

Friends Meeting House, Friargate

Friargate, York, YO1 9RL

National Grid Reference: SE 60383 51605



Statement of Significance

The site has been in Quaker ownership since 1674 and overall has high heritage value. The present building has medium heritage significance, as a meeting house built in the early 1980s replacing an earlier building of 1817, located to the rear of a late nineteenth century extension facing Clifford Street. The building was further extended in 2013-2015 with a contemporary extension. The former women's meeting room dating from the 1884 extension, retains historic fabric and fittings, whilst the basement includes surviving historic fabric from a former Friary, both adding to the high significance of the building for aesthetic and historical value. The site as a whole has high archaeological potential.

Evidential value

The multi-phase building occupies part of the site of a medieval friary which has high archaeological value. The present main meeting room was built as part of an extension in 1884 onto a meeting house built in 1817; the latter was replaced in the 1980s. The present collection of buildings have the potential to yield evidence about Quaker development on the site and earlier activity.

Historical value

The building is located within an Area of Archaeological Importance on part of the site of a former Friary. The present meeting house varies in date with

the main meeting room occupying the former women's meeting room of 1884 which retains surviving internal features. The majority of the meeting house occupies a 1981 building replacing an earlier structure of 1817, with a recent extension. The more recent additions have low historical value, whilst the main meeting room has high historical value as part of the late nineteenth century phase of expansion to the meeting house.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a functional modern design, and has modest aesthetic value. The cast iron columns from the former meeting room are attractive additions to the entrance of the building. The frontage of the late nineteenth century former meeting house is of high aesthetic value, but no longer in Quaker ownership. The internal space of the main meeting room has high aesthetic value, with its roof structure, dado panelling and some historic benches. The landscaped garden to the rear is also of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house was built for Quaker use and is also a valued community resource. The building is used by local groups and visitors and has a high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *York*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0007470*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *City of York Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire and the Humber*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *York*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *York Central Historic Core*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1884 (main meeting room); 1981; 1980s, 2013-15*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *William Henry Thorp; Jones, Stocks and Partners; John Baily, PPIY Ltd*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *25 April 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *John Gilham and Stephen Parry*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Bishophill burial ground NGR SE 60188 51366*

1.18 Attached burial ground: No

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 711-718.

Helen E. Roberts, *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History: A Guide to Sources*, University of Hull, 2003

John Gilham, Local Meeting Survey, January 2016.

University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Carlton Hill Collection, York Monthly Meeting Estates Book, 1964 (MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/40/1).

City of York Council, York Central Historic Core: Conservation Area Appraisal: <https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3509/ca01yorkcentralhistoiccorepdf>

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

2.1. Historical background

Yorkshire has strong associations with the early Quaker movement and George Fox who travelled through the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire in 1651 and 1652. In 1651 Fox made an attempt to preach in York Minister. William Dewsbury attracted York people to Quakerism following a meeting held in an Orchard of Richard Smith. Early meetings were held in the home of Thomas Waite, a local bookseller, before Quakers rented premises in 1659. The first meeting house was acquired in 1674 when a local Friend Edward Nightingale leased a property neighbouring his home in Far Water Lane (present name Friargate). The property was converted for Quaker use at a cost of £225.8.10.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, as a result of growing membership, larger premises were required. A new meeting house was built to the east of the existing building to accommodate 800-1000 people in 1718. The former meeting house was enlarged and subsequently used as a women's meeting room. This remained a venue for Quaker worship for the following 98 years until in 1816 when Friends purchased additional property and land to expand the meeting house. In 1817 a new large meeting room was built designed by Watson and Pritchett along with a library, committee room, toilets and a strong room.

During the late nineteenth century York expanded and as a result of redevelopment, a Clifford Street was constructed, close to the Friends women's meeting room. Friends were offered, by the City, a plot of land opposite the new street for £475. In 1884, plans were approved to extend the premises resulting in a new front entrance facing Clifford Street designed by William Thorp. As part of this extension work a new library, lecture room, school room, two committee rooms, women's cloakrooms, caretakers quarters along with the demolition of the meeting house of 1674 and replaced with a smaller meeting room. The cost of this work was approximately £5,000.

