

Friends Meeting House, Warwick

39 High Street, Warwick, CV34 4AX

National Grid Reference: SP 28071 64737



Statement of Significance

Warwick Meeting House has exceptional heritage significance as a fine example of a purpose-built meeting house erected in 1695, to replace an earlier seventeenth century building damaged by fire on the same site. The interior of

the meeting house was altered in the eighteenth century and retains its gallery and fireplace of this date.

Evidential value

The meeting house was built in 1695 and was enlarged in the eighteenth century by the addition of a cottage to the north-west and more recently in 1992. The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record identified the remains of a medieval or post medieval well. The fabric of the building and site have the potential to yield evidence about past patterns of Quaker life and worship. The building and site have high evidential value.

Historical value

Quakerism has a long history in this area. The building has high historical significance as a purpose-built meeting house replacing an earlier seventeenth century meeting house destroyed in the fire of 1694. The meeting house retains its historic layout, as well as a number of features dating from the eighteenth century, including the gallery and fireplace. The meeting house and burial ground have high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The form and design of the building is typical of late seventeenth century vernacular architecture in this area, constructed in local materials. The attractive setting of the grounds to the south adds to its aesthetic significance. The exterior, interior spaces and the simplicity of the historic fittings have exceptional aesthetic value. The eighteenth century cottage is of high heritage value whilst the latest addition to the west has been sympathetically designed and has not spoiled the aesthetic value of the whole.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value, it provides a local community focus with an onsite Quaker Community Café and its facilities are used local groups.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Central England*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0020490*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Warwick District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Warwick*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II**
- 1.8 NHLE: *1035431*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Warwick*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1695; Eighteenth century; 1992*

1.13 Architect (s): *Not established; not established; Donald James and Partners*

1.14 Date of visit: *14 December 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *William Waddilove and Edward Creasy*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp.647.

Edward Creasy, Local Meeting Survey, September 2015.

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

2.1 Historical background

The beginnings of Quakerism in Warwick coincide with George Fox's visits in 1655 and 1656. By 1671, a piece of land had been purchased on High Pavement, for a Quaker burial ground. A dwelling was located on the site which was used as a meeting house until it was destroyed in the fire of 1694, which destroyed much of Warwick. The present meeting house was built on the same site in 1695 at a cost of £116. Butler (1999) notes that internal changes had taken place by 1710 including the removal of the elders' stand which was once located to the north east. At a date unknown, presumably during the late eighteenth century, a gallery was built along with a fireplace; the entrance into the meeting house at this time was to the south east. In the eighteenth century a dwelling was built adjoining the north-west elevation of the meeting house.

Following a decline in membership numbers the meeting closed in 1909 for 40 years until it opened again in 1949. During the 1950s the meeting house was restored with repairs to the windows, woodwork and walls. By 1972, additional space was required by the Friends which was provided by creating a children's rooms and kitchen in the eighteenth century cottage at a cost of £3,000. In 1992, at a cost of £130,000 a three storey building was built to the designs of Donald James and Partners to the west, to provide additional ancillary facilities at ground level and office accommodation above.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

