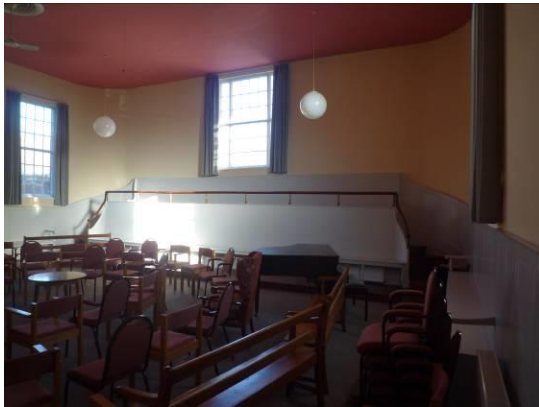


Friends Meeting House, Northampton

Wellington Street, Northampton, NN1 3AS

National Grid Reference: SP 75726 60730



Statement of Significance

A meeting house of 1830, replacing an earlier meeting house on a different site in the town. The meeting house is attached to a burial ground which also replaced a detached burial ground elsewhere in Northampton. The western half of the interior has been altered, with a new upper floor in part, but the main meeting room still preserves something of its original character. The site as a whole is of high heritage significance.

Evidential value

The building was apparently built on a greenfield site, the altered interior may retain elements of the original arrangements and the building is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

A reasonably well-preserved example of a substantial early nineteenth century meeting house, which is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The red brick exterior of the building is attractive and the interior of the surviving meeting room still preserves something of its original character. The building is of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used continuously by Quakers since its opening in 1830 and more recently by other community groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Northamptonshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000520*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Northampton Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Northampton*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1052388*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1830*

1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *15 January 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Ruth Whitehouse*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *A meeting house of 1705 still survives in Kingswell Street, though now no longer in Quaker ownership. There is a detached burial ground at Winwick, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 10297 80642).*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 pp.469-70

Whitehouse, Ruth, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Northamptonshire* (1997)

Northamptonshire HER, number 1160/254/1

Local Meeting survey by Elizabeth Redfern, October 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1662 Friends purchased a barn, messuage and adjoining garden in Crackbowl Lane (now Swan Street). A meeting was established in 1668 and probably used the buildings, while the garden was used as a burial ground. In 1705 a meeting house was built on a new site in Kingswell Street. This building still survives (not in Quaker ownership) but in 1829/30 a larger meeting house was erected on the present site (which was acquired from a Quaker named William Collins) and the old building was later sold. The new site included a burial ground, replacing the Swan Street burial ground which was also sold. At its opening in October 1830, the building was described as, 'an elegant plain edifice and so constructed as to be made perfectly comfortable by steam...during the severity of the winter season... About 600 persons can be conveniently accommodated'. It seems likely that the building originally contained only two full-height meeting rooms divided by timber screens, but by the 1880s the western meeting room had been subdivided. In 1962 the timber screens were replaced by a solid wall. In 1966 a floor was inserted over half of the western or women's end and the fenestration on the north and west sides of the building was altered to reflect the internal change. Further internal alterations were made to this part of the building in 1988. In 2012 the burial ground was re-landscaped with the help of a legacy.

