

Friends Meeting House, High Flatts

9 Quaker Bottom, High Flatts, Huddersfield, HD8 8XU

National Grid Reference: SE 21232 07461



Statement of Significance

High Flatts Meeting House has high heritage significance and has an idyllic location on the edge of the Dearne Valley, within High Flatts Conservation Area. The meeting house was rebuilt in 1754-55, incorporating material from an earlier seventeenth century barn on the same footprint. The interior retains high quality joinery including the gallery with folding shutters.

Evidential value

The fabric of the building has the potential to provide further details on the history of its development and particularly the phases of reconstruction. The

attached burial ground dates back to the eighteenth century and has been extended on a number of occasions in the nineteenth century. The meeting house and the burial ground have high evidential value.

Historical value

This has been a site of Quaker worship since the seventeenth century. The building retains early features, including the Elders' stand and dado panelling. The simple headstones of the burial ground remain. The meeting house and burial ground have high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building has been altered over time, with external changes to the front elevation in 1864 creating the present frontage. The building, together with the burial ground and stone boundary walls form an attractive historic group on the edge of the idyllic Dearne Valley. Collectively the site makes a notable and positive contribution to the local conservation area. The meeting house has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been in Quaker use since the late seventeenth century, with additional community use since the twentieth century. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Central Yorkshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000240*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Kirklees Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Denaby Dale*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1313329*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *High Flatts*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1697; 1754-5; 1864*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *11 July 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Jane Pinder*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Wardens residence*

1.18 Attached burial ground: Yes

1.19 Information sources:

Bower, D. and Knight, J., *Plain Country Friends: Quakers of Wooldale, High Flatts and Midhope*, 1987.

Butler, M.D., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 803-804.

Heritage Inspired, High Flatts Quaker Meeting House, nd

Kirklees Council, *High Flatts Conservation Area Appraisal*, nd

Pinder, J, *Local Meeting Survey*, July 2016

Roberts, H.E., *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History: A Guide to Sources*, University of Hull, 2003, pp. 45. <http://hullhistorycentre.org.uk/quaker/quakerguide.pdf>

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

2.1. Historical background

High Flatts Meeting is recorded from 1678 and is said to have originated from the Denaby Meeting which was established from 1665. There are two theories relating to the origins of Quakerism in the locality, the first involves George Fox who may have travelled through High Flatts on his journey from Balby to Wakefield, and early members of the movement from the area are noted as Henry Jackson of Totties, Henry Dickenson, Thomas Ellis, and John Swift. Secondly, it has been suggested that John Firth from Shepley, the guard of George Fox at Nottingham Castle who deserted in 1642, arranged meetings in a barn which later become High Flatts meeting house.

A barn was in use for meetings at High Flatts from the seventeenth century. The barn was probably altered for meeting house use in 1697 (the date on the date stone to the rear of the building) and conveyed to the trustees in 1701 by Joseph Bayley. The land in front of the meeting house was in use as a burial ground and in 1790 land was purchased to the rear of the site for the burial ground and this was subsequently extended in 1839, 1874 and 1892.

In 1754-55 minutes record repairs to the meeting house at a cost of £29 3s od. These works are likely to have entailed substantial re-building when the building was raised in height and a gallery introduced. At its peak in the late eighteenth century, High Flatts was one of the largest meetings in this part of Yorkshire. Further building work took place in 1831 and by 1864 further substantial changes had occurred including raising the floor level, walls increased in height, the stabling area converted for use as a kitchen and cloakroom, with the upper room merging with the existing gallery, a porch added and the front elevation rebuilt to its present appearance.

Later changes in the late twentieth century and involved the installation of electricity in c1970s and the modernisation of the kitchen and toilet facilities in 1984.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

