

Friends Meeting House, Barnsley

Western Street, Barnsley, S70 2BP

National Grid Reference: SE 34215 06894



Statement of Significance

As a relatively modern building, the meeting house itself has low heritage significance. The present meeting house replaces a meeting house of 1815 on the same site. In front of the meeting house is a burial ground which dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century; the site has medium significance.

Evidential value

The current meeting house is a modern building with no evidential value. The site includes a burial ground which is at least as old as the earliest meeting house here, c1815, with several marked graves. The site and the burial ground have medium evidential value.

Historical value

Being of relatively recent date, the meeting house has low historical value. The site has overall high historical value with the present meeting house replacing an earlier building of 1815 set within a burial ground. The headstones in the burial ground can provide further information relating to local Quaker families in the area.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a functional modern design, and has relatively low aesthetic value. The building is located within an attractive burial ground with a stone boundary wall which contributes to the aesthetic value of the overall site.

Communal value

The building is in use as a Quaker meeting house and for community groups. This and the presence of the burial ground give the building and site considerable communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Central Yorkshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: 0015670

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire*

1.6 Civil parish: *Barnsley*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Barnsley Victoria Road*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1969; 1994*

1.13 Architect (s): *Gordon Benoy and Partners*

1.14 Date of visit: *7 June 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Geoffrey Hutchinson*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Classroom range and caretaker's dwelling*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 777

Brian Elliott, *The Early Quakers of Monk Bretton 1657-1700: a study of dissent in a South Yorkshire village*, 1976

Geoffrey Hutchinson, *Local Meeting Survey*, June 2016

Helen E. Roberts, *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History: A Guide to Sources*, University of Hull, 2003, pp. 30 <http://hullhistorycentre.org.uk/quaker/quakerguide.pdf>

Part 2: The Meeting House & Burial Ground: history, contents, use, setting and designation

2.1. Historical background

Yorkshire has strong associations with the early Quaker movement, the founder of the Society of Religious Friends George Fox, travelled through the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire between the years 1651 -52. It was following one of these meetings in Yorkshire

that William Dewsbury and James Nayler from West Ardsley became 'First Publishers of Truth' and helped settled new meetings. A meeting is recorded to have taken place in Burton (Monk Bretton), a village two miles north east of the centre of Barnsley. Friends would travel from the nearby areas including Barnsley to attend meetings in each other's homes. Land was purchased for a burial ground in Burton in about 1657 and a meeting house was built on the same site in 1698. Fox is recorded as holding a meeting at Burton in 1660. The relocation of the meeting to Barnsley followed the visit of Friend Thomas Shillitoe, from Barnsley, who witnessed the poor conditions and the need of extensive repairs to the Burton meeting house. A plot of land was acquired at the corner of Western Street and Huddersfield Road at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A meeting house was opened in 1815.



Figure 1: Illustration of Barnsley Meeting House, 1815 by T.Rebmayne, 1928 (Barnsley MH Archive).



Figure 2: Two photographs of the meeting house built 1815, the left with porch the right the porch demolished, date unknown (Barnsley MH Archive)

By the 1960s the meeting house was in poor condition and suffering from rot, dampness and poor heating. A decision was made to demolish the meeting house and replace it with a new building on the same site. In 1968, the meeting house was demolished and a new meeting house with separate warden's accommodation was built to the designs of Gordon Benoy and Partners.

In the 1970s a separate classroom was built to the south of the meeting house and this was replaced with a permanent structure in the 1990s at a cost of £16,000.

A small extension was introduced in 2008-2010 to accommodate a store room, and more recently in 2014-15 a larger window opening was made to the east wall of the main meeting room to provide more natural light into the main meeting room.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The Meeting House was built from designs by Gordon Benoy and Partners and opened in 1969. The building is built in brown brick laid in stretcher bond, and the flat roofs are covered in felt. The plan consists of two single-storey flat roofed interconnecting blocks; the meeting room is in the southern block and ancillary spaces and a smaller meeting room are in a shallower rectangular block to the north. The east elevation of the northern block facing the burial ground forms the principal frontage and is entered via a ramp or three steps under a canopied area. The entrance comprises of a concrete rectangular block that sits on a brick base and includes the inscription "SOCIETY OF FRIENDS QUAKER MEETING HOUSE". The northern elevation faces Western Street and has one single light window with a further window encompassing the north-west corner. The west elevation has a single window with a door providing a rear entrance into the building. The range containing the main meeting room adjoins the southern elevation, a large 10-paned window is located to the east, a small horizontal window to the west and four vertical slim lined windows and fire exit to the north.

The building is entered via a ramp from the burial ground side where a foyer provides access and circulation to a kitchen, library, toilets and a meeting room. The main meeting room is generously lit from the newly introduced window to the east, a small window to the south and slim vertical windows to the west. The walls of the meeting room are formed of concrete blocks painted white, with a horizontal pine dado to the four sides of the room, a ceiling with narrow tongue and groove panelling and a floor covered in carpet.

2.3. Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground

The land for the present meeting house and burial ground was acquired in 1814. The burial ground is located to the east of the site. It is bounded by a stone wall with copings, with mature trees around the perimeter. An undated plan of the burial ground reveals 8 rows of approximately fifteen plots. All the gravestones have a uniform character, with rows of round headed headstones which are unusually characterised by a curved hollow to each side. The headstones include basic information for name, date of death and age. The burial ground includes headstones of seventeenth century date which were relocated from the burial ground at Burton; one is located to the eastern boundary and a small collection to the western boundary. The burial ground retains a sundial as depicted in the illustration in figure 1 but the dial plate was stolen a number of years ago. The records for the burial record cover a period approximately from 1839 – 1981 and these are located at Barnsley meeting house. The burial ground is now closed for burials but is still in use as a place for scattering ashes.

