

Friends Meeting House, Norwich

Upper Goat Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 1EW

National Grid Reference: TG 22802 08656



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has exceptional heritage significance as a dignified 1820s building designed in the classical style with a handsomely-fitted interior, replacing a late seventeenth-century building on the same site. The meeting has strong associations with several leading social reformers of the early nineteenth century which adds to its historical significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house occupies a city centre site and it is likely that there are below-ground remains of earlier structures. The present building has been somewhat altered internally but the original arrangements are readily discernable. The building and site are of high evidential value.

Historical value

Norwich has always been an important Quaker centre. In the early part of the nineteenth century, when the present meeting house was built, Norfolk Quakers like Joseph Gurney, his sister Elizabeth Fry and their Anglican brother-in-law Thomas Buxton were nationally conspicuous social reformers. For both these reasons the Goat Lane Meeting House has exceptional historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has high aesthetic value as a typical example of early nineteenth-century nonconformist architecture by an established local architect. The meeting rooms and exterior are plain but handsome.

Communal value

Goat Lane meeting has been the centre of thriving Quaker community since the 1670s. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was associated with evangelising social reform, in the second half of the century with adult education and mission work. It is of high communal value as a building used both for worship and for a wide variety of community purposes.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Norfolk and Waveney*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0008600*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Ltd*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Norwich City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Norwich*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II**
- 1.8 NHLE: *1051780*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Norwich City Centre*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1826*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *J.T. Patience*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *24 June 2014*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Lucy Parker*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *hall and offices*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *there is no distinct burial ground but there have been some interments of ashes in the garden of the meeting house*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 448–454

Norfolk HER ref. NHER 26222

Local Meeting survey by Lucy Parker, 2014 and 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

In the late seventeenth century Norwich was a centre of Quaker growth, with some 500 Quakers by 1700 and two substantial meeting houses in Goat Lane and at Gildencroft, where there was also a large burial ground. The meeting house on the Goat Lane site was built in 1679. In 1826 a new, larger and more architecturally impressive meeting house was built on the same site, to serve the new and different needs of what was then an evangelical meeting led by such Friends as Joseph Gurney of Earlham Hall. The architect was John Thomas Patience, a local man who became City Surveyor in 1836 and designed several public buildings in Norwich. The new building had two meeting rooms, including a women's meeting room, both galleried, as well as other accommodation. By the 1850s it had become a financial burden. In the 1860s, under the impetus of the Adult Schools movement and mission work, additional land was purchased between the meeting house and Pottergate for classrooms and a hall. After the Second World War the need for much of this space had passed and it was leased to other organisations. The meeting house was refurbished in 1987 under the direction of Peter Codling. The work included the levelling of the main gallery and its conversion to a separate space.

