

## ***Friends Meeting House, Skipton***

*The Ginnel, Newmarket Street, Skipton, BD23 2JA*

*National Grid Reference: SD 99120 51543*



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

**Skipton meeting house has high heritage significance as a good example of a small vernacular meeting house, built in 1693, retaining historic fittings of various phases, and enhanced by an attractive burial ground setting.**

### ***Evidential value***

***The meeting house has high evidential value for its fabric which incorporates historic joinery and fittings of several phases, from the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The burial ground has archaeological potential.***

### ***Historical value***

***Skipton is associated with national and regional meetings of early Quakers in the 1650s, and was important in the establishment of Quakerism in Yorkshire. The meeting house was built in 1693 and fitted with distinctive joinery features that reflect how the building was originally used. The burial ground has also been in use since the 1690s.***

### ***Aesthetic value***

***The form and design of the compact building is typical of late seventeenth century vernacular architecture in this area, constructed in local materials. The interior expresses Friends' simple approach to worship and has high***

***significance for the fittings. The attractive setting of the walled burial ground and garden in a ginnel off a main street adds to its aesthetic value.***

**Communal value**

***The meeting house is primarily a place for Quaker worship, and the site as a whole is an important community asset in Skipton. The building and the New Room have high communal value.***

**Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Craven & Keighley*

1.2 Property Registration Number: 0005990

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting Trustees*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Craven District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire*

1.6 Civil parish: *Skipton*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1131875*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Skipton*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1693*

1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *21 June 2106*

1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*

1.16 Name of contacts made on site: *Chris and Gil Skidmore*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Cottage and New Room*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

David Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, Vol 2, 1999, p837-838*

Richard Harland, *The Living Stones of Skipton Quaker Meeting, 1993*

Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group, *unpublished report 1593, Skipton Meeting House, 1999*

Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project: <http://www.eservices.hull.ac.uk/quaker/index.cfm>

Historic England Archive – photos 0426-115/117 and 0426-115/119

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

### 2.1. Historical background

Quakers have been meeting in Skipton since the 1650s; a meeting was settled at nearby Scalehouse by the Watkinson brothers in c1653. From 1657 to 1660 yearly or general meetings for the North or the whole country were held in the Skipton area, possibly at Scalehouse, and attended by George Fox; for these large events Friends probably met in the open. The early meeting in Skipton was at Bradley, founded by Edward Watkinson where a burial ground was provided from c.1663. Friends in Skipton first met in each other's homes, including those of John Hall and Abigail Stott in the 1680s. Skipton Friends were persecuted during this period and their meetings broken up. In 1693 two cottages off Newmarket were acquired by John Cowper and John Hall, and replaced by a new meeting house, the present building. A burial ground and stable was provided on the south side of the building. Later improvements in the meeting house included 'new seats and a division of the meeting house' for which funds were raised in c1761, indicating the panelled partition is of this date.

