

## **Friends Meeting House, Brighton**

*Ship Street, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1AF*

*National Grid Reference: TQ 31029 04119*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house at Brighton with the attached cottage dates from 1805 but was re-faced in the 1870s when the former adult school was added. It has high heritage value.***

#### **Evidential value**

***The fabric of the building has the potential to yield further evidence about the history of the meeting house. The buildings and the burial ground have high evidential value.***

#### **Historical value**

***The meeting house, the attached cottage and the former adult school have high historical value due to their historical associations and illustrative value.***

#### **Aesthetic value**

***The re-faced meeting house and the adult school have a Victorian appearance while the early date of the cottage is still discernible. Overall, they have high aesthetic value.***

#### **Communal value**

***The meeting house and adult school are well used by Quakers and community groups. They have high communal value.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Sussex West*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000770*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Brighton and Hove City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *City of Brighton and Hove NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1380935*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Brighton Old Town*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1805 and later*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *18 August 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Jackie Robinson and Tony Tree*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Cottage, former adult school*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Antram, N. and N. Pevsner, *Sussex: East (Buildings of England)*, 2012, p. 173  
Antram, N. and R. Morrice, *Brighton and Hove (Pevsner Architectural Guides)*, 2008, p. 78  
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 599-601  
Harrison, R.S., *Brighton Quakers, 1655-2005*, 2005  
Nairn, I. and N. Pevsner, *Sussex (Buildings of England)*, 1965, p. 437  
Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Eastern England*, 2002, p. 334  
Local Meeting archive, burial plan; architectural plans of the 1970s  
Local Meeting Survey by Jackie Robinson and Tony Tree, June 2015

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

### **2.1. Historical background**

In 1658, the first recorded Quaker meeting for worship took place in Brighton. In 1700, a converted malthouse in North Street was leased from Thomas Parsons who had acquired it on behalf of the Quakers. By 1792, initial plans were made for a new meeting house. In 1804, when the new site had already been purchased, two parcels from the North Street site were sold to the Prince of Wales who wanted to extend his Royal Pavilion estate. Further parcels

of land were sold off over time. While the burial ground was initially kept by the meeting, it was leased in 1831 to the Royal Pavilion estate and in 1893 sold to Brighton Corporation.

In 1804, the present plot in Ship Street was bought from Friend William Grover for £1,000, which at the time had two houses towards Ship Street which were later demolished. The meeting house (Figures 1 and 2) opened in 1805. The cost of the building was £1,800. The attached caretaker's cottage was probably built at the same time. In 1817, a canopy or sounding board over the stand was added. In 1845, a single-storey entrance block was added at the north (Figure 3). Various internal alterations were also made in 1845. By 1853 (date of a drawing by W.A. Delamotte) the meeting room had the stand against the east wall, a gallery at the west and a sliding shutter in the centre to divide the room. In 1876-77, the architects Holford & Clayton (according to Harrison; Antram and Pevsner: Clayton & Black) built the adult school to the north (at the cost of £2,420), and added an extra storey to the caretaker's cottage. The former north entrance was enclosed as a corridor which links the meeting house and adult school. Based on photographic and map evidence, the re-building of the meeting house's west elevation, which included a complete re-fenestration as well as the addition of a pediment and the current porch, also took place at that time (Figure 2). (The porch and the adult school are not shown on the 1876 OS map and first appear on the 1898 map.) At some point in the later twentieth century, the elders' and ministers' stand was removed from the meeting room (it is still described as *in situ* by Butler (published in 1995) and Stell (published in 2002)). In 1997, the corridor west of the meeting room was extended into the meeting room to create a reception and storage room (removing or encasing the 'two columns with lotus capitals' under the gallery depicted by Delamotte and described by Stell). In 2009, the toilets on the ground floor of the cottage were refurbished and altered to form toilets and a library room.

There have been a number of detached burial grounds associated with the Brighton meeting. In 1659 the first recorded burial took place at Rottingdean, on land which was bought by Nicholas Beard from Thomas Alberton in 1661 and which was leased to the Quakers in 1675. In c.1988, it was sold by the Beard family. In 1854, Charles Beard offered a plot at Black Rock to the Quakers as the Rottingdean plot had come to be regarded as his family's personal burial ground. The burial ground at Black Rock was in use from 1855 until 1972 when it was sold and the burials exhumed. Another burial ground in Woodingdean has been used since 1972.

