

Friends Meeting House, Painswick

Vicarage Lane, Painswick, Gloucestershire, GL6 6XS

National Grid Reference: SO 86988 09742



Statement of Significance

An early eighteenth-century meeting house adapted in the late eighteenth century, little altered and retaining its historic furnishings and atmosphere. The building occupies an idyllic location on the edge of the town, overlooking Painswick Valley, on the other side of which is a late seventeenth-century Quaker burial ground. The site is of high evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value and significance.

Evidential value

The building is over three hundred years old and has undergone several changes over time, not least in the late eighteenth century, when the entrance was moved to the gable end and the interior refitted. These changes reflect changes in fashion and practice in meeting house design; today the fabric and fitting out are redolent of a typical traditional meeting house. The garden has marked burials ranging in date from 1770 to 1886. The building and site are of high evidential value.

Historical value

In 1658 Friends were given a burial ground across the valley at Dell Farm by Thomas Loveday, member of a prominent local family. Ten members of the Loveday family are buried here. This burial ground remained in use until 1819 and it is likely that a small meeting house was also built there. The present meeting house was built in 1706, again on land given by Loveday. Alterations were made in 1793, with a new stair and enclosing partition. It is also likely that the entrance was moved and most of the windows sashed at this time. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the building was let to various groups, but it was re-established as a meeting house in 1953. Both the detached burial ground and the meeting house site are of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The mellow Cotswold stone building and relatively complete and little-altered interior combine with an idyllic setting to give the building and site high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building and its facilities are not currently much used by the wider community, but simply by virtue of its architectural and historical importance, and the contribution of the open space of the garden, the site has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Gloucestershire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0010820*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Stroud District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Painswick*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1091556*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Painswick*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1705-6; 1793*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *1 June 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Paul Castle, Colin Gerard*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burial ground at Dell Farm (Grade II)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 222-3

Hoyland, J., *350 Years of Quakerism in Painswick*, 2000

Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, pp. 27, 99

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England*, 1986, pp. 92-3

Local Meeting Survey, by Paul Castle, April 2016

Quinquennial Survey, by J. Martin Ryder, 2011

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

2.1 Historical background

In 1658 Friends in the Painswick area were given a burial ground at Dell Farm by Thomas Loveday, member of a prominent local family. Ten members of the Loveday family were buried here between 1681 and 1729. This burial ground remained in use until 1819. It is likely that a small meeting house was also built here; a simple stone structure once existed against the boundary wall, later known as 'the chapel' and used for agricultural purposes. It was demolished in 1978 (Hoyland, p. 7), although the burial ground survives.

The present meeting house in Vicarage Street was built in 1705-6, again on land given by Thomas Loveday (the date is inscribed in the lintel over the original entrance door, now blocked, on the south side of the building). It is built of local ashlar, with a tall, steeply pitched roof. It consists of a single room on the ground floor, with upper rooms used variously as a schoolroom, to accommodate travelling ministers and for women's business meetings. Alterations were made in 1793, with a new stair to the upper room and enclosing partition. It is likely that the entrance was moved to the front (gable) end at this time and most of the windows sashed.

As at many meetings, attendance fell in the nineteenth century, in competition with Methodism and other expressions of nonconformity. For much of the period between 1815 and 1953 the building was used by the YMCA, Bible study groups and others, and in 1907 the building was leased to the Plymouth Brethren. They remained tenants until 1953, when the Quaker meeting was re-established. Recent improvements include a new kitchenette and accessible WC on the ground floor and a refurbished first floor library (architect Paul Castle).

