

Friends Meeting House, Chesterfield

27 Ashgate Road, Chesterfield, S40 4AG

National Grid Reference: SK 37411 71528



Statement of Significance

The Chesterfield meeting house is a good example of late twentieth century design which exhibits clever adaptation to an awkward site and imaginative engagement with the surroundings. The interior is flexible and well-planned.

Evidential value

The building is evidence for the presence and resources of the Quakers in Chesterfield in the late twentieth century and the gravestones from the Saltergate burial ground provide a link with the past. There is relatively low evidential value.

Historical value

Historical value is located in the evidence for Quaker presence on the site since the late twentieth century and historical links with the previous meeting house and burial ground is provided by the gravestones. There is relatively low historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building has been identified as one of few twentieth century nonconformist buildings in Derbyshire to adopt an imaginative architectural approach (Hartwell, Pevsner & Williamson, forthcoming). The massing of the building and engagement with the surroundings are salient features, and the building is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is popular with local groups and has attractive flexible spaces. There is medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Nottingham and Derbyshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0006230*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Chesterfield Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Chesterfield*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1971-2*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Bartlett & Gray*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *23 October 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *John Newton*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Attached former warden's accommodation*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No but headstones from a predecessor meeting house burial ground have been placed in the grounds*
- 1.19 Information sources:
OS 6 in: 1 mile, Derbyshire XXV NW surveyed 1876
Goldwell Bank, Sale Particulars, 1968 (Chesterfield meeting house collection)
Stell, C., *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses Derbyshire* (RCHME 1986), p. 38-9

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), Vol I, p.124-6

Hartwell, C., Pevsner, N. & Williamson, E., *The Buildings of England Derbyshire* (Yale University Press, London and New Haven, forthcoming).

Newton, J., Volunteer Form, October 2015.

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

2.1. Historical background

There are records of a meeting house erected in 1677, but another, described as standing at the end of a small croft off Saltergate, was erected in 1696-7 possibly as a conversion of cottages. It was rebuilt in 1770 and enlarged in 1799. This building was acquired by the council in 1971 and demolished in c. 1974. By this time a site for a new meeting house had been obtained on a sloping plot at the corner of Ashgate Road and Brockwell Lane. It was occupied by a detached house known as Goldwell Bank with a mature garden. The house is shown on the 1876 OS map, in an area which was still largely open land at that time. Sale particulars of the house show that it was owned by the National Coal Board at the time of the sale.



Figure 1 Goldwell Bank prior to demolition (Chesterfield meeting house archive)

Designs for the new meeting house were prepared by Bartlett and Gray, who also designed meeting houses in Nottingham and Mansfield (qq.v.). Much of the mature garden was retained, and the building designed to exploit the sloping land and to engage with the grounds. Later alterations included conversion of an upstairs storeroom into a kitchen in c. 1982. In 2007-8 accessible toilets, a ramp access and new external doors were fitted. Both

kitchens were later upgraded. In 2002 the roof was repaired, and new roofing undertaken in 2012 by Merlin Design.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

Meeting house by Bartlett & Gray erected in 1971-2. Concrete frame clad in grey brick laid in stretcher bond; of two principal storeys with flat and slated roofs. The plan is broadly speaking L-shaped, with the short arm formed by large unequal octagonal rooms on two storeys with subsidiary rooms and former warden's accommodation in the longer arm. The upper octagonal room is the main meeting room and is accentuated by a pyramidal roof. It has large windows in the three exposed short sides of the octagon, which give views directly into the mature trees and vegetation of the gardens. Service rooms and circulation areas are attached to the north and west, and there is a children's room attached to the east. Circulation lies to the north, accessed on two levels, with an upper walkway from Brockwell Lane leading directly to the upper floor, and a lower entrance to the ground floor rooms accessed from Ashgate Road and the car park. The lower octagonal room is designated a 'social room' on the plans and there are storage areas, kitchen facilities and WCs at this level. Later alteration of the building included provision of disabled toilets on both floors and upgrading kitchen accommodation. The interior is characterised by good spacious planning, with easy access to the main spaces. The underside of the pyramidal roof of the meeting room is clad in hardwood.

