

Quaker Meeting House, Ipswich

39 Fonnereau Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 3JH

National Grid Reference: TM 16326 44954



Statement of Significance

The building has medium heritage significance as an example of a nineteenth-century house adapted for a meeting house in the 1930s. Its aesthetic value and setting has been diminished by twentieth century additions to the front.

Evidential value

Although this building dates from the mid-nineteenth century, it has only been a meeting house since the 1930s. Its evidential value as a meeting house is therefore low, although the surviving bench from the previous meeting house is of high evidential value.

Historical value

The present meeting house is a mid-nineteenth-century villa, adapted and extended in the 1930s, as a replacement for a meeting house built in Ipswich in 1700 (demolished in c1990). This had an attached burial ground, and was altered and extended at various times. The building is of medium historical value, as part of the nineteenth-century development of the Christchurch Park area with smart new houses, but its historical value as a meeting house is considered to be low.

Aesthetic value

As an attractive mid-nineteenth-century classical house which makes a positive contribution to a part of the conservation area dominated by buildings of that era, the meeting house is of high aesthetic value. However, the twentieth century additions are of low aesthetic value, and the alterations at the front have detracted from the aesthetic value of the building.

Communal value

The building is used by the local community as well as for worship by the meeting. It is also a positive feature in the conservation area, opposite a popular public park, and can be appreciated by local people and visitors who may not be users of the building. It is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Ipswich and Diss*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0007310*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Ipswich Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Ipswich*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed, not locally listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Central Ipswich*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c1860; 1935; 1972*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *3 July 2014*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Mike Medhurst*
- 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. 2, pp. 573–5
An Account of the Estates etc. belonging to Suffolk Quarterly Meeting, second edition, Ipswich, 1868
A brief history of Quakers in Ipswich, typed notes provided by LM

Ipswich Borough Council online register of planning applications,
<https://ppc.ipswich.gov.uk/appnresults.asp>
Local Meeting survey by Mike Medhurst, June 2014 and November 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

George Fox visited Ipswich in 1699, and a timber-framed meeting house was built in College Street (near the site of Cardinal Wolsey's projected college) in the following year. The builder was Joseph Clarke, who sold it to the Friends, including 'seats, benches, forms, partitions', along with the adjoining cottage and sufficient land for a burial ground, for £200. Clarke also built the Unitarian Meeting House at about the same time (next door to Norman Foster's Willis building, and like that building also listed grade I).

In 1797 a piece of ground next door to the meeting house was purchased, and a further (larger) building erected, seating about 500. This was of brick, with a hipped slate roof, with an avenue approach from Bank Street (see figure 1). It opened in 1799, whereupon the 1700 building became the women's meeting room.

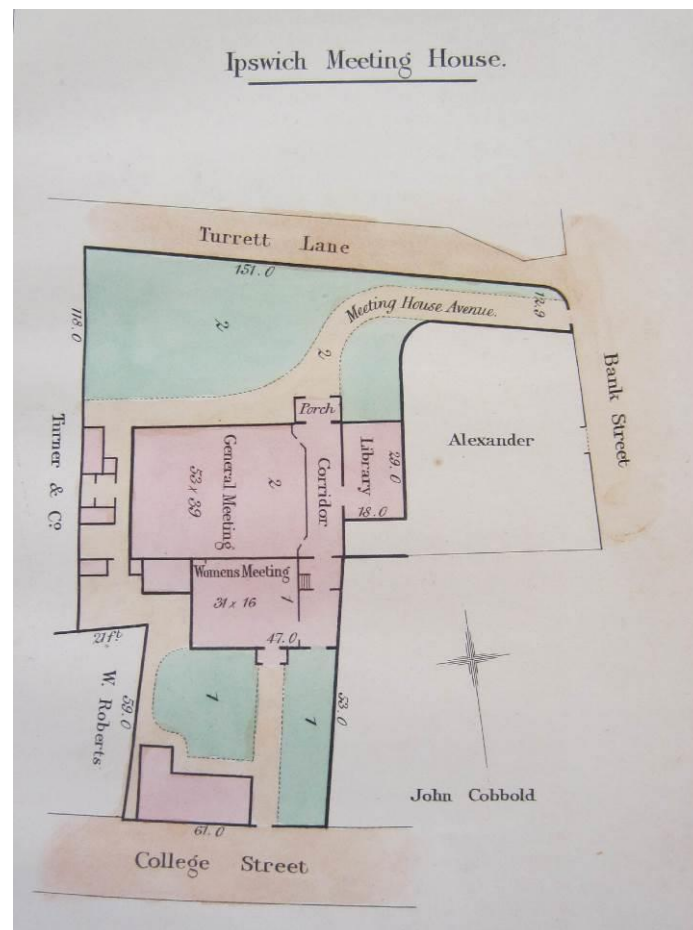


Figure 1: The College Street site, from *An Account of the Estates etc. belonging to Suffolk Quarterly Meeting*, 1868

The burial ground was extended in 1820 but was closed in 1856, when Friends obtained land in the new town cemetery (opened 1855).

