

Friends Meeting House, Shipston-on-Stour

12 Church Street, Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire, CV36 4AP

National Grid Reference: SP 25914 40573



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has high heritage significance as a purpose-built late seventeenth century building, which has since been altered and extended. The building is no longer in use by the Quakers and has been in use as a library

since 1995-6. The building retains some internal fittings (such as columns) and the vernacular architectural style is very much part of the character of Shipston-on-Stour.

Evidential value

The meeting house was built on the site of cottages dating back to at least the early seventeenth century. One of the cottages had former associations with the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral and it is reported that the burial ground has individual brick vaults. The site and burial ground could yield evidence of past patterns of ecclesiastical use in the area and has high evidential value.

Historical value

The site had been a site of Quaker worship from the mid-seventeenth century. The fabric of the purpose-built meeting house illustrates the resources of Friends and reflects phases of investment in 1889/99 and 1992-95. The simplicity of the headstones in the burial ground reflects Quaker values. The meeting house and burial ground have high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is very much part of the distinctive character of Shipston-on-Stour, making use of local materials in a vernacular style. The exterior design is characterised by plainness, whilst the modern extension using contrasting materials has been sympathetically designed. Overall, the building has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The purpose-built meeting house remained in Quaker use for nearly 300 years, until the lease of the building was passed to Warwickshire County Council in 1995-6 and it has since been in use as a public library. The building will contribute to the collective memory for many people and has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Banbury and Evesham*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000000*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Stratford-on-Avon District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Shipston-on-Stour*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1185483*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Shipston-on-Stour*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1692; 1889/8; 1992-94*

1.13 Architect (s): *Unknown*

1.14 Date of visit: *5 November 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Paul Mobbs*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 2, pp. 644-645

Jack Wood, *Some Rural Quakers* (York: William Sessions Limited, 1991).

Paul Mobbs, Local Meeting Survey, October 2015.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council, *Shipston-on-Stour Conservation Area*, 1992

Stratford-on-Avon District Council, planning database (93/00371/FUL)

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends began to meet in Shipston-on-Stour during the seventeenth century; Wood (1991) records the date as 1655, and by 1682 the membership was recorded as being at seventy-eight. As a result of increasing members a cottage was leased and converted for use as a meeting house from the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral from 1685. By 1690, the cottages were demolished and a purpose built meeting house was built in 1690-92. Butler's reconstruction sketches dated 1995 suggest that the purpose-built meeting house consisted of a symmetrical two-gabled front to the east, with central doorway flanked by pairs of cross windows and with two three-light casements above and a mullioned window to the west,, with a passage which led to the adjoining property. Butler suggests that that the mullioned windows on the existing meeting house were re-used from the former cottage which once stood on this site. In the 1690s building, the original stand was located to the west side and it is believed a staircase was located to the north east corner, which led to a loft. The meeting house remained largely unaltered until the nineteenth century when work was undertaken to insert a room over the meeting house for an Adult School in 1887/8. The gabled roof was removed and the eaves raised allowing for the upper room to be constructed. Internally, a new staircase was introduced to the north west, a new stand was built on the south side of the meeting room and two timber columns, which were no longer needed to support the loft and roof structure, were relocated to the east side of the meeting room.

