

***Friends Meeting House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge***

*11–12 Jesus Lane, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB5 8BA*

*National Grid Reference: TL 44964 58799*



***Statement of Significance***

***The building has overall medium heritage significance as a much altered and extended example of an eighteenth-century purpose-built meeting house, associated with the long history of Quakers on this city centre site. It contributes positively to the conservation area.***

***Evidential value***

***The older buildings on the site are considered to have medium evidential value, while the overall site has high evidential value, due to its below-ground archaeological potential.***

***Historical value***

***The history of the Quaker presence on the site dates back to at least 1700. The current meeting house was the first purpose-built meeting room on the site. The buildings are associated with various prominent Quakers, including the benefactors Ann Docwra and Caroline Stephen. The complex has high historical value, due to its illustrative and associative values.***

***Aesthetic value***

***The eighteenth-century meeting house and the 1960s block both have low aesthetic value as relatively plain buildings with few features. No.11 Jesus Lane has medium aesthetic value.***

### **Communal value**

***The complex has high communal value as a Quaker meeting house which is also used by local community groups. Its association with Quakers and its long history is highlighted by a plaque which contributes to the buildings' key part in the memory and identity of users, visitors and local residents.***

#### **Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Cambridgeshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0005880*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Cambridge City Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *Cambridge*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed, not locally listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Central Cambridge*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1776–7, 1969 (12 Jesus Lane); early nineteenth century (no. 11)*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not known (1776–7), William Barnes (1969); not known (no. 11)*

1.14 Date of visit: *10 July 2014*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Graham Waterhouse and Trish Carn*

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. 32–6

Cambridge City Council, 'Section 3: Street-by-Street Analysis: Jesus Lane', in 'Cambridge Historic Core Appraisal', 2006

Historic drawings and photos in the meeting houses' archives

Phillipson, L., 'Quakerism in Cambridge. From the Act of Toleration to the End of the Nineteenth Century (1689–1900)', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, vol. 77 (1988), 1–33

Local Meeting survey from Graham Waterhouse, 2014 and 2015

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

### 2.1 Historical background

In about 1659 Friends rented a house near Sidney Sussex College for meetings. In 1700, Ann Docwra (c.1624–1710) gave several houses in Jesus Lane to the Friends, including one for use as a meeting house and another cottage which remained hers to use in her lifetime. Apparently, the meeting house and the adjoining burial ground had already been in Quaker use before that date. Ten years later she left a plot of land (about 60 acres in Fulbourn) in her will to the Friends (this was leased in 1949). In 1776–7 a new meeting house was built on part of the site, including over the former burial ground, and adjacent to Ann Docwra's cottage (see Phillipson, pp. 7, 8).

Between c.1795 and 1884, the meeting was discontinued and the meeting house was let. Its uses included a Lancastrian school (from 1808), a Church of England Sunday school (1827–33), and Cambridge's first Free Library (1855–62). Once the university was gradually opened to non-conformists, the number of Quakers in Cambridge grew and the meeting was revived in 1884. In 1883 the meeting house was described as a square room with a brass-railed platform and a gallery, with seating for 155.

In 1894–5, the meeting house was repaired due to inadequate foundations over the former burial ground and the presence of Civil War defences (the 'King's Ditch'). The foundations were strengthened with lime and cement, while the meeting room's plan was changed from a square (33ft by 33ft) to a rectangle (33 by 19ft) with a foyer. The former gallery was partly removed and partly enclosed to create a children's room. Ann Docwra's cottage at the corner of Jesus Lane and Park Street was demolished and rebuilt as a caretaker's residence in the 1890s. The architect was Edwin Boys.

In 1919, Fred Rowntree prepared a scheme to extend onto the site of 11 Jesus Lane, an adjacent public house (in c.1870, The Taylors Arms). This house had been acquired by the local Friend Caroline Stephen (aunt of Virginia Woolf) whose will of 1909 included the provision that once the lease expired in 1922 Friends were to have the option to acquire it (which duly happened in 1922). A reduced version of Rowntree's scheme was carried out in 1927, leaving no. 11 largely unaltered. In 1949 a fire caused damage to the buildings and the meeting house was reopened in 1950 after repairs, including a new concrete roof to the meeting room (architect: Fred Rowntree & Sons).

