

Quaker Meeting House, Truro

Friends Way, Paul's Terrace, Truro Vean, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 1HF

National Grid Reference: SW 82676 45188



Statement of Significance

Built in 1825, the meeting house is an urban, late Georgian meeting house with an attached burial ground. In plan and elevation it closely resembles the slightly later meeting house at St Austell. The interior retains the original stand and corridor screens (albeit re-sited). Overall, the meeting house has high significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house has been altered and extended over time; however, it is still an important reminder of the late Georgian presence of Quakers in Truro. The surviving planform with screens separating the two meeting rooms is typical

of the period when men's and women's business meetings used to be held separately. The building has high evidential value. The attached burial ground has high archaeological value.

Historical value

The meeting house was built on part of the garden of Truro Vean, the house of the Tweedys, a local Quaker banking family. Members of the Tweedy family are buried in the burial ground, together with their dogs. Thomas Mann, a member of the meeting and possibly the 'surveyor' who provided the plan, is also buried here. Albeit slightly altered internally, the original planform (which clearly influenced St Austell (qv)) is still legible. The meeting house has high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house was built using local stone with a higher quality front elevation with symmetrical windows. Internally, the fine woodwork of the stand and the screens survives, as do a number of benches. The building has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

Primarily a Quaker place of worship, the meeting house is also used by local community groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Cornwall*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0012250*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Cornwall Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Truro*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1201508*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Truro*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1825*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *9 May 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Helen Chiverton*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Meeting House Cottage*

1.18 Attached burial ground: Yes

1.19 Information sources:

Beacham, P. and N. Pevsner, *Cornwall (Buildings of England)*, 2014, p. 668

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 73-74

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, pp. 53-54

Truro Buildings Research Group, *From Moresk Road to Malpas*, 1988, pp. 32-36

West Briton, 28 October 1825, as quoted in Truro Buildings Research Group (1988), p. 35

Griffith, P., 'Quaker Burial Grounds in Cornwall', typescript, 2002

'Truro Meeting House, log book of premises', 2010 (includes 1852 plan and drawings of 1981 'as existing' and 'as proposed')

Cornwall Council, *Truro Conservation Area Appraisal*, 2010

Cornwall & Scilly Historic Environment Record, HER number 138203 (meeting house) and 176577 (burial ground)

Local Meeting survey by Helen Chiverton, April 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

By 1670-71, Truro Friends used an upstairs room in the house of Edmund Hinckes, a whitesmith. The meeting was continued in a room above his wife's shop, which is thought to have been on the corner of today's Victoria Square and Kenwyn Street. There may have been another meeting house in Truro, as in 1702, Friends were arrested for 'riotous assembly' in Pydar Street. By 1704, a house was rented for meetings for £20 per annum which was used until 1809. A burial ground was leased at Bellevue in St Clements parish from 1786 to 1835. Soon after 1809, the meeting revived and in 1817 a licence was issued to use a room in James Bawden's house for meetings for worship.

In 1825 the current meeting house (seating 350) was built, on a plot at the bottom of the garden of Truro Vean, the Tweedy family's home, an influential local Quaker banking family. The cost was £1,499 15s 6d, including £315 for purchasing the lease. Tantalisingly, the accounts include £12 paid to a 'surveyor' for the plans but no name is recorded. Thomas Mann, a builder and member of the Truro Meeting, who gave £5 to the Building Fund in 1825, has been suggested as the designer of the building. (Whoever designed Truro meeting house was also probably responsible for the slightly later meeting house at St Austell (*qv*) which is very similar in planform and elevation.) To the north of the meeting house stood a carpet factory established in 1791 by Peter Tippett who then lived at Truro Vean. (The factory is still shown on Symon's map of Truro of 1848 but was apparently disused by 1850/52.) There may also have been a previous structure on the meeting house site as the building accounts mention the reuse of 'old materials purchased with the premises and used in the building' (Truro Buildings Research Group, p. 35). The new meeting house was opened for worship on 21 October 1825 when Elizabeth Fry and her sister addressed the congregation.

