

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak

930 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6NB

National Grid Reference: SP 04006 82040



Statement of Significance

The 1926 building has medium heritage significance as an example of a meeting house designed in a domestic Neo-Georgian style by the Bournville Village Trust architects. The meeting house was a gift from Edward Cadbury, the eldest son of George Cadbury.

Evidential value

This is a purpose-built structure of early twentieth century date. The Birmingham Historic Environment Record has not identified the site for any archaeological interest.

Historical value

The meeting house overall has medium historical significance. The meeting house is typical of the small, plain, domestic-style buildings built by the Bournville Village Trust. It has strong associative value with the Trust and the Cadbury family.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is designed in a plain neo-Georgian domestic style typical of the era. The interior includes some attractive features such as the exposed timber roof in the main meeting room. The building is largely hidden from the street, and overall the building has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a building developed for the Quakers which has been in use since it opened in 1926. The building provides a local community focus and its facilities are used by a number of local groups.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Central England*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0014960*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Birmingham City Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Birmingham*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1926; 1966; 2002*

1.13 Architect (s): *Bournville Village Trust; BVT; Peter Hing and Jones.*

1.14 Date of visit: *7 November 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Harriet Martin*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *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, pp. 630

Osbourne, J., *Selly Oak Friends 1895 – 2000*, 2000

Selly Oak Centre Centenary June 1894-1994 Programme of Events, 1994

Clare Barnett and Rebecca Dyde, *Local Meeting Survey*, October 2015.

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends in Selly Oak first began to meet in the late nineteenth century, in a Workmen's Hall in Elliott Road. From 1892 records indicate that approximately 170 Friends were attending Sunday evening worship. The Adult School Movement was gaining pace at the same time, founded by local Quaker philanthropists to address the education needs of the community. Joseph Sturge, who established British School Rooms in Severn Street was a key figure in the movement. The classes expanded to the suburbs including to Selly Oak, with George Cadbury, a Quaker manufacturer and philanthropist among the teachers.

By the late nineteenth century, George Cadbury had started to build Bournville Village which included buildings for community use, including venues for education, social and worship under one roof, as part of the 'Institute' movement. The Selly Oak Institute on Bristol Road was built at the expense of George Cadbury and opened in 1894 at a cost of £5,500. The Institute included a large club room, three committee rooms and a large hall. The Institute remained the venue for Quaker worship for the Selly Oak Meeting until 1927.

In the early twentieth century, as a result of both declining numbers and the upkeep costs of the building, Friends considered whether to remain at the Institute or relocate to new premises. In 1925, Edward Cadbury informed the Friends of a plot of land situated between Langleys Road and Bristol Road; Selly Oak Friends decided to build a smaller meeting house at Bristol Road. It is suggested the Bournville Village Trust architect produced the designs for the meeting house, although a named architect has not been identified. The meeting house opened in 1927, and the Institute was given to the city to continue as a community venue.

In 1966, an extension was built to the designs of Bournville Village Trust onto the south west to accommodate a children's room and in 2002 Paul Hing and Jones designed the toilet extension to the northeast.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