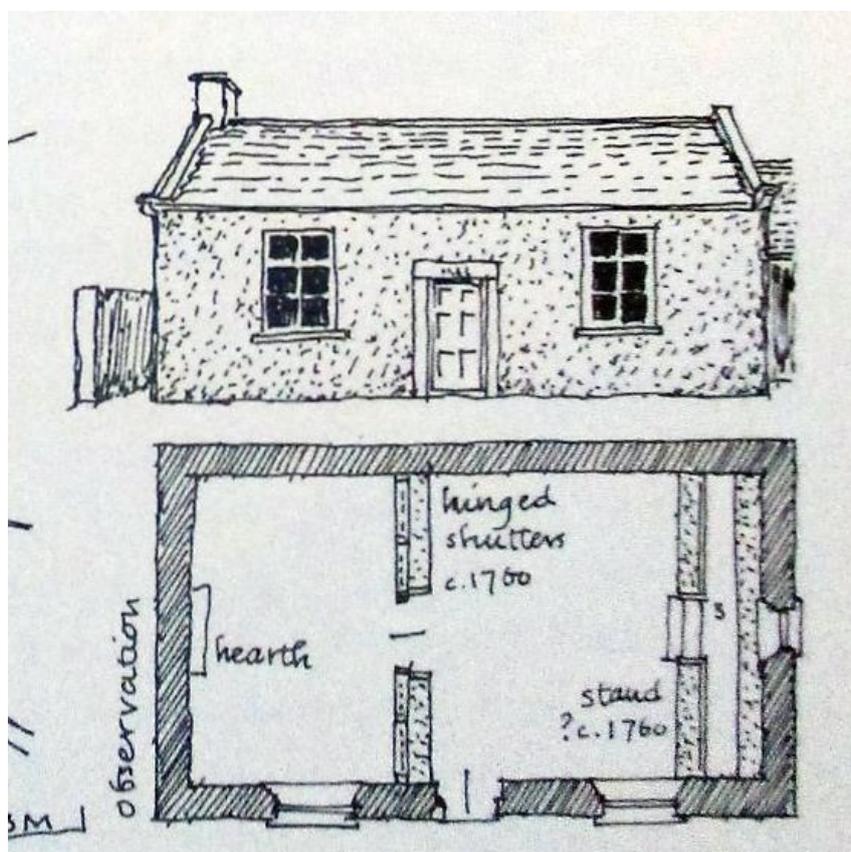


Fig.1: Reconstructed plan from Butler, 1999, p837. North is to the top

David Hall, son of John Hall, ran a Quaker boarding school in his home on New Market from 1703 until he died in 1756. The meeting declined in the late nineteenth century and closed in 1897; the remaining members joined Keighley. In 1906 an Adult School was set up which encouraged the revival of the meeting in 1907. By 1850, a privy had been built against the west gable, and sometime between then and 1907 an extension was added to the east gable; its initial purpose is unknown. In c1876, some works were carried out, probably including a timber floor, alterations to the stand and alterations to the windows and doorway. By the 1950s the east addition was a kitchen and being used to sort goods donated to the Oxford

Committee for Famine Relief, the forerunner of Oxfam. A loft floor was inserted here and used for overnight accommodation from 1972. In 1988, the wooden floor in the meeting house was removed and the stone flags reinstated. To the west end the earlier lean-to extension was extended for a new lobby and WCs in 1993, to replace the old privy. The render was taken off the external walls, the stonework repointed and the interior lime-plastered. At the south end of the burial ground the stable was gradually adapted as a cottage for a warden, and in the 1950s a timber children's room was built in the south-west corner of the site (Fig.2). This was replaced by the New Room in 1994, built onto the cottage.



Fig.2: The meeting house prior to the west extension added in 1993 (Skipton Meeting collection)

Notable members of Skipton meeting include the Binns family, some of whom emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1818. Arthur and Elizabeth Raistrick were active in adult education during the twentieth century.

## 2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was built in 1693, on the site of earlier cottages. It is constructed in coursed sandstone under a stone slate roof with coped verges on kneelers and stone ridges. The ashlar stack to the west gable partly projects beyond the gable wall, and has ogee mouldings. The rainwater goods are cast iron. The simple rectangular building is subdivided into two unequal spaces. The symmetrical front faces south with a central doorway; the jambs are deep chamfered below a plain lintel with the date 1693 in bas relief within a shield. The solid timber door has six fielded panels and iron furniture. The 6-pane windows flanking the doorway are set in deep chamfered surrounds, with hoppers to the top-lights and chamfered glazing bars; probably late nineteenth century. The rear elevation is blind, and constructed from rubblestone. The gable-ends are rendered above the later single-storey lean-to additions, which are built of roughly coursed rubble; the east addition has a Welsh slate roof and the west lean-to has a stone slate roof. The latter has a deeply chamfered window to the north wall, probably re-set; all the external joinery is modern.



Fig.3: elders' stand with oak panelling

Inside, the meeting house, the larger meeting room is to the east, entered directly from the central door. The walls are lime-plastered above a painted timber tongued and grooved dado, and the floor is laid with stone flags. The elders' stand to the east end may be original; it is of oak with simple lineal mouldings and there is graffiti, including the name B.Talwin and the date 1731. There are signs the stand panelling was previously painted or lime-washed. The fixed benches either side of the central steps have fielded panels to the back, probably c1761. The small sash window (blocked) behind the centre of the stand is nineteenth century. The flat ceiling is plastered with the soffit at a higher level than the ceiling in the west room. The painted timber partition dividing the space has fielded panels consistent with a date of c1761; there is a central door below a pair of wider panels suggesting this was the primary doorway (the doors have been removed but are in store). The upper part of this doorway and the openings either side have top-hinged shutters which are fixed to the ceiling using iron hooks, enabling the spaces to be combined, above a low dado level. The door to the south end of the partition is a later insertion. The smaller space to the west has a blocked fireplace to the west wall, and the same boarded dado as the larger space. The door to the south side of the chimney is a modern insertion.



Fig.4: screen with shutters from the west

### 2.3. Loose furnishings

The set of plain pine benches are nineteenth century, and come from Carperby meeting (built in 1864).



Fig.5: set of pine benches from Carperby meeting house

### 2.4. Attached burial ground

The burial ground on the south side of the meeting house has been in use since 1693. Burial records range in date from the 1690s to 1893, and are held at the Special Collection of Brotherton Library, Leeds University. From 1864, gravestones were permitted; there is a small group of gravestones laid flat, with incised lettering in usual Quaker style, many to the Smith family. The burial ground is now in use as a garden, enclosed by high rubblestone walls with half round copings on the east and west sides, with the meeting house to the north and the cottage and New Room to the south. The main entrance is from the ginnel on the west side, through a doorway with flat stone lintel, below a slightly raised section of wall.

