

Friends Meeting House, Mansfield

Rosemary Street, Mansfield, NG19 6AB

National Grid Reference: SK 53323 61766



Statement of Significance

A meeting house typical of the 1970s, combining a simple plan with a striking roof form, top-side lit principal rooms and visual engagement with the garden. It has medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

The building is evidence of the resources of the Mansfield Quakers, but has no archaeological value. The headstones in the garden have the potential for adding to knowledge about local Quakers. Evidential value overall is relatively low.

Historical value

The meeting house demonstrates continuity in the history of the Quakers in Mansfield, a town with very strong associations with George Fox and the origins of the Quaker movement. There is medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is typical of mid-twentieth century design, and one of three different designs for the Friends in the Derby and Nottingham area created by the architects Bartlett & Gray. The building has some presence and it

demonstrates engagement with the surroundings. There is medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is associated with local Friends and offers good facilities for use by local groups, there is medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Nottingham and Derbyshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0010060*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Mansfield District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Mansfield*

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): *1973*

1.13 Architect (s): *Bartlett & Gray*

1.14 Date of visit: *7 December 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Erick Sermuksus*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Almshouses founded by a Quaker on Nottingham Road*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Hunt, J., Holt R. & Roberts, J., *The History of the Quakers in Mansfield* (privately printed guidebook with revisions of 2009)

Pevsner, N. & Williamson, E., *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1979), p. 170

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), Vol. 1, p. 126-7

<http://site.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/learning/history/quakers-heritage-trail/>

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

2.1. Historical background

George Fox had very close associations with Mansfield and was resident there by 1674. Fox worked as a cobbler and made the first converts to his movement in the town. Meetings were subsequently held in the houses of Timothy Garland in Mansfield and of Elizabeth Hooton in the nearby village of Skegby. The latter premises became a meeting house and the grounds used for Quaker burials. A purpose-built meeting house was built in Mansfield in c. 1691, serving the local meeting until new premises were built on the same site in 1800. An existing burial ground on the site remained in use. Elizabeth Heath founded almshouses for Quakers and Anglicans in 1691, also providing a burial ground. These buildings were replaced in 1855 and stand on Nottingham Road.



Figure 1. The previous meeting house of 1800 (Mansfield meeting house collection)

Local Quakers went on to hold prominent positions in Mansfield as industrialists and in public service, as aldermen and mayors of the town. In the mid-1960s the meeting house and burial ground were acquired by the local authority for road developments, and a site for a new meeting house on Rosemary Way was eventually identified and bought. The architects were Bartlett & Gray, who also designed meeting houses in Chesterfield and Nottingham (qq.v.) during the mid-twentieth century. The building was opened in 1973 and cost £43,000, a detached warden's bungalow was also provided. Various repairs and alterations have been made over the years, and a painting of a dove inserted outside between the sets of clerestory lighting of the principal spaces. In 1999-2000 a programme of alterations to improve accessibility was undertaken.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

Meeting house of 1972-3 by Bartlett & Gray, built of brick laid largely in stretcher bond in informal patterns using pale and darker brown bricks. Soldier courses are used at the eaves of the flat-roofed sections, sloping roofs are clad in tiles. The plan is of modified T-shape, with a pair of tall gabled elements with clerestory lighting along the top forming a cutaway, fronted by a low flat-roofed entrance, circulation and service block. The panel between the two sections of clerestory lights incorporates a painting of a white dove on a blue ground executed in the early twenty-first century by Erick Sermuksus. The rear elevation of the building consists of tiled roofs reaching down to a glazed screen with doors at the ends so

both rooms have independent access to the garden. An attached wall on this side encloses a garden.