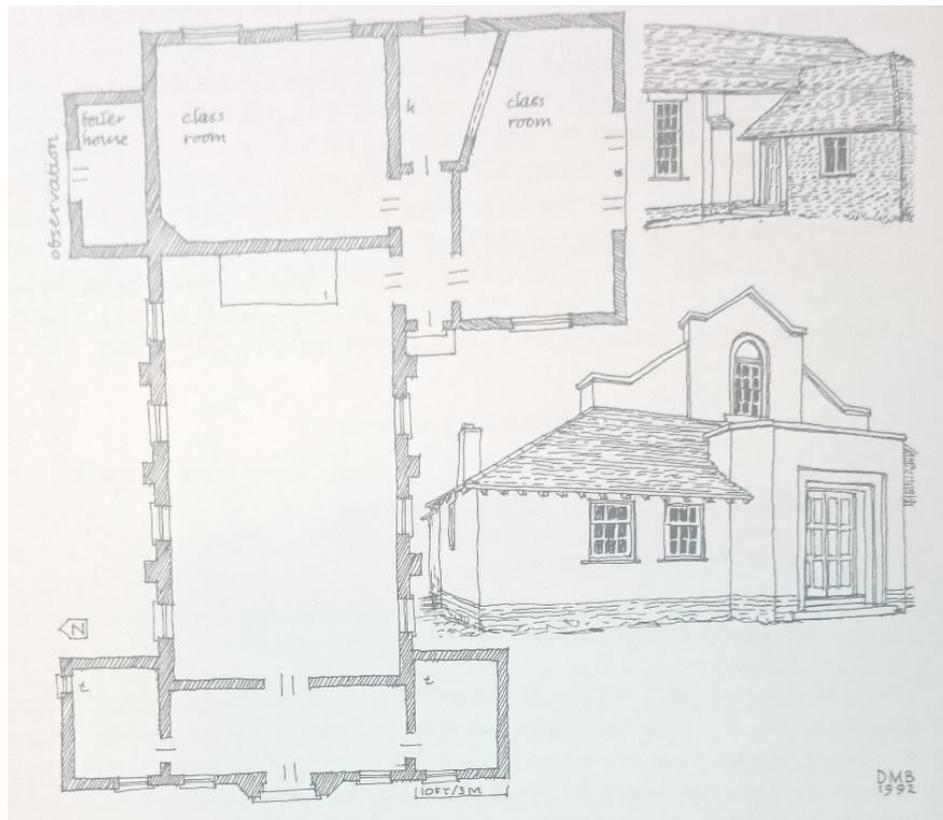


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as reconstructed by Butler (north to the bottom right; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.630)

The meeting house was built from designs by Bournville Village Trust architects and opened in 1927. It was extended to the south west in 1966 by Bournville Village Trust with a further extension in 2002 to provide additional toilet facilities, designed by Peter Hing and Jones. The materials are brown brick laid in stretcher bond, with white render, and a clay tiled roof. The plan is roughly L-shape, with a kitchen and additional meeting room within the 1966 extension. The north-west front elevation comprises the gable end of the meeting house with a central projecting bay forming the entrance, and side pavilions under a hipped roof. The doorway has a 12-panelled double door, up two steps. The gable of the meeting house above the doorway has a 12-pane window in a semi-circular arch. The entrance is flanked by two 9-pane windows. The side elevations of the meeting room have three six over nine paned windows separated by buttresses. The side pavilion to the north-east was extended in 2002 and a further projection on this elevation contains the boiler room under a cat slide roof with a double brick chimney stack. To the south west elevation is the single storey hipped roof extension of 1966 in red brick laid in stretcher bond. The gable end of the rear elevation to the south east has a 2-light cross window flanked by single light windows with a 2-light cross window above.

The lobby area is plainly painted white with an inscription on the plaster 'EDC 1926' for Edward Cadbury. The flooring is herringbone parquet and a series of six panelled doors lead to the storage areas, WC facilities and the main meeting room. The 4-bay meeting room has an exposed roof structure of three king post trusses with raking struts, carrying three tiers of purlins. The walls are plastered and painted white with timber panelling to dado height. There is a perimeter platform on three sides with loose historic benches. The room is well lit by windows from the north east and south west walls. A doorway to the south west corner leads to a small lobby area providing access to the piano room, smaller meeting room and ancillary facilities.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room contains a clock by Simmons and Son, London which was originally located in Devonshire House. There are historic benches around the perimeter of the meeting, which presumably date from the building of the meeting house.



Figure 2: Simmons & Son clock, Devonshire House Figure 3: Benches in the meeting room

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Selly Oak is a suburb located four miles south west of Birmingham city centre. The meeting house is located off the south side of Bristol Road, predominately a residential area. The road is lined with semi-detached and detached houses dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, built in Arts and Crafts style, the houses are set back from the road, many with gables facing the road and each with variations in style. The meeting house cannot be seen from Bristol Road, as it is situated up a long driveway accessed between two dwellings. To the west is a warden's bungalow, now privately let. There is a cast iron lamp post to the north-west of the meeting house. The area surrounding the meeting house is well planted with trees and shrubs.

