

Friends Meeting House, Nottingham

25 Clarendon Street, Nottingham, NG1 5JD

National Grid Reference: SK 56675 40326



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a good example of mid-twentieth century modern design with alterations to the roof broadly in keeping with the original concept. It occupies an attractive site which has been a burial ground since the mid-nineteenth century.

Evidential value

The building has evidential value in the manner in which it reflects the history of the site, with development of a burial ground followed by construction of the building. The meeting house has evidence for two principal phases of development with initial construction followed by replacement of the roof. Evidential value is low-medium.

Historical value

The building has historical value which is inherent in the site, which originated in the middle of the nineteenth century as a burial ground. It represents the final phase in a tradition of Quaker meeting houses and burial grounds which originated in the mid seventeenth century, with historical connections with George Fox and the Sherriff John Reckless. There is medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a good example of the functional modern traditions of mid twentieth century architecture. The original roof structure has been removed, but the successor is a worthy if less experimental replacement. There is medium aesthetic value in the design and setting.

Communal value

The building is fairly well used by local groups and the burial ground adds historical depth and interest to the area. There is medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Nottingham and Derbyshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0006280*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Nottingham City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Nottingham*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/A*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Canning Circus*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *Yes, Conservation Area*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1961*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Colin Gray of Bartlett & Gray of Nottingham, engineers Hume & Tottenham*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *18 November 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Rod Sladen*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:
Holland Walker, 'An itinerary of Nottingham: Granby Street, Spaniel Street and Friar Lane', Transactions of the Thoroton Society, (1928), Vol. 32 accessed online
Gray, J., 'Quaker Meeting Houses and Burial Grounds in Nottingham since 1649'
unpublished manuscript dated 1991 (Area meeting, held in the on-site archives)

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 2, pp. 26-8

Harwood, E., *Nottingham*, Pevsner Architectural Guide, 2008, p. 27 and p. 131

C20 Society Churches Database: <http://www.c20society.org.uk/c20-society-churches-database/>

Sanderson, R., Volunteer Form, 7 January 2016

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

2.1. Historical background

A garden was acquired by Nottingham Friends as a burial ground in 1674. It was situated on Walnut Tree Lane near Castle Terrace. It was in use until 1805, but remained in the ownership of the Society until 1902 when it was sold to Nottingham Corporation. It was later built over. The Sherriff John Reckless had met George Fox in 1649 while Fox was in Nottingham. Meetings were held in Reckless's house until 1678, when he sold the Society new house on Spaniel Lane and Friar Lane, which was registered as a meeting house in 1689. Two adjoining houses on Friar Lane were bought in 1737 and the three properties were demolished, so that a completely new meeting house could be erected.

