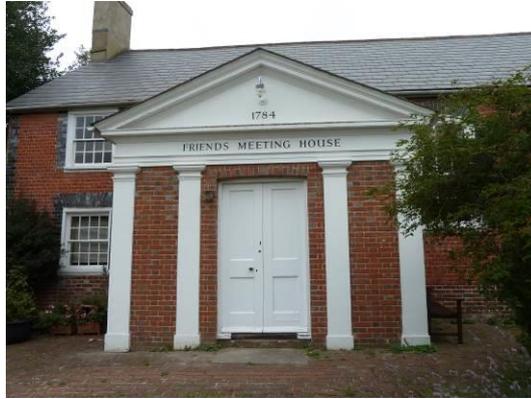


## ***Friends Meeting House, Lewes***

*32 Friars Walk, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2LE*

*National Grid Reference: TQ 41795 10067*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house was built in 1784 on a site which had been a Quaker burial ground since 1697. It has been extended three times, resulting in a long linear building. Burials in the attached burial ground include several prominent Victorian Quakers. The meeting house and the burial ground have high heritage value.***

### ***Evidential value***

***The built fabric has the potential to reveal more information about the history and development of the meeting house. It has high evidential value.***

### ***Historical value***

***The meeting house has a long and complex history of extensions, responding to the needs of the meeting over time. It has strong associations with prominent local Quakers, especially of the Victorian period, who were active in all aspects of life in Lewes and beyond. It has high historical value.***

### ***Aesthetic value***

***Although it has been altered and extended over time, the building has attractive detailing such as the mathematical tiling, the portico and the panelled meeting room. It has high aesthetic value.***

**Communal value**

***As a Quaker meeting house which is also well-used by community groups, the building has high communal value.***

**Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Sussex East*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000920*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Lewes District Council (on behalf of South Downs National Park Authority)*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Lewes*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1353031*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Lewes*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1784 and later*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *19 August 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *David Hitchin*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Antram, N. and N. Pevsner, *Sussex: East (Buildings of England)*, 2012, p. 514

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 607-9

Hitchin, D., *Lewes Quaker Meeting House from 1784. Records of the building construction and maintenance*, 2015 (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

Hitchin, D., *Quakers in Lewes. An informal history*, 2010 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Eastern England*, 2002, pp. 350-351 (including pre-1977 photo)

Lewes Monthly Meeting, 'Particulars of Trust Properties', 1978, typescript

Area Meeting archive, drawings for extension, 1976

Local Meeting survey by David Hitchin, July 2015

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

### 2.1. Historical background

George Fox visited Lewes in 1655 and there has been a Quaker meeting ever since. In 1675, a building in Puddle Wharf was used as a meeting house and three years later it was given to the Friends (possibly on the death of its owner, Thomas Snashfold). During the days of persecution, the building was occupied by a resident Friend. In 1697, a burial ground was acquired in Friars Walk (the current site) on a 1,000-year lease from John Newnham of Barcombe. In 1752, the Puddle Wharf building was altered or rebuilt.

In 1784, a new meeting house was built for £229 on the current site in Friars Walk, as the old building was considered 'unfit to sit in', partly due to the proximity of a slaughter house. The new building was timber-framed on a brick base with mathematical tiles fixed over boarding. In 1801, a cottage was added at the south and the meeting room extended by 12 feet south into what may have been the original cottage. The original gallery was removed and the cottage's upper floor used as the new gallery with the re-used original balustrade (resulting in a somewhat awkward arrangement as the staircase was not moved.) There may once have been shutters to the gallery but the details are not known.

In 1812, a new wider and pedimented porch was added. In 1860, a larger cottage was added to the north. In 1955, repairs were made on the advice of Hubert Lidbetter. Two years later, the inscription on the porch was painted and the headstones re-arranged. In 1977, the meeting's nineteenth-century coach house was demolished as the local council wanted to build an access road to a new car park to the north of the meeting house. At the same time (1977-78), another extension was built to the north, providing a children's room on the ground floor and a warden's flat above (which continues on the upper floor of the 1860 cottage). The cost of the extension was about £25,300, most of which was paid for the sale of land to the Council. (The original drawings for the extension by the contractors Press & Banks Ltd are in the Area Meeting archive.) At the same time, a new porch was added to the 1860 cottage. In the late twentieth century, the stand in the meeting room was altered when one row of fixed benches was removed.

