

Friends Meeting House, Huntingdon

48a Post Street, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire PE29 2AQ

National Grid Reference: TL 24441 70734



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has high heritage value as a former public house with parts dating to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Evidential value

The building consists of several parts, of which the oldest appears to date from the seventeenth century. The fabric of the building may reveal more about its evolution, and the site has high archaeological potential as Post Street has Roman origins. The building and site have high evidential value.

Historical value

Relatively little is known about the history of the building before its conversion for use as a meeting house. It has historical value for its former use (from at least c.1886) as a public house, and for its later association with the Quakers. The building has high historical value, mainly due to its illustrative value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a picturesque and accretive building in the local vernacular tradition, with Georgian-style symmetrical sash windows. The older part of the wing is more irregular in its proportions and elevations which lend it picturesqueness. Overall, the building has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house building has high communal significance as a former public house (until the late 1960s), and now as a Quaker meeting house, which is also partly used by local community groups and a nursery.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Cambridgeshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0004360*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Huntingdonshire District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Godmanchester*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1128605*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Godmanchester (Post Street)*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *17th century; late 18th century; 19th century*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *10 July 2014*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *David Bale*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 273–4
Huntingdonshire District Council, 'Godmanchester (Post Street), Conservation Area Character Statement', 2002
Huntingdonshire District Council, planning database
Hunts Post, 14 September 1972
Heritage Gateway, entry for early medieval remains, 44 Post St, Godmanchester, CHER Number: 02585
Local Meeting survey by David Bale (2014) and Neil Simmons (2015)
Information from Graham Waterhouse

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

2.1 Historical background

In 1672, the Huntingdon meeting acquired a burial ground on which they built a meeting house in c.1685. The location of another (detached) burial ground in the town has not been identified (Butler). The meeting was discontinued in 1860 and the meeting house building let from 1873. In 1907 it was repaired and reopened for ten years until in 1917 it finally closed, and was demolished in 1931.

In 1968–9, the Rose and Crown pub in Godmanchester was bought for £3,200. It comprised a late eighteenth-century building fronting the street and behind it an earlier, possibly seventeenth-century rear block whose thatched roof had been covered by corrugated iron, and the rear part of the wing (possibly of the nineteenth century). The necessary alterations (architect: Dennis Adams) cost £6,000 and included remodelling the easternmost end of the wing as a meeting room, the conversion of the seventeenth-century block into a kitchen and the conversion of the front part into flatlets (*Hunts Post*, 14 September 1972). A new entrance area with toilets was added in the courtyard-facing side of the L-shaped building. The meeting house was in use from Christmas 1971 and was formally opened in September 1972. In 2000, internal alterations were made to the toilets (architect: Graham Waterhouse). The front part of the building (no. 48) continues to be rented out, while the meeting uses the ground floor of the seventeenth-century rear block and the 1969–72 meeting room (which together form no. 48A).

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The street elevation faces southwest. The whole building is L-shaped in plan, with the late eighteenth-century building to the southwest, followed by a rear wing with a seventeenth-century central block and an end block (possibly of the nineteenth century). Along the north (courtyard-facing) side of the rear wing is a narrow flat-roofed entrance block with toilets (1969–72).

The late eighteenth-century building facing the street (photo top left, p. 1) is built of brick (now painted), with a tiled hipped mansard roof. At either end are brick stacks. The street elevation has three bays: the (modern) entrance door in the centre, flanked by two 8-over-8 sashes (set into originally wider openings), with two dormers above. The south corner is chamfered. The northwest side elevation has a modern side door, a casement window at first-floor level and a window to the raised basement or cellar. The interior was not inspected.

The seventeenth-century block has a brick base with rendered timber-framing above, a steeply pitched roof (of corrugated iron over thatch) and a central brick chimneystack. The southeast elevation has four small-paned windows to the ground floor and one casement to

the first floor. The ground floor of this part of the building contains two low-ceiled rooms (one of which has a large fireplace (photo bottom right, p. 1), the other is now the kitchen), both with chamfered beams, as well as a small cellar room only a few steps below ground level. Above are a small first-floor room to the west (used in conjunction with the front residence and not inspected) and an attic on the east side of the central stack; the latter has lath-and-plaster walls and ceiling (the photo bottom left on page 1 shows the attic room to the east of the stack).

