

Quaker Meeting House, Liverpool

22 School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BT

National Grid Reference: SJ 34738 90169



Statement of Significance

The meeting house itself has low heritage significance as a relatively modern, but attractive building. However, Quakers have had a presence in Liverpool since the mid-seventeenth century and the site has high historical significance and some archaeological potential.

Evidential value

The meeting house is a modern building with no evidential value. However, it was built on the site of an earlier wing of Bluecoats Chambers (1717) the oldest building in Liverpool. The site has medium evidential value in relation to the archaeological potential of Bluecoats building.

Historical value

The meeting house itself has low historical significance, however Liverpool meeting has a long history and this and the nearby former Bluecoat building on the site gives high historical value to the site.

Aesthetic value

The building has medium aesthetic value as a well-designed modern meeting house that makes a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area.

Communal value

The meeting house was built for Quaker use and is also a valued community resource. The building is used by a number of local groups and visitors and has a high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Hardshaw & Mann*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0009600*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trust*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Liverpool City Council*

- 1.5 Civil parish: *Liverpool*
- 1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Duke Street*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *2006*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Page and Park*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *23rd April 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Ian Jones*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burial ground – Arundel Avenue (SJ 37938 88774)*
- 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. 1, pp. 313-318.

Liverpool Meeting House Archive, Liverpool and the Quakers. Information boards.

Ian Jones, *Local Meeting Survey*, April 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1652 two of George Fox's "Publishers of Truth" Richard Hubberthorne and John Lawson preached in Liverpool. Following this in 1657 a Meeting was first established in Knowsley. In Liverpool, Friends met in each other's homes during this time and the Liverpool Meeting was regarded as part of the Knowsley Meeting. In 1709, the first meeting house was acquired by Liverpool Friends in Hackins Hey and in the following year the Hardshaw Monthly Meeting made a decision to rename the Knowsley Meeting as the Liverpool Meeting.

By the late eighteenth century, the meeting house purchased in 1709 became too small for the Friends and in 1788 a site was purchased for a new purpose-built meeting house on Hunter Street. The sale of the former meeting house allowed the Friends to purchase land at Smithdown Lane (known today as Arundel Avenue) for use as a burial ground. The new meeting house opened in 1791; Hunter Street remained the home of Liverpool Quakers for the next 150 years until it was destroyed by bombing in the Second World War, on the 4th May 1941.

Hubert Lidbetter designed a new meeting house (Fig.1) for Hunter Street and this opened in 1941. The building was first occupied by the County Court and Friends did not hold their Meetings there until 1948. By the 1960s the Corporation of Liverpool had developed plans for the Churchill Way Flyover which resulted in the meeting house being demolished in 1967. The fourth meeting house (Fig.2) was built in Paradise Street in 1982, designed by Kenneth H Evans who had previously designed Southport meeting house.



Figure 1: Meeting House in Hunter Street designed by Hubert Lidbetter in 1941 (Liverpool Quakers Archive)



Figure 2: Quaker Meeting House in Paradise Street designed by Kenneth Evans in 1982 (Liverpool Quakers Archive).

In 1999 Liverpool City Council launched a competition for the Paradise Street Redevelopment Area. This scheme later became better known as 'Liverpool One'. Due to the regeneration plans for the area the meeting house was demolished and the Quakers relocated to another site in the area.

The present, fifth, meeting house is part of a development that includes the new BBC TV and Radio studios. The architects Page and Park of Glasgow designed a building with two characteristic styles to differentiate the Friends meeting house and the BBC; the meeting house opened in 2006. The interior of the meeting house was designed by Ainsley Gomon Architects.

In 2014, the Friends commissioned Ainsley Gommon Architects to undertake extensive alterations to the configuration of the ground floor interior.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house opened in 2006, built to designs by Page and Park of Glasgow. The meeting house is part of a mixed use building which includes BBC Merseyside to the south end. The meeting house at the north end of the block is faced in red brick laid in stretcher bond, with panels of aluminium and glass. The Friends' component of the building has a utilitarian contemporary design, with a high proportion of wall to openings, compared to the BBC element which is more transparent with plenty of glazing. The front north elevation to School Lane has a ground floor glazed screen below a steel beam to express the entrance, with red brick and vertical windows to the first floor and high level glazing set back below the roof line of the meeting house.

The contemporary use of glazing and brick continues to the west elevation which leads into the concave elevation of the more transparent BBC component. The east elevation is of brick with vertical windows on three floors.

The meeting house is large in scale and arranged over four floors, with a roof terrace. The ground floor is light and spacious; the circular entrance lobby is linked by a ramp to the rectangular west area containing the café, quiet room, office space and stairs to the first floor. To the right of the lobby is the reception area, WC facilities and lift. The first floor has a large foyer area giving access to the main meeting room, library, small meeting room, WC's, kitchen and terrace. The main meeting room is octagonal in shape and lit from high-level windows, the walls are a mixture of white plaster and fair-faced brick, the floor is carpeted. The high plastered ceiling is divided into varied levels and angles, with lower ceilings are located to the south-west and north-east of the room. To the north-west is a small stage area. The furnishings generally consist of modern loose chairs arranged in a circle around a central table with some historic benches against the walls.

