

## ***Friends Meeting House, Marlborough & District***

*The Parade, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 1NE*

*National Grid Reference: SU 18978 69108*



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

***A former schoolroom belonging to the adjoining early nineteenth-century Congregational chapel, which makes a positive contribution to the local conservation area. It has been a Quaker meeting house since the 1980s. Overall, it is of medium evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***The building opened as a meeting house only in 1986; its evidential value as a place of Quaker worship is therefore low. It has medium evidential value for its association with the chapel.***

#### ***Historical value***

***Built in 1895, the building has medium historical value for its contribution to the history of nonconformity and education in Marlborough.***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***The building is not prominent in public views, and has been altered, but nevertheless has medium aesthetic value for its contribution to the group of former church buildings and to the townscape of The Parade.***

#### ***Communal value***

***The building is well used by community groups as well as by Friends, and is of high communal value.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Oxford & Swindon*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0014870*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wiltshire Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Marlborough*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Marlborough*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1895*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *21 June 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *June Buffery, Barney Rosedale*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 683-4

Local Meeting Survey, by June Buffery, April 2016

Quinquennial report, June 2013

Victoria County History, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol12/pp199-229#p133>

Kennet District Council, *Marlborough Conservation Area Statement*, June 2003

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

### **2.1 Historical background**

In 1656 George Fox visited Marlborough, during a time of persecution of Quakers. In 1658 William Hitchcock gave land at Manton Corner to the Friends, part of which was used as a burial ground. The VCH says a meeting house was built here, Butler says not (the site was sold in 1927). Fox visited Marlborough again in 1673 and 1677, and William Penn came in 1687, both speaking at Hitchcock's house in the town.

In 1722 a meeting house was built on a backland site off the High Street (registered in 1727). The meeting declined in the late eighteenth century and was dissolved by 1800. The building was sold in 1831 and eventually demolished in 1935.

A new meeting was established in the town in 1961, and in 1985 new premises were acquired, a former schoolroom behind the lecture hall of a former Congregational chapel in The Parade. This was a year or so after the (by then United Reformed Church) chapel had closed; built in 1817 and listed Grade II, it is now an antiques warehouse. Alterations to the former schoolroom were carried out for the meeting by architect John Bangma, at a cost of £10,000, the converted building opening in 1986.

