

Friends Meeting House, Kelso

12 Abbey Row, Kelso, TD5 7JF

National Grid Reference: NT 72884 33973



Statement of Significance

The meeting house at Kelso has some heritage significance as a former service wing at the rear of a listed Georgian town house. It was adapted for Quaker use in 2000, and retains a few historic features, but most of the interior is modern.

Evidential value

The site and grounds may have archaeological potential, as Kelso has origins as a medieval town.

Historical value

The building has medium historical value as part of a late Georgian domestic site in Kelso. It has been associated with the Quakers for less than 20 years, and has low significance for this connection.

Aesthetic value

The building has high architectural value as part of the rear wing to a late Georgian town house, retaining its historic domestic character and features such as sash windows and two plain fireplaces. The walled garden accessed from Abbey Row is part of the setting.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a place of Quaker worship since 2000 and as a building valued by the wider community.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *South East Scotland*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0032680*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Scottish Borders Council*
- 1.5 Historic Environment Scotland: *The Scottish Borders*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Kelso*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Grade B*
- 1.8 Reference: *LB35860*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Kelso*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *Early 19th century*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *29 June 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Marianne Butler*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 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. 882.

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

2.1. Historical background

In the nineteenth century, Friends had a meeting house and burial ground on The Butts, but the meeting declined and by the early twentieth century, the small group of Kelso Friends were meeting in each other's homes. In 2000, Friends bought the existing building, previously in use as a café with bed and breakfast accommodation, and obtained planning permission to convert it to a meeting house. The building appears to have been built for as a

service wing to the rear of 33-35 Woodmarket (the Priory); it is said to have been a coach house, although the fabric suggests it was probably also built for domestic use. The interior was altered for business use in the late twentieth century.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building dates from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and is attached to the rear 3-storey wing of a large house fronting Woodmarket, the street to the north. The 2-storey, 6-window building is built with the gable end facing Abbey Row, to the south. The building is built of roughly coursed local stone, with tooled quoins; it may have been harled in the past. The slate roof has galvanised steel ridge, coped verges to the south gable and cast-iron rainwater goods. There are two chimney stacks to the ridge. The front elevation faces east onto the garden, and has four 12-pane sashes, one small window and two modern glazed doors to the ground floor and six sashes to the first floor. The sashes appear to be the originals. The rear elevation faces a vennel to the west, and is largely blind apart from two historic doorways (one blocked and one with a boarded door), an inserted doorway, a small opening to the left end (probably a former coal chute) and two small inserted windows. The gable end to south has a late twentieth century bow window to the ground floor, probably in an earlier opening, with a modern door to the right, and two 12-pane sashes to the first floor.

The interior has one large room towards the south end, lit by windows facing east. The west wall is fair-faced masonry, as the internal plaster has been removed, with a blocked door towards the south end. There is a chimney breast at the north end of the room, with plain stone surround and cast-iron grate, typical of c.1800 and the type found in cottages and small houses. The room has a modern pine floor and plasterboard ceiling. North of the chimney breast is a small lobby and ancillary rooms, with a modern staircase leading to the first floor. The first floor is arranged with a corridor along the west wall, and rooms facing east or south. The south room is used as a library, and has a plain stone fireplace and sashes with shutters.

2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting house does not contain any historic benches; new seating was acquired in c.2000.

2.4. Attached burial ground

N/A

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is just to the south of the town centre, accessed along a vennel and from Abbey Row. Kelso is an attractive and busy market town in the Borders area on the banks of the rivers Tweed and Teviot. It attracts some tourism. The town is characterised by mostly Georgian architecture, but has medieval origins. The late eighteenth century octagonal parish church is located to the south of the meeting house with a large burial ground, and to the south-west stand the ruins of Kelso Priory. The meeting house has a small garden on its east side, enclosed by a high stone wall along Abbey Row, with modern steel gates.

2.6. Listed status

The building appears to be covered by the Category B listing that applies to Nos 33-35 Woodmarket, although it is not specifically mentioned in the listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

It has not been possible to obtain information from a curatorial archaeologist on this site, but the site's location in relation to Woodmarket and the arrangement of historic property

boundaries, suggests that this may be on a medieval burgage plot. In this case, there may be some below-ground archaeological potential within the grounds and below the meeting house.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good

In 2015 a QI was completed by John Renshaw Architects; the key works recommended in the 2010 QI had been undertaken. Work recommended for the next five years including overhauling sash windows, some stonework repair, improved insulation to the roof and checking the electrical system.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/A

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting reports that it does not have enough funds for maintenance. There is a 5-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has taken some measures and plans to do more:

Climate change & energy efficiency: New windows & insulation planned for next 5 years

Resource use, recycling & waste management: Recycling of waste wherever possible

Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: The garden is attractive to birds and bees.

Transport: Encourage lift-sharing/public transport

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has good facilities including the large ground floor Meeting Room, three smaller rooms on the first floor, a library, four individual WCs (three with sinks), a shower, and ground floor kitchen. There is limited on-site parking.

3.5. Access

A Disability Access Audit has not been carried out, but the meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is a WC suitable for disabled people, and a hearing loop, but no facilities for partially-sighted people.

Public transport to the meeting house is good on weekdays and Saturdays but on Sunday the bus service does not coincide with Meeting. There is space for three or four cars on the site, particularly used for those with mobility issues

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 2-4 hours per week. It is available for up to 450 hours in total, and actual community use is 30 hours. The meeting has a Lettings Policy which covers the usual Quaker criteria. It is popular because of the good location, facilities and because it is 'a lovely space'.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There is no evidence of general crime, heritage crime or anti-social behaviour. Generally this is a well-cared for area with low crime levels, low deprivation, and high community confidence. Police have not been involved.

3.8. Plans for change

The meeting intends to follow the recommendations in the QI on windows and insulation, but no alterations are planned.

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 building is listed as part of a separate property, which may limit changes to the exterior and parts of the interior. But as most of the interior is fairly modern, there may be scope to remodel the layout, subject to consent.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the same points above apply to wider use.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the meeting house could easily be returned to residential use, if the meeting decided to relocate.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Summary

33-35 Woodmarket, The Priory

Item No 177

Information

- Category: B
- Date Added: 02/07/1980

Location

- Local Authority: Scottish Borders
- Planning Authority: Scottish Borders
- Burgh: Kelso

National Grid Reference

- NGR NT 72876 33992
- Coordinates 372876, 633992

Description

Early 19th century, 3 storey, 3 bay centre door with moulded architrave and triglyph frieze, windows retain original 12 pane double sash glazing. Droved ashlar front with raised angle

quoins and cill-course at 1st floor. Moulded cornice and blocking course, straight skews, slated; roof brick end stacks; harled flanks, 3 storey wing to rear.

Statement of Special Interest

References

Bibliography