

Come-to-Good Friends Meeting House

Tregye Road, near Feock, Truro, Cornwall, TR3 6QS

National Grid Reference: SW 81278 40325



Statement of Significance

Come-to-Good meeting house is one of the best-known meeting houses in England, not least due to its picturesque setting and appearance and its memorable name. Built in 1710, a gallery was later inserted and an open lincay for stabling horses was added. The interior is remarkably little altered. Overall, the meeting house has exceptional significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house has undergone some alterations and additions during the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. The fabric of the building has the potential to provide further information about its evolution and use. The building has

exceptional evidential value. The whole site with the burial ground has high archaeological potential.

Historical value

The meeting house is an important early meeting house which survives relatively little altered. It is associated with Catherine Payton Phillips, a notable travelling Quaker minister of the eighteenth century, who is buried here. The meeting house has exceptional historical value.

Aesthetic value

The vernacular idiom, the use of local materials, the overall patina of age and the survival of the interior furnishings and fittings all contribute to the high aesthetic value of the building. The 1960s extension is relatively unobtrusive.

Communal value

The building's primary use is as a Quaker place of worship with an attached historic burial ground, both of which lend spiritual importance to the site. While the meeting house is currently not available for community meetings, it is a much loved local landmark and visitor attraction. It has exceptional communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Cornwall*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0031560*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Cornwall Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Kea*

1.7 Listed status: *I*

1.8 NHLE: *1140860*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1710 with later extensions*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *9 May 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Barbara Stevens and Wendy Franklin*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *detached Children's House; detached burial ground in Budock, Falmouth*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

- Beacham, P. and N. Pevsner, *Cornwall (Buildings of England)*, 2014, p. 155 and plate 82
- Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 59-61
- Feock Local History Society Group, *Feock with Devoran and Carnon Downs: some aspects of local history, Part IV*, 1977, pp. 34-39
- Griffith, P., *Early Quakers at Come-to-Good*, 1995
- Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, pp. 19, 27, 74, plate 35
- Pallett, H., *Come-to-Good and the early Quakers in Cornwall*, 1968
- Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, p. 32
- Griffith, P., 'Quaker Burial Grounds in Cornwall', typescript, 2002
- Swingler, J., 'The Glazing: Come-to-Good Meeting House', unpublished manuscript, 1994
- Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, HER number 18906
- Historic England Archive, red box collection photos of c.1943, 1966 and 1970 and measured drawings
- Local Meeting survey by Vernon White, April 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

George Fox and other itinerant Quaker preachers visited Cornwall in 1656 and the first meetings in Cornwall were founded around that time. (According to Butler, there was already a meeting in Kea parish by 1653 or 1654.) By 1663, Friends in the parishes of Kea and Feock met at the farmhouse at Penelewey Barton, then occupied by Walter Stephens but owned by Thomas Munro, a Quaker. They then rented a property at Come-to-Good from his son John, for which they paid rent until about 1725. (The name 'Come-to-Good' has long been thought to be a derivation from the Cornish 'Cwm-ty-Coit' (wooded valley or the coombe by the dwelling in the wood). However, the first recorded mention of the name dates to the late seventeenth century, i.e. long after the westward retreat of the Cornish language, and it might in fact be an ironic reference to the growing prosperity of local Quakers.)

By 1707, this old building had become inadequate for the purposes of the meeting, and a subscription was started for a new meeting house on a nearby site. (However, according to Patricia Griffith, the present attached burial ground has been in use from the 1650s.) The new site was owned by the Quaker James Mayo and was later leased to Vyvian (list entry, see part 6 below). The current meeting house was completed in 1710 at the cost of £53 8s 3d. The first meeting for worship was held on 13th day of 6th month 1710 (i.e. 13 August in the pre-1752 Julian calendar) when it was still unroofed: Thomas Gwinn recorded that 'it were as well the weather were fine as the roof was off the old building and the new', suggesting that the roof structure was transferred from the previous building. The two windows in the south elevation (flanking the original entrance), which have been dated to c.1640, may have come from Penelewey Barton which was being remodelled in 1710. In 1716 (Pevsner) or 1717 (Butler), the gallery was added at the west for £15 10s 0d, providing additional seating and a space for the women's business meeting. According to surviving accounts, a 40ft ship's mast was purchased for 15s to be used as two supports for the gallery. Two additional high-level windows were inserted at the east and west. The gallery was originally approached by a stair against the north wall.

