

Friends Meeting House, Uttoxeter and Burton

39 Carter Street, Uttoxeter, ST14 8EY

National Grid Reference: SK 09050 33358



Statement of Significance

One of the oldest surviving buildings in Uttoxeter, this vernacular meeting house was built in the early eighteenth century and has high heritage value. It is architecturally modest but retains furnishings dating from the eighteenth century along with an attached burial ground.

Evidential value

The purpose built meeting house dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century was not built on the site of an older building but there is a burial ground. Overall, the meeting house has medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is of high historical value as one of the oldest buildings in Uttoxeter. The meeting house retains its historic layout, as well as features dating from the eighteenth century, including loose furnishings. The meeting house has associations with Samuel Botham and his daughter Mary Howitt who was a poet.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has a high aesthetic value. It is an attractive early eighteenth century vernacular building which retains much of its original external and internal architectural detail. It makes a positive contribution to the Uttoxeter conservation area.

Communal value

The meeting house has medium communal value. It is in use as a place for worship and community groups.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Staffordshire*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0005370*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *East Staffordshire Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Uttoxeter*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1038744*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Uttoxeter*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c1705*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *24 November 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Cathryn Hayes*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Separate smaller meeting room and ancillary facilities.*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Hayes, C., *Local Meeting Survey*, October 2015.

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.563-564

Dennis, S., *The Early Quaker Movement in Staffordshire 1651 – 1743: From open fellowship to closed sect*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2001.

East Staffordshire Borough Council, *Uttoxeter Conservation Area Character Appraisal*, 2009

Hughes, J.R., *Historic Meeting Houses of the Society of Friends in Staffordshire*, 1948

Stuart, D and Kent, E.W., *The Quaker Meeting House, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire*, University of Keele, 1976.

The city of Stoke-on-Trent: Protestant Nonconformity, in A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 8, ed. J G Jenkins (London, 1963), pp. 276-307 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol8/pp276-307>.

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

2.1 Historical background

Quakerism in Uttoxeter was established shortly after George Fox's visit to Staffordshire in 1651. One of the First Publishers of Truth, James Harrison, visited the Uttoxeter area in 1654. Friends would first meet in each other's homes and by 1660 nineteen Quaker families were recorded to be living in Uttoxeter and the surrounding areas. The Friends were given a house and the surrounding land for a burial ground by Robert Heath, prior to his emigration to America in 1700. He had married a Quaker in 1675. A purpose built meeting house was built to the rear of the dwelling house in c.1705 at a cost of £51.13s.9d, raised by contributions from nearby local meetings and a loan from Walter Pixley, which was repaid from rental income from the adjacent dwelling. The building was registered as a meeting house in 1706.

The simply built meeting house was designed with a gallery to the east for use by women and children. Conjectural plans by Butler indicate that the main entrance to the south and access to the gallery via a separate entrance on the east gable wall. During the 1770s the meeting house underwent a phase of alteration including a new lobby area which provided a new access to the gallery which was formerly accessed by a separate entrance to the north east corner of the building, the south side entrance was replaced by a window, iron columns to support the gallery were introduced along with shutters within the gallery to divide it from the meeting room and the elders seating and platform were reconstructed. The panelling and perimeter seats were fitted in the meeting room at this time. Figure 1 reveals that the room was once heated by a large iron stove in the centre.



Figure 1: Interior of the meeting house with central stove, 1959 (Uttoxeter & Burton MH archives)

A decline in membership numbers resulted in the meeting closing by the late nineteenth century; it was then leased to other groups. The meeting re-emerged following the arrival of a new Quaker family (Anne and Parry Llewellyn Griffiths) in the area in 1922.

During the 1930s minor repairs were undertaken to the building including the installation of electricity. In 1958 the meeting house underwent a major phase of repair and restoration following advice that the north-east end of the meeting house was in danger of collapse. The Friends received funding through appeals and from the Historic Churches Preservation Trust. The majority of the woodwork which dated from 1700s was renewed with oak from the nearby (aptly named) Needwood Forest. Other work undertaken included the replacement of the roof, rebuilding the north east wall of the building, the gallery was opened and the staircase was partly renewed along with the reconstruction of the elders' stand.

