

Friends Meeting House, Maldon

Butt Lane, Maldon, Essex, CM9 5HD

National Grid Reference: TL 85345 07031



Statement of Significance

The meeting house at Maldon has high heritage significance as an early nineteenth-century building with original furnishings and a burial ground.

Evidential value

Little is known about the use of the site of the meeting house before its acquisition by the Quakers in 1818. The fabric of the meeting house and the burials on the site have the potential to yield evidence about the building's construction and past Quaker activity. The building and the site have medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is a late Georgian building and one of the oldest buildings in Butt Lane. It retains most of its historic layout (i.e. the division into two meeting rooms, one for men and one for women), as well as a number of Georgian benches. The meeting house is associated with Eric Baker, one of the founders of Amnesty International, who is buried at Maldon. The meeting house and burial ground have high historical value, both illustrative and associative.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a good example of late Georgian architecture, although like most meeting houses, the building is fairly plain. The simple form of the original building has been slightly diminished by incremental extensions on either side. The setting of the well-maintained historic burial ground, adds to the aesthetic value of the building and site. Overall, the meeting house and burial ground have high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house and site have high communal value as a building and burial ground developed for the Quakers. It is now also in community use, and a familiar landmark for local residents and visitors. The building and burial ground symbolise Quaker values, such as the testimony of simplicity.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Essex*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0021710*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting with Friends Trusts Limited who hold the deeds as custodian trustees*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Maldon District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Maldon*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1257102*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Maldon*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1820–21*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *18 June 2014*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Sue Smith and Peter Garratt*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Bibliographic references:

Bettley, J. and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Essex*, 2007, p. 581

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 193–4

Essex Historic Environment Record, monument ID: MEX1013697

Maldon District Council and Essex County Council, 'Maldon Conservation Area Review and Management Plan', 2006

'Maldon Meeting House. An historical account of Maldon Quakers and Quakerism in Essex', leaflet, no date

Maldon Meeting House archive, architectural plans from 1958, 1980, 1992, 1997

Local Meeting survey by Sue Swaffin-Smith, 2014 and 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends used a rented room in Maldon by 1696. In 1706, a collection was organised to buy a piece of land just off the High Street for the construction of a meeting house. The site cost £4 and the meeting house was opened in 1707. In the 1790s the number of Quakers in Maldon grew and plans were made to construct a new meeting house. In 1818, a new site was acquired and the current meeting house constructed in 1820–21. The building cost £1,233. The previous building was sold in 1821 and was used as a builder's workshop until it burnt down in c.1962.

Originally, the meeting house consisted of two rooms: one for the women's meeting (to the northwest; photo centre right) and one for the men's (to the rear; photos bottom left and right) (figure 1). The timber partition between them may have originally been removable, possibly similar to the sliding panels on sash cords at Great Bardfield (*qv*). In 1850 a new porch was added for £18 and the following year a side porch was built (£16). In 1863, part of the former women's meeting room was partitioned to create committee rooms and a small upstairs room. In 1943, electricity was installed. In 1952, the northwest corner was rebuilt on new foundations due to subsidence problems. In 1958, a detached toilet block was replaced by a small extension to the north. In the 1960s, false ceilings were installed in the two main rooms. In 1980 the 1958 toilet extension was replaced by a larger toilet extension on the same site (architect: Peter Ball ARIBA).

In 1987, a small boiler room was added as a projecting extension in the centre of the southwest wall. In 1992, the architects Plater Inkpen Vale & Downie of Tollesbury surveyed the building in preparation for alterations. These were undertaken in 1999 by Halliday West Associates of Chelmsford. They comprised the replacing of the boiler room with a larger south extension with a new boiler cupboard and a ramp for wheelchairs. The brick boundary wall to the street was rebuilt, reusing the old stonework and any reusable bricks, supplemented by second-hand bricks. Minor internal alterations included changes to the partitions in the stairwell lobby.

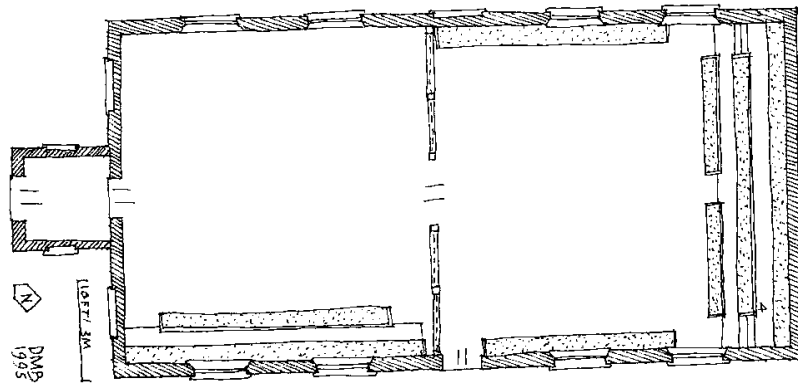


Figure 1 Ground floor plan of the meeting house in c.1850 as reconstructed by Butler (northeast is at the top; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 1, p. 193)