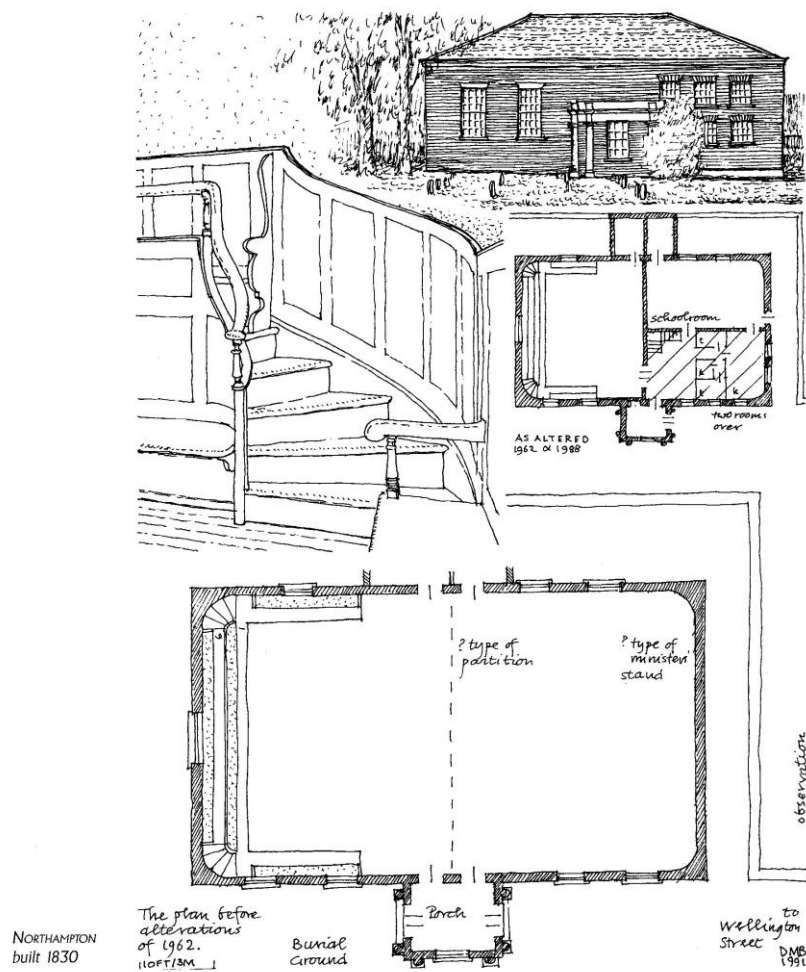


Figure 1: The likely original plan (bottom) with the plan as altered in 1966, a view of the north front and a detail of the stand. North is to the bottom of both plans. *Butler*, Vol. 1, p. 470

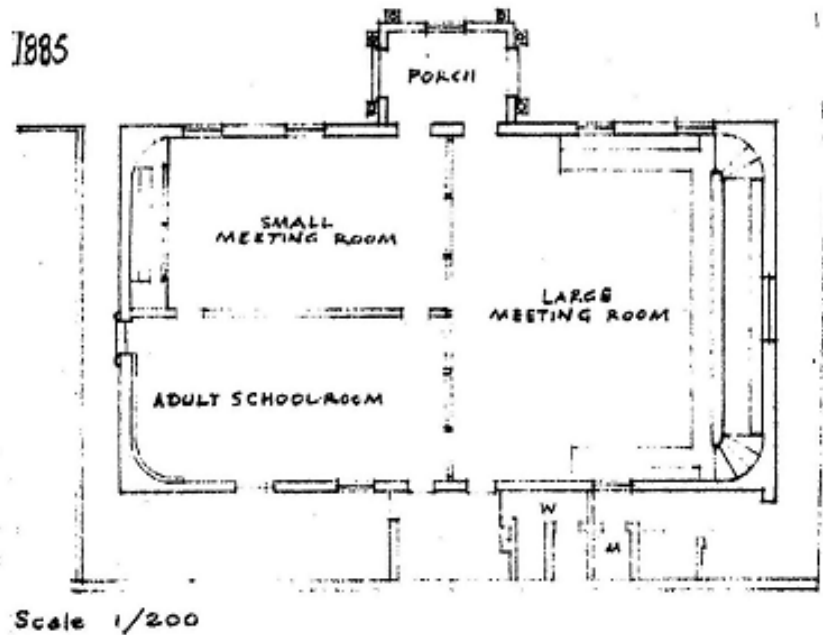


Fig.2 Plan of the meeting house in 1885 from Northampton Local Meeting records. (North is to the top of the plan).

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house built in 1830 is rectangular on plan with a hipped overall roof. The external walls are of brick; the north and west sides are laid in Flemish bond with grey headers and red stretchers, the south and east walls are of plain red brick. The roof is covered with Welsh slate. The main front to the north has a Doric columned brick porch off-set slightly to the right (west). The east half of the front has two tall, single small-paned timber sash windows lighting the main meeting room; the western half has six modern rectangular small-paned timber windows on two storeys. The wall rises to a moulded timber cornice, which is continued on the west elevation. This front has an entrance with a modern timber Doric-columned surround. To the left (north) of the doorway are two modern rectangular timber windows on both ground and first floors.

The front porch now leads to an internal stair hall with a modern door into the main meeting room. This room rises the full height of the building and has a flat ceiling (possibly modern) with no cornice and curved corners at the eastern end. The side walls have panelled dados with benches and there is a raised stand across the full width of the east wall with curving stairs and curving ends to the mahogany handrail. The other parts of the building appear entirely modern.

