

Friends Meeting House, Tottenham

594 Tottenham High Road, London, N17 9TA

National Grid Reference: TQ 33918 90370



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is an unremarkable structure of the 1960s, part of a redevelopment on the site of an earlier meeting house, with an early eighteenth-century burial ground attached. The building itself is of low heritage significance but the site and burial ground together are of medium significance.

Evidential value

This simple post-war building has low evidential value.

Historical value

The building is part of a modern commercial development on the site of an earlier meeting house. It has little historical value in itself, but the site and burial ground are of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is an unremarkable structure of low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is reasonably well-used by the local community and is of medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *North London*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0025000*
- 1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *London Borough of Haringey*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *London*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Tottenham Hale NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Scotland Green*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1962*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Martin Lidbetter*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *4 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Catherine Utley*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *detached burial ground in Stoke Newington*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Sources of information:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp.422-424
Collie M A, Quakers of Tottenham 1775-1825, *Edmonton 100 Historical Society*, occasional paper 37 (1978)
The Friend, 1962 p.744
Greater London HER nos. MLO107386 & MLO107387
Local meeting survey by Catherine Utley, August 2015
Information on the detached burial ground in Stoke Newington by Peter Daniels, July 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

A Meeting was being held in Tottenham at least as early as 1691. The meeting house location moved at least once before a new meeting house was built on the present site in 1714, with a forecourt in front and a burial ground behind. The building was enlarged in 1776 and the burial ground was enlarged in 1803. The old meeting house was 'practically rebuilt' in 1831. At the rear was a women's meeting room and in 1879 a first floor schoolroom was constructed on the street side over the meeting house entrance lobby. The meeting declined

in the twentieth century and in 1957 the meeting house was offered for sale. It was purchased by a developer in 1960 and demolished. A new three-storey building was erected on the street front, with a single-storey supermarket on the ground floor extending to the rear. A new meeting house was built on the roof of the rear extension in 1962. The burial ground was retained, with access from the car park behind the building.

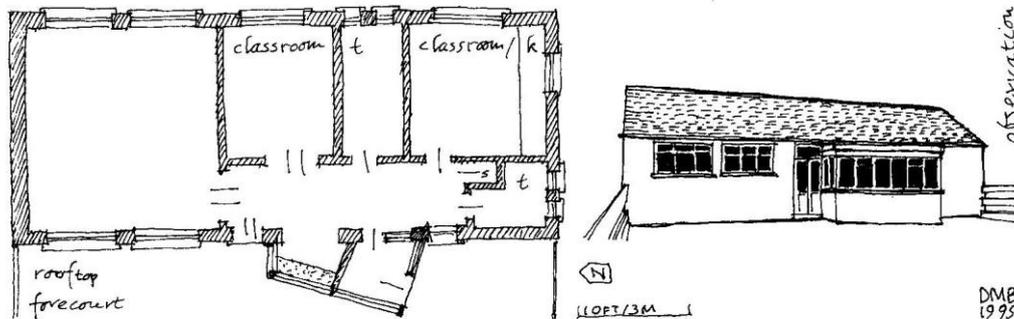


Fig.1 Plan and perspective view of the meeting house, *Butler*, vol.1 p.424

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building fronting the street is a typical example of a small 1960s commercial building, three storeys high with a flat roof and faced with yellow stock brick. On the ground floor are now two modern shop-fronts. The upper floors each have three metal windows with decorative panels between them. The ground floor is extended at the rear and the meeting house is built on the far end of the extension and is reached by an open stair from a passage alongside the extension. The meeting house building also has walls of yellow stock brick, metal-framed windows and a pitched roof covered with Welsh slate. The front elevation has a canted timber enclosed porch which may be a later addition. Inside the building, the square meeting room at the north end has painted dado panelling of early nineteenth-century character which presumably came from the previous meeting house. All else is of a modern character.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are several old benches in the meeting room, which presumably came from the previous meeting house

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground is a rectangular space with a grassed centre and border shrubberies. The space is enclosed by a yellow brick wall which appears to be partly nineteenth century and partly twentieth century in date. There are some small headstones which have been moved against the side walls and are now largely hidden by the shrubbery. None of the headstones appears to be earlier than the mid-nineteenth century.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The main 1960s building fronts Tottenham High Road, which has been a principal route from London since the Middle Ages and has been more or less continuously built-up since the mid-eighteenth century when Tottenham was a prosperous suburb. It has suffered decline since the mid-nineteenth century and the street frontage is a mixture of old houses and more modern residential and commercial premises.

There is a detached burial ground in Yoakley Road, Stoke Newington (NGR: TQ 33132 86657). This was originally an attached burial ground but the meeting house (a 1957 replacement for a building of 1828) was sold in 1966. (The former meeting house is now owned by the Seventh Day Adventists.) The burial ground is still owned by Six Weeks Meeting. The part behind the flats known as Lister Court is maintained by Hackney Borough Council (who owns the flats), and the area behind the former meeting house is maintained by the Seventh Day Adventists. The part behind the former meeting house has no gravestones and is used as a gravelled car park. The part behind Lister Court apparently has gravestones although none pre-date 1750 and only one is in its original position. The remainder have been moved against the walls. Famous Quakers buried here include William Allen (1770-1843) of the pharmaceutical firm Allen & Hanbury; Joseph Jackson Lister (1786-1869), developer of an improved microscope; Joseph Beck (1829-1891), famous for his campaign to save Clissold Park; and John Fyfe Stewart (1845-1908), who was a prime mover behind the Manchester Conference of 1895 which changed the direction of British Quakerism to a more liberal and less evangelical religion. The burial records (covering 1830-c.1950) are in the archive at Friends House.

2.6. Listed status

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

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The burial ground has been in use since 1714 and the frontage of Tottenham High Road has been mostly built-up since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. The site has high archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: The meeting house itself appears to be in good condition (though the host building on which it stands is shabby). The last QI was in 2015 (not seen).

ii) Attached burial ground: Generally satisfactory but with minor localised problems (the headstones are largely concealed by vegetation and their condition is unclear).

3.2. Maintenance

Maintenance is carried out as required.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. Improved heating controls have increased energy efficiency. A fence has been erected at the end of the burial ground to discourage fly-tipping. The burial ground is being cultivated as a wild garden.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has most of the amenities it needs (male and female toilets, kitchen, library and meeting room) but it would be good to have a direct water supply for the burial ground/garden. There is no resident warden. The meeting is well-served by public transport (principally buses). On-site parking is informally available. Bikes need to be brought inside the meeting house.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is only accessible by a long flight of external stairs. There is level access inside the meeting house itself. There has not been a Disability Access Audit. There is no WC suitable for disabled people and the hearing loop is presently unused. Discussions with other tenants about provision of a lift have come to nothing.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for about 3 hours per week. There are three meeting rooms in the building which could theoretically be let for 60 hours per week but are actually let for a total of about 24 hours per week. There is a lettings policy.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house is set within a locality which is not generally well cared-for, has high crime levels, high deprivation and low community confidence. There has been no heritage crime, but the burial ground attracts rough sleepers with the consequent mess, though there is no evidence of drug use. Most of this is not reported to the police but Friends have developed a link with the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no immediate plans for change but there have been sporadic negotiations with LB Haringey, who lease the rest of the site, about installing a lift and also about re-developing the site.

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: this is a small building and scope for significant change is limited.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use; again, this is a small building and scope for change is limited.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House; the meeting house could serve a secular use if the meeting was laid down.

Part 5: Category: 4