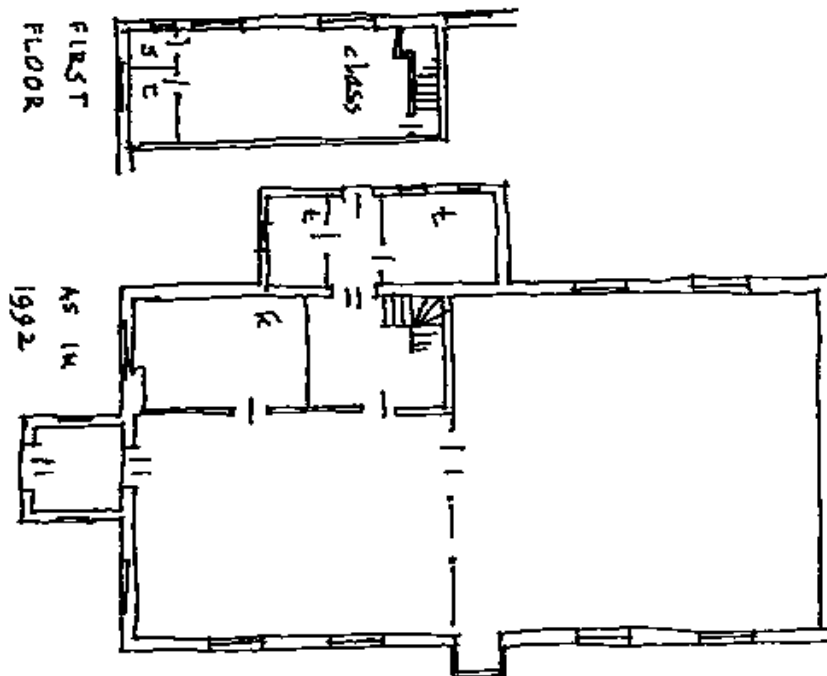


Figure 2: Plan as in 1992 (Butler (1999), vol. 1, p. 193)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The front elevation faces northwest but the following description will assume it faces west. The meeting house was built in 1820-21 with an oblong plan and has had a number of small extensions since, including: the front porch (1850), a north extension (1980) and a south extension (1999). The materials are red brick in Flemish bond with a hipped slate roof on projecting eaves. The porch and the south extension have gable roofs of slate, while the north extension has a hipped lean-to roof of slate with a small weatherboarded lean-to structure. The pedimented porch has double-leaf doors with a moulded architrave. Its return walls have blind round-headed recesses with stone sills and gauged brick heads. On either side of the porch are similar, tall blind recesses, with a blind oculus in the centre. The side walls have several of the round-arched tall brick recesses, some with 16-pane sash windows with radial glazing to the heads. The south elevation has four such windows and one blind arch,

the north side has three windows and one blind opening (as well as several later windows on both levels at the northwest corner).

The interior has two main rooms, as well as a kitchen and staircase against the north wall of the west room with a room and a small kitchen on the first floor (created in 1863). Both meeting rooms have a vertical-panelled dado, a suspended ceiling and a timber floor. The smaller (the former women's) meeting room has a fixed bench against the south wall, the remnant of a former stand (see figure 1). Between the two rooms is a panelled division, possibly formerly with sash shutters, whose mechanism reputedly survives in the roof. The part-glazed door into the larger meeting room is a later replacement. The main meeting room has the two-stage stand at the east end, with turned balusters to the short flights of steps. There are fixed benches along the north and south walls and a modern door into the south extension. The first-floor room has no features of particular note.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room has fifteen open-backed benches with armrests on turned supports. There is also a gate-leg table with turned legs.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground, which surrounds the meeting house in four sides, is an oblong plot with a narrow west frontage to Butt Lane. The site was acquired in 1818. The surviving headstones are largely between the road and the building, with some more recent headstones to the west of the southwest corner. The burials date back to 1821. There are two undated plans of the burial ground in the meeting house; the older one (possibly of a nineteenth-century date) indicates 94 marked burials, the more recent one (c.1950s; but not kept up-to-date) around 112. Other records are deposited in the area meeting archive.

The headstones are, as usual in Quaker burial grounds, of uniform size and material (limestone), with only slight variations in the lettering. A corner between the entrance porch and the main body of the meeting house is used for the scattering of ashes. (A board inside the porch lists the names of those whose ashes were scattered.) The burial ground is still used for burials.

A notable burial of international importance is the grave of Eric Baker (1920–76), one of the founders of Amnesty International and the organisation's second secretary-general (1966–68). A locally notable grave is that of Lucy Hicks (died 1900) who has been identified as the women in whose memory a horse trough was installed outside All Saints church in Maldon (grade II listed, inscription: 'TO THE MEMORY OF A GOOD MOTHER WHO LIVED AND DIED IN THIS TOWN 1864–1900').

The boundary walls are of brick with stone dressings; these were rebuilt in the 1990s, while retaining the wrought-iron gates with fleurs-de-lis finials. The planting is largely around the perimeter of the burial ground, apart from one yew tree beside the gravel path. This path leads from the gates to the meeting house entrance, where it forks into two concrete paths leading to the side entrances.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is set back from the street but its boundary wall and graveyard provide an enclosed open space which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. The key view of the meeting house is from Butt Lane, along the axis of gates and pathway towards the entrance.

