

Friends Meeting House, North Walsham

Quakers Hill, Mundesley Road, Swafield, North Walsham, NR28 0RF

National Grid Reference: TG 28516 31732



Statement of Significance

The building has exceptional heritage significance as a fine example of a modest mid-eighteenth century meeting house, retaining much of its original interior simplicity and Georgian fittings, in an unspoilt rural setting.

Evidential value

It appears that the building is still much as first built, though there may have been some minor alterations to the internal arrangements. For this reason it is of high evidential value.

Historical value

The site and the building have high historical value, as an eighteenth century Quaker site, although it appears that the Quaker community at North

Walsham has always been small, despite the huge size of the nearby burial ground, and there are no notable historical associations.

Aesthetic value

The building has exceptional aesthetic value as the epitome of a modest Georgian Quaker meeting house, with an interior that retains its original simplicity and fittings.

Communal value

There appear to have been periods in the building's history when it was little-used and its isolated situation must have always limited its importance to the wider community. It is of medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Norfolk and Waveney*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0007490*

1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Ltd*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *North Norfolk District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *North Walsham*

1.7 Listed status: *II**

1.8 NHLE: *1373956*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1772*

1.13 Architect(s): *original builder not known; 1984 restoration by Christopher Codling*

1.14 Date of visit: *26 June 2014*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *David Correa-Hunt*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Large walled burial ground a short distance to the south. On the opposite side of the main road is a group of three small cottages known as Quaker Cottages, which were once part of the Quaker settlement here.*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

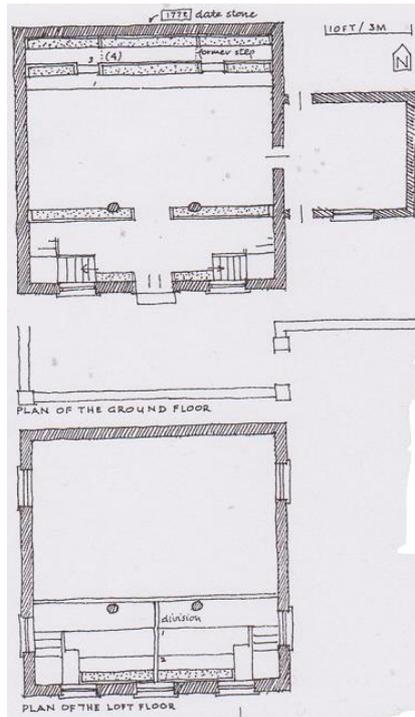
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 446–8

Norfolk HER ref. NHER 47561

Local Meeting survey by David Correa-Hunt, 2014 and 2015

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

2.1 Historical background



According to Butler, the first meeting house was built in 1702 on land given by James Millar. It was replaced on the same site by the present building which was erected in 1772 (datestone on rear elevation) at the expense of William Seker, owner of the nearby watermill. Another account places the earlier building adjacent to the nearby burial ground. The meeting house was carefully repaired and restored in 1984. The roof originally had a central louvre.

Figure 1 Ground floor and gallery plan (Butler (1999), vol.1, p.447)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The Georgian building of 1772 is rectangular on plan with a small lower addition to the east. The walls are of soft red brick laid in Flemish bond. The main hipped roof is covered in blue pantiles, the pitched lower roof in blue and red pantiles. The main elevation is two-storeys high and symmetrical; it has a central doorway with a timber surround flanked by two rectangular windows with 6/6 timber sashes. The doorway once had a pediment. The upper floor has three small square openings with 3/3 timber sashes and there are two similar openings on each side elevation. The rear wall is blind and carries the datestone of 1772. There is a small paved enclosure in front of the building enclosed with a brick boundary wall.

