

HISTORY OF SUTTON QUAKER MEETING

Miscellaneous Documents

1. Early History of Quakers in the Sutton Area
 2. History of Friends in Croydon
 3. The Pitt Family – Mitcham Quaker Meeting
 4. Sutton Quaker Meeting – the Founding Friends
 5. A Statement on the Present World Situation, December 1948
 6. Article by Arthur White about Sutton Meeting, Quaker Monthly 1964
 7. Minute recording the move from Worcester Gardens to Cedar Road, 1970
 8. Article in Sutton Friends Quarterly, June 1970
 9. Article by Gordon Steel in The Friend, with data on the membership of Sutton Meeting 1935 – 2010
 10. Some talks at Sutton Meeting 1938 – 2010
-

1. EARLY HISTORY OF QUAKERS IN THE SUTTON AREA

In 1781, Foster Reynolds, a wealthy Quaker, bought a tract of land in Carshalton on the border with Mitcham. This was a large estate beside the river Wandle at Hackbridge which included a flour mill and supported a number of the rural industries at that time. The area, which lies between Green Wrythe Lane, Nightingale Road, and the London Road (to Mitcham) has since been developed for housing and there are few remaining signs of this earlier period. Foster Reynolds established an important area of ‘bleaching grounds’. The Wandle was used to fill an extensive network of ditches; the cloth to be whitened was spread out on the grass beside the ditches and labourers armed with scoops constantly patrolled the area to ensure that the material was kept damp. At times there was up to 50 acres of land covered with linen.

Foster Reynolds also owned Carshalton House and the land that went with it. This was an important property south of London which previously had many eminent owners, including Dr. John Radcliffe (a physician to the Queen), Sir John Fellowes (a governor of the South Sea Company), Lord Hardwicke (who became Lord Chancellor), and Thomas Walpole (nephew of the great Sir Robert Walpole). The

house, and the land immediately around it is now occupied by the Catholic school of St. Philomena's.

After Foster Reynolds' death in 1798, his two younger sons Thomas and Jacob Foster inherited the bleaching grounds but William (the elder son) seems to have inherited enough wealth to live without working. He occupied Carshalton House and had married Esther Morris, who herself was related to two other well-known, and wealthy, Quaker families: the Frys and the Gurneys. At that time the nearest Quaker Meetings were at Mitcham and Purley, to which the Carshalton Friends no doubt travelled.

William Foster Reynolds died in 1838 at the age of 70 and Carshalton House was sold. For the sale it was described as a 'very Capital Handsome and Truly Comfortable mansion in most Substantial Repair with Superior Offices of every Description ... only one mile from the Brighton Road at Sutton [the fast turnpike road] and only 10 miles from the several Bridges' [London, Blackfriars, Southwark, Waterloo, Westminster, and Vauxhall].

In 1837, Samuel Gurney, another Quaker and the brother of Elizabeth Fry, married one of the Reynolds family and acquired the bleaching grounds and flour mill (not Carshalton House). It was he who built the mansion called *The Culvers*. There appears to have been some public protest when he tried to close footpaths that went close to the house. Samuel Gurney collected exotic wildfowl (the Aviary occupied quite a large area on the old estate map) and he is said to have imported the first Black Swan from Australia. In trying to close the footpaths he was perhaps seeking to protect his collection. By 1847 the estate contained *The Sprules* lavender distillery as well as a leather dressing works.

Samuel Gurney was active in philanthropic activities in the area. He founded a 'British School' (in reply to the Church of England's 'National Schools') in Leicester House, an old workhouse at Wrythe Green.

Samuel Gurney's rural luxury was brought to an end by the failure of the family bank: Overend and Gurney's. In 1866 the estate was then sold by auction.

No doubt there were other Quakers resident in the area; for part of the 19th century *Shepley House* in Strawberry Lane was occupied by Alfred Tylor who was also described as a 'philanthropic Quaker'.

The above information is based on a study by Margaret Arnold for the 50th Anniversary of Sutton Meeting. It is taken from *The Story of Carshalton House* (p79), *The Illustrated History of Old Carshalton* (pp 86-89), and *From Medieval Manor to London Suburb* (p89), all written by A.E. Jones.

2. HISTORY OF FRIENDS IN CROYDON

Transcribed and edited (re-phrased but not cut) by David Parlett, from
"a retrospect compiled by George Percy Harris from researches by Agnes
Lindsay Waldmayer" [*sic* - Waldmeyer?]

Preface

On coming to Croydon in November 1940 my first sight of the Meeting House was a sad one. I asked two policemen at the corner of George Street and the High Street at where the Friends Meeting House was. One did not know, the other directed me to the police station to enquire again, a third policeman told me to go along the road and turn right and cross two roads and it was on the right. Yes it was there or rather what was remaining of it after a land mine had exploded near. It was a sad sight to see the shattered building and the red tiles of the adult school hail all loose, the Meeting House a mere shell. There was a notice pinned up to inform Friends that Friends Meeting for Worship was held in the hall of the Free Church in Wellesley Road where the following Sunday I found a large wooden shed where Friends were gathered and where I was very warmly welcomed. We met there for several months until the Adult School Hall was repaired enough for us to be able to use it for meeting.

In recognition for kindness of the people of the Free Church who let us use their hall, the meeting presented them with a clock. At the Preparative meeting it was left to O. Percy Harris to buy the clock and to "choose a good face"

A few weeks later, the Free Church lost their wooden hall.