The easternmost rear part of the wing is more difficult to date. It has been suggested that this was built in c.1969–72 on the site of an earlier building but the brickwork looks older. It is a brick structure with a tiled pitched roof. It has two three-light mullion and transom windows to the south and two square gable windows to the east. Internally it is open to the king-post roof and has a timber-panelled ceiling (photo centre right, p. 1). To the north, the former external wall has been removed and the room extends into the 1969–72 entrance block (photo centre left and right, p. 1).

2.3 Loose furnishings

None of particular note

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/a

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located close to the centre of Godmanchester. Post Street has an urban character but the buildings are generally in residential rather than commercial use. Neighbouring buildings are largely residential, of brick or timber-framed. To the east is the medieval parish church, set within a large graveyard. To the south of the meeting house is Church Place, an L-shaped cul-de-sac. Roughly opposite the meeting house is a car park. The key view of the meeting house is the street elevation. The small courtyard to the north of the meeting house is largely used as a nursery playground.

2.6. Listed status

The building is currently listed grade II which is considered appropriate. The list entry (see Part 6) is very brief and does not describe the rear wing or the interior. It would benefit from the correction of a typo, general clarification of the sequence of building and amplification.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The origins of the settlement at Godmanchester date back to the Roman period. Post Street, the principal thoroughfare towards the river crossing, is thought to be part of the Roman Ermine Street, from York to London. Archaeological excavations at nearby 44 Post Street in the 1970s have found medieval floors, pits, pottery and a fourteenth-century town ditch. The archaeological potential of the meeting house site is thought to be high.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Fair
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *N/a*

3.2 Maintenance

There are problems with rising damp throughout the building, probably due to the use of impermeable paint on the exterior. The last QI was undertaken by Cheffins in 2011. The meeting has enough money for routine repairs. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan which is based on the QI.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: the meeting monitors energy use and has discussed ways to reduce this with the nursery that uses the premises during the week.
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: the meeting has instituted an agreed system that all users including the nursery follow.
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: double-glazed windows installed in gable end.
- Transport: green book kept for recording 'green savings' on road fuel which is then spent on tropical trees.

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate and would not consider obtaining one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the required amenities. There is no resident warden. The meeting is accessible by public transport but there are no buses on Sundays. The train station is one mile away. There is no on-site car parking (apart from disabled parking) but a free car park is located opposite. There are no bike racks but ample space for parking bikes.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is fully accessible, apart from one small internal step between the hall and kitchen. There is an accessible WC, level access and a hearing loop. There are no specific facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was carried out in c.2000.

3.6 Community use

Friends use the meeting house for 2 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 45 hours per week. It is used for an average of 26-32 hours per week (as the nursery runs only in term time). The meeting has a lettings policy. Use of the meeting house is only free of charge for Quaker groups or Churches Together meetings or events. Users value the meeting house for its good location, warmth, quiet, competitive pricing and size of accommodation.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area has generally low crime levels and there are no signs of ongoing or recent crime or anti-social behaviour on the site. There was a burglary in 2014 (reported to police) and a previous incident of attempted lead theft from the roof (within the last two years). There is no established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

There are currently (2015) 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: The actual meeting room is a large flexible space which should not require any alterations in the medium term. There are no furnishings of note but the planform and features of the older parts of the building should be respected and retained.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is already in use by local community groups (including a nursery) and has all the facilities to support these.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: In the event of closure, a new sympathetic use will need to be found for the building, possibly including the front part which is currently let. The building has already been converted at least once to a new use, and could be adapted again, if sympathetically handled.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description(s)

List entry Number: 1128605

Location

48, POST STREET

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
Cambridgeshire	Huntingdonshire	District Authority	Godmanchester

Grade: II

Date first listed: 28-Nov-1950

Date of most recent amendment: 27-May-1977

Details

Godmanchester POST STREET 1. 5140 (East Side) No 48 (formerly listed as Rose and Crown Inn) TL 2470 4/54 28.11.50. II GV

2. Late C18, altered and modernized. Brick, painted. One storey and attic, 2 windows with glazing bars and recesses on sides of windows for shutters. Central modern door. flipped mansard tile roof with brick end stacks. 2 dormers. Probably older rear wing with central brick stacks.

Listing NGR: TL2444170734