In around 1780-1800 (based on the dating of the glass in the new window) or the early nineteenth century (Pevsner and Stell), a new doorway was formed in the west wall and the original entrance in the centre of the south wall was replaced by a window. (The same change occurred at the meeting house at Marazion (*qv*.) Probably at the same time, the stair was relocated to the northwest corner and made less steep (figure 3). At some point in the eighteenth (Stell) or nineteenth (Pevsner) centuries, the linhay (or linney, i.e. an open lean-

to shelter for horses) was added at the east and the east window was blocked. (The list entry suggests that the former east window of 1717 was moved in the mid-nineteenth century to the south elevation, replacing the former central doorway; however, Swingler dated the new central south window to the late eighteenth century.)

The meeting declined in the last decade of the eighteenth century and in 1795 the last remaining members transferred to the meeting at Perranwharf (now Perran ar worthal), where the Quaker Fox family's iron foundry was. The meeting house reopened in 1815 for six years. It was in occasional use during the nineteenth century and at some point only four times a year. By 1938 meetings were held once a month. It reopened again in 1946 after a period of closure. In the 1950s, a detached barn on the site was converted to a children's classroom. In 1967, the architect Waldo Maitland added a new extension comprising a lobby, toilets, kitchen and a classroom at a cost of £4,200. At the same time, electricity and running water were installed. An additional piece of land was given by the neighbouring landowner. The new extension replaced a small timber and slate lobby and a small pair of earth closets at the back (figures 1-3).

In 2006-07, the extension was remodelled to provide an accessible toilet, as well as making improvements to the kitchen and library spaces. The detached children's room had previously been refurbished and reroofed. In 2010-12, there was a major restoration and re-thatching, managed by the conservation surveyor David Scott of Scott & Co.

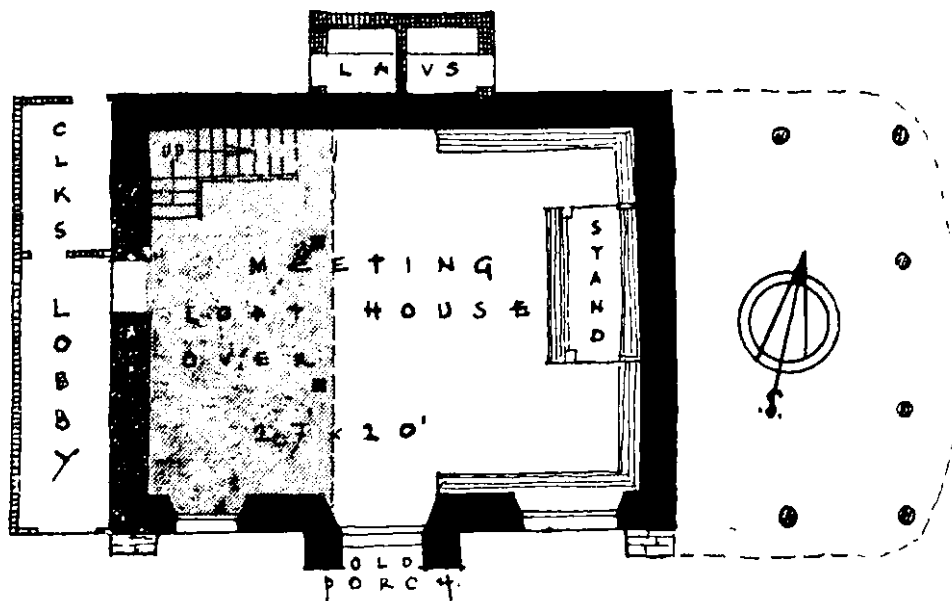


Figure 1: Ground floor plan before the extension of 1967 (north is at the top; not to scale) (Lidbetter (1979), p. 74, reproduced with kind permission of Mark Sessions)



Figure 2: Undated photograph of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (before the burial mounds were levelled in the 1940s), looking northeast (Local Meeting archive)