Now that the Meeting House is condemned I would like to make a few records to the property, as a possible interest to Friends in the future when all signs of the Meeting House have been erased.

Agnes Waldemeyer

The Premises

Origins are somewhat obscure, but the following account is based on researches conducted by Agnes Waldmayer (a late Croydon Friend) from various sources.

Gilbert Latey's biography refers to the existence of a meeting in 1657, and in 1664 Friends were holding meetings in their own houses in Croydon and Mitcham.

A minute of Wandsworth and Croydon MM, June 1697, records: "It is agreed that the weekday meeting be appointed on the 5th day of the week at the Meeting House in Croydon."

In or about that year a small building was rented at a cost of £2 per annum from Thomas Beck, but its whereabouts is not known.

In 1702 Joseph Pierce, with the help of his wife, started a small school, possibly in the small building already referred to.

In May 1707 a plot of land was bought from John Davis for £25.5s and conveyed to John Lamb, Richard Storyer, Moses Savory and John Boswell as trustees, and later on another piece of land was purchased.

In 1721 a meeting house was erected on this land at a cost of £249, together with the "West Wall" for £21. Park Lane was at that time known as Back Lane. The meeting house formed the older portion of the building which was eventually destroyed in 1944.

In 1731 the property was conveyed to John Wheeler, John Eliot, Benjamin Bell and others, and in 1753 it passed into the hands of Philip Eliot, Benjamin Bell, Richard Grafton, John Eliot and others. The property was conveyed again in 1794 to William Foster Reynolds, Edmund Fry and others "upon Trust that the said premises should at all times hereafter be used as a meeting house for the religious worship of the people called Quakers and the burial ground for the dead for ever and should for those purposes be conveyed from time to time to new trustees when and as often as the preparative meeting of the said people called Quakers at Croydon and then subsequently monthly meeting for the time being should direct and appoint".

In 1720 there appears a minute in either monthly or preparative meeting desiring that Samuel Curtis should pay a half year's rent to Elizabeth Garland for a meeting house. A few years later this lady was paid 10s. in consideration of a way through a yard, but its location is not specified.

The rate book of 1761 records a rate of 2/6d for a meeting house at Woodside paid by Edward Skinner, and a rate of sixpence for land rented from Thomas Beck. In that year John Eliot left £100 towards a fund for keeping the meeting house and burial ground in repair. Eliot died in 1752 and his trust remains to this day [1955].

In 1764 Francis Eliot gave £50 and a little later Mary Eliot gave £100 towards the Repair Fund. John Eliot lived at The Grove, a large house situated at the corner of Coombe Road and Park Lane. It is now known as Coombe Hill House and occupied by a school.

In 1811 the burial ground was enlarged, the cost being defrayed by John and Ann Hall, who also gave £400 towards the erection of a meeting house. That this probably took the form of an addition to the older portion is suggested by the word 'repairs' in this minute of May 1816: "The subscriptions received amount to £871.15.1. The expense of building and

repairs amounts to £893.5.2”, leaving a balance of £21.10.1 to be provided for.

This meeting house was registered as a recognised place of worship in May 1854, so that marriages and funerals could take place there.

The cemetery in Queens Road was opened in 1861, with a portion allotted to Friends. This was evidently an unusual concession, as unconsecrated land was not generally allowed in a public cemetery. The grant may have been made because of the respect felt in the town for Friends.

In 1888 the meeting house was again altered, at a cost of £900. Four years later Kingston MM reported that John Horniman had offered to provide increased accommodation. Six Weeks Meeting appointed a committee to consider the matter in conjunction with Croydon Friends. The additions comprised the room alongside the meeting house proper, known as the Long Room, two classrooms on the first floor, caretakers' quarters on the top floor, and an improved heating apparatus. The total cost was £1600 for the building and about £100 for furniture and fittings.

In 1923 a strip of land was leased to the Corporation at a peppercorn rent for a footpath which passed under the archway in Park Lane.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the first air-raid on Croydon took place on 15 August 1940 and was followed by continual raids by day and by night. On Saturday 28 September a land mine was dropped in Park Lane, but failed to explode. The authorities immediately cleared the neighbourhood, pending the removal of the mine.

In the very early hours of the following day – about 2am – meeting house caretakers Harold and Ruth Wilkinson, who had been out when the area was cleared, appeared at the home of the Percy (the writer) and Barbara Harris at 24 Haling Park Road, seeking refuge. Sunday morning meeting was held here the same day.

On the following day a naval squad appeared in Park Lane to remove the mine. It was in the process of being hauled on to a lorry by a long cable when it unfortunately slipped. There was a terrible explosion. Several houses were destroyed or severely damaged, including the meeting house and St Anselm's School. (The school premises were those previously occupied by Friends School between its removal from Islington in 1825 and its transfer to Saffron Walden in 1879.) Fortunately, no lives were lost on this occasion, but several people were rendered homeless.

Friends met in Haling Park Road on the two Sundays following, but, almost immediately, the members of the Free Christian Church in Wellesley Road offered us the use of the building at the back of their church. This offer was gratefully accepted and meetings were held there

throughout the winter of 1940-1. In the spring of 1941 the Adult School Hall, which had suffered from the explosion, was sufficiently repaired to enable Friends to meet there. This continued till the summer of 1944 when the first flying bombs ('doodle-bugs') appeared. Thereupon the Corporation requisitioned the Hall and established various offices in it, including a canteen provided by the Salvation Army.