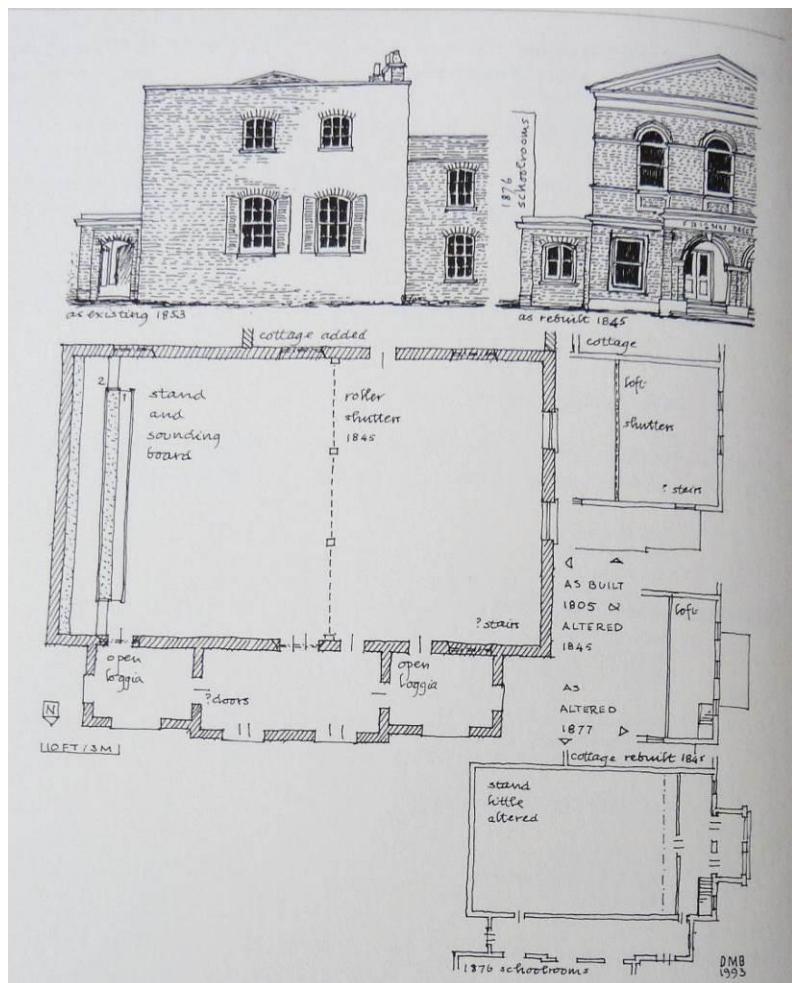


Figure 1: Plans and elevations of the Meeting House as originally and as later altered. (North is at the bottom of the plan; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p. 600)

