

Friends Meeting House, Bradford

Russell Street, Little Horton Lane, Bradford, BD5 0JB

National Grid Reference: SE 15849 32436



Statement of Significance

The meeting house was created in 1995, in part of a building dating from the late 1960s. This was built for the Unitarians in the garden of an adjacent house used as a meeting house between 1951 and 1995. The meeting house building has low heritage significance, but contributes to Little Horton conservation area. It represents the latest in a series of Quaker meeting houses in Bradford.

Evidential value

As a relatively modern building, meeting house has low significance for evidential or archaeological value.

Historical value

The meeting house has low significance for historical value, as a modern building, but it does reflect the long history of Quakers in Bradford; the previous meeting house was on the adjacent site.

Aesthetic value

The 1969 structure is a modest building designed in a traditional form using local stone; it fits well into the conservation area.

Communal value

The meeting house is valued by the community and expresses the presence and work of Quakers in Bradford. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Brighouse West Yorkshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0018700*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Bradford Metropolitan District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire*

- 1.6 Civil parish: *Trident*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Little Horton Lane*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Dates: *1850s (Quaker use from 1969); 1995*
- 1.13 Architects: *Kitson and Partners of Leeds; James Able of Able Lynn Partnership*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *19 February 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Kevin Holloway*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

D.Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, Vol 2, 1999, pp781-786

G. and J. Hague, *The Unitarian Heritage*, 1986

Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project, online records maintained by Hull University:

http://www.eservices.hull.ac.uk/quaker/index.cfm?fuseaction=location.collection&collectionID=58&search_type=place&countyID=0&townID=27

Little Horton Conservation Area Appraisal:

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E0E4F3BD-2FBA-433F-A9DB-D6E465597D60/o/LITTLEHORTONLANEAPPRAISAL.pdf>

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

2.1. Historical background

According to research for the Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project (YQHM), ‘a Meeting was settled in Bradford around 1652 by Christopher Taylor (who had been convinced by the preaching of William Dewsbury)’. The first meeting house opened in 1698, on land at Goodman's End where the burial ground had been acquired in 1672. The YQHM notes that ‘In 1732 a new Meeting House was built on the same site; this was demolished and replaced by a new building in 1811. Despite successive improvements, the whole property was sold in 1876 and a new Meeting House opened in Fountain Street two years later’. In 1951 Friends sold the Fountain Street building to Busby's department store and acquired a large house in Melbourne Place as a meeting house; built in the 1850s, this is a listed building. In the large garden of this house the Unitarians built a chapel in 1969, and in the 1990s, Friends decided to vacate and sell 11 Melbourne Place and acquire part of the Unitarian Chapel, which was

adapted for their use by the Sykes Able Partnership. The meeting house was ready in 1995 and officially opened in May 1996. Bradford Quakers were historically involved in the wool trade, banking and insurance; the Friends Provident Institution was founded in Bradford in 1832, and prominent local Quakers included the Bartlett, Hustler, Seebohm, Peckover, Harris, Maud and Priestman families.



Fig.1: 11 Melbourn Place, Russell Street was the meeting house from 1951 to 1995

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The 1969 building was built for the Unitarians, to designs by Kitson and Partners of Leeds. The south wing was adapted for Friends in 1995 by the Able Lynn Partnership. The building is faced in coursed buff sandstone, with a Welsh slate roof and cast metal gutters carried on large square stone brackets. The meeting house forms the south wing of the larger building, with the entrance on the gable-end to the east, facing the forecourt. The building is of 3 storeys, with the upper storey partly in the roof. The front elevation has a part-glazed triangular porch with single casement windows of stained timber to ground, first and second floors. On the north return, there is a single window to the first floor, with a galvanised steel grille. There is a large dormer to the north pitch of the roof, with 3-light window and hopped slate roof. The left return to the south, and the rear elevation to the west have tall timber windows to the ground floor meeting room, and a part-glazed external door to the garden.

Inside, the meeting house is plainly decorated with plain painted plaster to walls and ceilings, with acoustic panels to the ceiling in the meeting room. Floors are finished in carpet. The ground floor has a spacious lobby with kitchen and toilet facilities to the east side and the meeting room to the west. The upper floors contain two small meeting rooms and a flat with three rooms.

2.3. Loose furnishings

Most of the meeting house furnishings are modern, but there is a set of six pine benches. These are sturdily constructed with turned legs and arm rests. They probably date from the late nineteenth century and may have been made for the Fountain Street meeting house.



