

Monthly Meeting agreed to this and also said that then this was completed Hartshill should run its own affairs and not have oversight from a Hartshill Committee at Birmingham.

Hartshill Friends then started on a fund-raising spell with great gusto and in a period of about 4 years they raised £6000 without recourse to raffles or gambling of any kind, although every other kind of fund-raising was used.

Eventually in 1972 the new Quaker Centre at Hartshill was opened, it consisted of a meeting house, foyer, two classrooms, kitchen, cloakrooms and a warden's flat. This centre was built on the site of the old School and School House, which were then demolished. The old Meeting House, which was situated on Hartshill Green (about quarter of a mile from the present Meeting House) was sold and has been converted into a dwelling house.

Donald and Hazel Moore were appointed resident Friends in 1972. Since that time we have had 5 different couples as resident wardens. These people do not necessarily have to be Quakers although some of them were.

Apart from meeting for worship, there is an evening fellowship, mid-week women's fellowship and a Sunday school. We hope that the Quaker 'Touch of Light' will never go out in this neighbourhood.

We who worship still feel that same spirit of Trust, Goodness and Mercy is with us as with Friends down the ages and we earnestly desire that our patient waiting upon God may long be continued.

[1] Unable to locate this meeting

[2] See Leaflet No 2 'A George Fox Walk around Hartshill'

[3] Some of this Coventry educational work continues through the Soothern and Craner Educational Foundation. See Charity Number 528838. [www.soootherandcraner.org.uk](http://www.soootherandcraner.org.uk)

[4] Newton's Educational Foundation Charity Number 528719

[5] Hartshill Relief in Need. Charity Number 215668

Leaflet No.3

[www.1624country.org.uk](http://www.1624country.org.uk)

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# HARTSHILL

## Some fragments of Quaker history

Written by a Hartshill Friend to be given to visitors

Edited for the 1624 Country Project by William Waddilove

George Fox was born in the year 1624 at Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire a village just in from the Warwickshire county boundary so he must have been familiar with the north of the county. The first mention of him coming into Warwickshire is in his Journal was in 1643, at the age of 19 years, when he visited Mancetter in search of some inward satisfaction after deep religious exercises. This was a visit to the priest of Mancetter, and Fox records 'after conversing with him for some time, he recommended to me to take tobacco and sing Psalms'. He adds, tobacco was a thing I did not love, and Psalms I was not in a state to sing, I could not sing',

In the year 1657, mention is made of Friends from Hartshill, who apparently were members of Ardsley Meeting [1], the 'home' Meeting of George Fox. It is recorded, in this year 1657 two friends, Edward Teddes and Philip Rose, went from Hartshill on the 30 th day of the fourth month, whose intention was to go to New England on the Service of Truth, but what became of them was not known, but in all likelihood they were cast away'. (Probably these two would-be missionaries were shipwrecked, never being mentioned afterwards.)

In the winter of 1667, George Fox had many blessed Meetings in Warwickshire and Leicestershire, and he writes that in this year 'the order of the Gospel was set up in these two counties and that Men's Monthly Meetings were established. There can be no doubt that the Meeting at Hartshill was brought about through the influence of the teachings of Fox who would probably visit the village in his ministrations.

In 1677 Fox was in Warwickshire and held a Meeting at Henry Sidon's home at Baddesley. It was a large and peaceable in spite of the threats of a Justice, who declared he would have it broken up. The following day Fox was at Hartshill, at the home of Nathaniel Newton, where several Friends met him, with whom he had

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a good service. This Nathaniel Newton who lived at the Grange (about a half a mile north from the present Meeting House) [2] was a man of property, and in an early Minute Book there are some requests from Monthly Meeting that he should lend money, to Friends who were in need, the Meeting, however, recorded its opinion that 'the said Friends should pay interest for the same'. It was in 1704 that a Friends Meeting was established in Hartshill. Part of a barn given by Nathaniel Newton was used as a meeting place. It was in 1720 that the first Meeting House was built. We are told that some years later this was burnt down

A second Meeting House was built in 1740, 50 years after Fox died, the money for its erection being collected in this and neighbouring Quarterly Meetings. Apparently Hartshill Meeting has never been large in numbers, but many persons of great worth and of Christian character have been members of the Meeting. It is understood that Hartshill and Baddesley was at one time a joint Preparative Meeting.

