

Hartshill background

Hartshill is the nearest Quaker Meeting house to the birthplace of George Fox. The history of Hartshill dates back to earliest Quaker times. The Newton family were contemporaries of George Fox and were well known to him and the early followers. George Fox had relatives in the village.

The old meeting house, The Grange and the Newton's Field and the present Meeting house all have their histories interwoven together.

In 1740 Nathaniel Newton wished to establish a school and bought his grandfather's house and five acres of land and it was here he established the school. The front part of the field is the present Meeting House and the rear is now known as Newton's Field and is allotments.

The school had been started in the barn of The Grange in 1707 (some of the original coat pegs are still present!) The school was opened on 23 June 1742 (the original school roll book is in the Bull Street Meeting strong room). Parents and travelling Friends were always welcomed at the school, as they were at The Grange [4]. The first headmaster was Richard Adkins aged 23 and it was for boys and girls to be taught 'reading, writing and cost accounting'.

Under succeeding Quaker headmasters the school developed into a well known and respected boarding school for Midland and East Anglian Quaker families, and was a school of Grammar school standards. Pupils of note attending the school during the 19th Century included Isaac Reckitt, who later founded the Victorian firm of starch manufacture, Robert Bakewell, who later became one of the founding fathers of the science of Geology; and in 1813 John Cadbury - son of Richard Tapper Cadbury, a draper and silk merchant of Birmingham - who attended the school with his brother Joel.

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1713. Her son Benjamin Bartlett Junior inherited sole ownership of The Grange in 1768.

In 1762 Benjamin Bartlett Junior had moved to London for his apothecary business, but due to poor health he spent long summer periods at The Grange, and carried out improvements and extensions to the building.

Benjamin Bartlett Junior died in 1786, leaving the estate to his nephew Bartlett Gunney - a Norwich banker - with instructions to sell everything!

In 1789 The Grange was sold to the Alkins family from Leicestershire, who were not Quakers. The 130 year link of The Grange with Quakers was broken. It is now a private house.

Unless you are walking to Fenny Drayton return back up the hill.

Now visit Fenny Drayton (see leaflet No 1).

By road. Leave by going down hill, past the green and over the canal bridge with the traffic lights. Keep going straight on (you join the main road under the railway bridge for a few yards) into Woodford Lane. At the A5 turn left and right (you can see the junction). Continue along Drayton Lane into the village (it is 2.5 miles).

On foot. Continue past The Grange, over the main road and into Leather Mill Lane. Continue and follow the road through the farm past the private road sign. At the A5 turn right and the footpath across the field is a few yards on the left. It leads straight along the hedge and leads into Drayton Lane. Turn right towards the village.

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1624
UK
COUNTRY

A walk around Hartshill and its Quaker Heritage



*The old school and the teachers' house -
demolished to build the current meeting house*

1624
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COUNTRY

A Quaker Heritage walk around Hartshill.

Start

The walk may be done in any order and direction but for convenience it starts at the current meeting house. [1]

The Present Meeting house [1]

The present meeting house was built in 1972. It was designed to offer a meeting room suitable for fellowship meetings, quiet meetings and with a removable screen so that the main room could be expanded into the foyer. It also needed to have rooms for Sunday school meetings and other meetings and a resident wardens flat. (The first wardens were Donald and Hazel Moore). See leaflet Number 3.

It was built on the site of the old school (see the cover picture) which had fallen into disuse; also the old Meeting house on the green which needed extensive repairs was sold to help fund the new one.

The old school provided free non-denominational education for local children. The Nathaniel Newton name continues in a local school up the hill.

The shorter walk; turn right out of the meeting house and walk down the hill to the green

Extension walks - One - Newton's field [3 on the map]

This adds a little as you 'walk around the block' and end up at the green. Leave the Meeting house [1] and walk up the hill. In a hundred yards you pass the end of Castle Mew Close and take the marked foot path to the left along the edge of the field. At the rear of the houses you will see through the hedge an intensively used allotment field that is Newton's field. Continue to the end and look at the viewing point into the quarry. Hartshill is geologically famous for providing a large amount of granite stone for building and road use. You will note that Nuneaton Road was closed as it started to subside!

Just beyond the field entrance (It will probably be locked) you come to the Green and the old meeting house [2] (see below) and Grange Road to the right

Extension walks - Two - The Hayes

You may choose to leave this to another time or do it upon return

The wood across the road behind the houses is a country park 'Hartshill Hayes'. George Fox tended sheep in Hartshill Hayes during his apprenticeship. There is a nearby pedestrian entrance.

Leave the meeting house and walk uphill. In a few yards on the right is a steep narrow footpath. Just before you enter the wood is the ruin of Hartshill Castle.

