

## ***Friends Meeting House, Harrogate***

*12a Queen Parade, Harrogate, HG1 5PP*

*National Grid Reference: SE 30798 55125*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house is a good example of a 1960s purpose-built meeting house in a modernist design. It makes a neutral contribution to the conservation area and has medium heritage significance.***

### ***Evidential value***

***The site of the meeting house was formerly a playground and gymnasium for Belmont School. The building and site has low evidential value.***

### ***Historical value***

***The present meeting house has low historical significance, however it is associated with Quakers' long presence in the Harrogate area. The first meeting house in Oxford Street was built primarily to accommodate the increasing number of visitors to the area to visit the spa town.***

### ***Aesthetic value***

***This modernist building has medium aesthetic value and makes a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area.***

### ***Communal value***

***The site has been in Quaker use since 1966 and is well used by a number of local community groups. The meeting house has high communal value.***

### **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *York*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000840*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Harrogate Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire and the Humber*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Harrogate*

- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Harrogate*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1966*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Elder Lester and Donald Whiteley*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *24 April 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Mark Richards*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 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. 801-803.

Helen E. Roberts, *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History: A Guide to Sources*, University of Hull, 2003, pp. 43.

Mark Richards, 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).

Harrogate Borough Council, Harrogate Conservation Area Character Appraisal, 2010

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

### 2.1. Historical background

During the late seventeenth century there was a group of Quakers in Harrogate and the surrounding area; some of these Friends suffered imprisonment for preaching. Friends travelled to Knaresborough where a meeting had been established from c1665. At this time Harrogate was a small village, but with a rural spa discovered in c.1571 by William Slingsby. The town later became a popular spa resort, with expansion largely during the second half of the nineteenth century. During the beginning of the nineteenth century travelling ministers were preaching in the area and in 1835 a meeting for worship was established. At this time there were no known Friends in the area and the meeting was used only by visitors. By the mid-nineteenth century local Friends were meeting in a schoolroom which soon proved inadequate to meet the needs of the meeting. A plot of land was purchased in Chapel Street (known today as Oxford Street) and a meeting house was built at a cost of £894.17.4; the first meeting was held in August 1854. In the beginning, meetings were only held during the tourist seasons.

During the 1960s, the area surrounding the meeting house underwent redevelopment and the meeting house itself was in need of extensive repairs. The meeting decided to build on a

new site, and acquired the playground and gymnasium which formed part of Belmont School on Queen Parade, for £4,500. A new meeting house was designed by Friend Donald Whiteley and built by a firm owned by another Friend Geoffrey Fowler. Until the new meeting house was opened in 1966 Friends met in a room in the Y.W.C.A building.

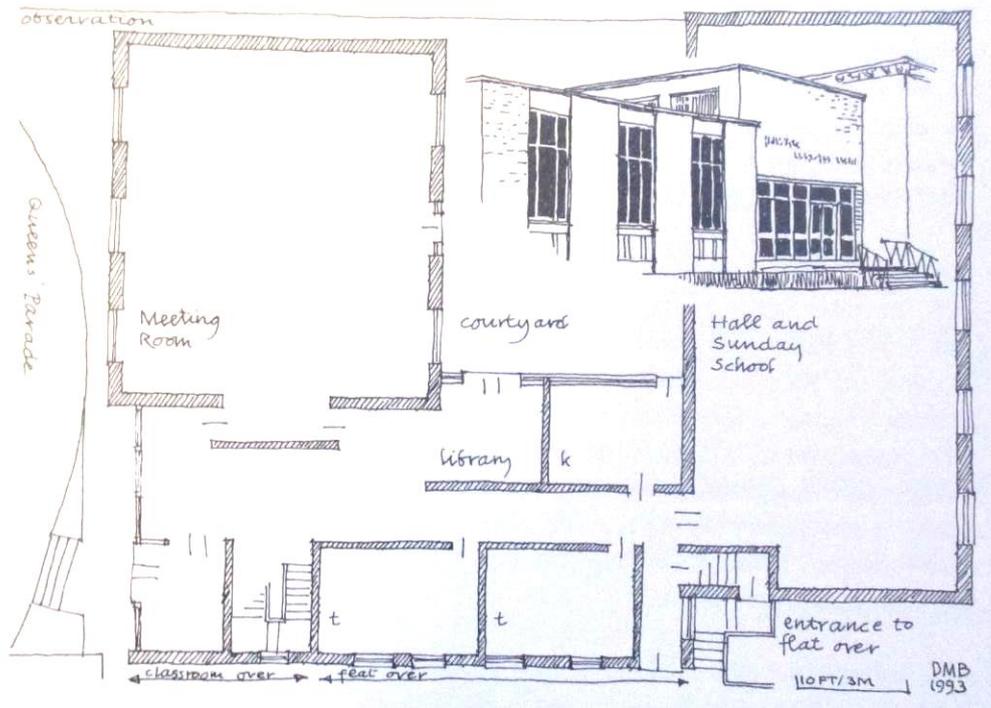


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house, as reconstructed by Butler (north is to the bottom right corner: not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. II, p.803)