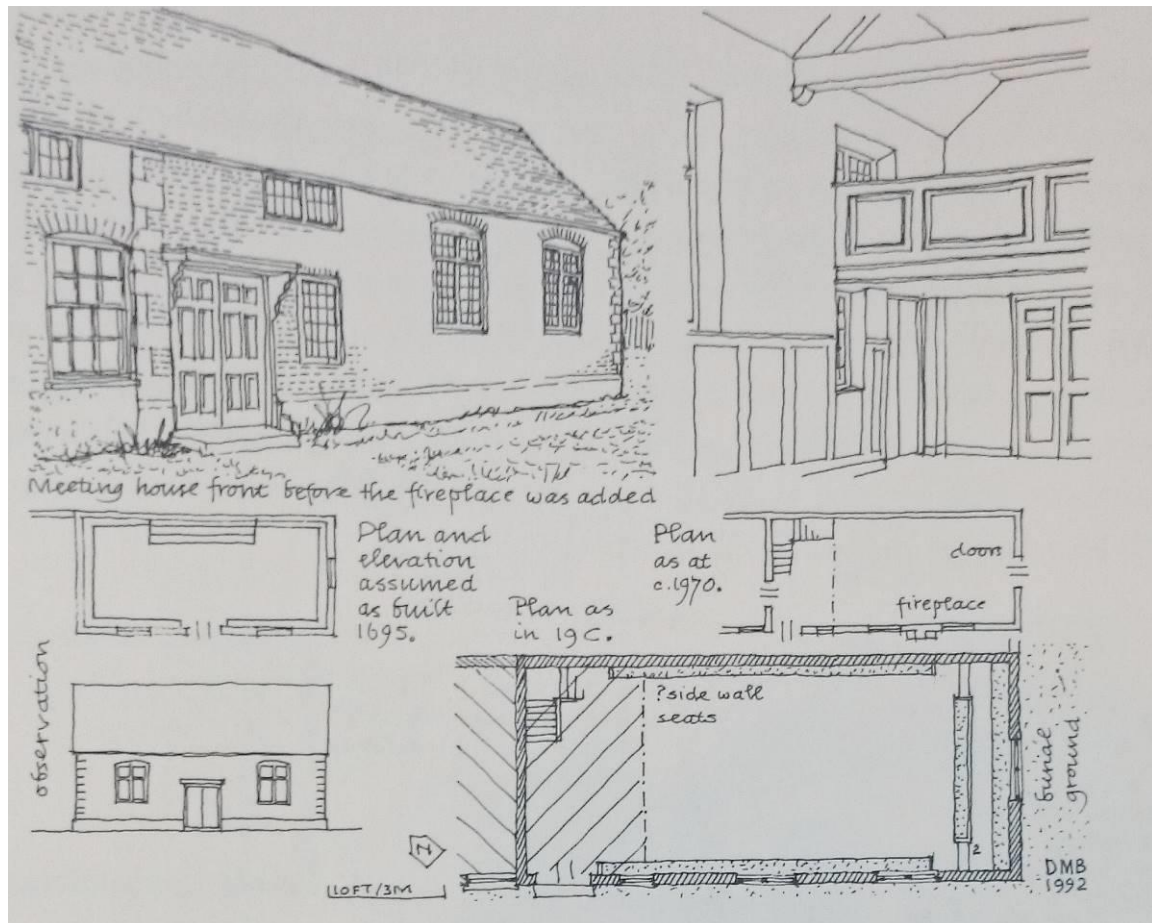


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as reconstructed by Butler (north to the left; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.647)

The present meeting house was built in three phases. The original meeting house was built in 1695. It is rectangular in plan and built of red brick laid in Flemish bond, with stone quoins, stone plinth, a pitched roof covered in clay tiles and a semi-circular stone well to the south west. Entrance to the south west is via a pair of six-panel timber doors with a flat timber canopy; to the right are two tall transomed and mullioned timber casements to the meeting room, and smaller rectangular leaded lights to the gallery and space below. The south east gable has a central glazed door with a transomed and mullioned window above, with segmental brick head. The north east has a plain elevation obscured by vegetation. Adjoining the north-west elevation is the eighteenth century range: the south west elevation is two storey with three 12-pane sash windows at ground level, and a small two light leaded window and two gabled dormers with small sashes to first floor. Facing Hill Street the eighteenth century range has an entrance reached by a series of stone steps, with a plain canopy, a 16-pane sash window at ground floor with two 12-pane -sashes above and a dormer. To the west is the 1992 range; the Hill Street elevation is built of modern red brick, with three 12 pane sliding sash windows at ground and first floor and to the east a lower section with a dormer window. To the west is a red brick archway with stone dressings leading to a passage, providing access into the 1992 range and to the meeting house.

Internally, access to the meeting house is to the south west leading into an internal porch and then the rear of the meeting room. The walls are lined with tongue and groove panelling to dado height, with the walls plainly painted and plastered. A fire place is located within the

east wall. The main body of the meeting room is three-bay, with two roof trusses partially obscured by the ceiling, and the floor is parquet. The meeting room is well lit from the south east and south west. The gallery is to the north-west. Access to the common room, library, WC facilities and community café is available from the doorway on the north-west wall of the meeting room.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room contains a number of pine benches dating from the beginning of the twentieth century.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The burial ground is to the rear (south-east) of the meeting house, it is no longer used for burials. The date range of the burials is 1660-1912 for which the records are held at Bull Street meeting house, Birmingham. Only two headstones remain and these do not pre-date 1750. Buried in the burial ground is William Dewsbury (1621 – 1688), who met George Fox in 1651 and by the following year became a Quaker minister travelling through Lancashire and Cumberland.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house has a central position within Warwick along High Street, located within the historic core of Warwick Conservation Area. A large area of Warwick was destroyed by fire in the late seventeenth century and following this the rebuilding resulted in the townscape which is seen today, characterised by brick and stone, with a mix of classical style buildings. High Street and Jury Street are the main streets in the area with Northgate crossing through the middle. High Street has a number of listed buildings including the Grade I listed St James, Chapel West Gate, opposite the meeting house is the Hospital of Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, an attractive heavy timber framed building listed Grade I; the site of this is also included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The majority of the buildings to the east of the meeting house, on both sides of Hill Street are listed Grade II.

