admitted  
 1890 *Leighton Park Friends' School founded in Reading*  
 1890 –1922 Superintendent = John Edward Walker with Anna Phyllis Walker as Mistress of the Family  
 1891 Title of "Superintendent" replaced by "Head Master"  
 1892 Chemistry Laboratory opened  
 1894 First Whitsuntide gathering of Old Scholars Association at the School  
 1894-1920 Senior Mistress = Lucy Fairbrother, from 1910 "Head Mistress"  
 1896 Annual examination begins, includes exhibition of children's work  
 1896 Cookery classes instituted  
 1898 Music practice rooms and photographic darkroom completed  
 1899-1902 *Boer War*

## **START OF TWENTIETH CENTURY**

- 1901 Teachers studies provided on "girls' side"  
 1902 Bi-centenary celebrated. "Sketch of 200 Years" published  
 1902 Swimming Bath and Gymnasium completed  
 1902 Half-years replaced by three term pattern  
 1903 Masters Block (studies) completed  
 1903 *First powered flight by aircraft (Wright Bros in USA) (in UK -1908)*  
 1907 First recorded "School Tramp" (educational tour) for boys led by CBR  
 1908 School Sunday Evening Meeting instituted  
 1908 *First school meals provided*  
 1910 Co-education commences (joint class teaching throughout school in scheme proposed by teachers)  
 1910 Official School magazine: "The Avenue" started publication  
 1910 Girls included in School Tramp for first time  
 1912 *First cinema in Walden opens*  
 1913 School Sanatorium built  
 1913 First Friends' School scholar to pass London Matriculation Examination  
 1913 First OSA Lecture Week-end held (continued with gaps to 1974)  
 1914-18 *First World War*  
 1914-15 School requisitioned for military use for 11 weeks  
 1917 House competition began  
 1918 World-wide influenza epidemic affected most of School but no deaths

1918	Age of entry to School raised from 9 to 10
1918	<i>National school leaving age raised to 14</i>
1920	Revised "Organisation and Scheme of Work" (Curriculum) adopted
1920	Burnham Scale of salaries adopted
1920-37	Headmistress = Florence Priestman appointed. L Fairbrother retires
Early 1920s	Pair of houses bought & named "Hillcroft" to accommodate headmaster & girls' hostel, etc (Sold in 1994)
1921	School recognised by Board of Education
1922	New 3 storey teaching block erected at east end of main building
1922	Head Master - J E Walker retires and C Brightwen Rowntree is promoted
1923	Modified Dalton Plan for teaching is adopted
1925	Cricket Pavilion built, a gift of Old Scholars
1928	<i>Women in UK get equal voting rights to men</i>
1929	Jubilee of School at Walden. Appeal for a junior school
1930	Junior School opens in newly purchased "Flint House"
1931	Post-Matriculation course began
1932	<i>Second cinema in Walden opens (Talkies!)</i>
1933	Electric light installed in most of ground floor of building
1934-55	Headmaster –C B Rowntree retires, Gerald Littleboy appointed
1935	First "Director of School Music" appointed
1936	Biology Lab + Geography Room and Assembly Hall completed. Lecture Room becomes Library
1936	First children admitted on recommendation of Essex Education Committee
1937	"Robins Acre" purchased for Headmaster (Sold in 1991)
1937-44	Headmistress – F. Priestman retires and Sylvia Clark is appointed
late 30s/early 40s	Refugee children enter Junior and main School
1939-45	<i>Second World War</i>
1940	Girls evacuated from Tottenham High School taught at FSSW
1944	<i>"Butler" Education Act , established pattern of primary, secondary &amp; further education, compulsory &amp; free to age 15, later 16.</i>
1944-64	Headmistress – S Clarke resigns and Jennie Ellinor appointed
1945	Parent-Teacher Association formed
1946	Age of entry established at 11
1946	2 Essex County Council representatives added to School Committee
1946	Plans for major building development prepared but not implemented
1947	<i>Women could take degrees at Oxford for first time. Cambridge 1960's</i>
1948	Junior School closes. House renamed "Croydon House" and is used for domestic science etc.
1948	Decision by Friends' Yearly Meeting to continue Friends' schools
1948	Chimney stack above clock at rear of building falls in storm
1949-50	Improvements to kitchens carried out
1949	Mark Leicester makes legacy to School
1949	Half-holiday granted to pupils for award of first State Scholarship to a pupil (Alice Kendon). (OSA Report 1942 records State Scholarship obtained by Harold Mattingly but he had attended the Leys School in the later years)
1950	2 Classrooms & house for Bursar (The Laurels) built
1952	Electric lighting in buildings completed
1952	250 years of the School celebrated.- Pageant, with commissioned choral music, performed on stage & David Bolam's "Unbroken Community" published
1952	Hard tennis courts constructed - partly gift of Old Scholars
1954	School Committee reduced from 40 to 24 members