2.3. Loose furnishings

There are a number of timber benches in the main meeting room, probably of mid-nineteenth century date.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The rectangular burial ground to the north of the meeting house has been used for burials since 1831, which is the date of the earliest grave marker. The last burial was in 2014. The burial ground was elaborately landscaped in 2012 with the help of a legacy, retaining the headstones. The space is now enclosed by twentieth-century brick walls.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and burial ground stand at the northern end of Wellington Street, a short distance south of the busy intersection with Lady's Lane, from which they are separated by a public green open space. Most of the neighbouring buildings are commercial and there is a Salem church next door; the meeting house appears to be the only historic building of interest in this neighbourhood. The best view of the meeting house is from within the burial ground on the north side, as the setting from the street is rather spoiled by car parking. There is a detached burial ground at Winwick, near Oundle (originally in Northamptonshire, then Huntingdonshire, now in Cambridgeshire) (NGR TL 10297 80642).

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is properly listed at grade II.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site lies on the edge of the central area of Northampton which was an important mediaeval town and may have some 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): Generally satisfactory but with one significant localised problem. The burial ground was completely re-landscaped in 2012 and is well-maintained, but the western boundary wall (a modern brick structure) is showing marked signs of movement. It is currently unclear who has responsibility for rebuilding the wall.

3.2. Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection report was carried out in September 2014 by a conservation-accredited chartered surveyor. The building was found to be generally in good condition, with some maintenance requirements, which have mostly been attended to. The chief concern was the condition of the burial ground boundary walls; the walls are modern but one is showing considerable structural movement. The responsibility for repair of this wall is in dispute. In addition to the QI, the Premises Committee inspects the building every six months.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses both the Sustainability Toolkit and the Carbon Calculator. It has implemented several measures to reduce environmental impact. These include the installation of air source heat pump central heating and low-energy light bulbs throughout the building. The building does not currently have an Energy Performance Certificate but the meeting would consider obtaining one.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house - including four meeting rooms of different sizes, a well-equipped kitchen, toilets and various ancillary storage spaces. There is no resident warden.

The meeting house is in central Northampton, a short walk from the bus station and about half a mile from the railway station. There is on-site parking for 4 cars and racks for bicycles. There are several public car parks nearby.

3.5. Access

All the ground floor rooms are accessible. There is no lift to the first floor. There is an accessible WC and infra-red hearing systems in the main meeting room and the schoolroom. There are no specific facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was carried out in March 2006 and several of the recommendations implemented including the substitution of lever handles for doorknobs and the provision of a fully accessible WC.

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the building for 6 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 312 hours per week (4 rooms) and is used for approximately 75 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. No smoking, alcohol or gambling is permitted. Free hire is offered to Quaker groups. Users value the central location, pleasant interior, friendly welcome and good pricing.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been some anti-social behaviour at the site. There have been rough sleepers in the burial ground many times in recent years and the police have been called about intimidation and minor damage to the property. In addition there has been some graffiti on boundary walls (cleaned by the council). There has also been some heritage crime. A small amount of lead was stolen recently and a more serious lead theft was attempted some years ago. Police have been informed about serious incidents and are aware of the situation but the meeting is trying to alleviate matters by minor changes, like improvements to the side gate lock. Northampton is a prosperous town but the meeting house suffers the usual town-centre problems.

3.8. Plans for change

There are currently no plans for changes to the building.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

Summary addressing scenarios below:

i) As a Meeting House used only by the local Meeting: the interior has seen several changes since the 1960s. There is probably some scope for further internal change, subject to listed building constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: as above, there may be scope for minor alterations, subject to listed building constraints.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the building could doubtless find another use if the meeting were laid down.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1052388

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE, WELLINGTON STREET

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

County: Northamptonshire

District: Northampton

District Type: District Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 09-Dec-1968

WELLINGTON STREET 1. 5327 Quaker Meeting House SP 7560 NE 2/158 9.12.68.

II 2. Early C19, traditional Georgian design. Red stretchers, grey headers, ovolo cornice, Welsh slate hipped roof. Single storey left part of north front has 2 tall sash windows in reveals under stucco flat arches. 2 storey left part of front has 3 modern casement windows with glazing bars under flat arches. Central closed porch with entablature broken forward over Roman Doric columns.

Listing NGR: SP7572560728