Fig.2: one of a set of pine benches, probably dating from the 1870s

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

N/A

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is situated in Little Horton, an area on the south-west side of Bradford that developed as a residential suburb in the nineteenth century. The area retains its low density leafy character and Russell Street is still laid with stone setts and lined with large stone houses in spacious grounds. The meeting house has a large forecourt behind a stone boundary wall. This area is used for parking, and shared with the Unitarians. The area has been a conservation area since 1977, but its social status has declined and many of the houses are no longer in residential use, and are used for offices or community uses. The Meeting House and Unitarian church building is identified as a building of local interest on the conservation area appraisal dated January 2008. Bradford Council and Historic England consider the conservation area to be 'at risk'.



Fig.3: Russell Street frontage to the meeting house

There is a detached burial ground at Westfield Lane, Idle, near Shipley, at NGR SE 1750637919. There are also some Quaker burials at Undercliffe the large Bradford cemetery.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed. The building has local interest in the conservation area. The former Friends Meeting House (in use 1951-1991) to the north of the present meeting house is listed grade II; the name on the List entry needs to be amended to make it clear that 11 Melbourne Place is no longer a Quaker meeting house.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service was consulted and holds no records for this site. The site was part of the garden of a mid-nineteenth century house and the archaeological potential is probably low.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey by Kevin Holloway

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Fair. The last QI took place in April 2013, completed by architect George Pickles. All the items identified as needing attention have been addressed. Some damp ingress in an external wall has since become an issue.

ii) Attached burial ground: N/A

3.2. Maintenance

The building appears to be well-maintained although the meeting does not have a maintenance plan. The meeting has sufficient funds for ongoing maintenance but not for exceptional problems.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit, but has implemented some measures to reduce its environmental impact.

Climate change & energy efficiency:

- Photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the building.
- Electricity supplier changed to 'Good Electricity'.
- New high performance external doors installed, which has reduced heat loss.
- Front windows changed to high performance windows which has reduced heat loss.
- Replacement of old boiler with more efficient boiler.
- Thermostatic valves have been installed throughout the heating system.
- New zoned timers have been installed.

Resource use, recycling & waste management:

- Provided labelled recycling bins for use inside the building.

3.4. Amenities

The Meeting has access to all the amenities it needs, with a large meeting room, kitchen, toilets with baby changing and a spacious lobby on the ground floor, and two small first floor

meeting rooms, one of which can be used for children on Sunday. There is a maisonette on the upper floor which is currently not in residential use, but is let to a community group for meetings.

3.5. Access

The Meeting completed an access audit in 2014 and the ground floor of the meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities, and has a WC suitable for disabled people, with an alarm. A ramp has been installed to the main entrance and new wider doors installed. The upper floors are less accessible as there is no lift. There a hearing loop and some measures have been taken for partially sighted people, such as bold clear signs.

There is some public transport; bus stops are 5-10 minute walk and the railway station is 15-20 minute walk. There is car parking on the site, and secure cycle parking.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the building for an average of three and a half hours per week throughout the year. The building is available for a total of 180 hours per week, and is actually let for an average of 31 hours per week. The lettings policy is currently under revision; the policy states that 'lettings shall be made to local and national organisations, whose purposes are educational or charitable or seeking a spiritual path and do not conflict with Quaker Faith and Practice'. Few groups use the meeting house for no fee at all; these include Quaker groups, and groups closely associated with the Quaker Meeting such as Bradford University Peace Studies Department. Some groups are let a room for a very low fee including Alcoholics Anonymous. Groups appreciate the peaceful, comfortable atmosphere, car parking on site, location close to the city centre and very reasonable charges. Some also value the fact that the notices on the notice boards reflect the values of their group.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting records that there is some anti-social behaviour in the form of littering, but none has been reported to police. There has been no heritage crime. The area is not generally well cared for and does suffer from some crime, deprivation and a lack of community confidence. Friends have not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team, but would consider doing so.

3.8. Plans for change

The meeting is considering whether to invest in upgrading the building, to develop facilities to enable wider community user, depending on financial decision-making. Discussions are ongoing.

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 interior of the meeting house could be remodelled or upgraded with no heritage impacts. Changes to the exterior would need to take account of the conservation area.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use

The building is already used by different community groups, but there is scope for the building to be better used with some internal remodelling.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House

The building is fairly modern and could be adapted in the future for alternative uses, without any heritage impact.

Part 5: Category: 4