

Quaker Meeting House, Bideford

17 Honestone Street, Bideford, Devon, EX39 2DJ

National Grid Reference: SS 45185 26467



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a former house which at some point had a ground-floor shop. It was acquired for Quaker use in 1997. It has medium overall significance.

Evidential value

Relatively little is known about the history and development of the building and the built fabric might hold further information. It has medium evidential value.

Historical value

The building was built as a house, possibly over a shop, and has been in use by the Quakers for nearly twenty years. It has low historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a plain two-storey house with an upstairs bay window and an internal timber-framed wall. It has low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is now primarily a Quaker place of worship (with an upstairs flat) and is also used by the local community. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Devon*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0023920*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Limited*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Torridge District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Bideford*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Bideford*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *Nineteenth century*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *12 May 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Robert Sharrock*
- 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. 1, p. 134
Torridge District Council, *Bideford Conservation Area Appraisal*, 2009
Local Meeting Survey by Rob Sharrock, March 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

A Quaker meeting had been established in Bideford by 1944. In 1997, the meeting bought 17 Honestone Street for £37,000 and converted it for use as a meeting house with an upstairs flat. Relatively little is known about the building which may date from the nineteenth century. Honestone Street (then Honestone Lane) was built up by the time of the 1842 tithe map.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The two-storey meeting house faces north. The plan is approximately oblong, with the pitched roof lower over the rear. The walls are rendered and painted. The roof is covered in slate; any chimney stacks have been removed above roof level. A gateway in the east bay of the front elevation gives access to a narrow yard and to 19 and 21 Honestone behind the

meeting house. Beside the yard entry is a ground-floor window and a shop-front window with a door into the meeting house. The first floor has a sash window with side-lights and horns to the east and a canted bay window with similar sashes to the west. The east elevation facing the yard has 6 over 6 sash windows with horns on the ground and first floors. There is a side entrance into the meeting house from the yard. (A former door from the yard directly into the front room has been blocked up apart from a small window.)

The main meeting room is to the front, this has a large chimneybreast to the west and the blocked door in the south wall near the east corner. The staircase is behind (to the south of) the front room with a WC under the upper flight. (The staircase is also the main access to the upstairs flat.) The south wall of the stairwell is timber framed (photo bottom right on page 1). To the east of the staircase is the kitchen which overlooks the yard. To the rear is another small room with the entrance to the yard. The first-floor flat was not inspected.

2.3 Loose furnishings

None of note.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

No. 19 and 21 Honestone Street are accessed via a gate on the ground floor of no. 17 (photos top left and right on page 1). The meeting house now occupies a corner site although there was a continuous street line to the east in the 1880s (according to map evidence). By 1904, there was a long narrow cattle market east of no. 15 Honestone Street. (Bideford's Pannier Market was built in 1883-4 on the site of the former cattle market.) By the 1950s, the cattle market had expanded into rear plots to the west. By 1967, some of the buildings on Honestone Street had been cleared for the cattle market, including no. 15. By the 1970s, the cattle market had become a 'training centre'; today, it is used for light industrial businesses and car parking.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and, on the basis of present evidence, is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

According to the conservation area appraisal, there has been relatively little formal archaeological investigation in Bideford and, for example, the extent of any surviving archaeological deposits in the medieval core is unknown (conservation area appraisal, pages 6-7). The archaeological potential of the meeting house site 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): Not applicable

3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection was in 2010 but a new one is imminent. The meeting has enough money for maintenance and minor repairs.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact, some of which were suggested by a recent Living Witness Project. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: use of renewable energy, installation of cupboards under the kitchen window as a barrier to heat loss, dry-lining of walls
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: use of council recycling
- Transport: car share and walking to meeting house where possible

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, although these are very limited. These are all in the meeting house. There is no resident warden. The meeting is not accessible by public transport. There is no parking on site but there is a public car park opposite. There is no secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is not accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into the building but wheelchair access between spaces would be difficult due to the narrow corridor and the projecting internal steps of the staircase. There is no accessible toilet, no hearing loop and no facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit has been conducted and some improvements have been made, including stair nosings.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 3 hours per week. The main room is theoretically available for community lettings on six evenings per week. It is used for an average of 4 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Users value the building because of the cheap rates.

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. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the meeting might consider making contact if necessary.

3.8 Plans for change

There are currently no 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: Although the meeting house has only limited facilities, it generally fulfils the needs of the local meeting. There is no room for an extension and additional space could only be gained by converting the upstairs flat for use of the meeting.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house has all the facilities currently required by its community users. Better facilities (for

example in the upstairs rooms) might increase the uptake of lettings but there are currently no plans to do so.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should the meeting be laid down or decide to sell the building, the building could be converted to residential or commercial use.

Part 5: Category: 3