

**Friends Meeting House, Pontefract**

*Liquorice Way, Pontefract, WF8 1DR*

*National Grid Reference: SE 45402 21880*



***Statement of Significance***

***As a relatively modern building, the meeting house itself has low heritage significance. However, the meeting house was designed with characteristics found in early meeting houses and has medium aesthetic value.***

**Evidential value**

***The building has no evidential value, although the site may have some archaeological potential.***

**Historical value**

***The meeting house has low historical significance as a modern building.***

**Aesthetic value**

***The simple modern building is well-designed for its purpose and fits into the townscape of Pontefract.***

**Communal value**

***The meeting house provides a local community focus and its facilities are used by a number of different groups. The building has medium communal value.***

**Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Central Yorkshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: 0015790

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wakefield Metropolitan District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire*

1.6 Civil parish: *Wakefield*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Market Place*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date: *1998*

1.13 Architect: *Andrew Pickering*

1.14 Date of visit: *11 July 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Lynda Storey*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 821-822.

Helen E. Roberts, *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History: A Guide to Sources*, University of Hull, 2003, pp. 19 <http://hullhistorycentre.org.uk/quaker/quakerguide.pdf>

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

### **2.1. Historical background**

Quakers were recorded in the area from the mid-seventeenth century, including Mary Fisher who was arrested for preaching in Pontefract in 1653 and 1654. A Meeting was settled by 1655 and George Fox, the founder of the Religious Society of Friends held a meeting at the home of Thomas and Sarah Cooper of Knottingley in 1677. Peter and Mary Scaife and Henry and Mary Calfe were active early Quakers and meetings were held in the home of the latter in Micklegate. Land for use as a burial ground in Southgate was acquired by the Friends in 1685. Thirteen years later a meeting house and cottage were built on the same site in 1698. This building was re-built in 1844, to accommodate 300 people. Following severe war damage the meeting house was demolished in 1947.



Figure 1: Meeting House rebuilt in 1844 (Pontefract MH Archive)

Until the Quaker cottage was converted for meeting house use from 1952, Friends met at various venues including a room located at the Cornmarket. The cottage remained in use until 1974 where a property was acquired on Mayor's Walk Avenue which better met the needs of the Friends. This was adapted and expanded in the 1980s but subsequently sold in the 1990s, due to planning restrictions and structural issues becoming apparent at the property. Friends again met in each other's homes until a suitable piece of land was purchased at Swales Yard and a meeting house built to the designs of Andrew Pickering in 1998; this cost approximately £140,000.

## 2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was built in 1998 to the designs of Andrew Pickering. The building is roughly rectangular in plan and built using red brick laid in stretcher bond, artificial stone dressings to the windows and the pitched roof is covered in grey Welsh slate. The lean-to to the south is constructed in stone and timber dressings. The linear range is aligned roughly north east to south west and is mainly single-storey with a first floor loft/gallery at the north eastern end but for the purposes of this report the principal elevation faces west. This principal elevation faces Liquorice Way, and is accessed via the lean-to. The west elevation has a single light within the apex with a 3-light window with artificial stone mullions. The north elevation consists of a single 1-light window, the south wall of the meeting house has a single light window whilst the lean-to is blind with clerestory lighting under the eaves, and the rear elevation to the east comprises of a single light window within the apex, a 2-light mullioned window and a smaller 1-light window at ground floor level.

Internally a small foyer space, with exposed red brick walls, provides access to the main meeting room, kitchen/children's room, and the staircase to the loft/gallery. The main meeting room is a rectangular full-height space with exposed 2-bay roof structure. The trusses are light-weight with raking struts. The walls are lined with vertical tongue and groove panelling made from pitch pine. The floor is laid with carpet. To the eastern end of the meeting room is the loft/gallery designed in a contemporary style taking characteristics from early meeting house designs with pitch pine shutters separating the area from the main meeting room. The small meeting room at first floor is a light airy space.

### 2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting room contains open backed benches designed by Andrew Pickering; these traditional benches date from the 1998 opening of the meeting house.



### 2.4. Attached burial ground

Not applicable.

### 2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in a central position in Pontefract in a predominately commercial area. Liquorice Way falls within the boundaries of Market Place Conservation Area. To the north west of the meeting house is a row of nineteenth century terraces known as Belk's Court, to the north east is the Grade II listed 11-15 Corn Market dating from the seventeenth century, and to the east of the meeting house is the Grade II listed counting house, a range of three or four cottages dating from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century or early century.

The meeting does not own any additional land surrounding the meeting house. The immediate setting of the building comprises of driveways to the buildings located to the north east.

### 2.6. Listed status

Not listed and not considered a future candidate for listing.

### 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The West Yorkshire Archaeological Advisory Service was consulted and no Historic Environment Records are associated with the site. Overall, the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable.

### 3.2. Maintenance

A recent quinquennial survey has not taken place, but the Pontefract Premises Committee has a system of annual reporting, review and planning that is brought to the attention of the Area Meeting Finance and Property Committee/Trustees. Friends ensure regular inspections are undertaken at the meeting house. The meeting currently has enough money to maintain and repair the meeting house.

### 3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit, but the following measures have been implemented to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: Upgrading of insulation.
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: Maintenance programme in place.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Friends take home waste for recycling.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the front of the meeting house has a small area of low-level planting which provides wildlife habitats.

### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs including a kitchen, foyer, toilets and an additional meeting space located at the first floor. There is no resident warden. An on-site car park is available for one car and no secure bicycle parking is available. The meeting house is also served by a local bus service.

### 3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and throughout the ground floor of the building with restricted access to the first floor. An accessible toilet, a hearing loop and facilities for partially-sighted people are present.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 4 hours each week. The meeting house is theoretically available for community lettings for approximately 60 hours per week and is used for an average of 10 hours each week. There are two rooms available to hire, the main meeting room and the first floor meeting room. The meeting has a formal lettings policy. It is down to the discretion of the Meeting which organisations and individuals who wish to use the building are allowed to do so. Users value the building for its peaceful location.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house has not been subject to any anti-social behaviour or heritage crime in the past. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. Friends have not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8. Plans for change

No future plans for change.

#### **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 currently serves the Meeting well, but if remodelling were needed, there are no internal heritage constraints. The site is restricted and there is little room for further addition.
- ii) *For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house is used by local groups and the building has the necessary facilities to support these groups.
- iii) *Being laid down as a Meeting House:* The building has no heritage significance and could be readily adapted for another use such as community or business use, if the Meeting ceased.

#### **Part 5: Category: 4**