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

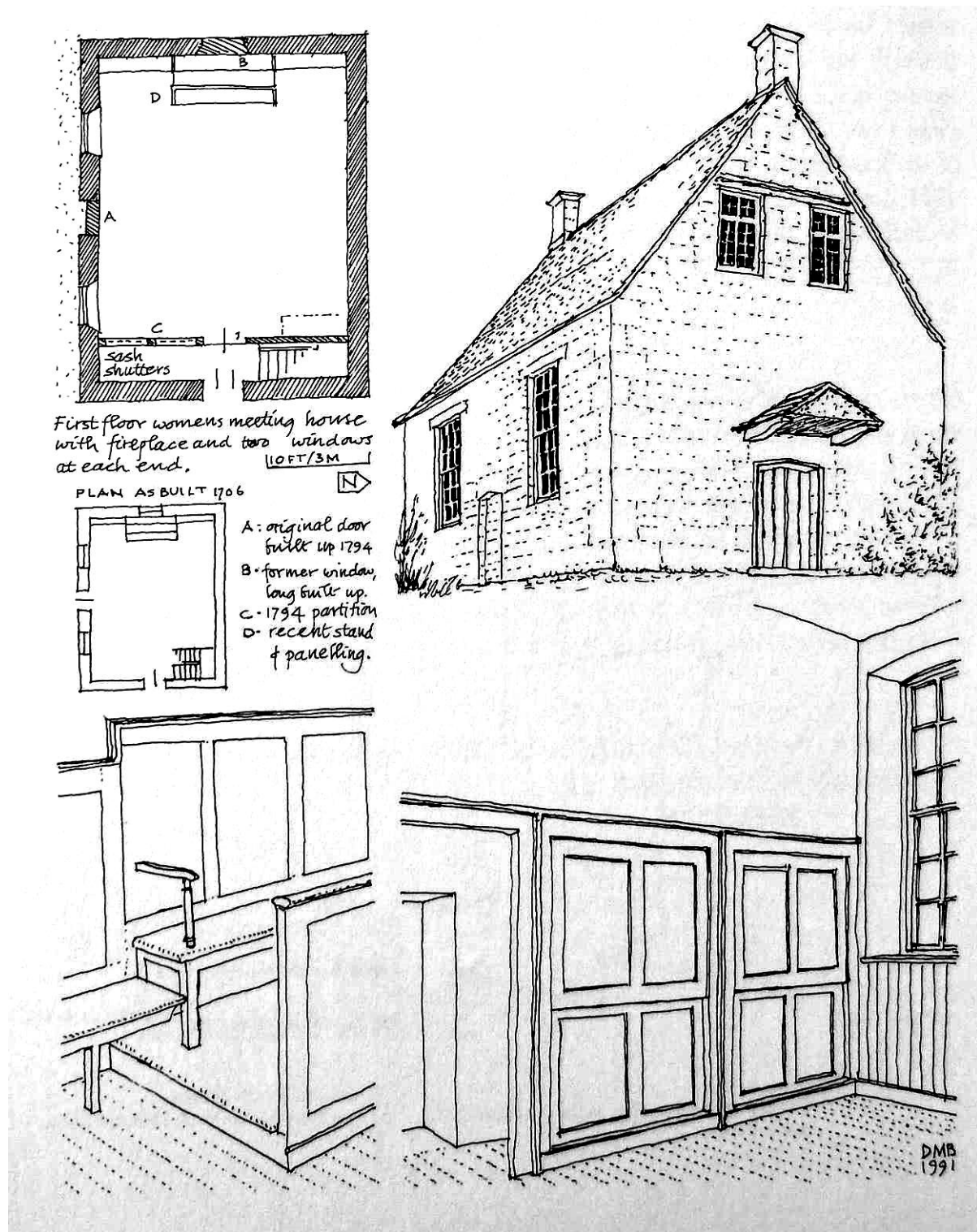


Figure 1: Plan, elevation and details, from Butler, vol.1, p.222

The meeting house was built in 1705-06, on land given by Thomas Loveday. Major repairs and modifications took place in 1793-4. The building is of squared limestone ashlar, with a steep slated roof, presumably replacing original stone slates. The original entrance was placed centrally on the south elevation, as at Cirencester and Nailsworth (*qqu*). Since 1794 the building has been entered from the east gable end, the entrance with a moulded surround and slightly peaked head under a gabled hood supported on long wooden brackets.

Above this, two mullioned and transomed timber casement windows with rectangular panes are set high in the gable, under a continuous drip moulding. The gables are topped by square chimney stacks, each with moulded cappings. The south front has the date 1706 inscribed in the cambered stone lintel over the blocked central doorway, and is flanked by two large eighteenth-century sash windows, each of twelve panes over twelve, with timber lintels. The west elevation has two six-over-six sash windows to the first floor, and a low WC addition at ground floor level (built in 2013, replacing a previous structure of similar size, which had required the blocking of a ground floor window in the meeting house). The north elevation (facing Dovers House and Cottage) is plain.

