

## ***Friends Meeting House, Maidenhead***

*14 West Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RL*

*National Grid Reference: SU 88782 81276*



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

***The meeting house has low heritage significance as a small inter-war building which was extended in the 1990s. There is a historic burial ground to the rear and a detached classroom of the 1950s. The site is currently under threat of redevelopment.***

### ***Evidential value***

***The building has low evidential value. The site has high archaeological potential due to the presence of burials and, possibly, below-ground evidence of the 1803 meeting house on the site.***

### ***Historical value***

***The meeting house is an interwar building with a later extension. It has low historical value.***

### ***Aesthetic value***

***The building work of the 1990s has removed most of the inter-war character of the building. It has low aesthetic value.***

### ***Communal value***

***As a Quaker place of worship which is also well-used by the local community, the meeting house has high communal value.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Thames*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0030610*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Maidenhead NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1935, extension: 1998-9*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Leonard L. Jackson, extension: Malcolm Barnett*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *22 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Alastair Donaldson*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Garden room to rear*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 11-13  
Jones, S.F., *Maidenhead Quakers. Three centuries in the life of a small community*, 2009  
Historic England Archive, photo of 1970, <http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/archive-collections/englands-places/card/14461>  
Local Meeting survey by Alastair Donaldson, June 2015

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

### **2.1 Historical background**

In the early eighteenth century, Friends met in each other's homes. In 1734, a meeting house was built on land leased from William Wickens. In 1803, a replacement building was privately built by Hannah Wilson and Rachel Newbery on the present site. In 1805 or 1809 they donated it to the Monthly Meeting. In 1871-96, Quaker use briefly lapsed and the building was used as a club for the poor and as a chapel for the Plymouth Brethren. In 1927, the building was deemed unsafe and it was demolished in 1934-5. In May 1935 the construction of the current meeting house started which opened in July 1935 (architect: Leonard L. Jackson, a member of Reading meeting). The cost was £350. In 1951, a kitchen was added and a large detached classroom (now known as the Garden Room) was built at the

back of the burial ground, at a total cost of £1,050. In 1998-9, the meeting house was extended to the front (architect: Malcolm Barnett of Henley). The local council has identified West Street as a 'key development area' and is currently discussing a number of options, some of which propose the demolition of the meeting house.

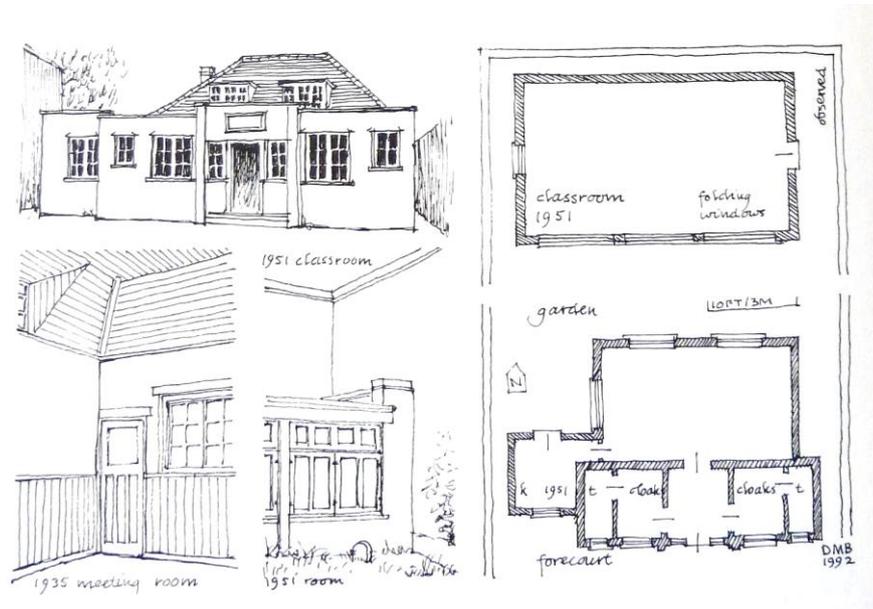


Figure 1: Elevation, plans and details of the meeting house (before the 1998-99 extension) and the classroom (north is roughly at the top of the plans; not to scale) (Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 12)