With the Hall no longer available, the Meeting returned to Haling Park Road and continued there for about three months, despite considerable damage to the house in August 1944 from the blast of a bomb dropped on some houses immediately opposite.

With the lessening of the raids the Hall was not so much in use. Friends thereafter migrated to the Gallery Room of the Hall.

Shortly afterwards the building was de-requisitioned and meetings resumed in the main body of the Hall, here they have been held ever since.

One of the earliest of these meetings was in memory of Hugh and Helen Crosfield, who had been killed instantly in the early morning of 14 November 1944 when their house was completely destroyed by the last bomb to fall in Croydon.

Composition of the Meeting

Croydon became a Monthly Meeting upon its separation from Wandsworth in 1720. By 1755 monthly meetings were being held only four or five times a year. Only cash affairs were attended to, and representatives were entertained at The Greyhound or The White Lion. In that year Quarterly Meeting sent a committee to Croydon to investigate matters and to see what could be done to improve the life of the meeting. In 1778 Croydon joined Kingston and Wandsworth Monthly Meeting.

Meetings for worship began in Purley in 1905, but a Preparative Meeting was not formed until 1910.

A change in the Monthly Meeting boundaries took place in 1935. Hitherto Kingston and Southwark MM comprised PMs at Croydon, Esher, Kingston, Peckham, Purley, Streatham, Sutton, Sydenham, and Wandsworth. Two new Monthly Meetings were now formed.

1. Kingston MM comprised Esher, Kingston, Mitcham, Purley, Streatham, Sutton, and Wandsworth.
2. Croydon and Southwark MM comprised Croydon, Petts Wood, Peckham, Sydenham, and Woolwich.

<DSP note: In ?1982 these were rearranged as follows: 1. Kingston & Wandsworth MM = Esher, Kingston, Richmond, Wandsworth, Wimbledon;
2. Southwark, Lewisham and Bromley MM = Bexleyheath, Blackheath,

Bromley, Forest Hill, Petts Wood, Woolwich; 3. Purley & Sutton MM = Caterham, Croydon, Epsom, Purley, Streatham, Sutton.>

Friends School

Friends School transferred from Islington to Croydon in 1825. The house stood in 13 acres of land, but its actual boundaries are unknown. The grounds apparently extended from Fell Road to the railway. Various Quaker names are still to be seen, including Friends Road, Barclay Road, and Penn Road House.

The site contained an old mansion said to have been designed by Wren.

In 1853 Edward Foster Brady and Elizabeth Brady were appointed to the headship. The former died in 1838 and was buried in the burial ground. His widow continued as head until 1842, with John Sharp second in command. She thereupon became superintendent of the Mount School, York, while John Sharp and his wife Hannah became heads of Friends School. The former died in 1853 and was succeeded by Charles Fryer, who died the following year. His widow, Sarah, continued until 1860, and was followed by William Robinson. He died nine years later, and George and Lucy Linney took charge.

A number of epidemics broke out between 1839 and 1875, and, as Croydon had grown considerably, thus adding to the danger arising from typhoid, the Committee decided to remove the school to Saffron Walden in 1879, where it still remains.

<Present-day Taberner House stands on part of the site of the Croydon school. The twin iron gates originally standing at the entrance to the Croydon school were also removed and are still prominently displayed at Saffron Walden School.>

Some 19th Century Personalities

Looking back to the end of the 19th century, one recalls that somewhat imposing row of elderly Friends seated in the upper gallery, as it was called, of the meeting house – i.e. the top row of seats: Charles and Jane Morland, Lucy Morland, Georgina King Lewis, George Theodore Crosfield, Henry Tuke Mennell, and Edward Grubb.

Those were the days of large families: the Crowleys, Mennells, Morlands, Allens, and Warners. There are not many living today (1954) who can remember them, but to a few these names recall old memories.

Out of a large number of Friends, well-known in their day, it is only possible to mention a few.

Thomas Beck was a wealthy landowner and farmer. In 1688 he bought a house, a brewery, a barn, and a garden. He also owned the land on which the meeting house stood.

Lydia Rous, the famous head mistress of the Mount School, York, was a pupil at Croydon Friends School at the age of ten in 1829, where she remained for four years.

Liza Bell. In the diary of John Finch Marsh there appears an account of her funeral 7th mo. 24th, 1839. "I attended the interment of the remains of dear Liza Bell at Croydon. Her dear bereaved husband seemed preserved in much calmness and was strengthened to express a few words sweetly at the graveside. There were several communications in the Meeting, and some supplications. I was of the mind that more silence and fewer words would have been more profitable and edifying."

John Ashby was the founder of the firm of Ashby, Son, and Allen, millers in St James Road, still carrying on business as A H Allen and Co Ltd. He died in 1845.

Peter Bedford lived in Park Cottage, Brighton Rd. His name is still well known as the founder of the Bedford Institute. He died in 1864 and as buried in the Burial Ground.

Richard Sterry lived for many years at Oakfield Park, the grounds of which are now occupied by the Croydon General Hospital. In 1878 the estate was sold and cut up and is now occupied by the roads Oakfield, Kidderminster, Leonard, and Farquharson. Richard Sterry was a member of the Croydon Local Board from its inception in 1849 to 1855. He died in 186?, and he and his wife Anne were buried in the Friends' Burial Ground.