The interior has a low full-width lobby containing two flights of stairs rising to a gallery, which is supported on two timber Doric columns, with another pair rising from gallery level to the flat plaster ceiling. The ceiling has a moulded cornice all round. The gallery has a flat-boarded front. The main meeting space in front of the gallery has a vertical boarded dado with fixed bench seating on the line of the gallery columns. On the long side opposite, the minister's stand extends the full length of the room with two raised seats. The dais has been

renewed and simplified. The gallery is divided by a centre partition, which is an unusual feature in so small a building.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are painted timber benches against the timber dado of the meeting room walls. Some of these benches may be freestanding. Other benches of similar pattern have been lost in living memory.

2.4 Attached burial ground

None

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and an adjacent cottage stand in open fields some distance north of North Walsham on the southern edge of the village of Swafield and on the west side of the B1145 Knapton Road. A short distance to the south across a field and clearly visible from the meeting house is a large walled burial ground, which was established in the 1690s (NGR: TG 28519 31568). It has a perimeter wall of red brick laid in Flemish bond, which has been renewed in places, and a gate towards the road. Within the wall are some burial markers (but none from before 1750) and several mature trees. Apparently a section of the burial ground on the west side, which included the site of an earlier meeting house, was taken for road-widening in the 1970s. The burial ground is still in use but there are apparently no burial records.

2.6 Listed status

The building is properly listed at II*, as a good surviving example of a simple meeting house with a complete eighteenth-century interior (albeit repaired and part-renewed). The list description is very brief.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

It is possible that traces of a pre-existing meeting house may survive below ground, either below the existing in the burial ground. Otherwise the site probably has low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Fair.
- ii) Attached burial ground: N/A

3.2 Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection was made in February 2012 (Christopher Codling of Peter Codling, architects, Norwich). Minor repairs have been carried out but complete re-pointing

has been recommended. The meeting has enough money for minor maintenance but not for major works. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has taken some measures to reduce environmental impact.

- Climate change and energy efficiency: some secondary glazing has been installed. More is planned.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the kitchen roof is a protected bat roost.

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate but might consider obtaining one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the required amenities, mostly provided in the small wing. There is no resident warden. The meeting house is accessible by public transport, up to a point. There is an infrequent bus service on the B1145 and North Walsham railway station is 1 mile away. There is ample on-site parking space for cars and bicycles.

3.5 Access

There is a step at the main entrance but there are removable ramps. There is level access within the building (except to the gallery); there is an accessible WC and a hearing loop (disused) but there are no specific facilities for the partially-sighted.

3.6 Community use

Friends use the meeting house for 3 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 87 hours per week. It is used for an average of 3.5 hours per week by community groups. There appears to be no formal letting policy. Users value the building for its free parking, quiet, reasonable pricing, pleasant atmosphere, and facilities.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area in general has low crime levels. The demographic of the former rural working community is now mingled with commuters and retired people. There has been no sign of criminal activity or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been contact with the local policing team in the past.

3.8 Plans for change

There are currently (2015) no plans for alterations to the building.

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 is scope for re-arrangement of the moveable furniture

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the building is already used for some non-worship functions.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: it is difficult to see how the building could serve an active wholly secular use without significant and destructive change.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1373956

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, MUNDESLEY ROAD

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
Norfolk	North Norfolk District Authority		North Walsham

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 21-Jun-1950

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

Details

In the following entry:- MUNDESLEY ROAD TG 23 SE (west side)

4/20 Friends' Meeting House

GV 21.6.50 II

the Grade shall be amended to read II* (star).

----- 1. MUNDESLEY ROAD
1461 (West Side)

Friends' Meeting House TO 23 SE 4/20 21.6.50. II GV

2. 1772, dated stone below moulded brick eaves, North. Red brick. Pantile roof, hipped. 3 flush frame sash windows at gallery level with vertical glazing bars. Central entrance door with 6 flush panels and wood case, and flush frame sash window each side with gauged flat arches. Original interior with 2 wood Doric columns supporting gallery. Small 1 storey wing East.

Friends' Meeting House forms a group with The Thatched Cottage.

Listing NGR: TG2851631732