

Friends Meeting House, Luton

28 Crawley Green Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2 0QX

National Grid Reference: TL 10071 21277



Statement of Significance

A purpose-built 1960s meeting house in a simple modern style designed by the architect Norman Hyde to replace an earlier building in the town centre. The meeting house is attached to a burial ground which was established in 1864, replacing an earlier town centre burial ground. The meeting house is of medium significance overall.

Evidential value

The building was erected on a new site in the 1960s, has been little altered, and is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The site was acquired by the Quakers in 1864 for a burial ground, but the meeting house was only erected in 1963. It is of medium historical value

Aesthetic value

The building is a typical example of functional 1960s architecture and for that reason is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

As a Quaker meeting house which is very well used by the local community, the meeting house has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Luton & Leighton*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0018270*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Luton Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Luton NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *None*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1963*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Norman V Hyde*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *29 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Helen Osborn*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *none*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 pp.5-7
The Friend 1963, p.731
Local Meeting survey, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Luton Friends first met in a room on the premises of Daniel Brown in about 1740. The building was enlarged in 1761, but in 1799 an adjacent site in Castle Street was purchased, on which was built a larger meeting house with a burial ground. It was enlarged in 1835 and again in 1866. In 1862 the former National School building in Castle Street was acquired for an Adult School, which became independent of the meeting in 1899. The Castle Street burial ground was closed in 1865. The year before Friends had bought a replacement burial ground in Crawley Green Road and erected a small cottage there. A new meeting house was built on the Crawley Green Road site in 1963. The old meeting house was sold in 1975.

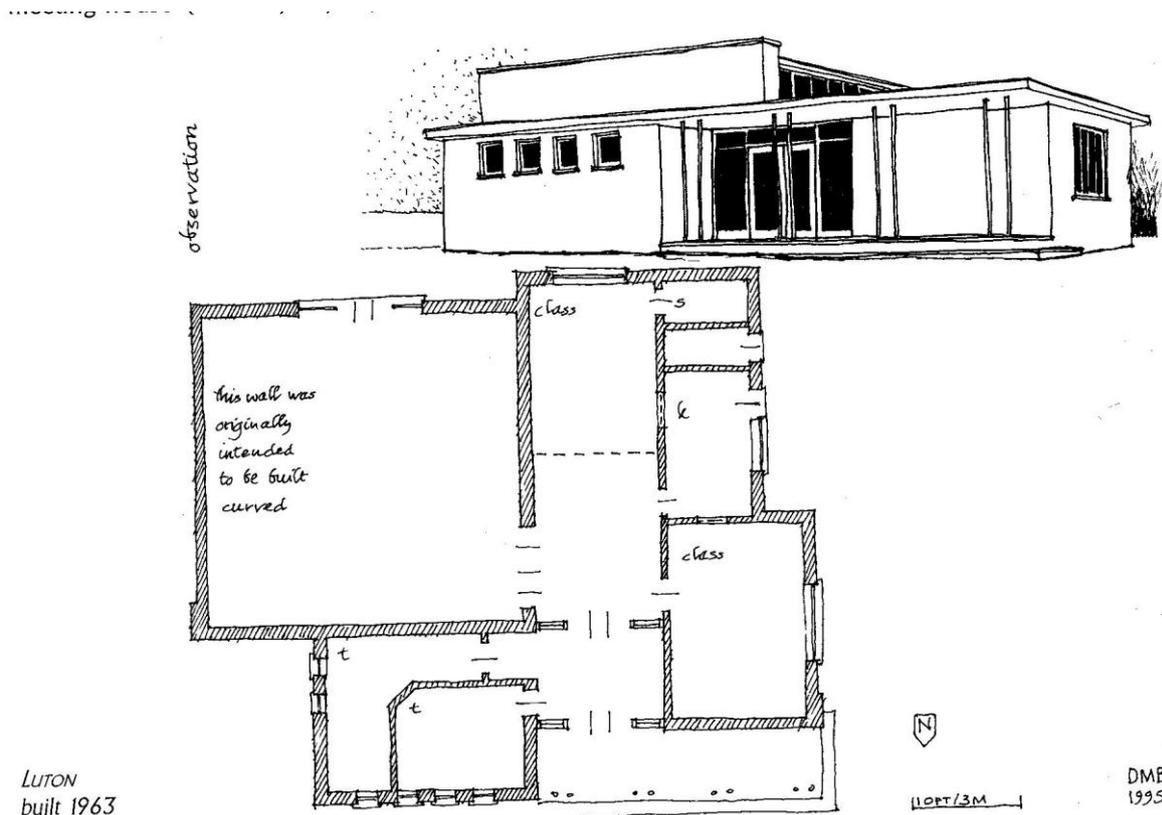


Fig.1 The ground plan of the meeting house and a perspective view, from *Butler*, vol.1, p.6

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The single-storeyed meeting house building is typical of the 1960s in its use of simple shapes, functional planning and metal-framed windows. The large, square flat-roofed meeting room space is enclosed on the north and east sides by lower flat-roofed ranges containing the kitchen, toilets and other meeting spaces. The main facade is faced with purple brick laid in stretcher bond with dark mortar; the side and rear walls are of red brick. The right-hand half of the north-facing main front has an open verandah with paired metal supports to a flat roof, which is continued over the lavatory block to the left. Behind the lavatory block rises the blind side wall of the meeting room. On the east side of the building, the lower range containing kitchen and classrooms has a stepped frontage while the taller meeting room behind has a continuous clerestorey. On the garden front both the meeting room and the classroom have French windows. Internally, the meeting room has walls of barefaced purple brick with self-coloured mortar. The ceiling is currently hung with material.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of interest

2.4. Attached burial ground:

The rectangular burial ground extends to the rear (south side) of the meeting house and forms a small enclave within a much larger municipal burial ground. The Quaker burial ground space is now defined by gravestones set edge to edge along the boundary. The centre of the burial ground is laid to grass with trees and bushes along the borders.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is reached from Crawley Green Road, which is a wide and busy main road on the outskirts of Luton. The building is set back from the road, behind a mid-nineteenth century cottage, which may be the building erected by the Quakers in 1864 when the burial ground was purchased.

2.6. Listed status

The building is probably not a candidate for the statutory list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house occupies a site some distance from the centre of town which is probably of low archaeological potential, but the adjacent burial ground is clearly of high archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal

3.2. Maintenance

There has been no recent quinquennial inspection and the meeting does not have a 5-year maintenance and repair plan. The meeting does have enough money to maintain and repair the meeting house.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include

- Cavity wall insulation
- Double-glazing
- Ecotricity supply gas and electricity

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

The burial ground is managed as a wild flower area, with no grass cutting.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house, with adequate kitchen, toilets, and meeting space. There is no resident warden.

There is good public transport. There is ample parking on site but no secure storage for bicycles.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building, and an accessible WC. There is no hearing loop, nor facilities for partially-sighted people. There has not been a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the building for approximately 2 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 84 hours per week and is used for approximately 60 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Users include groups of other faiths and community groups which provide support for unemployed people with addiction problems. Only Quaker organisations are allowed to use the meeting house for free. Users value the peaceful atmosphere, quite, and the good location.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime at the site but there has been some theft of copper piping and there have been break-ins and thefts of items from the store cupboard. The locality is generally not well cared-for, has some high deprivation and has low community confidence. There have been fleeting links with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no plans for 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 currently has all the required facilities. There is probably some scope for alterations or additions.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the meeting house currently has all the facilities required by its users. There is probably some scope for alterations or additions.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: should the meeting house be closed or laid down, it could doubtless find a continuing community use.

Part 5: Category: 3