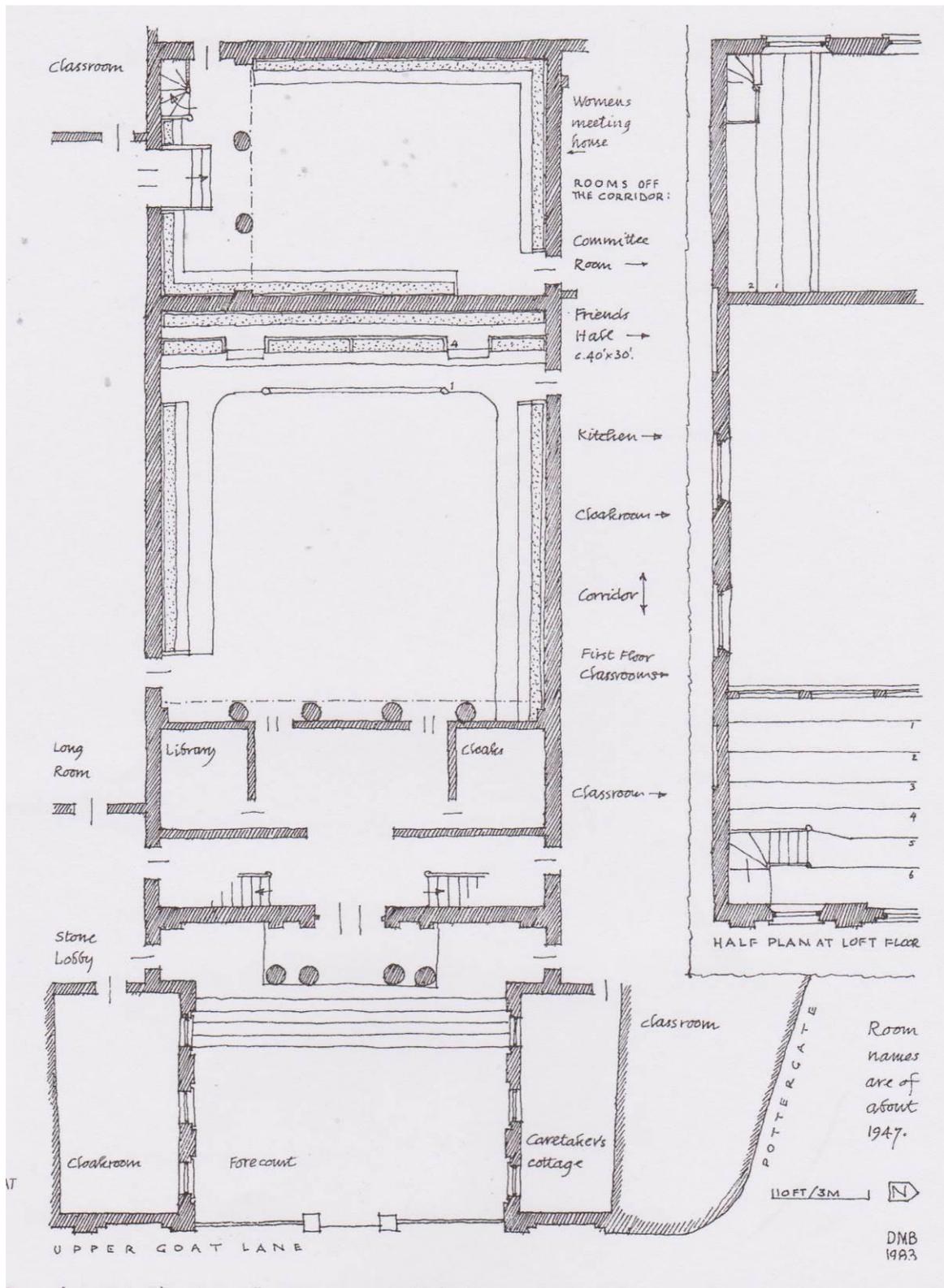


Fig.1: Ground floor and part gallery plan of the meeting house in 1983, with room names of 1947 (Butler (1999), vol.1, p. 450)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The main building is rectangular on plan, with lower two-storey wings flanking a small forecourt enclosed by iron railings. The front walls are faced with white brick laid in Flemish bond with stone detailing; the side and rear walls are faced with red brick. The brickwork shows signs of modern repair, including concrete lintels over the large window openings of the rear elevation. Apparently a lot of work was done in the 1940s and 1950s. The roofs are covered with slate. The main elevation has a central doorway with a massive tetrastyle stone porch with unfluted Doric columns. The walls on either side of the porch are blind. Above the level of the porch, the front is filled with three large round-headed windows separated by pilasters rising to a plain entablature and cornice; the central bay is slightly set forward. The side walls have four similar windows and the rear (west) wall has three windows, all set in sunk panels. The projecting wings have three-bay fronts to the courtyard with rectangular sashes below and square sashes above and a plain stone cornice and parapet. The single-bay elevations to Goat Lane have blind recessed panels with semi-circular yellow brick arches. A plaque on one of the front left hand projecting wings commemorates Thomas Fowell Buxton, the social reformer, who was related to the Gurneys and closely associated with the Norwich meeting.

