

Quaker Meeting House, Sale

Park Road, Sale, M33 6WX

National Grid Reference: SJ 78345 92403



Statement of Significance

Sale meeting house is a good example of a suburban mid-nineteenth century meeting house set within a large burial ground. The building retains much architectural and historic character and the burial ground makes an important contribution to local amenity.

Evidential value

The building has medium evidential value as the interior illustrates the changing uses of the ground floor. The burial ground has the potential for adding to the fund of knowledge about local Quakers.

Historical value

The site has high historical significance reflecting local Quaker history, with interments from a closed burial ground in Manchester. The building is historically interesting as an example of a nineteenth-century structure combining stables, dwelling and meeting house. The ensemble of building and large burial ground has high historical significance, and illustrates the Quaker presence in the expanding suburbs of Manchester.

Aesthetic value

The building is of modest architectural ambition with a little decoration. The grounds are highly attractive in the local scene. Overall, the building and site have medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has a strong connection with the community through use of the premises by local groups and public access to the grounds. There is high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Manchester & Warrington*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0016290*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council*

1.5 Civil parish: *Sale*

1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*

1.7 Listed status: *N/A*

1.8 NHLE: *N/A*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *N/A*

1.12 Date(s): *1856-60*

1.13 Architect (s): *P. B. Alley*

1.14 Date of visit: *8 July 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Josephine Wright*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Attached house*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information Sources:

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 42

Hartwell, C., Hyde, M., & Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England Cheshire* (London and New Haven, 2011), p. 111

Anon, 'Sale Quaker Meeting House Park Road Sale A History' (leaflet, n.d.)

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

2.1. Historical background

A meeting is recorded in the area from 1753, but the later history is obscure. The present meeting house was built in 1856. This had its origins in the formation of a burial ground on open land in response to the closure of the Manchester town-centre burial grounds at Mount Street and Jackson's Row. The site, which was then open fields, was purchased for £142. The area was walled and a meeting house with attached dwelling was built on the site to the designs of P. B. Alley. Alley was a member of the Society of Friends and was in partnership with Richard Lane. Lane was the pre-eminent Manchester architect of the 1830s and 40s and was responsible for the design of the Mount Street meeting house in Manchester.

The first burial took place in 1856 and the meeting house opened in 1860. It was the first of several meetings which were established from Mount Street as Manchester expanded. Worship took place in the upper room above a range of stables and coach house. In 1876-7 the burials at the Jackson's Row burial ground were removed and taken to Sale. There were 702 interments and the work was overseen by Isaac Wright and P. B. Alley. In the early twentieth century the stables were converted for use as a meeting room. A major refurbishment took place in 1998 when work included levelling the floor of the ground-floor meeting room, and fitting new matchboard dado panelling probably to match the previous finish. Other works have included building a ramp, conversion of the porch to toilets, and installation of a kitchenette upstairs. Tie rods were inserted into the main meeting room to stabilise the structure in the early twenty-first century. WC fittings were renewed in 2003. An extension was added to the house in the late twentieth century.



Figure 1. Detail showing the original entrance, brick diaper decoration and the stone plaque.

The meeting has historical associations with George Bradshaw (1801-1853). Bradshaw, who is renowned for his railway timetables and guides, was a member of the Society and several members of his family are buried at Sale.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house and attached dwelling house were built in 1856-60 to designs by P. B. Alley. The building is of brick with sparing diaper decoration, slate roofs and stone dressings. The plan is a modified L-shape with a single-storey porch in the angle and attached single storey former WC and stores at the south end. The meeting house element is in the long, south range. It is of two storeys and five bays with rows of upper windows with slightly raked heads and keystones. A range of four openings of similar type below are broader, and were formerly open to ground level forming an arcade. This area was used for stabling and shelter for traps and coaches. These openings were converted to windows with stone sills in the early twentieth century when a meeting room was formed at ground level. The northernmost opening was altered to form a door in the late twentieth century, before that time the house and meeting house had a common entrance via the porch. This is gabled and has a pointed-arched door and three small windows. The dwelling house is also of two storeys. There is a narrow canted single-storey bay window on the north-west side, and a stone plaque above the porch reads 'AD 1856 erected for the use of the Society of Friends'. The former WC attached to the other end of the building is single-storey and has an original doorway with detailing similar to that of the main building. The space appears to have been altered and subdivided, and another door with a flat head appears to be an insertion.

The meeting house element of the building consists of a large room on each floor with a stair and services at the north end. The porch (now converted to toilets) which formerly served entrances to the house as well as the meeting rooms, originally opened to a lobby with openings leading off to adjoining spaces. The present meeting house entrance gives to a lobby from which double doors open to the ground-floor meeting room. This has matchboard panelling to dado height, probably a reproduction of the early twentieth century finish. In the east wall there are Tobin tubes, with handles intact. They represent remains of a ventilation system and are probably of early twentieth century date. A 19th century stair leads up from the lobby to a landing, where the main space has been subdivided to form a kitchenette. A blocked arch at the head of the stair in the north wall originally connected with the dwelling house. The upper meeting room has a dado of matchboard panelling which is ramped up at the east end of the room, marking the position of a stand. There is a simple timber roof, ceiled in at the top, where there are plasterwork ventilation openings.