John and Anne Horniman lived at Coombe Cliff, now (1954) occupied by the Corporation's Convalescent Home for children. Part of the grounds are now a public park adjoining the Park Hill recreation ground. John Horniman was the proprietor of 'Horniman's Tea', familiar in hoarding many years ago. He contributed largely to the meeting house. He was buried in the Burial Ground in 1893. His wife died in 1900 at the age of 100, and was also buried there.

George Pitt, still remembered by some of us, was the last local Friend to wear the plain Quaker dress. The writer recalls his leaving the meeting if the Bible were read, because he considered that it lacked the spontaneity required in a Friends' meeting. He died in 1908, and was probably the last to be buried in the Burial Ground.

Friends have for many years taken an active part in town affairs, and at time of writing many are serving on public bodies and on various social service activities. At one time five members of Croydon meeting were

town councillors, and at another time three were magistrates. The only Quaker mayor was Charles Coleby Morland, who served in 1903-4. A former Friend, Charles Heath Clark, was mayor in 1919-20. He resigned his membership during the First World War because he could not accept the pacifist position.

Persecutions

It is well known that from the early days of Quakerism Friends suffered many kinds of persecution and imprisonment. Some local cases will prove interesting. The surprising thing is that these continued in a milder form until nearly the end of the 19th century.

Records show that in July 1659, at Mitcham, "a volley of stones was thrown at a bare-headed man engaged in prayer. The congregation was kicked, beaten, trampled upon, and sent away drenched the muddy water. A few days later the meeting at Mitcham was again broken up by violence. At this meeting another valiant servant of God, Rebecca Travers, and others were present."

Many Friends in Croydon and the neighbourhood were fined, and in some cases imprisoned, for non-payment of tithes and church rates. For example:

- On December 26, 1696, Joseph Perch was committed to the Marshalsea Prison at Southwark for failure to pay tithes. He remained here till April 27, 1697.
- In 1698 Nathaniel Owen the Elder was sued by the Rev Hugh Owen of Sevenoaks. The result of the action is not recorded.
- In 1699 John Cole of Mitcham was sued by Matthew Cookman for tithes amounting to £4.19.0. He also was sent to the Marshalsea.
- A little later, John Wilkins of Sutton was sued in the Ecclesiastical Church <sic: court?> "for 3s.4d for church rate, by the Wardens of the Parish".
- In 1704 John Lamb of Croydon "had taken from him (for non-repairs of the Parish Worship House) Oats 12 bushells which cost 18/-, the demand being 12/-, it being 6/- more than the demand."
- In the same year "James Jordan of Croydon by virtue of a warrant by Nicholas Carew and John Kater, Justices so-called, for 8/-.

3. THE PITT FAMILY – MITCHAM QUAKER MEETING

The 26 'founding Friends' of Sutton Quaker Meeting, as listed on 22 November 1932, included John Marsh Pitt and Emily Pitt. They were part of the notable Pitt family of Mitcham and it would appear that the formation of Sutton Meeting received support from the well-established meeting in Mitcham. The following notes are taken from papers reproduced by 'ENM' in June 1995.

George Pitt (senior)

Retired draper of Camden Town.

Married to Elizabeth, daughter Susan.

Son George (junior) born in 1830.

~1830 bought London House, Mitcham, for use as a hardware and drapery shop.

Later owned other houses and shops in Mitcham.

George Pitt (1830 - 1908)

Born in London House, Mitcham.

Worked in his father's drapers shop, unpaid.

1853 joined the Society of Friends, presumably at Croydon Meeting.

1860 married Priscilla, daughter of John Finch Marsh & wife Hannah of Park Lane, Croydon. They were Quakers.

George and Priscilla lived very simply, still running the drapery business.

1870 they gave the London House business to Thomas and Eliza Francis.

Thomas Francis turned the London House business into a general stores.

George and Priscilla had five children at London House, all of whom died.

In 1871 **John Marsh Pitt** was born at Berkeley Cottage, and survived.

In 1876 the Pitts moved next door into the Manor House. They provided accommodation for their recently widowed mothers, Elizabeth Pitt and Hannah Marsh.

A Quaker Meeting was held in the Pitt's home, Manor House, Mitcham.

In 1880, George and Priscilla embarked on extensive travels to other countries, first to countries in Europe and then round-the-world. They travelled simply and at low cost.

George and Eliza later moved to live at Berkeley House (next door).

In 1883 George built Liberty Hall in the grounds of Berkeley House. It was used, in part, to provide meals for the poor.

After the death of George Pitt, a Quaker Meeting was held at Liberty Hall.

At the time of his death he owned over 300 cottages and shops in Mitcham.

John Marsh Pitt (1871 - ??)

One of the founding Friends of Sutton Quaker Meeting.

Mitcham Meeting was laid down in April 1950.

4. SUTTON QUAKER MEETING: THE FOUNDING FRIENDS

A sheet of paper has come to hand, torn into 16 pieces (one missing), headed 'Attendances 22. xi. 32' on which 26 people have signed their names in pencil:

J.A. Pilliner	Florence E. Thomas
W. Neville	John Marsh Pitt
M. Neville	Winifred Maddock
John D. Davis	E. Tallack
Mollie C. Collings (?) - Mitcham	Emily H. Pitt
Ernest W. Pingin (?)	Neville Smith
L.W. Pilliner	J. Stuart Ritch
M. Pilliner	A.M. Wilson
D.R. Saylor - Muswell Hill	Bernard C. Thomas
E. Kendall	George F. Smith (?)
Th. J. Hughes - Epsom	Albert Francis
Ann Hughes - Epsom	
Monica Bennetton	
Margaret R. Armitage	
Eldwyth Armitage	

This is presumably the attendance at the planning meeting
at Sutton, as mentioned in the minutes for
22 November 1932.