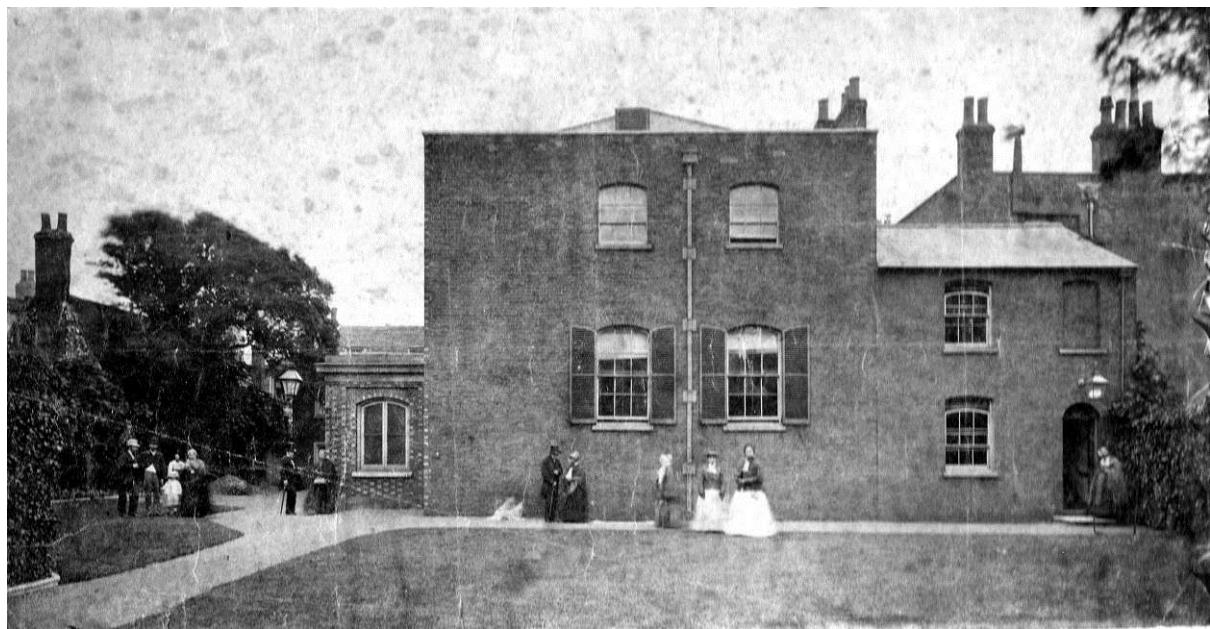


Figure 2: The meeting house from the west in 1875 (Brighton Local Meeting archive)

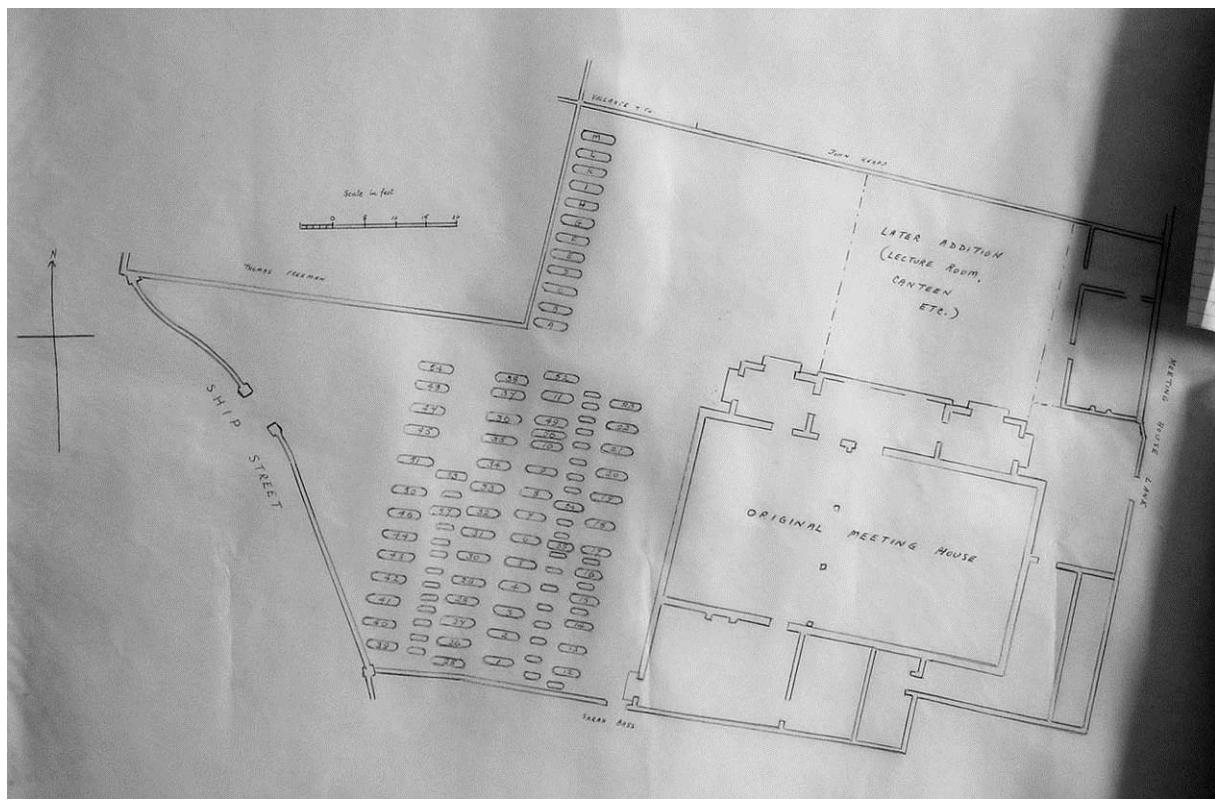


Figure 3: Copy of the 1856 plan of the attached burial ground (north is at the top; not to scale) (Brighton Local Meeting archive)