By 1848, there was a southwest porch; four years later a southeast porch had been added. In 1852, some parcels of land were exchanged with the neighbouring landowner, the Rev. Edward Tippett, with the Quakers gaining a strip to the north of the meeting house in return for a triangular plot east of two cottages (fig. 1). The meeting was discontinued between 1895 and 1912, although Quarterly Meetings continued to take place in the meeting house. In the 1940s, the meeting house was used by the pupils of Stoke Damerel High School which had been evacuated from Plymouth to Truro with their headmistress, who was a member of Plymouth Meeting. Some additional buildings were erected on the site for the school; they have been demolished since. In 1981-2, repairs and alterations took place (architect: Giles Blomfield, builder: Tony Pascoe). These included the creation of a smaller meeting room, a

toilet and kitchen, all within the former women's meeting room. The central corridor was widened by moving the south screen in order to insert a staircase to a new first-floor library above the kitchen and toilets. At the same time, the original stove in the meeting room was removed, which used to be fuelled with coal stored in the cellar, and concrete floors replaced the timber floors due to dry rot. Lean-to lavatories to the northeast were removed.

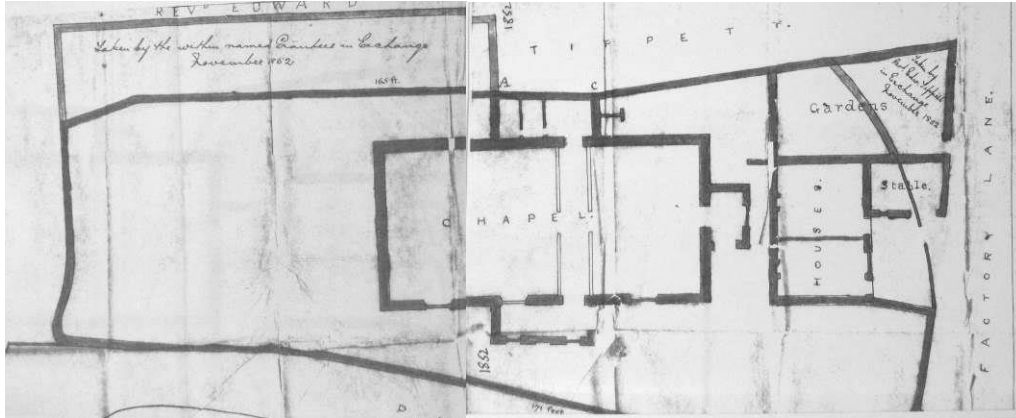


Figure 1: Site plan of 1852 showing exchange of land with Rev. Edward Tippett ('Truro Meeting House, log book of premises', 2010)