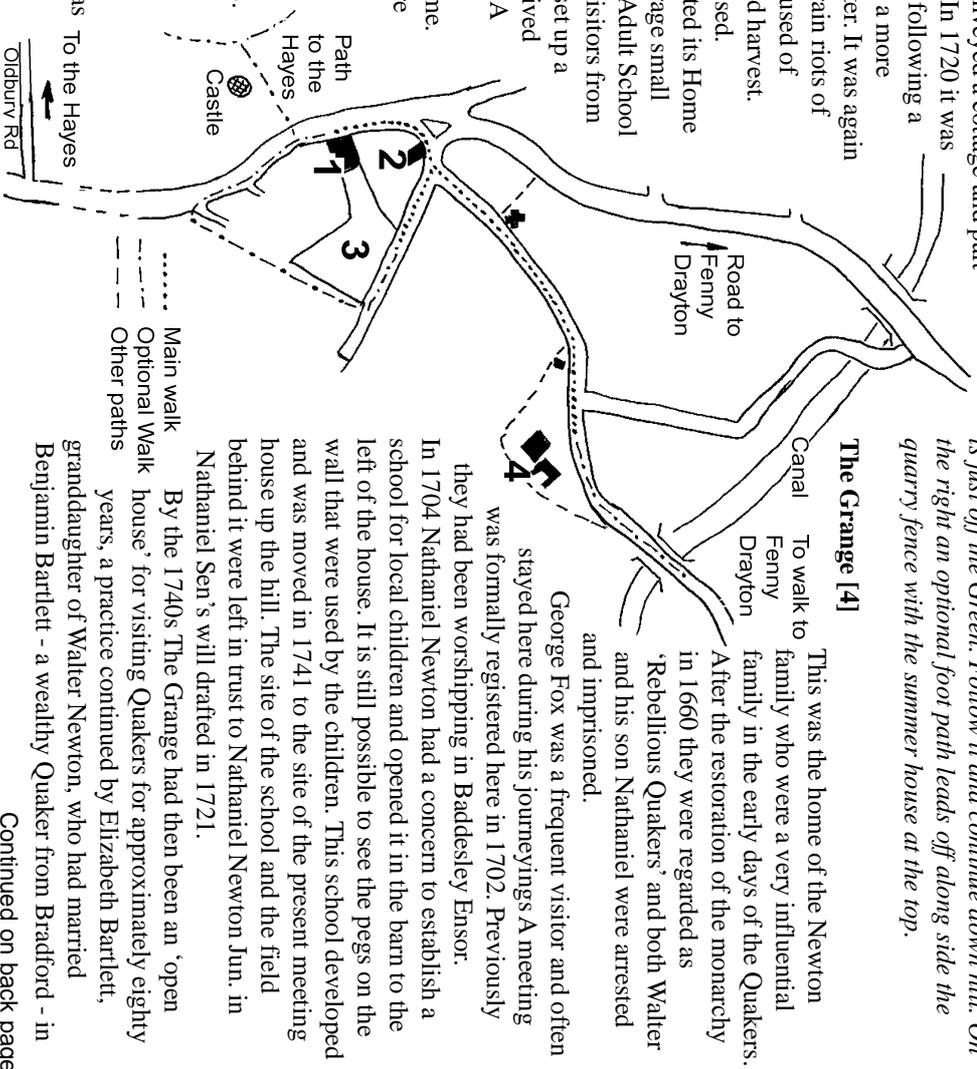
Alternatively if you continue up the hill by car turn right at the shops and in about a mile on the right is the visitor centre, car park and cafe which is open at weekends. This is just a recreational walk there are no George Fox monuments nor any particular route.

Old Meeting House [2] (Meeting House cottage)

In 1704 Nathaniel Newton conveyed a cottage and part of a barn as a meeting house. In 1720 it was repaired after being damaged following a fire. It was also repaired after a more extensive fire twenty years later. It was again damaged by fire during the grain riots of 1756 when Quakers were accused of hoarding grain following a bad harvest. Eventually by 1838 it was closed.

In 1881 Yearly Meeting directed its Home Mission Committee to encourage small rural Quaker Meetings in the Adult School provision and in 1869 some visitors from Pakefield, Suffolk wished to set up a mission in Hartshill. They arrived and found the door unlocked. A lively mission meeting with a resident leader was the outcome. However by 1956 repairs were needed to the roof and to the missionaries house and the building was sold and converted to the present private dwelling in the 1970's.

The old meeting house had been the only place of Christian worship in Hartshill for over a hundred years until the Congregational Chapel was opened. (You will pass this along Grange Road)



Walk up Nuneaton Road for a few yards (past the end of Grange Road), Newtons field is on the right.

Newton's Field [3]

This field was purchased from the grandfather of Nathaniel Newton in 1741 as well as the land where the present meeting house stands. It has been divided and the current Meeting house shares a common boundary. The field is the principal asset of the Newton's Educational Foundation, the income of which is used to making grants for education of local people.

Opposite you will see why the road is closed! The old main road started to become unstable on the edge of the quarry. *Return the way you came to Grange Road. Grange Road is just off the Green. Follow it and continue down hill. On the right an optional foot path leads off along side the quarry fence with the summer house at the top.*

The Grange [4]

This was the home of the Newton family who were a very influential family in the early days of the Quakers. After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 they were regarded as 'Rebellious Quakers' and both Walter and his son Nathaniel were arrested and imprisoned.

George Fox was a frequent visitor and often stayed here during his journeyings. A meeting was formally registered here in 1702. Previously they had been worshipping in Badesley Ensor.

In 1704 Nathaniel Newton had a concern to establish a school for local children and opened it in the barn to the left of the house. It is still possible to see the pegs on the wall that were used by the children. This school developed and was moved in 1741 to the site of the present meeting house up the hill. The site of the school and the field behind it were left in trust to Nathaniel Newton Jun. in Nathaniel Sen's will drafted in 1721.

By the 1740s The Grange had then been an 'open house' for visiting Quakers for approximately eighty years, a practice continued by Elizabeth Bartlett, granddaughter of Walter Newton, who had married Benjamin Bartlett - a wealthy Quaker from Bradford - in