

Friends Meeting House, East Garston

Back Street, East Garston, Hungerford, Berkshire, RG17 7EX

National Grid Reference: SU 36395 76800



Statement of Significance

The meeting house was built in 1979 to replace an earlier building constructed using war-time packing cases. It has low heritage significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house is a relatively recent building. It has low evidential value.

Historical value

As a building of 1979 it has low historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a small functional building in a vernacular idiom. It has low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a Quaker place of worship which is also used by the local community.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Thames*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0013140*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *West Berkshire Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *East Garston*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *East Garston*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1979*

1.13 Architect(s): *John Bangma*

1.14 Date of visit: *22 September 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Phoebe and Robert Fennel*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *2 cottages (Yew Tree and Little Yew Tree) owned by the Area Meeting*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 9-10

Milligan, E.H. 'News from darkest Berkshire', *The Friend*, 21 July 1978, pp. 889-890

Milligan, E.H., 'Esgar's children', *The Friend*, 23 May 1986, p. 664

Photo album, historical accounts and plan in local meeting archive

Local Meeting survey by Phoebe and Robert Fennel, September 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

In 1710, it was reported that a meeting house had been founded in East Garston. Nothing further is known about this early meeting and its location. The meeting was re-established in 1939. From 1958 or 1959 it met in a temporary building constructed out of war-time packing cases. By 1978, this was deteriorating and demolished. It was replaced by a new meeting house designed by John Bangma, a local Friend. The new meeting house opened in 1979 and the total cost was £13,000. The site (part of the garden of the house known as Yew Tree) was donated by Cecil Barker. In 1986, a detached timber classroom was added (cost: £12,000).

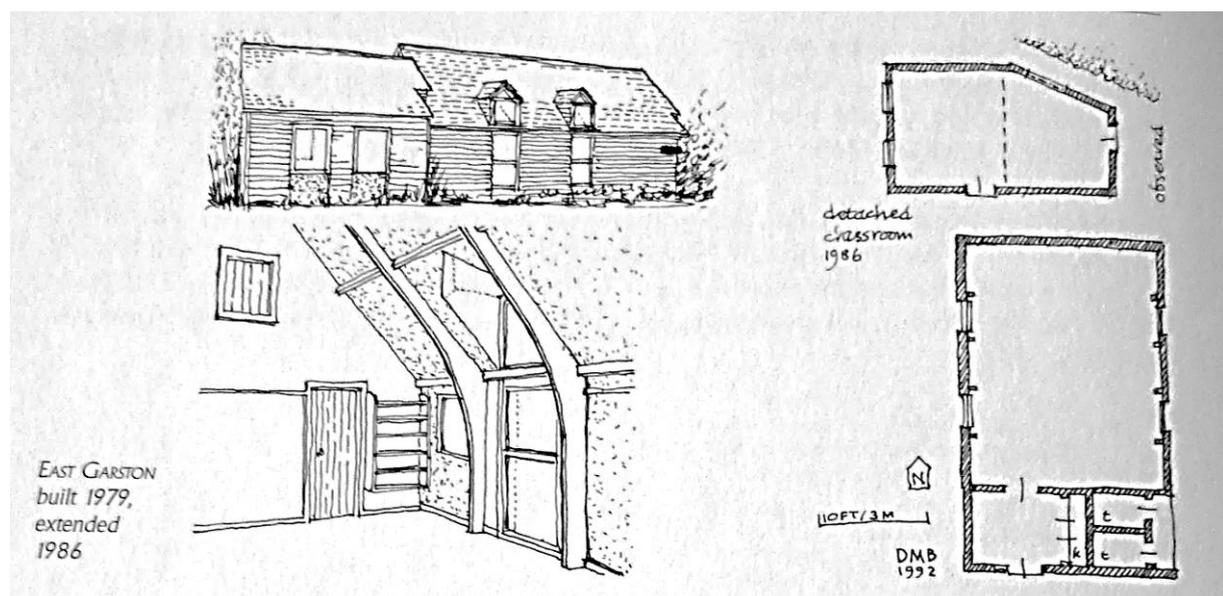


Figure 1: Perspective, detail and plan (north is to the right; not to scale)
(Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 10)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The street elevation faces roughly south. The plan of the meeting house is oblong with a lobby, kitchenette and toilets (accessed from outside) at the east and the meeting room at the west. The building is weatherboarded with a pantiled roof. The pitched roof has an overhang over the entrance at the east. Each long side has a tall window and a French door with dormers above. The meeting room is divided into five bays by four pairs of cruck frames of laminated timber. The floor is of cork.

The detached children's room was built in matching materials on a brick base. Photographs of its construction show that it was built using concrete blocks and brick. It has two windows to the south and one small window in the west gable.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room has a mixture of chairs, from new upholstered ones to older ladder-back chairs. The children's room has four historic open-backed benches whose provenance is unknown.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in the centre of the village, opposite the village hall. The building is set back from the road behind a garden. The detached children's room is just to the west. The meeting house shares a drive with two cottages to the rear (Yew Tree and Little Yew Tree), both owned by the Area Meeting. The meeting house is located in a conservation area, while the children's room is just outside its boundary.

By 1682, there was a detached Quaker burial ground at Lambourn Woodlands (still in use by 1738). Its exact location is unknown. However, this is no longer in Quaker ownership.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The previous meeting house on the site was built from wartime packing cases and it is unlikely that it left any below-ground archaeological evidence. The site has low 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): Not applicable

3.2 Maintenance

The most recent quinquennial inspection report by Edge Architecture dates from November 2009. All the recommended works have been carried out since. The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: double-glazed windows
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: recycling of garden waste and kitchen waste
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: regular maintenance
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: garden maintained with nature conservation in mind
- Transport: car share and cycling where possible

The meeting has an Energy Performance Certificate for the meeting house.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden.

The meeting is not accessible by public transport. There is limited parking on site. There is secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building. There is no accessible toilet, no hearing loop and no facilities for partially-sighted people. No Disability Access Audit has been conducted.

3.6 Community use

Friends use the meeting house for 2 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 40 hours per week. It is used for an average of 3 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Drinking and gambling are not permitted. Quaker groups may use the building for free. Users value the pretty garden and rooms, the peaceful atmosphere, good location and fair price.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no 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 changes 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 currently has all the required facilities. It could be extended or altered if required.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house has all the amenities required by its community users. Should this change, the building could be extended or altered.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should the meeting cease to be used by the meeting, it could continue in community use. Alternatively, the site may be redeveloped (subject to planning and conservation area consent).

Part 5: Category: 4