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The street elevation faces roughly south. The meeting house has an approximately oblong plan with the 1935 meeting room under a tiled hipped roof to the rear and the flat-roofed extension of 1998-99 with a cross gable over the central bay to the front. The walls are rendered and the windows were replaced in timber in the 1990s. The original window openings to the rear have tile lintels and sills. The front elevation has a projecting lobby under the cross-roof with a six-light south window. The entrance is in the west wall of the lobby. On either side of the lobby are toilets and a kitchen, lit by a small south window and a larger three-light south window, respectively. The meeting room is a small oblong space with dado panelling. It is lit by a window to the west, two French doors to the garden, and two skylights (which replaced two original dormers).

## 2.3 Loose furnishings

None of particular note

## 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground is to the rear of the building. In 1959, the gravestones were relocated to the perimeter walls (not seen) and in 1963 the plot was paved with a central rose garden. Only five burials were recorded between 1839 and 1869.

## 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located near the centre of Maidenhead, in a street of back exits of shops, parking plots, office buildings and a pub. The meeting house is slightly set back from West Street. The boundary walls were replaced in 1998-99 by a new dwarf brick wall. Behind

the meeting house is the burial ground and garden with the Garden Room of 1951 at the rear (photo bottom left). The Garden Room has foldable windows.

## 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house and the schoolroom are not listed. They are modest buildings from the inter-war and immediate post-war period and are not considered to be eligible for inclusion on the statutory or local list.

## 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house is the second on the site, replacing a building of 1803. This, together with the presence of burials, gives the site 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/generally satisfactory

### 3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection was undertaken in October 2010 by Edge Architecture. It found no major problems with the building, only minor maintenance issues. The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. It has 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. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: use of renewable energy (Good Energy), caretaker switches off lights and heating, installation of insulation, curtains for Garden Room
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: recycling where possible
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: regular maintenance
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: provision of a rare garden in the area
- Transport: use of public transport or walking where possible

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate but would consider obtaining one. In 2011, the Energy Savings Trust surveyed the building and made recommendations.

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, apart from on-site parking. The amenities (meeting room, kitchen, toilets, and storage) are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is no parking on site. Bicycles can be securely parked in the garden.

### 3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building, as well as an accessible toilet. There is no hearing loop and no particular

facilities for partially-sighted people. An informal Disability Access Audit has been conducted and its recommendations were implemented, including a ramp to the Garden Room (c.2005).

### 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 80 hours per week. It is used for an average of 55 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Alcohol, smoking and the presence of animals (except guide dogs) are not permitted. Free use is at the discretion of the local meeting. Users value the meeting house for its central location, fair price, quiet atmosphere and garden.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been heritage crime at the site: In 2011 and 2014, there have been attempts to steal copper from the roof which resulted in damage; both incidents were reported to police. The locality is generally not very well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and medium community confidence. The meeting has established a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8 Plans for change

The detailed plans for the development of the area and the issue of the potential demolition of the meeting house will not be decided until 2019.

## **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:* There are currently no heritage constraints on this building. It could be altered or extended if required. At the present, the greatest threat is the proposed redevelopment of the area which may result in the compulsory purchase of the site.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house currently has all the facilities required by its users. If necessary, it could be altered or extended.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting:* Should the meeting house cease to be used by the local meeting, it could easily accommodate a new community use. However, the redevelopment of the site is a more likely outcome (subject to planning permission), if the terms of the deed of 1805 can be clarified. This appears to give a right of re-entry to the heirs of Rachel Newberry in the event that the premises cease to be used as a Quaker meeting house for three years. The meeting should seek legal advice on this in the case of sale or compulsory purchase.

## **Part 5: Category: 4**