

YOU MAY LEAD A HORSE TO WATER...
FRIENDS AND THE 1986 SWARTHMORE LECTURE

Hazel Shellens

Brampton, Cambridgeshire, England

ABSTRACT

The 1986 Swarthmore Lecture, given by the Quaker Women's Group, was essentially a consciousness-raising exercise. It was intended to 'bring into the light' the experience of women in the Society of Friends; experience which had frequently been under-valued or ignored. Writing centred around a number of different topics including women and violence, feminist theology, women and peace, and sexism in language and education. *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* made a huge impact at the time of its delivery, but despite the enormous interest that it engendered, it did not lead to any major changes and no real effort was made to combat sexism within the Religious Society of Friends or to embrace gender equality in its totality. This article explores why the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture failed to live up to the hopes and expectations of so many of those who heard it.

KEYWORDS

Quaker Women's Group, Swarthmore Lecture, feminism, gender equality, sexism within the Religious Society of Friends, residential Yearly Meetings

Every year, usually at the time when members of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain come together for their annual meeting for business known as Yearly Meeting (YM), the Swarthmore Lecture is delivered 'on some subject relating to the message and work of the Society of Friends'.¹ At the same time a book is published, which embodies and frequently enhances the lecture. In 1986, in a departure from the usual format of a single lecturer responsible for both the book and the lecture, the Swarthmore Lecture was written and presented by members of the Quaker Women's Group as a co-operative endeavour. Its delivery, at the residential YM held in Exeter was, for many, a defining moment. *The Friend*² reported the following week: 'The women had spoken truth, and in a way that had moved many but deeply angered some—women as well as men'.³

Using a mixture of methodologies,⁴ evidence has been gathered to enable the author to analyse the background, presentation, and effect of *Bringing the Invisible into the Light*,⁵ in an attempt to explain why this controversial Swarthmore Lecture failed to become the 'important step forward in the Society' that the then clerk of the Swarthmore Lecture Committee had confidently predicted that it would.⁶

1. THE CONTEXT

Any analysis of the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture needs to take into account the pluralistic and divided nature of the Religious Society of Friends at the end of the twentieth century. A shift in the nature of liberal Quaker theology had taken place in the course of the middle years of the twentieth century and at the same time the abolition of the 'recording of ministers' in 1924⁷ and of birthright membership in 1959⁸ had helped to promote the Society as an inclusive group open to anyone. As Pink Dandelion expresses it:

The Bible, now regarded as fallible, was demoted as a source of authority and ideas of sin dropped from the popular imagination of Friends. The return to the idea of the Inward Light was linked with the now universal and definitional Quaker belief in 'that of God in everyone'.⁹

The years leading up to the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture, therefore, saw the Religious Society of Friends in a period of transition and although drawn together by their practice of worship based on silence, their belief in an unmediated relationship with God, and their rejection of outward sacraments and creeds, the Friends assembling for YM were nonetheless representative of a Society 'characterised by pluralism, division and debate'.¹⁰

Contributing to this division and debate, but somewhat apart from it, were the Quaker feminists. During the 1970s and 1980s feminism was a live issue in all mainstream churches¹¹ and the formation of the Quaker Women's Group (QWG) in 1978 was but one element in an active Christian feminist movement. The QWG was not a radical group: it published a newsletter (which has appeared on a regular basis ever since), established contact with the Christian Women's Information and Resources project (CWIRES),¹² formed regional groups, and held residential weekends about four times a year throughout the 1980s.¹³

The fact that a number of Quaker women were sufficiently attracted to feminism to form a Quaker women's group is not of itself surprising. Feminism and Quakerism have much in common, including two basic tenets: first, a belief in human equality: 'At the centre of Friends' religious experience is the repeatedly and consistently expressed belief in the fundamental equality of all members of the human race';¹⁴ and second, an acceptance of the fundamental importance of personal experience: 'Holding that truth is to be discovered by each person testing their own experience, both Quakers and Feminists recognise that each must be heard and their experience attended to'.¹⁵

The QWG was not alone in struggling with the issues of sexism at this time. The matter was on the agenda at YM 1984, where the Minute read (in part):

We have been reminded of the pain caused to many women and men by the expectations held of them on the basis of their sex, and of the dominance of male-associated values, even within our own Society, which has traditionally extended substantial respect, influence and responsibility to women. We are called upon to look both at our personal attitudes and at the structures within the Society of Friends.¹⁶

Two years later, in response to this Minute, *Freeing Each Other: A Quaker Study Pack on Sexism*,¹⁷ was published by the Resources for Learning Group. At the same time Woodbrooke, the Quaker study centre in Birmingham, was beginning to look at women's issues, 'trying to ensure that women's theology is a regular emphasis in its programmes'¹⁸ and there were several term-time courses on the subject during the 1980s. The peace movement, too, was an area where Quakerism and feminism met and a number of Friends, including several members of the QWG, were actively involved with the Greenham Women's Peace Camp,¹⁹ which attracted (amongst others) some of the more radical feminists. It became clear that feminism had begun to make some impact on the Religious Society of Friends when, in 1985, YM agreed to set up a Revision Committee to update the 1959 Book of Discipline,²⁰ bearing in mind the need to use gender inclusive language.²¹ The impact was, however, very limited as became evident during YM 1986.

Britain Yearly Meeting in session is the final constitutional authority of the Religious Society of Friends in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Its membership consists of all those who belong to the several monthly meetings... All members of the yearly meeting have the right to attend and to take part in its deliberations.²²

YM was first held outside London in 1905 and in 1974 the first fully residential YM, with full provision for children, was held in York. This opened up YM to a large number of Friends who had previously found it difficult to attend. The Epistle²³ referred to 'the imaginative and practical preparations, which made possible the presence of whole families'²⁴ and recorded that 'never within our memories have so many Friends attended YM'. The format proved so popular that the decision was taken to hold a residential YM once every four years.

The atmosphere on these occasions is hard to describe. Outside the sessions there is a wide range of meetings and the special interest groups are out in force. These gatherings are market places, fairs, revival meetings, family reunions, holiday camps, theatres, studios—and music, laughter and discussion flow far into the night.²⁵

It was at such a residential gathering that the Quaker Women's Group delivered the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture, on the university campus in Exeter.

The Swarthmore Lectureship had been established in 1908 by the Woodbrooke Council,²⁶ following a minute of the Woodbrooke Extension Committee of 9 December 1907, which called for 'an annual lecture on some subject relating to the message and work of the Society Friends'. Seen as an additional means of education and outreach, its purpose was defined as '(1) to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their message and mission (2) to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the Society of Friends'.²⁷ From its inception the lectureship provided both for the publication of a book and for the

delivery of a lecture, which 'should be widely advertised beforehand, and should be open to representatives of the Press, and be delivered in some suitable public building'.²⁸ The first Swarthmore Lecture entitled 'Quakerism—A Religion of Life' was given by Rufus Jones in Birmingham in 1908. The lectures have continued ever since, with the single exception of 1948. Responsibility for the Swarthmore Lecture lies with the Swarthmore Lecture Committee (SLC), 'appointed in the course of time to consider the names of lecturers and subjects and to make all the necessary arrangements for delivery and printing'.²⁹ It is appointed by, and is responsible to, the Woodbrooke Council.