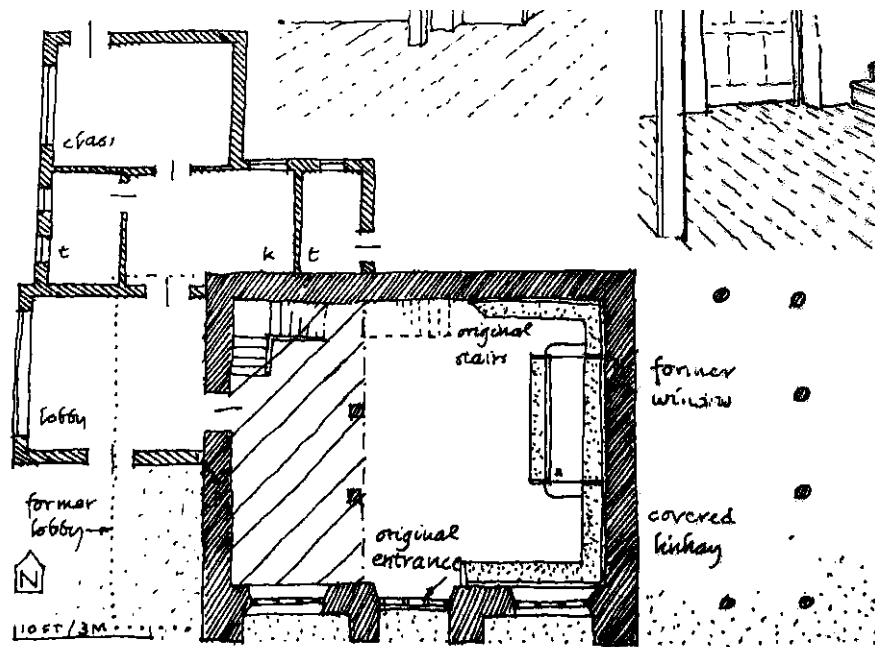


Figure 3: Ground floor plan after the extension of 1967 and before the alterations of 2006-07 (north is at the top; not to scale) (Butler (1999), p. 60; reproduced with kind permission of David Butler)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is fully described in the list description (see part 6 below). The main elevation faces roughly south.

The meeting house was built in 1710, comprising just one full-height oblong room. The linhay was added later, possibly in the late eighteenth century. The extension at the northwest was built in 1967 and remodelled in 2006-7. The materials of the meeting house are plastered and painted cob on stone rubble footings, with a steep wheat reed thatched roof which is half-hipped to the west and hipped over the linhay. The open-sided linhay is supported on brick piers and timber poles, the latter are supported on a stone hedge to the east and by the east wall of the meeting house (photo centre right on page 1). The modern extension is of rendered and painted concrete with a matching thatched hipped roof over the lobby and flat roofs behind.

The south elevation is symmetrical with three leaded three-light windows in oak frames and with oak mullions and external shutters set between stone buttresses and the projecting sides of the former porch at the centre. The east elevation within the linhay is of cob with a blocked window opening with oak lintel. The linhay is open to the roof and is propped against the meeting house on unhewn timber poles. The west elevation has one three-light window with rectangular panes. There are no windows on the rear elevation.

The meeting room is accessed via the modern extension and a plank door in the gable wall which is hinged so it folds back against the wall. The room is open to the roof which has pegged apices and lapped collars of unstained pine. At the west is the gallery, supported on two unhewn posts which are probably the former mast acquired in c.1717. The gallery stair in the northwest corner has square newels and balusters; the door in the gallery relating to a former stair along the north wall is now permanently blocked. The gallery front of pine has three openings and a simple balustrade. At the east end of the room is the short stand, of the type which Lidbetter calls the 'pulpit-type stand' (cf. Wallingford), with a plain boarded front and back. The raised bench at the back has shaped ends and altered armrests. In front of this is a pine panel with square newels and a small fixed reading desk, with a plain bench in front. The stand is flanked by wall-benches with pine dados which return along the north and south. There is another wall-bench on the west wall, albeit without a dado. At the centre of the north wall is a hearth with a modern radiator. The floor is of timber boards. The extension of 1967 comprises a lobby, a kitchen, toilets, and a library.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are eight open-backed benches in the meeting room, some of which are converted forms (i.e. back-less benches, see figure 4), as well as a number of Windsor chairs. There are two forms on the gallery (including one of the eighteenth century with moulded edges and shaped supports), as well as several benches. There are also two simple forms in the children's room.