A pair of early (possibly 1706 reused?) thickly ledged and boarded doors with big iron strap hinges lead into an entrance lobby with late eighteenth-century unpainted panelled partition with fixed shutters and a stair to the first floor. A small modern kitchenette has also been neatly contrived in the lobby area. The main meeting room measures 29 ft 9 ins x 23 ft 6 ins (9.06 x 7.16m) and has heavy chamfered and stopped beams to a six-compartment ceiling. There is a short raised stand at the west end with a panelled front, backed by a plain deal boarded dado. A vertical boarded dado around the rest of the space is painted, and ramps up over the unpainted dado at the west end. The walls and ceiling are plastered, the floor finish of modern pine boarding. Above the stand, the ghost of a blocked window can be discerned.

The late eighteenth-century stair in the lobby is of unpainted timber with closed string, stick balusters, turned newels and moulded handrails. It leads up to the first floor, which has a wide boarded floor, fireplace and two windows at each end. It has a kitchen, WC and a good-sized library/meeting room (recently refurbished). Between the windows at the west end is a painted wall panel of a Quaker family group, in *faux naïf* style, signed JC 1978.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are a number of early nineteenth-century open-backed deal benches with armrests with columnar supports, similar to those at Nailsworth (*qv*). Upstairs, the library contains several old leather-bound Quaker texts (Fox's Journal, Sufferings of the Quakers etc.)

2.4 Attached burial ground



Figure 2: Headstones in Meeting House Court

The garden of the meeting house is known as Meeting House Court and contains twenty five recorded burials, ranging in date from 1770 to 1886. There are nine headstones, ranging in date from 1809 to 1886. These have been relocated to the perimeter (figure 2). Full lists of those buried here and of the headstones are in Hoyland, pp. 22-3

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house lies on the edge of this picturesque and historic Cotswold village, within the Painswick Conservation Area. It is on a sloping site within a garden/former burial area known as Meeting House Court, which is bounded by a dry stone wall. New iron gates at the entrance were made by blacksmith Alan Evans, and in the newly-landscaped garden is a semi-abstract metal artwork by Fiona Meadley, clerk to the meeting.

From here there are fine views across the Painswick Valley towards the site of the burial ground at Dell Farm (NGR SO 870 097 and not visited as part of this review). This land was given by Thomas Loveday in 1658 and originally consisted of 360 sq. yds, being later enlarged to 600 sq. yds. It contains about ninety five burials, including several members of the Loveday family. There are nine marked graves. The last burial was in 1819. A building here which was probably the original meeting house was demolished in 1978. A nineteenth century stone-built privy survives, above the burial ground closer to the farm buildings (Hoyland, p. 6).

2.6 Listed status

The building fully merits its Grade II listed status. There are two typos in the list entry – construction date should read 1705-6 (not 17-5-1706), and the date of the benches should be C19 (not C10).

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The pre-eighteenth-century use of the site has not been established, but its use for over three hundred years as a meeting house and burial ground means that the archaeological potential is likely to be high.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2 Maintenance

As reported in the QIR (2011), the meeting house and its burial ground are maintained to a high standard. There is a five-year maintenance and repair plan, and the building is regularly monitored by the Premises Committee to ensure that it is kept in good condition. In addition to regular building maintenance, works carried out since the QIR have included the installation of a kitchenette on the ground floor, the refurbishment of the first floor room to provide space for the meeting house library, and the rebuilding of the western addition to provide an accessible WC. The boundary walls were repaired in 2014 and the gardens re-landscaped and planted.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. Measures taken to reduce environmental impact include improved roof insulation and insulation in the walls of the new first floor library room; secondary glazing is also proposed to the library windows. The recent WC extension is also fully compliant with current insulation requirements. Electric radiators are controlled by a time switch and thermostats. The usual recycling arrangements are in place.

3.4 Amenities

With the recent improvements, the meeting considers that it has the amenities it needs. These include a ground floor meeting room with adjacent kitchenette, an accessible WC, and upstairs meeting room (library), kitchen and WC. Upgrading of the upstairs kitchen is planned. There is no resident warden. There is no public transport. Most members and attenders of the meeting do not live in Painswick, and come by car. Parking is difficult near the meeting house; the main public car park is about 500 metres away. Whenever possible lifts are given to reduce car miles. There is secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

A disability audit has not been carried out, but the building is as accessible as the constraints of historic character and listing allow. A portable ramp is available to negotiate the step at the main entrance. Otherwise, the ground floor is fully accessible, including an accessible WC reached from the outside at the west end of the building.