During the late 1970s the SLC appears to have been somewhat lacking in energy and vision, but in February 1981 a new chairman (*sic*),³⁰ Erica Vere, was appointed, who began to make changes: 'In everything Erica [Vere] did, she had a gift for thinking and acting quickly'.³¹ The SLC was no exception. Four new names appear on the list of those present at the meeting held on 31 March 1982, as well as two previously appointed by Woodbrooke Council. Of the twelve committee members present, five were women, compared with an attendance of two women in a total of nine in May 1977. This meeting agreed that papers should be prepared to enable the committee to take a new look at the Swarthmore Lecture: 'We hope these [papers] will cover a draft constitution, and also direct our attention to the whole area of the Book and the Lecture, and variations in our traditional approach'.³²

The resulting papers were considered at the September 1982 meeting of the SLC and in November 1982 a statement was issued. There had clearly been a radical rethink. The book, it was stated 'may excite, explore, inform, but it will not always be a tidy, intellectual exercise' and the lecturers 'may wish to suggest a method of presentation of their views, which might relate more to drama than to scholarship'. The 1986 Swarthmore Lecture, commissioned after this statement was issued, is a clear product of the new thinking.

So when the members of the QWG took the stage in Exeter to present their Swarthmore Lecture, it was against a background of change. The Religious Society of Friends, in terms of belief, was in a state of transition; a rejuvenated SLC was looking to break the mould of an academic lecture presented by one person; feminism was a live issue, in society as a whole, in the churches, and in the Religious Society of Friends and the 1986 residential YM offered the opportunity to present a Swarthmore Lecture which, in accordance with the statement issued by the SLC in November 1982, would 'have relevance to the current condition and needs of the Religious Society of Friends' in a way that was not necessarily 'a tidy, intellectual exercise'.

2. THE LECTURE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE YEARLY MEETING IN SESSION

Between 1908 and 1985 there were 76 Swarthmore Lectures. Only eleven of them (14.5%) were given by women. Between 1952 and 1991, the Swarthmore lecturer was a man in eight years out of ten—a surprising record for a religious organisation with a testimony to equality, which is still fond of quoting the words of Elizabeth

Bathurst written in 1685: 'As male and female are made one in Jesus Christ, so women receive an office in the Truth as well as men, and they have a stewardship and must give an account of their stewardship as well as the men'.³³

In 1983, however, the changes in membership of the SLC and the consequent re-appraisal of the Swarthmore Lecture itself, began to feed through as '*the Committee began to look at the gender of lecturers*'.³⁴ The minutes reveal that in thinking about the 1986 lecture a (new) committee member

Has talked to us about a women's style presentation and book that could form the lecture for the next residential Yearly Meeting in 1986. The theme could include the experience of women in the Society of Friends and might take several forms. We could envisage the book as a series of essays and the presentation as group activities.³⁵

Two members of the SLC were asked to meet with the QWG to explore the possibilities and there followed a series of meetings, debate, and discussion, within both the SLC and the QWG, as to whether a 'women's style presentation' was the right way forward for the 1986 Lecture. As one member of the SLC told me: '*We found ourselves having to convince first the committee, then the women, then the committee again*'. Finally, however, the decisions were made and the formal invitation was issued and accepted.

The first mention of the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture in the *QWG Newsletter* appears in May 1984 (i.e. following the issuing of the official invitation in March) and thereafter there are regular reports. Women were asked either to send their writings/cuttings/ideas to the Swarthmore Lecture correspondent, who would pass them on to the women coordinating that particular topic, or to share them with other women in their area, or to bring them to a working weekend to be held in November.³⁶ Writing centred around eight different topics:

- Women and Violence
- Feminist Theology
- Quakerism and Feminism—how each informs the other
- Women and Peace
- Sexism in Education
- Sexism in Language
- Autobiographies—our stories
- 'Herstory'

Women agreed to coordinate particular topics; there were ad hoc groups at QWG residential gatherings; specific Swarthmore preparation weekends were held in June and October 1984 and January 1985; and there were additional meetings in members' own homes. The weekends were basically about sharing the writing and work that individual women had done towards the Swarthmore Lecture. In the words of one contributor to the *QWG Newsletter*, 'It is the sharing of many contributions which gradually shapes our ideas, experience and knowledge into some workable whole'.³⁷ During late May and early June 1985 the Swarthmore Lecture correspondent 'received writing from twenty-one women, their words amounting to somewhere between 50,000 and 70,000'.³⁸

The editorial process began with meetings in small groups in Edinburgh, Oxford, and Bristol over the weekend of 22 June 22, followed by 12 days' worship and concentrated work at a residential centre. Membership of the editorial team changed:

Each day we wrote a diary of the decisions we had taken that day, so that women joining us at the week-end and those who would carry on during the second week, could see how we had arrived at the point where they joined us. By and large these changes in personnel were managed with a minimum of upset to the process.³⁹

At the end of the 12 days the editorial group had produced a working text of 25,000 words, ready for those attending the September QWG residential meeting in Nottingham to read and comment on. It was this meeting that decided 'to publish all the names of women who had been involved in any way with the Swarthmore effort'.⁴⁰ The decision (a) to acknowledge all who contributed in this way and (b) not to put names at the end of articles meant that:

1. confidentiality/anonymity was preserved;
2. the experiences recounted could be seen as the experiences of women in general, not just of one particular woman;
3. the writing was a form of ministry—'*there was a discipline around letting go of your own writing; it came through me as a Quaker woman, at that time, it wasn't mine*'.

The final text was received by the SLC in January 1986. The Secretary to the Committee, writing to the QWG correspondent on 13 February 1986, said it had been 'overwhelmingly and warmly approved', and that the SLC had found it to be 'a profoundly moving document, challenging and uplifting...a brave and co-operative effort, which they suspected had been costing to many'.

In inviting the QWG to give the 1986 Lecture, the SLC was clear that 'the *method* of group action was an intrinsic part of the message'⁴¹ and the women were equally clear that 'our process is for all of us to work together'.⁴² It is true that the need to work in a non-hierarchical way, yet still be able to operate efficiently, did on occasion create tension, but despite these difficulties, inherent perhaps in any feminist group, the writing of the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture was quite clearly a group process, in which any member was free to participate.

The same principles were applied to the preparation of the presentation. As with the written lecture the invitation to participate came via the *QWG Newsletter*. The January 1986 issue announced: 'Now is a good time for women who are interested, to join in the main action towards the presentation: the next meeting is a residential weekend...from Friday 31st January to Sunday 2nd February'.⁴³

The familiar tensions surfaced—the wish to involve and listen to all the women present, conflicting with the need to produce a script. At last, it was agreed that a small group would write the text and would '*work in accordance with the spirit behind the writing*'. It would appear that once this had been decided, the process moved forward and an article in the April 1986 *QWG Newsletter* records that 'getting together a script for the Swarthmore Presentation is well under way'.⁴⁴ The article went on to appeal for performers and two weekends were arranged for rehearsals. There was a

run through in the Great Hall at the University on the Friday afternoon before YM began and then a final rehearsal on the afternoon before the performance. It would appear that not all the performers were able to attend all the rehearsals, but everyone agrees that '*anyone who wanted to be in, was in*'.

As with the book, anonymity was considered important. About half of those who had written something participated in the production, but no woman spoke her own words and as a consequence '*very special bonds were thus created between the woman whose words I spoke, and the woman who spoke my words*'.