Figure 4: Forms converted to benches in the meeting room

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The attached burial ground appears to have been first used for burials in 1656 or 1659 when friends met in a building nearby owned by John Stephens. A 1000-year lease was signed in May 1755. By the 1940s, the burial ground was full and the burial mounds (still visible in figure 2) were levelled. The five surviving gravestones date from the nineteenth century and belong to the Magor family who were initially Quakers but later became Wesleyans, Baptists and Anglicans. Notable people buried here include Catherine Payton Phillips (1727-1794), a travelling Quaker minister and writer. (During her life she was actually more closely associated with Redruth Meeting but as there was no burial ground at Redruth was buried at Come-to-Good instead.) The burial ground is no longer in use for burials. There is no formal maintenance plan but the meeting has an established pattern of seasonal maintenance.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located on Tregye Road (B3289), an historically important route which led to King Harry Ferry which still crosses the river Fal. Near the meeting house is a cluster of houses in an otherwise rural location. The plot of the meeting house is a long thin shape, roughly aligned east-west. The entrance to the site is via a modern five-bar gate in a stone boundary wall beside a donation box in form of a stone cairn. Just inside the gate are a cast-iron street lamp (from a street in Camborne) and a mounting block of rubble stone (figure 5). To the west of the meeting house is the Children's House, a former barn of rubble stone with a half-hipped slate roof which already existed by the time of the survey for the 1880 Ordnance Survey map. Near this building are the remaining five gravestones. Further west, the ground falls towards a small stream. Just to the east of the east stone hedge supporting the linhay is an access road to another property. A planning application to build a house replacing a caravan which would require lorry access via this road has recently been refused, partially because of the vulnerability of the meeting house to heavy traffic along this road. A subsequent appeal against the refusal has been allowed with stringent conditions imposed on the applicant.



Figure 5: Mounting block to southeast of meeting house

Come-to-Good Friends may use the detached burial ground at Mongleath Road, Budock, Falmouth, for burials, which is cared for by Falmouth Meeting (NGR: SW 79021 32316). The first burial there took place in 1658. In 1719, a 200-year lease was taken out. The burial ground was enlarged in 1841. The late seventeenth-century boundary walls are grade II listed (National Heritage List entry number: 1269987). Notable burials include members of the influential Fox and Tregelles families. The gravestones have reportedly been moved to the walls; some gravestones from other burial grounds have been moved here as well.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade I due to its historical and architectural significance and its largely unaltered state. The Children's House and the mounting block are important curtilage structures.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

Burials on the site date back to the 1650s and there may have been an earlier building as well. The site has high archaeological potential.

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 last quinquennial inspection took place in July 2012 and was undertaken by David Scott, conservation surveyor. It found no major problems. The QI report serves as a 5-year maintenance and repair plan. The local meeting does not have sufficient funds for major works. The last repair and conservation campaign was partly grant-funded.

3.3 Sustainability

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

- Climate change & energy efficiency: in the process of switching energy supplier to 100% renewable energy; attempts to reduce water usage
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: recycling of waste, use of Fairtrade food and drink where possible
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: use of environmentally-friendly materials where possible
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: logpiles provided for insects and small vertebrates, area near stream left wild
- Transport: the local meeting encourages walking to the meeting house where possible

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities required by the meeting, although the two toilets are inadequate for large meetings of over 30 people. No cooking is permitted in the kitchen to reduce the fire risk. There is no resident Warden.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is limited parking in a layby opposite an on-street and for large gatherings the meeting arranges the use of the carpark at the Tregye campus of Truro College nearby. There is no secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access via a removable ramp, an accessible toilet, and a hearing loop. There are no specific facilities for partially-sighted people, other than large print books. No Disability Access Audit has been conducted.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for worship for 2 hours per week. The building is not available to community lettings as a condition of the repair and conservation grant stipulated that the building be open to visitors at all reasonable times (except when in use by Quakers).

