

Friends Meeting House, Lancaster

Meeting House Lane, Lancaster, LA1 1TX

National Grid Reference: SD 47298 61681



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has high significance as a good example of a meeting house dating from the late seventeenth century. Its large size reflects the building's use for regional meetings in the eighteenth century. It has an attractive setting within a large burial ground in the historic core of Lancaster and the exterior preserves its historic character and appearance. There are some original interior fittings and features, although the interior has been altered.

Evidential value

The meeting house has a complex building history involving successive enlargement which is evidence of the resources of local Friends and the need to accommodate Northern meetings. The building and site has high evidential significance, in use since the late seventeenth century.

Historical value

Lancaster was an important Quaker centre with good communications, forming a venue for the Northern Meetings of the Society during the eighteenth century. The meeting house has associations with Margaret Fell and has occupied the same site since the late seventeenth century. It is in close proximity with Lancaster Castle where many Quakers were detained for their beliefs in the seventeenth century, including George Fox. The building externally is largely of early eighteenth century date and has high historic significance.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a relatively modest vernacular building which retains its eighteenth century architectural character, externally, on the south and east sides, and enjoys an attractive setting. It has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house is within a conservation area and part of a group of buildings with high historical and aesthetic significance. It is very well used by local groups and has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Lancashire Central & North*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000200*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Lancaster City Council*
- 1.5 Civil parish: *Lancaster*
- 1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II**
- 1.8 NHLE: *1211515*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Lancaster*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1660, with early and late eighteenth century extensions*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Unknown; 1960s remodelling by Fred Howorth & Son*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *26 June 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Hugh Roberts*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *There is a detached burial ground on Wyresdale Road, SD487 610 and a former Quaker Hall on Fenton Street, Lancaster*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Baines, E., *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster*, Vol 3

(1825), map of Lancaster

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 306–12

Hartwell, C., & Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England Lancashire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2009) p.373

Architectural History Practice & Taylor Young, 'Lancaster Conservation Area Appraisal, Character Area 2 The Castle (Lancaster City Council, March 2013).

Clark, G., 'Friends' Meeting House Lancaster' (leaflet, Lancaster Civic Society, 2014).

<http://www.lancsquakers.org.uk/lancaster.php>

Hugh Roberts, *Local Meeting Survey*, April 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Following George Fox's visit to Lancaster in 1652, there was an increase in the number of Quakers locally. Fox and other prominent Quakers were later detained at the prison in Lancaster Castle. A Quaker burial ground on the Moor or Golgotha, was created in 1660. The first meeting house was built in 1677 on the present site, belonging to a Quaker, Thomas Rawlingson. Margaret Fell contributed towards the costs of this building. A school had been established within the meeting house by 1690, and the site included a burial ground in which the first burial took place in 1694. Meetings of Friends in the Northern Counties were held in Lancaster annually and in order to accommodate the extra numbers it was decided to build a larger meeting house on the site. This was undertaken in 1708 under the supervision of William Stout, who held meetings at his house until the new building was ready. It is thought that part of the seventeenth century building may have been retained in the new work, possibly part of the rear (north) wall and the wall dividing the men's and women's rooms. Everything appears to have been complete by 1709 in time for the Northern Meeting in April of that year.

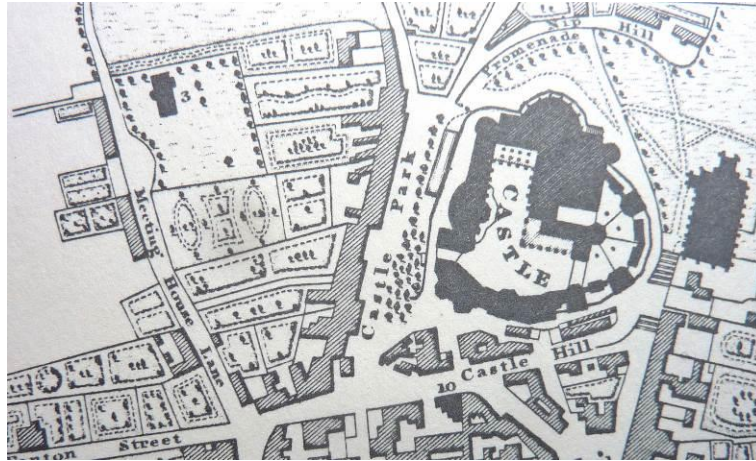


Figure 1. Detail of a map of Lancaster surveyed by J. Atkinson, 1824 (Baines). The meeting house is shown top left, numbered 3, and the map is orientated with west at the top