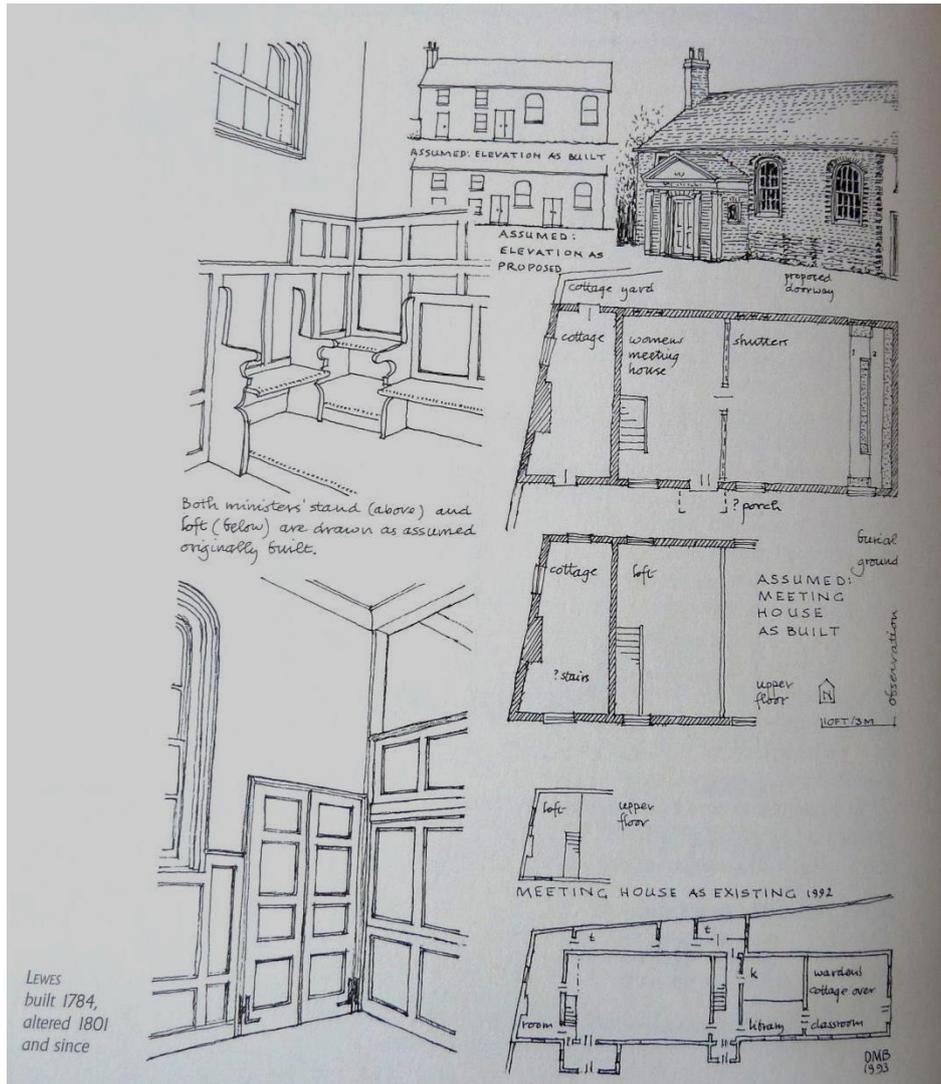


Figure 1: Plans, elevations and perspectives (northeast is to the right on the bottom plan; not to scale) (Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 608)

## 2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main elevation faces southeast. The plan is a long oblong with two porches to the front and toilet extensions to the rear. The materials are brick, apart from the original meeting house and the 1801 cottage which are timber-framed on a brick base and mathematically-tiled. The south gable is tile-hung, as is the rear elevation. The pitched roof is covered with slate to the front and hand-made tiles to the back. There is a chimney stack at the south. (Another stack to the north (visible in a pre-1977 photo on Stell) was removed when the 1970s extension was built.)

The front elevation of the original meeting house of 1784 has a brick base of red bricks and burnt headers in Flemish bond. The base between the two three-centred windows to the meeting room (8-over-8 sashes) has evidence of an earlier or intended doorway. The windows of the meeting room and the 1801 cottage have glazed black dressings; the same material is used for quoins. The cottage has a sash window (8 over 8) each to ground and first floor; the lower of which was converted from an original door opening. The large porch of 1812 is of red brick with burnt headers laid in Flemish bond. Four pilasters support the entablature and pediment with the inscriptions 'Friends Meeting House' and '1784'. The porch has small lateral windows. The 1860 cottage is rendered. It has two 2-over-2 sashes on

both floors with an additional small first-floor window over the flat-roofed porch of 1977-8. The elevation of the 1977-8 extension (of brick in stretcher bond) is similarly fenestrated, with rubbed and gauged flat heads to the ground floor windows. The north elevation has a double-leaf door and a sash window to the ground floor, with two sash windows above. All three windows are of 2-over-2 pattern and all openings have lintels of soldier courses. The south elevation has one window on each level beside the stack. The rear elevation has a small first-floor window to the 1970s building, and two three-light casements to the 1860 cottage, as well as a small ground-floor window. The rear elevation of the meeting room is lit by two high-level 4-over-4 sashes under three-centred arches.

The main porch leads to the doors into the meeting room, set beside a disused panelled timber door. The meeting room has dado panelling of pine. The windows have plain architraves. There is a decorative ventilation grille in the ceiling. At the north, the panelling steps up behind the ministers' and elders' stand which has one fixed bench and two lateral fixed seats with shaped side panels (figure 1). Opposite is a panelled wall interrupted only by the gallery on the upper floor of the 1801 cottage whose panelled timber balustrade is complemented by an iron rail. The cottage's lower floor (now the library) has timber-panelled walls and a structural cast-iron post in the shape of a thin column. The floor above has a fireplace with mantelshelf. The ground floor of the 1860 cottage contains a stone staircase to the upstairs flat as well as a kitchen and a corridor leading to the large children's room in the 1970s extension. The upstairs flat was not inspected.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

There are ten open-backed pine benches in the meeting room, of various lengths.

