

Friends Meeting House, Gloucester

Greyfriars, off Southgate Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 1TS

National Grid Reference: SO 83077 18364



Statement of Significance

A meeting house of the 1830s, designed by the significant local architect Samuel Daukes, with additions of 1879 by J. P. Moore. The meeting house is set back from the street behind a contemporary gatehouse, and between the two buildings is a small burial ground. The site lies close to the commercial and historic core of the city, and is of high evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

Evidential value

The meeting house interior is little altered, its fitting out evocative and illustrative of historic Quaker worship. The burial ground contains a large number of burials, marked and unmarked. The building and site are of high evidential value.

Historical value

This is the second meeting house in Gloucester, the first having been in what is now Park Street. It is on an ancient site, close to the medieval Greyfriars and to Glevum, the Roman colonia. The burial ground contains marked burials ranging in date from 1836 to about 1876, including local notables Samuel Bowley and John Bellows. The buildings and site are of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is somewhat hidden away behind the gatehouse, which gives onto a cobbled street. Nearby are the medieval parish church of St Mary de Crypt and the surviving portions of Greyfriars. The meeting house and gatehouse enclose the burial ground in an informal courtyard. The integrity of the original design of both meeting house and gatehouse has been undermined, but not fatally so, by later additions. The meeting room interiors retain their historic character and atmosphere. The buildings and site are of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building and its facilities are used by the wider community as well as by Friends. The contribution that the building makes to the townscape of the local conservation area adds to this high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Gloucestershire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0004070*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Gloucester City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Gloucester NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1245828*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Gloucester City Centre*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1834-5; 1879*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *S. W. Daukes; J. P. Moore*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *1 June 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Sarah Eilbeck, Nick Peters, Colin Gerard*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Gatehouse (Grade II)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 216-218

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England*, 1986, p. 84

Verey, D. and Brooks, A., *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire 2*, 2002, pp. 459-60

Local Meeting Survey, by Sarah Eilbeck, April 2016

Peters, N., Typescript notes on history, September 2015

Ryder, J Martin, Quinquennial Survey, October 2013

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

2.1 Historical background

George Fox visited Gloucester Quakers in 1660, when meetings for worship took place in the houses of Friends. In 1678 two cottages in Back Hare Lane (now Park Street) were acquired and combined to form a meeting house. This remained in use until 1834, when it was superseded by the present meeting house. The building survived until 1903, when it was replaced by the present Park Street Mission Room.

The 1834-5 meeting house on Greyfriars was built from designs by Samuel Whitfield Daukes (or Dawkes), a Gloucester architect who may also have designed the meeting house built about the same time in Cheltenham (*qv*). An entrance lodge or gatehouse on the street frontage built at the same time was also presumably Daukes' design. Between the two buildings a burial ground was laid out.

As originally designed, the meeting house consisted of two rooms, with a small single-storey entrance lobby. The latter was demolished in 1879 when a two-storey addition was built onto the front to provide a larger entrance area with a committee room to one side and a large classroom above. The gatehouse was altered and extended at the same time. The *Buildings of England* names J. P. Moore as architect (James Philip Moore continued the practice established by Daukes, his practice archive is held by Gloucestershire Archives).

In 1946, low flat-roofed additions were built on either side of the lobby and against the western flank wall, providing improved facilities (NB Butler suggests that the western addition was in 1879). Substantial repairs were undertaken in 1974 (including underpinning at one corner) and 1987-8. In 2011 the building was subject to an arson attack, resulting in mainly smoke damage. It was repaired and reopened in 2013.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

