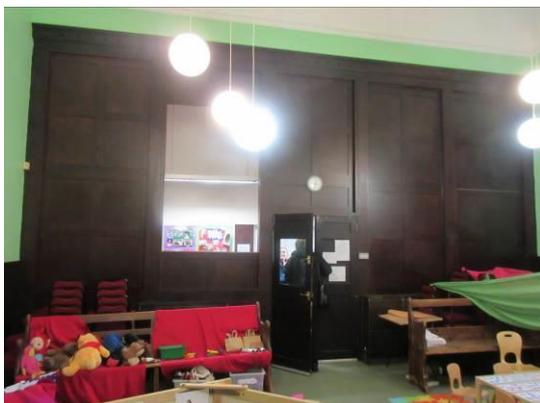


Friends Meeting House, Uxbridge

York Road, Uxbridge, London, UB8 1QW

National Grid Reference: TQ 05663 84326



Statement of Significance

An early nineteenth-century meeting house, with a little-altered large meeting room, set within a garden which forms part of a now-reduced burial ground. Overall this is a meeting house of high significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house was built in 1817 and retains much of its original character and fabric, including hidden elements such as the king-post roof. Features such as the full-height shutters and the fixed seating in the elders' stand are important survivals, evocative of Quaker tradition and worship. In the garden are several reset historic headstones. The building suffered fire damage in

1988, with some loss to its evidential value, but this nevertheless remains high.

Historical value

This is one of the oldest meeting houses in Greater London, and has been in continuous use since 1817. It is the successor to earlier meeting houses built in 1691 and 1755. It is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is externally little altered and has a plain late Georgian character, with notable details and features such as the fine external brickwork detailing and joinery. Inside, the shutters and other high quality fixed furnishings in the large meeting room contribute to the aesthetic value of the building. It stands within a small and well-maintained garden, with a contemporary (but altered) brick boundary wall, and is an oasis of calm in an area which has seen much large-scale post-war rebuilding. Additions of 1962 have not significantly reduced the aesthetic value of the building, which is high.

Communal value

The meeting house is widely used by local groups as well as Friends, and is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *London West*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0010770*
- 1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *London Borough of Hillingdon*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *London*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Uxbridge NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1080107*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1817; 1962*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not known; Hubert Lidbetter*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *21 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *David Burnell*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Boundary wall (Grade II)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes (in part)*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, Vol. 1, pp. 425-7

Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, p. 16, pl. XVI, fig. 34

Trott, C., *The Story of Uxbridge Quakers from 1658*, 1970

Local Meeting Survey, by Johnathan Lingham and Glennis Burnell, June 2015

Oxley Conservation, Quinquennial Survey Report, 2014

London Open House Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House: Architectural Fact Sheet