## 2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building faces roughly west. The meeting house is at the centre of the complex, flanked by the warden's house to the south and the former adult school to the north. The meeting house dates from 1805 and was re-faced in 1876-7. Its plan is oblong with a projecting west porch and north block. The materials of the meeting house are brick laid in Flemish bond with stucco-cement dressings. The main roof is hipped and covered with slate, while the flat roofs over the porch and former north portico are covered with lead. The meeting house's main elevation has windows on two levels (with the upper windows lighting the gallery of the full-height meeting room). On the ground floor is a single-storey porch with a flat roof, two arches on pilasters and two corner pilaster supporting the frieze with the incised inscription 'FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE'. On either side of the porch are oblong windows with architraves. The cornice of the porch returns and continues on either side. Above, the three arched windows with plate-glass sashes have oblong aprons with brick panels, a moulded sill band, a dentilled springing band, and architrave arches. The pediment above has a strongly moulded entablature. The former entrance block to the north is now an enclosed corridor, with a former north doorway remodelled as a segmental-headed window. This block also has a cornice. The side walls of the meeting house are largely obscured by adjoining and neighbouring buildings but where visible are of red brick with burnt headers in Flemish bond, with segmental heads to the windows. The rear wall of the meeting house is rendered and has a central downpipe whose hopper is dated '1805'.

Inside the main entrance is a corridor under the raking gallery of the meeting room, containing a stair of 1876-7 in the northwest corner. Under the gallery and projecting into the meeting room is a storage room (to the north of the entrance into the meeting room) and the reception (to the south). The meeting room is a double-height room with a flat, panelled ceiling with a cornice and a central cast-iron ventilation grille. (The latter probably was installed when a central stove was added which is visible in a drawing of 1853 by W.A. Delamotte.) The room has a timber dado (probably of the 1960s or 1970s) and high-level

sash windows on both sides (three to the north (16 over 16 panes), two shorter ones to the south (6 over 6 panes)). At the east is the full-width curved sounding board of 1817, below which the original elders' and ministers' stand would have been. See from inside the meeting room, the corridor extension appears as another level of the gallery with a matching front panel, whereas in fact behind it is just an inaccessible flat roof. The raked gallery above has a panelled timber balustrade. The corridor in the 1845 entrance block to the north of the meeting room has no historical features of note. Behind (to the east) of the meeting room is a small single-storey extension housing a quiet room.

The warden's cottage is a three-storey building attached to the south side of the meeting house. It was probably built in 1805 and was extended upwards by one storey in 1876-7. Its plan is oblong with a two-storey rear wing. The materials are brick in Flemish bond with a pitched slate roof. There are two chimneystacks to the north. The main (west) elevation is two windows wide. The right (south) bay has the arched entrance with a decorative fanlight over the six-panelled door. The second-floor windows are flat arched, the others have segmental arches. The two windows above the door are blocked. Most of the ground floor is taken up with toilets and a library (remodelled 2009). The stair to the warden's flat on the upper floors (not inspected) is against the south wall.

The former adult school (1876-7) has an oblong plan with a re-entrant corner at the southeast. It is of brick, with a hipped slate roof. It is a two-storey building whose main elevation is four windows wide. The windows are paired on both floors. The ground-floor windows are plate-glass sashes under a lintel (above which is a course of sawtooth bricks) and divided by a brick pilaster. Between the pairs of windows is a date stone inscribed 'Erected 1876'. A cornice divides the ground and first floors. The first-floor windows have plate-glass sashes under segmental heads with strongly moulded architraves with a moulded springing band. The windows are divided by brick pilasters whose capitals continue the springing band. Below the windows are decorative panelled aprons with central brick diamonds. Above a dentil cornice is a short parapet with projecting corners and centre. The side elevations are largely blank, apart from a sash window in the staircase bay at the south. There are two chimney stacks to the north and one to the south. The rear elevation has a lean-to extension on the ground floor and three asymmetrically-spaced plate-glass sash windows on the two upper floors. (There is a mezzanine to the rear half of the building which accounts for the extra storey.) The mezzanine windows have rubbed brick segmental heads, brick sills, as well as sill bands and springing bands of brick. The first-floor windows have flat arches of rubbed brick with brick sills and a brick sill band. The window arches interrupt a cornice of two courses of sawtooth bricks. The sawtooth cornice and the sill bands continue around the building.