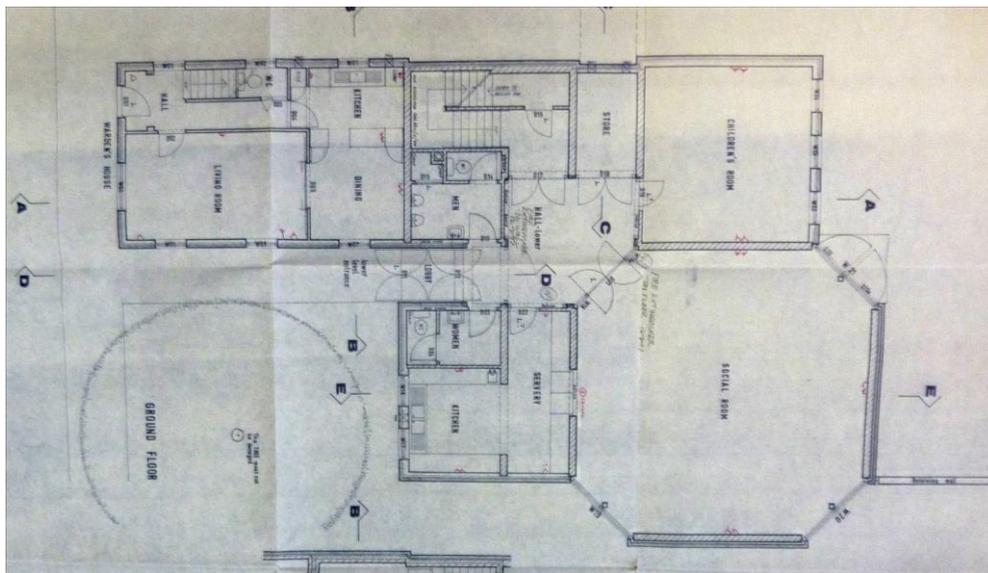


Figure 1. Ground floor layout shown on the architects' plans (Chesterfield meeting collection)

2.3. Loose furnishings

None of note.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None but there is an area where headstones from the previous burial ground on Saltergate have been laid out.



Figure 2. Headstones from the previous burial ground

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is situated in attractive grounds with a lawn and mature trees. The layout and much of the planting relates to the house previously on the site, and the building is served by the original drive and stone gate piers relating to the house. The site lies on the western side of the town centre in an area which is largely residential to the north, where there are twentieth century housing estates. To the west there is early and later twentieth century housing, and a large area of allotment gardens lies to the south. To the east Ashgate Road becomes Saltergate and leads into the town centre and the site of the previous meeting house.



Figure 3. Part of the gardens

2.6. Listed status

Not listed and not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

No areas of archaeological potential have been identified.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good

ii) Attached burial ground: n/a but the grounds and area with headstones are Optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2. Maintenance

A QI was carried out in 2015 and there is an annual plan for routine works of maintenance. Many of the recommended works have been carried out, including installation of a new downpipe, new urinal and a carbon monoxide alarm, but inspection of the flat roofs and repairs to external walls and to the grounds are pending.

3.3. Sustainability

- The following measures have been implemented:
- A modern boiler has been installed
- Green tariff fuel suppliers are used and draught proofing has been undertaken
- Waste is recycled where possible
- The grounds are maintained in a wildlife friendly way
- Car sharing is encouraged

3.4. Amenities

There are adequate toilets and kitchens on both floors and ample meeting areas and offices.

3.5. Access

There is separate level access to each floor, with on-street parking and a bridge link from Brockwell Lane, while the lower floor is approached from an on-site car park and ramp.

Disabled toilets are supplied on both floors. There are good bus links, including on Sundays.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting house is used by other groups for about fifty hours a week and there is a lettings policy which prohibits use by political parties, for children's parties, and certain other restrictions.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

Crime is not a particular problem and has tended to be confined to isolated incidents. The ball finials from the gateposts were stolen some time ago.

3.8. Plans for change

Replacement of windows and installation of double glazing is planned.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

Summary addressing scenarios below:

i) As a Meeting House used only by the local meeting: The building has a high degree of flexibility with good amenities and a number of spaces of different sizes, appearing to answer the needs of the meeting and user groups. There is scope for change if required.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: There are already established uses by other groups and no obvious constraints to extending these.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: discontinuing use by the Friends would be regrettable, but the building could in theory be adapted for other uses.

Part 5: Category: 3