The burial ground was extended in 1765. The meeting house was extended to the north in 1779 allowing a gallery to be erected on that side. In 1789 the women's room was extended to the west and the present porch was built on the south side. The work was finished in time for the Northern Meeting in 1790.



Figure 2. The interior of the main meeting room looking east, in a photograph of July 1900 (Lancaster Friends' Meeting House).

The women's room was used as a schoolroom, probably from the late seventeenth century. Additional accommodation for the school was added at the rear (north) side of the building incrementally. The school was run by the Quakers until 1968 when it became the independent George Fox School until closure in 1989, whereupon the buildings reverted to the meeting. They were partially demolished thereafter. Other changes included provision of a warden's cottage on the north-west side of the building in 1852.

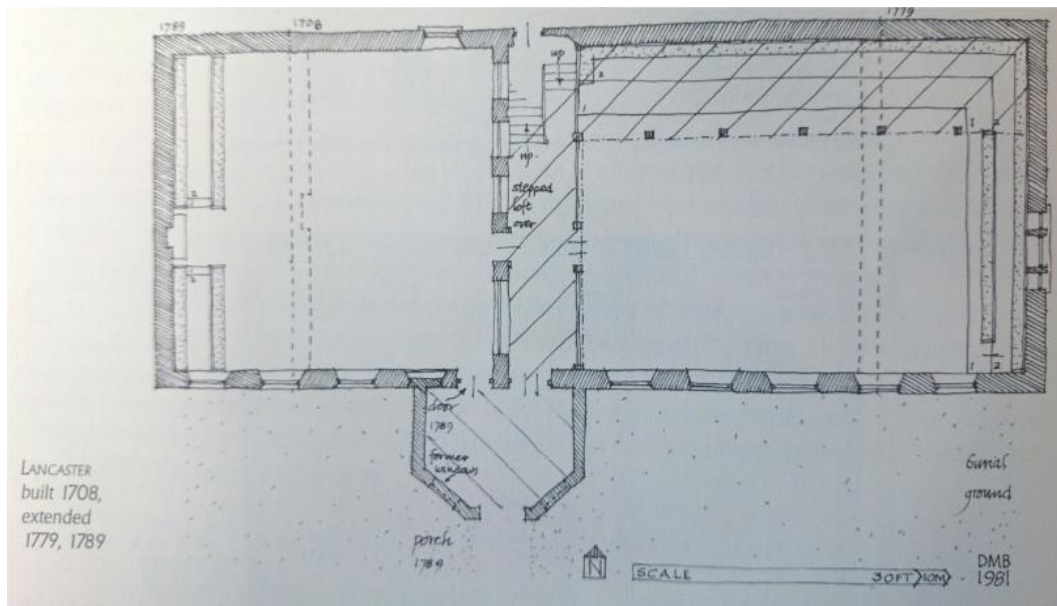


Figure 3. Reconstruction of the meeting house plan by circa 1800 (Butler, 1999, p.307. Not to scale). North is at the top. The end walls of the 1709 building are indicated by dotted lines