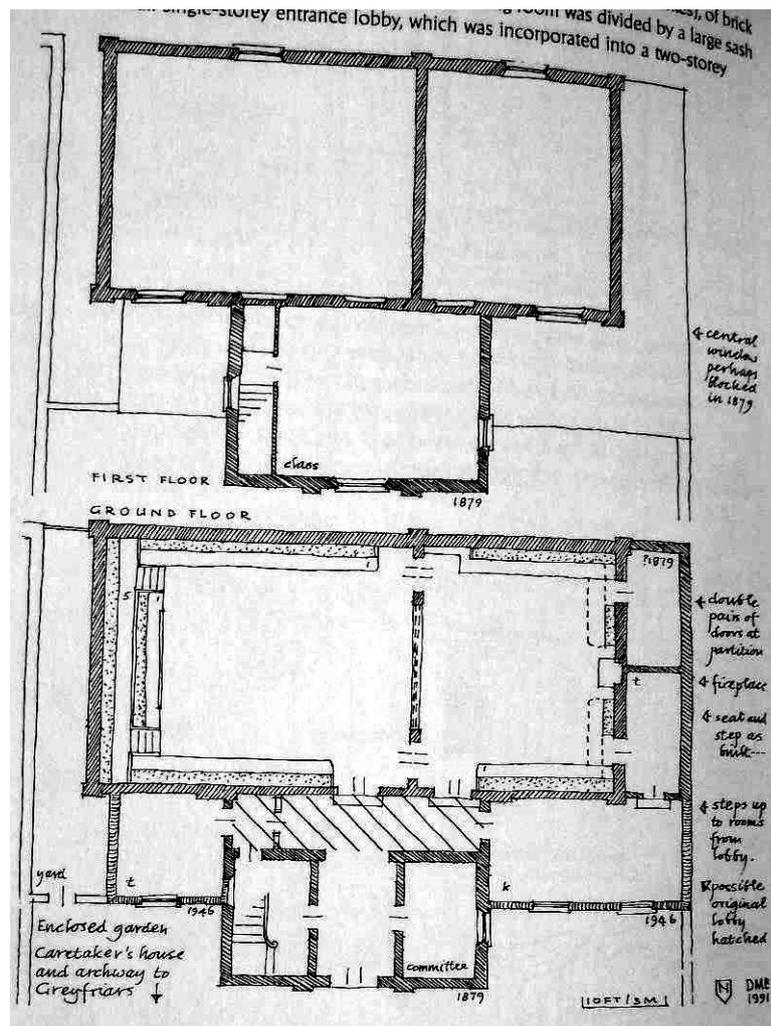


Figure 1: Ground and first floor plan, from Butler, vol. 1, p. 218

The meeting house was built in 1834-5 from designs by S. W. Daukes, and was extended in 1879 (architect J. P. Moore) and 1946. The original building consisted of two large meeting rooms with a lower entrance lobby, the latter removed to make way for the two-storey front addition of 1879. Both the original building and the 1879 addition are of red brick laid in Flemish bond with stone dressings and slate roofs (hipped over the original building). The outer bays of the front elevation retain their original tall rubbed brick round-arched windows in arched recesses, with glazing bar fixed light windows (probably replacements of 1879). The projecting central bay of 1879 has a central door with brick cambered arch and a round-arched window above, framed by a giant order of brick pilasters rising to meet an open pediment.

The entrance lobby has an encaustic tile floor, with a stair to the upstairs classroom on the left, and a small committee room to the right. The two meeting rooms are each lit by high level windows front and back (two in the main meeting room and one in the smaller room blocked by the 1879 addition). Each room has plastered walls and flat plastered ceilings with moulded cornices and a central rose/ventilator. Covered wooden ventilators are also set into the walls. Between the two spaces, vertical sliding deal panelling occupies the full height within arched openings, the central one wider and with a depressed arch and containing shutters which slide down as well as up, the outer ones round-arched, slightly lower, and incorporating communicating doors. At the east end of the main meeting room is an