### 2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is reached via a narrow ginnel off the south side of Newmarket Street or along a path beside the river to the south. The site is on the south-east side of the busy town centre, close to the market and main retail area. Like Settle, Skipton is popular with tourists but also serves as market town for this part of the Dales. On the hill south of the river is an area of terraced stone houses, densely developed on a grid layout in the nineteenth century.

The trustees are not responsible for any detached burial grounds, but there is known to be one at Fox House, Rylstone, national grid reference: SD964590, and another at Bradley (in private ownership and NGR not known). About six miles to the east in Wharfedale, Farfield meeting house is now cared for by the Chapels Trust; built in the 1689, the meeting house closed in the nineteenth century.

### 2.6. Listed status

The building is Grade II listed, but the entry is very short and needs to be expanded.

### 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house forms a record on the North Yorkshire County HER: SMR Number MNY31152. The site is likely to have high archaeological potential, as a burial ground and

also for potential medieval archaeology as the site appears to be on part of a burgage plot off Newmarket Street.

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

*See completed volunteer survey*

#### **3.1. Condition**

i) Meeting House: Good. The last QI was undertaken in May/June 2015, and was carried out by a suitably qualified person. The meeting is working its way through the list of essential works in the next twelve months, and have completed all those listed as of utmost urgency.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/satisfactory.

#### **3.2. Maintenance**

The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the Meeting House; they currently have £16,000 in a building fund with a target of £20,000. The premises committee have a 5-year maintenance and repair plan for the building.

The burial ground is well managed as a garden using volunteers and also a gardener for three hours per week.

#### **3.3. Sustainability**

Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has undertaken some improvements

Climate change & energy efficiency: Researched alternative sources of heating but electricity only practical option; all electricity obtained from Good Energy supplier and the meeting is thinking of placing solar panels on ancillary buildings.

Resource use, recycling & waste management: Waste is recycled and composted

Building maintenance & refurbishment: Double glazing has been renewed in ancillary buildings, but none in listed building.

Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: burial ground is kept wildlife-friendly.

#### **3.4. Amenities**

The meeting has access to all the facilities it needs. The kitchen has been refurbished recently and there are a total of four toilets, one with disabled access, and an extra meeting room (in the New Room). Recent facilities are in the New Room built in 1994 and attached to Meeting House Cottage. There is a resident Warden/resident Friend living in the cottage.

#### **3.5. Access**

The meeting house has not conducted an access audit but is mostly accessible to people with disabilities; there is a step with a ramp. The disabled WC is in The New Room, a separate building. There is a hearing loop, but no changes have been made to make it easier for partially sighted people.

There are some Sunday bus services into town and rail access seven days a week. There is parking for two cars on the adjacent site, with access over private ground. The Meeting House is not on a roadway and foot access is via paths.

### 3.6 Community Use

The meeting house and New Room, together, are used by Friends for 12 hours per week. The maximum number of hours per week that the meeting house and New Room are available for lettings is 108. The total average hours per week of community use is 40 hours. There is a lettings policy and preference is given to non-profit, community-based groups. No public meetings for political parties or groups opposed to Quaker values are permitted. There is a no alcohol policy. The meeting house is valued due to the central location, warm comfortable atmosphere, the quiet and the reasonable prices.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting records two cases of vandalism about four years ago which were reported to police. There has been no heritage crime. Resident Friends take an active part in the local community association. This part of Skipton is generally well-cared for with low crime levels and low deprivation.

### 3.8. Plans for change

Meeting is at the beginning of a process of considering the meeting's needs in the new century, and how to ensure the buildings are suitable. This may lead to some alteration to the library/loft at the east end. The meeting is also looking into improving the toilets at the west end.

## **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 retains some historic fittings and features which should be retained as far as possible in the future. Its setting with the burial ground is also sensitive to change, due to the archaeological potential and burials.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The New Room provides up-to-date community facilities and this takes any pressure for change off the historic meeting house. There is scope to refurbish the east extension of the meeting room for Quaker or community use.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* In the unfortunate event of the meeting house being closed, it would be vulnerable to change and would require a sensitive viable new use to secure its future. An alternative use that does not entail loss of the interior character will be a priority, subject to listed building and planning constraints.

## **Part 5: Category: 2**

## **Part 6: List description**

Name: **FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE**

List entry Number: 1131875

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, THE GINNELL

County: North Yorkshire

District: Craven

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Skipton

Grade: II

Date first listed: 02-Mar-1978

List entry Description

1. 5336 THE GINNELL

Friends Meeting House SD 9951 1/52

II

2. A plain low single-storey building which is cement-rendered and has 2 windows and a centre door with lintel dated 1693. Stone slate roof with copings and springers. Chimney on west gable peak. Interior has panelling partitions and elders' bench.

Listing NGR: SD9912251543