Butt Lane is in the centre of Maldon. To the south are short Victorian terraces, while opposite the meeting house stands a Baptist Chapel of 1896. To the north of the meeting house is a wide junction, as well as one of the town's main car parks which somewhat increases the traffic in Butt Lane (which is a one-way street). On certain days, the car park is used for a market.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is listed at grade II which is considered appropriate. The list entry needs to be amended: Contrary to the statement in the list entry, the building is not of two storeys and the main meeting rooms are not floored over. Most of the building remains single-storey in height. The only first-floor room is above the small kitchen, lobby and stairwell. The suspended ceilings in the two main rooms were added in the 1960s but there are no rooms above.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

It is not known if there was an earlier building on the site before 1818. While prehistoric and Roman remains have been found in the vicinity of Maldon, few objects of prehistoric or Roman origin have been found in the town. The town itself is first recorded in the Anglo-Saxon period, and although the use of the site prior to the construction of the Meeting House is not known, the site may have medium 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. The conservation area appraisal describes the burial ground as 'a model of how graveyards can be managed'.

3.2 Maintenance

There has been no inspection by a qualified professional since 1998 (Halliday West Associates). Members of the meeting inspect the building annually. The inspection of 2014 only found minor maintenance items, including a mossy patch behind a downpipe at the southeast. In 2013 the roof was insulated. The building has several historic spreader-plates on the side elevations but there is no evidence of recent movement. The suspended ceilings in the two main rooms are not particularly attractive and the interiors would be much enhanced by their removal. However, they were installed to reduce the heatable interior volume. Heating and insulation continue to be concerns; the meeting is considering ways to install internal glazing to the sash windows. The local meeting does not have enough money to maintain and repair the building. The area meeting funds most works although the local meeting contributes as far as possible. There is a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The Meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact.

- Climate change & energy efficiency: installed roof insulation in 2013; use of 100% green (renewable) electricity
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: recycling where possible

- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: nest boxes and log piles for bugs
- Transport: car share

The meeting does not have an energy performance certificate and does not consider it necessary.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the required amenities. It is accessible by public transport. There is no on-site parking for cars or bikes. However, a public car park is opposite. There is no resident warden.

3.5 Access

There is a small step to the main entrance but level access is available via a ramp to the south side entrance. Within the building there are no steps. There is no disabled access to the first floor room. There is an accessible WC and a hearing loop. There are no specific facilities for partially sighted people, other than large print copies of *Quaker Faith & Practice*. There has been no Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community use

Friends use the meeting house for 12 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 126 hours per week. It is used for an average of 34 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Activities without alcohol consumption are preferred and letting free of charge is only available for Quaker events. Users value the building because of its good location, vicinity to car park, competitive pricing, good lighting, cleanliness, amenities, high standard of maintenance, and its quiet, peaceful and spiritual atmosphere.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area in general has low crime levels and there are no current signs of ongoing crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. About two years ago lead was stolen from the roof of the WC extension and there was a break-in to the lean-to shed beside this. About six years ago lead was stolen from the entrance porch. There is an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Police team.

3.8 Plans for change

There are no plans for changes to the building (as of 2015).

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 has all the facilities it currently needs. Given the building's recent history of accretive extensions, any further extensions should be carefully considered. The Georgian benches in the main meeting room should be retained.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is already used for a range of community activities and has all the necessary facilities to support these.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: The building is a relatively flexible building which could be used for secular purposes, if no longer required as a meeting house,

provided the burial ground and spacious setting is protected. Ideally the historic furnishings should be retained in situ.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1257102

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, BUTT LANE

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
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Essex	Maldon	District Authority	Maldon
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Grade: II

Date first listed: 24-Sep-1971

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

MALDON

TL8507SW BUTT LANE 574-1/7/9 (East side) 24/09/71 Friends' Meeting House

II

Friends' meeting house. 1821. Red brick in Flemish bond with hipped slate roof. Rectangular plan of 4 bays with 2-bay front to road.

EXTERIOR: 2-storey height, probably originally fully open, now floored over. Roof has projecting eaves. Pedimented porch with double-leaf doors in moulded architrave. Blind round-headed recesses to return walls with stone sills and finely gauged brick heads. Porch flanked by a pair of similar recesses and surmounted by oculus. Flank walls have tall 16-pane sashes with radial glazing to round heads. Low addition and various C20 inserted windows to north wall.

INTERIOR: 2 principal rooms. Half-glazed double doors to outer room; vertically-panelled dado with wall bench to south; doorways to north giving access to added kitchen and upper floor. Central timber partition wall containing double-leaf half-glazed doors with margin glazing. Meeting room has similar dado, which ramps up behind the Elder's benches on the end wall; 2 tiers of high-backed benches with shaped seats on brackets, and further bench against wall; steps to upper tier with ramped handrail, stick balusters and column newels; wall benches to north and south and probably contemporary unfixed benches.

Listing NGR: TL8534507031