The 1986 Swarthmore Lecture attracted a higher attendance than any YM session—1650⁴⁵ Friends and guests packed into the Great Hall on the evening of Sunday 3 August and some were disappointed: '*We walked up and down the Great Hall looking for a seat, couldn't find one and left. We weren't the only ones, there were quite a few others*'. Most of the items in *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* were included in the presentation (some in abbreviated form), along with some other pieces that had not been included in the book because of lack of space. Songs and some silence were also incorporated. The entire production lasted for 75 minutes. *The Friend* reported:⁴⁶

The presentation was sober, dignified and moving. A hundred women of all ages gathered on the stage, and in front of this supporting background twenty women in simple but varied grey dress gave a succession of readings, songs and poems 'bringing to light' their personal sufferings, their anger and their love, their realisation of the power of solidarity as Quakers, their vision and their hopes.

It was, as an interviewee said, '*a wonderful theatrical performance*'. The mixture of readings, songs and poems kept the presentation moving and the audience alert. This was not a Swarthmore Lecture where Friends lost concentration as a single lecturer delivered what he had to say from a lectern. '*The women were very energised; there was real fire*'. '*The whole atmosphere was strongly emotionally charged*'. '*There was the shocking impact of hearing words you did not expect to hear and in a Quakerly context*'. '*It is one of the strongest, clearest memories I have of a Swarthmore Lecture*'. At the end 'the only sound in an emotion-laden pause was the rustling of handshakes round the hall. The women had spoken truth, and in a way that had moved many but deeply angered some—women as well as men'.⁴⁷ The reaction of Friends to what they had heard reverberated around the campus and the effect was felt throughout the remaining five days of the YM.

'Nobody who heard the Swarthmore lecture was untouched by it: its power was witnessed by the strength of the emotions it aroused'.⁴⁸ Those emotions were both positive and negative, ranging from the (male) Friend who declared '*I'm not listening to this*' and walked out, to the (male) Friend who '*sat in his seat with the tears streaming down his face, because now for the first time he really understood what the women had been saying*'. Since the YM was residential, Friends did not disperse for the night, and the lecture remained at the forefront of everyone's consciousness. '*Some Friends were stunned—they silently walked away afterwards*'. '*It made a huge impact—we returned to the flat—the men ambivalent—the women tactful*'. '*I remember going back to the camp site and my own Meeting all cramming into one tent over cups of cocoa to share how upset we had been (men and women)*'.

Some in the audience could not believe what they had heard—according to them violence and rape did not happen in Quaker families.⁴⁹ ‘*These women are lying; no-one would have been raped within the Society*’. At the other end of the spectrum, particularly among the women from the QWG, there was considerable elation: ‘*I don’t remember leaving the hall; I remember a lot of hugging and singing*’. ‘*A great feeling of celebration*’.

The Swarthmore Lecture had stirred up considerable feeling and although a few people were fairly unmoved by it and one was reported as thinking that ‘*it was all a bit unnecessary*’, the Friend who said that in the room he sensed ‘*anger, sadness, grief, relief and joy*’ probably had it about right. All these emotions were in evidence and many of them resurfaced during the course of the week, particularly in the follow-up groups, which were held on several days and ranged widely over the material used in the presentation. The *Daily Bulletin*⁵⁰ for Tuesday 5 August has the following entry:

SWARTHMORE LECTURE FOLLOW-UP

Separate groups for men and women (on general themes) in WOODBROOKE ROOM. Other rooms in Amory for specific topics: homosexuality, violence, pornography, miscarriage, stillbirth, child death; etc. Please come to Woodbrooke room for re-direction.

QWG members facilitated these groups in pairs and a number of interviewees mentioned how difficult they had been. One Friend, recalling the hostile sentiment that she had encountered, remembered hearing such phrases as: ‘*You are not really Quaker women*’. ‘*We have always had equality in the Society of Friends*’. ‘*I’ve always allowed my wife to do what she wants*’. The fact that the groups were facilitated by members of the QWG to some extent helped to keep the emotions alive. There were other Friends present at the YM, who could have helped with the follow-up groups, offering support or counselling. These Friends were not, however, involved. Had they been, the experience of many may well have been different. Facilitation by non-QWG members may have meant less emotion, less passion, less catharsis, which would have suited some, but it may also have enabled others to avoid looking at issues that they needed to face. As one interviewee said: ‘*The Swarthmore Lecture follow-up group changed my life*’.

The Swarthmore Lecture took place on Sunday evening. In the session on Tuesday morning *To Lima With Love* was considered—the YM’s draft response to the World Council of Churches’ document on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry. Nineteen amendments were accepted, of which three related to the use of language and were undoubtedly influenced by the atmosphere prevailing after the Swarthmore Lecture. An interviewee, who was involved in the redrafting, said those who were doing it were very conscious of sexist language: ‘*It was a constant throughout the YM—in the light of the Swarthmore Lecture “To Lima With Love” must be perfect*’.

Of the three amendments, the one which changed ‘our worship focuses our hope for the final establishment of God’s peaceable kingdom’ into ‘our worship focuses our hope for the fulfilment of God’s purpose’ was the most dramatic and the most contentious. It signalled a change from previous practice and a willingness to look for other forms of expression, if the original language was in some way biased. Although Friends previously had generally accepted that contemporary documents should use inclusive language, they had, until then, shown a real reluctance to change the

wording of writings from previous centuries. One Friend, reporting to her MM, described the replacement of the words 'God's peaceable kingdom' as:

A change in orientation by the Society as it sought to respond to the hurt of the QWG and, through them, to that of all women. It was an acknowledgement of something previously hidden, a bringing of the invisible into the light.⁵¹

The 'Swarthmore Lecture effect' also crept into ministry and one Friend recollects:

Some very pointed ministry after the Swarthmore Lecture, when there was reference to 'that of God in every **man**', following which Harvey Gillman⁵² prayed 'Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Lover, God'. I am not quite sure of the words any more, but it was very inclusive, very healing.

Perhaps most healing of all was the Celebration on the final night, 'when some of the presenters returned to the stage to lead the singing and the song "We are gentle, angry women" became "We are gentle, angry people" with everyone in the hall linking hands'.⁵³ Although the pain and the hurt had been what most Friends had heard when the Swarthmore Lecture was presented, by the end of the week the atmosphere had changed and along with the healing came joy and celebration in which most were able to join. There was also a very definite feeling that something had shifted. *The Friend* described it thus:

Critics saw the lecture as highly partial. But it has surely moved the Society an irreversible step in the right direction, and any Friends who refuse to read this Swarthmore for reasons of stubbornness can be accused of not keeping their minds open to new light.⁵⁴

The 1986 Swarthmore Lecture had aroused great expectations. It remains to consider the extent to which those expectations were met.

3. THE SHORTER- AND LONGER-TERM EFFECTS

If sales are a gauge of the impact a Swarthmore Lecture has made, *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* had an immediate effect on the Religious Society of Friends. At its meeting on 17 September 1986 the SLC noted that 1750 of the 2000 copies printed had been sold and it was agreed that there was a need 'to ensure further stocks quickly'.⁵⁵ By the end of the year, 2230⁵⁶ copies of the book had been sold, as well as at least 200⁵⁷ cassette recordings of the presentation made at YM. As the Secretary of the SLC wrote, in a letter to a QWG member, dated 20 October 1986: 'This is not a record, but only Gerald Priestland [1982] and George Gorman [1973] have done better in recent years'. It continued to sell well in the years immediately following the lecture—694 copies in 1987, 254 in 1988 and 177 in 1989 and then gradually tailed off until 1992, when 40 copies were sold and the stock was exhausted.⁵⁸ Clearly, therefore, it continued to be of interest to members of the Society throughout the remainder of the 1980s and into the 1990s.

