

Friends Meeting House, Eastbourne

17 Wish Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 4NX

National Grid Reference: TV 61197 98688



Statement of Significance

In the 1930s, a complex of garages and a Victorian cottage were converted for use as a meeting house. They were partially rebuilt to a new design after war damage. The buildings have low heritage value.

Evidential value

While the building retains some Victorian fabric, it has been largely altered and rebuilt. It has low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house has a complicated history and was partly destroyed during the Second World War. It has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a plain building whose few decorative features were destroyed during the war and subsequent rebuilding. It has low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has been in use as a meeting house since 1939. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Sussex East*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0033380*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Eastbourne Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Eastbourne NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *late 19th century, 1938-9, 1951-2*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *original architect: not established, conversion and rebuilding: H. Hubbard Ford*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *19 August 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Geoffrey Johnson*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 603
Lewes Monthly Meeting, 'Particulars of Trust Properties', 1978, typescript
The Eastbourne Herald, 8 April 1939
The Friend, 28 April 1939, p. 343
The Wayfarer, October 1939, pp. 225-7
Local Meeting Archive, original drawings of the 1930s and 1950s and minute book
Local Meeting survey by Geoffrey Johnson, July 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Meetings for Worship were held in Eastbourne since 1910. The current site was acquired in July 1938 by the Quakers. It was then occupied by a house and two garages ('UNO Garage') in a former stable building, all grouped around a courtyard (Figure 1). According to map evidence, the buildings dated from between the 1870s and 1899. The architect H. Hubbard Ford and the builders Mark Martin & Son converted one garage into a meeting room and the

other into a children's classroom and kitchen (Figures 2, 3). The meeting house opened in 1939. The house was let.

During the Second World War and particularly during April 1943, the meeting house and the cottage sustained severe bomb damage. In 1951-2, the meeting house and cottage were partially rebuilt by the architect H. Hubbard Ford (builders: G. Gower & Sons). The entire west front was rebuilt as a two-storey flat-roofed block which included a first-floor flat (Figure 4). The eastern part of the meeting room, the courtyard and the children's room remained largely unaltered.



Figure 1: The garage and house in Wish Road in 1938 (Local Meeting archive, minute book)

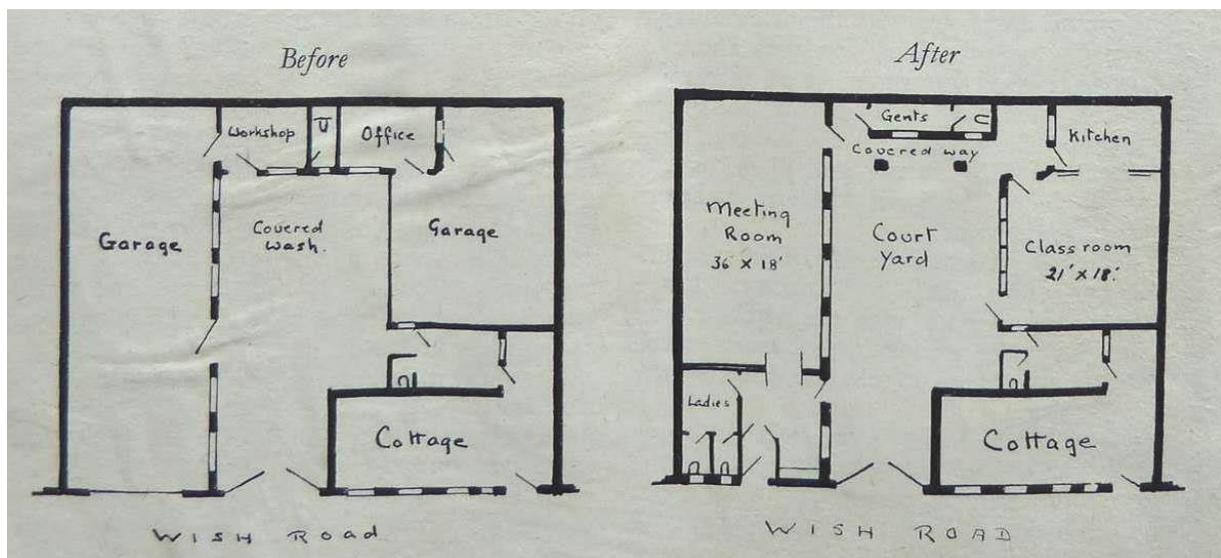


Figure 2: Sketch plans of the buildings before and after the conversion of 1938-9 (north is to the left; not to scale) (*The Wayfarer*, October 1939, p. 225)



