

Friends Meeting House, Cotherstone

Cotherstone, Barnard Castle, DL12 9PG

National Grid Reference: NZ 01604 19454



Statement of Significance

The meeting house was built in 1797; the attached burial ground was opened at the same time. There have been some minor alterations to both exterior and interior but the building is substantially intact and still preserves much of its original character. It is of high heritage significance.

Evidential value

The building still contains many elements of the original arrangements and overall the building is of high evidential value.

Historical value

A well-preserved example of a small late-eighteenth century rural meeting house with some nineteenth century alterations. The building is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The modest stone exterior of the building is attractive while the interior still preserves a great deal of its original Georgian character. The building as a whole is of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been in use for Quaker worship continuously since 1797, but its remote situation has deterred other community users. The building has medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Teesdale & Cleveland*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0013830*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Durham County Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Cotherstone*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1323052*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Cotherstone*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1796*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *17 May 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Susie Wood*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.2, pp.745-7
Collecot, Diana, *All Cheese and Quakers - Cotherstone Friends Meeting House*, 2015
Stell, Christopher, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting houses in the North of England*,
RCHM, 1994, pp.207
Durham County Council HER, ref. H36880
Local Meeting survey by Susie Wood, November 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In the eighteenth century Cotherstone was a farming community with a high proportion of Quakers: it was described as being 'all cheese and Quakers'. Meetings were held from the 1680s and there was a meeting house in the nearby village of Lartington from 1701, but in 1796 the Lartington meeting house and burial ground were sold and a site purchased in Cotherstone. A new meeting house was erected in 1797 within a burial ground. A small rectangular porch was added 1837 and the interior may have been re-fitted at the same time.

A single-storey cloakroom passage was built along the north and east sides in 1857. In 1987 the building was repaired and refurbished. The cloakroom was removed, a pitched roof was built onto the porch and a window opening in the west wall was built-up.

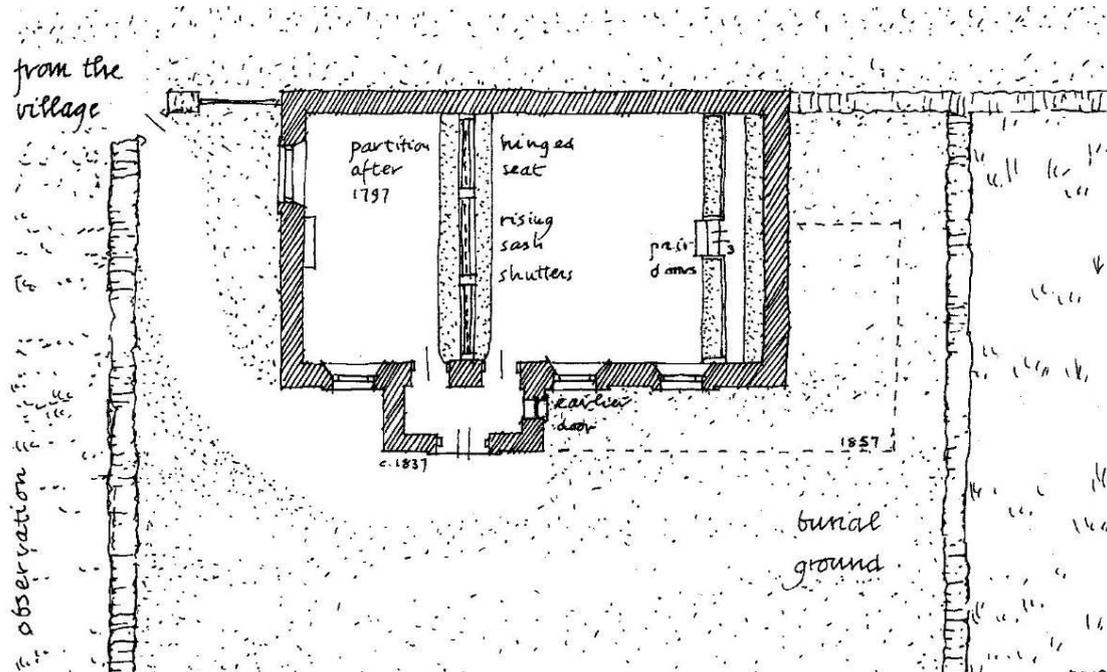


Fig.1 plan of the meeting house in 1987, *Butler 1999 vol.2 p.732*, (north is at the top). The plan shows a window opening in the west wall which is now built-up.



Fig.2 The meeting house before the 1980s refurbishment, showing the modern glazing, the lean-to cloakroom addition and the flat-roofed porch (Local meeting collection).