The burial ground includes the graves of a number of members of the Harvey family, who were involved in the linen industry and philanthropists in Barnsley. William Harvey (1811-1867) was an avid art collector and provided funds for a School of Art building. Tom Pickles, a geography teacher at Holgate Grammar School was the author of school geography textbooks.

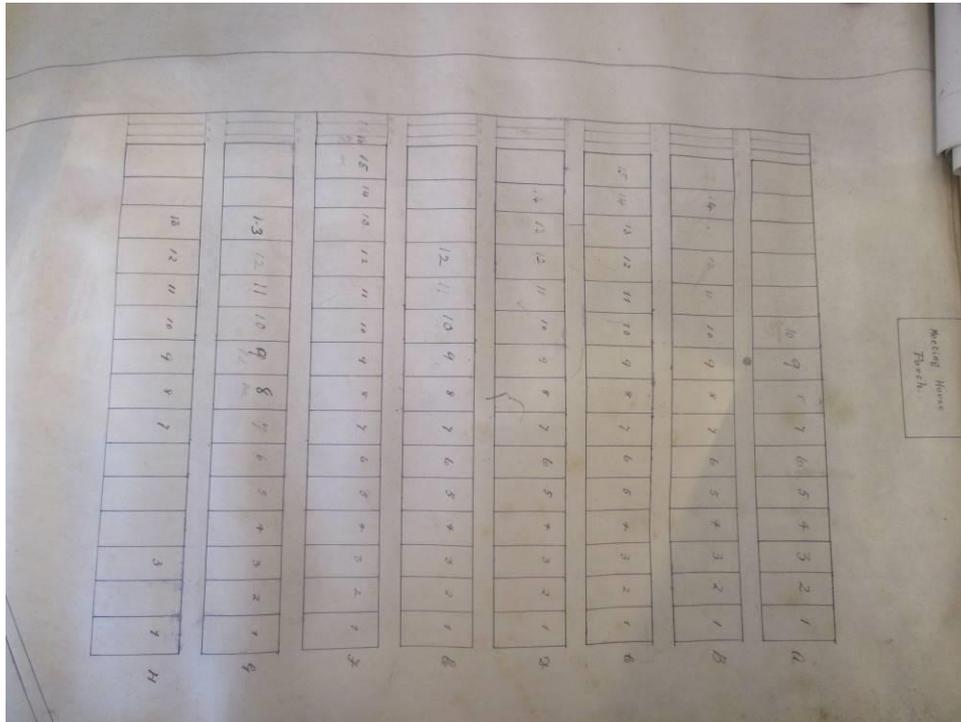


Figure 3: Burial ground plan, nd (Barnsley MH Archive)

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in the centre of Barnsley and falls within the boundaries of Barnsley Victoria Road Conservation Area. The site occupies a corner plot between Western Street and Huddersfield Road. The area along Western Street is predominately residential area whilst Huddersfield Road comprises of a mixture of residential and commercial properties. The buildings are generally two-storey, faced in stone with ashlar dressings and date from the nineteenth century with some twentieth century infill. To the south of the meeting house is the Grade II listed premises used for the National Union of Miners dating from 1874 and designed by Wade and Turner.

The meeting house and burial ground are bounded by a stone wall with copings, with mature trees lining the edge of the boundaries restricting views to the meeting house from Huddersfield Road. The meeting house occupies the northern end of the site with a 1990s classroom range built to the southeast,

A detached burial ground is located at Burton Bank, Monk Bretton.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed and not considered to be a future candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The South Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record was consulted and no Historic Environment Records are associated with the site. The present meeting house replaces an earlier building of 1815. Overall, the archaeological potential of the site, including the burial ground, is considered to be medium.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal / satisfactory.

3.2. Maintenance

A recent quinquennial inspection has not been undertaken. Friends regularly monitor the meeting house and have the necessary funds to undertake repairs and maintenance when needed.

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. The following measures have been implemented to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Resource use, recycling and waste management: use of council recycling scheme.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs, including a kitchen, a spacious foyer and library area, toilets, and meeting room. The meeting has a resident caretaker, who lives in a separate building on-site. An on-site car park is available for a small number of cars, with further parking available on the nearby streets for a maximum period of two hours. Secure bicycle parking is not available. The meeting house is served by a local bus service seven days a week and Barnsley railway station is approximately a ten minute walk away.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and throughout the building, an accessible toilet, a hearing loop and facilities for the partially-sighted. It is not known if a Disability Access Audit has been undertaken.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 2.5 hours each week. The meeting house is theoretically available for community lettings on a daily basis and is used for an average of 15-20 hours each week. The meeting does not have a formal lettings policy, but political and military groups are excluded from using the building. There is free use of the meeting house for Quaker events. Users value the building for its central location, good price, comfortable and good facilities.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house has not been subject to any anti-social behaviour and heritage crime in recent years. The locality is generally well-cared for and has low crime levels. Friends have not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

No future plans for change.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

i) As a Meeting House used only by the local Meeting: The meeting house is a modern building which could be altered as required internally. At present, it has all the required facilities to support the local meeting.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is already in use by local community groups. At present, the building offers all the necessary facilities to support these users.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building could easily be adapted for secular use. The location of the meeting house inside a conservation area and the burial ground would make redevelopment of the whole site difficult. The local authority would probably require a sympathetic design on the present footprint, and the future of the burial ground would need to be taken into account.

Part 5: Category: 4