

Friends Meeting House, Littlehampton

23 Church Street, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5EL

National Grid Reference: TQ 03032 02147



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a former school building and schoolmaster's house of the 1830s. It has a fine flintwork elevation and well-detailed Gothic windows. It has high heritage value.

Evidential value

The meeting house is a school building from the 1830s built on a former garden. The building has the potential to provide further evidence about its construction, use and development over time. It has medium evidential value.

Historical value

The building is a rare example of a Penny school from the 1830s with an attached schoolmaster's house. It has high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is reputedly one of the finest examples of a Sussex flint building in the area. It has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used over time for a variety of uses, including by a range of religious groups. It is a prominent part of the townscape and is well used by both Quakers and community groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Sussex West*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0026380*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Arun District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Littlehampton*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1027811*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Littlehampton East Street*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c.1835*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *18 August 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Florence Roberts, Roy Morris*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *No*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 610
Local Meeting survey by Florence Roberts, June 2015
Natrass, S., 'Quakers in Littlehampton & Arundel', 2003, leaflet

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

2.1. Historical background

Until the Second World War, only occasional meetings for worship were held in Littlehampton. After the War, meetings were held in a room at the youth centre and at the Old People's Club in New Road. In 1965, the present building was bought from the Exclusive Brethren and opened as a meeting house in 1969. The cost of purchasing and altering the building was £4,000. The meeting house was built in c.1835 as a Penny school (a kind of Dame school) with an attached house for the schoolmaster. On 12 March 1835, Richard Weekes sold a plot of land to Mrs Sarah M. Welch, for £105 on which she planned to erect a Penny school. Subsequent users included the Baptist Believers (1906-7), the Salvation Army (c.1907-c.1919) and the Exclusive Brethren (1925-1965).

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is aligned roughly east-west, with the main elevation to the south.

The plan is L-shaped with the former schoolmaster's house in a cross-wing at the east. The materials are flint with brick quoins and dressings, and a slate roof. To the north is a shallow flat-roofed extension of brick and flint. The main elevation has gables over the slightly projecting school entrance at the west and over the schoolmaster's house to the east. The school entrance at the west is set into a pointed arch with a fanlight. The four windows (two to the north, two to the south) of the school room are likewise pointed, with Y-tracery. The schoolmaster's house has a two-storey canted bay with sash windows to the south, and the main entrance (widened and with a modern canopy) to the west, with two two-light windows on the first floor with pointed heads to each light. The east elevation has another pointed arch containing a two-light window on the first floor and a sash window on the ground floor. Slightly to the north of this is a tall brick chimneystack.

The former school room is now used as the meeting room, while the ancillary rooms are in the former schoolmaster's house and the rear toilet extension. The meeting room has dado panelling and a flat ceiling. The lower parts of the north windows are boarded up. Near the northwest corner is a door into a small projecting storage cupboard. Two modern doors at the east end link the room with the schoolmaster's house. The former schoolmaster's house has an entrance hall which extends into the ground-floor bay, with a kitchen under the stairs. A further room is on the first floor.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are five benches (four in the meeting room, one in the garden) which may date from the nineteenth century. Reputedly, these were in the building when it was acquired in 1965. The bench ends are decorated with a small circular hole and a pierced trefoil.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The garden is used for the burial of ashes but there is no historic burial ground on the site.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located near the centre of Littlehampton. It is slightly set back from the road, behind a garden with a brick boundary wall. It forms a group with 7-15 Church Street, the cottages to the west, some of which also have flint elevations. The meeting house makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

There is a detached burial grounds in St Peter's churchyard, Twineham (see report on Ditchling Meeting House). A former detached burial ground in Tarrant Street, Arundel, (NGR: TQ 01693 07005) was sold in 1990 to a neighbour for use as a garden. 31 Quakers are buried there.

2.6. Listed status

The building is correctly listed at grade II. The brief list entry (see Part 6) could be expanded.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

As far as is known, there was no previous building on the site as Sarah Welch purchased a garden plot for her school. The archaeological potential of the site 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): Not applicable

3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection was made in 2012 by David Loosley MRICS of Holland Alexander. Apart from two minor items, all of the recommendations have since been carried out. The report also advises that a major repointing of the all the flint walls will be necessary in the next quinquennium. The meeting has sufficient funds to maintain and repair the building. The QIR serves as the five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: heating on timer, use of blankets, plans to install wireless thermostats, green energy from Ecotricity, use in winter of removable internal secondary glazing
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: use of recycling bins
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: insulated roof, secondary glazing, draftproofing around doors
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: composting of garden waste, no pesticides
- Transport: use of car pool

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate but would consider obtaining one.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. Kitchen, toilets and meeting space are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden or Friend.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is no parking on site or secure parking for bicycles. There is a public carpark nearby.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. It has level access, an accessible toilet, a hearing loop and facilities for partially-sighted people. There has been no Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 3 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 192 hours per week. It is used for an average of 25 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. No political meetings are allowed and group aims must be in accord with Quaker values. Quaker groups and Quaker-led charity occasions are eligible for free use of the building. Users like the meeting house because it is peaceful and quiet, has a comfortable atmosphere, good location, fair price, storage available, a garden and a kitchen.

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 deprivation and high community confidence. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the meeting might consider making contact should the need arise.

3.8. Plans for change

There are currently no plans for any alterations.

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: At the moment, the meeting house has all the facilities and space required by the meeting. As a listed building, any alterations would have to be carefully considered and sympathetically designed.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is well-used by local community groups and has all the required amenities. Should community use necessitate any alterations to the building, these would need to be carefully considered in the context of the wider requirements of the building and its status as a listed building.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: A sympathetic reuse by another denomination or community group which would not require any subdivision of the main internal spaces would be preferable.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

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: 1027811

Location

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, 23, CHURCH STREET

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
West Sussex	Arun	District Authority	Littlehampton

Grade: II

Date first listed: 21-Aug-1975

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: 297458

List entry Description

Details

1. 5401 CHURCH STREET (North Side) ----- No 23 (Friends' Meeting House) TQ
0302 1/54

II GV

2. Mid C19 L-shaped building. Cobbles with brick dressings and quoins. Main hall of 3 bays has 2 large pointed windows and pointed arch over entrance, which is on the left and breaks forward slightly. Windows contain paired lancets. 2 storey wing at east end with canted bay to street elevation. [Legend 'Friends' Meeting House' painted above on stucco]. Some grey headers in quoins. West side has modern entrance above which are 2 twin lancets in moulded frames. Built originally as a Penny School in 1835 or soon after.

Nos 7 to 15 (odd) and No 23 [Friends' Meeting House] form a group.

Listing NGR: TQ0303202147