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is a very modest building, almost like a field barn. The 1797 building is rectangular on plan, with walls of rubble stone which is coursed and squared on the main south elevation and roughly coursed on the three other sides. The roof is covered in stone flags with coped gables and shaped kneelers. The main front has three round-headed window openings with modern timber sashes. Between the two left-hand windows is a small stone projecting porch, added in 1837, originally flat-topped but now gabled. The entrance has panelled double doors and a semi-circular head with a fanlight. The three other walls have no openings but against the east end is a small stone lean-to addition.

The porch shelters two doorways. The right hand door leads to the larger space which is the main meeting room and has a simple panelled stand across the full width of the east wall with a central entry. The west wall consists of a full height timber screen originally with rising sash shutters. The frame of the screen has the reed and roundel decoration typical of the early nineteenth century, which suggests that it may have been added in 1837 at the same time as the porch. The smaller western space, originally the women's meeting room, has been converted to provide a kitchen and toilet. The interior walls throughout are painted pink - an unusual choice for a meeting house.

2.3. Loose furnishings

There are several simple unpainted timber benches, probably modern. There are also two wood and iron chandeliers, which are said to be original to the building. If they date from the 1790s, or even from the 1830s, they are of considerable historic interest, and rare. There are also two ornamental brass flower vases by Omar Ramsden of Sheffield, which were given to the meeting.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The meeting house stands at the north end of a large rectangular burial ground enclosed by a dry stone wall. The burial ground is open for interment of ashes. There is a maintenance plan for the burial ground. Some of the headstones were re-erected in 2013/14. Within the burial ground is a large Austrian pine tree, which was strapped in 2015.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and its burial ground stand in open country at some distance from the village of Cotherstone and can be reached from the village centre by means of a (public) footpath across an open field. The meeting house can also be accessed if required by car down a side lane and across the open field via the bottom gate. There was a meeting house and burial ground in the nearby village of Lartington from c1700 to 1796. It is not known whether the burial ground is extant.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is properly listed at Grade II. The list description should be amended to take account of the 1987 alterations.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house occupies a remote site and it is unlikely that there are any below-ground remains other than those associated with the existing 1797 meeting house and burial ground. The site is of medium 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

3.2. Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection report was carried out in 2014 by a suitably-qualified person. The building was found to be generally in good condition; some minor electrical work has been attended to. The local meeting has enough money to pay for routine maintenance; external works are the responsibility of Area meeting. The meeting has a 5-year budget plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does use the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented several measures to reduce environmental impact. These include the installation of new electric heating, the use of eco paint and repairing of windows and the maintenance of a wild area in the burial ground. The building does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house, with a meeting room, a kitchen and toilet. There is no resident warden.

The meeting house is in a remote location some distance from the village, reached by a pedestrian footpath across a field. There is no public transport, no parking on site and no secure storage for bicycles.

3.5. Access

Once reached, the meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities with assistance (there is one step). The WC is not adapted for disabled people. There is a hearing loop but no aids for partially-sighted people. A Health, Safety and Welfare Audit was carried out in May 2015.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the building for 2 hours per week. The remote location of the building means that it is only occasionally used by the wider community.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been no general crime or heritage crime at the site. The locality is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and the matter has not been considered.

3.8. Plans for change

No changes to the building are planned.

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: there is little scope for significant change to the simple layout of the meeting house interior and fittings.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: As above, there is little scope for significant change.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: If the meeting were laid down, the remote situation and the Grade II designation would limit alternative uses.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: **SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) MEETING HOUSE**

List entry Number: 1323052

Location

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) MEETING HOUSE, DEMESNE LANE

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

County:

District: County Durham

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Cotherstone

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 17-Jun-1986

List entry Description

COTHERSTONE DEMESNE LANE NZ 0119 (South side, off) 30/43 Society of Friends (Quakers) Meeting House II Quaker Meeting House. 1796, porch added c.1837. Squared rubble and ashlar dressings. Stone-flagged roof and stone chimney stack. Single storey, 4 bays with low plinth and flush quoins. Projecting, flat-roofed porch, in second bay, with 3-panel double doors and radial fanlight in round-arched surround. Flanking replaced casements in similar surrounds. Roof with coped gables and shaped kneelers. Left end stack with top band and water table. Later lean-to addition to right return.

Plain interior. Stepped benches, with panelled front and central double gates, across right end of meeting room. Vertically-sliding panelled partition separates meeting room from left end room.

Listing NGR: NZ0160819454