Despite the fact that a few Friends disliked the lecture and therefore refused to buy the book,⁵⁹ *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* clearly aroused sufficient interest to create a much greater demand than had been expected. This would appear to indicate

that it was being widely discussed within the Religious Society of Friends—a supposition endorsed by perusal of the letter pages of *The Friend*, in the weeks immediately following the Swarthmore Lecture. There were 27 letters in all, ranging from the extremely positive: ‘the Swarthmore Lecture made this a very special Yearly Meeting for me, and thanks to the women who made this possible’,⁶⁰ to the Friends, who wrote that they were: ‘shocked and surprised that the committee responsible for the Swarthmore Lecture should have accepted the book *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* as meeting the specified requirements of the lecture’.⁶¹

Discussion was also taking place in a number of follow-up/study groups in Meetings around the country. One of my interviewees told me that she had ‘*been invited on more than one occasion to talk about the male/female thing*’, following the Swarthmore Lecture and the *QWG Newsletter* reported that discussions had taken place in Shrewsbury, Hampstead, and Manchester Mount Street, as well as amongst young Friends.⁶²

Some, however, were less eager to talk about the lecture. One interviewee, who had been to a follow-up meeting in Leeds, recalled ‘*the inability [of Friends there] to deal with the fact that this painful subject had been raised*’. She also told me that two members of her local Meeting had been present at YM ‘*but no-one ever spoke to me about it*’, although they all knew she had been involved. This reluctance of some to talk about the Swarthmore Lecture is corroborated by three other interviewees, widely separated geographically, all of whom said they had no recollection of its being discussed or even talked about in their local area and Woodbrooke had difficulty in finding participants when, as part of its short-course programme, it held a weekend event entitled ‘Issues from the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture’. It would appear that Friends were perhaps more ready to write to *The Friend* than they were to sit down in a group and discuss the issues raised with an open mind.

The effect of the Lecture on the members of the QWG is best gauged by looking at the *QWG Newsletters* for August and November 1986. It would appear that for many members of the Group the weeks following the Swarthmore Lecture were not easy and after the euphoria immediately following the presentation many of the women were left feeling raw and vulnerable. Writing in the *QWG Newsletter*, a woman who had been closely involved described it thus: ‘for several days I felt very much like the mother of any newborn: physically exhausted, emotionally very vulnerable and unable to establish with certainty my new identity’.⁶³

Several of my interviewees referred to the fact that a number of women left the QWG either immediately or soon after the delivery of the Swarthmore Lecture. Some were women who had put a tremendous amount of time and energy into the lecture over two to three years and who were ready to move on, both personally and (in some cases) professionally. For at least one woman who spoke to me, ‘*the sense of empowerment*’ she found in the QWG was a factor in enabling her to move to a new and more responsible job in the autumn of 1985 and, once the Swarthmore Lecture was over, she left the QWG.

The departure of some members of the QWG following the lecture appears to have been compensated for to some extent by the arrival of new members: ‘*Following the lecture members of the QWG increased, particularly younger women*’. ‘*I felt a need to be part of this so I joined the QWG next day*’.

A report in the *QWG Newsletter* stated that several local QWGs, as well as the national one, had swelled in numbers because of the Swarthmore Lecture and that new local groups had been formed, including one at Friends House.⁶⁴ There does not, however, appear to have been any dramatic overall increase in numbers. Perhaps the woman who told me: 'I went to the QWG a few times, but [they] knew each other too well and I did not feel welcome' put her finger on the reason why. Delivering the Swarthmore Lecture had been a powerful experience for all who participated—as one interviewee expressed it '*the bonds forged then are like steel*'—but this meant that the group was not easily able to welcome new members and there was not, therefore, the major expansion that may have been expected.

The QWG was formed in 1978; it produced the Swarthmore Lecture exactly eight years later. Following that it continued to hold residential weekends on a regular basis, to produce a newsletter four times a year, and to support and uphold its members, providing a safe space for women, but the drive and energy which produced the Swarthmore Lecture was no longer evident. Ten years later, in September 1997, there was a suggestion within the QWG that the time was right to produce a Quaker Women's Study Pack. A questionnaire was sent out to members and a residential weekend, held in Birmingham in February 1998, considered the responses and explored the matter further. By September 1998, however, the enthusiasm of the previous year appears to have evaporated and no further progress is recorded. It would seem that following the Swarthmore Lecture, those women who had been really changed by it moved on, a few new ones joined but found difficulty in being accepted, and the QWG as a whole became 'stuck'—exhausted and depleted, it reverted to being a safe space for women, rather than an organisation seeking to bring about change.

At its first meeting following the presentation in Exeter the SLC minuted: 'The Lecture including songs, poems and prose had considerable impact on Friends at Yearly Meeting. We have as a committee expressed appreciative gratitude for the presentation and the book'.⁶⁵ From its Minutes and its Report to Woodbrooke Council, the SLC appears to have been satisfied with the fact that the lecture had made an impact on the Society, that sales of the book were high, and that local discussions had been taking place. Less formally, one of the SLC link persons told me that at the end of the presentation: '*I felt I knew what it was like to be a father—make some input in the beginning, sit back and let someone else do the work and then feel tremendously proud at the result*'. Whether the whole of the SLC felt the same way is not recorded, but there is certainly a sense of quiet satisfaction in their correspondence and Minutes.

For the Swarthmore Lecture as an institution, however, the effects of *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* were a great deal more far reaching than the immediate impact. As one of my interviewees put it, '*the mould had been broken*', leaving the way open for future lecturers to experiment with both the book and the presentation, for example, by the reading of poetry,⁶⁶ the use of slides,⁶⁷ the incorporation of taped inserts,⁶⁸ or the use of music and movement.⁶⁹ It meant also that a precedent had already been set when two Friends—Brenda Clifft Heales and Chris Cook—were invited to give the lecture jointly in 1992 and although the Swarthmore Lecture is

usually still delivered by a single lecturer standing at a lectern, 'different' ways of doing it are now accepted and acceptable.

It is traditional for the previous year's lecturer to introduce the current year's lecturer and at a business meeting held on 7 December 1986 the QWG decided, 'we would like to introduce the 1987 Lecture as a group'.⁷⁰ This raised a number of issues for the SLC and some negotiations must have followed, of which there is no record, but a very warm letter from the clerk of the SLC, Erica Vere, to a member of the QWG, dated 5 April 1987, confirmed that 'three Friends should do the introductions'. It is interesting to note that neither *The Friend*, nor the *QWG Newsletter*, made any mention of this and that less than nine months after the 1986 Lecture, the innovation of having three introducers was not considered worth mentioning.

The adoption of 'minders', as they are colloquially called, was another long-term effect of the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture. Reference has already been made to the fact that two members of the SLC were appointed in 1983 to meet with the QWG 'to explore the possibilities' and once the decision was made to issue the invitation, these same two SLC members were asked 'to be especially supportive to the Women's Group'.⁷¹ According to one of my interviewees, this system of 'minders' 'was adopted after the QWG lecture—it became a process which is now automatic—supporting rather than communicating with the lecturer(s)'.

