

Friends Meeting House, Bridport

95 South Street, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 3NZ

National Grid Reference: SY 46624 92577



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a part of a small complex of late mediaeval and seventeenth-century buildings given to Bridport Quakers by Daniel Taylor in 1697 for use as a meeting house and almshouses. The meeting house was re-fitted in the early eighteenth century and there have been several subsequent alterations. Many of the internal fittings were removed in 1958 but the meeting room still retains something of its original character. The building is of high overall significance.

Evidential value

The building is the product of serial alterations and accretions with much evidence of past phases of use. It is of high evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house and the contiguous almshouse buildings form a complex of Quaker-related buildings which is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The exterior is unassuming and the interior lost many of its fittings in the 1950s. The building is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been in continuous use for Quaker worship since the late seventeenth century and is now also used by the wider community. It is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Dorset & South Wiltshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0008020*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *West Dorset District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Bridport*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1228011*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Bridport*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *Probably late seventeenth-century in origin*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*

1.14 Date of visit: *11 July 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

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

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Daniel Taylor's Almshouses with burial ground wall (Grade II*). Detached burial grounds are recorded in South Street Bridport, Membury, Axminster, Lyme Regis and Thorncombe*

1.18 Attached burial ground: Yes

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 pp. 146-148

Reynolds, F., *Daniel Taylor of Bridport 1642-1714 Quaker; a brief account of his life and the trusts he founded*, 1980

RCHME, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments of Dorset, vol.1: West* (1952)

Stell, C. *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, p. 111

Dorset Historic Environment Record number 1 016 008 - MDO12235

Local Meeting survey by Howard Wright, March 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends were meeting in Bridport from the late 1650s, and by the 1690s meetings were held in a barn in South Street belonging to Daniel Taylor. In 1697 this barn, together with the adjacent Porch House and tenements of fifteenth and sixteenth-century dates, were given to the Society of Friends for use as meeting house and almshouses. Butler states that the barn is the basis of the present meeting house, much altered in a sequence which is unclear. Stell suggests that the barn may have been rebuilt c1707. The interior was fitted-up in 1720 with a minister's stand and two lofts or galleries on the north and east sides and the windows and door to the courtyard may also have been inserted at this time. A farm tenement at the back of the meeting house was later converted to provide an additional room. The street front at one time had a central door flanked by two tall windows but the door was later blocked and the left-hand window cut down to form a door giving direct access to the north gallery. Major alterations were made in 1958 when the street front was given its present appearance and much of the interior woodwork was removed, including the minister's stand and the north gallery. A single-storey addition including a new kitchen was made at the rear of the meeting house in 1988.

In 1709 Daniel Taylor gave Friends a burial ground in another part of South Street. By 1810 it was full and from 1811 the garden of Porch House was used for burials and enclosed by a high stone wall.

The almshouses are still in use and are governed by a separate trust.