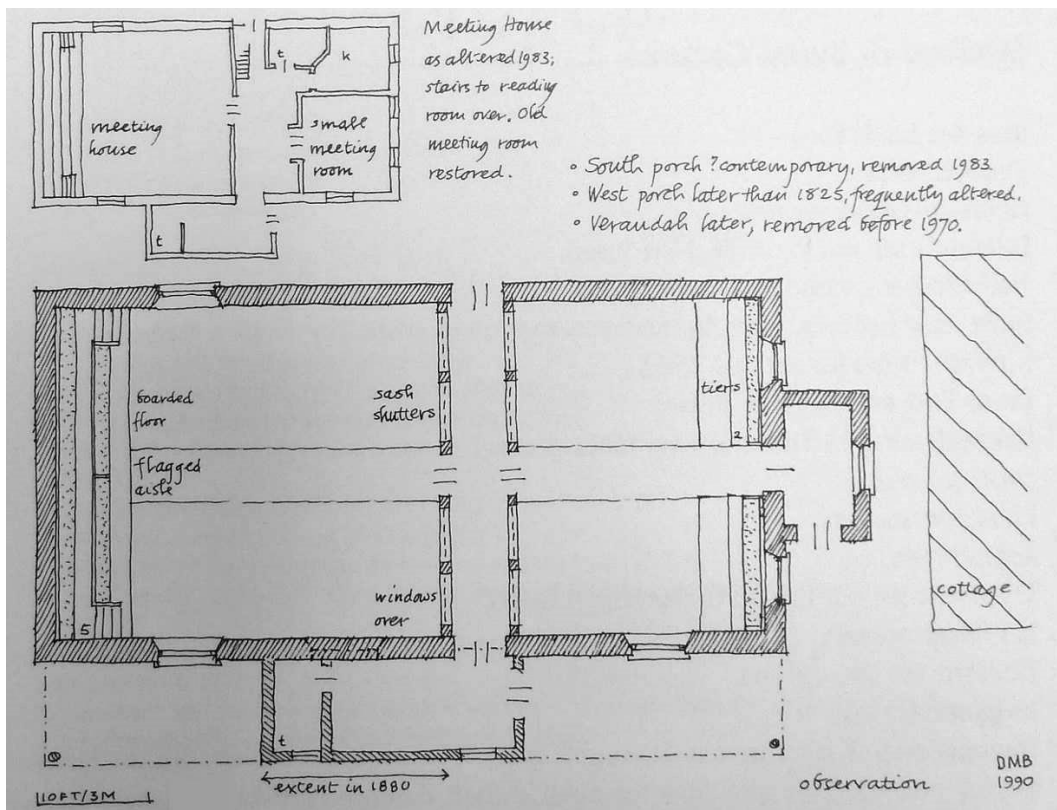


Figure 2: Plan as in c.1880 (bottom) and as altered (top). Butler's statement that the south (actually southeast) porch was removed in 1983 is incorrect. (Southwest is at the bottom; not to scale) (Butler, vol.1, p. 73)

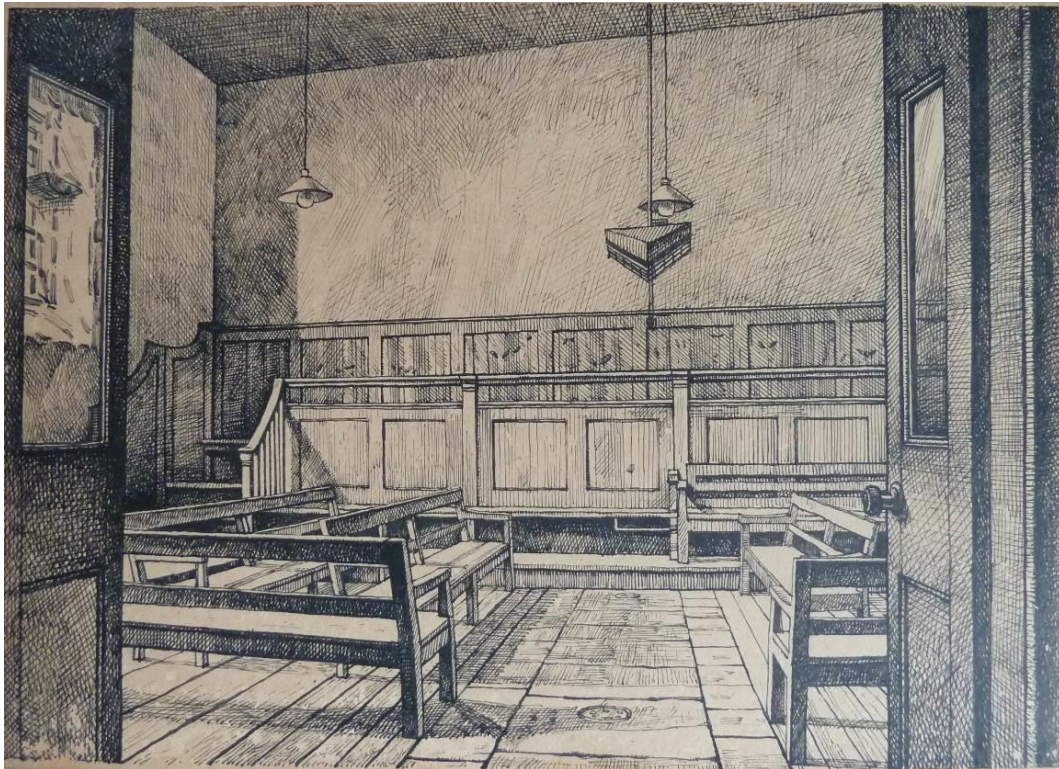


Figure 3: Undated drawing of the interior before the 1980s alterations (Truro Meeting House)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main elevation faces southwest. The meeting house as built in 1825 was a single-storey building with a cellar (used for coal and possibly for the lower part of the vertically sliding screen). In 1981-2, a small first-floor library was inserted at the southeast end. There are two porches: a flat-roofed porch at the southeast (added between 1848 and 1852) and hipped lean-to at the southwest (in existence by 1848).

The materials are dressed and coursed local killas sandstone in the main elevation and predominantly rubble in the other elevations, with a granite plinth. The hipped roof is covered in grey asbestos tiles. The original plan of the meeting house was an oblong plan bisected by a corridor flanked by vertically-sliding screens with entrances at either end. The corridor separated the main meeting room and the smaller meeting room used for women's business meetings, which could be combined into one for larger gatherings. The women's meeting room had its own entrance.