In 1967 work began to adapt the women's room for the sole use of Friends. A kitchen was introduced on the north side and a mezzanine floor was inserted with change of circulation. Surviving school buildings at the rear were remodelled to provide WCs and additional offices. During the same campaign of work most of the remaining fixed furnishings in the men's room were removed, and the gallery on the west side of the room blocked in. The stairs leading to the gallery were removed and trap-door access introduced. A door in the upper room of the porch leading to the gallery seems to have been blocked at this or an earlier time.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was first built on this site in 1677, substantially rebuilt in 1708, extended in 1779, 1789-90 and in 1852. It has been altered internally at various times, including remodelling in 1967-9 by Fred Howorth & Son. The building is constructed of sandstone rubble, with roughcast render at the front (south side) and projecting stone quoins at the angles. Additions to the rear are rendered. The roof is of grey sandstone stone at the front and slates at the rear. The meeting house element is single-storeyed, with a two-storey canted porch. The front, south side of the building has a range of eight tall twelve-pane sash windows in painted, rebated and chamfered surrounds, with hinge pins for shutters (missing). The earlier windows originated in 1769 when the mullions and transoms were removed from the original cross windows. The left-hand windows were altered, and one was added, in 1789 when the small meeting room was enlarged and the porch constructed. The two right-hand windows were added when the large meeting room was extended. The 2-storey porch, added in 1789, is offset in bay four. It has canted sides each with an upper sash window in a plain stone surround lighting the upper room. The doorway has a cyma-moulded surround with a semi-elliptical arched head with keystone. The main roof gables are coped, and the left-hand gable has an ashlar chimney stack with a cornice and weathered offset. Near the junction of the porch and the main roof is a second chimney cap. The right-

hand (east) gable wall is part of the 1779 extension. It is of coursed squared stone and has a Venetian window with stone surround and intersecting, Gothick style glazing detail. The window is offset in the elevation to give room for a gallery (now removed) along the north side of the main meeting room. In the rear, north elevation an upper three-light rebated and chamfered mullioned window has been exposed by the partial demolition of adjoining and attached school buildings. This window was one of a set inserted in 1779 in order to light the gallery inside. The style is old fashioned for the date, and it is possible the window was re-used. The remainder of the elevation is obscured by later buildings, mainly of nineteenth century date, altered in the mid twentieth century. At the north end of the elevation a projecting wing is an addition to the warden's accommodation of 1998. The warden's house was added in 1852. The west elevation of the house stands in line with the west side of the meeting house. It is of two storeys with openings in plain stone architraves, including doorways at each end and sash windows.

INTERIOR: The plan evolved to result in a distinctive plan typical of eighteenth century meeting houses in which a passage or corridor runs beneath the gallery, and divides the larger (men's) meeting room from a smaller meeting room (used for women's business meetings). At the far end of the passage a stair (removed in this case) gives access to the gallery (over the women's room). The essentially tripartite plan has resonances with vernacular house plans. Inside the porch there is a pair of chamfered doorways, that to the west, which led to the smaller women's room, has a re-set datestone inscribed '1677', from the first meeting house on the site. The door is fielded and panelled with original ironwork furniture and is probably of eighteenth or nineteenth century date. The other door has been replaced with one probably of late twentieth century date. Attached to the wall on the east side of the porch is the inscribed grave slab of John Lawson (d. 1689), removed from the Quaker burial ground in Wyresdale Road. There are late eighteenth century wooden hat peg rails along the walls, and a plaque records the work completed in 1969. The east doorway opens to a passageway underneath the north gallery. A screen divides it from the principal meeting room, and there are cupboards at the north end of the passage in the place of a stair which was removed in 1967-9. The partition is partially glazed, and probably originally had moveable shutters. There is an original panelled door with L-shaped hinges. The ceiling has closely-spaced joists supporting the gallery. The large meeting room to the east had a north gallery which was removed in 1967-9 when the west gallery was also blocked. The screen dividing the room from the corridor incorporates eighteenth century woodwork, including raised and fielded panels, pilasters, and a cornice. The north wall is panelled to dado height with raised and fielded panels, and the east wall is panelled with plain panels. The high ceiling has four cased beams supported by brackets and two decorative nineteenth-century vents. On the west side of the corridor an original moulded stone doorway leads into the former women's room which has been subdivided. To the north of this room a stair of 1967-9 leads up to a mezzanine area with WCs, etc. and on to the room above the porch. This room incorporates a doorway with a stone architrave in the north wall which formerly communicated with the west gallery, but was blocked in 1967-9. This was the original access to the room, which is described as the 'Elders' Room' in some accounts. The buildings attached to the north of the meeting house are divided from it by an axial corridor and the interiors are not of special interest. The warden's house interior was not inspected.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are a number of benches distributed around the building. Those currently painted white are indigenous, and are probably the same as some of those in a photograph of 1900 (figure 1). Others originated from a meeting house in Oxfordshire. They are all probably of nineteenth century date.

