

Friends Meeting House, Bournemouth

16 Wharncliffe Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH5 1AH

National Grid Reference: SZ 10982 91518



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a large building of 1964, built following a site exchange with Marks & Spencer. It has low overall significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house is a modern building which was designed to be flexible in use. It has low evidential value.

Historical value

The building is a large, modern meeting house built to serve a large post-war meeting in the Bournemouth area. It is the successor building to a meeting house of 1912 built on a site acquired in 1871. It has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The design, the materials and the furnishings are typical of the 1960s, with few decorative details. The building has low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is primarily a Quaker place of worship which is also well-used by local community groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Bournemouth Coastal*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0012270*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Bournemouth Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Bournemouth NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Boscombe Spa*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1964*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Dexter & Staniland*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *3 June 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Janet Warren and Frances Pouncey*
- 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, pp. 230-232
 - Local Meeting Archive, copies of original drawings, Dexter & Staniland, July 1962
 - Wigg, L., 'Bournemouth Meeting House: History of the Site', typescript, 2014
 - 'Quakers in Fordingbridge', typescript
 - 'Bournemouth Friends', typescript
 - Local Meeting survey by Janet Warren, April 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

Quaker visitors to Bournemouth met at Letitia Thompson's house until 1871 when the construction of a purpose-built meeting house was first proposed. This was supported by the brothers Edward, Arthur and Joseph Pease of Darlington who frequently spent the winter at Bournemouth. (The Pease family were benefactors of a number of meeting houses at seaside resorts, for example at Jersey (*qv*).) A site in Avenue Road (which was then being developed) was bought in 1871 and the meeting house completed the following year. The cost was £700, of which the Pease brothers contributed £175. This was a T-plan building with a full-height meeting room and lower ancillary rooms flanking the entrance (figure 1). In 1912, an extension was proposed (architects: Rumsby & Rodd) but the discovery of dry rot and

structural problems due to insufficient foundations prompted a rebuilding on the same site instead (cost: £1,313). This was a building in the Queen Anne/Georgian Revival style with a tall hipped roof (figure 2).

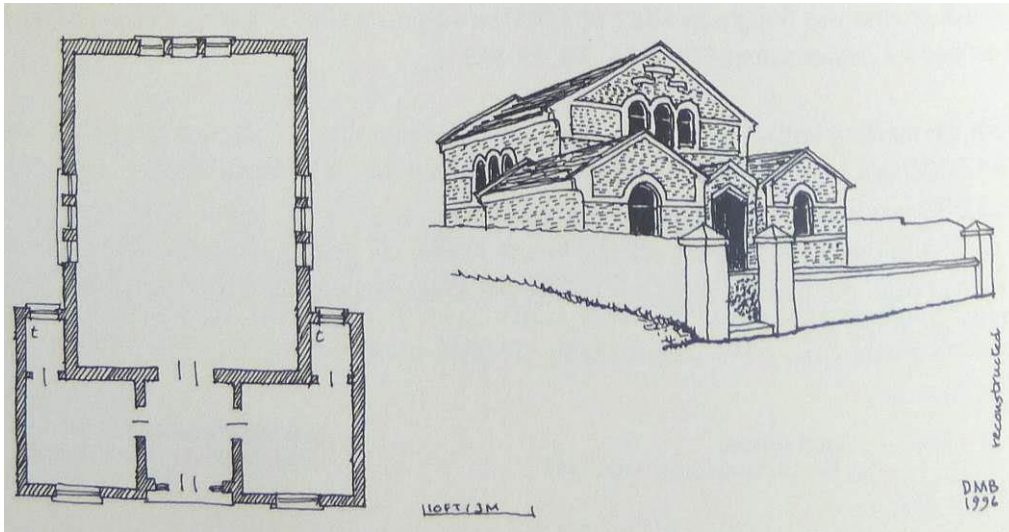


Figure 1: Plan and perspective of the meeting house of 1872 (Butler, vol. 1, p. 230)



Figure 2: The former meeting house of 1912 (Local Meeting archive)

In 1964, the meeting house in Avenue Road was acquired by Marks & Spencer who redeveloped the site in return for paying for a replacement building in Wharncliffe Road, Boscombe. (Apparently, no money changed hands during the transaction.) This, the current meeting house, was built by the architects Dexter & Staniland in 1964 and opened on 20 June that year (figure 3).

The Bournemouth Local Meeting has been merged with that at Fordingbridge which was discontinued in 1905 due to dwindling membership. The meeting house at Fordingbridge was sold in 1947 but is still extant (not listed). This is a building of 1835 on a site acquired in 1694. Meetings at Fordingbridge were re-started in November 2011 using the United Reformed Church.