The building is now generally entered through the single-storey corridor or 'Long Room' which runs the length of the south side of the building and fronts the car park. The main meeting room is a handsome tall rectangular space, lit by two large round-headed windows on each side and with a deep moulded plaster cornice. The walls are panelled in oak to head height, with timber benches against the walls, and there is an elders' dais with fixed benches and a rail across the full width of the west wall. Across the east wall are the timber Ionic columns of the gallery, which has now been enclosed behind the column-line by timber and glass partitions. The gallery space has also been enclosed, but the original panelled gallery front remains, as do the original gallery stairs in the entrance foyer. The Women's meeting house lies to the west, behind the dais of the main room. It is entered from the south side under a gallery. The walls are panelled in oak, but the benches along the walls appear to be modern. The gallery rests on a pair of columns with simple block capitals. The space behind the columns has been in-filled and enclosed. The gallery itself remains open.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are some timber benches in the main meeting room and elsewhere which follow the pattern of the benches on the Elders' stand, and may be original to the building.

2.4 Attached burial ground

There has never been a proper burial ground at Goat Lane, but by special arrangement the scattering of ashes has been allowed in the garden area on the south side of the meeting house

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Upper Goat Lane is a narrow thoroughfare leading uphill off Pottergate in the western side of the old city centre. The architectural character of the area is mixed, with the mediaeval church of St Gregory to the north, below Pottergate, a number of attractive old domestic buildings in Pottergate itself, and a brutalist multi-storey car park to the south which forms

the background to views of the meeting house. Immediately adjoining the meeting to the south and west is open ground, now used for car parking.

Although there have apparently been a few recent interments in the garden at Goat Lane, the principal burial ground for Norwich Quakers has always been at Gildencroft on the edge of the city (see report on the former meeting house at Gildencroft).

2.6 Listed status

The building is properly listed at grade II* for both its architectural interest and its historical importance through associations with the Gurney family and others.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The city-centre site is of high archaeological potential, due to the probability of medieval or earlier archaeology, depending on its degree of disturbance.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/A

3.2 Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection was made in 2013 (architect: Chris Codling). The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting has Sustainability Group and measures have been implemented to reduce the environmental impact, including:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: improved insulation; sealing of some windows and reducing draughts from doors; low energy lighting where possible; switch to green energy
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: waste recycled where possible and reduced as much as possible

The meeting has an Energy Performance Certificate but it is out of date. It would consider obtaining a new one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the required amenities. There is no resident warden. It is accessible by public transport and has on-site parking for cars and bicycles.

3.5 Access

Most of the meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access to the large meeting room, and a portable ramp for one ground floor room. One upstairs room is

not accessible for wheelchair users. There is an accessible WC and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for partially-sighted people. The meeting has conducted a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for under 10 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 375 hours per week. It is used for an average of 100 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Users have to be in accord with Quaker principles and no alcohol or drugs are allowed on the premises. Users value the building for its pricing, location and reputation.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area has generally low levels of crime. The site has occasionally seen evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour, such as graffiti, use of garden and courtyard as a toilet, and occasional evidence of drug use. There has been no heritage crime on the site. There is no established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the meeting might consider making contact.

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: both the meeting spaces have been altered to some degree, mainly in the arrangements of the gallery. Both spaces have panelled dados and the main meeting has a dais across one end. The scope for alteration may be limited by these important features.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: Both meeting rooms are already used for secular and community purposes and could probably be adapted for more intensive use of this kind without causing harm.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: the building could be adapted to serve a secular use, such as community or business use, although any the main spaces should retain their spatial character and fittings, to avoid damaging the original character and significance of the listed building.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1051780

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, UPPER GOAT LANE

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
Norfolk	Norwich	District Authority	

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 26-Feb-1954

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

Details

TG 2208 NE UPPER GOAT LANE (west side) 15/920 26.2.54. Friends Meeting House GV II* Quaker Chapel. 1826 by J.T. Patience with C20 single storey south side extension. White brick with stone detail. Red brick sides. Slate roof. Away from street line with 2 projecting wings. Chapel:- Single storey with balcony; 3 bays with centre bay projecting. Central double-doors with unfluted Doric tetrastyle portico. 5 steps up. The entablature of the portico continues across the outer bays as a stringcourse with 4 pilasters above. Large sash windows with radial glazing bars in top sash and semi-circular arches, double-order in centre bay. Heavy cornice. Projecting wings:- low 2 storeys. 3 bays with sash windows and door in corner. Single-bay to street each with blind recessed panel with semi-circular arch. Cast iron railings, stone gate posts with simple over-throw and central lantern.

Listing NGR: TG2280208656