

## ***Friends Meeting House, Shaftesbury***

*5 Abbey Walk, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8BB*

*National Grid Reference: ST 86030 22902*



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

***A small meeting house converted in 1980 from a former outbuilding, probably of mid-nineteenth-century date, and enlarged in 2004 by the addition of a cross-wing. The original building has been very much altered and the whole is of low heritage significance.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***Both the original date and function of the original modest structure are presently unclear. Despite the extensive refurbishment, it is possible that the surviving fabric may contain some information on these matters and the building is of medium evidential value.***

#### ***Historical value***

***The present meeting house building is of little historical value***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***The meeting house is a pleasant but modest functional structure of little aesthetic value.***

#### ***Communal value***

***The meeting house is well-used by Quakers and by other local groups and the building has high communal value.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Dorset & South Wiltshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0006440*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *North Dorset District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Shaftesbury*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Shaftesbury*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *probably mid-nineteenth century; additions 2004*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *original builder unknown, additions by Philip Proctor Associates*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *11 July 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Simon Rutter*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *The former meeting house of 1746 survives in St James St., now converted to a private house. There is a burial grounds attached to the former meeting house and another in a remote situation on the downs near Tollard Royal on the Ashmore Estate.*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:  
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. *The Friend* 1980, p.126  
Local Meeting survey by Simon Rutter, March 2016

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

### **2.1 Historical background**

A meeting house was erected in St James St. in 1746 with a burial ground attached. The building still survives, though now converted to a private house. The Georgian meeting house was superseded in 1904 by a new building in Gold Hill. In 1980 this building was sold to nearby St Peter's church for use as a parish room and a small single-storey stone building in Abbey Walk was acquired and converted for use as a meeting house, with a new roof and new internal arrangements. The original function of the building is unclear; it may have been a cottage or a stable serving and adjacent house. In 2004 a new single-storey wing containing a small meeting room, kitchen and lavatories was added at right angles to the original building.

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is set back from the street frontage behind an attractive garden. The building is single-storeyed and L-shaped on plan, with the older range containing the meeting room to the west and the modern (2004) wing to the north. All the walls are of Greensand rubble and the roof-coverings are of Spanish slate. The old range has three modern casements on the east (entrance) side and a glass door in the south end wall. The modern range has two wide doorways and a central casement window on the south side. All the windows and doors are sheltered by a projecting glass canopy on timber piers. The windows are of UPVC in the older range and of powder-coated aluminium in the extension.

The main entrance in the modern wing leads to a large vestibule serving both the ancillary spaces and the main meeting room which occupies the whole of the old building. It is a plain space with a flat ceiling and modern finishes and a hearth with a modern surround in the northwest angle.

## 2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest.

## 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

None

## 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house stands and fronts a narrow lane off a wide road on the western edge of Shaftesbury west of the walled site of Shaftesbury Abbey and the large churchyard of the former Anglican church of Holy Trinity. South of the meeting house is the complex of buildings forming Shaftesbury Hospital.

There is a detached burial ground in St James Street, next to the former meeting house, now a private dwelling (NGR ST 861227). This is the burial place of John Rutter (1796-1851), the author of *Delineations of Fonthill*, published in 1829. There is another burial ground in a remote situation on the downs near Tollard Royal on the Ashmore Estate (NGR ST917194).

## 2.6 Listed status

The building is not a candidate for the statutory or local lists.

## 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house is located not far from the site of the mediaeval Shaftesbury Abbey and the meeting house site probably has medium archaeological potential.

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

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/A

### 3.2 Maintenance

The meeting does not operate a regular Quinquennial Inspection regime. The condition of the building is kept under review by the premises committee which includes a retired chartered surveyor and a director of a local architectural practice. There is no formal maintenance plan. The meeting has enough money to cover the costs of maintenance.

### 3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit, and has implemented measures to reduce the environmental impact of the building which include the following:

- Double-glazing and roof insulation
- Low- energy lighting
- Recycling through local council

The building does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house – including a kitchen, toilets and two meeting rooms. There is no resident warden.

The meeting house is fairly close to the town centre which has regular bus services. There is some on-site parking space and ample street parking. There is no secure storage for bicycles.

### 3.5 Access

The meeting house is fully accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building. There is an accessible WC and facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was completed in March 2016 and the recommended changes, chiefly alterations to signage, are in hand.

### 3.6 Community Use

The building is used by Friends for about 12 hours per week. The building is otherwise available for community lettings and is let for an average of 32 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. No groups have free use but some have a reduced rate at the discretion of the Meeting. Users value the pleasant room, good location, cheap rates, peaceful atmosphere and the pleasant garden.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or heritage crime at the site. The locality is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and the matter has not been considered.

### 3.8 Plans for change

Some minor internal alterations are in prospect

## **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 all the facilities it currently needs. There is probably some scope for change, if required subject to Planning and Conservation Area constraints.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* the meeting house is already used by community groups. There is probably some scope for minor related change, if required.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* the building could doubtless serve another secular use.

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