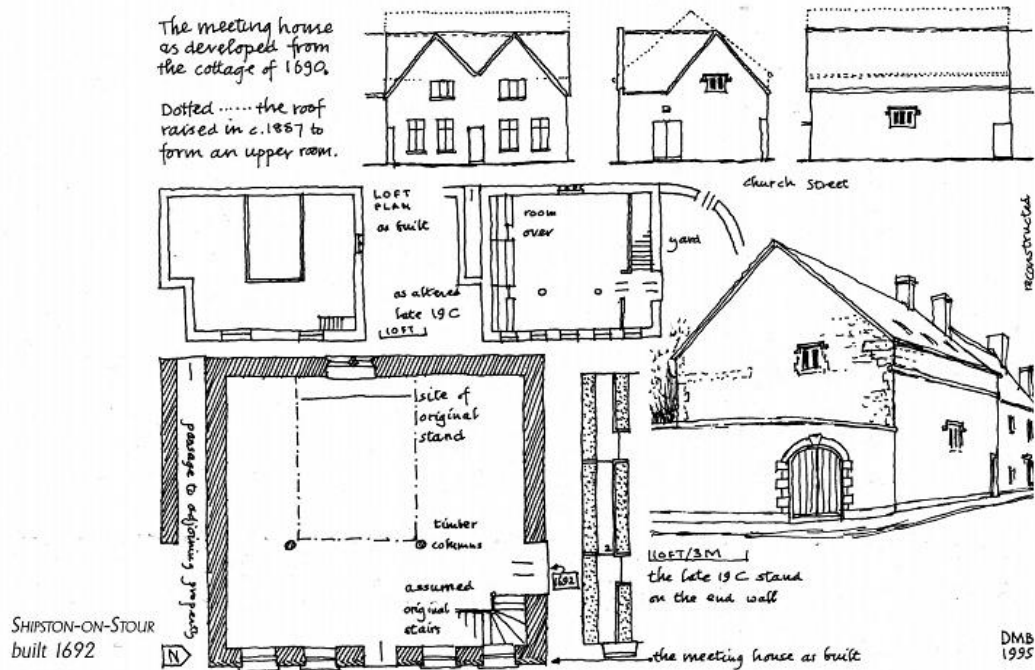


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as reconstructed by Butler (north is to the right; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.645)

During the First World War membership numbers of both the meeting and Adult Achool declined. During the 1920s the meeting house became an important venue for vocational training for young men. By 1956, the Shipston Meeting had ceased and the building was leased to Warwickshire County Council as a public library from 1995-6. Permission was granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council in October 1993 for the construction of an extension to the meeting house to provide additional space for the county library service. The work was undertaken at the expense of the Friends, at a cost of £65,000, and was designed by Warwickshire County Council.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was built in 1690-2, extended in 1887/8 for a schoolroom and again in the mid-1990s to the east. It is constructed with square coursed limestone and blue lias quoins, dressed stone details, concrete plinth and the roof is laid with modern plain clay tiles, with three skylights to the west and two to the east. There is a redundant chimney stub on the party wall to the south and a brick chimney stack located on the east pitch. The rainwater goods are plastic. The entrance into the building is on the north side via a timber framed door with glazing, above is a two-light mullioned window with hood mould, and to the east the mid-1990s extension gable end is separated from the meeting house by triangular glazing. The west elevation facing the street is largely blind with only a three-light mullioned window with hood mould and label stops, a plain string course above marking the raised eaves and a passage to the adjoining building to the south accessed via a timber door with 6-panes of glass and timber lintel. The twentieth century red brick addition to the east has a cat slide roof, and a central glazed gable providing an exit. 8 – 10 Church Street abuts the south elevation.

From the entrance, a further door to the south leads into the former meeting room, now library. To the west a staircase with arched opening supported on cyma reversa mouldings leads to first floor now used as a staff room. The former meeting room retains two timber columns in addition to timber beams on the ceiling. The floor is laid with carpet and the

walls and ceiling are plainly plastered, painted white. The east wall was altered in the mid-1990s to accommodate an extension for the library services. The former doorway has been opened in addition to the adjacent windows which now form door openings. The window in the first bay has been infilled with brick and the form of the fifth window remains. From within the extension, the former external east wall is of brick laid in a mixture of stretcher and Flemish bond, painted white, with a central brick buttress with two window openings either side located at first floor level. Two modern timber beams provide support to the roof structure. The extension is well lit from the glazed gable doorway to the east.

2.3 Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note. The meeting house has not been used for a place of worship since 1956 and furnishings were removed at that time. A stone plaque is located within the extension commemorating the Adult School members who lost their lives in the First World War.



Figure 2: Memorial plaque in commemoration of Adult School members who lost their lives in the First World War

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground lies to the east of the meeting house. It is enclosed by brick walls and the date range of the burials is not known. Six round-headed headstones were relocated to the edge of the garden to the east. The burial ground is now maintained as a garden for the library and incorporates areas of planting.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The market town of Shipston-on-Stour is located to the south of Warwickshire, eleven miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon. The meeting house is located within Shipston-on-Stour Conservation Area designated by Warwickshire County Council in 1969. The gentle curved road of Church Street is lined with two-storey buildings with steep roof pitches, generally constructed of stone or brick in mellow orange and red colours, whilst some properties have a plain rendered face. The neighbouring properties to the meeting house are also listed at Grade II including to the south Birmingham House (8 Church Street), The Horseshoe Inn and 4 Church Street. To the north of the meeting house are 14 and 16 Church Street and across the road to the west is Wm Fry & Son (1 High Street).