3.6 Community Use

In addition to use by Friends for an average of two hours a week, the meeting house is used by third parties for one hour a week. There is a hirings policy (2015) which states that the accommodation is let from time to time to groups, in particular religious and voluntary bodies, including those that are new and informal or the subject of discrimination. The premises are also let for family occasions, including non-Quaker marriages and funerals. They are not let to political parties for political purposes, and hirers should not be in serious conflict with Quaker values. Written details of the aims or policies of new groups wishing to hold meetings are requested. Those who do use the meeting house cite its quiet and beautiful rural setting and its simple and restful interior.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no reported instances of crime, antisocial behaviour or heritage crime. The area is generally well cared for, with low levels of crime and social deprivation.

3.8 Plans for change

Refurbishment of the first floor kitchen is proposed.

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 building has been adapted and upgraded to provide the necessary facilities, while taking account of its sensitive and important historic fabric and character. The proposed upgrading of the upstairs kitchen should present no historic buildings issues. In addition to its historic character, the interior has a calm, restful atmosphere. There is limited scope for further change internally, and the location in the conservation area also limits the scope for significant external alteration or addition.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is capable of wider use, and this capability will be enhanced by the provision of an up-to-date kitchen on the first floor. However, its location on the edge of the town, the poor parking facilities, and the existence of other more convenient venues in the town centre all militate against wider use. Extended use also requires the availability of members able to administer this. The tranquil atmosphere of the building and its beautiful setting, combined with its facilities, suggest that there would probably be a demand, once the availability of the building became more widely known.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The meeting house is over three centuries old and retains its historic character and fitting out. For most of the nineteenth century and for over half of the twentieth century it was not used as a meeting house, but was let to other groups, for various religious uses. The building could be similarly let in future, or for other community uses. A far less desirable outcome would be residential conversion; there would undoubtedly be high demand for this, but it could only be achieved at the expense of its historic character and fitting out, and should only be contemplated as a last resort.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List descriptions

Meeting house

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1091556

Location: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, VICARAGE STREET

County: Gloucestershire

District: Stroud

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Painswick

Grade: II

Date first listed: 24-Aug-1990

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 133529

PAINSWICK VICARAGE STREET SO 8609 (part) (south side) 8/337 Friends Meeting House

GV II

Chapel. Built 17-5-1706; major repairs and modifications 1793/4. Limestone ashlar, slate roof to very steep pitch, presumably replacing original stone slate. A very direct gabled building, with small ashlar stack with moulded cappings to each gable. Entrance front has, set high, two cross mullioned casements in wood, with leading and under a drip moulding. Below is a pair of early plank doors in moulded surround to a slightly peaked head under on a gabled porch to wood brackets. South front has 2 large 24-pane sashes, and, centrally a blocked door opening with date 1706 over. West gate (back) has two 12-pane sashes, and the north wall, facing Dovers House and Cottage (qv) is plain. Interior has heavy chamfered and stopped beams to a 6 compartment ceiling; C18 staircase, C10 benches. The building was closed in 1894 and re-opened in 1952. The meeting had, since 1658, had a burial ground at Dell Farm (qv), gift of Thomas Loveday, who greatly supported the community.

(STELL, c; An Inventory of Non-Conformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Central England, RCHM, 1986: Glos No 122).

Listing NGR: SO8698509737

Detached burial ground

Name: FRIENDS BURIAL GROUND

List entry Number: 1340507

Location: FRIENDS BURIAL GROUND, BEECH LANE

County: Gloucestershire

District: Stroud

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Painswick

Grade: II

Date first listed: 24-Aug-1990

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

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 133207

PAINSWICK BEECH LANE (off south SO 8609/8709 side) 7/31 Friends' Burial Ground

II

Former burial ground. Datestone 1658. Walled enclosure in drystone limestone, some weathered stone coping to west and south, some large slabs to north; varied heights but from 1 m to 1.5 m high from within enclosure which is about 17 x 10 m. On the west side is a large stone stile slab set into the wall, the back inscribed MM-708 (presumably 1708), front, approached by 3 concrete block steps 2m wide and carrying a cast iron plaque Friends Burial Ground 1658. The enclosure includes a series of 6 ledger slabs and 2 coffin stones, all with evidences of inscriptions, but not now eligible (*sic*). A very valuable survival, well away from normal access in the area.

(Hyett, F A, Glimpses of the History of Painswick, 1957.)

Listing NGR: SO8754009432