Twelve years after the QWG Lecture, the Swarthmore Lecture was again given by a group. Young Friends General Meeting⁷² (YFGM) published a book and presented a lecture entitled *Who do we think we are? Young Friends' Commitment and Belonging*. This time round the SLC had experience of a collective lecture—they knew what the pitfalls were and there were two 'minders' to support the Young Friends through the process. A large number of Friends were involved and Young Friends seem to have gone through an exercise very similar in some respects to that of the QWG. Indeed, at a very early stage some members of YFGM watched the video of *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* and some of the similarities between the two lectures were a reflection of this, as Young Friends themselves acknowledged.⁷³ Compared with the earlier group lecture, *Who do we think we are? Young Friends' Commitment and Belonging*, caused little stir in *The Friend*. Delivered on 23 May, it was not reviewed until five weeks later⁷⁴ and provoked only four letters. Times had changed, the Swarthmore Lecture had changed and the Religious Society of Friends had changed. It was no longer considered inappropriate to talk about rape and abuse⁷⁵ or to incorporate music and mime into a Swarthmore Lecture. It is possible that there was also something else at work. As one of my interviewees rather cynically remarked: 'Women can do no right; Young Friends can do no wrong'.

Bringing the Invisible into the Light had an immediate impact on the Quaker Study Centre at Woodbrooke. Many of those attending the woman-only peace week, held there from 21–27 August, had also been at YM and came to Woodbrooke feeling 'raw and vulnerable', but also very conscious of womanpower. The week was intended for 'women who have some involvement in the peace movement or the women's peace movement, and who would like to spend time reflecting, sharing, thinking and worshipping with other women who work for peace'.⁷⁶

The letter which was sent out to participants prior to the event made it clear that there would be another course in residence at Woodbrooke at the same time:

This group is mixed—men and women—as, of course, is Woodbrooke staff; both are happy to respect our request for provision of space for women only within Woodbrooke during the week. The programme of sessions we have planned, with the Common Room as our base, is for women only, as are our morning Meetings for Worship and evening epilogues. We are assuming that many women will also want to sit with other women at mealtimes. Women are welcome to join in sessions, meals and worship with the mixed course if they wish, but we'd ask you to respect the women's space on the course and refrain from inviting men into it.⁷⁷

It would appear as if it had all been amicably organised, but according to my interviewees this was not the case: 'The entire tutorial group at Woodbrooke at that time was men—it was a deeply controversial event'. 'Woodbrooke was absolutely thrown by the fact that we wouldn't let men into the Common Room'. The Minutes of Woodbrooke Council confirm that there had been difficulties and tensions 'arising from the exclusive nature of the activities of the participants',⁷⁸ but despite these difficulties the Council also recorded, in the same Minute, its wish to continue to encourage the holding of courses on feminist issues and its readiness 'to go on learning how to reconcile the special needs of groups with the corporate life of Woodbrooke as a community'. And that is exactly what it did do. By the time the First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women came to be held in July 1990 Pam Lunn had been appointed as a 'tutor in peace and justice issues, who would bring a feminist analysis to bear' (field notes). This time there was very little upset. Pam Lunn 'held' the conference for Woodbrooke, several of the male tutors absented themselves, and there were no other concurrent groups.

It appears that throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Woodbrooke was quietly adjusting to the changes that needed to be made in response to the growth of the women's movement and although the changes were not dramatic, they were continuous. The Swarthmore Lecture did not have any major effect, in that Woodbrooke had already recognised the need, but the atmosphere pertaining post *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* may well have made it easier for the college to continue to move in the direction in which it was already going.

The same could be said to apply to other developments that were taking place during the 1990s, such as the preparation and publication of the 1995 edition of *Quaker Faith and Practice*, the organisation of the First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women in 1990, the development of policies regarding sexual abuse, and the establishment of Young Women's Groups.

Quaker Faith and Practice is the book of Christian discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. It is revised and corporately re-adopted about every 25 years. In 1985 YM appointed a Revision Committee to carry out the task of bringing the 1959 book up to date in the light of the changes that had taken place in the previous thirty years. Revision of the book of discipline had, therefore, begun before the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture took place, but the presentation of *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* and the redrafting of *To Lima With Love* that followed it, put inclusive language firmly on the agenda of the Revision Committee:

Sensitivity to gender-exclusive language and the hurt it causes has only now become recognised amongst us. Effort has been made to avoid such modes of expression, accepting that quotations from earlier times must remain in the language of their age, but exercising discretion where there has been a choice of extracts.⁷⁹

Several of my interviewees, some of whom were themselves on the Revision Committee, said that because of the atmosphere pertaining in the Society after the Swarthmore Lecture '*inclusive language was never a problem and very few documents ever emerged that weren't carefully checked for bias*'. Thus, when as part of the 'Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women', the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland surveyed all the mainstream churches in the early 1990s, the Quakers (along with the Methodists) were able to say that their official documents were in inclusive language.⁸⁰ But although the Religious Society of Friends was clearly aware of the need to use inclusive language, there was no explicit statement to this effect. As the 1996 Swarthmore lecturer put it:

I do not remember BYM corporately adopting a testimony against the use of sexist language as a part of its testimony to equality. I believe it would have been better to do so explicitly rather than to let it quietly emerge. As it is we have a testimony by implication only. We could celebrate it much more effectively if we had worked our way through to adopting it as a group.⁸¹

This failure to adopt inclusive language 'as a group' may account in part for what some Friends see as a '*slipping back*' in recent years. The Swarthmore Lecture helped to ensure that the 1995 edition of *Quaker Faith and Practice* used inclusive language, but there was no formal statement and sexist language is still be heard, on occasion, at Quaker gatherings.

The First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women, which was held in July 1990, may or may not have been '*a direct result of the Swarthmore Lecture*' as one interviewee maintained, but there are clear parallels with the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture and the feminist way of working, as the proceedings⁸² show. Co-operation and community were the basis of the organisation—each participant had a responsibility and every single person involved was important: 'No long speeches, no adulation, just a simple offering of ourselves to each other. There are no "stars" in this gathering'.⁸³ Inevitably, with 74 women attending, from 21 countries, representing all continents and coming from very different worshipping traditions, there were times of difficulty and tension, as well as times of joy. At the end of the conference, however, the women were able to record: 'Each of us has been challenged, enriched and profoundly moved. We have been empowered'.⁸⁴ The same could have been said of the QWG after their presentation at YM in 1986.

Reference has already been made to the fact that there were some at YM in 1986 who could not accept that physical or sexual abuse took place in Quaker homes, and although the Swarthmore Lecture opened the subject up in BYM, the issues raised were given little real consideration by the Society as a whole. In 1994 the subject was again under discussion, following an article in *The Friend*⁸⁵ and this time action was taken. In December 1995, Meeting for Sufferings⁸⁶ approved a document entitled *Safeguarding Children from Harm* and despite some initial reluctance, Friends gradually

accepted the need to exercise proper care to safeguard the safety and well-being of children, young people, and those working with them. When the much-enlarged code of practice, *Meeting Safety*, was published in 2001, the extent to which the Society had moved forward became clear—the letter to introduce the new document referred to the fact that, ‘Many Quaker Meetings have worked out their own policies and some Meetings have realised that some of our members and attenders have convictions for offences in this area’.⁸⁷

At about the same time as *Safeguarding Children from Harm* was being drawn up, three Friends from a group calling itself Q-HAPSA (Quakers concerned for the Healing and Prevention of Sexual Abuse) were working on a booklet entitled *What Can We Say about Child Sexual Abuse?*. The publication of this booklet is another indication of how far the Society had moved since 1986—it is specifically aimed at and for Quakers, to enable them to ‘move towards a helpful response’ to child sexual abuse.⁸⁸ At least one of the authors was very familiar with the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture and the final paragraph explicitly reflects the influence of *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* on *What Can We Say about Child Sexual Abuse?*:

We believe we can encourage these healing responses by bringing this subject out of the shadows, into the light, sensitive to the blocks which the wall has created and ready to be part of a movement towards healing and change.⁸⁹

Q-HAPSA was not a direct result of the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture, but it undoubtedly came out of the climate prevailing post *Bringing the Invisible into the Light*, enabling those Friends who had a specific concern to address issues raised by the lecture so to do.

