

Friends Meeting House, Oakham

59 South Street, Oakham, LE15 6BG

National Grid Reference: SK 85941 08691



Statement of Significance

An attractive simple building of the early eighteenth century, with an interior which has preserved something of its original character. The meeting house is of high heritage significance.

Evidential value

Much of the building fabric is probably original but there may be traces of subsequent alterations and refurbishments. The building is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

The historical value of the building fabric is enhanced by the existence of the Oakham Meeting minute book (now in the county record office), which documents the regular business of the Meeting from 1675 to 1754. The meeting house is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The exterior of the building is attractive and the interior still preserves something of its original simple character. The building is of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by members of the Oakham community continuously since 1720, either as a Quaker meeting house, or as a meeting place for other groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Leicester*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0033400*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trust*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Rutland County Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Oakham*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1177717*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Oakham*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1719; classroom added 1992*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Original builder not established; 1992 additions by Thomas Allen*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *7 January 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Unaccompanied*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Former detached burial ground in Long Row*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 p.359
Elliott, Malcolm, *A short History of Quakers in Leicestershire and Rutland* (unpub., n.d.)
Stell, C, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses (Leics., Notts. and Rutland)*, 1986, p.189.
Leicestershire HER, number MLE 16316.
Local Meeting survey by Hilary Ludlow, October 2015.

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

2.1. Historical background

The Oakham Quaker meeting was established by 1675 and the minute book for the period 1675-1754 is preserved in Leicester Record Office. A burial ground was established in 1670 in Through Ley (now called Long Row) on the western outskirts of the town. It was walled in 1719, had been enlarged by 1825, was last used in 1869 and was sold to the Town Council in 1978. In 1720 Robert Hawley conveyed to Friends a piece of land at the south end of Gaol Lane, with a newly-erected meeting house, to which he contributed £35 of the £166 building

cost. The building was repaired in 1806 but the meeting was discontinued in 1838. The meeting house was then let to other Nonconformist groups. In the 1890s it was used by the Primitive Methodists; in the early twentieth century it served as a parish hall and then as a centre for the Women's Institute. The Meeting recommenced in 1969. In 1992 a small new block was built in the forecourt containing a classroom, kitchen and toilets and a new entrance gateway was formed in the forecourt wall. The meeting house building is currently (January 2016) being refurbished.

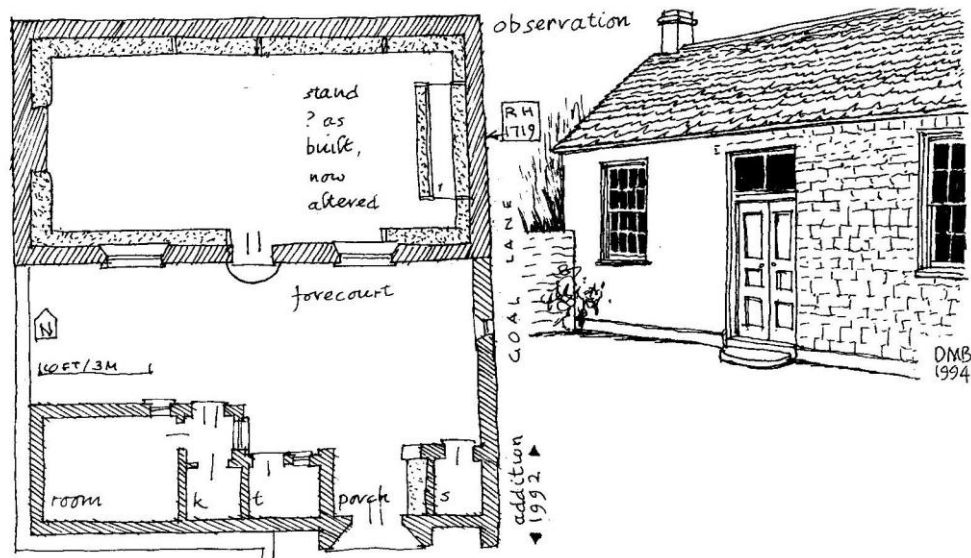


Figure 1: Plan and perspective view from the north west, *Butler*, Vol. 1, p. 260