2.3. Loose furnishings

Items of furnishings include a few benches of very simple design, probably of early twentieth century date. There is also a characterful cast-iron umbrella stand possibly of similar date.

2.4. Attached burial ground

There is a large burial ground enclosed by walls. Two entrances, both with nineteenth century gate piers serve a drive which runs in a loop to the meeting house. The area has many mature trees and the grounds are maintained as lawns with wildlife areas on the north and west sides. The headstones were repositioned in 1977 to make management of the ground easier, when they were laid horizontally in rows around the perimeters of the main open areas. On the west side there is a stone enclosure with low walls and a memorial inscription recording the re-interment of remains from Jackson's Row burial ground in 1876-77. This was renovated in 2000.



Figure 2. The 1877 stone commemorating the re-interments from Jackson's Row

A columbarium was established in 1938. A wall with memorial stones stands in an area of formal planting in the north-east part of the burial ground. The boundary walls are of brick faced in stone along Park Road. They were extensively repaired in circa 2003, when management of mature trees was also undertaken.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is situated in a residential part of Ashton-on-Mersey, though the area is often grouped with Sale, the adjacent township. The area is within the extensive suburbs on the south side of the Manchester conurbation which grew with the advent of improved communications. There is a mixture of different types of housing, largely dating from the early twentieth century and after. The burial ground forms a prominent green area within the location and makes a very positive contribution to the neighbourhood.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed. It is a building of strong architectural and historic interest, but later alterations and loss of original furnishings mean that it is a marginal candidate for listing. The building has local heritage interest and would be eligible for a local list subject to local authority resources.

2.7 Archaeological potential

The site was open fields prior to building the meeting house and archaeological potential is considered to be low.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. A QI was undertaken in 2012. This identified a number of works very largely of routine maintenance and redecoration, though weakness in the stability of the roof requires monitoring. Works needing immediate attention were mainly those of clearing gutters and rainwater goods. A property report was completed in 2015. All recommended works have been completed.

ii) Attached burial ground: Optimal/generally satisfactory. The burial ground is subject to continued maintenance and the perimeter walls are monitored and repaired as necessary. The gardener has undertaken a course on tree hazard management, and a tree hazard assessment has been carried out.

3.2. Maintenance

The QI system is supplemented by regular monitoring of the building and the grounds and perimeter walls.

3.3. Sustainability

All the properties of the Area Meeting were subject to an Energy Assessment Report by Purple Consulting Engineers in 2012, which supplies a basis for understanding and improving energy efficiency. There is a set of suggested improvements for the Sale meeting house and it is understood that these are to be implemented as possible.

The sustainability toolkit is not used, but various measures have been implemented:

- Windows were double-glazed in 2008
- Burial ground maintained with extensive wildlife areas

3.4. Amenities

There are good modern WC s including a baby-changing area. A small kitchenette upstairs has a serving hatch towards the main room. The meeting plans to introduce a full kitchen through the conversion of a ground-floor store. There is a car park of reasonable size and bicycle parking.

3.5. Access

The ground floor of the meeting house is fully accessible, with a ramp and disabled toilet. There is a hearing loop. There is a drop-off area and a car park on the site, which is served by nearby bus and tram routes.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by local groups for around thirty hours each week. The well-lit rooms with views of peaceful garden areas are a factor in its popularity, and the grounds make it an attractive venue for children. There is a detailed lettings policy which prohibits use by organisations espousing violence, or beliefs in serious contravention of Quaker principles. Other restrictions relate to compliance with health and safety regulations, child safeguarding, and so on.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The burial ground is generally accessible to the public and this has sometimes led to problems with minor anti-social behaviour incidents, especially during the school holidays. A good relationship has been built up with the local police and the community, and the problems are usually quickly resolved.

3.8. Plans for change

Plans are in hand for the conversion of an attached building, formerly toilets, now garden stores, to be converted to a kitchen. A doorway would be introduced into the dividing wall between this and the ground-floor meeting room.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

i) As a meeting house only: The changes already undertaken have adapted the building for the needs of the meeting and there is scope for provision of a larger kitchen on the ground floor without the need for extensions.

ii) For wider community use, additional to local meeting use: The proposed new kitchen will help to extend the possibilities for wider community use.

iii) As a consequence of being laid down as a Meeting House and passing into secular use: In the event of closure provision would have to be made for the respectful care of the burial ground. The meeting house could in theory be converted for alternative uses, but it would not be easy to find ones which kept the internal volumes and general character of the building. Demolition would be regrettable as the building is a local community heritage asset.

Part 5: Category: 3