

## ***Quaker Meeting House, Disley***

*Ring O' Bells Lane, Disley, Stockport, SK12 2AG*

*National Grid Reference: SJ 97535 84436*



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

***The meeting house has medium heritage significance as an early eighteenth century stone-built dwelling, which was converted to a meeting house in the late 1930s with a first-floor meeting room, and a kitchen and other facilities on the ground floor.***

### ***Evidential value***

***The building and site have medium evidential values primarily associated with the potential to yield information about the building's past use and construction.***

### **Historical value**

***The building is of high historical value which is derived from previous uses, first as a dwelling dating from the 1740s, a public house and since the 1930s as a meeting house. There is documentation relating to former occupiers of the building from the mid-nineteenth century. Its use as a meeting house also has historical value.***

### **Aesthetic value**

***The traditional vernacular architecture of the meeting house and its attractive surrounding landscape provide a positive contribution to the semi-rural character of Disley. Overall, the meeting house and the building's setting have high aesthetic value.***

### **Communal value**

***The building has been in communal use from the eighteenth century as a public house, then a venue for local groups before the Quakers purchased the property in the early twentieth century. Today the building is used as both a place of worship and a meeting place for local community groups. The meeting house has high communal value.***

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

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *East Cheshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015730*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Cheshire East Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Disley*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1231682*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Disley*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1740*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *28<sup>th</sup> April 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Judy Harman and Morwenna Brooke*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Blockley, L., *Cash drive for the Ring O' Bells* - The reporter, 1991. Newspaper article.

Butler, D., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.47.

Stewart, M., *Meeting Point Disley*, 1987, pp. 186 – 188.

Morwenna Brooke, *Local Meeting Survey*, March 2015

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

### 2.1. Historical background

Friends began to use the Ring O' Bells for worship from 1933, prior to this the property had a number of previous uses. The building was built in 1740, allegedly by the Leghs of the nearby Lyme Hall. It is said that it was built to lodge the journeymen, bell-ringers and craftsmen who had connections with the nearby St Mary's parish church. For a number of years the building was better known as the Ring O' Bells Inn, but in the mid-nineteenth century it ceased use as a public house. Due to the number of hostelries in the area Lady Newton decided to use the premises for a meeting place for local groups in the village, one being a mothers' group.

By the early twentieth century Friends in the area were meeting in a café in Whaley Bridge. In 1933, permission was obtained to use the Ring O' Bells for worship. The Friends agreed to pay a small amount for the services of the caretaker and by 1940 Friends purchased the property for £280 from the Lyme estate. J.W Beaumont and Sons, architects of Manchester were appointed in July 1939 to draw up plans to re-configure the building for the Quakers.



Figure 1: Works undertaken at the meeting house in the 1990s (Disley Meeting House archive).

Building alterations to accommodate changing uses over the years caused major problems; after an inspection of the building Friends found that the main structural timbers had been cut resulting in serious defects. In 1988, Friends' first task was to repair the Warden's cottage which at the time had woodworm and dry rot. Work commenced in 1991 (Fig.1) to ensure the meeting house was structurally safe, oak beams were reinforced by steel plates supported by stone or concrete foundations. Features in the building including partition walls, cupboards, ceilings and lintels had to be removed due to dry rot. The existing interior and exterior toilets were replaced with two internal toilets, new heating, and kitchen facilities were installed. In

the meeting room on the first floor, two stone buttresses were rebuilt to ensure sufficient support to the roof. The works were completed by 1994/95 at a cost of £45,000 which was raised by the Friends.

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

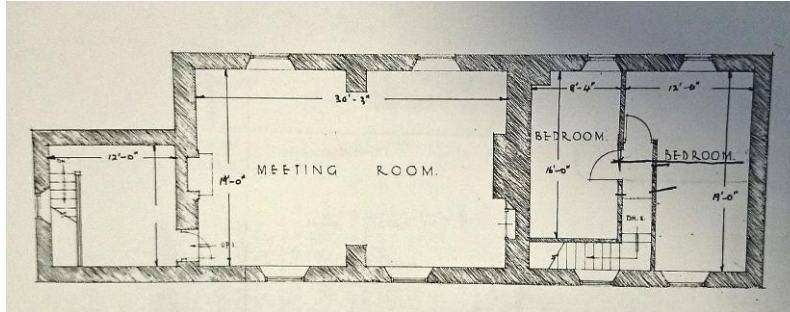


Figure 2: First floor plan of the meeting house as adapted by J.W. Beaumont and Sons 1939 (north is to the right; not to scale) (Disley Meeting House archive).

