

Friends Meeting House, Guildford

3 Ward Street, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 4LH

National Grid Reference: SU 99789 49645



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a large urban example built in 1804-6 to a design by John Bevans, a Quaker architect of Plaistow. It has been altered and extended since but retains the original stand in the meeting room. It has high heritage value.

Evidential value

The meeting house is a Georgian building whose fabric probably contains further evidence about its history and development. It has high evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house was built in the early nineteenth century due to the efforts of local Quakers and, in particular, the Chandler and Birkbeck families. It replaced an earlier meeting house nearby, whose burial ground, known as Quakers' Acre, survives. The meeting house has high historical value.

Aesthetic value

While the meeting house has been altered and extended, the main elevation and the main meeting room in particular have high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is primarily a Quaker meeting house but is also well-used by local community groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Surrey & Hampshire Border*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0019390*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Guildford Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Guildford NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1029195*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Guildford Town Centre*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1804-06*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *John Bevans of Plaistow*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *23 October 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Les Jones*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Quakers' Acre burial ground (North Street)*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 590-591

Rowntree, H., *Early Quakerism in Guildford and a Brief History of Past and Present Meeting Places of the Guildford 'Friends' 1673-1952, 1952*,
http://media.wix.com/ugd/1d26f3_accf291278711017b124f596e4e13bb6.pdf

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Eastern England*, 2002, p. 325

History on Local Meeting website, <http://www.guildfordquakers.org/#!early-quakerism-in-guildford/c1061>

Local Meeting survey by Stephen Crouch, October 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

Meetings for Worship were first held in Guildford in 1668. In 1673, a burial ground with a frontage to Crown Yard (now North Street) was bought, together with a gatehouse tenement, which was altered for £234 and registered in 1689. The plot was extended in 1739. By 1802, the building was in severe disrepair and the following year it was demolished. Also in 1803, a new site in North Street (opposite of the burial ground) was acquired for £105. A new

meeting house was built in 1804-06 which opened in February 1806. The Quaker builder and surveyor John Bevans of Plaistow produced plans for the new meeting house (memorandum of 1805). The carpenter was John Silvester and the bricklayer was Edmund Upton. Two Quakers particularly prominent in founding the new meeting house were Morris Birkbeck and William Chandler; their families subscribed the largest amounts towards the new meeting house (1803 list of subscribers). Originally, the meeting house consisted of a large men's meeting room, a smaller women's meeting room, and a cloakroom. The two meeting rooms were divided by sash shutters. In 1827, more land was bought to provide a new entrance to North Street. In 1875, another plot to the west was bought to create a new entrance to Ward Street.

Major alterations were made in 1898 and 1913, including the addition of a porch, an upper room above the women's meeting room, and the installation of a heating system. In 1914, folding partitions were installed between the two meeting rooms (replacing the original sash shutters) and within the women's meeting room. In 1993, extensive repairs were made at a cost of £23,500.

In 1927, the burial ground of 1673 was conveyed to the Corporation for use as a public open space. This plot, now in North Street, is known as 'Quakers' Acre'.