5. A Statement on the Present World Situation by the Sutton Preparative Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers)

December 1948

GRAVE and ominous as are the days in which we live, we feel it is not a time for despair but rather for the hope and courage that led to creative action. Now is the time to encourage the latent forces for peace that exist in every land and to this end we call men and women everywhere to witness to the seed of goodness that seeks to live in their hearts and minds.

The division of men into hostile camps is a denial of the Christian conception of society. Jesus saw through men's outward professions and ideologies to the possibility of kindling the living truth within them. This truth in its redemptive quality would ultimately heal strife and division.

The world's condition cannot be solved by methods of expediency or force but by men and women applying the eternal verities to their own lives. God has given to each man His Divine Light, which, if he would but follow, will lead him to the Truth, and we reaffirm that this Divine Light is in all men of whatever nationality, class or creed.

This in effect implies the unity of all mankind under the Fatherhood of God; that we are indeed members one of another and that in His Kingdom there is neither East nor West.

In our daily lives it is to this Divine Light in others (and in ourselves) that we must always appeal. If our appeal fails, we must, as Christ taught us, be willing to suffer the consequences. But history testifies that out of such failures the seeds of true peace have often grown.

We will never inflict suffering by armed strife on our fellow men however wrong we believe their opinions and deeds to be; nor will we willingly cause suffering by any other means. To do so, may destroy men to whom God Himself has given His Light.

We do not condone that which is evil in Soviet Russia, but we ask that we should neither be blind to the good that exists in that country, nor overlook the background of her history and the sufferings of her people.

Moreover, who can say that all is well with Western Democracy? The truth is that mankind has lost its way. Individual men and women the world over are morally sick and tired, while fear and suspicion are characteristic of our time.

As Quakers we are conscious that we frequently turn aside from God's Guidance and that we have far to travel before we reflect the mind of Christ, but we are certain that the essential Christian message that has been relegated to the background by the modern world must be recalled and implemented in action if men are to live together. This message alone can

reconcile a desire for social justice for men in the mass with the rights of the individual.

There exists in each of us unknown reserves of love, compassion and wisdom and if we would but call upon them they would guide us from darkness into light. It is indeed to the degree to which we avail ourselves of these eternal qualities that God comes to our assistance. The creative journey into peace will undoubtedly entail risks—risks for national sovereignty, risks of personal sacrifice—but the way of peace has a redemptive quality of its own and as hatred begets hatred, so goodwill begets goodwill, and in the end the healing of the nations as well as of men will be secured.

Clerk: Jack Finch

From Quaker Monthly, August 1964

6. SUTTON MEETING

The place called Sutton in Surrey was there all right, but George Fox missed it. He got to Mitcham, of fairground fame; was pelted with mud and filth, and took the road to Croydon. If he had taken the road to the south coast later used by George the Fourth, whose coach stopped for fresh horses at the Sutton hostelry, *The Cock*, on the way to Brighton, then Quakerism might have taken root in Sutton before 1932. It was Croydon's gain, and in due time Croydon begat Purley and Purley begat Sutton.

Sutton Meeting today, with 159 members, radiates a certain liveliness. Nothing succeeds like success and inquirers visit Sutton Meeting almost, it seems, without anything very much being done to attract them. There has been extension work; public meetings, a notice on the railway station, Sunday evening meetings with good speakers – recently on 'Friends and their vocations', with a deputy-governor of a prison, a scientist, a Member of Parliament, a social worker and an artist. There is a mid-week discussion group which reaches top form when engaged in the study of the Bible. These activities confirm and convince rather than apply the magnet. It is the liveliness of the people that attracts.

Sutton's members are active in the borough. They have supplied presidents for the Council of Churches and the Free Church Council, a candidate in the local elections, had at one time the monopoly of office-holders on the local Marriage Guidance Council, boast a Brown Owl and a Scoutmaster, help in numerous other activities and organizations. The meeting's members are known and the place is familiar to Soroptimists and Crusaders, Nuclear Disarmers and Pipers, Theosophists and WEA students, to whom rooms have been made available. Friends have accepted invitations to face the questions of sixth formers at local schools, have talked Quakerism to youth clubs, young wives' groups, church meetings and humanists. These contacts have made for freshness of thought; and the meeting, saved from staleness, knows well enough what people are saying about religion in general and Quakerism in particular.

Sometimes it looks as though the transfer market is really going to shake a winning team. A family goes to Birmingham because Woobrooke needs a lecturer; two stars respond to the call of wardenship elsewhere; others go to a small country meeting through a move of work; retirees go off to the coast; a couple to the States for government service; teachers concerned go to serve in Africa. But the certificates 'in' have a knack of supplying the substitutes; other members blossom and the whole process is seen as part of Quaker development.