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was opened in 1720. The building is single-storeyed and rectangular (or rather, trapezoidal) on plan with a pitched roof overall. The walls are of roughly-coursed ironstone; the roof coverings are of Collyweston slate (renewed in 2015). The main front faces south. It has a central panelled timber double door with a rectangular fanlight over; the doorway is flanked by two large-paned timber sash windows. All the openings have thin timber lintels. The other walls are blind and those on the west and north sides abut other properties. The west gable ends in a square chimneystack. The east gable wall to Gaol Street has a small datestone high in the gable with a moulded cornice. The stone is inscribed 'RH 1719' (presumably for Robert Hawley who gave the site).

The interior of the meeting house is now a single space with plain plastered walls above a painted softwood timber dado with a moulded capping and a timber perimeter bench. In the centre of the east end wall is a timber ministers' stand (apparently altered, according to Stell). In the centre of the west end wall is a chimneystack with a tiled hearth surround and a timber shelf on shaped timber brackets. The plaster ceiling (currently being restored) is laid on reed. Across the centre of the room is a downstand beam (now a modern RSJ) which may mark the site of an earlier partition.

The small forecourt is enclosed from the street by what appears to be a tall modern wall of ironstone with a modern door and window opening to Gaol Street and a modern stone entrance gateway in the south side. A small red brick classroom block with kitchen and toilets attached was built in the south west corner of the forecourt in 1992.

2.3. Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and its walled forecourt stand at the southern end of Gaol Street, at the junction with South Street, on the southern edge of the old town centre. The former burial ground in Long Row on the west side of the town (National Grid reference SK 856 087) is now a grassed open space fronting the road, with an old ironstone wall on the north side, which carries a plaque commemorating the former use.

2.6. Listed status

The building is properly listed at Grade II, though the list description should be amplified and the date 1714 corrected to 1719.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

It is thought that the 1719 building was erected on open ground, but the site is close to the medieval town centre and may have some archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good (currently being refurbished)
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/a

3.2. Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in March 2014 by John Eaton, a chartered architect. The report found that the building was generally in reasonable condition but recommended that when funds allowed the Collyweston slate roof should be renewed, the then suspended ceiling be removed and the original plaster ceiling beneath be repaired. Both these works have now been done.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting has used the Sustainability Toolkit to determine what improvements could be made. These include:

- improvement of the roof insulation as part of the current repair work
- recycling of waste
- use of LED lights.

The building does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house, with a modern kitchen and toilets in the outbuilding. There is no resident warden.

Public transport is poor, with no buses on Sundays. Oakham railway station is 5 minutes walk. There is no on-site parking. There is no secure parking for bicycles on site.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building and to the outbuilding with the kitchen and toilets. There is an accessible WC, but no hearing loop in the main meeting room nor any special facilities for partially-sighted people. There has not been a Disability Access Audit.

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the building for between 2 and 3 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 80 hours per week and is used for an average of 10 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy; no gambling, alcohol or smoking is allowed. Users value the atmosphere, the good location, the quiet and the pricing.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been no heritage crime and there are no current signs of general crime at the site, though young people occasionally trespass on the flat roof of the outbuilding. The locality is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and the matter has not been considered.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no plans for further change after the current refurbishment work.

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 meeting house has all the facilities it currently needs. There is probably some scope for minor change, subject to listed building constraints, but the stand and panelling of the main meeting room are valuable survivals and should be retained.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the meeting house is already used by community groups. There is probably some scope for minor alteration, subject to listed building constraints.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the building could doubtless serve a wholly secular use if laid down, but the interior of the meeting house should be preserved undivided and the fittings retained.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List Description

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, SOUTH STREET, OAKHAM

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

County/District	District Type	Parish
Rutland	Unitary Authority	Oakham

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 24-Nov-1971

List entry Description

Details

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 05/01/2015

SK 8508 6/40 1469

SOUTH STREET, Friends Meeting House

(Formerly listed as Women's Institute Room, GAOL STREET)

II

One-storey early C18 meeting house in coursed ironstone with stone slate roof. Gable end to street has a small datestone inscribed 'R.H. 1714' under tiny moulded cornice. Windows with wood lintels to side.

Listing NGR: SK8594008690