The ground floor of the former adult school has a large lecture room to the west (photo top right), and a kitchen, a café/canteen and the staircase to the east. The lecture room has a dado rail, a cornice and an original tiled fireplace. Within a cupboard is a remnant of a nineteenth-century floral wallpaper. The café which extends into a single-storey rear extension has a plainer and smaller fireplace. The open-well stair has turned newels and balusters. Below the stairs is a Victorian walk-in safe. The mezzanine between the ground and first floors has two small rooms to the rear. On the first floor are two rooms to the front (both with blocked fireplaces and original surrounds), and a small kitchen and another room (with a cast-iron grate) to the rear.

To the rear (east) of the site is a flint and brick wall to Meeting House Lane with two blocked openings. The only current rear exit is via the north corridor of 1845 with a cast-iron gate to the Lane.

## 2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting house has at least 21 open-backed benches (16 of which are in the meeting room and the remainder throughout the building) which are similar to those at Worthing Meeting

House (*qv*). They have curved armrests on turned supports. The legs have sturdy iron straps which could be screwed to the floor. Two white eighteenth-century open-backed benches from Chichester Meeting House (*qv*) are stored in the attic.

#### 2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The attached burial ground with about 160 recorded burials was closed by Order in Council in 1854. There are no surviving gravestones. The meeting house archive contains a burial plan of 1856 as well as a modern redrawing of this (Figure 3). The burial ground is now laid out as a garden, bounded by flint and brick walls to three sides. The railings on the flint dwarf wall to Ship Street were removed during the Second World War but the historic gates were kept to ensure the security of the burial ground.

Notable people interred here include the abolitionist Isaac Bass (died 1855); his son Isaac Gray Bass, a former mayor of Brighton; the writer Maude Robinson (died 1950); Bernard N. Southall JP, who was mayor in 1920; the doctor, suffragette and penal reformer Dr Elizabeth Wright (died 1933); and Daniel Pryor Hack (1794-1886), a local benefactor who donated books worth £600 to the Brighton Free Library.

#### 2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in central Brighton, at the corner of Ship Street and Prince Albert Street. Towards Ship Street, the meeting house (flanked by the attached cottage to the south and the former adult school to the north) is set back behind the burial ground and garden. To the rear, it borders the narrow Meeting House Lane.

According to Butler, the site of the North Street burial ground is now a covered yard (NGR TQ312043). There were further burial grounds in Rottingdean (NGR: TQ371027) and Black Rock (TQ335035). The only detached burial ground still in Quaker ownership is that in Woodingdean (NGR: TQ350055), which is still in use.

#### 2.6. Listed status

The meeting house (with the attached cottage and former adult school) is correctly listed at grade II. The list description needs to be amended to correct the erroneous sequence of construction. Notably the meeting house was built in 1805 and only refaced in 1876-77 (not built in 1850).

#### 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

By 1805, there were two houses on the Ship Street site although their exact location is unknown. The site has high archaeological potential, due to the presence of around 160 burials.

### **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

#### 3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/generally satisfactory

#### 3.2. Maintenance

The most recent quinquennial inspection was undertaken in April 2012 by Holland Alexander & Co Ltd, chartered surveyors, Bognor Regis. (A copy of the report was not available at the time of the visit.) Most of the recommendations have been carried out.

### 3.3. Sustainability

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

- Climate change & energy efficiency: installation of sustainability notice board, film evenings on the topic, participation in local interfaith climate action group, change of energy supplier to Good Energy
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: Use of eco cleaning materials and recycled materials where possible; waste is recycled or composted where possible; two water butts, a hot bin and three composting compounds in garden; a public 'repairs café' held at meeting house
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: loft installation depth increased, doors draught-proofed, more efficient gas boiler installed, phasing out of inefficient electric heaters, a MVHR (mechanical ventilation with heat recovery) system is being installed, change to LED lights is planned, use of sustainable materials in kitchen and café area refurbishment where possible, use of energy efficient appliances
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: garden management based on permaculture principles, a wide range of edible plants and fruits (including four heritage apple trees) are being grown
- Transport: the meeting encourages car share and use of public transport and have installed bicycle racks.

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate. However, a full energy report was commissioned which provides a more specific assessment of energy consumption and efficiency and of the potential areas of reducing carbon emissions. The meeting is currently implementing the recommendations.

### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. There is a resident warden, who lives in a flat on the upper floors of the attached cottage.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is no parking on site but there is secure parking for bicycles.