### 2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground was in use from 1698 to 1926. It is now only used for the burial of ashes. There are over 20 headstones arranged in rows in front of the 1977-8 extension. In 1957 and again in the 1970s, the headstones in the burial ground were re-arranged to allow for easier grounds' management (without disturbing the burials). The earliest visible headstones date from the 1850s but Stell reported the presence of at least two from the eighteenth century: John Rickman (died 1789) and Elizabeth Rickman (died 1795).

Prominent Quakers buried here include: Joseph Woods (1776-1864), an architect and botanist, first president of the London Architectural Society and author of *The Tourists' Flora* (1850); Caleb Rickman Kemp (1836-1908), a merchant, member of the Anti-Slavery Society, Quaker minister at the age of 21, vice-president of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and twice mayor of Lewes; and Burwood Godlee (1802-1882), a banker, coal-merchant, founder member of the Lewes Scientific Society, chairman of the local gas company, and a county magistrate.

### 2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and burial ground occupy an oblong plot parallel with the road. To the rear of the site is a tall brick wall, which is cut down where an extension projects forward. To the north is Styles Field, the access road created in the 1970s on the site of the former coach house. It now leads to a new public library and a car park. To the south of the meeting house is a narrow passage with a fifteenth-century gateway (listed grade II, photo top left); the ownership of, and management responsibilities for, the passage are disputed. Beyond that is All Saints Centre (grade II\*), a former Anglican parish church which since 1975 has been in use as an arts and community centre.

## 2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade II. The list entry (see below, Part 6) needs to be revised to reflect the full chronological sequence of the building's development and to eliminate a typo.

## 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

It is not known if there were buildings on the site prior to 1784. The site has high archaeological potential due to the presence of burials.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/generally satisfactory

### 3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in 2013 or 2014. (No copy was available during the visit.) The rear boundary wall is in poor condition. Nothing can be done about damp problems at the south end until the ownership of the passage outside is resolved and the higher ground there can be lowered.

The Area Meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. The Local Meeting has also recently received a large legacy which will be used for making improvements in the building. The QIR is used as a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

### 3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact and plans to insulate the roof. It is not known if the meeting house or the warden's flat have an Energy Performance Certificate.

### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, apart from sufficient office space. All amenities are in the meeting house. There is a resident Warden, whose self-contained flat is on the first floor.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is parking to the rear of the site but no secure parking for bicycles.

### 3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into the building but not within it. There is an accessible toilet, a hearing loop and limited facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit has been conducted a few years ago and its recommendations were implemented as far as possible.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 12 hours per week. It is used by community groups for an average of 16 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Political parties, smoking or

alcohol are prohibited. Only Quaker groups may use the building for free. Users value the building for its good location, and pleasant historical atmosphere.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no heritage crime, general crime or other incidents. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low and high deprivation, and high community confidence. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8. Plans for change

There are currently no specific plans for alterations but the use of the recent legacy is currently under discussion.

## **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:* As a listed building, any alterations need to be well-considered and should preserve the special interest of the building. Any alterations to the more historic parts of the building should be kept to a minimum. The more recent parts and the 1977 extension in particular could easily be altered.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* At present, the meeting house has all the facilities required by the community users, apart from level access within the ground-floor rooms.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting:* In the unlikely event of closure, a new, sympathetic use should be found which would preserve the meeting room in particular.

## **Part 5: Category: 2**

## **Part 6: List description (s)**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1353031

Location

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, FRIAR'S WALK

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
--------	----------	---------------	--------

East Sussex	Lewes	District Authority	Lewes
-------------	-------	--------------------	-------

National Park: SOUTH DOWNS

Grade: II

Date first listed: 29-Oct-1985

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

#### Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 293109

#### List entry Description

##### Details

TQ 4110 SE LEWES FRIAR'S WALK 10/127 (north side)

Friends' Meeting House

##### GV II

Friends' meeting house and cottage to right. Dated 1784, extended to right in later C20. Red mathematical tiles with glazed black dressings, including pseudo-gauged heads on ground floor. House to right plastered. Slate roof with stack to left. Closed pilastered portico to left of centre on mathematically-tiled part with red brick infill between pilasters. Full cornice carrying triangular pediment, dated 1784. Central slightly segment-headed entrance. Single glazing bar sash on both floors to left, in open boxes. Projecting flat-headed porch to left of plastered house with doubled panelled doors and corniced head. Two storey house with three window front, caches in open boxes. Later C20 red brick extension of two storeys and two windows to extreme right. Interior: Meeting Hall and Gallery panelled in pine, furnished with pine benches.

Listing NGR: TQ4179510067