Figure 3: The west elevation of the meeting house in 1939
(Local Meeting archive, minute book)



Figure 4: The new west elevation in November 1952
(Local Meeting archive, minute book)

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building faces west. The plan is of four ranges around a central courtyard. The west front is a two-storey flat-roofed block of 1951-2 faced in brick in stretcher bond. The windows (all now replaced in UPVC) have projecting surrounds, as does the recessed central entrance and the recessed entrance to the flat at the south. On either side of the entrance are three windows (two square windows, one oblong), while the first floor has four windows of four lights each. The meeting house wing retains some of the Victorian appearance of its tiled, pitched roof with decorative ridge tiles and a truncated ventilator stack (see photo bottom

right). The south wall of the meeting room (facing the courtyard) was largely rebuilt in 1938-9 with a brick wall with parapet and buttresses between the four windows. The east courtyard block also has a pitched tiled roof supported on two timber posts with braces, which forms an open loggia in front of a small brick block with metal windows (now a store, in 1939 gents' toilets). The flat-roofed single-storey south wing dates from the 1930s and was partially rebuilt in 1951-2. The brick here is laid in stretcher and Flemish bonds with soldier and rowlock courses above and below the windows and the parapet. It has two windows and a door into the courtyard. Its roof is used as a roof garden for the flat. The courtyard is paved in yellow pavers in herringbone pattern.

On either side of the vestibule are toilets. There is a classroom in the southwest corner (with a sliding, folding partition) and a former classroom (now dining area) in the south wing. At the east end of the south wing is a kitchen. The meeting room in the north wing is a large oblong room with a canted ceiling (photo bottom left), a woodblock floor and dado panelling. It has four windows and a door, all on the courtyard side of the room.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting house was initially furnished with wooden chairs, some of which were replaced in 1973 by chairs from New Equipment Limited (still in situ). (Twenty-five of the original wooden chairs were in 1973 given to the meeting house at Leigh-on-Sea (*qv*).)

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located near the centre of Eastbourne, close to the seafront and Devonshire Park. Most of Wish Road was redeveloped after the Second World War and has largely lost its late Victorian character as a mews road which is still visible on photos of 1938 (although a few of the late Victorian houses and stables survive further south). The RAF Association Club was built in the 1950s directly to the north of the meeting house.

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

By the 1870s, the whole site between Wish Road and Cornfield Lane (of which the meeting house only occupies the western half) was a garden with perimeter paths and access from Cornfield Lane. By c.1899 (the date of the publication of the Ordnance Survey map), the garden site had been split into two plots and they had been developed. By then Wish Road was mostly occupied by mews buildings. The meeting house site is considered to have 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): *N/a*

3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in 2014. The report was not available at the visit but is said to have made only minor recommendations, some of which have since been carried out. The local meeting has sufficient funds to maintain and repair the building. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: installation of double-glazed UPVC windows
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: use of Council recycling bins

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate but would consider obtaining one.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. The first-floor flat is let out.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is no off-street parking on site. There is secure parking for bicycles inside the courtyard.

3.5. Access

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

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 4 hours per week. The meeting house is currently not available for lettings.

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 alterations 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: There are currently no heritage constraints on the building. It could be altered if required.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is currently not available for lettings. In theory, it has all the required amenities but could be altered if necessary.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should it cease to be used, the meeting house could be converted to an alternative use. A more likely outcome would be the redevelopment of the site (subject to planning permission).

Part 5: Category: 4