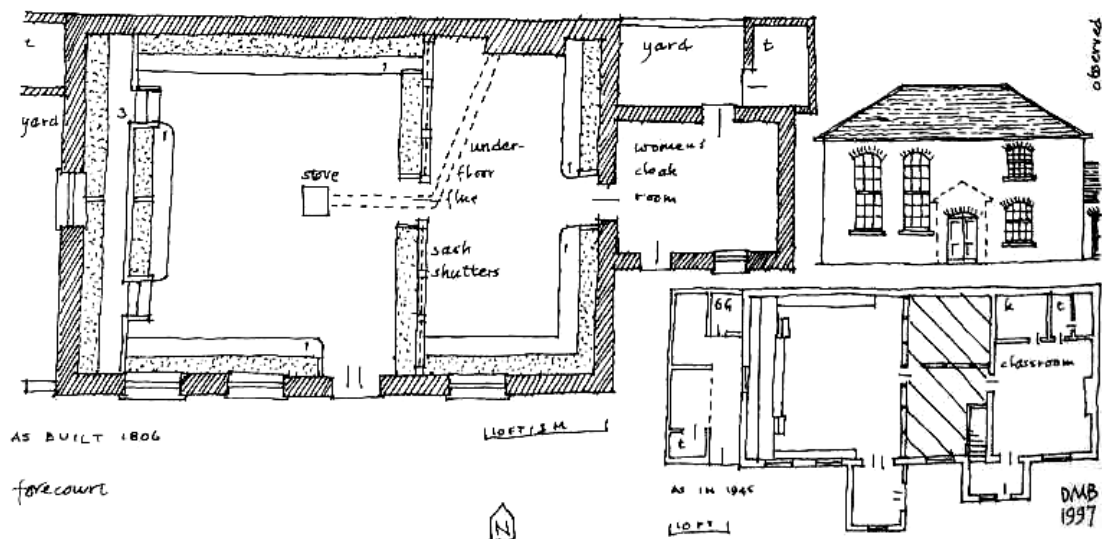


Figure 1: Plans (as in 1806 and in 1945), elevation (north is actually to the left; not to scale) (Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 590)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main elevation (photo top left, p. 1) faces roughly west. The materials are red brick laid in Flemish bond with a hipped slate roof. The plan is oblong with a porch to the west and a lower extension to the south, also with a porch. The main building has brick dentilled eaves. The west elevation has two large 24-pane sash windows under gauged-brick segmental heads to the north of the porch. To the south of the porch are 16-pane sashes to the ground and first floors. The porch (of brick in stretcher bond) has a hipped slate roof, a 16-pane sash to the west, and modern arched and glazed doors to the south. The north elevation has a 20-pane sash window. At the northeast corner is a brick chimney. The south elevation has one arched metal casement window to the upper room. To the south of the meeting house is a small extension (of brick in Flemish bond) with a metal ventilator flue on the hipped slate roof and a 16-pane sash to the west. A small lean-to brick porch with a window beside a part-glazed door links the main building and the extension.

Inside the main porch are preserved inscribed bricks, which feature the date '1805' and the initials of the 'founders' (identified in Rowntree, pp. 25, 43). The ceiled main meeting room has timber dado panelling and a carpeted timber floor. The two-tier stand is to the north and has turned end pillars to the two flights of steps. At the northwest is a built-in cupboard. The south wall has a folding partition with some glazed panels; above is further panelling. (According to Butler and Rowntree, this never was a gallery as the smaller (women's) meeting room originally did not have a floor above.) The east wall has two small, high-level metal windows. The adjoining smaller meeting room has a further folding partition which can divide it into two. There is a large chimneybreast against the east wall. The children's room in the south extension has another blocked chimneybreast as well as vertical dado panelling; it adjoins the small kitchen and toilets. The southern porch has a staircase with a square newel and square balusters. It leads to the first-floor room with another blocked chimneybreast to the east.

2.3 Loose furnishings

Part of the original specification included twelve 'forms' or benches. By 1952, only eleven were still in the meeting house. Today, none remain *in situ* although four benches at Woking (*qv*) are said to come from Guildford.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The site was never a proper burial ground although one burial is known to have taken place on the meeting house site: this was the burial of Herbert Spencer in 1835.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in the centre of Guildford. It is set back from both North Street and Ward Street. Towards North Street, there is an access road with a modern gate between the old fire station of 1872 (grade II) and the former Horse & Groom pub (grade II). Towards Ward Street, the Quaker site has a boundary wall of gault brick with railings and gates (all of c.1875). The walls, gate and the meeting house make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

A yard to the north of the meeting house contains the attached boiler house; an external toilet and shed (see figure 1) were recently demolished. The area to the west of the meeting house is laid out as a garden, with a central brick-paved path.

The detached burial ground (NGR: SU 99788 49585) acquired in 1673 is in North Street, roughly opposite the meeting house. Since 1927, it has been managed by the local authority. There was another burial ground at Worplesdon which contained over 214 burials when it was sold in 1852.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade II. The list entry needs to be amended to correct one typo and to add the name of the architect and other details. The boundary wall and railings to Ward Street can probably be considered listed as curtilage structures to the meeting house.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

It is not known if there was an earlier building on the site. The site is known to include at least one burial. It is considered to have medium 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): Optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in c.2010. No copy of the report was provided. There appears to be active woodworm in the cupboard on the stand. Since 2010 the extension roof, the floor boards in the main meeting room, and the folding partitions have all been repaired. The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the meeting house. 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 the installation of low energy lighting.

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 accessible by public transport. There is limited parking on site but no secure parking for bicycles.

3.5. Access

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

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 5 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 144 hours per week. It is used for an average of about 120 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Smoking, the use of intoxicants, drugs, chewing gum and candles are not permitted on the premises. Only Quaker-related groups are granted free use. Users value the meeting house for its convenient location, competitive pricing, and quiet ambiance.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. Recent heritage crime at the site includes the theft of lead from the extension roof and the theft of York flagstones from the garden. These have been reported to the police. Unreported crimes include one broken window. 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.

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: As a listed building, the meeting house has limited capacity to accommodate change. The later extension could probably sustain more alterations than the main meeting house.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is well used by community groups and has all the facilities required by its current users.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should the building cease to be used as a meeting house, it could easily become a full-time community centre with minimal changes to the building. The main meeting room in particular should be as little altered as possible.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description(s)

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1029195

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, NORTH STREET

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, WARD STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
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Surrey	Guildford	District Authority	
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National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 15-Mar-1988

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 289116

List entry Description

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

SU 99 49 NE GUILDFORD WARD STREET (East Side, off) 5/161 Friends Meeting House

GV II

See also North Street (North Side). Friends Meeting House. 1805 with later C19 extension. Red-brown brick with low-pitched hipped slate roof. Rectangular main block with porch to front and lower room to right end. Single storey with brick dentilled eaves. Two large 2lt-pane glazing-bar sash windows to left under gauged-brick segmental heads. One 16-pane glazing-bar sash window to right over similar segmentally-headed window below. Hip-roofed porch to centre with 16-pane glazing-bar sash window in front. C20 glazed wood doors in right hand return front of porch. Pentice to right with half-glazed door and flanking window at junction with room to right. Interior:- Plain meeting room to left half with dado panelling and dais across the end approached up side flights of two steps with turned end pillars. Panelled partition screens across the centre of the room.

Listing NGR: SU9978949638