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

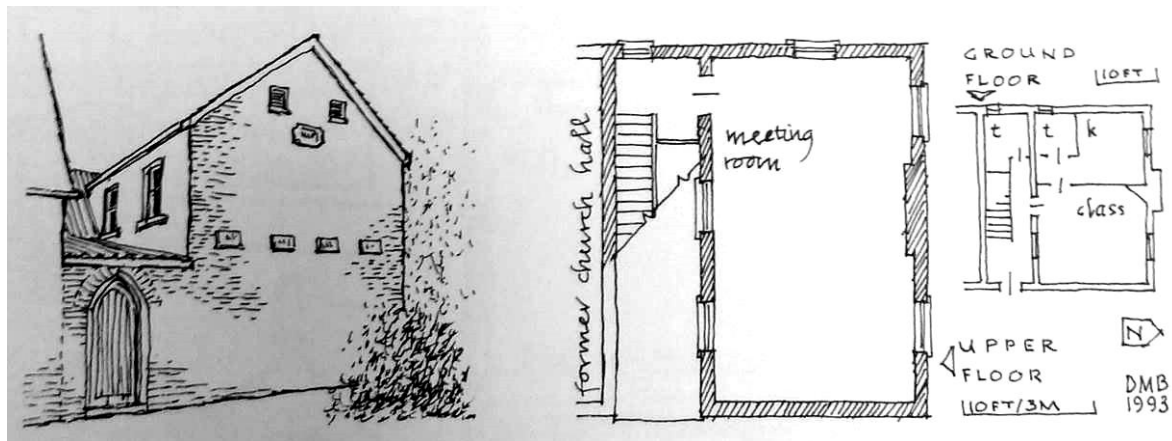


Figure 1: Plan and elevation, from Butler, 1999, p.864

The building is a converted schoolroom of 1895, attached to and located to the rear of the former lecture hall (?1867, in the foreground in photo upper left on page 1) of the adjoining former Congregational chapel, which was built in 1817. A panel bearing the date 1895 is one of several raised stone blocks set into the western gable end of the former schoolroom. It is built of red brick laid in Flemish bond under a slate roof with clay ridge tiles. It is of two storeys, its main elevation (photo lower left on page 1) facing towards the late nineteenth-century manse (now a private house). This elevation is of three bays, with a solid wall in the central bay (for a stack which has been capped at the eaves) flanked by windows with gauged brick arches and stone sills. The windows are uPVC replacements. At the side, a space between the former schoolroom and lecture hall has a screen wall with Gothic doorway, which serves as the entrance to the meeting house.

A classroom and kitchen and WCs are on the ground floor, and a stair with a somewhat improvised roof over leads to the main meeting room above. This is an intimate, welcoming space, with an open king post roof (photo bottom left on page 1). Apart from at the western end, the walls are clad with vertical pine boarding.

## 2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no furnishings of particular historical note.

## 2.4 Attached burial ground

Not applicable.

## 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The Parade is a narrow, curving street which leads down from the High Street and opens into a triangular open space, lined in large part with historic buildings (several of them seventeenth-century or earlier), now given over to tarmac and surface car parking. The meeting house forms part of a group of nineteenth-century buildings associated with the former Congregational chapel; it is largely hidden from public view behind the slightly older lecture hall. The former chapel is also well set back from the street, behind an avenue of trees.

## 2.6 Listed status

The building is not listed, although it might be considered to lie within the historic curtilage of the former Congregational chapel (Grade II and now in separate ownership). The meeting house is not considered to be a candidate for listing in its own right. Along with the former lecture hall, it is identified in the Council's Conservation Area Statement (p. 18) as a significant unlisted building.

## 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The Parade (formerly known as The Marsh) is within the historic core of the town, and the archaeological potential is likely to be high.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground: Not applicable

### 3.2 Maintenance

The QIR (2013) reports that the meeting house 'appears to have been conscientiously maintained and generally is in good order. Inevitably in a building this age there will be areas that require attention'. Necessary repairs identified in that report have since been carried out, including window replacement, roof insulation and localised repointing. The cost of these improvements has been met from a deposit fund. There is a five year repair and maintenance plan.

### 3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. Measures undertaken to reduce environmental impact include new double glazing, roof insulation, low energy light bulbs where possible, and shared transport. One member has an electric car. The usual recycling arrangements are in place.

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting considers that it has the amenities it needs. These include a downstairs kitchen and sitting room and two WCs. There is no resident warden.

The town is served by public transport, which is good during the week but limited on Sundays. There is no car parking on site, but there is public parking nearby. There is no secure parking for bicycles.

### 3.5 Access

An access audit has not been carried out. There is step-free access into the building and the ground floor facilities (which include an accessible WC), while a chairlift is provided on the stair to the first floor Meeting Room. A hearing loop is provided.

### 3.6 Community Use

In addition to use by Friends for approximately four hours a week, the building is let to third parties for about twenty-eight hours each week (out of a possible thirty-six). There is a lettings policy which contains no particular restrictions. Users appreciate the location, price and 'good, peaceful feeling' in the meeting room.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no recorded instances of crime. This is generally a fairly well-cared-for area with relatively low levels of crime and deprivation.

### 3.8 Plans for change

Possible further window replacement.

## **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 has been adapted to meet current needs. There are no particular heritage constraints governing further internal change, although external changes or additions would need to take account of the building's location in a conservation area.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The building is already well used by community groups, and similar considerations apply.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* The building has been identified as a significant unlisted building in the conservation area, and so it would be desirable for a suitable alternative use to be found. It would appear to lend itself to a number of uses, including residential, subject to resolution of planning and access issues.

## **Part 5: Category: 3**