unusually high stand, with panelled front and dado, the five steps up on either side flanked by moulded handrails, turned newels and stick balusters. The handrail continues along the front of the stand, supported by stubby wooden piers. The floor is timber boarded, with full-length metal heating grilles set into it on either side. The high dado panelling and fixed seating continue around the north and south sides, and around three sides of the smaller meeting room, here interrupted on the west side by doors to the 1946 addition (Butler says 1879) and a central arched and plastered fireplace, flush with the wall.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The loose furnishings in the meeting rooms are modern, but two open-backed benches, probably nineteenth-century in date, survive in the upstairs classroom.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground contains burials spanning the period 1836 to 1876. The headstones lie flat, and most have been gathered together in a corner to the right of the main entrance. Some headstones are still set into the grass more centrally in this area, which is also used for car parking. Amongst those buried here are Samuel Bowley (1802-84), a cheese factor and anti-slavery and temperance campaigner, and John Bellows (1832-1901), writer, publisher and printer.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is set back from Greyfriars behind the contemporary gatehouse, close to the commercial and historic core of the city. Greyfriars is a picturesque cobbled thoroughfare, onto which also gives the medieval parish church of St Mary de Crypt (listed Grade I) and the remains of the Greyfriars church, a scheduled ancient monument now in the care of English Heritage. This incorporates an early nineteenth-century house built into the west front, facing towards the meeting house and St Mary de Crypt (its rear elevation brutally treated in the 1960s). It is suggested in the Local Meeting Survey Return that the meeting house lies on the site of the orchard belonging to Greyfriars, and that a Tudor wall (rebuilt in 2015) on the western boundary was the boundary wall of the former orchard. However, the orchard is understood to have lain further to the east. The area to the south of the meeting house, formerly the Technical College, is of high archaeological sensitivity and importance; it was undergoing regeneration and enhancement as The Greyfriars Quarter at the time of writing.

Butler states (p. 217) that there is no evidence that the gardens at the back of the cottages in Back Hare Lane were ever used as a burial ground. However, the Local Meeting Survey Return states that there is at least one burial at what is now the Park Street Mission Room (NGR SO 83307 18899).

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is appropriately listed Grade II. The gatehouse is separately listed, also Grade II. The list entries are below; that for the meeting house is inaccurate in a number of respects and is very short on the interior.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

High. In addition to its use as a Quaker burial ground since the 1830s, the site is on land formerly associated with the medieval Greyfriars and close to the site of Glevum Roman colonia, both scheduled as ancient monuments. An *ex situ* mosaic panel, said to be Roman and of unknown provenance, is set into the paving under the gatehouse carriage arch. Archaeological investigation at the former Technical College site by Cotswold Archaeology has revealed significant Roman and later finds.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

i) Meeting House: Good

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Generally satisfactory but with minor localised problems.

3.2 Maintenance

The building has been fully repaired following the fire damage of 2011, and is in good condition. The work was mainly covered by insurance, with some grants and gifts.

The burial ground/garden is also well maintained, but the use of this area for parking is likely to be damaging to those headstones which have not been relocated to the perimeter.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit, but has taken steps to reduce its environmental impact. Measures include provision of a condensing boiler, and use of the usual recycling facilities.

A different sustainability question concerns the ability of a small and diminishing group of members and attenders (Sunday attendance averages eight) to meet the continuing high maintenance costs of the building.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting considers that it has the amenities that it needs. In addition to several good-sized rooms (more than adequate for the needs of the meeting), these include a large refurbished kitchen and accessible WCs. There is a resident warden in the Gatehouse. There are buses into the city centre, but fewer on Sundays. Car sharing is encouraged. There is secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

There is a change of levels from the entrance lobby into the main meeting room; a demountable ramp is available. The upstairs classroom is not accessible for those unable to use the stairs. A hearing loop and accessible WC are provided and the stair nosings have been picked out in a different colour.

3.6 Community Use

In addition to use by Friends (about four hours a week), the meeting house and its facilities are used by third party hirers for about twenty of a possible ninety nine hours a week. There is a hiring policy which encourages lettings to other groups, in particular religious and voluntary bodies, including those that are new and informal or the subject of discrimination. Users whose values conflict with those of the Quakers are not accepted. Users of the facilities cite the reasonable charges, the good city centre location and the atmosphere of the building.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

This is a somewhat run-down city centre location, albeit one undergoing some regeneration. The churchyard opposite the meeting house is reported to be a haunt for street drinkers. The building has suffered from heritage crime (lead theft) and arson. Following the fire and

conviction of the arsonist, the meeting has been actively involved in the restorative justice programme.

3.8 Plans for change

The Local Meeting Survey Return states that ‘the AM trustees and Gloucester Meeting are trying to look to the future use of the Meeting House. Reduced numbers attending meetings and only modest use by the local community require us to find solutions’. See below.