In a similar fashion, work with young women within BYM, which began in 1989 and continues to this day, came out of the post-1986 Swarthmore Lecture climate. Supported and encouraged by volunteers drawn from the QWG, young women’s weekends were organised on a regular basis throughout the 1990s, with funding obtained from the Department for Education and Employment. The fact that there is still a demand, particularly from 12–15 year olds, would seem to suggest that providing a safe space for young women is as necessary and valid today as it was in 1989.

4. CONCLUSION

As this analysis has shown, the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture, written and delivered by members of the QWG as a co-operative endeavour, made a huge impact when it was presented to the YM in session at Exeter. It may have been expected that a Swarthmore Lecture, which aroused so much strong feeling at the time of its delivery, would make an indelible impact on the Religious Society of Friends, and many of those present in 1986 believed that this would be the case. Careful analysis of the material, however, would appear to show that the long-term effects of the lecture were minimal and although it made a major difference to the lives of a small number of Friends (most of whom were members of the QWG), its effect on the Society as a whole was extremely limited. There was a huge impact at the time, particularly on those who were present, but little follow-up and no real fruition. Indeed, in the long

term, *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* probably did more for the Swarthmore Lecture itself than it did for feminism.

In the opinion of this researcher, two factors are key in explaining the impact made by the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture at the time:

1. The YM at which *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* was delivered was residential and was a week long.
2. The SLC was seeking to modernise the Swarthmore Lecture and had invited the QWG to deliver a 'women's style presentation and book' and 'an experimental style lecture'.⁹⁰

Residential YMs differ from YMs held in London. They tend to attract whole families, which means the attendance of a wider age range and more non-Friends (accompanying partners who are in membership). Thus, although the deeply committed and 'weighty'⁹¹ Friends, who habitually attend YM, are still there, they are proportionately fewer and the diverse and pluralistic nature of the Society becomes more apparent. Most of those attending are resident on campus and discussions continue long into the night and over breakfast the next morning, thus ensuring that subjects that may have caused unease, disagreement, or even anger are not quickly forgotten or put to rest, but continue to be debated throughout the week.

Bringing the Invisible into the Light was presented on the evening of Sunday 3 August. YM continued until Friday 8 August. The audience was extremely diverse, and, in terms of the subject matter of the Swarthmore Lecture, ranged from active feminists through those who had never really given much thought to such issues, to the Friend who walked out declaring he didn't 'have to listen to this'. At the end of the lecture, Friends did not simply disperse, reconvening the next morning to move on to the next item of business on the YM agenda, but remained together, in groups, to talk about what they had heard. Here the second factor came into play. For what they had heard was very different, in both content and format, from any previous Swarthmore Lecture. It was a presentation, not a lecture. At the same time, it was delivered in a spirit of worship, as a form of ministry, by women who had spent hours working on it co-operatively, and it clearly came from a deep spiritual place. It was a potent mix: personal life stories intruding into Quaker time, during a Swarthmore Lecture, which had always been regarded within the Society of Friends as epitomising the respectable, academic face of Quakerism.

Reactions ranged from the jubilant to the stunned and as this was a residential occasion there was ample opportunity to discuss, debate, attend follow-up groups, talk with the presenters, or even grapple with personal issues related to the subject matter. The presentation pervaded the remaining four days of the YM, influenced the session on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, was mentioned in the YM Epistle, and featured in the final Celebration.

But what was its effect beyond the YM? The 1986 Swarthmore Lecture undoubtedly had a transitional influence on the Religious Society of Friends as a whole and on some of the institutions within it. To some extent it legitimised what was already happening and facilitated the path of those working to bring about change. Thus single-sex courses continued at Woodbrooke and the First International Theological

Conference of Quaker Women was held there—a highly successful woman-only event, organised according to feminist principles; the Revision Committee preparing the 1995 edition of *Quaker Faith and Practice* was careful to ensure that the language used was inclusive; the Children and Young People's Committee began to work with single-sex groups; and in 1995 Meeting for Sufferings finally grasped the nettle of child abuse and gave guidelines for Meetings to follow in *Safeguarding Children from Harm*. None of these, however, were major changes of direction and none can be attributed directly to the Swarthmore Lecture.

There are, however, two areas where the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture had a permanent long-term effect:

1. on the Swarthmore Lecture as an institution; and
2. on individual Friends.

The QWG served the SLC well when it came to showing members of the Society of Friends that 'their message and mission' did not have to be interpreted by an academic standing at a lectern. The 1986 Lecture '*broke the mould*' and thereafter lecturers felt more able to experiment with their method of presentation. But although *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* changed the pattern of Swarthmore Lectures and enabled the SLC to implement its paper of November 1982, ironically it did not do a great deal to change the balance of men and women lecturers. In the decade 1977–86 there were seven men and three women (counting QWG as a single woman); between 1987 and 1996 there were six men and four women, and in the five years between 1997 and 2001 there were three men, one woman, and YFGM.⁹²

The effect of the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture on individual Friends is extremely difficult to quantify, but it was clear from those coming to the meetings in Exeter in 2001 that the impact had lasted to this day in most cases. The atmosphere in the room at both meetings was surprisingly emotional, given the passage of time (field notes) and comments on the feedback forms included: '*I understood for the first time why sexist God language had been so painful to women*'. '*The Swarthmore Lecture changed my life*'. Although these were clearly self-selected groups, the fact that so many people wished to revisit the Swarthmore Lecture fifteen years later and talk about their responses to it (whether positive or negative), indicates that it had had a profound effect on them.

The effect on individual members of the QWG was likewise profound and it is noteworthy that a large proportion of those listed as contributors to the Lecture are still active within the Society, many in high-profile positions.⁹³ Some respondents confirmed that being part of the QWG and contributing to the Swarthmore Lecture had given them the self-confidence they needed to enable them to move into the wider Society and take on positions of responsibility.⁹⁴

But although these effects were long term, they were not of any major significance to the Society of Friends as a whole and the question must therefore be asked: Why did the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture fail to move the Society forward in the way that many had thought it would? Paradoxically, the answer would appear to be that in the same way as *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* made an enormous immediate impact because it was a Swarthmore Lecture, ultimately it failed to make any real difference

for exactly the same reason. For although the Swarthmore Lecture is delivered at the time of YM, it does not form part of the proceedings. The responsible body is the Woodbrooke Council, through the SLC and the Swarthmore Lecture is not in any way 'part of the system'. There is, therefore, no administrative mechanism in place to take up the issues raised, unless they are embraced in some way by the YM.

