

Friends Meeting House, Redland

126 Hampton Road, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6JE

National Grid Reference: ST 57824 74591



Statement of Significance

A substantial late nineteenth-century meeting house occupying a prominent position in the Redland & Cotham Conservation Area. Despite alterations, it remains a building of high aesthetic and communal value.

Evidential value

The meeting house is built to a plan which was popular in the late nineteenth century, with the meeting room placed behind a frontage range housing other functions. The building has been altered internally, and holds medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house was built in the 1880s to serve the expanding suburbs of Redland, Cotham and Clifton. It is of medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is an attractive stone-built design by the Bristol architect Henry Williams, combining Gothic and Jacobethan detailing. It makes a prominent and positive contribution to the local conservation area. Although internally and externally altered, it remains a building of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

In addition to use by Friends, the building is well used by the wider community. It is also of communal value for its contribution to the character and appearance of the local area. It is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Bristol*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0031830*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Bristol City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *City of Bristol NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Locally listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Cotham and Redland*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1884; 1967-8*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Henry Williams (1884)*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *1 September 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Bill Thatcher (warden), John Mayne*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *128 Hampton Road (warden's house)*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.2, p. 527
Jennings, R., *A History of Redland Meeting 1885-1997*, 1997
D. R. Mills & Associates, Quinquennial Inspection Report, 2008
Local Meeting Survey, by Christine Tollerton and Fiona Hamilton, April 2016
Plans at Bristol Record Office (BRO Building plan/20/37)

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

2.1 Historical background

The nineteenth century saw considerable suburban expansion in the Redland, Cotham and Clifton areas. Meetings for Worship took place in hired premises in Redland from 1876 until the present meeting house opened in 1885. The site for this had been acquired in 1883 for £527 9s. Plans were prepared by the Bristol architect Henry Williams, and a contract let to C. Chorley & Son; the building opened on 14 January 1885 and cost about £1,400. The adjacent house (now the warden's house) was built soon afterwards by others, and was acquired by the meeting in 1892 for £475.

Williams' plans are deposited at Bristol Record Office. As originally designed, the main meeting room was a large, double-height space, with the benches arranged in rows, a raised elders' stand at the high end and high-level windows at the sides. It was placed behind a two-storey front range, which had a central entrance lobby with rooms on either side and a library and Sunday school on the upper floor. This arrangement, in a modified and reduced form, was later also adopted at Horfield (*qv*).

In 1967-8 the building was radically adapted, with an inserted floor to the meeting room (and associated lowering of the window openings on the side street elevation), side extension (cantilevered first-floor corridor), and remodelling of the frontage block (including a new staircase on the other side of the lobby). No architect was employed; the plans were drawn up and the building work overseen by Norman Richardson, a quantity surveyor and member of Horfield meeting. The total cost was £14,619 18s 4d. A lift to the first-floor meeting room was installed soon afterwards, a second-hand one from the house of a member of the Wills family (this was replaced in 1996, when a ramped approach was also installed in the forecourt).

Further minor internal alterations (downstairs kitchen, storeroom and accessible WC) were carried out in about 2000. In 2011 solar panels were installed on the south-facing roof of the meeting house.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

A large meeting house of 1884-5 by Henry Williams of Bristol, in an eclectic style which combines Gothic and Jacobethan elements. It consists of a two-storey front range, originally containing a library, Sunday school and ancillary spaces, and a single-storey, double-height range to the rear, housing the main meeting room. The building was altered in 1967-8, when the meeting room was horizontally divided by an inserted floor, providing new accommodation below, with a corridor addition at the side. The front range was also internally adapted at this time. The building is faced in rock-faced Pennant sandstone blocks with Bath stone dressings, and has Welsh slate roofs and decorative cast iron rainwater goods. A datestone (1884) is set into the attached stack on the flank elevation of the front range. The design of this range is asymmetrical and informal, with leaded mullion and transom windows varying in size as internally required – a functional yet also deliberately picturesque design. The Gothic main entrance is in a slightly projecting central bay with quoins, pedimented gable, and large mullion and transom window above (which, like a similarly large one on the south elevation, lights the library). Several of the ground floor leaded windows have been renewed in plate glass, and glass doors have also been installed at the main entrance.