Sutton Friends regard themselves as being in the welterweight rather than the heavyweight class. There is a preponderance of youngish couples rising towards middle-age whose families were born and have grown up in the fold, children who for the most part have attended local schools and have introduced their pals. About forty youngsters from nought to seventeen, in five classes, require a teaching rota of twenty, but there is a tradition of support for the work. A Saturday night club, run by one of the 18-year-olds, gets the lads and lasses together during the week. The meeting, with rare good sense, invested in a first-class table-tennis table. The annual pantomime, they say, is a winner. Cinderella and Prince Charming of 1956 are acting out their pantomime roles in real life; Snow-white, Robin Hood, Mother Goose, Aladdin and Dick Whittington and many of the supporting cast are still around.

These same young people get involved in discussion at school and elsewhere with their age group in other churches and, notably, the fundamentalists. An occasional Sunday afternoon tea party with a couple of elders has proved to be invaluable in sorting out where they stand on the meaning of the Cross, sacraments, the authority of scripture.

Sutton is in the suburban sprawl, but the meeting knows that the doors of trim semi-detached houses provide no effective shelter from the basic questions and the realities. The ministry arising from worship week by week reflects the experience of a group well integrated with life. Sutton has known all the sorrows as well as the laughter, and it has its saints who go marching on and whose memory puts new life into the stragglers.

Of course, the meeting has its weaknesses. A shower of rain knocks the attendance pretty hard and ... well, you know the kind of thing. But you could feel pretty confident about inviting someone along next Sunday.

J. Arthur White

7. MINUTE RECORDING THE MOVE FROM WORCESTER GARDENS TO CEDAR ROAD, 1970

Minute 5 of Sutton Preparative Meeting held 12 July 1970

On May 26 1970, Sutton Preparative Meeting moved from Worcester Gardens to new premises at 10 Cedar Road. On the following Sunday we held our first Meeting for Worship there.

We have left our premises at Worcester Gardens with some sadness for it was a place where we had experienced many happy times; and we remember those Friends who, having been with the Meeting since it was formed in the early 1930s, are with us no longer.

Nevertheless we have moved to our new home in a spirit of joy and thankfulness. We thank our architect, Martin Lidbetter, for his work on our behalf and we are grateful to Six Weeks Meeting for all the help and support that they have given us in our negotiations with the London Borough of Sutton. We particularly wish to place on record the faithful service of our own New Premises Committee. Its members were first appointed in January 1962 and over the past eight years have represented our interests and wishes in negotiations with the London Borough of Sutton, with the architect and with the builders. They have had to bear the brunt of much frustration and criticism, which they have done with patience and humour, and the fact that we at last have a purpose-built Meeting House is due in no small measure to their persistence, tact and loving care for Sutton Meeting.

We know we will find 10 Cedar Road strange at first; some of us have reservations about some aspects of the design or about the quality of the workmanship. Defects can be remedied and time will make the unfamiliar building home for us once again.

We are, however, united in our feeling of joy in being in our new surroundings. We accept with gratitude our new Meeting House, not as a cosy retreat from the world, nor as a valuable property to be cherished for its own sake. We accept it rather in a spirit of challenge, for it provides us with additional opportunities of advancing our work in Sutton and district. We give thanks for this gift; for this tool which we can shape to the service of God.

We decide to send a copy of this minute to Six Weeks Meeting.

8. INTO A NEW MEETING HOUSE

On Sunday 31st May, we held our first meeting for worship in our new meeting house in Cedar Road, Sutton. Frank and Mary Williams and their family have moved in a few weeks before in order to keep the new building under supervision. The main moving day was 26th May, the day after Bank Holiday, and this was the opportunity for a little army of Friends and attenders (including Tom who came to Sutton Meeting for the first time the day before) to descend on the premises and make a start on the odd-jobs. It seemed quaint that one of the things that attracted earliest attention was the compost-heap at 7 Worcester Gardens. A number of Friends seemed to show a hidden affection for compost, and with an eye on the little wilderness of a garden that we were inheriting it seemed criminal to leave this huge heap to the bulldozers. While one little group of Friends were filling bags (and Tom transporting them in his van), others were battling with the outside notice-board which dug in its heels and struggled to stay; and others began the digging (in places into ground that resembled concrete) and planting those of the plants from the old garden that seemed worth preserving. Inside the building the handymen were at work putting up curtain rails, and extra clothes pegs in the cloakrooms for any users who happen to be under five feet tall.

There was excitement in the conversation, which bubbled along all day. One couldn't of course expect that all the talk would be in praise of the new building; Friends seem to have strong views on everything and no architect could have satisfied us all. So this was a feast-day for the critics and the designers among us. Why didn't a Quaker architect remember that we need a clock in the meeting room? And where should it be anyway? (how lovely to see Friends trying to decide such a thing in committee). Opinions divided on the internal brick finish and the heaters. And did we have to have our old piano in this lovely modern room?

During the week some hours of enjoyment were gained from the problem of the electrical system. The constructors seemed to have thought that its functioning would be self-evident. But for some time half the heaters were permanently on (unless we took out the fuses) and the other half were dead. Some heaters were controlled by two thermostats, and there were two (night-storage) in the hall that were controlled by a clock which said it operated from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. Mon. - Fri., October to March - and yet the heaters worked.

One of our big problems has been in communication. It was clear that individual Friends were doing all manner of jobs (like Jack Boag's masterly reconstruction of the kitchen water-heater) but it was difficult to

see how they were co-ordinated. So the following list is presented to indicate the membership of most of the official work-parties. Any Friend who has strong views on developments in any of these departments can contact those who are doing the job.

Garden: Ann Strauss, Isobel Boag, Frank Williams, Margaret Arnold.

