

Friends Meeting House, Bexhill-on-Sea

15A Albert Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 1DG

National Grid Reference: TQ 74239 07236



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a former Brethren's Hall built in 1959. It has low heritage value.

Evidential value

The building is a post-war building and has low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is a relatively recent building with no significant historical associations. It has low historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a plain, modern building typical of its time. It has low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been in use by the Quakers and local community groups since 1965. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Sussex East*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015800*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Rother District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Rother NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Bexhill Town Centre*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1959*

1.13 Architect (s): *Roy E.G. Harrison*

1.14 Date of visit: *19 August 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

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

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 599
Lewes Monthly Meeting, 'Particulars of Trust Properties', 1978, typescript
Local Meeting Archive, original drawings of June 1957, March 1958, c.1969
Local Meeting survey by Daphne Hill, July 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Meetings for Worship were first held in Bexhill in January 1957, initially in private homes. From 1961, meetings were held in the Glyne Hall Hotel. In 1965, the Brethren's' Hall in Albert Road was acquired for £8,000. This had been built in 1959 to a design by Roy E.G. Harrison ARIBA of Bexhill-on-Sea. The same architect built a small extension in 1969 for the Quakers.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main elevation of the meeting house is to the west. The plan is roughly oblong with the entrance at the west. The external walls are faced in brick laid in Monk bond. The pitched roof is covered with roofing felt. The main elevation has a slightly projecting central bay with a canopy on square pillars. The flanking bays have small oblong windows. To the north of the main elevation is a plain brick archway, providing ramped access to the north side of the building. Inside, there are toilets on either side of the entrance lobby which leads straight into the meeting room. This is a full-height room with a pitched ceiling which is lit by five clerestory windows on either side and three south windows. Above the door to the lobby is a large glazed panel, providing borrowed light. Along the north wall are ancillary rooms (including the room added in 1969) and a kitchen at the northeast.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in a late Victorian residential street in the centre of Bexhill close to the seafront and the De La Warr Pavilion. It is located in the Bexhill Town Centre conservation area.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Albert Road was laid out between the 1870s and the 1890s. The site of the meeting house remained undeveloped until at least the 1930s. Ordnance Survey maps of the early 1950s show a previous building on the site. The site has low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *N/a*

3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in 2011. (No copy was available during the visit.) All of the recommendations have been carried out. The meeting has access to area meeting funds for maintenance and repairs. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: changed to a green energy supplier
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: all paper and plastic is recycled
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: regular maintenance and refurbishment
- Transport: shared car use and use of public transport where possible

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate. It is planning to replace all windows which can be opened with double-glazed windows.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden.

The meeting is accessible by public transport although bus services on Sundays are limited and sparse in the evenings. There is no off-street parking and no secure parking for bicycles.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building, an accessible toilet, and a hearing loop. There are no specific facilities for partially-sighted people. No Disability Access Audit has been conducted.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 3 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 40 hours per week. It is used for an average of 10 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Political meetings are only permitted if they are cross-party meetings. Free use is granted for charities which provide special services to the public such as the League of Friends of Bexhill Hospital. Users value the meeting house for its central location, cleanliness, warmth, quiet, friendliness and well-priced letting options.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no heritage crime, general crime or other incidents. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team as it is not considered necessary.

3.8. Plans for change

Apart from replacing the windows with double-glazed ones, there are no plans for alterations.

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 currently has all the required facilities but it could be altered or extended if required.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house currently has all the facilities required by its users but it could be altered or extended if necessary.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should the meeting house cease to be used by the local meeting, the building could continue in community use. Alternatively, the site could be redeveloped (subject to planning and conservation area consent).

Part 5: Category: 4