By the 1960s, the existing accommodation had become inadequate. In 1969, the corner building (i.e. the caretaker's cottage of 1894–5) was demolished and replaced by a new entrance block by the architect William E. Barnes of Letchworth. A warden's flat was created on the two upper storeys of 11 Jesus Lane and on the second floor of the entrance block. Some alterations were made to the 1776–7 meeting room. In the 1990s, an accessible toilet was installed (architect: Graham Waterhouse). The ground floor shop and one first floor room in 11 Jesus Lane are currently rented out to a hairdresser.

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

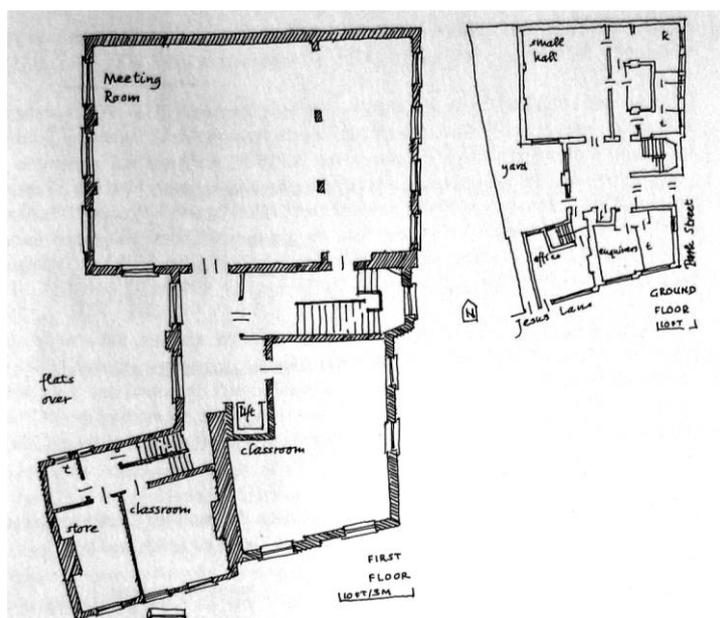


Figure 1: First and ground floor plans of the current buildings (southeast is actually at the bottom; not to scale) (Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, vol. 1, p. 35)

The meeting house complex consists of three separate buildings on a corner site at the junction of Jesus Lane and Park Street: the eighteenth-century building containing the meeting room in Park Street; the 1969 entrance block to the corner; and the former public house (11 Jesus Lane; at the left in the top left photo on page 1). All three parts are internally connected.

The 1969 corner block is of three storeys and has a flat roof. It was built using facing bricks laid in stretcher bond. To Jesus Lane (south) are two slightly staggered bays with three-light ground floor windows and sash windows above. To Park Street (east) are two further bays with sashes, as well as a projecting stair tower lit by sash windows. The entrance under a flat canopy is in the centre bay. On the ground floor this contains the entrance lobby, the entrance hall, stairwell, a lift and a library; on the first floor is the Alden Wright Room; on the second floor are bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom, which are part of the warden's flat (not inspected).

The two-storey block containing the meeting room was built in 1776–7, and has been altered several times. After c.1870 it was extended to the rear; in 1894–5 the foundations were strengthened and the internal plan altered; after the 1949 fire the upper floor was rebuilt and a new concrete roof constructed; a chimney stack was at some point taken down; and a large portion of the rear wall has been rebuilt. It was built of brick laid in English bond. The street elevation (facing northeast) is four windows wide, with flat brick arches to the 16-pane sash windows and an arched light to the basement. On the ground floor there is a small hall (the Ann Docwra Room), as well as toilets and a kitchen, above is the meeting room (photos bottom left and right, p.1) and the Annex; between the two rooms are folding screens (photo bottom right, p.1). The meeting room is lit by three arched windows to the west, and one similar window to the south.

