

Quaker Meeting House, Ludlow

St Mary's Lane (off Lower Corve Street), Ludlow, SY8 1DZ

National Grid Reference: SO 51119 75320



Statement of Significance

Ludlow meeting house is a modest brick building, adapted in the 1980s from a former late nineteenth century agricultural building. It is on the edge of Ludlow in a conservation area and has medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

The building was extensively remodelled in the 1980s and does not appear to retain much original fabric. The site and building has low evidential value.

Historical value

The late nineteenth century building was built as a farm or working building and has only been associated with the Quakers since 1977. It has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is an undistinguished but attractive building, converted in the 1980s. It is part of a group of historic brick buildings on the hill above Corve Street and has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has been a Quaker meeting house since 1977 and is also used by other community groups; it has medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Southern Marches*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000910*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Shropshire Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Ludlow*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/A*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Ludlow*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date: *Late nineteenth century, remodelled 1980s*

1.13 Architect: *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *14 January 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Bridget Cherry*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites:

Detached burial ground at Newlands, Leominster Meeting House: NGR SO 49640 58820

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

David Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, Vol.2*, 1999, p510

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

2.1. Historical background

There are references to Quakers in Ludlow from the 1680s, and in 1731 Thomas Story, a visiting Friend, held a meeting in Ludlow Castle. The next record of Quakers active in Ludlow is not until 1947 when Arthur Reynolds and two other Quaker craftsmen and their families came to Ludlow to make furniture. They lived in Dinham House and first held a meeting for worship on 11 May 1947. Friends later met in a succession of temporary places, including the Friary Hall, the Burlingham's home, the Grammar School and the Women's Room on Church Street. Monthly meeting was also held regularly at Ludlow in the post-war years. From 1977 meetings were held in a small former agricultural barn, owned by Garth and Julia Reynolds. The building, known as The Barn, was probably built in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century (the linear range is first shown on the 1904 OS map). In 1986, the meeting was able to buy the building for £15000, after a fund-raising

appeal. Remodelling within the footprint of the barn created a meeting house seating about 45, with a loft for an additional 15 and a lobby and small library/children's room below. The external appearance of the brickwork and the internal block lining indicates that the 1986 work was extensive and little of the former working building was retained. The works were carried out by Allen Wright, a member of Ludlow meeting, who made the staircase and other internal features.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building is constructed in red brick cavity walling, with stretcher bond to the external skin, concrete block to the inner face and two courses of flush headers at first floor level. The roof is laid with Welsh slate with a ceramic ridge and plastic rainwater goods. The linear range is aligned roughly north-south with the entrance facing the street to the east, and is mainly single-storey with a first floor loft or gallery at the south end. The entrance is towards the south end of the east elevation with a recessed porch with concrete lintel, hardwood half-glazed door to the right and a window into the small meeting room. The main meeting room to the north is lit by a clerestory window and one ground floor window towards the north end of the elevation, with a single upper window on the north gable end. To the rear are lean-to additions for kitchen and WCs, with timber doors and windows; one casement window lights the west side of the main meeting room.

The interior is divided into two unequal parts by the entrance lobby and staircase towards the south end of the building. The main meeting room to the north is a rectangular full-height space with exposed 2-bay roof structure. The trusses are light-weight king post trusses with raking struts and exposed rafters. The walls are painted concrete block with pine tongue and grooved panelling to the north wall and fitted pine benches against the walls. The floor is laid with carpet tiles. The south end of the meeting room is separated from the lobby by a glazed partition with a simple timber balustrade to the gallery above. The lobby has a tiled floor and a hardwood staircase leading to gallery, built by Allen Wright. The small meeting room and library at the south end has plain plastered walls, exposed joists carrying the gallery above and carpet tiles to the floor. In a lean-to off the west side of this room is a WC, accessed from the courtyard at the back. The kitchen is in a lean-to adjoining the north end of the main meeting room, with a door to the courtyard; a second WC adjoining the kitchen is also accessed from the courtyard.

2.3. Loose furnishings

There are some historic pine benches in the gallery; these are probably of nineteenth date and brought here from another meeting house. In the small meeting room there is a mid-twentieth century oak barley-twist gate leg table, and in the Meeting Room, a more recent table probably made by Garth Reynolds.



