



SWARTHMOOR HALL

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2016/17

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A LETTER FROM SWARTHMOOR HALL

Friends, it is a time of year for:

Reflection

In this winter newsletter Mary Swale, Craven & Keighley AM, reflects on her experience of coming to Extended meeting for worship at Swarthmoor Hall. It takes place the last Thursday of each month from 11am-1pm and is followed by a simple lunch of soup, bread and cheese. It attracts Friends from throughout the region. (Also, look out for Rex Ambler's piece entitled 'Two hour meeting for worship' in a December issue of the Friend). Lee Johnston, Pendle Hill AM, a regular guest at the Hall, reflects on a recent visit.

Celebration

Local historian Margaret Bailey writes about the Christmas celebrations which might have been enjoyed at Swarthmoor Hall at the time of Margaret Fell.

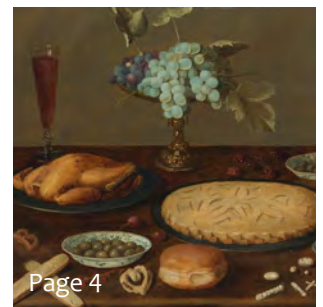
Looking ahead

Next year we look forward to Yearly Meeting Gathering which will be about movement building and living out our faith in the world. The Swarthmoor Hall 2017 programme offers an opportunity to engage with the theme of building community in: '*Creating the Future: building Quaker faith communities*', with Deborah Shaw and Wendy Hampton, from Friday 9 June – Sunday 11 June. Building communities also requires us to recognise our spirit-given gifts. From Friday 24 - 26 March we are running a course entitled '*Spiritual Gifts*', with Norma Lee and Rachael Swancott. Living our faith in the world can take many different forms including developing the skills and practices to create a more contented life. This is the focus of a course '*Towards contentment*' with Wendy Hampton and Rachael Swancott, from Friday 14 – Sunday 16 April.

We can also draw upon the inspiration of early Friends. Our 2017 programme includes: '*Drinking deep at the Well: the passionate spirituality of early Quaker women*' with Deborah Shaw and Wendy Hampton, from Tuesday 23 – Thursday 25 May, '*George Fox – his life and message*' with Gordon Matthews, from Friday 17 – Sunday 19 February, and '*Friends from the start*', with Martin Layton and Erica Canela, from 10 - 12 November. Full details of Swarthmoor Hall's 2017 programme guide will be available in January.

We would like to thank Friends who have supported the Life at Swarthmoor Hall in many different ways and look forward to welcoming more Friends to the Hall next year. May this truly be a season of peace, love and goodwill. In Friendship,

Jane Pearson manager



WINTER
OPENING
TIMES

Swarthmoor Hall & The Barn Café :
Closed for Christmas **23 December to 3 January**

Swarthmoor Hall open for tours :
from **20 February to 29 October**

The Barn Café Winter opening :
6 January to 19 February, Friday to Monday 10:30am - 4:00pm



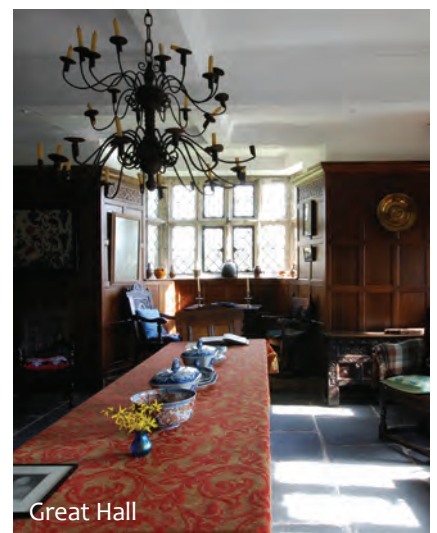
I have recently started to attend the extended Meeting for Worship which takes place on the last Thursday of each month at Swarthmoor Hall. This is a two hour Meeting in the Great Hall. It is followed, for those who wish, by a shared soup, bread and cheese lunch.

Some of us attend the Meeting for the full two hours, others come in later, or come and go at need. There's a lovely ease and informality about this. In the warmer months the door stands open throughout the Meeting, and visitors to the Hall are invited to come in, while respecting the silence of the Meeting. My understanding is that this is akin to the way the earliest Meetings were held. That's inspiring too. I think early Friends would sometimes sit for hours at a time, coming and going as necessary, and sometimes with much weeping and confessing of faults and sharing of insights as they struggled to come into harmony with themselves, one another, and God. We are, so far, more restrained than this, in a twenty-first century way, but these two hours give wonderful space for more to unfold than the conventional hour allows.