The former domestic building and public house has been a Quaker Meeting House and warden's cottage since 1933. It was reputedly built by the Legh family of Lyme Hall. It is built of coursed squared, buff sandstone rubble with a Kerridge stone slate roof and three stone chimneys. The two storey linear single-pile building is in two parts: the meeting house to the south and wardens cottage to the north (Fig.2), with the cottage under a lower roof.

The east front elevation of the meeting house (to the left, ground floor) has an 8-pane horizontal sliding sash window, entrance doorway, a 14-pane horizontal window with stone head, and to the first floor a 8-pane window and two horizontal sliding sashes of 8-panes. A stone porch with a hipped Welsh slate roof is at the north end of the meeting house frontage. There are three circular iron pattress plates on the front wall. The east elevation of the cottage has a blocked 2-light chamfered mullion window and a 6-pane horizontal sliding sash at ground level and a 12-pane vertical window and 8-pane horizontal sash window at first floor level.

The south gable end has an 8-pane horizontal sash window at first floor and two small uPVC windows at ground floor level. On the north elevation is a sign for the former Ring O' Bells public house, a 6-pane horizontal window at first floor and 12-pane window at ground floor. The west rear elevation has an extension with cat slide roof to the right which probably dates from the eighteenth century; the meeting house has two 12-pane horizontal sash windows at ground floor with two 8-pane horizontal sash windows at first floor.

The interior of the meeting house can be accessed via the porch or the doorway on the east elevation. The large meeting room is on the first floor. The ground floor is open plan but divided into three distinct areas; the stairway and WC facilities to the south end, small meeting room and kitchen (with access into the warden's cottage). The kitchen is roughly rectangular in plan with a modern tiled floor and kitchen units, the ceiling is exposed with two oak beams and joists which have been infilled with plaster. The north wall of the kitchen has a former stone fireplace. The small meeting room has a carpeted floor, ceiling similar to the kitchen with oak beams and joists, fire place to the south wall, window seat on the east wall and a doorway which leads into a small area which accommodates the WC facilities and stairway to the first floor.

At first floor level there is a small landing area and the entrance to the large meeting room is down one small step. The 2-bay meeting room is rectangular in shape with plain plastered walls, and ceiling, carpeted floors, modern dado rail and skirting board. There are two fireplaces one on the north and south walls, the south has a cast iron basket grate. Benches

are located along the walls whilst loose stacked chairs are stored at the north end of the meeting room.

### 2.3. Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note.

### 2.4. Attached burial ground

Not applicable.

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

The meeting house is located in north-east Cheshire in the parish of Disley. Disley is a dormitory village with a semi-rural character, south of Stockport. Ring O'Bells Lane runs off the busy Buxton Old Road with the White Horse Hotel and 12, 14 and 16 Buxton Old Road located at the entrance of the lane, which are all grade II listed buildings dating from the late eighteenth century. The lane itself is narrow and steep leading up to the meeting house.

The grounds of the meeting house are enclosed by a drystone boundary wall and provides an attractive enclosed green space which complements the semi-rural character of the area. The sloping grounds to the east are well planted with trees and shrubs which add to the amenity of the area. To the west of the meeting house is a small stream and mature woodland species. The key views of the meeting house are from the sloping grounds to the east.

### 2.6. Listed status

The Friends meeting house and Warden's cottage are appropriately listed as grade II.

### 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The cottages that became the Ring O' Bells Inn were most probably built by the Leghs of Lyme Hall in c1740 and it is not known if there were other earlier buildings on site. Overall, the site is considered to have medium archaeological value.