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

2.1 Historical background

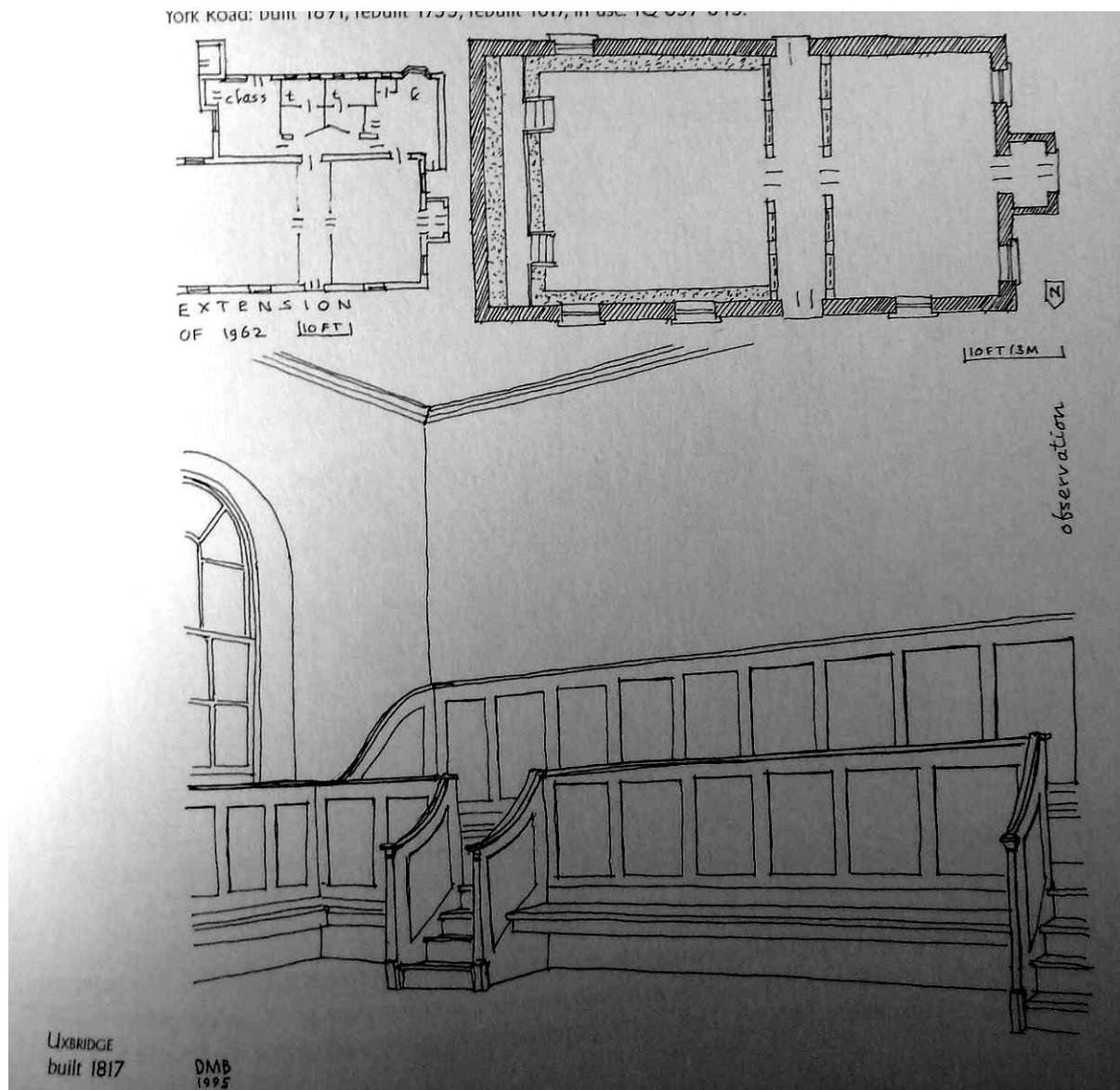


Figure 1: Plan and internal elevation, from Butler Vol. 1, p. 425

Friends met in private houses in Uxbridge, then a country town and major staging post on the London to Oxford Road, from at least 1676 (as witnessed in a letter from John Sands to

George Fox, quoted in Trott, p. 2). By 1678 a room was rented at the George Inn, in the High Street, and in the same year land at the north end of the yard (adjacent to the present York Road) was given by the Heale family, owners of the inn. In 1691, soon after the passing of the Toleration Act (1689), a small meeting house was built on land given by William Winch next to the burial ground, at a cost of £159.10.2. The builder was John Hudson, a Quaker bricklayer from Ruislip. The boundaries of the burial ground were renewed, and slightly extended, in 1723.

The meeting house was built on inadequate foundations and in 1755 it was demolished. It was replaced with a smart new meeting house on the same site that year, at a cost of £245.17.0. However this too was found to be structurally unsound, and was demolished in 1817. It was replaced with the present meeting house, a large structure of two chambers, the larger for the main meeting room and the smaller for the women's business meeting, each giving off a central lobby with shutters on both sides which could be opened to create a single space. Built in 1817, the cost was £1,520.3.11. The burial ground was enlarged at the same time.

Originally behind high walls and gates, the burial ground was last used in 1928. In the 1950s part of it was given up for the widening of York Road, in exchange for which Friends accepted a piece of land to the south, upon which an extension housing kitchen, schoolroom and WCs was built in 1962, from designs by Hubert Lidbetter, Surveyor to Six Weeks Meeting. Burials from the surrendered part of the burial ground were reinterred in the southwest corner of the present site in 1960 (as recorded on a stone plaque on the 1962 building).