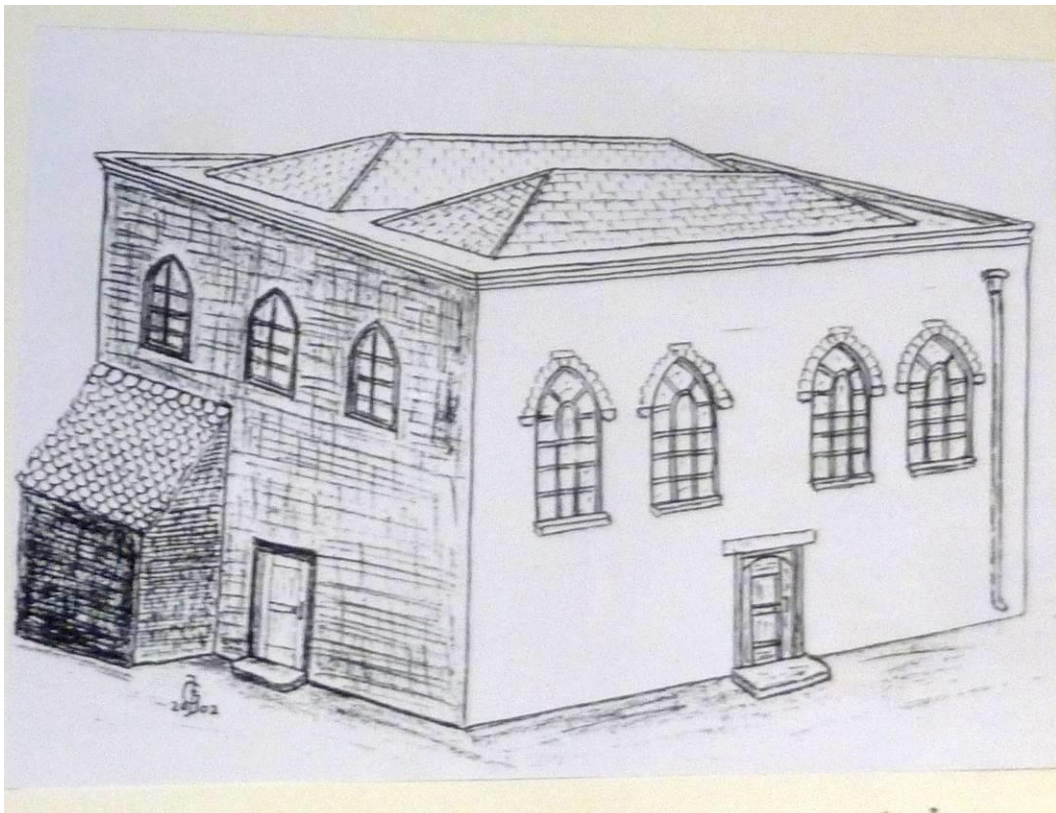


Figure 1. The meeting house built on Friar Lane in 1737 (Reproduced in the John Gray manuscript, Nottingham Friends' Meeting House)

Yet another, larger meeting house was built on the burial ground on Friar Lane in 1837, and a school was built on an adjacent site in around 1870. Burials ceased on the Friar Lane site in 1849 and land for a new burial ground was bought for the Society on Cemetery Road (later renamed Clarendon Street) in 1852. The Friar Lane burial ground was formally closed in 1856.

The new burial ground lay immediately beside Nottingham General Cemetery which had been founded in 1836. A part of this site which had not been used for burials was used to build a new meeting house which was completed in 1961. The building was designed by the architects Bartlett & Gray, project architect Colin Gray. The practice also designed meeting houses in Chesterfield and Mansfield (qq.v.). The principal space originally had a laminated timber dome, of elliptical paraboloid form, engineered by Hume & Tottenham. The building received a regional RIBA award in 1963, recorded on a bronze 'architecture medal' plaque in the entrance hall, which records the name of the architect Colin Gray and identifies the building as 'The most meritorious building erected within the counties of Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire during the three years ended 31.12.1963.'



Figure 2. The meeting house prior to removal of the dome (undated photograph, Nottingham Friends' Meeting House collection)

By 1981 the weatherproofing of the dome had failed, and extensive repairs were undertaken. Further problems led to the replacement of the dome by a roof with clerestory by Peter Hill Architects in 2006-7. Other alterations of approximately this period were the creation of ramps inside and the upgrading of toilets to form facilities for the disabled.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building occupies a somewhat uneven site and is aligned with Clarendon Street. The burial ground is on a slightly lower level and is separated from the General Cemetery by a brick wall. The building is entered via a ramp from the Clarendon road side where a foyer provides access and circulation to this floor and that below, via stairs. The principal space at upper level is the generously lit main meeting room, which connects with the adjacent social

room by means of a screen allowing the spaces to be thrown together. Smaller downstairs rooms, some formerly used as classrooms, include an archive store, meeting rooms, etc. There is access to the burial ground at this level. The building is singled out in a review of the architecture of the city as an example of 'gentle 1950s functionalism' by Elain Harwood, the leading expert on twentieth century architecture.

2.3. Loose furnishings

Furnishings are largely modern, including attractive chairs of 2007 by Treske in the main meeting room. The table here was made by a member of the meeting, John Gray, in 1972. A few traditional benches survive in this room and are said to have come from the former Friar Lane meeting house.

2.4. Attached burial ground

The burial ground is divided from the cemetery by a stone wall. It is an attractive area with a number of large stones laid flat along the perimeter, and some trees and mature vegetation. The burial ground is still in use.