Fig.1: historic pine benches in the gallery

2.4. Attached burial ground

N/A

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is situated on a narrow lane on the north edge of Ludlow, on a hill above the east side of Corve Street, the main historic street into the town from the north. The meeting house directly fronts the street with no front garden, but there is a narrow courtyard garden to the rear overlooking the rooftops and gardens of Corve Street. The adjoining properties are residential and appear to be of similar date to the meeting house, some also in converted working buildings. There is a small twentieth century housing estate to the east of the lane opposite the meeting house. The historic town centre is on the hill to the south, with housing, shops and leisure facilities. There is a detached burial ground at Newlands, Leominster which relates to the former Meeting House at Leominster at SO 49640 58820; this is cared for by a member of Ludlow Meeting. Plans and burial records are in Herefordshire archives.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and as a modest former working building extensively remodelled in the 1980s, it is unlikely to be listable.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

There are no records relating to this site on the Shropshire Historic Environment Record. The building was previously used as an agricultural or workshop building, which seems to have been built in the late nineteenth century. The earlier use of the site is not known, but as this was on the northern edge of the historic town, the site may have been a garden or orchard. The archaeological potential is considered to be low.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey by Bridget Cherry

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Fair. The last QI was in May 2012 and since then works have included temporary s stabilisation (propping) to the roof over the gallery; repair of drains and compliance with asbestos regulations. Works are still needed to the roof structure.

ii) Attached burial ground: *N/A*

3.2. Maintenance

There are ongoing discussions about building maintenance and the options for refurbishment, mainly related to the need for extra space and the roof. The QI was undertaken by a Chartered Surveyor, W.B.Morgan. The meeting has sufficient funds for maintenance but not for ambitious rebuilding options. The meeting does not have a 5-year maintenance plan, but does use an Annual Rolling Programme to guide maintenance, revised every 1-2 years.

3.3. Sustainability

Meeting has looked at the Sustainability Toolkit, but has not used it together. Some measures have been undertaken to improve sustainability:

Climate change & energy efficiency: the boiler was replaced a few years ago with a low energy condensing boiler which makes the best use of gas. Care is taken in the timing of the heating and control of the boiler to reduce energy use. The cavity walls are thought to have been insulated some years ago, but the roof needs more insulation. All light bulbs are now low energy and an arrangement enables the reduction of the number needed to be switched on i.e. two instead of four.

Resource use, recycling & waste management: Cleaning is done by the members who take the waste home and recycle it themselves.

Building maintenance & refurbishment: There are ongoing discussions about building maintenance and refurbishment

Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation. The small backyard is planted with bee-friendly flowers and vegetables, watered from a water butt and replenished by compost from a compost bin. A 'Bee Day' was held in 2015.

Transport: The meeting is working on mitigating emissions made by travel to the Meeting House.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has essential facilities, but is considering options for improving these, particularly to provide internal access to the two WCs; both are currently accessed from the back yard. The kitchen was refitted within the last ten years. As well as the main meeting room, there is a library/children's room which can be used as a small meeting room, but this has a fairly low ceiling and is quite cramped. There is no warden's accommodation or car parking.

3.5. Access

An access audit has not been undertaken, but access to the Meeting room is known to be satisfactory and it has been used by wheelchair users. The WC is not suitable for a wheelchair user but does have a frame for the infirm; changes to the WC are being considered. There is a hearing loop, but no specific measures are in place for visually impaired people, except for clear fire exit signs.

The meeting has good access from the town centre and is ten mins walk from Ludlow train station and bus stop, but members from outside Ludlow generally travel to meetings by car as country bus services are very limited. There is a small car park with spaces for three cars near the door, and free parking on-street on Sundays.

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the meeting on house on Sunday for three hours, and on Wednesdays for between three and six hours; there are occasional meetings at other times.

The building is used for six hours per week by other groups including a children's music group, an art group, Buddhists and Humanists. The meeting house is popular because it is quiet and convenient.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting does not report any general crime, heritage crime or anti-social behaviour at the Meeting House. They have had meetings with the local police commissioner.

3.8. Plans for change

Options for improving and enlarging the Meeting House, including integrating the WCs with the interior and providing a larger second meeting room have been under consideration for several years.

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 could be adapted and altered internally without affecting heritage issues. It is in a conservation area so its demolition and rebuilding would be subject to extra planning controls regarding the external design.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use. The meeting house is already used by other groups and any changes made by Quakers would also benefit users of the building, subject to conservation area controls.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House. There is likely to be potential for the meeting house to be adapted for another use, such as residential conversion, if the meeting decided the building and site no longer suited their needs.

Part 5: Category: 3