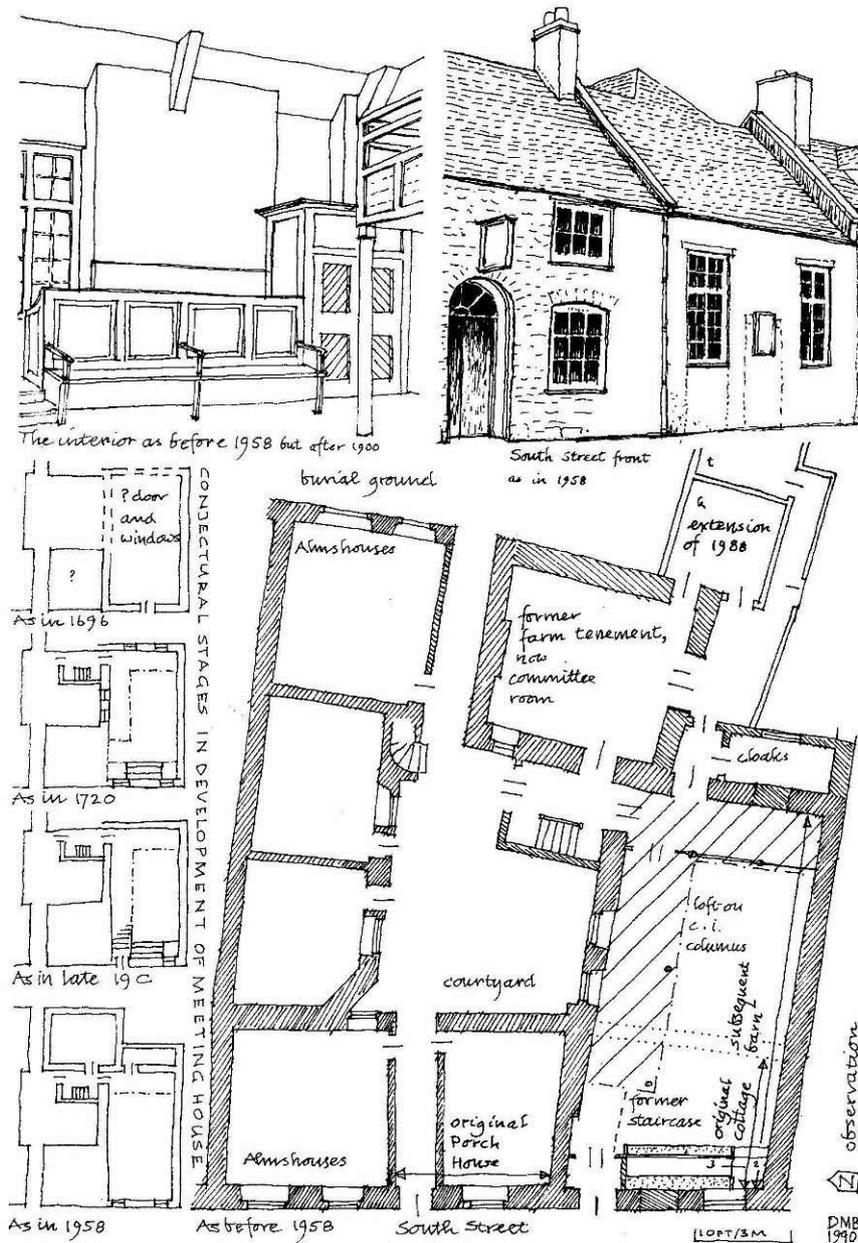


Figure 1: Ground plan before 1958 alterations, with conjectural development stages at left (present plan bottom left), perspective and details, including the former minister's stand and part of north gallery which were both removed in 1958 (Butler, vol. 1, p. 147)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main meeting house and a smaller room to the rear now form the south and east ranges of a small complex round a small central courtyard. All the buildings are faced with rubble stone and have roof coverings of Welsh slate. The west front of the meeting house to the street has two tall rectangular windows with modern timber mullions and transoms. Between them is a blocked former door opening and the left hand window was also a door opening until 1958. Above the front slope of the pitched roof can be seen the ridge of the main roof at right-angles to the street. The courtyard is entered from the street by way of an open passage with timber boarding on both sides. The courtyard elevation of the meeting house has two cross-windows on the ground floor with two small casements above and a single-storey entrance lobby to the left with a modern boiler house attached.

The meeting room is a rectangular space with plain plastered walls and a flat ceiling with the feet of the main rafters visible. Across the east end is a timber gallery on two timber posts with a front of raised and fielded panelling and a modern timber rail above. Behind the gallery in the east end wall are two casement windows. The space beneath the gallery is now enclosed by a modern partition. There was formerly a gallery along the north wall and a stand in the centre of the west end but these were removed in 1958.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room contains two old painted timber benches with open backs.

2.4 Attached burial ground

The burial ground, which is still in use, lies to the east of the meeting house and almshouse complex and was originally the garden of Porch House. The burial ground is enclosed on all four sides by tall stone walls ramped to higher corners framing views to open country. These walls are listed Grade II* as part of the almshouse complex and the list description suggests that they are of seventeenth or eighteenth-century date. Butler suggests that the walls date from 1811 when the burial ground was established. The burial ground is laid to lawn with flower borders against the walls. A number of small grave markers are ranged along both sides.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and almshouses form part of a continuous row of mediaeval and later buildings on the east side of South Street, one of the principal old streets of Bridport. Immediately opposite the meeting house is the large graveyard of the mediaeval parish church.

At the southern end of South Street is the site of the former Bridport burial ground. Butler records a stone archway with the date 1696 and there is apparently a plaque commemorating the life of Daniel Taylor who was buried here, but neither are now apparent and the site is currently used as the access route to a County Council storage yard.

Other detached burials grounds are recorded at Membury (adjacent to Lea Hill Farm EX13 7AQ); Axminster (square plot to east of Shiles Farm EX13 5SE) and Lyme Regis (off Stile Lane DT7 3JD).