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 meets and indeed exceeds the requirements of the small number of regular members and attenders. The primary significance of the building lies in the two main meeting rooms, described by *The Buildings of England* as ‘little altered and a rare survival’. Any changes to these spaces should involve the retention of the original fittings. Permanent provision for enhanced wheelchair access to the meeting rooms would need to be carefully considered. This might involve adapting the western addition and entering the second meeting room from there, rather than altering the steps at the entrance to the main meeting room. It would probably not be contentious in historic building terms, though costly, for a lift to be provided in the lobby of the 1879 addition, giving access to the first-floor classroom. Parking in the burial ground should be discouraged.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already used by the wider community, and changes in order to extend such use would be subject to the same constraints as those outlined above.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building is maintained by a small and diminishing number of members and attenders, and current arrangements are probably not sustainable. If it is not possible greatly to increase income from third party hiring, it may be necessary to consider transferring the meeting to alternative premises (perhaps the gatehouse), and leasing the meeting house for a suitable commercial use. The site’s location close to the town centre, tourist sites and an area of regeneration may all be helpful in this respect; against this however are the constraints of the listing, and the desirability of preserving the interior and its features. Anybody taking on the building is likely to be subject to the same constraints as those outlined above. Subdivision of the internal spaces of the main meeting rooms would be highly regrettable, but may be justified if non-damaging and reversible, and as a means of securing a sustainable new use for the building.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List descriptions

Meeting house

Name: SOCIETY OF FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
List entry Number: 1245828
Location: SOCIETY OF FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, GREYFRIARS
County: Gloucestershire
District: Gloucester
District Type: District Authority
Grade: II
Date first listed: 12-Mar-1973
Date of most recent amendment: 15-Dec-1998
Legacy System: LBS
UID: 472221

GLOUCESTER SO8318SW GREYFRIARS 844-1/12/133 (South side) 12/03/73 Society of Friends Meeting House (Formerly Listed as: GREYFRIARS Friends Meeting House with Gatehouse)

GV II

Meeting house. 1834-5 by SW Daukes. For the Society of Friends (Quakers). Red brick with stone details, hipped slate roof. A rectangular block on south side of a walled forecourt entered through a Gatehouse (qv) on the north side. PLAN: a square block. EXTERIOR: single storey; the front of three bays has a slight projection to the central bay with pediment above, in the central bay the entrance doorway with moulded stone frame doorcase, in bay to each side an arched recess framing a sash with glazing bars. INTERIOR: not inspected, but noted as having 2 rooms divided by a screen with hung shutters.

Listing NGR: SO8307718364

Gatehouse

Name: GATEHOUSE TO FORECOURT OF SOCIETY OF FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
List entry Number: 1245829
Location: GATEHOUSE TO FORECOURT OF SOCIETY OF FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, GREYFRIARS
County: Gloucestershire
District: Gloucester
District Type: District Authority
Grade: II
Date first listed: 12-Mar-1973
Date of most recent amendment: 15-Dec-1998
Legacy System: LBS
UID: 472222

GLOUCESTER SO8318SW GREYFRIARS 844-1/12/134 (South side) 12/03/73 Gatehouse to Forecourt of Society of Friends Meeting House (Formerly Listed as: GREYFRIARS Friends Meeting House with Gatehouse)

GV II

Gatehouse to forecourt of the Society of Friends Meeting House (qv). 1834, late C19

alterations. Brick with stone details, hipped slate roof. A range with a wide entrance to forecourt towards east end, extended to west in late C19 for caretaker's or porter's accommodation. EXTERIOR: two storeys; on irregular front to street, the earlier portion to left with a weathered ashlar plinth on each side of the carriage archway with dressed stone jambs and segmental head; in the archway a pair of gates in timber with open panels crossed with vertical iron bars and concave head rail; on each side of archway a brick pilaster strip rising to eaves; above the arch a recessed, rectangular panel with inscription in a moulded stone frame stone; on ground floor to left a single light window with stone lintel and projecting stone sill, in late C19 addition to right a narrow sash and, further right, a wider sash, above on the first floor to right two widely spaced sashes, all in openings with stone lintels and sills. INTERIOR: not inspected.

Listing NGR: SO8309318384