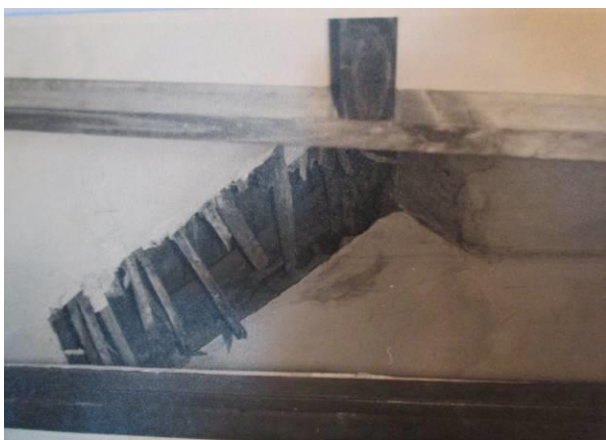


Figure 2: Structural repairs to the ceiling, 1959.



Figure 3: Roof being replaced, 1959.

Up until the late 1960s access to the meeting house was entered via a door opening on Carter Street between two dwellings. 37 Carter Street (to the left on Figure 4) was demolished in 1966 and part of the land was used for the construction of Wilfred House.



Figure 4: Former access to the meeting house from Carter Street, 1965 (Uttoxeter & Burton MH Archive).

In 1973, Burton Meeting and Uttoxeter meeting merged. By the 1980s additional space was required along with accommodation for ancillary facilities. After a fundraising appeal by the Friends, a separate building to the east of the meeting house was constructed providing much-needed facilities in 1985 at a cost of £12,000; a meeting room, kitchen and toilet facilities (altered to become fully accessible in 2005).

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

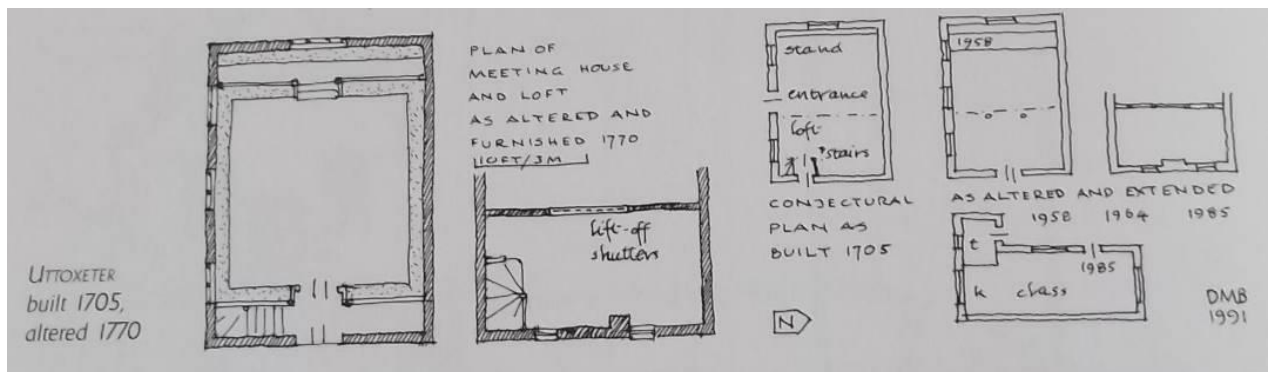


Figure 5: Ground floor plan of the meeting house, as reconstructed by Butler (north to the right, not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.564)

The small meeting house was built in c1705. It is constructed of red brick laid in English garden wall bond, and the roof is covered in clay tiles. Rectangular in plan the meeting room is a single space with gallery at the west end over a narrow entrance lobby. The east gable elevation is the principal entrance into the meeting house. The plain 6-panel double door has a modern flat canopy and above, two 1-light leaded windows. The south elevation consists of three timber cross windows with leaded lights and brick heads. The west elevation has a 3-

light leaded window and the north elevation is blind. The meeting house has a moulded brick eaves cornice and plinth.