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is currently listed Grade II while the adjacent almshouse buildings and the attached walls surrounding the adjacent burial ground are Grade II*. The two properties really form part of a single complex and there is surely a good case for upgrading the meeting house to II* on grounds of both historic and architectural interest. It appears that the list description of the meeting house has not changed since the building was first listed in 1950, because the description fails to take account of the major alterations made in 1958 (including the removal of one of the two galleries mentioned in the description). The list entry should be fully revised.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house is in central Bridport near the parish church in a street which was already built-up by the fourteenth century. The archaeological potential is high.

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

The last Quinquennial Inspection was made in February 2012 and was undertaken by Stephen Sherlock of Beauchamps of Bridport, chartered surveyors. The recommended damp-proofing and decoration works have been carried out. The local meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. External works are the responsibility of Area Meeting. Maintenance is guided by annual inspection by members of the meeting.

3.3 Sustainability

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

- Climate change & energy efficiency: secondary glazing generally, additional roof insulation
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: attempts to maximise recycling
- Wildlife and nature conservation: Peace Garden and organic produce garden adjacent
- Transport: encouragement of walking, cycling or public transport where possible

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. There is a resident Warden. The meeting is accessible by public transport (bus) all week, though the service to outlying villages is poor. There is no parking on site but there is a public car park within 500 yards which is free on Sundays. There is no dedicated secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities, with level access from the pavement. There is an accessible toilet and a hearing loop and some facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit has not been carried out.

3.6 Community Use

No information given.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There have been occasional break-ins, which were reported to police. There has been no heritage crime. The locality is generally well cared-for and has low crime levels and high community confidence, but there is some deprivation. Friends have a liaison with the local police.

3.8 Plans for change

There are no current plans for change to the building

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 appears to have all the amenities it needs. Minor internal improvements should present no problems but scope for more major work is limited by the cramped site and by planning and listed building constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: As above, there is probably some scope for minor improvements.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: Scope for any alternative use is limited by the shared access to almshouses and burial ground as well as by listed building constraints.

Part 5: Category: 1

Part 6: List description(s)

Friends' Meeting House

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1228011

Location: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, SOUTH STREET

County: Dorset

District: West Dorset

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Bridport

Grade: II

Date first listed: 28-Nov-1950

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

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 402504

1. 5191 SOUTH STREET (East Side)

Friends Meeting House SY 4692 1/131 28.11.50.

II GV

2. 1697 (when it was given by Daniel Taylor to the Society of Friends), or possibly earlier as it was alleged to have been a barn. Rubble. Mullion and transom windows with lead glazing bars. Interior: Galleries on east and north sides, supported on 3 old timber posts. Nos 87 to 95 (odd) the Friends Meeting House, Nos 99 to 159 (odd) form a group.

Listing NGR: SY4662492565

Daniel Taylor's Almshouses/wall of Friends' Burial Place

Name: DANIEL TAYLOR'S ALMSHOUSES WALL OF FRIENDS' BURIAL PLACE

List entry Number: 1287414

Location

DANIEL TAYLOR'S ALMSHOUSES, 95, SOUTH STREET

WALL OF FRIENDS' BURIAL PLACE, SOUTH STREET

County: Dorset

District: West Dorset

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Bridport

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 28-Nov-1950

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

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 402503

1. 5191 SOUTH STREET (East Side)

28.11.50. No 95 (Daniel Taylor's Almshouses). Wall of SY 4692 1/130 - Friends' Burial Place.

II* GV

2. C15, west range. C16 north range. Given by Daniel Taylor to the Society of Friends as almshouses in 1697. Rubble, slate roof. 2 storeys. Casements and 2 sashes with glazing bars. Round-headed entrance with fluted early C19 reveals in front of west range, leading to small courtyard, with access to Meeting House on south side. East end of north range has a stone newel staircase approached by a C16-centred arched doorway. Paved courtyard, with pump dated 1814. Interior: North part of west range originally formed 1 room, and has contemporary roof truss with curved braces, wind braces, moulded wall plates and central beam with carved paterae. C17 panelled partitions. North range has some C16 moulded ceiling beams, and a blocked contemporary fireplace on the upper floor: parts of the roof trusses and some curved wind braces are exposed. Friends' Burial Ground is bounded by C17 or C18 hammer dressed stone walls, ramped to higher corners.

Nos 87 to 95 (odd) the Friends Meeting House, Nos 99 to 159 (odd) form a group.

Listing NGR: SY4662192577