The southwest elevation has four sash windows with 30 panes each under shallow segmental arches with keystones. (Like the recently-replaced sashes at St Austell (*qv*) the upper sashes do not slide but pivot.) The flat-roofed porch of ashlar is not quite centrally aligned. It has a central blind full-height recess flanked by small windows, each with keystones. The entrance to the porch is at the southeast under a lean-to slate canopy. There are two bootscapers on either side of the door. At the south corner is the coal chute into the cellar. (The extent of the cellar under the building is not known.) The southeast elevation has two sash windows of 24 panes each on either side of a slightly higher blind recess, all under shallow segmental arches with keystones. Below is the porch built between 1848 and 1852, with a door to the southwest under a flat arch with a keystone, and a modern window to the southeast. The northwest elevation is blind. The northeast elevation has a high-level sash window of 15 over 10 panes towards the north end, a door to the central corridor and toilet windows of the 1980s just to the south of the door.

The central corridor was widened when the stair was inserted in 1981-2 by moving the south screen further south. Its sliding timber sash panels are no longer working and the pulleys are in storage. The main meeting room is entered via double doors with glazed panels. This is a tall ceiled room with dado panelling to the side walls, which sweeps up to the full-width stand at the northwest. This is similar but not identical to that at St Austell: it is a two-tier stand with flights of steps at either end which have balustrades with turned colonette newels and stick balusters. The lower bench with shaped supports is raised one step above the main floor. The upper bench also has shaped supports as well as a moulded rail to the moulded panelling in front. The flagstones of the original central aisle have been re-laid in the 1980s concrete floor of the meeting room; they are now covered by carpet. The small meeting room created in 1981-2 has a suspended ceiling which sweeps up to the tall sash windows. The original entrance door (with a wooden latch) directly into the women's meeting room is still in situ; the porch beyond was a kitchen prior to 1981 and is now used for storage. The current kitchen at the east is lit by the lower half of a window; the upper half lights the library above. The 1980s toilet beside the stairs has been replaced by an accessible toilet.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The main meeting room has thirteen open-backed benches and a turned gateleg table. There is one further open-backed bench in the small meeting room. The first-floor library has three bookshelves from the Northumberland-based library of the Quaker banker and historian, Thomas Hodgkin (1831-1913). (The nineteenth-century noticeboard with a pointing hand and 'This way in' noted by Stell is no longer in situ.)

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground was purchased from the Tweedy family in 1825. (Butler's statement that the meeting house was built on the site of a burial ground of 1789 appears to be wrong as the lease was acquired in 1825; also, there was a detached burial ground in use elsewhere from 1786.) There are over 40 surviving gravestones (mostly of slate and all placed at the foot of a grave). The earliest recorded burial dates from 1826, the most recent from 1997. Burials include the benefactors, William and Ann Tweedy, and their daughters, as well as, unusually, three of their dogs (Brutus, Blank and Keeper), also commemorated with gravestones. Thomas Mann (died 1854), the builder to whom the meeting house has been tentatively attributed, is also buried there. There is a burial plan of 1967 in the meeting house library. The burial ground is still in use.



Figure 4: The burial ground, looking north

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located to the north of the centre of Truro. The site is bounded by rubble stone walls with freestone ashlar gates at the southern corner. The walls and gates are separately listed at grade II. The walls to the southwest and southeast have stone copings; the walls on the north side of the plot (parts of which were built after 1852) are of rubble with slate copings and clay ridge tiles. The upper part of the wall close to the northeast wall of the meeting house has been partly rebuilt in brick; up to 1981-2, there were lean-to external toilets between the two walls (fig. 1). The meeting recently applied for pre-application advice on the repair and rebuilding of the listed north-eastern boundary wall.

The Meeting House Cottage is a partial rebuilding of the two cottages shown on the 1852 plan (fig. 1) which are said to have been built in connection with the carpet factory of 1791. By 1852 the two cottages belonged to the local meeting and one of them was probably used as a warden's house. During the 1852 exchange of plots the cottages lost the attached stable and part of the garden (fig. 1). In the 1960s, the upper half of the building was rebuilt by the Quaker builder Francis Herring, leaving only the stone-built ground floor of the original building. Today, the Meeting House Cottage is let to the woman who cleans the meeting house. The meeting house and the boundary walls make a positive contribution to the local conservation area. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes that 'The Friends' Meeting House [...] is a notable building within the area'.

