

Friends Meeting House, Totnes

3 Ticklemore Street, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5EJ

National Grid Reference: SX 80531 60327



Statement of Significance

The meeting house consists of an earlier (probably nineteenth-century) building with later front extensions. It was converted to Quaker use in 1986. It has medium overall significance.

Evidential value

Relatively little is known about the history of the building. The built fabric probably holds further clues as to its use and development. It has medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is part of the historic centre of Totnes and was at some point a yard for a nearby inn. The building has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

While the taller slate-hung rear part makes a positive contribution to the conservation area, the front extensions are more functional. The building has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has been a Quaker place of worship since 1986 and is also used by local community groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Devon*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015810*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Limited for Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *South Hams District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Totnes*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Totnes*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *Probably nineteenth century and later*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *11 May 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Mary Trimble*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 144

Brief history on Totnes Meeting website, <http://swquakers.org.uk/meetings/devon/totnes>

A short history of Quakerism in Totnes and Ashburton, c.2010

Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal, no date

Local Meeting survey by Mary Trimble, May 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

In 1664, two travelling Quaker preachers, Christopher Bacon and Edward Braiford, passed through Totnes and met with some local Friends. From 1703, Friends met at Chudleigh for a few years. In 1707, a small garden at the junction of Leechwell Street, Maudlin Road and Kingsbridge Hill was bought by Michael Lee for a Quaker burial ground. This was last used in c.1763 and sold in 1843. (It is now a private garden.) A new meeting was settled in 1967, using initially a room at Birdwood House. In 1985, Alison Robins, a musician, offered the current building to the Quakers at generous terms which were accepted. In January 1986 the building was acquired from her for £30,000 which included some contents such as chairs.

Originally the site was a yard used for stabling for a nearby inn and to keep pigs. The building had been used for a variety of purposes, including an ice cream factory, a betting shop (from 1965), and a pottery (1978-80). At some point, the building was in the same ownership as 1-3 The Plains and a small first-floor link was built. In 1975, planning permission was granted for a single-storey extension for office use. Robins had used the building as a music studio with living accommodation. In 1989, a steel beam was inserted to strengthen the floor of the first-floor meeting room.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house faces south towards Ticklemore Street. The older part is the two-storey slate-hung block to the rear with a gable roof which abuts Rose Cottage to the west. To the front are two flat-roofed extensions: a block to the east with an elevation of rubble stone with brick dressings, and a shallower block to the west with large windows and the entrance door. The ground floor contains a toilet, kitchen, a lobby, and a small meeting room. The main meeting room occupies the whole of the first floor. It is lit by three casement windows to the

front. The roof is ceiled above the tie beams. The staircase (installed in c.1978-80) is along the west wall.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no furnishings of particular historic interest.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in Ticklemore Street, just around the corner from the junction of The Plains and Fore Street. The conservation area appraisal has highlighted the two-storey part of the building as making a positive impact to the area.

2.6 Listed status

The building is not listed and is not considered to be eligible for listing. It might be deemed a curtilage building to 1-3 The Plains (listed grade II).

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

Totnes was founded by King Edward in the early tenth century. Fore Street was an important connection between the castle to the west and the river to the east. Ticklemore Street follows the line of the medieval dam and town quay. The site has high 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): Not applicable

3.2 Maintenance

In 2014, the building was inspected by Peter Hart, a structural engineer. He found the building generally to be in good condition. A number of the recommended actions have been carried out. The local meeting has enough money for minor repairs and regular maintenance but has access to Area Meeting funds for larger expenditure.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: timed heating system, environmentally cleaning materials, energy audit
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: use of Council recycling scheme, composting (off-site)
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: replacement of night storage heaters on internal walls, improvement of roof insulation, insulation of a draughty window
- Transport: installation of a rail for bike storage, encouragement of car share and public transport, transport survey among members

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, although the kitchen is small and access to the toilets is via a narrow and angled corridor. The main meeting room is increasingly too small for the local meeting. The amenities are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden. The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is limited car parking on site as well as a rail for secure bicycle parking.

3.5 Access

The meeting house has limited accessibility for people with disabilities. There is no level access or stair to the first floor meeting room. There is no accessible toilet. There is a hearing loop and some facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was conducted in May 2002 and some of the recommended changes have been made.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 32 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 124 hours per week. It is used for an average of 24 hours per week. The meeting does not have a lettings policy but has terms and conditions governing the use of the building. Generally, the meeting is happy to let a wide range of beliefs and practices use the building, unless they are in any way harmful or at odds with Quaker values. Free use is granted to groups, such as Street Pastors, who are doing work supported by Quakers. Users value the building for its central location, calm and pleasant atmosphere, comfort, reasonable pricing, and its vicinity to parking and bus stops.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There have been two instances of vandalism (both including damage to locks and keys), and one case of graffiti. The two cases of vandalism were reported to the police. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. However, the location is a town centre location with the usual events of drunkenness and occasional fighting. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the Street Pastors use the meeting house.

3.8 Plans for change

As the meeting house is increasingly too small for the growing local meeting, there have been plans to extend the building. However, a pre-application discussion with the Council showed that due to the conservation area and the vicinity to a listed building only limited change would be permitted.

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 is at present too small for the meeting. The Council has indicated that only limited external changes such as an extension would be permitted.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: At present the meeting house has all the facilities required by community groups, except level access to the upper room and an accessible toilet.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should the meeting decide to sell the building, it could probably be converted to another use, which is likely to be commercial in this town centre location.

Part 5: Category: 3