I wasn't sure how I would find the two hour stretch: would I wriggle a lot, or get bored? I have found that I have settled more easily and deeply in these Meetings than in my home meeting of forty-five minutes on a Sunday. I think that I relax more fully, knowing that there are two whole hours just to be in the Meeting, with God, in this lovely place where Quakerism took root, and from where early Friends went out into the country and then the world, to share their vision and conviction. I have had deep and powerful openings and insights, as well as profound peace and happiness, in these Meetings. One Friend said that he felt he was more spiritual in the Swarthmoor Meeting, compared to his home Meeting. Another said that she felt a deep love between those she had shared worship with in this way. I have been very aware of the shared nature of our worship, as the silence ebbs and flows.

I think the depth of history still palpable in the Hall adds to the depth of the Meetings I've attended here. There's a power in knowing that Margaret Fell and her family were long term seekers after truth here, and that they, as well as George Fox and other early Friends, met on this very spot for worship over many years and through much hardship. Perhaps their prayers remain here. I am also aware of retreats I have been part of at the Hall in recent years, which have brought deep spiritual sharing.

It has also been lovely to meet over lunch with Friends and others from different Meetings, and different countries, who have found themselves at Swarthmoor on a particular Thursday. Again, for me this echoes the many travellers' meetings which took place at the Hall in the early days of Quakerism. So, if you have some time to spare on a last Thursday of the month, and find yourself within reach of Swarthmoor Hall, come to this Meeting. It's well worth the journey.



Mary Swale

VISITING SWARTHMOOR HALL

A visit to Swarthmoor Hall is always a time of eager anticipation. Each season has its charms, and as the train weaves its way round Morecambe Bay (as it has done since the Furness Railway opened in 1857) the various moods of the ‘sands’ herald the arrival of a different world, far removed from my home in Bolton. The splendid Victorian tower of Ulverston Railway Station reminds me that in twenty minutes or so I’ll be on the doorstep of Swarthmoor Hall. This mechanical clock, made in Leeds, is one of only three remaining station clocks in Britain which need winding by hand.

Yet all this is ‘modern’ times compared with the seventeenth century world of Swarthmoor. We arrive by train or car in Ulverston. George Fox and Margaret Fell must have suffered tremendously, physically, in their travels on horseback and by coach. I picture Swarthmoor in the cold and dark of January 1661 when...



“On 24th, at Swarthmore, forty three Persons were taken, some out of their houses, others from the Market, and some from their Labour and Employment, by a party of Horsemen, and without any Warrant, Mittimus, or Examination before a Magistrate, committed to Lancaster Castle ...”

Eventually, with help from Margaret Fell’s intervention, they were released ...

“Men who languished in jail could not sow spring corn”

These thoughts recently flashed across my mind as I sat one evening in the lounge at Swarthmoor, enjoying the warmth and glow of a log fire as the onset of winter approached. A time of year which must have been dreaded in the seventeenth century. How fortunate we are to live in present times, with creature comforts, plenty to eat, and with freedom to worship as and where we like. We must never forget the struggles of years gone by – and the sacrifices and sufferings of many.

Lee Johnson Bolton, Lancashire

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

Meeting for Worship

Every Monday morning 9:30am - 10:00am. These meetings are followed by a cup of coffee or tea.

Extended Meeting for Worship

Last Thursday of month 11:00am - 1:00pm. Friends are welcome to come for as much or little of the time allowed for the meeting as they like. It is followed by a simple lunch of soup, bread and cheese.

WINTER WORSHIP

Swarthmoor Hall will be closed from **Friday 23 December** to **Tuesday 3 January**. The first meeting for worship will be held on **Thursday 6 January**.

Meetings for worship in January will be held in the Friendship Room or Conference Room because of work being done in the Great Hall.

SPRING AT SWARTHMOOR

If you’re looking for a reason to visit Swarthmoor Hall this winter why not come to our National Garden Scheme Opening of Spring Bulbs – from **Monday 20 February** to **Sunday 11 March**.

See our crocus meadow and beautiful bulb displays in the early spring. Combine your visit with a tour of the historic house and stay for a cup of tea in the Barn Cafe.

Visit our website for opening times.

Artist | Jacob van Es



FOOD IN THE 17TH CENTURY

An enthusiasm for seventeenth century social history reveals many more similarities than differences in the way that we live and enjoy life. Especially at Christmas, when there are so many traditions and customs that we share, we are repeating activities which go back to the 17th century and beyond, some even to pagan times.

In the 1640s and 1650s, whilst Swarthmoor Hall and the Fell family were at the centre of the new Quaker movement, the Puritans within the Church of England and elected politicians in Parliament were demanding the simplification of doctrine and worship and greater strictness in religious discipline. They clamped down on the celebration of Christmas and other Saints' and holy days, though it is a common myth that Oliver Cromwell personally 'banned' Christmas. The objections to Christmas were twofold. Some saw the celebrations as wasteful, extravagant, disordered, sinful or immoral, but mainly that Christ's Mass was a relic of the Roman Catholic Church and its superstitions and that it was encouraged by aristocrats and Royalist recusants.