Figure 3: The new meeting house shortly after completion in 1964 (Local Meeting archive)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house's roughly oblong plan is aligned east-west, with the meeting room at the west and the warden's flat over ancillary rooms to the east. The entrance is about halfway along the north elevation and there is an internal courtyard in the eastern half. The materials are reinforced concrete with brown brick in stretcher bond. The brick is occasionally used for decorative effect: the concave west wall of the meeting room has three rows of vertical strips of projecting headers, and inside the entrance porch are sixteen squares of headers laid on edge. The tall meeting room is the same height as the two-storey wing to the rear; ancillary spaces are only single-storey in height. The concave west end wall has a large stone panel with the inscription 'FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE'.

The entrance lobby at the north leads into the small Joseph Rowntree Room at the northwest and the large meeting room (George Fox Hall) to the southwest. The latter is a large space lit by tall windows to the south and east, with clerestory windows to the north. At the west is a stage lit by lateral windows on either side of the curved end wall (photo bottom left on page 1). The floor is of woodblock with an outer edge of lino with a green and white meander pattern. At the northeast corner of the building are toilets and a kitchen which connects to the adjacent John Woolman Room which can be subdivided with a folding partition. At the southeast corner is the small Elizabeth Fry Room. The large and narrow Margaret Fell Room is at the south (photo bottom right on page 1). The small inner courtyard has a fishpond. The warden's flat at the east was not inspected, nor was the small basement containing the former boiler room.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are two old benches in the meeting room, both with bench ends carved with a circle and a trefoil. (There are three similar benches at Poole Meeting House (*qv*) which came from the old meeting house at Bournemouth.) There are also several sets of the original 1960s chairs, the same model in three different colours (olive, red and green). The entrance lobby has four older chairs of unknown provenance with carved backs and turned legs and armrest supports.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is surrounded by a garden to the west and south, while there is a drive to the north and a car park to the east. The wider area is suburban and residential with a few hotels, yet within walking distance of Boscombe's shopping centre.

2.6 Listed status

The building is currently not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

This part of Boscombe was not developed until the late nineteenth century. There was a Victorian villa known as 'Studland House' 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: Fair
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable

3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in 2012 and was undertaken by Smith Robinson Higley (no copy seen). A structural report on the roof was prepared by Patterson Reeves (no copy seen). Since then there have been repairs to the rusting and spalling reinforced concrete window surrounds. The reports also flagged up the need for potentially expensive repairs to the cavity wall ties and the flat roof in the near future. A new inspection will take place in 2017. The local meeting has enough money for regular maintenance and repairs but major repairs have to be paid from their reserves.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting has made some use of the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact, as far as possible. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: green tariff, new boiler and heating system, double glazing, partial cavity wall insulation, heating monitoring and controls
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: composting, recycling bin, use of recyclable products where possible
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: promoting biodiversity in the garden, insect houses, bird feeders
- Transport: fitted bike racks, public transport where possible.

The meeting has an Energy Performance Certificate of 2012 (energy efficiency level: D).

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. There is a resident Warden, whose self-contained flat is on the first floor. The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is parking on site as well as secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access, an accessible toilet, and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for partially-sighted people but their provision is currently under review. A Disability Access Audit was conducted in 2012 and most of the recommendations have been implemented.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 10 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 240 hours per week. It is used for an average of about 120 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Groups whose values are in accord with Quaker values are allowed to rent rooms. Free use is usually only granted to Quaker initiatives but applications are reviewed on a case by case basis. Users value the building for its good location, warm and welcome rooms, pleasant peaceful atmosphere and the professional organisation of the lettings.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There have been incidents of attempted arson, break-ins and rough sleepers. All crimes have been reported to the police. The locality is generally well-cared for, has medium crime levels, variable levels of deprivation and moderate community confidence. There is an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

The meeting house might need expensive repairs in the near future. The local meeting will be making a decision on the building's future after the next quinquennial inspection in 2017.

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 amenities required by the meeting. There have been suggestions of rebuilding the meeting house in conjunction with affordable flats, should the anticipated repairs to the current building be too expensive. Any such proposals would have to take account of the need to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and require the relevant consents.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is very well used by local community groups and provides all the required facilities.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: At present, the greatest threat to the building is not the closure of the local meeting but the cost of the anticipated repairs. Any rebuilding proposals need to take account of the site's location within a conservation area and require the relevant consents.

Part 5: Category: 4