The immediate setting of the building is formed by a boundary of high brick walls. Access to the main entrance of the meeting house is via a stone lined arch through a high brick wall with wooden vertical planked door with wrought iron strap hinges. A modern brick path leads to the entrance of the building, an outside toilet with slate roof and timber planked door and finally to the burial ground to the east. The burial ground retains six small, round-

headed headstones bearing the usual basic Quaker information; these have been relocated adjacent to the boundary wall. The area is well planted with trees and shrubs which add to the mature landscaped character of the area.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is appropriately listed at grade II, reflecting its early date, and it is still listable despite the extension and internal alterations. Minor amendments are required to the list description; the location is 12 Church Street not 10 Church Street.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The site was formerly occupied by a row of cottages dating from the seventeenth century, which were later demolished for the construction of the present meeting house, there could be some archaeological potential. The site and burial ground have medium 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 July 2013 by Philip J Cooper, chartered building surveyor and historic building consultants) found the building to be generally in a good and well maintained condition. Recommendations for work to be undertaken in the utmost urgency category include roof and boundary wall repairs. Within the next twelve months the report recommended repairs to the chimney, rainwater goods, front gates and outside privy.
- ii) Attached burial ground: Optimal/generally satisfactory. The burial ground is well tended and the headstones are in good condition.

3.2 Maintenance

Since 1995 the meeting house was leased to Warwickshire County Council which is responsible for the maintenance and repair. The lease is between Friends Trust and Banbury & Evesham Area Quaker Meeting and related charities (landlords) and the Warwickshire County Council (tenants), last renewed on 3 June 2011 for ten years.

3.3 Sustainability

The Sustainability Toolkit is not used, and the building is not managed or occupied by Quakers. From the site visit it appears that the following steps seem to have been undertaken to improve the sustainability including:

- Resource use, recycling and waste management: the meeting house uses the local authority recycling scheme.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has amenities to accommodate its current use as a library and one-stop shop, including a large room for the library, staff room at first floor with a WC and basic kitchen facilities. The premises do not include WC facilities for the public.

There is no on-site car parking available, the nearest car park is at Mill Street owned by Stratford on Avon District Council, and is free of charge. The meeting house is served by local bus services running to and from Stratford, Chipping Norton and Banbury. There is no secure on-site parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken, but the most recent quinquennial inspection made the following observations: the access into the premises for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled is considered acceptable. There is limited provision for the audibly or visually impaired.

From the site visit, the meeting house entrance has level access into and throughout the ground floor, with an automatic door and external handrail. There is restricted access to the first floor; this area is for staff use only. Throughout the ground floor and entrance of the building are a number of clear visual signs providing information and directions.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting house is leased to Warwickshire County Council as use as a library and as a one-stop shop which includes Warwickshire Direct Outlets (residents can speak to customer service advisors located within communities) and Warwickshire Police services. The library is open twenty hours a week (Monday and Saturday mornings and all day Tuesday and Wednesday).

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The property has not been subject to heritage crime however occasional anti-social behaviour has taken place (litter). The library holds a drop-in centre for the police, so the library staff have developed liaison with the local policing team.

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 ceased use by Friends in 1956 and has subsequently been leased to Warwickshire County Council for use as a library from 1995-6.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is well used by the public, and the property has been extended in the late twentieth century to meet the library service needs.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: There is no local meeting to use this building, and if Warwickshire County Council were to no longer require it, it could be adapted for a new use, such as residential, business or community use, subject to planning permission and listed building constraints.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: **SHIPSTON LIBRARY**

List entry Number: 1185483

Location

SHIPSTON LIBRARY, 10, CHURCH STREET

County: Warwickshire

District: Stratford-on-Avon

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Shipston on Stour

Grade: II

Date first listed: 13-Oct-1966

Date of most recent amendment: 16-May-1988

List entry Description

SHIPSTON ON STOUR CHURCH STREET SP2540 (East side) 14/89 No. 10 (Shipston Library) 13/10/66 (Formerly listed as Friends Meeting House)

GV II

Meeting house, now library. Late C17, with C20 rear wall. Squared, coursed limestone and lias with quoins. C20 tile roof. 2 storeys; one-window range. To far right a C20 part-glazed door with wood lintel. To centre of building a 3-light mullioned window with hood mould and label stops. Plain string course wall above. Three C20 skylights. C20 double plank doors in left gable end. Interior: retains original beams. Included for group value. (Buildings of England: Warwickshire, p.395-396).

Listing NGR: SP2591340568

Selected Sources

Books and journals

Pevsner, N, Wedgwood, A, The Buildings of England: Warwickshire, (1966), 395-96