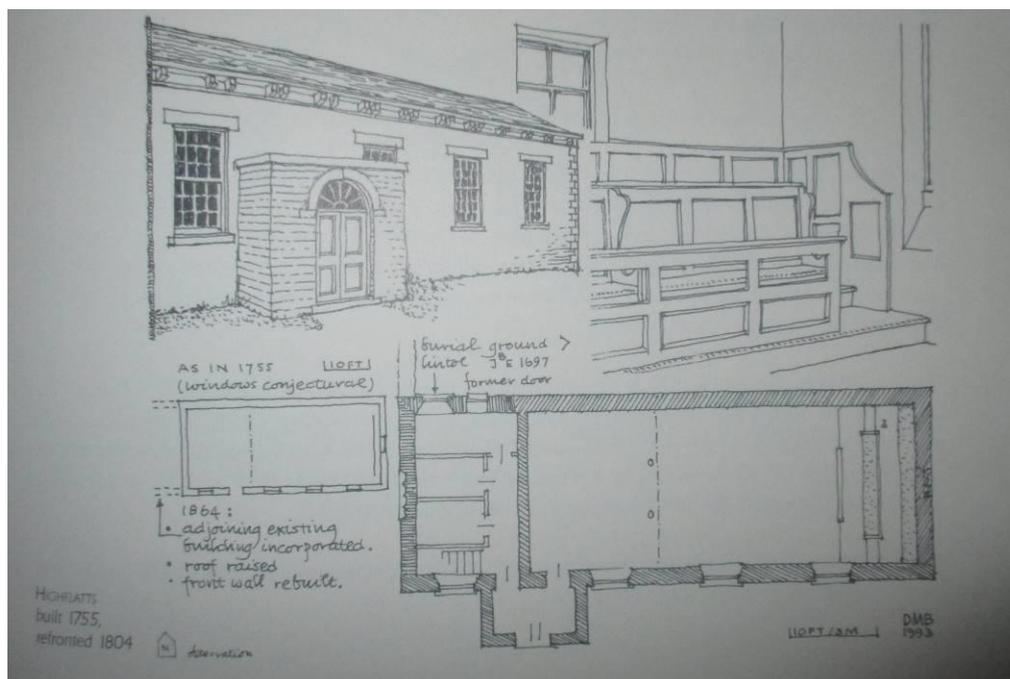


Figure 1: Ground floor plan (not to scale) and perspective
(Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 803)

The meeting house originated as a remodelled barn in the late seventeenth century, substantially rebuilt in 1754-55, and altered in 1864. The meeting house is of oblong plan and built using hammer-dressed stone and quoins to the south and coursed rubble to the rear elevation. The pitched roof is covered in stone slate, a chimney stack to the west gable end, gutters on stone corbels and with stone string course to the south. The main entrance elevation faces the south, with a square stone porch with flat stone slab roof, a double panelled door with semi-circular fanlight and lantern. To the western side of the porch is a 24-paned sash window, and to the eastern end of the elevation three 24-paned sash windows with stone headers and sills, and ventilation grills below. The west gable consists of a 4-light stone mullioned window and to the east a single light within the apex and a 6-paned sliding sash window below. The elevation shows signs of scarring which may relate to when the building was altered and raised in height in the nineteenth century. The rear elevation to the north provides the most visible evidence of the building's former use as a barn, with different phases of masonry, three infilled windows at lower level and a further infilled window to the western end. The far west of the elevation is of two storeys and comprises of two 4-light sash windows at ground level (one in a former door opening) and offset above two 16-paned sliding sash windows and a stone lintel inscribed with J B E 1697 (Joseph and Elizabeth Bayley).

Internally, the porch has two door openings providing access to the main meeting room to the east and the staircase to the west leading to an additional meeting room within the gallery space. The interior of the meeting room is rectangular in plan and entered from the south-west end. The walls are painted to dado height apart from the east wall where fielded panels are located, also painted. The raised Elder's stand is at the east end of the room, with fixed benches with fielded panelled backs. To the west is the gallery with panelled shutters supported on two cast iron columns. From the ceiling hangs a central wrought iron candelabra.

2.3. Loose furnishings

The seating consists of open-backed pine benches with turned front arm supports.



Figure 2: Open-backed pine bench

2.4. Attached burial ground

Land at the front of the meeting house was initially used as a burial ground until further plots were purchased to the north in 1790, 1874 and 1892. An undated plan of the burial ground indicates the extent of the plots to the north of the meeting house. The burial ground is still open for burials and the scattering of ashes. The gravestones have a uniform character, with rows of round headed headstones with basic information inscribed including name, date of death and age only. The burial records cover the period from 1874 and are located within the meeting house. The burial ground is bounded by a dry stone wall with half- round coping stones.