2.4. Attached burial ground

There is a large attached burial ground around the meeting house, enclosed from Meeting House Lane by a stone retaining wall, which continues as a free-standing wall around the other sides of the precinct. The front wall contains a pair of moulded stone gate piers, dating from the eighteenth century; these are separately listed Grade II (List entry No. 1298363). A car park has been formed at the rear of the meeting house, accessed via a drive on the west side of the plot, where there are some railings of late twentieth century date and others with vase finials which could be of nineteenth century date. The car park is separated from the burial ground by steel railings. Headstones have been removed and laid flat at the rear of the site beside the railings (Fig.4). Burial records itemise interments from 1694 to 1940. The remainder of the site incorporates several mature trees, and it is managed as a wildlife area incorporating vegetable gardens.



Figure 4: railings between burial ground and car park

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting.

The meeting house is situated to the south of the Lancaster Castle precinct alongside a principal route between the town centre and the main railway station. It is set back from the road, screened by the high boundary wall with listed gate piers. The large burial ground forms part of an important group of green spaces in the immediate area that also includes the adjacent grounds of the Storey Institute and the private gardens of houses between the site and the Castle. A detached Quaker burial ground was established in 1660-61 on the east side of Lancaster in an area called Golgotha (so named because it had been the site of a gibbet from the seventeenth century) beside present-day Wyresdale Road at SD487 610. The site is walled, and passed into the care of Lancaster City Council in the late twentieth century. A 'new' Quaker burial ground is recorded at Kellet Croft in 1789, but the location has not been established. A Quaker Hall on Fenton Street in the town centre was built in

1904 in order to provide additional accommodation for educational and social purposes. It was sold in 1969.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is rightly listed grade II*. The listing for the front gate piers could be amended to also include the front boundary walls.

2.7 Archaeological potential

The Historic Environment Record for Lancashire does not record any specific finds here, however the archaeological potential of the site is very high as it is located close to the site of Roman fort and early medieval Lancaster Castle.

Part 3: Current use and management

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground: Generally satisfactory with minor localised problems.

3.2. Maintenance

A QI was carried out in 2015. All urgent works recommended in the QI have been carried out and other works are planned. There are regular inspections of the premises and a rolling programme of maintenance and repair.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented the following measures:

- Installation of energy-efficient lighting
- Replacement energy-efficient boilers
- Solar panels on the roof
- Improved insulation
- Recycling of waste

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has good facilities; there is a kitchen, WCs, a shower, disabled toilets and flexible meeting spaces in the building

3.5. Access

There is level access to the ground floor and a fully accessible WC. A disability audit is due to be carried out and a stair-lift is planned. A hearing loop has been installed in the main meeting room. The car park has dedicated disabled spaces.

The meeting house is situated very close to Lancaster Station and on main bus routes, and in walking distance of the city centre. There is space on site for parking ten cars, including two disabled spaces.

3.6 Community Use

Space in the building is let for about 165 hours per week and let to groups who do not contravene Quaker principles.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

Lead from the roof was stolen in 2011 and the replacement treated with Smartwater. The meeting house is close to the town centre and station, and is subject to minor incidents of anti-social behaviour. A good relationship has been formed with the local police and community team.

