

## ***Friends Meeting House, Poole***

*52 Wimborne Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2BY*

*National Grid Reference: SZ 01581 91400*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house is a semi-detached house of 1887 which was acquired and converted to Quaker use in the 1970s. It has overall low heritage value.***

### ***Evidential value***

***The building is a former semi-detached house whose planform has been altered. It has low evidential value.***

### ***Historical value***

***The meeting house is a house of 1887 which has been a meeting house since 1973. It has low historical value.***

### ***Aesthetic value***

***The building is a typical Victorian semi-detached house which retains some original features including decorative lintels, small-paned fanlights and a datestone. Others (such as the original staircase and the fireplaces) have been removed. The building has low aesthetic value.***

### ***Communal value***

***The building is primarily a Quaker meeting house which is also in additional community use. It has high communal value.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Bournemouth Coastal*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0006430*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting/Friends Trusts Ltd*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Borough of Poole*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Poole NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1887*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *3 June 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Roger Gillet*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
  - Bonwitt, W., *Michael Searles. A Georgian architect and surveyor*, 1987
  - Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 150-151
  - Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, pp. 22, 24, 33
  - Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments of Dorset, vol. 2: South East*, 1970, p. 63
  - Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, p. 125
  - Local Meeting survey by Jeremy Deane, April 2016

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

### 2.1 Historical background

By 1655, meetings were held in a room in Leg Lane (now Lagland Street), Poole, where George Fox held a meeting that year. A meeting house was built in 1678 in Leg Lane (according to Stell on the same site) which may have been rebuilt in about 1731. By 1796, a new meeting house designed by the London architect and surveyor Michael Searles (1751-1813) had been built beside the old one (which was not demolished until after 1803).

(Searles's work is also sometimes described as a substantial rebuilding of the earlier building.) Searles had Quaker connections from previous projects and in c.1794 designed a gaol for Poole Corporation (not built). In mid-1795, the Quakers still owed Searles £12 12s 0d for his work at Poole; he presented his final accounts on 7 September 1796. In 1820, the new meeting house was extended with a two-storey entrance with twin spiral stairs (since demolished). In 1906, a Mission Institute was built to the east of the meeting house and parallel with it. The meeting was laid down in 1938 and the meeting house sold in 1952-3. It was listed at grade II in 1954 (NHLE list number: 1275392). From 1946 it had been used as a boys' club for which it was altered and extended. In the 1960s, the remaining burial ground to the west was cleared and burials were moved to a municipal cemetery near Upton. Butler states incorrectly that the old meeting house was demolished in 1973 (he may have confused it with the Mission Institute which was demolished and replaced by a flat-roofed extension to the former meeting house). The former meeting house survives, much altered, as the Poole Old Town Community Centre, but without any fittings. (Butler's drawing (figure 1) shows the former stand; Lidbetter (who visited before 1955) mentions wrought-iron candle brackets formerly on the stand.)

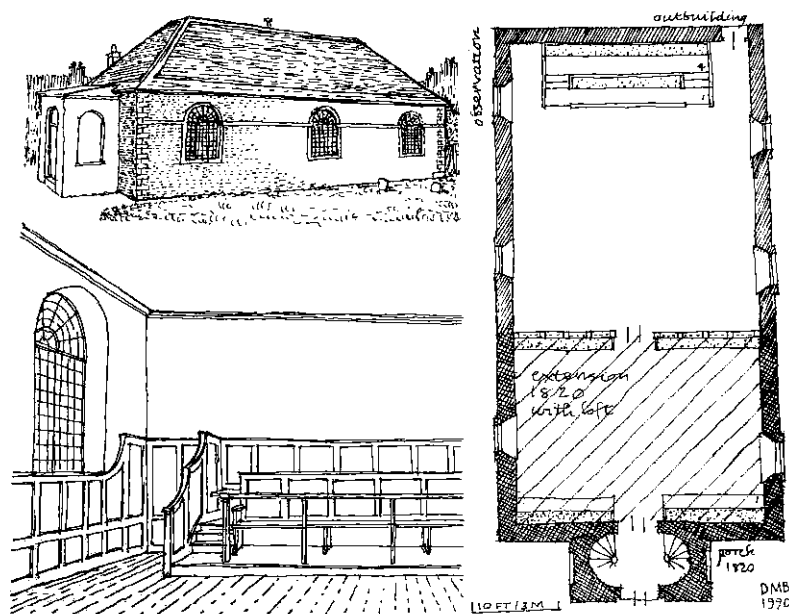


Figure 1: Perspective, interior detail and plan (southwest is at the bottom; not to scale) of the former meeting house at the corner of Lagland Street and Prosperous Street, Poole (Butler, vol.1, p. 151)