In January 1642, shortly before the Civil War began, Charles I had agreed that Christ-tide (as they called it to omit the Catholic-sounding 'mass') - should be a day of fasting and prayer, and also that the last Wednesday in each month should be kept as a fast day. In 1644, the 25th of December fell on the last Wednesday of the month, and Parliament stressed that the day should be kept "*as a time of fasting and humiliation, for remembering the sins of those who in the past had turned the day into a feast sinfully and wrongfully giving liberty to carnal and sensual delight.*"

Throughout the 1640s, legislation progressed until Sundays were the only holy days, strictly observed for the worship of God and 'Festival days, vulgarly called Holy days' were prohibited and to be discontinued. In June 1647 the Long Parliament confirmed the abolition of the feasts of Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday, although charitably they said that the second Tuesday of each month was to be kept as a non-religious, secular holiday, providing a break for servants, apprentices and other employees! During the 1650s, the regular monthly fast which, not surprisingly, had never proved popular or been widely followed was quietly dropped, although legislation was passed to ensure Sundays were even more strictly observed as the Lord's day.



At the Restoration in 1660 all the legislation of the period 1642-1660 was swept away and both the religious and secular elements of the full Twelve Days of Christmas including New Years Day could once again be celebrated openly, in public and with renewed exuberance and wide popular support. The assail on Wassail was over! Churches and homes could once again be decked in the evergreen foliage of holly, ivy, rosemary and bay. Father Christmas appears as the symbol of 'the good old days of feasting and good cheer'.



So looking at what people of that time would have eaten at Christmas and which of their traditions will still be familiar to us. Some of our Yuletide dishes have been with us for centuries. Sarah Fell in her accounts of the 1670s records purchases of chocolate, olives, oranges and lemons, cinnamon and wine though not necessarily for Christmas. We will probably partake of all of these. Access to European and New World goods would have been possible through the international ports of Whitehaven and Lancaster. Turkey was available served in a pie or as a roast bird, but so would be other wild fowl or domestic poultry, as at Christmas these would be at their fattest, most succulent and best.



Artist | Osias Beert

Pies with fillings of all kinds - these also served as a means of preservation. After cooking, clarified butter or jelly would be poured through a hole in the lid to exclude air or seal the meat in. This ensured that the contents would keep for weeks and the pies could be sent long distances as gifts or from country to town house. Mince pies originated in the 16th century or earlier. Though sweet, they usually contained meat along with dried fruit and spices. Modern mincemeat still contains suet as a relic of this tradition. Plum pudding appears to have developed from a spicy and sweet oatmeal, dried fruit and suet mixture which was boiled in a sheep's stomach much the same as haggis. When cooked and air-dried the stomach also acted as protection and a preservation method. How natural, sustainable and bio-degradable these age old methods were!

Cakes of the time may have been the delicious flavours of honey, fruit, spices and nuts kneaded into a piece of bread dough saved from the weekly baking, reminiscent of a German Stollen or Italian Panatone; in fact most regions of Europe have a similar speciality of this kind. Ham, salt beef and tongue, pickles, cheeses, nuts, chestnuts, fresh and candied fruits, jellies, wafers and marzipan would appear on both their and our tables. And to even the most lowly of households, a slice of white bread would have been an especial and welcome treat.

Margaret Bailey



Welcome to Swarthmoor Hall's programme of events for 2017. The historic, peaceful and beautiful setting of the Hall provides a wonderful environment for the courses, pilgrimages, retreats and special events which we run.

Many of the courses and retreats in the programme have been run in partnership with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (the main centre of Quaker learning in Europe).

All of our courses are open to Quakers and non-Quakers alike. For more information please visit:
www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk

17 – 19 February	George Fox - his life and message
24 – 26 February	Spiritual Gifts
20 February – 11 March	National Gardens Scheme Opening
14 – 16 April	Towards Contentment
23 – 28 April	Writing Retreat
5 – 7 May	'God is love ': the letters of John
8 – 12 May	In Fox's Footsteps: 1652 Quaker pilgrimage
20 – 23 May	Drinking Deep at the Well: the passionate spirituality of early Quaker women
2 – 4 June	Quaker Nominations: exploring good practice
9 – 11 June	Creating the Future: building Quaker faith communities
12 – 13 June	Ulverston International Music Festival at Swarthmoor Hall
23 – 26 June	Experiment with Light Retreat: deepening the practice
21 – 25 August	In Fox's Footsteps: 1652 Quaker pilgrimage
4 – 9 September	Working Retreat and Pilgrimage
7 – 8 September	Heritage Open Days
10 September	'Ladies of the Lake' Cycle Event
15 – 17 September	Being a Quaker Clerk
22 – 24 September	Christian Animism: the Christian faith as an earth-based, creation-focused spirituality
29 Sep – 1 Oct	Welcoming the Soul: creating space for deep listening in our meetings
October	Quaker Week
12 – 15 October	Being and Silence: a contemplative retreat
10 – 12 November	Friends from the Start: exploring the early Quaker story

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