For a variety of reasons, no body or group within the Society took up the issues raised by the QWG:

1. The QWG, exhausted and depleted, reverted to being a safe space for women rather than an organisation working to bring about change.
2. Because the lecture had been produced collectively and the authors were anonymous, there was a problem of ownership. There was no single person who could reasonably be expected to take responsibility for answering queries or moving things on.
3. The SLC, having sanctioned the book and the presentation, did nothing to 'hold' the reaction, either by supporting the women in the follow-up groups or by replying to criticism in the Quaker press and elsewhere. The SLC failed to put its imprimatur on *Bringing the Invisible into the Light*.⁹⁵
4. The Religious Society of Friends, by and large, does not respond to emotion, preferring 'quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place'.⁹⁶ This is particularly true of male Friends,⁹⁷ who, at that time, held most of the influential positions in the Society. *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* was essentially emotional. The presentation was variously described to me as 'violent / in your face / intensely personal / moving'. For some of the 'weighty' Friends, who were in a position to influence the Society and implement change, the method chosen obscured the message.
5. Agenda Committee made no attempt to take up the issues raised, either at the time, or in a subsequent YM.⁹⁸
6. Hearing such personal accounts of pain and fear in a Quaker context was a new experience for many Friends:

We know of violence, oppression, pornography, rape, death, incest, but it is what we tend to read about in *The Guardian* at one remove, or talk over with friends in a separate compartment from our Quaker lives. We don't mix it much with our faith.⁹⁹

The QWG was operating in Quaker-time to seek a change in Quaker attitudes to what happened to women in their 'private' lives, which many regarded as having nothing to do with Quakers or Quakerism. Many Friends do not find this acceptable.¹⁰⁰ Consequently the will to take the material and run with it was not there.

7. Friends have a testimony to equality: 'the repeatedly and consistently expressed belief in the fundamental equality of all members of the human race'. This naturally leads members to believe that men and women are treated equally within the Society and that discriminatory practices and sexism do not exist. There is a reluctance to believe that there may be a problem.

Although the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture helped to raise Friends' awareness of the issues that were engaging the women's movement in the 1980s, for all the reasons given above it did not lead to any direct action within the Society. Sexism, albeit less pervasive, was endemic in the Religious Society of Friends, as in society as a whole, and the inherently slow and cautious Quaker business method militated against any rapid change. The message had been delivered, but there was no quantum leap and change came about slowly, as it did elsewhere. August 1986 had given Friends a window of opportunity to embrace gender equality in its totality and to move the Society forward in a way that was clear and unmistakable, but 'To liberate ourselves from pervasive attitudes and practices of our time and social environment requires new perceptions and hard work'.¹⁰¹ *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* had put the new perceptions before Friends; no person, or group, came forward to do the hard work.

NOTES

1. Minute 8, Woodbrooke Extension Committee, 9 December 1907.
2. An independent weekly Quaker journal, founded in 1843.
3. *The Friend*, 15 August 1986, p. 1030.
4. The following methods were used to gather evidence: textual analysis—the two main sources being *The Friend* and *The Quaker Women's Group Newsletter*; group meetings—held during the residential YM in Exeter in 2001 (exactly 15 years after the delivery of *Bringing the Invisible into the Light*); one to one interviews—with members of the QWG, members of the Swarthmore Lecture Committee and Friends who were in the audience at the time; and letters and articles, informing Friends of my research and inviting contributions.
5. *Bringing the Invisible into the Light*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1986.
6. Letter from Erica Vere published in the *QWG Newsletter* 29, November 1986, p. 1.
7. Between 1772 and 1924, those perceived to have the gift of ministry, that is, the ability to make regular and acceptable vocal contributions in Meeting for Worship, were 'recorded' as ministers. The practice was abolished, because it was felt that the recording of a few, undermined the potential of all to minister in Meeting (see Dandelion, P., *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: The Silent Revolution*, Lewiston, NY, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996, p. 17).
8. Until 1959, a child of Quaker parents acquired automatic membership of the Religious Society of Friends.
9. Dandelion, P., 'A Brief History of British Quakerism', in *Who We Are: Questions of Quaker Identity. Booklet A: Our Tradition and Today*, London: Quaker Resources for Learning, Quaker Home Service and Woodbrooke, 1999, p. 13.
10. Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis*, p. 14.
11. Daggars, J., 'Working for Change in the Position of Women in the Church: Christian Women's Information and Resources (CWIRES) and the British Christian Women's Movement, 1972–1991', *Feminist Theology* 26 (January 2001), pp. 44–69.
12. The CWIRES project was created in March 1979 'by and for the component groups of the broad constituency' (Daggars, 'Working for Change', p. 49). Its stated aim was to 'keep people across the country in touch with Christian feminist developments and activities' and between 1979 and 1990 over 2000 books, papers, and periodicals were collected and catalogued from the various groups, which were in membership.
13. The group defined its aims as (i) Generating awareness of the position of women in the Society of Friends and in the wider society, which will lead to a fuller realisation of Womanhood (ii) To be a supportive, loving, caring group who want to grow and develop strength as women

(iii) The interpretation of traditional theology from a specifically female viewpoint. Support and stimulus for rethinking the structure of society (iv) Supplying information through our own resources and those of other women's groups (*QWG Newsletter* 1, pp. 1-2).

14. *Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*, London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 1995, 23.36.

15. *Bringing the Invisible into the Light*, p. 5.

16. *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, London: London Yearly Meeting, 1984, p. 263.

17. *Freeing Each Other: A Quaker Study Pack on Sexism*, London: Quaker Resources for Learning, Quaker Home Service and Woodbrooke, 1986.

18. Flier for course entitled 'Sarah's Dance' held 6-8 June 1986.

19. One of the most moving contributions to *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* is a description of the women 'waiting, watching, witnessing' at the fence (*Bringing the Invisible into the Light*, p. 94).

20. A book produced to guide Friends in procedural matters and to reflect the spiritual experience of earlier generations of Quakers (Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis*, p. 362).

21. *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 1985, pp. 12, 233.

22. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1995, 6.09.

23. A letter from one group of Friends to another, collectively drafted, sent to reflect the thoughts and message of a particular gathering, for example, Yearly Meeting.

24. *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 1974, p. 310.

25. Punshon, J., *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of Quakers*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1999, p. 256.

26. The governing body of Woodbrooke, a Quaker study centre in Birmingham, during most of the twentieth century, until a constitutional change established a trustee body in 1998.

27. Davis, R. (ed.), *Woodbrooke 1903-1953*, London: The Bannisdale Press, 1953, p. 110.

28. Minute 8, Woodbrooke Extension Committee, 9 December 1907.

29. Davis, *Woodbrooke 1903-1953*, p. 110.

30. At its meeting on 6 February 1981 the Swarthmore Lecture Committee recorded: 'We ask Erica Vere to act as our Chairman. We are glad that she has accepted' (SLC Minute 272). There was no further meeting until 31 March 1982, when the minutes, in recording those present, read 'Erica Vere (clerk)'. Thereafter there is no further mention of chair or chairman. It would appear that Erica Vere introduced the use of the gender neutral term 'clerk' at her first meeting.

31. *The Friend*, 2 October 1998, p. 13.

32. SLC Minute 82/5.

33. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1995, 23.43.

34. Throughout this article the use of italics denotes a direct quote from a respondent, made in the course of an interview or during fieldwork, including the meetings held at YM 2001 (see n. 4).

35. SLC Minute 83/13.

36. *QWG Newsletter*, November 1984, p. 12.

