

Friends Meeting House, Wallingford

13 Castle Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8DL

National Grid Reference: SU 60702 89627



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a small brick building of 1724 and survives largely unaltered. Furnishings include the rare 'pulpit-type' stand. There is no burial ground on the site but six headstones were relocated here from Warborough. Overall, the meeting house has high heritage significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house is relatively little altered and has the potential to reveal more about its history and users. It has high evidential value.

Historical value

The building is a rare example of a small, little altered meeting house of the eighteenth century. It has high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The aesthetic appeal of the building derives principally from its simplicity and compactness. It has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has been in Quaker use since its construction and, more recently, also in wider community use. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Thames*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0022710*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *South Oxfordshire District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Wallingford*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II**
- 1.8 NHLE: *1059622*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Wallingford*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1724*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *22 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *John Griffin*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *wardens' cottage, 2 children's rooms in garden*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 19-20

Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, p. 27, plate 55, fig. 10 (plan)

Oxfordshire County Council HER, HER Number: 10379

Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, pp. 17-18

Tyack, G., S. Bradley and N. Pevsner, *Berkshire (Buildings of England)*, 2010, p. 575

'The Religious Society of Friends, Wallingford Meeting', display panels, Local Meeting archive

Local Meeting survey by John Jackman, May 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

In 1722, the present site in Castle the Street was bought and two years later a meeting house erected. From 1855 to 1861, the meeting was temporarily discontinued. It closed again in 1877 and was re-established in 1922. In about 1924 the building was restored and reopened in 1926. In 1964, repairs and renovations were made for £1,000 and again in 1983 (for about

£10,000, which was grant-aided). A small rear outbuilding (visible in figure 1), first shown on the 1899 Ordnance Survey map, was demolished in the late twentieth century.



Figure 1: Undated photo of rear elevation (Local Meeting archive)

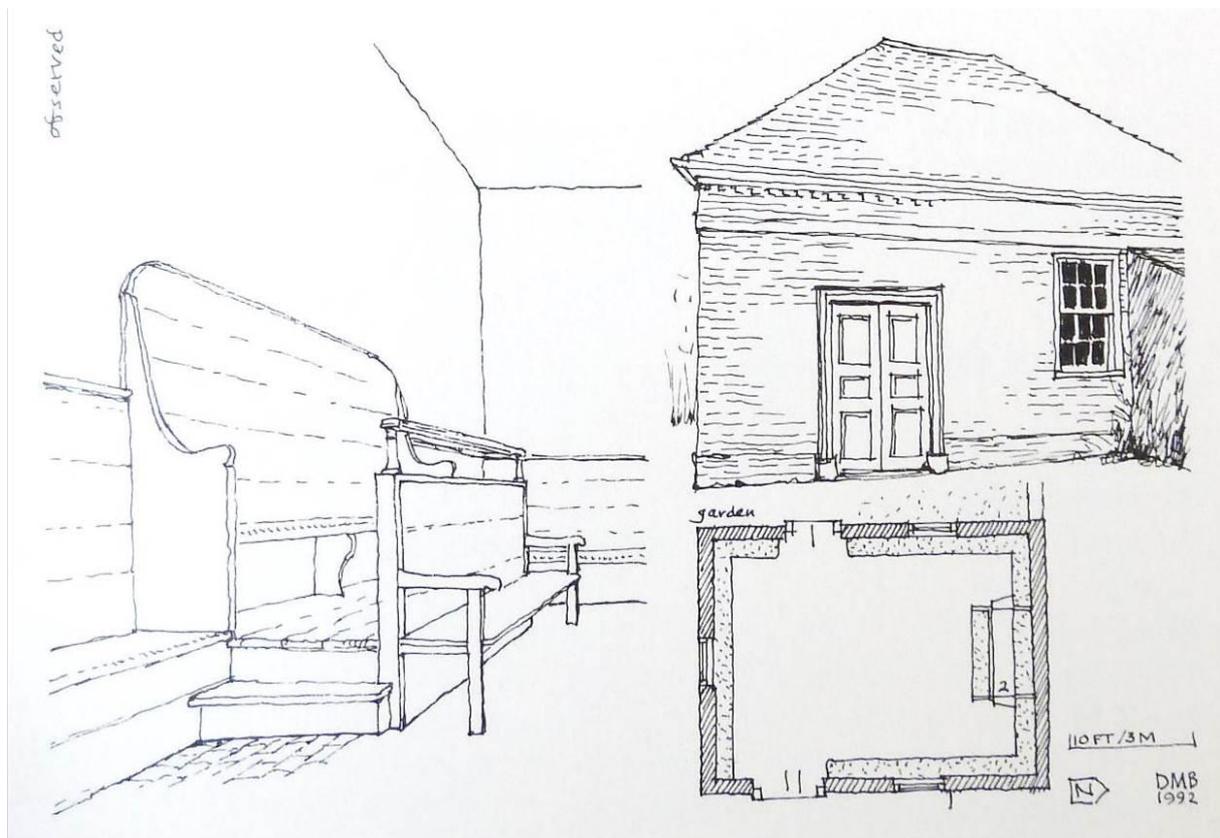


Figure 2: Perspective of the stand, front elevation and plan (north is to the right; not to scale)
(Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 19)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main elevation faces east. The plan is oblong, with entrances in the east and west elevations. The walls are of brick laid in Flemish bond, with a low brick and flint base, a brick plat band and a brick dentil cornice. The tall hipped roof has handmade clay tiles. The east

elevation has a two-leaf panelled door with an architrave surround beside a sash window of 6-over-6 panes. Attached to the northeast corner of the east elevation is a brick lean-to shed which belongs to a neighbour. The side elevation to the south has one sash window (again, of 6-over-6 panes). The rear (west) elevation has a similar window beside a panelled door with architrave, which is not aligned with the east door.