Records reveal that Hartshill, like many other country Meetings in Warwickshire, declined in numbers, so much so, that its weak state often called for the care of Monthly Meeting, until the Meeting was discontinued in the year 1838. The Meeting House was closed for a period of about 30 years. One often wonders what was happening in those 30 years, because the School House and the School were continuing.

The School and House were founded pursuant to the Will of Nathaniel Newton, the son of the Nathaniel Newton of the days of George Fox.

In his Will, dated 1730, he bequeaths a tenement, together with a piece of land from the produce of which the School was to be founded and a School Master appointed. The Will quotes 'a discreet and grave person and one of good life and conversation, who shall by the said trustees be adjudged and thought fit for the purpose to be a School Master, to teach children to read the English tongue and to write and cast accounts'.

The number of children at first was 26 and they were to be residents of Hartshill. The School Master afterwards was permitted to take boarders and it is understood that the School rose to some eminence under the care of a Friend named Joseph Crosfield who was the first appointed School Master. Later, School Masters named Hugh Perkins and August Marshall served the School. One has not traced the actual date of the building of the School, but a report dated 1754 stated, 'there are two boarding school in the two Meetings, one at Hartshill for teaching English, writing and accounts, and another at Coventry [3] teaching Latin, writing and accounts. There is still a Trust Fund in the name of Nathaniel Newton at Hartshill [4] deriving from income from the land and monies are used for educational purposes and a charity for aid to people in need [5]. Monthly

Meeting represents Friends on the body of Trustees through appointment, so this work continues in three Quaker founded charities.

The School House and School premises eventually came into the hands of the Charity Commissioners, probably about 1896. Friends rented the property for a number of years for religious work, then finally purchased in 1926.

It was in the year 1868 that a Friend from Leicester, named Edward Brewin, in conjunction with a number of Birmingham Friends, felt desirous of holding a Meeting for Worship in the Meeting House. These Friends made efforts to clear away weeds and overgrown briars etc.. to make an entry into the Meeting House, which was found to be in need of repair and cleaning. When this was completed, a comfortable and profitable Meeting was held, with many inhabitants of the village in attendance'.

Several other Meetings were held at various intervals by the approval of Monthly Meeting, chiefly under the care of Birmingham Friends.

In 1869 the Meeting House was opened again for regular Worship twice on First Day (Sunday).

In the 5th month of the year 1885 a committee was appointed by Birmingham Preparative Meeting to care for Hartshill Meeting, it was discharged on the 5th day of the 5th month 1889.

Coming nearer to our own time Hartshill was supplied with full-time Mission Workers in the year 1906 (or near that time) which continued until the year 1926, when Hartshill Friends then took on fuller responsibility of the work and meetings. Many who served Hartshill under the then Home Mission Committee were Albert and Mary Green, James and Elizabeth Woodroffe, William and Alice Chilvers, James Wild and his wife, Charles and Agnes Simpson and James and Elsie Coney.

When the Meeting House was re-opened in 1869, apparently the meeting was made an Allowed Meeting and continued as such until 1920 when the Meeting became a Preparative Meeting, James Coney becoming the Clerk. James Coney continued as Clerk until 1924 when James Birch was appointed, who continued until his death in 1966. Leslie Wilson was appointed Clerk in 1966.

Rex Harrad, an elder and Sunday School Superintendent, called a meeting of all Friends, Evening Meeting members and all who were connected with the Meeting, and it was decided that owing to the dilapidated state of the Meeting House, School and School House, Monthly Meeting should be approached and asked to institute an appeal for a new Quaker Centre at Hartshill.