Internally, the meeting room is a characterful space well-lit from the three windows to the south. The walls are plastered and plainly painted white, the carpet covers over what was formerly a brick floor and timber beams support the roof. To the west is the elders' stand with oak panelling behind fixed seating; the panelling with finials seen in Figure 1 was removed, probably in 1958. To the east is the gallery supported on two iron columns, and the open-fronted oak gallery accessed via an oak staircase to the south east corner.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The Windsor chairs date from about 1870, and the oak bench is original but restored in the 1960s. The long six-seater settle is on permanent loan from Abbots Bromley Almshouses and was made in 1700. There are three seventeenth or early eighteenth century settles and an eighteenth century cupboard, four chairs that date from the eighteenth century and a seventeenth century oak chest, all gifts from Friends after the restoration work in 1961.



Figure 6: Six seater settle on loan from Abbots Bromley Almshouse.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground is rectangular in shape and located to the south of the meeting house. There are sixty recorded burials dating from 1700, two gravestones commemorate Samuel Botham (died 1823 not 1828 as the gravestone laid flat notes) and Harrison Alderson (d.1871), who were the father and brother in-law of Mary Howitt, the poet and author of the poem *The Spider and the Fly* (1829).

The burial ground was converted into use as a garden in the 1920s. No longer used for burials, the burial ground is now used as a place to scatter ashes. The burials cover a date range between 1795 and 1900, and records are held in Staffordshire Records Office.

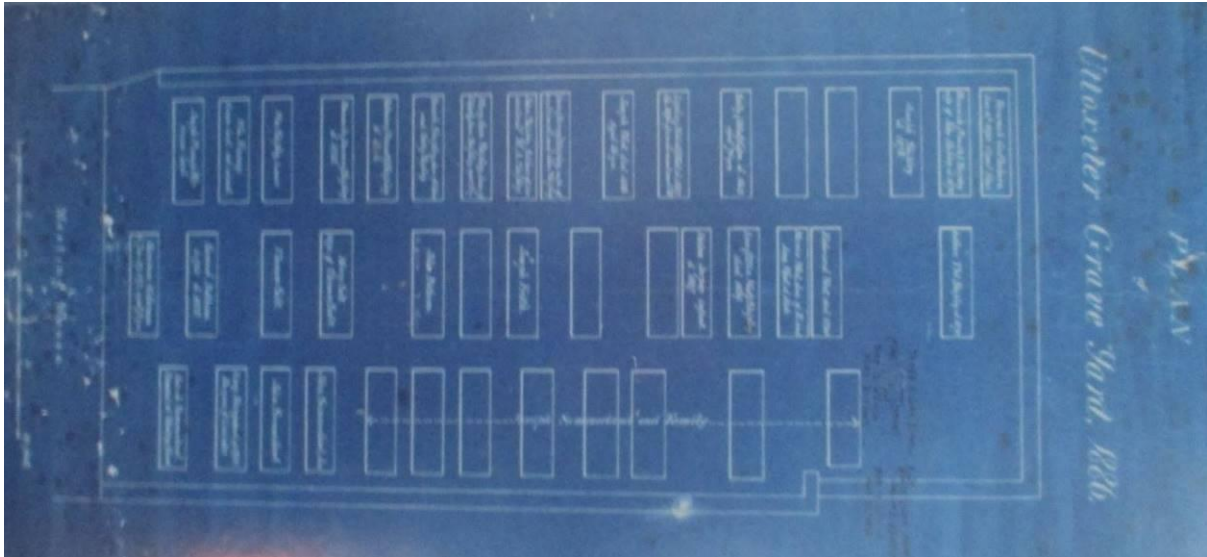


Figure 7: Undated plan of the burial ground (Uttoxeter and Burton Meeting House archives)

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Uttoxeter is a small market town in Staffordshire located fourteen miles north east of Stafford. The meeting house is within Uttoxeter Conservation Area designated in 1970. The layout of the streets has remained little altered and the buildings are generally two storey and domestic style characterised by red brickwork and clay roof tiling, with stone detailing.