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no recent heritage crime, general crime or other incidents. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the meeting might consider making contact if necessary.

3.8 Plans for change

There are currently no plans for change.

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 has most of the amenities it needs. Additional toilet provision might become an issue in the medium term. The meeting is well aware of the special interest of the meeting house and is keen to preserve it.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is currently not available for wider community use, apart from Quaker meetings and events.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Come-to-Good meeting house is one of the most famous meeting houses in England. Historically, the local meeting was waxed and waned, but numbers are now bolstered by summer visitors. Closure therefore seems highly unlikely. Should the meeting be laid down, a sympathetic new use would need to be found which retain the unaltered interior and furnishings which are part of the building's special interest.

Part 5: Category: 1

Part 6: List description

Name: THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1140860

Location: THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

District: Cornwall

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Kea

Grade: I

Date first listed: 30-May-1967

Date of most recent amendment: 12-Mar-1986

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 63420

Details

SW 84 SW KEA COME-TO-GOOD

2/134 The Friends Meeting House (formerly listed as "Come- to-Good Friend's Meeting 30.5.67 House")

I

Quaker meeting house. Circa 1710. Painted cob on stone rubble footings. Steep wheat reed thatched roof, half-hipped to left, west, and sweeping lower to right over later linhay. Originally plan of 1 rectangular room open to the roof. Galleried loft inserted in 1717. Linhay added circa mid C19, probably when window from east end was resited in original doorway position and new doorway cut in west end. Weather boarded lean-to porch added to west now demolished and replaced by thatch-roofed concrete structure in 1967. Symmetrical 3-window south front plus open-fronted linhay to right. Central shallow open porch now with 2-light window in original doorway position. Original leaded latticed windows within oak frames with oak mullions with ogee internal mouldings. Frames of 3-light windows in situ, left and right, and original frame of central window survives high up in east wall, now within linhay. Opening lights are hung on pin-tail hinges and all have wooden saddle bars holding

original lead comes and crown glass. Some intermediate bars set diagonally. Old wood shutters. Ovolo-moulded oak lintels with ogee tongue stops over doorway, porch and windows. (These lintels and the windows are of a slightly archaic design. Contemporary with the Meeting House is the remodelling of Penelewey Barton, in 1710, with up-to-date sashes, and where even the rear outshuts have wooden casements. It is quite possible that the lintels and windows are reused to save money). Buttresses to far left, and right of right-hand window are later. Further old leaded window of 2 lights but with rectangular panes 'is high up in west wall towards front.

Interior is almost intact with many original fittings. Exposed roof structure with pegged apices and lapped collars, which, together with loft gallery and fittings is of unpainted and unstained pine. Stair of 2 short flights is in north west corner replacing original 1717 stair which ran along north wall, rising to 2-panel door with wide stiles and rails, (also archaic and possibly renewed). Gallery front is supported on 2 pine posts, and floor structure of gallery is carried on planed pine beams with simple side mouldings. Ministers gallery at east end is complete, in the form of a wall settle approached by 2 wooden steps to either side. Shaped ends to settle and full width lectern in front. All this is flanked by wall settles at a lower level returning along north and south walls and with original arm-rests. Further built-in seat to south of doorway at west end. Some possibly original loose benches survive but fitted with later backs. These, and the later ones, together with all constructional features, are very simple, exemplifying the attitudes of the Quaker movement. Door to west is of plank construction, hinged also in the middle to fold back against west wall when open. Linhay is of very primitive construction of unhewn timber. A mounting block survives to the south east. The Meeting House was built: in 1710 using funds' raised from Quaker subscribers in 1707 and 1710. (Meeting House guide). Research by Mr Withers of Penelewey Barton shows that the farm including the land on which the meeting house stands, was owned by James Mayo, a Quaker, and was later leased to Vyvian, whose name with the date 1716 is scratched on one of the window panes at the farmhouse. In spite of the C20 porch on the west end, this little meeting house have been remarkably unaltered since the C19 and still retains much of its original character and fabric.

Further source: NONCONFORMIST CHAPELS, by Christopher Stell.

Listing NGR: SW8127840325