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

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent quinquennial inspection (undertaken in 2013 by Mellor Braggins) found the building to have been adequately maintained to a good standard for its age and type. Since the last inspection regular servicing of gas, electric, fire equipment and gutter maintenance.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *not applicable*

### 3.2. Maintenance

The meeting house does not have a five-year maintenance and repair plan. Members regularly monitor the meeting house, Warden's cottage and outbuildings along with undertaking the recommendations stated in the quinquennial survey. The Friends have the necessary funds to undertake repairs and maintenance when needed.

### 3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit, and the following steps have been taken to improve sustainability:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: energy efficient light bulbs, foil behind radiators, a new Glowworm Combi-condensing boiler has been installed (wardens monitor the heat and light usage). Consideration is given for new items to help improve energy efficiency in the future including radiator thermostats, light sensors etc.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Some items of kitchen waste and garden waste are composted whilst the rest is recycled using the local authority scheme.
- Building maintenance and refurbishment: Double and secondary glazing has been installed where possible, draught proofing and chimney capped. Friends undertake annual inspections and quinquennial surveys are commissioned. Repairs are undertaken as required.
- Wildlife, ecology and conservation: the grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats. Vegetables and fruit trees are planted.
- Transport: Friends car-share where possible.

#### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. These include a kitchen area, WCs (including one fully accessible), a small meeting room downstairs, main meeting room and a Warden's cottage.

#### 3.5. Access

A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken. However, an informal survey was undertaken by a wheelchair user in 2011. There is level access on the ground floor and a stair lift has been installed to provide access to the first floor. A fully accessible WC is available which in recent years has had the mirror lowered. Externally, there is a metal handrail leading to the entrance of the meeting house.

Adjacent to the meeting house is a warden's cottage for the resident warden.

A limited bus and train service is available. There is on-site car parking for nine or ten cars with further parking available at the Community Centre or Station at the bottom of Ring O' Bells Lane.

#### 3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 5 hours and in community use for 13 (plus an additional 8 hours every fortnight) hours each week. The meeting house can be let Monday to Saturday and also Sunday evenings if required. The Meeting does have a lettings policy; no smoking, alcoholic drinking or gambling is permitted. The Friends welcome bookings from non-political parties, however they reserve the right to refuse requests from organisations that are not acceptable to the Friends. Due to the age of the building numbers are limited to 60 people upstairs and no rhythmic movement is possible in the upstairs room. The meeting house is used for meetings, weddings, celebrations, yoga, meditation and lectures. There is no charge for Quaker-related events. The meeting house is a popular venue to hire due to its pleasant and peaceful location and well-priced facilities.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The grounds of the meeting house have occasionally been subject to anti-social behaviour from children who trespass in the garden and leave litter. Wardens currently monitor this and have developed a liaison with the local neighbourhood policing team.

### 3.8. Plans for change

No future plans for change.

## **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 few furnishings of note. The main heritage constraints relate to the statutory listing and 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.

*ii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* The meeting house could be converted into a dwelling (subject to planning permission).

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

## **Part 6: List descriptions**

Name: **No name for this Entry**

List entry Number: 1231682

Location

8 AND 10, RING O'BELLS LANE

CountyDistrict	District Type	Parish
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Cheshire East	Unitary Authority	Disley
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National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 31-Mar-1976

Details

SJ 97 84 DISLEY C.P. RING O'BELLS LANE (West Side)

7/50 Nos. 8 and 10

31/3/1976 II

Formerly 2 houses, then Ring O' Bells public house, since 1940 Quaker Meeting House and cottage: Originally C.1700 with alterations from late C18 onwards. Coursed, squared, buff

sandstone rubble with Kerridge stone-slate roof and 3 stone chimneys. Long rectangular plan 2-storey, irregular 7-bay front with one blocked 2-light chamfered mullion, and horizontal sliding sashes of 8, 18 and 32 panes in plain reveals. Door towards centre with hipped C20 rubble stone porch with Welsh slate roof. Blocked door towards right with shallow hood mould. Mixture of 2 and 3-light horizontal sliding sashes and one partly-blocked 3-light mullion to rear. Interior: As late C19 beer house with a long open gallery above. One early C19 iron basket grate in partly blocked large, earlier, surround.