Figure 3: Plan of the burial ground, nd (High Flatts MH Archive)

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The hamlet of High Flatts is located approximately 9 miles southeast of Huddersfield. The meeting house and burial ground fall within the boundaries of High Flatts conservation area. Part of the conservation area centres on Quaker Bottom, which historically was home to Quaker families and includes several Grade II listed buildings, Green Hollows, Low House, Low House Farmhouse and the meeting house itself. The buildings in this area form a small cluster of buildings generally dating from the eighteenth or nineteenth century, characteristically built in stone and of two storeys. The meeting house can be accessed from Quaker Bottom via a small gated entrance, and a path leads to the meeting house. The meeting house and burial ground is bounded by a dry stone wall, with a small garden to the south and the large burial ground to the north.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at Grade II.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The West Yorkshire Archaeological Advisory Service was consulted and no Historic Environment Records are associated with the site. Overall, the archaeological potential of the site, including the burial ground, is considered to be high.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal / satisfactory.

3.2. Maintenance

A recent quinquennial survey has not taken place, but the Friends have a system of yearly inspections which is brought to the attention of the Area Meeting Finance and Property Committee/ Trustees. The meeting currently has enough money to maintain and repair the meeting house

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. The following measures have been implemented to reduce its environmental impact. This includes:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: Changed to a green supplier (Good Energy).
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: Maintenance programme is currently in process.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: use of green recycling bin.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats. Sheep are used in the burial ground to graze the grass.

3.4. Amenities

Whilst in principle the meeting house has all the amenities it needs, including a kitchen, toilets and an additional meeting space located within the gallery, the facilities are dated, considered to be inadequate and require improvement. There is a resident warden located in accommodation separate to the meeting house. The meeting house is not served by local transport.

3.5. Access

There is one small step to the front entrance. Inside, there is level access to the main meeting room but restricted access to the gallery. There are no specific facilities for the partially-sighted, no hearing loop installed and no fully accessible toilet facilities.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 3 hours each week. The meeting house is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 80 hours per week and is used for an average of 4 hours each week. There are two rooms available to hire; the main meeting room and a meeting room at first floor. The meeting does not have a formal lettings policy. Organisations and individuals that are generally in keeping with Friends testimonies are able to use the building. The use of alcohol is prohibited. Free use of the meeting house is permitted for Quaker-led activities events. Users value the building for its peaceful location, competitive letting rate and the heritage of the building.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

No heritage crime has been recorded, and the area is generally well cared-for and has low levels of crime and deprivation. In the past, there have been incidents of vandalism in the burial ground which was reported to the police. The Friends have not considered developing a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

The Friends are currently in the process of implementing some improvements to the building, particularly the repair of the windows. In the future, the meeting plans to modernise the facilities at the meeting house.

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 the meeting house does not meet the needs of the local Meeting. The Friends require improved facilities and as a listed building alterations would need to be carefully considered; there is scope for sensitive change.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: As above, the facilities require improvement to allow for wider uses. Should community use increase and require alterations, these could probably be accommodated if designed in a sympathetic manner.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: It would seem unlikely that the meeting house would be laid down as considerable investment is expected to be made in the near future by the Friends to improve the building. In the regrettable event of closure, an appropriate new use would be needed, subject to heritage and planning constraints.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description (s)

Name: **FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE**

List entry Number: 1313329

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, PENISTONE ROAD

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

County:

District: Kirklees

District Type: Metropolitan Authority

Parish: Denby Dale

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 29-Mar-1965

List entry Description

SE 20 NW PENISTONE ROAD High Flatts 4/48 Friends Meeting House 29.3.65 G.V. II

Quaker Meeting House. Probably early C19, though earlier origin. Hammer dressed stone. Quoins. Stone slate roof with paired gutter brackets. Thinly coursed rubble to rear, part of earlier building. Good ashlar stack with cornice. Tall single storey meeting room, two storeys to left. 4 bays with large 24-pane sash windows with crown glass. Square stone porch with single stone slab roof. Double, panelled door with semi-circular fanlight with radial glazing bars. Reset door lintel at rear inscribed: B J E 1697

Interior: the meeting room has contemporary furniture. Loose benches arranged around centre. At front, tiers of fixed benches with fielded panelled backs. Gallery at rear with similar panelled front and shutters, on two cast iron columns. Central wrought iron candelabra.

1st meeting said to have been founded by John Firth circa 1700.

Listing NGR: SE2123207461