In 1988 the small meeting room was gutted by fire, with loss of the moveable screen on that side.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was built in 1817. It consists of two double height meeting rooms on side of a central lobby, which is entered via a doorway on the main north front. There is a gabled porch to the smaller (originally women's) room on the east side. Attached on the south side and slightly wrapping around the southeast corner is a lower extension of 1962, by Hubert Lidbetter. The original building is of stock brick laid in Flemish bond, with a shallow hipped slate roof. It has three high round-headed windows with gauged brick arches and glazing bar sashes on the north elevation, two lighting the main meeting room and one the smaller room. A similarly-detailed half window is placed over the main entrance, which has double doors each of three flush-beaded panels under a flat gauged brick arch. At the west end the porch has a hipped slate roof and double doors under a gauged brick arch, these doors each of five flush-beaded panels. The porch is flanked by windows similar to those on north side. The east elevation facing the street is plain and windowless, while on the south side the addition of 1961 is built of stock brick with a shallow pitched roof.

The main entrance on the north front gives onto a lobby, which originally had shutters on both sides which could be opened up to create a single internal space. The shutters to the smaller meeting room were destroyed in a fire in 1988 and not reinstated, and that room now has a modern character and finishes. However, the main meeting room survives intact, with its shutters on the west side (photos middle right and lower left at top of report) operated by sash cords, allowing them to be raised into the roof space. It also retains its perimeter panelled dado (partly renewed in 1988) with fixed seating and, on the east side, the elders' stand, raised by three steps and with a panelled front. The stand is reached by two short flights of stairs, each with turned newels of late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century character, very similar to the apparently much earlier arrangement at Isleworth (*qv*). The walls above the dado are plastered and painted, and there is a flat lath and plaster ceiling. In the roof space survives the original king-post roof structure, of sawn softwood (not seen at the time of the visit, photograph in QIR, p.28).

2.3 Loose furnishings

The large meeting room had recently been in use by a nursery at the time of the visit, and the extent of surviving loose furnishings was not clear. Reportedly, these include two freestanding benches of different designs.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground was last used in 1928. In c1960 it was mostly surrendered for the widening of York Road. Burials were re-interred in land acquired to the south of the meeting house, and some older headstones have been arranged around the perimeter wall.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

When built the meeting house enjoyed a rural setting and a larger burial ground. It is now a historic survivor in a part of Uxbridge much redeveloped, with large office buildings and a supermarket. It lies close to the underground station between two roundabouts on the widened York Road. The reduced site is bounded by a lowered boundary wall. Friends Walk runs along the north side, and there is a small garden on the other side of this (separately owned).

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is listed grade II. Had it survived more intact, listing in a higher grade (as at Isleworth) might have been appropriate. As it is, Grade II seems appropriate. The building is described briefly in the list entry (below), wherein it is incorrectly described as two-storey and given an eighteenth-century date. The interior is not described.

The boundary walls are separately listed, although lowered and much rebuilt.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

As a historic meeting house on an older site, with associated burials, the archaeological potential is likely to be high.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Fair
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems (worn headstones).

3.2 Maintenance

The building is generally well maintained but given its age and listed status this is inevitably a high maintenance structure. The most recent QIR concluded that the condition of the building was generally satisfactory, but there were a number of items requiring immediate attention:

- Repair of the rainwater goods
- Provision of rainwater gullies which take water away from the building more effectively than the present gullies
- Improvement of surface and ground water drainage, particularly to the east of the building

- Reduction of high external ground levels, particularly to the east of the building
- Improved ventilation, particularly in the kitchen
- Improved detailing around the boiler flue
- Repair of the boundary walls and gates
- Investigate potential risks of damp and timber decay to sub-floor timbers
- Upgrade kitchen and WCs
- Repair external joinery to store and boiler room
- Replace ceiling in the office.

