

Quaker Meeting House, Dorchester

8 Holloway Road, Fordington, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1LF

National Grid Reference: SY 69796 90675



Statement of Significance

A meeting house adapted in 1978 from a public house built in 1925. The exterior is largely unchanged but the interior has seen some alteration. The building is of medium heritage significance overall.

Evidential value

The building was previously a pub, occupying the site of an earlier pub and is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

The site was apparently occupied by a pub for many years before the erection of the present pub building in 1925 and this past use gives the site at least medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a pleasing and typical example of inter-war public house architecture and is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by Quakers since 1978 and also by other local groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Dorset & South Wiltshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000050*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *West Dorset District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Dorchester*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Dorchester*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1925, refurbished 1978, rear addition 2009*

1.13 Architect(s): *Original architect not established, 1978 refurbishment by R. A. Campbell, rear addition by A. P. Stainer*

1.14 Date of visit: *11 July 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Margaret Barker*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Two garages opposite the meeting house*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Attfield, Jim, *The Early History of Quakers in South Dorset: the story of the Weymouth and Dorchester meetings from 1656-1760*, 2000

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1, p.148
Local Meeting survey by Linda Wood, March 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

A cottage and garden was bought in 1712 on the north side of Pease Lane for a meeting house and burial ground. The meeting had effectively closed by the mid-1740s. The property was leased to tenants in 1764 and sold in 1840. The building had been demolished by 1920. A new meeting began in 1941 and in 1978 the former Union Arms public house in Holloway Road, Fordington, a building of the mid-1920s, was purchased from the Eldridge Pope Brewery company and adapted to serve as a meeting house with a flat for a warden. A small addition was made at the rear of the building in 2009. The property also includes a section of the steeply-sloping bank down to the river Frome across the road from the meeting house.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The former public house is in a simple neo-vernacular style. The walls are faced with render, above a red brick plinth laid in Flemish bond, and the roof is covered with plain tiles. The building lies parallel to the street with a tall pitched roof overall. The main street front is of one and a half storeys. The ground floor openings are arranged symmetrically, with two door openings, with moderne surrounds typical of the 1920s, each flanked by three-light timber mullion and transom windows. In the centre of the front is a tall cross-gable rising to the height of the main roof, with a six-light casement window to the upper floor. The gable is flanked by flat-topped dormers with three light windows. The exposed east end wall has a single door at the rear with a small two-light casement over. Across most of the rear elevation is a modern single-storey flat-roofed extension. The rear roof slope has a central flat-topped dormer with a four light window. The full-width of the slope above the dormer is now covered with solar panels. The interior has been thoroughly modernised and no trace of the previous use is evident. The meeting room is a simple space with a modern wood-block floor, plain plastered walls and a flat ceiling.

The ground behind the meeting house is bounded by a tall brick-faced embankment to the adjoining property. To the east the rising ground is laid out as small garden platforms. Across the road in front of the meeting house is a steep grassed bank sloping down to the River Frome. This is part of the meeting house property and Friends are responsible for the upkeep of the river bank.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The only item of heritage interest is a single open-backed timber bench (pictured bottom left above), apparently from the Meeting House at Leighton Buzzard (*qv*) in Hertfordshire, where similar benches can still be found. They probably all date from c1813 when the Leighton Buzzard meeting house was enlarged.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

None

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Holloway Road is an old thoroughfare on high ground immediately south of the River Frome, in the Dorchester inner suburb of Fordington. The street has a mixture of modest nineteenth and twentieth-century houses and old industrial buildings now converted to residential use.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not a candidate for either the statutory or the local list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The present building was erected in 1925 on the site of an earlier pub of the same name. The site has 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): N/A

3.2 Maintenance

The meeting does not have a Quinquennial inspection regime. A full condition survey was made in 2009 when the most recent alterations were made and any defects rectified. The premises committee makes an annual inspection to identify obvious defects, but the committee does not include any building professionals. A riverbank survey was completed in 2014. There is no formal 5-year maintenance plan but a rolling 5-year refurbishment plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. They include,

- 26 solar panels on the rear roof slope
- additional insulation in roof
- double glazing throughout
- thermostatic radiator valves
- only heating rooms in use
- Good Energy electric and gas supplier
- recycling wherever possible
- low energy lightbulbs throughout
- sustainable cultivation of garden

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house - including a kitchen, toilets and main meeting room, children's room and library. There is a resident warden who occupies a flat on the first floor.

The meeting house is fairly close to the town centre and some friends walk or cycle to meetings. Bus transport from outlying villages is very limited on Sundays and getting worse but there are car-share arrangements. There is limited on-site parking for 6 cars. There is no dedicated secure parking for bicycles, but they can be brought into the back yard via a locked gate.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is fully accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building. There is an accessible WC, a hearing loop in the main meeting room and clear signs in the steep rear garden for partially-sighted people. There has been no Disability Access Audit but ongoing advice is provided by a physiotherapist member of the meeting and provision is under constant review.

3.6 Community Use

The building is used by Friends for about 5 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 120 hours per week (5 days x 12 hrs x 2 rooms) and is let for an average of 28 hours per week (less out of school term time). The meeting has a lettings policy. No alcohol or gambling or loud music is allowed. Only Quaker groups are permitted free use of the rooms. A reduced rate is theoretically available and at the discretion of the local business meeting but in practice the local meeting prefers to offer low rates to all users. Users value the pleasant room, the peaceful atmosphere, the flexibility of booking, the garden and the central location.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There has been some minor pilfering of objects from inside the meeting house but no anti-social behaviour and no heritage crime. The pilfering was not reported to the police. 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 but the matter would be considered if there are more serious thefts.

3.8 Plans for change

No changes are currently proposed to the building.

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 all the facilities it currently needs. There is probably some scope for change, if required subject to Planning and Conservation Area constraints.
- ii) *For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* the meeting house is already used by community groups. There is probably some scope for related change, if required.
- iii) *Being laid down as a Meeting House:* the building could doubtless serve a wholly secular use if laid down.

Part 5: Category: 3