A detached burial ground is located at Lodge Hill Cemetery, in the Free Church section (NGR: SP 02800 82300). The burial ground dates from the time burials at Bull Street ceased. The burial ground includes Bull Street burials which were re-interred before the Priory Rooms were constructed. Burials of local Quakers include Richard and Emma Cadbury, William A Cadbury, John Hoyland and John Henry Barlow who was an ambassador for peace during the war and the first director of Bournville Village Trust, a post he held for twenty three years.

2.6 Listed status

Not listed. The meeting house is not considered to be a future candidate for listing but would merit inclusion on a local list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The Birmingham Historic Environment Record was consulted and no records have been identified for the site, it is therefore likely to be of low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent quinquennial inspection (undertaken in May 2015 by Barnsley Bate, chartered building surveyors) found the building to be in good working order. Recommendations for the next twelve months include isolated repairs to the roof, repointing of ridges, investigate render defects, minor adjustments to external gutter falls and insulation over front accommodation. Since the last quinquennial survey in 2011 Friends have undertaken rendering to buttress and parapet, lead work replaced in part, some roof tiles replaces, vegetation removed from parapet and, clearing of rainwater gutters.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable.

3.2 Maintenance

The building is well-maintained by the meeting and although there is no five year maintenance and repair plan in place, the meeting house manager regularly undertakes inspections of the building. Central England Area Meeting issue an 'Annual Inspection of Premises Questionnaire' each year. Maintenance needs are considered following the inspection. The questionnaire is divided into two parts:

1) Maintenance items of a routine or cyclical nature. For example, have the gutters and down pipes been cleaned our regularly?

2) Structural and other defects which may give cause for concern, and actions required or taken as a result of the quinquennial survey. For example, does the roof leak?

The questionnaire was completed by Barnaby Waters in September 2014 when no major problems or issues were recorded for the building. The need for some minor work was identified including a boundary fence in need of replacement and render repairs. The Friends have sufficient funds for the maintenance and repair of the building.

3.3 Sustainability

Although the meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit steps have been taken to improve sustainability including:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: roof spaces have been insulated.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: the meeting house uses the local authority recycling scheme.
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: the meeting house manager regularly undertake maintenance checks on the building.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats.
- Transport: the Meeting encourages Friends to cycle, walk and car share.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. This includes a main meeting room, piano room, small room, kitchen and WC facilities (fully accessible). The meeting house no longer has a resident warden; the former warden's bungalow is let commercially and Friends now have a meeting house manager who deals with the building and lettings.

An on-site car park is available along with secure parking for bicycles. The meeting house is served by local bus services (11, 61 and 63) which run seven days a week, reduced service on Sundays. The meeting house is half a mile from Selly Oak railway station.

3.5 Access

A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken. Level access into the building is available via the 1966 extension located to the south west side of the meeting house, where a ramp and hand rail is available. There is level access throughout the main body of the meeting house, a hearing loop has been installed and a fully accessible toilet. There are currently no facilities to accommodate the partially sighted.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 4 hours and community use for 38 hours each week. The meeting house has the potential to be let for 210 hours each week (three meeting rooms: main meeting room, piano room or small meeting room). There is a lettings policy. The meeting house is not let to political parties. Groups that use the meeting house on a regular basis include the Birmingham Natural Society, an accordion group, a Friendship group and it is used as a venue for music exams. The meeting house is popular for lettings due its peaceful location and good value for money.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house has on occasion been subject to window breakages, which have been reported to the local police. The area is generally well cared-for and has low levels of crime and deprivation. The meeting has not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but would consider doing so if necessary.

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 meeting house has been extended previously and at present it meets the needs of the Friends, but there is scope for change if needed; there are no conservation constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is used by a number of different community groups and the meeting house presently meets the needs of these groups, but could be further altered if required.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building could lend itself to alternative uses such as continued community use, or the site could be redeveloped as there are no heritage constraints.

Part 5: Category: 3