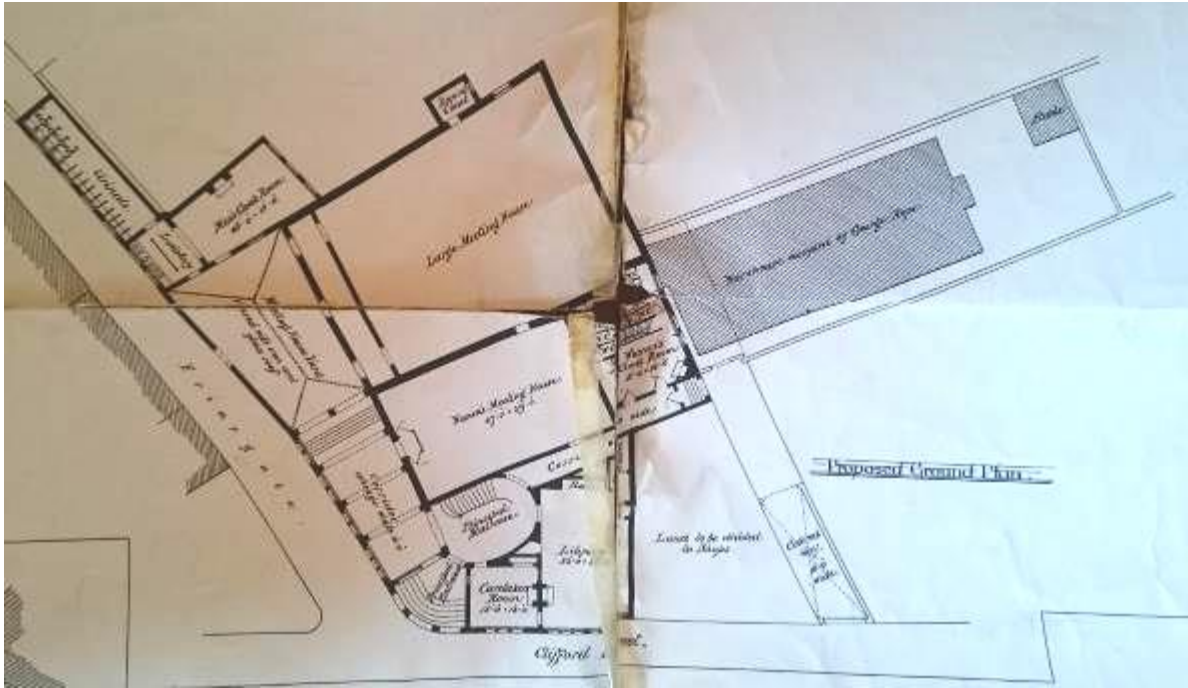


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the Clifford Street extension, 1884, William Henry Thorp (Friargate MH archive).

At the beginning of the twentieth century the meeting purchased properties neighbouring the meeting house in Castlegate, along with land to the rear of 19 and 21 Clifford Street, which was exchanged for a plot of land to the rear of the large meeting house for use as a garden.

During the 1970s the meeting house became more costly to maintain and run; the meeting explored the possibility of building a new meeting house. Following a structural engineers report in 1977, which reported that the building was unsafe, an application was approved by the local authority for the demolition of the Grade II listed large meeting room.



Figure 2: The former main meeting room (1817) being demolished in the 1970s (Friargate MH archive)

The architects Jones, Stocks and Partners were appointed to design a new building to accommodate a new spacious foyer, committee rooms, library, kitchen and toilets. The entrance of the building was altered and was relocated to Friargate, with a glass front incorporating cast iron columns from the 1817 large meeting room to carry the external canopy. From the late 1970s, the former women's meeting room of 1884 was used for worship, and the building fronting Clifford Street was no longer in Quaker ownership. Following this work, the Woolman Room and the associated toilets and kitchen were introduced using what had once been the crypt store of the original meeting house, designed by John Baily.

In 2012, permission was granted by York City Council for a three storey circulation tower providing additional meeting rooms, a lift and stairwell, and to raise the height of the 1980s building to provide additional meeting room space. As part of this phase of work the Woolman Room was refurbished, which involved new French doors into the garden and to provide views of the former friary walls. This work was completed in two phases in 2013 and 2015.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The present meeting house was built in several phases. The north-west elevation is the principal frontage of the meeting house and dates from 1981; this has a canopy supported on cast iron columns recycled from the large meeting room of 1817, following its demolition in the late twentieth century. A ramp provides access to a small lobby area with floor to ceiling glazing. The north-east elevation comprises -two phases of build; the 1981 part by Jones, Stocks and Partners is characterised by red brick laid in stretcher bond and forms the ground floor level and part of the lower ground level to the eastern side. The recent works dating from 2013-2015 by PPIY Ltd are faced in horizontal boarding. The 2013-2015 works relate to the eastern side of this elevation and comprise a two storey tower turret accommodating the quiet room and garden room, built in brick at ground floor and clad with boarding at first floor, and an additional range built above the existing 1981 rooms (Penn room and Woolman

room). The main meeting room roof facing the north-east (1884 by William Henry Thorp) has a pitched roof with clerestory windows. The gable-end southeast elevation of the main meeting room (1884) has a 3-light window, and two smaller windows at lower ground level and entrance to the lower ground rooms (Fell room, office and archives). Adjacent to this is a three storey tower built in 2013 for a lift and stairwell and part of the turret. The lower ground wall was re-built using reclaimed bricks and has single and 2-light windows and two sets of French doors, one leading to the Woolman Room.

Internally, the large open and spacious foyer provides a reception area and social area. The foyer provides access to toilet facilities, Fox room, kitchen, Penn room with access to the terrace and garden, library, the main meeting room and a corridor leading to the top terrace, quiet room, lift and stairwell providing access to the first floor and lower ground level. The main meeting room is a large rectangular space built in 1884 as the women's meeting room. The walls are plastered and plainly painted with oak panelling to dado height and the floor carpeted. The timber roof structure was formerly exposed but now hidden by a suspended ceiling to the centre of the meeting room (originally this was lit by clerestory windows). The beamed ceiling has coving on corbels. The room is lit from a 3-light window to the south-east and accessed via two entrances on the north-east wall. The doors are - double panelled and part-glazed with a single light window above.