- 1955-68 Headmaster –G Littleboy retires, Kenneth Nicholson appointed
- 1955 Science block & girls' changing rooms completed
- 1956 Ministry of Education General Inspection
- 1957 'Flu epidemic affected 150 boarders at one time
- 1957 Direct Grant status applied for - this was not granted
- 1959 Proposals for amalgamated Friends' School bursaries
- 1959 Greater freedom given to scholars on half-holidays and Sundays
- 1960-85 Reg Reynolds Memorial Award Scheme commenced
- 1961 Essex Wing built
- 1964 Jennie Ellinor (Headmistress) retires. Phyllippa Brown appointed Assistant Head (resigns 1965) Cyril Mummery made Deputy Head (until 1972 then Dean of Studies)
- 1964 First of many annual visits by staff & pupils to La Coûme work-camp
- 1965 Joy Ashford (later Dupont) made Head of Girls' Side & from 1968 Headmistress until 1972
- 1966 Sanatorium becomes boarding/home base for 40 junior boys & called "Gibson House"
- 1966 Last General Meeting at School – the event is replaced
- 1966 Autumn Term break introduced
- 1967 Classroom block ("Crosfield") opened (later found to have high-alumina cement in upper floor and closed for repairs)
- 1967 "Board of Governors" replaces School Committee
- 1968 Redundant town water tower and reservoir purchased
- 1968-89 Headmaster – K Nicholson retires, John Woods appointed
- 1969 Old Scholars Association centenary celebrated
- 1969 *First manned lunar landing*
- 1970 Occasional meetings between governors, staff & senior pupils instituted
- 1970's *Both cinemas in Walden close*
- 1972-77 Joy Ashford (Headmistress) resigns and Ena Evans appointed as Deputy Head
- 1973 Sub-Committee review ownership of premises to rationalise property
- 1973 *School leaving age raised to 16*
- 1973 Last of Essex County Council sponsored day scholars
- 1975 2 open days held instead of GM (Friends etc in April, Parents Sept)
- 1975 Specialist teaching block ("Leicester) opened
- 1976 Gate salvaged from Croydon FS premises installed at Walden
- 1976 Eric Brown, School's first bursar retires after 30 years.
- 1977 Concern expressed at declining numbers of pupils
- 1977 Week-end leave made easier
- 1977-1984 Deputy Head – Ena Evans resigns, Margaret Brandon appointed
- 1978 Scholarships established for 6th formers
- 1979 100 years of School at Walden celebrated. John Woods' book published
- 1981 School invited by DES to join Assisted Places Scheme & after debate agree to join (Scheme phased out in 1997)
- 1982 Out of c330 pupils, 34 are supported by assisted places scheme. 15% of pupils are from Quaker families
- 1982 *Falklands War*
- 1984-87 Deputy Head– Margaret Brandon retires, Christine Weston appointed
- 1984 Sports Hall and Music School completed.
- 1985 Governors re-affirm their faith in the future of the School as a co-ed Quaker boarding and day school
- 1985 Two members of staff invited to attend Governors meetings

- 1986 Older archives deposited at Essex Record Office (pre 1936)
- 1986 School catering contract awarded to outside agency
- 1987 CDT workshop extension built
- 1987 Governors faced with serious decline in numbers discuss introduction of 5 day week
- 1988 Deputy Head -Christine Weston resigns (1987). Trina Davies and Martin Hugall appointed as joint Deputy Heads
- 1988 Governors meet with addition of family (staff) member
- 1988 *"Baker" Education Act - affects all levels of education*
- 1989-96 Head (as called from 1985) John Woods retires, Sarah Evans appointed
- 1989 Governors decide on 5 day week with interesting activities for those staying at school at weekends
- 1990 Introduction of post exams 2 week work experience for form 5
- 1990-1995 Deputy Head – Trina Davies resigns (1989). Jane Laing appointed
- 1990 School becomes Limited Liability Company from 1/1/91
- 1991 Re-structure of school week begins. Earlier start and Saturday lessons transferred to Wednesday pm. with activities after school each day
- 1991 Tercentenary of death of George Fox commemorated
- 1991 Robins Acre (Head's house) sold
- 1992 Governors concern over falling numbers. Weekly boarding seen as appropriate lifestyle change
- 1992 Junior Department opens in Gibson House (7-10 year olds)
- 1993 Board of Governors reduces sub-committees
- 1993 School represented for second year at convention in Hong Kong to attract overseas pupils
- 1993 Junior Department admits children from 5 years old
- 1994 Decision made to sell Hillcroft
- 1995 Junior Department numbers rise to 100 and adds former medical centre to accommodation
- 1996 First boarding co-ordinator appointed
- 1996 Favourable report following short HMI Inspection
- 1996-2001 Head-Sarah Evans resigns, Jane Laing (Deputy Head) appointed as Head
- 1997 Assisted Places Scheme phased out by government
- 1997 Marketing & School development plans introduced
- 1997 Quaker audit of School carried out
- 1997 Start of Tercentenary Appeal for refurbishment of swimming bath
- 1998 Legacy from Maurice Arnold enables hard play areas to be improved
- 1998 Strategic review of School carried out by KPMG

## ***START OF TWENTY – FIRST CENTURY***

- 2000 Science Laboratory block rebuilt
- 2000 Swimming bath roof replaced (Tercentenary Appeal Fund scheme)
- 2000 New senior management structure set up
- 2001 Head– Jane Laing retires, Andy Waters appointed
- 2001 Andrew Holmes appointed Head of Friends' Junior School, replacing Mark Anderson
- 2002 **Tercentenary** celebrated with pageant, book sundial and exhibitions

1 March 2003