

Friends Meeting House, Berkhamsted

289 High Street, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 1AJ

National Grid Reference: SP 98735 08013



Statement of Significance

An attractive small meeting house built in 1818. The interior has been altered but the building is still of high heritage significance overall.

Evidential value

There is no early fabric concealed in the building, which is of low evidential value.

Historical value

As a reasonably well preserved example of an early nineteenth century Quaker meeting house, the building is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The exterior of the building is attractive and little altered. The interior has been modernised. The building is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by Quakers continuously since 1818 and more recently by other local groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Luton & Leighton*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000830*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Dacorum Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *Berkhamsted*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1067733*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Berkhamsted*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1818; new larger porch added and interior altered 1964*

1.13 Architect (s): *original architect unknown; new porch and alterations by Paul Mauger*

1.14 Date of visit: *30 September 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

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

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *There is a detached burial ground at Tring (see 2.5 below)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1, pp.253-4

Stell, C, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Eastern England*, 2002, p.130

Hertfordshire HER, ref.no.9281

Building Appeal leaflet 1964

Local Meeting survey by Bridget Wilkins, June 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

Upon the removal in 1818 of Tring meeting to Berkhamsted, where there was no meeting before, a meeting house was built that same year on the site of a former gazebo in the garden of Boxwell House (owned by the Quaker Littlejohn family). During the next hundred years or so a lean-to brick addition was made at the west end for a classroom and various other small accretions were added at the rear (shown dotted on the plan in fig.1). In 1964 the rear accretions were removed and the existing porch was replaced by a larger porch which also contained the toilets. At the same time, the original shuttered partition dividing the interior of the building into two halves was rebuilt as a permanent wall in a different position. This

gave a larger meeting room. The old meeting room stand and other old fittings were removed and a new window was inserted into the centre of the south wall.

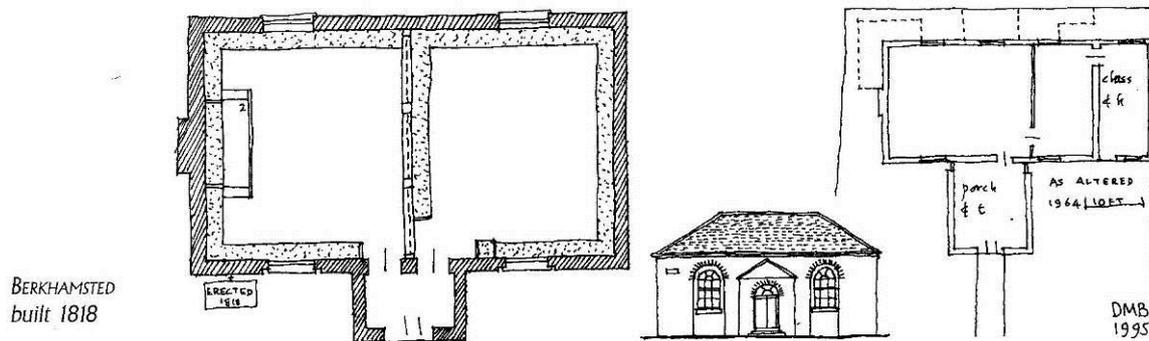


Fig.1 The original plan (left) and elevation, with the plan as altered in 1964 (right) *Butler 1999 p.253* (north is to the bottom).

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is set back from the street frontage behind a dwarf stone wall and the sloping burial ground. The building is rectangular on plan and single storeyed. The external walls are faced with yellow brick laid in Flemish bond, the shallow-pitched hipped roof is covered with Welsh slate. The entrance front is dominated by a large central brick porch with its own separate hipped roof. The porch is an addition of 1964, replacing a much smaller porch. On either side of the porch, the front of the main building has a single round-headed window with small-paned sashes. At the extreme left hand corner of the front is a cast-iron plaque with the words, 'ERECTED 1818'. Across the east end wall of the building is a lean-to addition. The south-facing rear elevation has three regularly-spaced round-headed windows with timber sashes. The central window was inserted in 1964. The interior now contains a large meeting room and two smaller rooms. The meeting room has a wood-block floor and a modern boarded dado, plain plaster walls and a ceiling lined with acoustic tiles.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of historic interest.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The small burial ground slopes down from the main front of the meeting house to the street. It is enclosed at the sides by a brick wall. Most of the burials apparently date from the period 1818-1885. There are about 30 headstones, which were all moved to line the side walls about 10 years ago. Many of them commemorated members of the Littleboy family. The burial ground is still open and is used for the interment of ashes. The burial ground is well cared-for but there is no formal management plan.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and burial ground stand towards the western end of Berkhamsted High Street.

There is apparently a detached burial ground at Tring in a small wood with a memorial stone near the front of Natural History Museum on the corner of the road going towards Wiggington.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house building is properly listed at grade II

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house was built on a garden site on the edge of the town and is probably of low archaeological significance.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

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

3.2 Maintenance

There has been no recent quinquennial inspection. The building is cared for by a building inspector (Tony Wilks). The meeting has enough money to cover the costs of maintenance. The meeting does not have a 5-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. Measures to reduce its environmental impact have been implemented in a casual way. Waste is recycled. The building does not have an Energy Performance Certificate but would consider obtaining one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house. There are two meeting rooms, plus kitchen and toilets. There is no resident warden.

There is reasonable public transport with buses from Watford and Aylesbury and rail connections into Euston via Hemel Hempstead and Tring. The railway station is 15 mins walk away. There is no on-site parking, but free parking on the street or in a car park nearby. There is secure parking for bicycles on site.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building. There is an accessible WC and a hearing loop in the main meeting room, but no special facilities for partially-sighted people. There has not been a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community use

The building is reserved for Friends' use for about 4 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 90.5 hours per week and is let for an average of 20 hours per week (30 in term time). The meeting does not have a lettings policy. Use is welcomed by local Community groups for worthwhile purposes. No alcohol is allowed nor sporting activities which might damage the building, nor loud amplified music nor artistic activities using paint, nor parties for children over the age of 12. Any proposal for free use would have to be approved by the Meeting. Users value the good

atmosphere, good acoustic for singing, convenient location for local residents and low hire charge.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no current signs of general crime at the site. Lettering on the building was stolen a few years ago. The locality is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and the matter has not been considered.

3.8 Plans for change

There are no current 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 has all the facilities it currently needs. There is probably some scope for change, subject to listed building constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the meeting house is already used by community groups. There is probably some scope for alteration, but subject to listed building constraints.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the building could serve a wholly secular use if laid down, subject to listed building constraints.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description (s)

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1067733

Location

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE, HIGH STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
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Hertfordshire	Dacorum	District Authority	Berkhamsted
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National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 09-May-1973

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 355474

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Details

1. - 839 HIGH STREET (South Side) Quaker Meeting House SP 9808 SE 4/141

II

2. Inscription 'Erected 1818" on left of front wall. Yellow brick, hipped Welsh slated roof, 1 storey, 2 round arched sashes with glazing bars in shallow arched panels. Brick cornice, Lower modern closed porch with hipped roof.

Listing NGR: SP9873508013