Like the adjoining houses to the west, 8–10 Jesus Lane, no. 11 may date to the early nineteenth century. It has three floors as well as an attic. (The second floor and the dormered attic were added in c.1888.) The street elevation is rendered. The shopfront is modern and includes a doorway into the shop, beside the separate entrance door to the rear yard. The upper floors slightly project over the ground floor. The windows have architrave frames and

plate glass sashes. The dormers in the tiled pitched roof have small barge boards and casement windows. The stair is located against the rear (northwest) wall and has turned balusters and newels with ball finials. The fireplaces have been blocked.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room has a number of nineteenth-century benches with curved armrests and turned legs, which are placed around the edge of the room.

### 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/a

### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located on a corner site in the centre of Cambridge, opposite Sidney Sussex College. This is a densely developed city centre area where buildings directly front onto the street without front gardens. Around the corner in Park Street is the ADC Theatre, while further west in Jesus Lane is the University Pitt Club (c.1865, Matthew Digby Wyatt). To the northwest of the meeting house is the medieval Round Church and the Cambridge Union Society Building (1866, Waterhouse). The main views of the meeting house complex are from Jesus Lane and Park Street. There is a small back yard.

### 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed. The oldest part of the complex is the building of 1776–7, built on a previous burial ground; it has been substantially altered and partly rebuilt on several occasions but its original form is still legible. It is probably too altered to be suitable for inclusion in the statutory list. Due to its historical significance in the city it would be a candidate for Cambridge City Council's list of buildings of local interest.

More research is required to establish the date of 11 Jesus Lane. It seems to have originated as a two-storey building which was heightened by two storeys in c.1888. It would also be eligible for the local list.

### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The archaeological potential of the wider area is high. In the past, Roman pottery, Saxon brooches and a Saxon inhumation have been found in Jesus Lane. According to the 'Historic Core Appraisal' of Jesus Lane, the archaeological potential is assessed as follows: 'potential for prehistory: high; potential for Roman: high; potential for medieval is moderate to high.' The site of the meeting house has been the location of a former Quaker burial ground and several buildings, dating back to c.1700 and earlier. Overall, the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be high.

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

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/a

### 3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection (Cheffins, 2011) found no major problems. It is planned to complete the window repairs and the façade repairs this year (2014), and to refurbish the men's toilets. So far, the local meeting has had enough money to maintain and repair the building but fundraising has now started for renovation work. There is a five-year maintenance and repair plan which is based on the QIR.

### 3.3 Sustainability

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

- Climate change & energy efficiency: Secondary glazing to large windows; additional roof insulation; 4kW photovoltaic solar panels on flat roof
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: City Council recycling measures
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: Heating pipes lagged where accessible; condensing gas boilers in flats

The meeting has an Energy Performance Certificate (energy efficiency level: C).

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs; these are all located in the meeting house. There is a resident Warden. There is public transport and nearby bicycle parking (outside the main entrance and within the yard). There is no on-site car parking but a multi-storey car park is nearby.

### 3.5 Access

The meeting house has level access to all parts (via a lift), apart from a small first floor room. There is an accessible WC and a hearing loop in the two largest rooms. There are no facilities for partially-sighted people. In 2012, a Disability Access Audit was carried out but no improvements were required.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 30 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 365 hours per week. It is used for an average of 68 hours per week. There is no formal letting policy but it conforms to the guidance in 'Quaker Faith and Practice', i.e. excluding any group whose aims or activities are in direct conflict with Quaker values. Quakers can use the meeting house for free and there are occasional grants to other groups. Users value the meeting house because of its central location, competitive pricing, welcoming atmosphere, and the fact that someone is on duty at the site which makes people feel safe.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area has low crime levels but there is some deprivation. There has been no heritage crime at the site; the only reported crimes being opportunistic theft. The meeting has established a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8 Plans for change

The meeting is currently (2015) planning to renovate the building which will include the updating of building services and the improvement of the kitchen and the storage provision.

## **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 building has few furnishings of note, apart from the nineteenth-century benches, which should be retained in any re-ordering. The main heritage constraint is the conservation area designation.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house is already in use by local community groups and has all the facilities to support these.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting:* In the unlikely event of closure, the meeting house could be adapted for alternative secular uses without requiring substantial alterations. As a non-designated heritage asset in a conservation area, a sympathetic new use would be preferable to demolition and redevelopment.

## **Part 5: Category: 3**