Curtains: Isobel Boag, Susan Hill, Winnifred Maddock, Mary Williams.

Purchase of Furniture (library): Tom Miller, Mary Williams.

Monday Evening Work Party for Renovating Furniture: convened by Susan Hill.

Layout of Cark Parks: Maurice Arnold

Handymen's un-committees: Jack Boag, Kit Hill, Keith Poulton, Gordon Steel.

In overall control (?) of the situation are the clerks of the old and new Premises Committees, acting in concert: Bob Burtenshaw, Arthur White.

9. LOOKING BACK OVER THE LIFE OF A NEWISH QUAKER MEETING

Sutton Meeting is a newcomer within the life-span of Britain Yearly Meeting. Founded in 1932 with the help of Friends from long-established meetings in Croydon, Purley and Mitcham, it has no deep-rooted tradition but it has displayed a certain liveliness. Perhaps surprisingly, its archives have been well-kept and they give a picture of a meeting that flourished during its first two generations but which is now showing the strains of modern times.

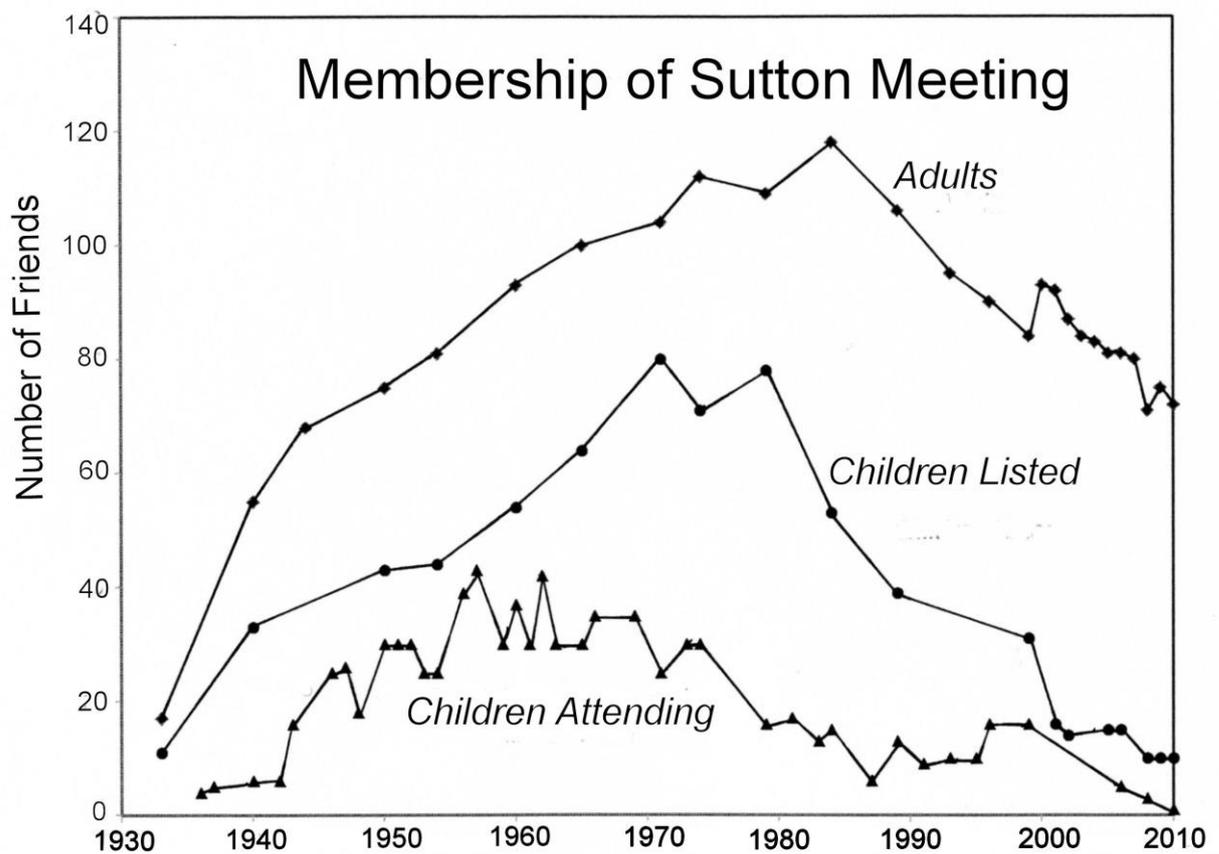
For their first eight years, Sutton Friends met in rented accommodation. Then in 1940, in the heat of war, they purchased a large detached dwelling which served them well for the next 30-odd years. In 1959 they added a beautiful new meeting-room to the rear of the property, only to be told two years later that the Borough Council intended to carry out a compulsory purchase in order to build a multi-storey car-park. It took nine years before the meeting was able to move into a brand-new building, provided as 'comparable reinstatement', premises that are now well bedded-in.