37. *QWG Newsletter*, November 1984, p. 12.

38. *QWG Newsletter*, August 1985, p. 11.

39. *QWG Newsletter*, August 1985, p. 11.

40. *QWG Newsletter*, January 1986, p. 12.

41. Letter from Secretary of the SLC to Christopher Holdsworth, who was to introduce the 1986 Swarthmore Lecture at YM, dated 25 November 1985.

42. Minute of the QWG Meeting held 19 February 1984.

43. *QWG Newsletter*, January 1986, p. 13.

44. *QWG Newsletter*, April 1986, p. 4.

45. Figure given in *The Friend*, 22 August 1986, p. 1072. The highest session attendance was 1500 (p. 1072).

46. *The Friend*, 15 August 1986, p. 1030.

47. *The Friend*, 15 August 1986, p. 1030.

48. Letter to *The Friend*, 12 September 1986, p. 1183.

49. Such denial is not uncommon, as the research of Judy Brutz amongst American Quaker families has shown: 'Even thinking about family violence among Friends is for many of us to enter an area of the unthinkable' (Brutz, J.L., *Parable and Transforming Power Among Friends: An Address Given at Illinois and Ohio Valley Yearly Meetings 1985*, Illinois: Illinois Yearly Meeting Publications Committee, 1986, p. 1). But her research has also revealed 'personal stories of extreme abuse' experienced in Quaker families (Brutz, J.L., *Seeking for Spiritual Wholeness in the Family*, Oskaloosa, Iowa: Friends Family Service, 1990, p. 11): 'These broken families include birthright as well as convinced Friends' (p. 11) and 'the proportion of [Quaker] families where such violence occurred was not less than the proportion of families in the general population where such acts occurred' (p. 11).

50. A news sheet produced daily at the time of YM, notifying Friends of events, meetings, and any changes to the programme for that particular day.

51. Slater, L., 'Report on Yearly Meeting to East Midlands of Scotland Monthly Meeting', *QWG Newsletter* 29, November 1986, pp. 16-17.

52. Harvey Gillman was, at the time, working for Quaker Home Service as Outreach Secretary. He himself gave the Swarthmore Lecture in 1988.

53. *The Friend*, 15 August, 1986, p. 1030.

54. *The Friend*, 15 August, 1986, p. 1030.

55. SLC Minute 86/13.

56. Figure obtained from John Clarke, storekeeper at the Quaker Bookshop, 8 November 2001.

57. Figure obtained from the *Friend*, 10 October 1986, p. 1300: 'Recordings made at Yearly Meeting have been very popular and orders are still coming in'.

58. *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* was, in fact, reprinted (420 copies) in September 1995; 52 copies were sold in 1996, 40 in 1997 and between 10 and 20 every year thereafter (figures obtained from John Clarke, storekeeper at the Quaker Bookshop, 8 November 2001).

59. One of my interviewees told me: 'It is the only Swarthmore Lecture I have never bought'.

60. Letter to *The Friend*, 29 August 1986, p. 1116.

61. Letter to *The Friend*, 12 September 1986, p. 1182.

62. *QWG Newsletter* 30, February 1987, p. 13.

63. *QWG Newsletter* 28, August 1986, p. 12.

64. *QWG Newsletter* 30, February 1987, p. 12.

65. SLC Minute 86/13.

66. Gillman, H., *A Minority of One: A Journey with Friends*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1988.

67. Heales, B., and Cook, C., *Images and Silence*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1992.

68. Newell, T., *Forgiving Justice: A Quaker Vision for Criminal Justice*, London: Quaker Home Service, 2000.

69. *Who Do We Think We Are? Young Friends' Commitment and Belonging*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1998.

70. *QWG Newsletter* 30, February 1987, p. 14.

71. SLC Minute 84/8.

72. The term Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) encompasses both the body of Young Friends who chose to attend weekend residential gatherings, and the gatherings themselves. YFGM is open to anyone between the ages of 18 and 35 years, who wishes to attend—some do not and it is not therefore representative of all Young Friends.

73. *Who Do We Think We Are?*, pp. 163-64.

74. *The Friend*, 26 June 1998, p. 10.

75. *Who Do We Think We Are?*, p. 87.

76. Application Form for 'Women and Peace', 1986.

77. Letter to course participants dated 28 July 1986.

78. Woodbrooke Council Minutes 86/30.

79. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1995, p. 15.

80. Byrne, L. (ed.), *Women in the Church*, London: CCBI, 1994, p. 58.

81. Dale, J., *Beyond the Spirit of the Age*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1996, p. 110.
82. *First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women*, London: Earlham School of Religion, Friends World Committee for Consultation, and Woodbrooke College, 1991.
83. Ferguson, V., 'Reflections and Hopes', in *First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women*, pp. 40-43 (40).
84. *First International Theological Conference of Quaker Women*, p. 68.
85. Scott, J., 'A Question for Us?', *The Friend*, 28 October 1994, p. 1373.
86. The executive body of Britain YM, which acts as a standing committee on behalf of the YM between annual gatherings.
87. Letter from General Secretary of Quaker Life, to PM and MM clerks, dated 8 March 2001.
88. Hardisty, E., Cannon C., and Turner R., *What Can We Say about Child Sexual Abuse? A Booklet for Quakers*, Chester: QHAPSA (c/o Chester PM), 1997, p. 10.
89. Hardisty, Cannon, and Turner, *What Can We Say about Child Sexual Abuse?*, p. 16.
90. SLC Minute 83/13.
91. A Friend whose words carry 'weight' and who therefore tends to be influential.
92. In her introductory remarks, the 2002 Swarthmore Lecturer, Jackie Leach Scully, joked that prior to being invited to give the lecture, she had thought that having a beard was mandatory.
93. They include the Director of Woodbrooke, a recent clerk of the SLC, a recent Swarthmore lecturer, and the Deputy Director of Responding to Conflict.
94. The QWG may thus have fulfilled a similar role to the Women's Meetings of the 18th and 19th centuries (see O'Donnell, E., 'Women's Rights and Women's Duties: Quaker Women in the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Women Friends', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Sunderland, 1999).
95. By contrast, when Young Friends presented the Swarthmore Lecture in 1998, Ben Pink Dandelion (then chair of the SLC) chaired a session entitled 'Meet the Swarthmore Lecturers' in the Woodbrooke Room at Friends House, following the lecture. Ten Young Friends were present to meet those Friends who attended (field notes). This practice of holding a Swarthmore Lecture follow-up session in the Woodbrooke Room appears to have begun in 1991.
96. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1995, 24.56.
97. Tutors at Woodbrooke say that the lecturer style courses on Quakerism and Bible study attract approximately equal numbers of men and women Friends, whereas the 'touchy, feely' courses are almost 100% women (field notes).
98. Although the Swarthmore Lecture is not an integral part of the YM, Agenda Committee knows the subject of the lecture 2 years in advance and can incorporate issues therefrom into the YM sessions, if it so decides.
99. Wallis, A., 'Awakening...', *Quaker Monthly*, December 1986, pp. 240-43 (242).
100. Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis*, p. xxvii.
101. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 1995, 22.36.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Hazel Shellens has a degree in history and an MPhil in Quaker Studies, which she completed with the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies (Woodbrooke/Birmingham University) in 2002.

Mailing address: 21 High Street, Brampton, Cambridgeshire PE28 4TG, England.
Email: hazel@shellens.wanadoo.co.uk.