

## ***Friends Meeting House, Dundee***

*7 Whitehall Crescent, Dundee, DD1 4AR*

*National Grid Reference: NO 40345 30124*



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

***Dundee Meeting House has high heritage significance as a relatively rare example of a Victorian Quaker meeting house in Scotland. It is one of only two purpose-built meeting house buildings still in use by Friends in Scotland. It contributes to the street scene and retains some original internal fittings and features.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***The site may have some archaeological potential, but as a single phase building the meeting house's evidential value is fairly low.***

#### ***Historical value***

***The meeting house has high historical value as the first premises in Dundee purpose-built for the Quakers, on a site that was part of a newly planned street laid out by William Mackison.***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***The building has high architectural value as a purpose-built city centre Quaker building designed by Stark and Rowntree. It contributes to the character of the street scene and the conservation area. The original ground floor meeting room has been remodelled for an estate agents; this altered area has medium aesthetic value.***

### ***Communal value***

***The meeting house has high communal value as a place of Quaker worship since c.1893 and as a building used by the wider community.***

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

1.1 Area Meeting: *East Scotland*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0007290*

1.3 Owner: *Dundee Friends Property Trust*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Dundee City Council*

1.5 Historic Environment Scotland: *Perthshire, Kinross and Angus*

1.6 Civil parish: *Dundee*

1.7 Listed status: *Category B*

1.8 Reference: *LB25637*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Central*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1891; 1989*

1.13 Architect: *Malcolm Stark and Rowntree of Glasgow; Ritchie Dagen of Dundee*

1.14 Date of visit: *28 June 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Bill Edgar*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *None*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 874-875.

Peter Robson, *Fred Rowntree, Architect* (Newby Books, 2014), p26

*A History of Quaker Meetings in Dundee*, nd.

George Braithwaite, *Dundee Friends' Meeting House – a short history*, nd.

Volunteer survey completed by Marion Sharkey

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

### **2.1. Historical background**

Quakers were known in Dundee from 1802, and in the 1820s and 1830s, Friends met at the home of Mr Smith in Bucklemaker Wynd, or the Hilltown. A meeting was settled in Dundee in c1870, after earlier attempts in the early nineteenth century, on the initiative of Mrs Janet McPherson Allan, a former Methodist. Meetings were held at her husband's house in Crichton Street, in 1879 at 50 Barrack Street, and from c1887 until 1893 at the YMCA. In 1891 local Friends (mainly the Allans and Braithwaites) bought a site on Whitehall Crescent close to the Tay water front; this was initially intended for a single storey building but due to the City Improvement Act, the overall form and design of the building was already laid down. A five-storey building was built to fit in with the street plan, with space for lettable rooms on the first, third and attic floors and a laundry in the basement. The meeting room was on the ground floor behind a shop front, with a cast-iron gallery. A Friends' institute was provided on other floors with an Adult School room, library and reading room. The new building cost £3810 and opened in 1893. In the early twentieth century, Friends were in debt and vacated most of the building which had by then become dilapidated, and the building was used for other purposes including a temperance hotel and travel agents. Meanwhile, Friends met at 11 Nethergate until 1925 when they returned to use rooms on the upper floors. From the 1940s, the front room on the first floor was remodelled as a meeting room, and a 'raisable wooden partition' was removed.

In the 1980s, the ground and basement floors were leased to the Tayside Solicitors Property Centre and the former meeting room was remodelled in 1989 by architect Joe Dagen of Ritchie and Dagen of Dundee, with extensive restoration to the exterior. The third floor was refurbished for residential use in 2000. Friends resumed meetings on the first floor of the building after it was refurbished, but are currently renting a room for worship in another building nearby.

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

The meeting house was built in 1891, designed by architect Malcom Stark of Malcolm Stark and Rowntree of Glasgow. It is built of local sandstone ashlar, with a slate and zinc roof. The frontage facing south-east is 4 storeys plus attic and basement, and three bays wide, in Renaissance style. The ground floor is framed by rusticated pilasters, with the entrance to the upper floors to the right via a recessed doorway with modern glazed doors and a semi-circular fanlight. To the centre is a shop front with curved glass on a polished granite plinth with two cast-iron classical columns to the stone fascia which has MEETING HOUSE in raised lettering. The entrance to the ground floor commercial premises is to the left. The upper floors are articulated by string courses and flanking pilasters, with alternate segmental and triangular pediments to the first floor windows, plainer architraves above. All the upper floor front windows are plate-glass sashes. The parapet has panels of balustrading flanking a pair of central chimney stacks, with round-headed dormers to the mansard and row of multiple stacks above the west party wall. The rear elevation is plainer and overlooks an area.

The interior has a full-height staircase from ground floor to attic to the east, with cast-iron balustrade, pine handrail and post-war terrazzo tiles. A side section of stair leads to a mezzanine room (former women's room) and the former gallery over the meeting room, with an integral 'gate' in the balustrade (Fig.2). Within the upper part of the ground floor, classical plaster cornices and columns relate to the former meeting room, remodelled for commercial use in 1989. The cast-iron balustrading to the former gallery was re-set as part of internal work in 2001 (Fig.1). On the first floor is a large lobby leading to a meeting room to the front and ancillary rooms to the rear, with panelled doors in moulded architraves. The front room has a moulded plaster cornice, ceiling roses and windows with shutters. Front

windows have secondary glazing and floors are laid with linoleum or vinyl. Upper floors are plainer; there is a flat on the attic level.



Fig.1: gallery balustrading re-set c.2000



Fig.2: original gate in stairs to former gallery

### 2.3. Loose furnishings

There are no historic furnishings in the building.