The interior of the meeting house consists of one room of 18ft by 24ft. Three walls have a dado of plain horizontal boarding with integral benches with curved armrests; the south wall has vertical boarding which appears to be a later alteration. The stand at the north has a taller backboard and shaped sides; the back of the fixed bench in front incorporates a rail with turned supports. Lidbetter has classified the stand at Wallingford as a 'pulpit type', with similar eighteenth-century examples at Esher (*qv*) and Come-to-Good meeting houses. The floor is of brick paviours. In the centre of the ceiling is a roof hatch.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are eight plain open-backed benches, probably of the nineteenth century.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

There is no attached burial ground (although Butler notes that the garden was referred to as such in 1903). There are, however, six nineteenth-century headstones brought from the burial ground at Warborough when the meeting house there was demolished in the early twentieth century. They include those for Richard Harris Brown and his wife, as well as for four members of the Pearman family. The fate of the burials at Warborough is not known.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is not visible from Castle Street as it is hidden behind 13 Castle Street, the caretaker's cottage. This, in turn, is half hidden by no. 14, leaving only a small gap. A corridor through no. 13 leads into the garden with the meeting house. The rear garden contains two garden buildings (built in the last ten years or so) which are used as children's rooms.

There was a former burial ground in Blewbury, at Quakers Croft. The meeting house in Blewbury was first built in c.1680, rebuilt in 1713 and demolished or sold in 1804/5.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade II* as a largely unaltered early eighteenth-century meeting house with many surviving original and historic fittings.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

As far as is known, there was no previous building on the site and there are no burials on the site. Castle Street is part of the Saxon street layout. To the rear, the garden adjoins a scheduled ancient monument ('Saxon Town'). The archaeological potential is considered to be medium.

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

The last quinquennial inspection took place in 2010 (Edge Architecture). The recommendations for immediate and short-term attention have been carried out. The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the meeting house. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan but keeps matters under constant repair. There are currently no outstanding long-term works.

3.3 Sustainability

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

- Climate change & energy efficiency: low energy bulbs (ground-source energy not practicable)
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: recycling where possible, composting
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: organic gardening
- Transport: car sharing where possible

The meeting house does not have an Energy Performance Certificate and this is not practicable according to the surveyor. There is one for the wardens' cottage (energy efficiency level of 54E, energy impact level 47E). Recommendations on the certificate include the replacement of the boiler, and the insulation of the walls.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. The kitchen and toilets are in a rear wing of the wardens' cottage. There are resident Wardens, who live in the cottage in front of the meeting house.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. There is no parking on site but public parking spaces are nearby. There is secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the meeting room, and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for partially-sighted people. There is no accessible toilet but changes to the existing toilet are in hand. When completed, the toilet will be more accessible but will not be wide enough for full accessibility. No Disability Access Audit has been conducted.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 2-3 hours per week. The building is available for community lettings for a maximum number of 40 hours per week. It is used for an average of about 6 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Lettings are welcomed from charitable, voluntary, religious and cultural activity groups. Lettings for commercial activities are decided on a case-by-case basis. Party-political groups are not normally allowed. Despite considerable efforts to increase the number of lettings, these remain low due to the limited facilities at the site.

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, general crime or other incidents – apart from a burglary in the wardens' cottage. 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 as this is not considered necessary. Following the break-in at the cottage, the police recommendations to improve security were implemented.

3.8 Plans for change

There are no plans for alterations to the meeting house. It is planned to upgrade the courtyard and to improve the toilet in the cottage to make it more accessible.

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 a listed building whose special character derives from its largely unaltered condition with many historic fixtures and furnishings. This should be as little altered as possible. The facilities in the rear wing of the cottage have more capacity for alterations although the warden's cottage itself might be considered a curtilage building (and, thus, subject to listed building consent).

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The present low level of community use appears to be largely due to limited on-site facilities (the kitchen and toilets are in the nearby cottage). Unfortunately, there is no capacity to provide facilities attached the meeting house.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: Should the building cease to be used by the local meeting, a new and appropriate use would need to be found which would allow the retention in situ of the furnishings and fittings.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description(s)

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1059622

Location

FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE, CASTLE STREET

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
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Oxfordshire	South Oxfordshire	District Authority	Wallingford
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Grade: II*

Date first listed: 09-Feb-1988

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

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 249228

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Details

WALLINGFORD CASTLE STREET SU6089NE (West side) Wallingford 10/66 Friend's Meeting House II*

Quaker meeting house. c.1724. Grey brick with red brick dressings; old plain-tile hipped roof. Rectangular plan. Single-storey, single-window range. 6-panel double door with wood architrave surround to left. 12-pane unhorned sash with thick glazing bars to right of centre. 12-pane unhorned sash to left return centre and to rear. Panelled door to rear. Flat brick band and dentil course to eaves. Interior: early C18 Elders bench and other benches,

Listing NGR: SU6070289627