

Friends Meeting House, Keighley

Strawberry Street, Keighley, BD21 3BA

National Grid Reference: SE 06074 41726



Statement of Significance

Keighley Quaker Meeting House is an attractive compact stone building constructed in 1936. It is significant as the latest building associated with the Quakers who have been present in the Keighley area since the 1650s. The building is a modest example of inter-war architecture designed in domestic style.

Evidential value

The building has low evidential value, as a 1930s building built on a former Victorian garden.

Historical value

It is significant as the latest building associated with local Quakers who first met in Keighley in the 1650s. Previous meeting houses in the town have been demolished.

Aesthetic value

The building has medium significance as a modest example of inter-war architecture designed in domestic style by local architect Joseph Wood. The well-tended garden and stone walls enhance its aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is significant as the place used for Quaker meetings in Keighley since 1936, and is also now well-used by local community groups.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Craven & Keighley*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015620*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Bradford Metropolitan District Council*

- 1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Keighley*
- 1.7 Listed status: *No listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date: *1936; c1990*
- 1.13 Architect: *Joseph J Wood; Anthony Dalby*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *13 June 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Richard Vesey*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

D.Butler, *The Quakers Meeting Houses of Britain*, Vol 2, 1999, p807

A Short History of Keighley Meeting (undated notes in the meeting house)

Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project: <http://www.eservices.hull.ac.uk/quaker/index.cfm>

Volunteer survey by Richard Vesey, January 2016

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

2.1. Historical background

A Quaker meeting was established in Keighley from about 1653, after William Dewsbury and Thomas Stubbs from Ives Delves in Warley visited that year. Early meetings were held in the homes of local Friends, including Calversike Hill, home of Thomas Brigg. In c1659, he gave a plot of land for a burial ground near his home, off what is now North Dean Street (extant). In 1700, the growing number of Friends led to the purchase of a property for use as a meeting house on Mill Street in Keighley, for £41. The first meeting there was held in 1709; there were about 80 members in the first half of the eighteenth century. A small burial ground was associated with the meeting house. The meeting house was either rebuilt in 1797, or a new building acquired on the same street. The meeting was in decline and the building was let for a school from 1807; by 1855 it had been discontinued. The meeting revived in 1872 and the Mill Street (Upper Green) building was repaired and re-opened in 1877. An adult school opened in 1882. The building was demolished in 1938 as part of the Westgate redevelopment. In 1936 plans were drawn for a new meeting house by J.J.Wood; a larger building shown on plans in the archive was rejected in favour of the current smaller meeting house which cost about £1100. The plot was a former garden on the east side of Skipton Road, alongside Strawberry Street. The first meeting was held on 27 September 1936. In c1990, the building was refurbished to provide a new kitchen and children's room in the

former library, with improved access facilities; the architect was Anthony Dalby. The Briggs were notable early Quakers in the Keighley area; from the early nineteenth century John Brigg & Co ran worsted mills in Calversike and Brow End.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house built in 1936 is constructed of coursed rock-faced sandstone, with ashlar details, a concrete tiled roof and cast-iron rainwater goods. The site slopes to the east, so that the building is single-storey to the west with a basement to the east end. The building is arranged on a T-plan with ancillary spaces and the entrance in the short arm facing Skipton Road, and the meeting house in the long arm to the east, with basement below. The front elevation facing Skipton Road is symmetrical with a central gabled entrance porch; the lintel is inscribed FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE 1936 and the inner double doors are panelled with transom light. Either side are 2-light timber casements. The rear and side elevations have similar 2 or 3-light timber casements, and a projecting chimney stack to the south—east serving the boiler. The basement entrance to the south side is down steps with iron railings.

Inside, the meeting house is simply arranged with a new central lobby and facilities to either side created in c1990. The meeting room to the east end of the building has windows on three sides with a pine panelled screen to the fourth (west) side. This unpainted screen is evocative of timber screens in early meeting houses and contains two blocked doors that previously connected to the library. The central double doors were inserted in matching style in c1990. The walls and ceiling are plainly plastered with a simple coving, and the floor is carpeted. The ceiling grille relates to the former ridge ventilator (removed).