The south elevation of the meeting house range has been more altered, with the original high-level windows extended down to plinth level to give light to the ground-floor accommodation created in 1967-8. The new windows are aluminium framed, with opaque glass to the upper floor. Solar panels have been installed on the roof slope here. Not visible in

public views, the inner (north elevation) of the rear range is now obscured by a cantilevered 1960s addition providing circulation space.

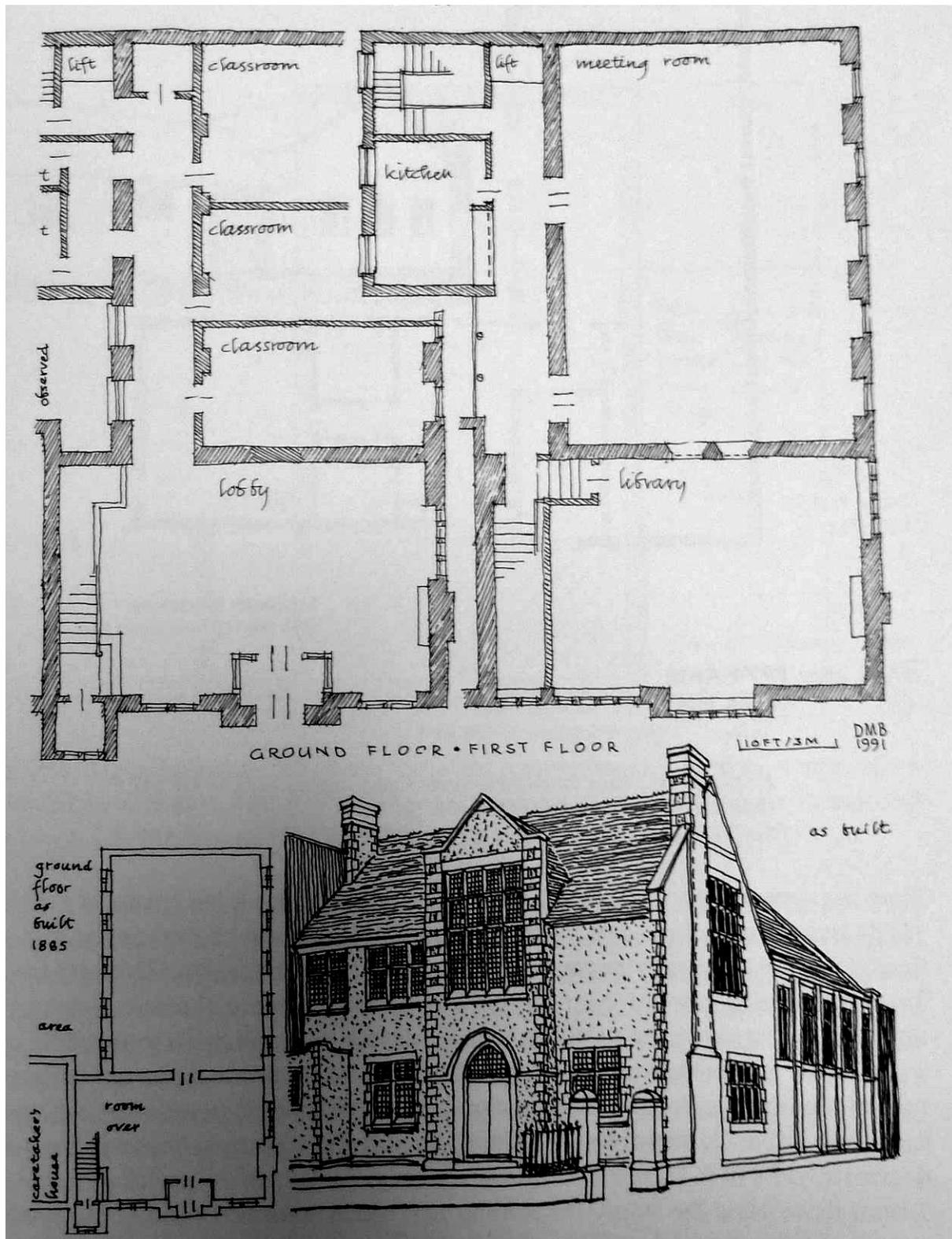


Figure 1: Plans and elevations, from Butler, Vol.2, 1999, p.527

The central entrance leads into a large entrance lobby, formed by the opening up of the ground floor space in 1967-8. The staircase to the first floor is on the left hand side, while a corridor leads through to classrooms and ancillary spaces. The ground floor no longer