The meeting house is set back from the road, to the rear of the grade II listed 39a Carter Street which was formerly the caretaker's house to the meeting house and has been recently sold. The core of the building is seventeenth century with nineteenth century alterations. On the opposite side of Carter Street, Numbers 38 to 42 along with Numbers 32 to 36 and the White Hart Public House are Grade II listed and all date from the eighteenth century. A long driveway leads up to the meeting house and the 1985 extension, a small brick structure with a pitched roof. To the south of the meeting house is a rectangular plot (the burial ground) bounded by red brick boundary wall lined with planting.

2.6 Listed status

The building is properly listed at Grade II. The list description could be amended to include the date of the building, c1705

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The purpose built meeting house of c1705 was not built on site of a former building, but the historic fabric of the building and burial ground have medium archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. The meeting house to be well looked after and cared for by Friends. No recent quinquennial inspection has been undertaken due to change of membership over the last few years.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/ satisfactory.

3.2 Maintenance

The meeting house does not have a five-year maintenance and repair plan but Friends currently have the funds to maintain and repair the meeting house if needed.

3.3 Sustainability

Although the meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit steps have been taken to improve sustainability.

- Climate change and energy efficiency: Energy saving bulbs where possible, off-peak heating.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Garden waste is composted.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are planted with trees which provide wildlife habitats. Friends have re-introduced newts to the garden.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, including a meeting house, and adjacent to the meeting house a separate building which contains a smaller meeting room, with kitchen and toilet facilities.

An on-site car park is available for a small number of cars. Additional car parking is available on the nearby roads. The meeting house is served by a local bus service which runs seven days a week, less frequently on Sundays. Uttoxeter train station is a ten minute walk from the meeting house. Secure parking for bicycles is available on site.

3.5 Access

A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken, but level access is available into and throughout the ground floor of the meeting house. There is restricted access to the gallery area. There is no hearing loop or facilities to accommodate partially sighted people. Level access is available into the adjacent meeting room, which provides toilet facilities (including one fully accessible).

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 2 hours per week, and the c1705 meeting house is only occasionally used for other uses due to the lack of available facilities. However, adjacent to the meeting house the meeting room is used for 10 hours each week, and is available 50 hours each week. There is a lettings policy. Booking are only accepted from individuals / organisations providing religious, charitable, social or cultural services to the community. Local charities may use the meeting space for free. The meeting room is popular for lettings due to its convenient location, price, and peaceful ambience.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

No heritage crime has been recorded, and the area is generally well cared-for and has low levels of crime and deprivation. The meeting has developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

No future plans for change.

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: Friends invested a considerable amount of funds in the late twentieth century to repair and fund a new purpose-built meeting room to provide the ancillary facilities required. At present the meeting house meets the needs of the Friends; it would be sensitive to change due to the high heritage value.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house and the 1985 addition meet the current needs of the community users; the historic meeting house is not suited to further change due to its heritage value.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: it would be highly regrettable if the meeting were to be laid down and the meeting house to close. Suitable alternative options such as potential transfer to a trust would need to be explored. Changes for future alternative uses would be constrained by the historic features of the building relating to its Quaker purpose, such as the gallery and staircase.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: **FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AT REAR OF NUMBER 39**

List entry Number: 1038744

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AT REAR OF NUMBER 39, CARTER STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Staffordshire

District: East Staffordshire

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Uttoxeter

Grade: II

Date first listed: 24-Oct-1950

Date of most recent amendment: 26-Mar-1973

List entry Description

CARTER STREET 1. 1756 (South Side) Friends' Meeting House at rear of No 39 [formerly listed as No 39 (Friends' Meeting House)] SK 0933 1/12 24.10.50. II 2. Small early C18 red brick building of one storey with windows on graveyard side only. 3 windows with C19 glazing; moulded brick eaves cornice and plinth; plain 6-panel double doors and modern hood replacing one of C19. The building well restored and the plain interior enhanced by reinstatement of original open-fronted gallery.