## 2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was built from designs by Elder Lester and Donald Whiteley and opened in 1966. The building is faced with sneaked local stone, designed in a flat-roofed, blocky style typical of the 1960s. The plan consists of three ranges, a two-storey range aligned north-east to south-west accommodating the ancillary facilities which links the two single-storey ranges; the main meeting room and the hall. The north-east elevation forms the principal frontage with a glazed central entrance accessed via concrete steps onto a floating concrete platform. To the south-east is the main meeting room lit by three high level windows. The north-west elevation of the ancillary range has mixed fenestration with pairs of windows and top hung casement windows, all in uPVC, a disabled access entrance and the entrance to the warden's accommodation via a concrete staircase. The hall adjoins the rear elevation to the south-west. The south-east elevation of the main meeting room is blind whilst the south-west has three high level windows. The hall to the south-west facing Homestead Road, has five high level windows.

The entrance leads into a large central lobby; the walls are lined with full-height tongue and groove panelling. From the lobby there is access to the main meeting room, hall, ancillary facilities and a staircase to the north west, leading up to small meetings rooms at first floor. The main meeting room is a large spacious area well-lit by floor to ceiling windows to the north-east and south-west. The walls are plastered and plainly painted, and the lighting is pendant lights. The flooring laid with floorboards. Fixed seating is located across the north-west and south-east wall. The double doorway in the north-west wall is set in a central recess. The hall is a large single volume space with galleried areas to the north-west and south-east.

### 2.3. Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note.

### 2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

### 2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

Harrogate is 18 miles north of Leeds and 22 miles west of York. The meeting house is located within Harrogate Conservation Area on Queen Parade, on the east side of the town centre. To the south-east of Queen Parade is The Stray, a large grassy public open space which was created to allow public access to mineral springs. Queen Parade is lined with nineteenth century detached and semi-detached properties with some modern infill; north of the meeting house The Gables is a modern terrace of sixteen maisonettes. Property boundaries are characterised by a mixture of dwarf walls with railings, hedges and well planted gardens.

The immediate setting of the meeting house comprises a garden with a curved path and low level planting and trees. A passage to the north-west side of the meeting house leads to the rear of the building, where there is a small area of parking facing Homestead Road.

There is a detached burial ground at Scotton (NGR SE3266159586). The site was leased in 1670 for 2000 years at a peppercorn rent and is used by Friends from all five meetings constituting York Area Meeting. The burial ground contains three Grade II listed headstones, a group of three chest tombs and the walls of the burial ground are also Grade II listed.

### 2.6. Listed status

Not listed and not considered to be a future candidate for listing.

### 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house was built on the site of a former playground and gymnasium built in the late 1920s early 1930s which was part of the Belmont School. The site has low archaeology 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 last quinquennial inspection took place in 2012. The following recommendations from the quinquennial inspection have been undertaken: external decoration and the balcony and flat roofs have been repaired. The meeting are currently looking at proposals for the refurbishment of the premises. The meeting has sufficient funds to maintain and repair the building. Friends have a fifty year maintenance programme which is budgeted for annually.

### 3.3. Sustainability

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

- Climate change and energy efficiency: improved insulation, installation of low energy light bulbs and new boiler fitted.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: the meeting house uses the local authority recycling scheme.
- Building maintenance and refurbishment: ongoing review.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats.
- Transport: the meeting house is close to the bus and railway station.

Future proposals for refurbishment are planned to address sustainability including new heating and lighting.

### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house and include a meeting room, hall and ancillary facilities. The building includes a flat at first floor; at present there is no resident warden but the flat could be available for a warden if required in the future. The flat is presently let commercially. The meeting is accessible by public transport and is located a short distance from the bus and railway station. There is on-site car parking available for six cars, plus additional parking associated with the flat accommodation and a dedicated space for a disabled user. Further car parking is available along the nearby street (limited hours). There is secure bicycle parking.

### 3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities, via the entrance on the north-west elevation. There is level access throughout the ground floor and restricted access to the first floor. The meeting house has a fully accessible toilet and hearing loop installed. A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken. The meeting has future plans to refurbish the meeting house which will incorporate improved facilities for people with disabilities as at the current facilities are inadequate.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 3-4 hours each week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 150 hours per week. It is used for an average of 43 hours per week. The meeting has a formal lettings policy. Users value the building for its price, central location, parking and good facilities.

### 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. The meeting has not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8. Plans for change

## **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:* At present draft proposals are being drawn up for the refurbishment of the meeting house; external works will need to take account of the conservation area.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house is currently well used by local groups; future plans to refurbish the building are being considered at present.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* The Friends are currently considering proposals for the refurbishment of the building and closure would therefore seem unlikely if investment is made to improve the facilities in the building. In the event of closure, there is scope for the building to be used as a venue for community groups. The redevelopment of the site would need to take account of the conservation area.

**Part 5: Category: 4**