possesses any historic character. This is more apparent at first floor, particularly in the library (photo bottom right on page 1), a handsome space with a deep cornice, and an arch-braced roof springing from corbel projections, lit by large mullion and transom windows on two sides. In the main meeting room the windows and inserted woodblock floor are modern (1967-8 or later), but the room retains its original roof, with arched braces rising from corbels to a flat ceiling with timber compartmentation. Ancillary spaces are more functional in character, largely dating from 1967-8, and include a lift and back stair.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are some attractive (probably c1884) open-backed benches with turned legs and supports for the arm rests, arranged around the perimeter of the meeting room and in the adjacent corridor.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

None.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house occupies a prominent corner site in the Redland and Cotham Conservation Area, amidst late nineteenth-century development of similar date, scale and materials (including the three-storey house at no 128, now the warden's house) as well as earlier stuccoed development of more Regency character. It is set back from the road, with a small front garden attractively landscaped. The original gatepiers and boundary railings have been lost over time, and there is now a low stone front boundary wall.

2.6 Listed status

Not listed. The building is not considered to be a candidate for listing, but fully merits its inclusion in the city council's local list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

Low. There was previously a nineteenth-century barn on the site (see photo in Jennings, p. 28).

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 meeting house is well maintained. The most recent Quinquennial Inspection Report dates from 2008, since when all of its recommendations (and some additional works) have been carried out. There is no five-year maintenance plan, but the wardens keep an eye on any defects and these are repaired as necessary; in view of this, an updated QIR has been deferred until 2017. This is a large meeting, which considers that it has the resources to meet any anticipated repair and maintenance needs.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. An Energy Review was obtained from the Centre for Sustainable Energy in 2009, and measures undertaken since then to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact have included photovoltaic panels on the south-facing roof slope over the meeting room (installed in 2011, the cost should be recouped by 2019), deep ceiling insulation, and secondary glazing in the library and some other windows. Electricity is supplied by Ecotricity and has zero carbon emissions; all lights are low energy and the spot lights in the foyer are on a timer. The meeting is fully compliant with the Bristol City Council Recycling Plan.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting considers that it has the amenities it needs. In addition to the large meeting room, these include a library/small meeting room, a large community room, two kitchens, WCs, a lift and storage spaces. There is a resident warden in the property next door, where there is an additional room in the basement for Friends.

The meeting house is served by public transport, with buses stopping in Whiteladies Road nearby. There is no off-street parking, but during the evenings and weekends there is free on-street parking. At other times parking is for residents only, although there are a few meter parking spaces, and parking permits for visitors are available from the wardens. There is provision for secure cycle parking in front of the meeting house.

3.5 Access

There has not been an access audit, but steps have been taken to ensure that the meeting house is made accessible where reasonably practicable. There is step-free access into and around the building, except for the library, where there are five steps. A lift is provided for those unable to use the stairs. An accessible WC and hearing loop are also provided, but there is no special provision for partially-sighted people.

3.6 Community Use

In addition to use by Friends (roughly ten hours a week), the meeting house is well used by other groups, for just over 100 out of a possible 160 hours a week. There is a lettings policy which makes no particular exclusions, although these are under consideration. Quaker groups are not charged for the use of facilities, others are assessed on merit. Users appreciate the comfortable and clean setting, the good and reasonably priced accommodation, and the contact with the resident wardens.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no recorded instances of heritage or other crime. This is considered to be a well-cared-for area, with low levels of crime and deprivation. The wardens have developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

Improvements to the main kitchen are under consideration.

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 as necessary over time to serve the needs of the meeting, and could be further adapted. The local listing and location within a conservation area limit the scope for external change, and internally it is desirable that original features and furnishings identified above should be respected.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already well used by the wider community, and similar considerations apply.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: This is the most active and well-attended of the Bristol meeting houses, and so closure would seem unlikely. In that event, the local listing and importance of the building in the conservation area mean that it would be necessary to secure an appropriate new use. Subject to planning, the building would lend itself to a number of possible uses, including community use and possibly conversion to flats (although this would inevitably mean a degree of internal subdivision).

Part 5: Category: 3