To the rear of the meeting house to the south east and south west, the brick boundary wall and surrounding garden create an attractive enclosed green space which makes a positive contribution to the surrounding area. The grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which add to the mature landscaped character of the area. The boundary trees restrict views to the meeting house from Castle Lane.

2.6 Listed status

The building is properly listed at II*. The list entry makes no mention of the late twentieth century addition.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record was consulted and records indicate the original meeting house was destroyed in the fire of 1694 and the present meeting house was built on the same site. Records also reveal the remains of a medieval or post medieval well; the site is therefore likely to be of medium archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent quinquennial inspection (undertaken in June 2015 by Barnsley Bate, chartered building surveyors) found the building to be in good working order.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable.

3.2 Maintenance

The building is well-maintained by the meeting and a five year maintenance and repair plan is in place. Central England Area Meeting issue an 'Annual Inspection of Premises Questionnaire' each year. Maintenance needs are considered following the inspection. The questionnaire is divided into two parts:

- 1) Maintenance items of a routine or cyclical nature. For example, have the gutters and down pipes been cleaned our regularly?
- 2) Structural and other defects which may give cause for concern, and actions required or taken as a result of the quinquennial survey. For example, does the roof leak?

The questionnaire was completed by Edward Creasy in October 2014 and there was no record of any problems or issues with the building. The Friends have sufficient funds for the maintenance and repair of the building.

3.3 Sustainability

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

- Climate change and energy efficiency: The meeting has a sustainability group.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Local authority recycling scheme used.
- Building maintenance and refurbishment: ongoing review.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the grounds are planted with trees and shrubs which provide wildlife habitats.
- Transport: Located on local transport routes.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. This includes the main meeting room, common room, library, toilets (including one fully accessible), community café and kitchen.

There is no on-site car parking available. The nearest car park is owned by Warwickshire District Council at West Street with a maximum stay for 3 hours. There is on-street car parking on Castle Street to the south of the meeting house which is also subject to a fee. There is secure parking for bicycles. The city centre location of the meeting house means it is served by local bus services which run seven days a week, with a reduced service on Sundays.

The meeting house is a fifteen minute walk from Warwick railway station and three minutes walk from the bus station.

3.5 Access

A Disability Access Audit was undertaken in 2000. Following the audit the following actions were taken: level access, hearing loop and contrasting nosings installed. Access into the main meeting room can be achieved via the eighteenth century building facing Hill Street which adjoins the main meeting room or through a passageway to the west of which leads to the rear of the properties, allowing level access. The ground floor is fully accessible, with accessible toilet facilities. There is restricted access to the gallery and within the 1992 extension, circulation to the upper floors is restricted (this is privately let).

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 3 hours per week and community use for approximately 50 hours each week; it has the potential to be let for a total of 234 hours each week. There are four rooms available; the main meeting room which can accommodate 75 people, the common room for 30, library for 12 and when the community café is not in use this is available to seat 30 people. The Warwick Quaker Community Café is open weekdays between 10am and 2pm and on Saturdays between 10am and 1pm. There is a lettings policy. The meeting house is not let for public meetings, political parties or commercial groups. There is a minimum hire period of 3 hours. The building may be used for free for Quaker events. The meeting house is popular due its good facilities and the reasonable cost.

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 Friends have not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but would consider making contact.

3.8 Plans for change

The Friends are currently pursuing a change of use from office space to residential within the 1992 phase of 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 building has already shown it can be adapted, as needs change, and currently meets the needs of the meeting.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the meeting is a popular venue for community use with an onsite community café.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: it would be regrettable if the meeting house was no longer used for Quaker worship; changes for future alternative uses would be constrained by the historic features of the building related to its Quaker purpose.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: **QUAKER MEETING HOUSE**

List entry Number: 1035431

Location

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE, HIGH STREET

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

County: Warwickshire

District: Warwick

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Warwick

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 10-Jan-1953

List entry Description

1. 1781 HIGH STREET (South Side) Quaker Meeting House (behind No 39) SP 2864 NW
1/72 10.1.53. II* GV

2. Land acquired in 1671, northern part of Meeting House built in 1690s, southern part mid C18. 1 storey 3-bay red brick building of simple character with 2 storey portion connecting with the front part of No 39. Transomed and mullioned wood frames with casements, rectangular leaded lights and camber-headed openings. Stone quoins to right hand side and stone plinth with simple semi-circular stone well head against the building. 2 storey portion adjoining house has two flush gabled dormers and (probably later C18) entrance doors with plain hood. Continuous roof of attractive old tiles. The interior of Meeting House has panelling of pine. Gallery at end nearest house. the large open fireplace appears to be C18. Good setting in attractive garden.

All the listed buildings in High Street (South Side) form a group.