The total cost of identified repairs is estimated to be in excess of £100,000, far exceeding the available budget. The Meeting has listed its key priorities, based on keeping the building warm and weathertight. Work has yet to start. It is recommended that possible sources of grant aid are investigated.

The garden is well maintained, and was refurbished and replanted in memory of deceased Friends in 2004.

3.3 Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. Measures taken to improve energy efficiency include higher grade insulation in some parts of the roof and secondary glazing in some areas. Further measures outlined in the QIR are being considered. Recycling takes place, aligned with local authority provision. There is good access to public transport, and visitors and worshippers generally use this, as there is no on-site parking and limited public parking in the area. There is no secure parking for bicycles.

3.4 Amenities

The Meeting considers that it has the facilities it needs. As well as the large and small meeting rooms in the historic building, these include WCs and a kitchen in the 1962 addition. The QIR suggests that the 1962 accommodation might be rebuilt, but this is probably beyond present budgets, quite apart from historic buildings and archaeological obstacles that may arise.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible for people with disabilities. There is step-free access into the building, and level circulation once inside. An accessible WC and hearing loop are provided. No special provision is made for partially sighted people, and an access audit has not been conducted.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the building for three hours a week. Others use it for 120 hours out of a possible 160. There is a lettings policy, which forbids parties (either for children or adults). Other lettings from commercial organisations are judged on their merits, and the extent to which they accord with Quaker values. Users cite the calm environment and convenience for local public transport.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

Apart from damage to a gate pier (which might be categorised as a heritage crime, since the gate pier is listed), the Meeting has not experienced crime. The area generally has low levels of crime and deprivation.

3.8 Plans for change

None.

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 stated to meet the needs of the Meeting. Funds permitting, there would be scope for adapting and improving the ancillary facilities in the 1962 addition, subject to planning and listed building consent. In the large meeting room it is important that the historic furnishings should be retained. It would be desirable in historic buildings terms, although probably unrealistic in practical/financial terms, for the shutters to the smaller meeting room to be reinstated, in accordance with available fabric and other evidence.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already well used by the wider community. Improvements to the ancillary accommodation, particularly the kitchen, would no doubt increase the attraction of the building to third parties. The small meeting room has lost its historic furnishings and finishes and as such is a robust space. The larger meeting room retains historic furnishings of note, which should be respected by third party users, who may not be aware of their historical significance.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: This has been a meeting house for nearly 200 years. In the regrettable event of its closure, it would be necessary to find a new use which retained its historic fabric and character, including the open space of the two rooms and the furnishings in the large room, as well as the gardens, boundary walls, relocated monuments, burials and archaeology. Apart from a local museum and heritage centre or a similar community or history-focussed use, it is difficult to conceive of an alternative secular use which would be both viable and acceptable in historic buildings terms.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List descriptions

Meeting House

Name: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1080107

Location: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, YORK ROAD

Grade: II

Date first listed: 06-Sep-1974

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Details

1. 5018 YORK ROAD (South Side) UXBRIDGE

Friends' Meeting House TQ 0584 SE 19/469

II

Late C18 building of 2 storeys, 4 bays on main north front. Stock brick with fairly low pitched hipped slate roof. Round headed openings, with gauged brick arches, consisting of 3 full

length sash windows with glazing bars and one half window above a 6-panel double door. On west end a porch, with hipped slate roof and 6-panel double door, flanked by windows similar to those on north side. Long modern glazed extensions on south side.

Listing NGR: TQ0566384326

Boundary wall

Name: WALL ON NORTH AND WEST SIDES OF SMALL GRAVEYARD SURROUNDING FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1080108

Location: WALL ON NORTH AND WEST SIDES OF SMALL GRAVEYARD SURROUNDING FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, YORK ROAD

Date first listed: 06-Sep-1974

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Details

YORK ROAD 5018 (South Side) UXBRIDGE

Wall on north and west sides of small graveyard surrounding Friends' Meeting House TQ 0584 SE 19/470

II

Late C18 wall of stock brick, moderate height, with flat buttresses and 2 pairs of square gate piers.

Listing NGR: TQ0566184337