

Friends Meeting House, Stocksfield

Branch End, Stocksfield, NE43 7NA

National Grid Reference: NZ 06622 61336



Statement of Significance

A former Co-op store, in use as a Meeting House since 1991, retaining its attractive shop front. The building is of medium evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

Evidential value

The primary evidential value of the building is in the shop front, denoting its original function.

Historical value

The building was erected in the early twentieth century as a store serving the local mining community, and as such has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

Although modest in size, the building is prominently placed on a corner site, and its attractive shop front makes a positive contribution to the local scene. The secondary elevations have low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building's Quaker witness and useful (albeit modest) facilities have communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Northumbria*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0004630*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Northumberland Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Broomley and Stocksfield*
- 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): *Probably 1910 (adapted for Quaker use 1991)*
- 1.13 Architect: *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *19 April 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Avril Armstrong*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *None*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 481
The Friend, 25 June 1993, pp. 817-8
Local Meeting Survey, by Caroline Westgate, Feb. 2016

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

2.1. Historical background

Although a long-established Quaker community, Stocksfield did not become a Preparative Meeting until 1982, when it met in the local Institute. This location proving unsuitable, Friends accepted an offer in 1990 from Bruce and Cyrilla Allsopp to use their art gallery and bookshop at Branch End. This had been built in 1910 (Local Meeting Survey) or 1922 (*The Friend*) by the West Wylam and Prudhoe Co-operative Society as a store serving the local mining community (on stylistic grounds, the earlier date seems more likely). After adaptation, it opened as a Meeting House at Easter 1991.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

A small, single storey structure consisting of a meeting room, smaller meeting room/library on a slightly higher level at the rear, and kitchen and WC. The building retains its attractive original timber shop front with stall riser, recessed splayed entrance at the corner, entablature, frieze with painted sign and dentil cornice. The shallow pitched roof is covered in slate, and the rear elevations are utilitarian in character, with pebbledash facing. The main meeting room has a flat plaster ceiling and modern furnishings, while the smaller room has an open boarded timber roof with one king post truss.

2.3. Loose furnishings

There are none calling for special mention.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The Meeting House occupies a corner site in the main street of Stocksfield, a village on the south bank of Tyne, popular with commuters. There is a small garden area to the rear.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and is not considered to be listable. The shop front is however an attractive design which makes a positive contribution to the local townscape.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

None known. The Northumberland Historic Environment Record holds no information.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable

3.2. Maintenance

No QIR report is available, but the building appears to be well maintained. There is a five year maintenance plan, and the Meeting has the resources it needs to maintain the building.

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. Measures taken to improve energy efficiency include removal of asbestos and provision of improved insulation and changing to a 'green' electricity provider.

3.4. Amenities

The Meeting has the facilities it needs, including two rooms (one seating twenty-five people and the other ten), a galley kitchen and an accessible WC.

3.5. Access

There is level access into the building and an accessible WC.

3.6 Community Use

This information was not available on the volunteer survey.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The local area is generally well cared for, with low crime levels. There is little visible deprivation, although there is a well-used food bank. There is said to be a good community spirit.

3.8. Plans for change

None stated. The back yard has recently been landscaped and turned into a garden area.

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: There are no heritage constraints governing internal change. The tight site boundaries limit the scope for expansion. The shop front is an attractive feature in the local townscape and should be respected when change is contemplated.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The same considerations would apply.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building could very readily revert to its previous use as a shop or gallery.

Part 5: Category: 3