The meeting was re-established in 1962 and temporarily rented the old meeting house. In 1973, the present meeting house – a semi-detached house of 1887 – was bought and adapted. The cost of purchasing the building was £13,000 and the alterations cost about £16,000. Until c.2002 the upstairs flat was let to resident Friends or wardens; it is now commercially let.

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house faces west. It is a semi-detached house built in brick laid in stretcher bond. The roof has modern cement tiles. The plan is L-shaped, with a front block originally two rooms deep and a rear wing with modern extensions. The front elevation is of two storeys and two bays, with an oblong single-storey bay window to the southern bay. A circular date stone on the party wall has the date 'ANNO DOMINI 1887'. All windows on this elevation have lintels carved with ogee arches. The ground-floor window in the north bay has a semi-circular small-paned fanlight under an arch with a keystone. The four-panelled, part-glazed entrance door is just around the corner, with a similar fanlight. (This placement of the entrance door appears to be the original layout which is replicated in the adjoining house.)

As part of the alterations of 1973-5, the original internal staircase was removed and a new external staircase was built along the north elevation, providing separate access to the upstairs flat.

The ground floor has the entrance hall (including the site of the former stairwell) to the north and the meeting room in what was originally two rooms to the south. (The chimneybreasts and the dividing wall were removed in 1973-4.) There is one toilet below the external stair. The rear wing has two further lavatories, a kitchen and a children's room. The upstairs flat was not inspected.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

There are four benches in the meeting room: one open-backed bench came from the meeting house at Alton (*qv*); three with trefoil-pierced ends are said to come from the former meeting house at Bournemouth. (There are two similar benches at the current Bournemouth Meeting House (*qv*.)

### 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

There is a small garden to the rear with a hut (a former children's room) and a garage (now used for storage). In Denmark Lane to the rear are three parking spaces for the meeting and one for the tenant. The site is a short walk north of the town centre, with a police station and sports centre on the opposite side of Wimborne Road.

### 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is currently not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The development along the Wimborne Road started in the second half of the nineteenth century and continued into the inter-war years. A former air raid shelter in the meeting house's garden has been filled in. The archaeological potential of the site is 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

The last quinquennial inspection took place in July 2012 (no copy seen). All of the recommended works have been carried out. It is planned to reroof the flat roof of the extension and to replace the fascia to the extension in UPVC. The local meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building. There is a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

### 3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: double-glazed windows throughout, cavity wall insulation, installation of eco-friendly boiler, use of low-energy light bulbs, improved loft insulation
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: use of municipal recycling scheme
- Transport: greater use of cycling and public transport following a transport survey among the meeting in 2011

The meeting has an Energy Performance Certificate (energy efficiency level: D) and all the recommendations have been implemented (except the installation of PV panels).

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden. The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is limited parking on site and three wall-mounted rings for securing bicycles.

### 3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access, an accessible toilet, a hearing loop and facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was conducted in about 2011 on behalf of the Quaker Disability Equality Group.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 12 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of about 60 hours per week. It is used for an average of about 22 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Political parties are not permitted. Free use is only granted to Quakers on Quaker business. Discounted rates are at the discretion of the bookings clerk. Users value the meeting house for its good location, peaceful environment, vicinity to public transport and good price.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no heritage crime, general crime or other incidents. (The meeting house is located opposite a police station.) The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, some deprivation (heavy use of local foodbanks) and high community confidence. There is an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

### 3.8 Plans for change

None.

## **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 is a semi-detached house of 1887 which has already been altered and extended. It could be further altered and extended if required. There are currently no heritage constraints on the building.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house is well-used by local community groups who find here all the facilities they require.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting:* Should the meeting close or decide to sell the building, the meeting house could easily be converted back to residential use (with a new internal stair to the upper floor).

**Part 5: Category: 3**