The character of the vibrant first 50 years was moulded by a succession of remarkable individuals who devoted a substantial part of their lives to Sutton Meeting. Jessie Ritch was a charismatic and very spiritual Friend at the centre of the early meeting, although we have been reminded in a lovely phrase reproduced as an extract from her Testimony (QFP 18.16) that 'our Friend was not without her human foibles...'. Jack and Ann-Mari Finch were the wardens of the first meeting house but both did far more than look after the premises. Ann-Mari was a grass-roots worker who shunned official Meeting appointments: 'she worked on her own like a whole team of overseers'. Jack had no intellectual misgivings about theological niceties: 'God was Love, Jesus showed the way to live and Jack was a willing disciple'. Dennis Scott was dearly loved: 'unforgettable, that rotund, bluff, waistcoated figure rising to minister, the strong, deep, vibrant voice reaching all his hearers'. Arthur White was widely known as recording clerk of London Yearly Meeting and was a pillar of the Meeting for many years: 'he ministered frequently and his insights were drawn from personal experiences in his daily life. His ministry often had the feel of modern parables delivered with a lightness of touch and a gentle humour but which, nevertheless, carried powerfully affirming and positive messages'. The right conduct of our business meetings was a particular concern of Arthur. Isabel and Jack Boag were a more recent couple at the centre of Sutton Meeting, They combined a loving care for individuals with a concern that the Meeting as a whole should be effective in addressing

some of the major problems of the world around us. These are just a few examples from a wide range of quiet and weighty Friends who have served and inspired the Meeting.

Since the 1980s Sutton Friends have been aware of a gradual decline in membership and attendance. This is graphically shown in the accompanying Figure which also charts the children's contribution to the Meeting, an attendance that peaked at around 35-40 in the early 1960s and now has fallen almost to zero. In spite of this sad state of affairs, Sutton is still a very lively meeting with a good age range of adults and a steady stream of new members.

The history of this relatively young Meeting has been documented in a compilation of 50 pages of text extracted from the minutes (1932 – 2010), extracts from the minutes of record of the lives of 67 Friends and attenders, a large number of ancillary documents about events in the life of the Meeting, and around 600 images of Friends and their activities. Copies are available on a single CD disc from ggsteel@onetel.com.



Membership of Sutton Meeting 1935 – 2010

10. SOME TALKS AT SUTTON MEETING (1938 - 2010)

For many years there has been a tradition of inviting formal talks at Sutton Meeting House, often held on Sundays after a shared lunch. The following are some examples of these talks, though the list is not complete:

1938	The Mission of Jesus	Eric Savage
1939	The Predicament of Paganism The Answer of Quakerism	Rev. EP Woollcombe Alan H. Penney
1946	'In All Things Charity' The Way of Friendship	Horace B., Pointing Jessie Ritch
1950	Faith on Trial Faith, the Evidence of Things not Seen The Basis of Christian Optimism	Richard Ullmann Duncan Todd Arthur White
1977	Approaches to Disarmament Rethinking Quakerism	Nicholas Sims Maurice Creasey
1978	South Africa Quaker Nourishment Friends and the Bible	Walter Martin Janet Sheperd John Punshon
1979	Sharing the Ministry Common Sense, Science and Religion Inspiration through the Arts The Challenge of Our Time	Jack Finch Jack Boag Charles Kohler Arthur White
1980	Children who Cause Concern The Way I have Come	Marian Noble Margaret Arnold
1981	What Difference does Faith Make? South Africa	Chris Lawson Hope Hay
1982	East-West Relations	William Barton
1985	'Just a Minute' How do we Speak about God?	Kurt Strauss Gordon Steel
1986	Faith in the City The Sanctuary Network	Trevor Jagger Thomas Taylor
1989	Obstacles to Peace God between the Lines Worship in Spirit and in Truth	Adam Curle Brenda Heales Teresa Hobday

1990	The Story of Quakerism From Testimonies to Action	Arthur White Beth Smith
1991	From my Heart Homelessness in Sutton	Val Ferguson John & Anne Dodwell
1992	Education The Helsinki Process	Paul Lacey Rachel Brett
1993	Being an Ecumenical Friend Editing The Friend Living in a Multifaith Society	Christine Davis Deborah Padfield Sylvia & Irwin Barnes
1994	A Faith for Today Has the Bible any Relevance Today?	Gordon Steel Meg Chignell
1995	Margaret Fell Creation Spirituality The Open Door Project	Peter Morgan & Margaret Vokes Grace Blindell Elizabeth Heap
1996	Quaker Activity in the Middle East Morals in Public Life Tracing and Sharing our Faith Journeys Quakers and the Bible	Bruce Stanley Robin Robison Alison Leonard Stan Lee
1998	The Friend	Harry Albright
1999	Friends Involvement in Ecumenical Affairs Quaker Work in Northern Ireland Quaker Outreach	Ethel Livermore Alan & Janet Quilley Harvey Gillman
2000	Quaker UN Office in Geneva Being a Quaker Copper Robert Barclay	Rachel Brett Chas Bailey Peter Morgan
2002	A Civilian Peace Service in the UK QCEA	Steve Whiting Sarah Richardson
2003	Servant Leadership Stillness	John Noble Stan Lee
2004	How I Survived the War The Work of a Prison Chaplain	Peter Barns Revd. Rosie Deedes
2005	Testing Concerns: a YM Session Working on behalf of Friends (QPSW) Teaching Young Children	Helen Drewery Linda Craig Marian Noble

2006	WAVE (the importance of early child development)	George Hoskins
2007	Key Stages in Quakerism	Beth Allen
2008	Being a Street Pastor in Sutton Being and Ecumenical Accompanier	Mark Thomlinson ZeeZee Heine
2009	Quaker Funerals The Situation in Burundi	Gordon Steel Ian Brightwell
2010	Ministry in a Quaker Meeting A Visit to Pendle Hill QAAD	David Parlett Beth & Peter Allen Helena Chambers

* * * * *