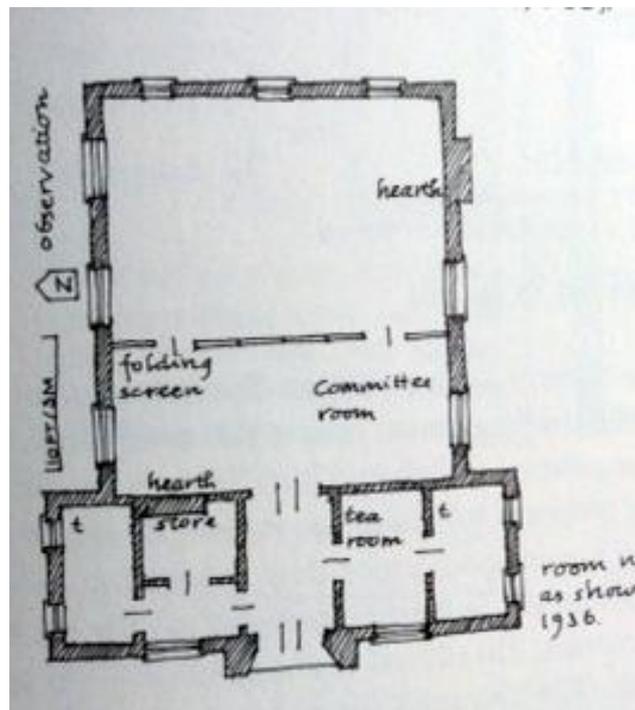


Fig.1: reconstructed plan from David Butler, 1991, page 807

2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting house has three pine benches with turned legs and plain back rail, probably made in the nineteenth century.



Fig.2: one of three pine benches

2.4. Attached burial ground

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is on the north side of Keighley town centre, set on a plot below the east side of the busy Skipton Road, at the junction with Strawberry Street which slopes steeply to the east. The area is residential with large nineteenth century villas and terraces set in leafy gardens on Skipton Road, and late twentieth century housing to the east of the meeting house. The high retaining wall along the east side Skipton Road is stone with weathered copings, with a small pedestrian entrance on the street corner. The meeting house stands in an attractive garden with trees and shrubs; Open Garden days are regularly held.



Fig.3: meeting house and garden viewed from the south-west

There is a detached Quaker burial ground, marked on historic maps as Briggs Sepulchre, towards the east end of North Dean Street on the west edge of Keighley (NGR SE 054 412). Further into the Dales to the south-west of Keighley there is a burial ground at Horton Croft in Stanbury (SE008 370). Stanbury was historically part of the same monthly meeting.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and as a plain 1930s building is not considered to be listable. It has some local interest and could be eligible for a local list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

West Yorkshire AAS consulted no HER record. Prior to the meeting house being built, the plot was in use as a garden; the archaeological potential is low.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

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

3.2. Maintenance

There has not been a recent QI. The building is managed by a buildings sub-committee, but without a 5-year maintenance plan. The meeting reports that there are probably insufficient funds for maintenance and repairs. The garden is managed by volunteers with a rota for cutting the grass.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has taken some steps to reduce environmental impact:

Climate change and energy efficiency: improved insulation, and use low energy light bulbs.

Resource use and waste: the meeting recycles waste and makes garden compost.

Building maintenance: double glazed windows.

Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the garden is managed for wildlife with plenty of shrubs and flowers.

Transport: a mini bus is used for visits.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has the facilities it needs, with one large meeting room, a smaller room for meetings, kitchen with water boiler and toilets.

3.5. Access

Disabled access was improved in the late 1980s and the meeting house is fully accessible, with a ramped path to the entrance and a toilet suitable for people with disabilities. There is a hearing loop, but no particular facilities for partially sighted people.

The meeting house is close to the town centre with a bus stop on Skipton Road. There is parking on the street and secure parking for bicycles in the basement.

3.6 Community Use

Quakers use the building for four hours per week, on average. It is available for a maximum of 54 hours per week and is let for up to 27 hours per week. There is no specific lettings policy, but some general rules apply and bookings are treated on a case by case basis; no more than 40 people can be accommodated at a time, no indoor bouncy castles are allowed for children's parties and religious groups are vetted. The meeting house is popular with local Asian groups. It is liked as it is inexpensive, close to the town centre and warm.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There is no evidence of general crime or heritage crime, but there has been some minor anti-social behaviour such as drug-use and minor vandalism. Incidents have not been reported to the local police. The area is generally well cared-for, but there is some deprivation in the area.

3.8. Plans for change

The meeting has plans to improve the setting with new noticeboards and path improvements.

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: there is scope to alter the meeting house internally without affecting its heritage value, and the exterior could also be changed subject to planning.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: there is probably scope for more community use using the existing facilities, and change is possible.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: if the meeting house were to be laid down, the building could be adapted for another use, including community or residential use. As it is not in a conservation area nor listed there are no statutory heritage constraints to demolition and site redevelopment.

Part 5: Category: 3