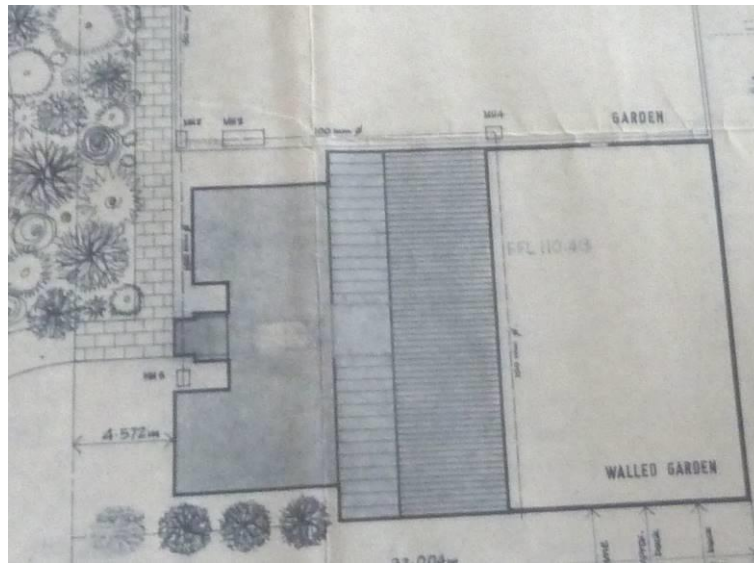


Figure 2. Block plan dated 1971 by Bartlett & Gray (Nottingham meeting house collection).

The entrance gives to a top-lit foyer with a kitchen to the east and toilets to the west. Ahead are the entrances to the meeting room on one side and a social room on the other. The two areas are divided by a store accessed from the social room, but are otherwise virtually identical spaces, with the tall sloping ceilings clad in hardwood, exposed brick walls and clerestory lighting high on the south side. The warden's accommodation is detached and lies to the west of the meeting house. It is a low bungalow of domestic character constructed of similar materials.

2.3. Loose furnishings.

Furnishings are modern apart from one wooden bench said to have come from the previous meeting house.

2.4. Attached burial ground.

The burial ground is walled and planted as a garden. It contains headstones from the burial ground associated with the previous meeting house. Most are placed face down along the inner perimeter, and a few stand against the west wall. Some re-interments were made following the destruction of the earlier burial ground, but the area is not now used for burial.



Figure 3. Headstones in the garden

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and detached warden's house stand on a spacious site on the north side of Mansfield, where there is open green space around the building and its neighbour, a Baptist chapel. In the local area are public and religious buildings, with the town centre to the south and residential areas to the north. The previous meeting house site is occupied by a bus station. The general cemetery has an area set aside for Quaker burials.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and not considered to be a candidate for listing, although it could be eligible for a local list, subject to local authority resources.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

No archaeological potential has been identified on the site.

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

A maintenance and repair plan is in place for routine work. A QI was undertaken in 2013. The minor works recommended have been carried out but the replacement of double glazing in the high-level windows is outstanding. Some problems with leaks in the roof are reported.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the sustainability toolkit and the following measures have been implemented:

- Energy supplier has been changed

- A recycling policy has been introduced
- The boiler has been replaced with a more efficient model
- Wildlife friendly measures have been undertaken in the grounds
- Installation of solar panels and cavity wall insulation is under consideration.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has the amenities required, including kitchen, WCs, social room and large meeting room. However some users have raised issues about the adequacy of storage areas.

3.5. Access

Accessibility was improved during a programme of work completed in 2000. There is level access throughout the building and a fully accessible toilet. There are no steps or stairs and signage meets the legal requirements. There is on-site parking and regular bus services.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting is used by local groups and there is a lettings policy which requires users to be acceptable on the basis of Quaker values. Written information is required if thought necessary and applicants reviewed on a case by case basis.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

Crime is not a serious problem. There have been isolated incidents of damage and some littering, but the area is generally well cared for without high levels of crime or anti-social behaviour.

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 building appears to meet the needs of the meeting but there would be scope for change if required.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The facilities are considered to be good and the venue is in an attractive setting with easy parking. There would be few constraints on undertaking a programme of alteration if required.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The character of the building is such that it would present problems for reuse except for community or religious uses, without major changes being made.

Part 5: Category: 3