In 1858 land to the east of the meeting house was given for a library addition by the Quaker banker Henry Alexander (shown on figure 1). At this time, Quaker families (such as the Ransomes, Corders, Frys and Collinsons) were prominent in the civic life of the town.

In the twentieth century the College Street area became more industrial and commercial in character, and was no longer considered a suitable location for a meeting house. In 1924 the site was sold to Burton Son & Saunders, sugar refiners, who converted the meeting house to a warehouse. The burial ground was initially retained by the Friends but was later sold and incorporated into the commercial use of the site.

For over ten years, meetings were held in hired premises, until in 1935 a mid-nineteenth-century house in Fonnereau Road was purchased, and extended to the rear with a new meeting room seating about 100. A warden's flat was provided upstairs. This was formally opened in 1936. The external appearance of the building about this time is shown at figure 2. In 1972-3 a small hall was added at the side of the property (agents Porte & Partners, London EC2, for the Trustees of Woodbridge United Charities). It is likely that the adaptation of the ground floor bay window at the front (compare photo top right and figure 2) took place at the same time.

The remains of the old meeting house in College Street were demolished in c1990 and at the time of writing the site is used for surface car parking, pending redevelopment. In 2001 a desk-based assessment was carried out by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archsearch/record.jsf>).



Fig.2: Leaving an early meeting at Fonnereau Road, c1936 (photo held at local meeting)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The house is a red brick classical villa of c1860 with a hipped slate roof with overhanging eaves, painted stucco dressings and plate glass sash windows. The main entrance originally had a simple doorcase surround with Doric pilasters (figure 2), which has been reused or copied in an enlarged porch (photo top left, p. 1). This adaptation probably took place in 1972, along with the removal of the original bay window with cast iron cresting (shown in figure 2) and its replacement with a larger bay with modern fenestration.

The meeting room (photo bottom left, p. 1) was added at the back of the property in c1935, and is typical of its date, with Crittall-type windows and ceiling detail of a simple Art Deco

character. There are further additions at the side dating from c1972, housing additional meeting rooms, kitchens etc.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no historic furnishings, apart from one small bench in the entrance porch (photo bottom right, p. 1), which is said to have come from the old meeting house.

2.4 Attached burial ground

None.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is set back on the west side of Fonnereau Road, a street characterised by detached Victorian villas similar to this or larger, and mainly still in residential use. There is a small garden area at the back, overlooking the town swimming pool. Lying opposite at the front is Christchurch Park, the main public open space in the town (Christchurch Mansion stands on the site of a medieval priory). The site lies within Ipswich's Central Conservation Area.

2.6 Listed status

The building is not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing. It is not locally listed and is not identified in the council's conservation area appraisal as a building of local architectural interest, perhaps on account of the external alterations of c1972. However the building is characteristic of the area, and notwithstanding the alterations at the front makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The site is not known to have archaeological potential. It is well to the north of the historic (Saxon/Medieval) core of the town, and was not developed significantly until the nineteenth century.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting house: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground: Not applicable

3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in 2014. The local meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and is gradually implementing measures. Existing measures include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: light bulbs are energy efficient; heating is turned on only as required and lights etc. turned off when not required; insulation is fitted.
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: careful use of energy and water; green waste is composted; general waste is recycled where possible.

- Building maintenance & refurbishment: the building maintained and decorated on a regular basis.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: there is a garden area where Meeting House users may sit, with bird feeders and an area for bug life; the garden is maintained with flowers to encourage bees etc., and is a peaceful place to sit; planting of wild flower area.
- Transport: cycle racks are provided and the meeting house is accessible by public transport; encouragement is given to the use of these.

The meeting has an Energy Performance Certificate (energy efficiency level: D). There were no recommendations on the certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs; these are all located in the meeting house. There is a resident warden whose accommodation is part of the meeting house.

The meeting house is accessible by public transport, has on-site parking and bicycle parking.

3.5 Access

The building is on two different levels, both of which are accessible via ramps. There is an accessible WC, a hearing loop, as well as facilities and assistance for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit has been undertaken and is ongoing. Measures implemented include the installation of two ramps and the provision of large-print signage where possible.

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 56 hours per week. It is used for an average of 40 hours per week. The lettings policy excludes users who are at odds with Quaker principles. No gambling or alcohol is allowed. Free use is awarded on the decision of the Premises Committee. Users value the building for its central location, good facilities, competitive pricing and friendliness.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area has some deprivation and fairly high levels of unemployment, with some known drug abuse problems. There has been some vandalism, with damage to windows and the fence, both recently repaired. Heritage crime includes the theft of lead in c.2000 from the Library roof. There is an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

The meeting is currently (2015) planning to replace some windows with double-glazed units.

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: Apart from one bench, there are no historic features or furnishings which would need to be taken into account when considering internal change for the purposes of worship.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is amenable to extended uses, which already take place.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: The building could revert to residential use, although the additions at the side and rear mean that it might be better suited to an appropriate commercial use (subject to planning).

Part 5: Category: 3