In addition to the detached burial grounds at Land's End (see Marazion) and Budock (see Come-to-Good), there is one further detached burial ground within the boundaries of the Area Meeting, albeit with no particular links to Truro meeting. The burial ground at Halbathic (NGR: SX 25378 65785) was in use between 1663 and the 1970s and is now managed by Liskeard Local Meeting.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade II, as are the boundary walls and gate (also grade II).

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

There may have been a building related to the carpet factory of 1791 on the site of the meeting house and the burial ground. As the site contains burials from 1826, it 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): Optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection was undertaken by David Scott, conservation surveyor, of Scott & Co, Truro, in August 2012. The most urgent items have been attended to. The meeting uses the quinquennial inspection report as its five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented some measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: energy-efficient lightbulbs
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: use of recycling bins
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: wildlife-friendly garden with for example the sowing of wildflower seeds
- Transport: use of public transport and park and ride where possible, car share and cycling where possible

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs (although the kitchen needs upgrading). These are all in the meeting house. There is no resident Warden.

The meeting is accessible by public transport although some villages are poorly connected to Truro by bus, especially on Sundays. There is no parking on site and the nearest public car park is five minutes' walk away but there is some on-street parking available on Sundays and in the evening. There is no secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

There are steps at the gate in the boundary walls. There are also steps into and inside the main (southwest) entrance porch but a removable ramp is available. Level access is via the rear (northeast) entrance of the meeting house. There is an accessible WC and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for partially-sighted people. The meeting has not conducted a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 5 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 72 hours per week. It is used for an average of 4.6 hours per week. The meeting is currently developing a lettings policy. Groups

whose views and aims do not align with Quaker views are excluded, as are smoking, alcohol and drugs. Only Quaker activities are granted free use. Users value the building for the inexpensive rates and the cosy atmosphere of the smaller room.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no heritage crime. There have been in the past a few thefts of money, coats and plants. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

There are no plans for changes to the building.

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 well used at present and has all the facilities the meeting needs.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is used by community groups and has at present all the amenities required for wider community use.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: In the unlikely event of closure, a new, sympathetic use would need to be found for the meeting house which would allow the retention in situ of the corridor screens and the stand, and would not require the subdivision of the main meeting room.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description(s)

Name: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1201508

Location: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, PAUL'S TERRACE

District: Cornwall

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Truro

Grade: II

Date first listed: 19-Jun-1973

Date of most recent amendment: 30-Jul-1993

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 377523

TRURO

SW8245SE PAUL'S TERRACE 880-1/4/210 (East side) 19/06/73 Friends' Meeting House
(Formerly Listed as: PAUL'S TERRACE Quaker Meeting House)

GV II

Meeting house. 1825. For Mr Tweedy. Freestone ashlar porch, otherwise dressed coursed local stone, asbestos slate hipped main roof, grouted scantle slate roof to porch. Rectangular plan. Single storey; front of 4-window range has plinth, central flat-roofed porch, moulded wooden eaves cornice and shallow segmental arches with projecting keyblocks over original 24-pane hornless sashes; wide doorway into right-hand side of porch. Right-hand end is a 2-window-range entrance front with similar sashes but copies, porch has doorway on its left.

INTERIOR: slightly altered 1980s but retains the original panelled minister's gallery with steps with ramped handrails at either end and original vertically-sliding panelled screens to either side of entrance hall.

Listing NGR: SW8267645188

Courtyard and burial ground walls and gate piers

Name: COURTYARD AND BURIAL GROUND WALLS AND GATE PIERS TO FRIENDS'
MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1205877

Location: COURTYARD AND BURIAL GROUND WALLS AND GATE PIERS TO FRIENDS'
MEETING HOUSE, PAUL'S TERRACE

District: Cornwall

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Truro

Grade: II

Date first listed: 30-Jul-1993

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 377524

Details

TRURO

SW8245SE PAUL'S TERRACE 880-1/4/211 Courtyard and burial ground walls and gate
piers to Friends' Meeting House

GV II

Courtyard, burial ground walls and gate-piers. 1825. For Mr Tweedy. Freestone ashlar piers, otherwise rubble with freestone copings and rubble with scantle slate copings with clay ridge tiles. Walls surround rectangular site with burial ground to the west and meeting house towards the east. Gateway at south-east corner. Piers have plinths and square edge copings; similar copings to south and east walls; coping ramps up to right of gateway.

Listing NGR: SW8268245166