### 2.4. Attached burial ground

N/A

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



*Fig.3: the meeting house is part of a planned late Victorian crescent*

Whitehall Street lies on the south side of the city centre, close to the Tay waterfront. The street is in the form of a shallow crescent, lined with four to five storey tenements over shop fronts, of similar but varying classical design. The Malmaison Hotel occupies part of the block to the south side of the street, with a mixture of commercial, leisure and retail

businesses on other ground floors. The Church of Scotland occupies one of the buildings on the opposite side of the road from the Meeting House building. There is some modern infill, including a block adjacent to the meeting house (see Fig.3). This area is undergoing regeneration related to the waterfront, with a new Victoria and Albert Museum under construction.

## 2.6. Listed status

The building is listed Grade B (see Part 6), but the description would benefit from revision to include the interior.

## 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

There were previously buildings on the site, but the 1891 building was built with a basement, reducing the archaeological potential of the site.

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

*See completed volunteer survey by Marion Sharkey*

### 3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The whole building has recently been thoroughly repaired with a new zinc roof covering, stonework repairs, man-safe installation on the roof and overhauled windows. The work was 50% funded by a grant from Dundee Historic Buildings Trust. Some minor basement issues are still to be addressed.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *N/A*

### 3.2. Maintenance

The building is well-managed; it is annually inspected by a factor and there is a maintenance plan, funded by income from lettings. The ground floor commercial space is let on a repairing lease and provides an income of £24,000 per year.

### 3.3. Sustainability

The meeting has undertaken some improvements to reduce energy use, installing additional insulation. There is some secondary glazing to windows. EPCs have been completed for the two flats on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors.

### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting has fairly good facilities on the first and second floors, but a major issue is the lack of a lift to upper floors; this has resulted in meetings for worship being held in a rented room at 30 Whitehall Street. There is a kitchen and WCs. The children's room is on the second floor and rooms for letting on the mezzanine, first and second floors. The two flats on the top floor are let; the top floor was previously occupied by a caretaker.

### 3.5. Access

Access for people with disabilities, for some older people and parents with small children is poor with no lift and a long flight of stairs. An access audit recommended providing additional handrails on the staircase, and highlighting the edges of the treads. There is a hearing loop.

### 3.6 Community Use

The building is no longer used for worship, but some Quaker meetings for other activities are held here. The average total hours per week that rooms could be let is about 380 hours, and space is let for a total of around 20 hours per week for community use. The meeting has a lettings policy and pays for an administrator to manage lettings. Political groups are excluded, and Friends and groups in sympathy with Quaker beliefs may use rooms for free. The location, price, size and variety of rooms makes it popular. It costs about £15000 per year to run the building, but income is substantially higher.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There have been no recent incidents, but there has been a break-in from the rear via adjacent properties; the police were involved. This part of the city centre is generally well cared for, but there is some deprivation in Dundee. Friends have not developed liaison with local police.

### 3.8. Plans for change

The meeting is considering the future of the building, as the lack of a lift and practical difficulty of installing one is a major obstacle to viable use by Friends. Due to the ageing membership, the meeting is considering renting another room for meetings on a trial, and may let out the existing building. Options may include social housing, for supported living or refugees.

## **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 lack of easy access to upper floors constrains the future use of the listed building; the layout and listing of the building means that a lift would be difficult to install. The frontage and some parts of the interior are important elements of the listed building and could not be changed without consent.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The points in the above paragraph also apply to community use.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* the meeting is currently considering whether to continue using the building, and in the event of its being let out or sold, any remodelling will need to take account of the Grade B Listing and be carefully designed.

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

## **Part 6: List description**

### **Summary**

7 and 9 Whitehall Street  
LB25637

### **Information**

- Category: B
- Date Added: 04/02/1965

## **Location**

- Local Authority: Dundee
- Planning Authority: Dundee
- Burgh: Dundee

## **National Grid Reference**

- NGRNO 40345 30124
- Coordinates 340345, 730124

## **Description**

Malcolm Stark and Rowntree (Glasgow), 1891. 4-storey and attic, 3-bay, tenemental and commercial building with shopfront (former Quaker Meeting House) to ground floor. Sandstone ashlar, grey slate Mansard roof. Corniced ground floor, cill course and lintel band to 1st and 2nd floor, corbelled main cornice over 2nd floor, corniced wallhead course, balustraded parapet from which rises linked corniced stack flanking shoulder-headed window; banded pilaster with paired consoles to ground floor right, 2-storey pilaster above, further pilaster to 3rd floor; architraved windows with triangular and segmental pediments to 1st floor, consoled lintels to 2nd, 2-pane timber sash and case glazing, round-headed dormers; ashlar-coped skew and corniced ridge stack to right.

FRONT ELEVATION: close entry to right with keystone round-headed fanlight, modern shopfront to left incorporating original cast-iron columns and 'MEETING HOUSE' at fascia board, 3 windows to each upper floor, parapet stack flanked by dormers.

INTERIOR: not seen.

## **Statement of Special Interest**

Whitehall Street and Crescent was laid out following the City Improvement Act to the overall design of William Mackison (with James Hutton and James Thomson, draughtsmen), following the development of Commercial Street in 1871. Various architects produced different designs but followed Mackison's floor levels and mix of Renaissance details. Robert Keith designed the first of the Whitehall buildings at 5 and 7 Whitehall Street (Whitehall Palace Buildings), dated 1884, for William Kidd, publisher. In 1989 the original elements of the shopfront of 7 and 9 Whitehall Crescent were revealed from an earlier modernisation.

## **References**

### **Bibliography**

William Kidd, THE DUNDEE MARKET CROSSES (1901), pp27-29; McKean and Walker (1993), pp63-64; Dundee ADPs, book 25, pp246-9.