Access to the lower ground floor and first floor is via the stairwell and lift to the south-west. All floors are light, pleasant and spacious and provide easy access to all rooms (which vary in size) and facilities. The lower ground floor rooms include Garden Room, the Fell room, archives office underneath the main meeting room, kitchen and toilet facilities. The Woolman room has a brick vaulted ceiling and has been recently refurbished with glass panelling to one side revealing the former Friary walls. The first floor is part of the new 2013-15 extension, and includes four additional meeting rooms.



Figure 3: View of section of the former Friary located in the Woolman Room

2.3. Loose furnishings

The main meeting room (the former women's meeting room of 1884) contains open-backed pine benches with turned front legs and arms, which date from the nineteenth century.



Figure 4: Example of one of the open-backed benches

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is on Friargate, in c York city centre. The building is in York Conservation Area, in the King's Staith and Coppergate Centre character area. Friargate is a narrow street laid with setts, and links Castlegate and Clifford Street. The main views to the meeting house are from Castlegate looking down Friargate. At the corner of Clifford Street, the former meeting house extension (1884, by William Thorp), is no longer in Quaker ownership apart from the former women's meeting room. Clifford Street was built by the corporation in 1881 during the expansion in the city and is lined with Victorian buildings including the Grade II listed Magistrates Court.

A detached burial ground is located at Bishophill (NGR SE604512). The land for the burial ground was purchased by Friends in 1667 and closed for burial grounds in 1854. Notable figure buried here include John Woolman (1720-1772); born in America, Woolman campaigned against slavery. William (1732-1822) and Esther Tuke (1794) are also buried at Bishophill; William was a philanthropist and tea merchant, for Twining's and Esther was involved in educational work. The burial ground is now leased to the York Housing Association as a garden.

2.6. Listed status

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

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The City of York Historic Environment Record was consulted and identified the site of the meeting house in Area of Archaeological Importance (SMR MYO4213). The site has been in Quaker use since 1674, and has high archaeological value due to the presence of a former friary on the site. Additionally, prior to the recent works taking place to extend the meeting

house the Friargate Community Archaeology Project was formed in 2012. The group were involved in undertaking historical research and small scale excavations, the results of which is due to be published in due course.

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 last quinquennial inspection took place in September 2014, undertaken by Mark Druery and Stephen Parry. All works recommended for immediate action or within twelve months have been carried out. The meeting has sufficient funds to maintain and repair the building. Friends receive significant income from the letting of rooms within the premises. Friends are currently preparing a five -year maintenance and repair plan for the building, in accordance with the quinquennial report.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. The following measures have been implemented to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: installation of solar panels, heating controls, energy efficient light bulbs.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: use of council recycling scheme.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats.
- Travel: Friends are encouraged to use public transport due to its central location.

3.4. Amenities

The large meeting house has all the amenities it needs, including two kitchens, spacious foyer, toilets, library, managers office, storerooms, WCs, a large meeting room and eleven other rooms located over three floors. There is a resident assistant manager. An on-site car park is not available, however, there is a large municipal car park 200 yards away and the nearest park and ride bus stop is 50 yards away. The central location of the meeting house results in good access by public transport. The meeting house is served by a local bus service seven days a week and is a ten minute walk from York Railway Station. Secure parking for bicycles is available on-site.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and throughout the building with a lift providing access to lower and upper floors. Accessible toilets are available, a hearing loop has been installed and facilities for partially-sighted people include clear signage and colour contrasts. A Disability Access Audit was conducted in 2015 as part of the recent works and the following recommendations were implemented:

refurbishment of toilets, change of font and positioning of temporary notices, contrast colours for seating and flooring used where possible, and signage in the accessible lift improved.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house exclusively on Sundays for approximately 5 hours each week. The meeting house is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 750 hours per week and is used for an average of 350 hours each week. The meeting house contains twelve meeting rooms, two large rooms, eight medium sized rooms and two small rooms. The Meeting does have a formal letting policy. Decisions regarding lettings are made by the Local Business Meeting. Political groups are not allowed to use the meeting house and alcohol is not permitted. Groups with links to the Quakers and church groups are able to use the meeting house for free. Users value the building for its location, pleasant atmosphere and price.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house has not been subject to heritage crime but due to the central location has been subject to anti-social behaviour in the past. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. Friends have not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but would consider making contact in the future.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no future plans for extensive works. Immediate plans include the refurbishment of the manager's office.

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 building is well equipped for the needs of the meeting following recent works, and there is scope for further change internally.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: Wider uses compatible with the Quaker ethos already take place, helped by the improved facilities of 2013-2015. There would be scope for further change if required.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: It would seem unlikely that the meeting house would be laid down as considerable investment has been made to improve and extend the meeting house. In the regrettable event of closure, there is scope for the building to be altered to remain as a venue for community use or for conversion into a commercial venture, subject to conservation area and archaeological constraints.

Part 5: Category: 3