### 3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and within the building (via a stair lift in the former adult school), an accessible toilet, and a hearing loop. There are no specific facilities for partially-sighted people but the walls in the corridors and staircase are already painted two different colours. A Disability Access Audit took place in 2011 and recommended changes have been implemented. Future plans include the fitting of a hearing loop system in the lecture room.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 6 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 409.5 hours per week. It is used for an average of 110 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Free use is approved by the Business Meeting. Groups whose aims are in serious conflict with Quaker values are excluded, as are groups at whose events violence, the encouragement of violence, or the contravention of fire and health & safety regulations is anticipated, or who have previously breached the terms and conditions of hiring the meeting house.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There have been incidents of general crime and anti-social behaviour at the site, including theft, graffiti, vandalism, drug use and rough sleeping. There has been no heritage crime at the site. Reported incidents include the theft of a laptop from an office, the presence of heroin users in the garden and front porch, incidents of threatening behaviour to staff and a break-in by the English Defence League who tried to disrupt a left-wing political meeting. One unreported incident is known where a threatened elderly member of the meeting declined to report this to the police.

The meeting house is located in the centre of Brighton. The locality is generally well-cared for, but has high crime levels, some deprivation (a mixture of expensive town centre accommodation and businesses, and rough sleepers) and low community confidence. The meeting has an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8. Plans for change

The meeting plans to refurbish the kitchen and café area in 2016.

## **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 retains a number of original and historic features, which should be retained in any alterations. The proposed changes to the café area will not affect any historic fabric and will improve the appearance of that part of the building.
- ii) *For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house and the attached former adult school contain all the amenities currently required for wider community use. Should community use necessitate any changes, these should be well-considered and carefully designed.
- iii) *Being laid down as a Meeting:* In the unlikely event of the closure of the meeting house, the buildings could easily continue in community use without the need for many adaptations. Such a use would enable the building to be used without major alterations which would be preferable for this listed building.

## **Part 5: Category: 2**

## **Part 6: List description**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AND THE COTTAGE

List entry Number: 1380935

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AND THE COTTAGE, SHIP STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County      District      District Type    Parish

The City of Brighton and Hove      Unitary Authority

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 11-Apr-1995

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

#### Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 481259

#### List entry Description

#### Details

BRIGHTON

TQ3104SW SHIP STREET 577-1/64/846 (East side) 11/04/95 Friends' Meeting House and the Cottage

II

Friends' meeting house. 1805, extended 1850 and 1876. The following will describe the complex in chronological order of construction. First, to the south, the cottage: brick in Flemish bond, flint, and stucco-cement dressings. Roof of slate. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys over basement. 2-window range. Round-arched entrance to right with fanlight of decorative glazing. The single window to the left and the first-floor windows are segmental arched with gauged brick lintels; the second-floor windows are flat arched. All have projecting sills. The window range above the entrance is blocked; the other windows have sashes of an original design: 6 x 6, 3 x 6 and 3 x 3 from ground to second floor respectively. While nothing in the design suggests that the earliest section was built as a meeting house, the first extension to the north, built in 1850, bears all the hallmarks of nonconformist architecture. 2 storeys over basement. 3-window range. Same materials as above. Gable-facing roof is finished as a pediment with its raking cornice that continues around the returns. The elevation below is symmetrically arranged. 2 segmental-arched entrances set under a single-storey enclosed porch, rectangular in plan. The porch entered by a 2 bay arcade of round, diaphragm arches supported on Tuscan pilasters; the entablature above returns and continues across the front wall. Over the entrance to the porch, incised on the frieze of the entablature is the legend: Friends' Meeting House. In the front wall to either side of the porch is one flat-arched window with projecting sill. The first-floor windows are round arched and tied together by a sill band and a dentil-cornice springing band; the window heads have architraves. Each window is rebated and has a panelled spandrel beneath the sill. Mouldings on front wall have a short return. Headers in the left-return wall are burned bricks. On this return, near the corner, is a single-storey entrance porch with segmental-arched entrances. This may be contemporary with the 1876 extension, which is set well back from the 1850 hall. 2 storeys and a 4-window range. Design and materials resemble the 1850 hall. The windows are paired and set back from the plain of the front wall. Constructed to provide education rooms and dormitory space, and now serving as an adult-education centre. It is included here for its group value. (Carder T: The Encyclopaedia of Brighton: Lewes: 1990-: 115R).

Listing NGR: TQ3103504126