The second floor is of a similar layout to the first floor with a series of further meeting spaces, kitchen facilities and WCs. The third floor forms the warden's flat.

2.3 Other furnishings (not fixed)

Throughout the meeting house there are a number of historic benches which probably originate from one of the former meeting houses; those in Figure 3 appear to be of mid-20th century in date.



Figure 3: Historic benches

The exterior walls on the east side of the meeting house have salvaged sections of guttering and rainwater hoppers attached to the walls; these date from the 1791 Hunter Street meeting house and are recycled as planters.



Figure 4: Hoppers from the Hunter Street Meeting House dated 1791

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in Liverpool City Centre within Duke Street Conservation Area and the World Heritage Site buffer zone of the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City. As a result of the city council's Liverpool One regeneration scheme the meeting house is within a densely built-up complex of large modern retail and leisure uses, with new open spaces. The townscape incorporates an interesting mix of surviving historic buildings with modern buildings. The historic properties neighbouring the Friends Meeting House include the Bluecoat Chambers a grade I listed former school, now in art gallery and retail use (built in 1717 and restored in 1951) and a Victorian pub 'Old Post Office'.

Between the Bluecoat and the meeting house is a narrow public paved courtyard enclosed on the east by the long concave wall of the BBC/Quaker building. This area contains the Quaker peace garden, designed with a mixture of seating, stepped paving and planting to provide a pleasant open-air retreat in a city centre location.



Figure 5: Quaker Meeting House Peace Garden, from the north

The detached burial ground is at Arundel Avenue. Land was purchased for this burial ground at Smithdown Lane (as it was then known) in 1856. Early Quaker burials were not marked but vertical headstones were allowed at a later date. The last burial took place in 1961. NGR: SJ 37938 88774.



Figure 6: Arundel Avenue Burial Ground (unknown date) (Liverpool Quakers Archive).

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed, and its recent date means that it is not considered a potential candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential

The site is likely to be of medium archaeological potential. The Merseyside Historic Environment Record was consulted; the site falls within a former wing of the Bluecoat Hospital. The Bluecoat building is the earliest building to survive in Liverpool city centre built in 1717.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. The meeting hasn't yet commissioned a quinquennial survey; this is a relatively new meeting house.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *Not applicable.*

3.2. Maintenance

As this is a relatively new meeting house, there are no particular maintenance issues.

3.3. Sustainability

Although the meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit, steps have been taken to improve sustainability.

- Climate change and energy efficiency: energy provided by a green energy supplier, use of LEDs and water cooler removed.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: recycling bins in all areas in the meeting house. Friends source second hand furniture.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: The roof terrace has a garden and there is a Quaker Peace Garden with a sustainable and peace theme. The garden is planted with plants and herbs, using peat-free compost, recycled plastic planters and seating.
- Transport: cycle racks have been installed.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has access to all the facilities it needs which include kitchen, toilets, meeting rooms, a library, a meeting house café and wardens flat.

3.5. Access

The meeting house has level access, first floor is accessible via a lift, an accessible WC is available on the ground and first floor and a hearing aid loop is available in the main meeting room. As part of the alterations to the ground floor in 2014, there is ramped access on the ground floor into the café. There are facilities to for the partially-sighted included clear signage and contrast-coloured nosings on the staircase.

The meeting house has good local transport links being located centrally in the city centre. There is no parking available on site apart from a single space which is reserved for disabled visitors. There is no free on-street car parking in the centre of Liverpool, but there are a number of council car parks. A multi-story car park is located in Hanover Street a five minute walk from the meeting house. There is also on-site parking for bicycles in a secure area.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 1.5 hours and in community use for 130 hours each week. There is a lettings policy. The cost of hiring the meeting rooms have a standard rate, however reduced rates are offered to voluntary, charitable or community groups. The meeting house has a no smoking and no alcohol policy. The meeting house is popular for lettings due to its warm and welcoming atmosphere, central city centre location, free Wi-Fi, on-site café, presentation equipment being available for hire and easy access.

3.7. Vulnerability to Crime

The area has low crime levels and there has been no heritage crime at the site. The Friends have not made contact with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but would consider making contact if the need arose.

3.8. Plan for Change

The meeting house underwent substantial alterations to the ground floor in 2014 and there are no plans for any further change.

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 meeting house is a relatively new building and the ground floor was significantly altered in 2014. There are no interior heritage issues that would constrain any change that might be desired by Friends in the future.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use. The meeting house is currently well used for community use and has the facilities to support this including a quiet room, on-site café and good facilities

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House. The central location of the meeting house makes it a popular venue to hire. Two smaller rooms are rented out on a permanent basis to two external groups. If the meeting house was to be laid down it would be feasible for the building to remain as a venue for community use or for conversion into a commercial venture.

Part 5: Category: 4