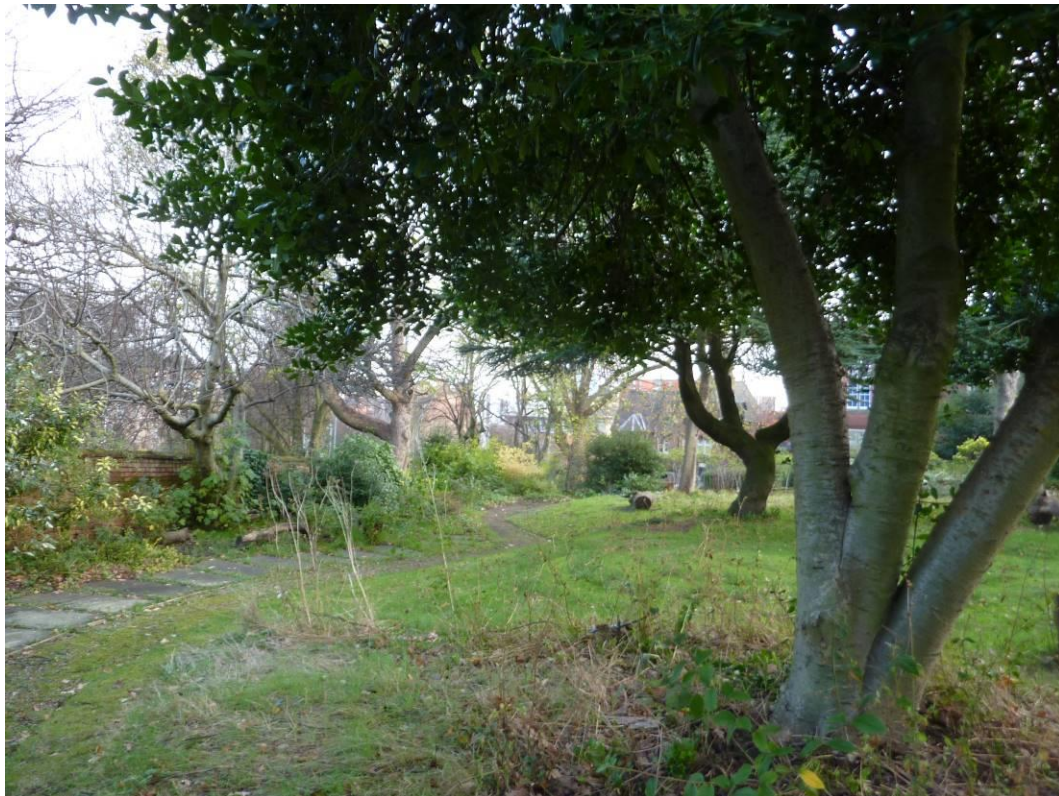


Figure 3. The burial ground

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is situated on the north-west side of the centre of Nottingham in an area which was open fields until enclosure, which began in 1839 following the Municipal Reform Act of 1836. The historic character of the area is defined by the presence of an arc of open land formed by the General Cemetery and the Arboretum. Residential development was initially for the middle classes, and a number of villas stand along Clarendon Street near the meeting house. Nottingham University College of 1877-81 (now Nottingham Trent University) is a close neighbour, with buildings in the area immediately east of Clarendon Street.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

None had been identified.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground: optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2. Maintenance

A QI system is in place and the most recent inspection was carried out in July 2011. A programme of work has since been undertaken, including repairs to mullions, damp-proofing, joinery and glazing repairs, installation of safety glass to doors and tree maintenance. Some works affecting the grounds are outstanding, such as repointing the boundary front wall and repairing the gate.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the sustainability toolkit and the climate change impact calculator has been completed annually since 2011. The following measures have been implemented:

- An energy-efficient boiler installed
- Insulation has been improved
- 'Green' electricity supplier is used
- Appropriate recycling measures are in place.
- The burial ground is maintained in a wildlife-friendly manner.
- Solar panels have been installed on the roof
- Heat recovery units (ventilators) are installed in the main meeting room and a room downstairs

3.4. Amenities

There are kitchens and toilets on both floors and adequate space for meetings and other activities.

3.5. Access

The building is accessible, with a drop-off point and disabled parking for use on Sundays near the main entrance where there is an external ramp. The interior has been fitted with ramps and accessible toilets. There is a hearing loop and step nosings in the foyer.

3.6. Community Use

The building is let for twenty-three hours per week. There is a lettings policy excluding political groups except the Green Party, and prohibiting smoking or the use of alcohol on the premises. Use is free for Quaker groups.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been vandalism affecting garden benches, and thefts from the building including an attempt to steal the copper roofing. The area is not residential and it is not characterised by serious problems with anti-social behaviour.

3.8. Plans for change

Modification of central heating is under discussion.

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 building appears to meet the needs of the local meeting, with ample accommodation, however changes could be made if desired.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is well used by local groups and appears to meet local needs in this respect with good facilities and a range of different rooms.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: In theory the building could be adapted for an alternative use, such as for community use. There may be constraints on alteration, particularly of the grounds, as the area is a conservation area.

Part 5: Category: 3