3.8. Plans for change

Plans to install a stair-lift are at an advanced stage and listed building consent has been applied for. It is hoped to install secondary internal glazing to improve insulation.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

i) As a meeting house only: The attached former school buildings at the rear have interiors of little heritage value and can therefore accommodate further changes if required. The changes to the meeting house itself should be restricted to minor adaptations as further losses of historic features would damage the character of the interior.

ii) For wider community use, additional to local meeting use: There is already a very high uptake by local community groups, with the possibility of alteration to the rear extension interiors if required.

iii) As a consequence of the Meeting being laid down and the building passing into secular use: It would be regrettable if the building could not continue in use by Friends. In that event, great care would need to be taken to safeguard the character and appearance of the building. Its popularity for use by local groups suggests there is a need for lettable rooms in the area.

Part 5: Category: 1

Part 6: List description (s)

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1211515

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, MEETING HOUSE LANE

County	District	District Type	Parish
Lancashire	Lancaster	District Authority	.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 22-Dec-1953

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

LANCASTER

SD4761NW MEETING HOUSE LANE (North side) 1685-1/6/178 22/12/53

Friends' Meeting House

GV II*

Quaker meeting house. 1708, altered 1769, extended 1779 and 1790, and altered internally early C20 and 1969. Sandstone rubble, pebbledashed at the front. Roof of stone slate at front and slate at rear. Single-storey, with 2-storey porch and with attic storey above left-hand (west) meeting room. 3 bays to left of porch and 5 to right, with projecting ashlar quoins. Windows have painted rebated and chamfered surrounds, with hinge pins for shutters, and have glazing bar sashes, the first of which were installed in 1769 when the mullions and transoms were removed from the original cross windows. The left-hand window was added in 1789 when the small meeting room was enlarged, and the 2 right-hand windows were added when the large meeting room was extended. The porch, which was probably added in the late C18, has canted sides which each have a glazing bar sash in a plain stone surround lighting the upper room. The doorway has a cyma-moulded surround with a lintel carved with a semi-elliptical arch with keystone. The gables are coped. The left-hand gable has an ashlar chimney stack with a cornice and weathered offset. Near the junction of the porch and the main roof is a second chimney cap. The right-hand (east) gable wall is part of the 1779 extension, is of coursed squared sandstone and has a Venetian window with stone surround and Gothick glazing. Towards the east end of the rear wall a 3-light rebated and chamfered mullioned window has been exposed by the demolition of adjoining school buildings. A rear wing towards the west was added in 1852 as a warden's cottage and further additions were subsequently made at the rear as part of the former Friends' School. INTERIOR: inside the porch a chamfered doorway which led to the left-hand meeting room has a re-set datestone inscribed '1677', re-used from the first meeting house on the site. Attached to the wall is the inscribed grave slab of John Lawson, removed from the Friends' burial ground in Wyresdale Road. The north gallery was removed from the large meeting room in the early C20, and the west gallery was removed in 1969 when the screen dividing the room from the vestibule corridor was moved. This is now partly glazed but incorporates C18 woodwork, including raised and fielded panels, pilasters, and a timber cornice. The north wall is panelled to dado height with raised and fielded panels, and the east wall is similarly panelled with plain panels. The high ceiling has 4 cased beams and 2 decorative C19 vents. (Dove, R & Segebarth, H: A History of the Friends' Meeting House Lancaster: Lancaster: 1990-).

Listing NGR: SD4729861681

Selected Sources

Dove, R, Segebarth, H , A History of the Friends Meeting House Lancaster, (1990)

Name: GATE PIERS APPROXIMATELY 15 METRES SOUTH OF FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1298363

Location

GATE PIERS APPROXIMATELY 15 METRES SOUTH OF FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, MEETING HOUSE LANE

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

County: Lancashire

District: Lancaster

District Type: District Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 13-Mar-1995

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

UID: 383212

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

LANCASTER

SD4761NW MEETING HOUSE LANE 1685-1/6/179 (North side) Gate piers approximately 15 metres south of Friends' Meeting House

GV II

Pair of gate piers. Mid C18, altered late C19. Sandstone ashlar. Square in plan with a pilaster on each face and a pronounced cornice; above this is a pyramidal cap, which dates probably from the late C19.

Listing NGR: SD4729961657