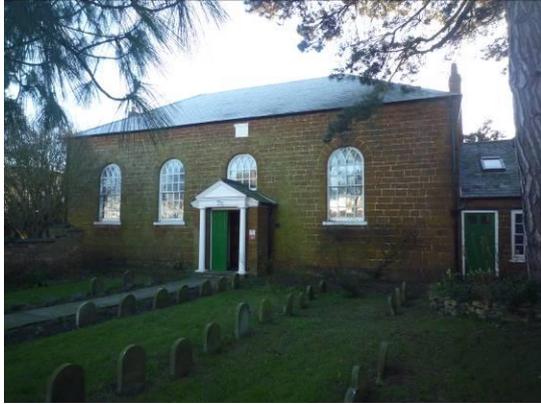


Friends Meeting House, Wellingborough

St John Street, Wellingborough, NN8 4LG

National Grid Reference: SP 88947 68055



Statement of Significance

A plain but handsome meeting house of 1819, built on the burial ground of an earlier meeting house. The main meeting room still preserves much of its original character, but other parts of the interior have been considerably altered in recent years. The building is of high heritage significance.

Evidential value

The building is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

A reasonably well-preserved example of an early nineteenth century Quaker meeting house with a burial ground established in the eighteenth century, all of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

As Pevsner said, this is a delightful little ironstone building with a plain but handsome late Georgian exterior and one well-preserved meeting room. The building is of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The present meeting house has been used by Quakers continuously since 1819, and more recently by other local community groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Northamptonshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0031720*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wellingborough Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Wellingborough*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1192305*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Town Centre*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1819, internal alterations 1991*

1.13 Architect (s): *Original architect or builder not established; 1991 works by Stimpson & Walton*

1.14 Date of visit: *15 January 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Anne Atkinson-Clark*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached former warden's house of c1937. There is a detached burial ground at Winwick, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 10297 80642)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 pp.472-3

Palmer, Joyce, *A History of Wellingborough* (1972)

Stell, Christopher, *Nonconformist Meeting Houses in Central England*, RCHM 1986, p.152

Whitehouse, Ruth, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Northamptonshire* (1997)

Northamptonshire HER, SMR number 3884/0/184

Local Meeting survey by Anne Atkinson-Clark, October 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Wellingborough was one of the earliest centres of Quakerism outside the north of England and there is some evidence that a meeting was regularly held from as early as 1654 and there is said to have been an earlier burial ground on a site north, which is now built-over. Nothing is known about the earliest meeting places, but in 1751 Samuel Ellington and Benjamin Middleton were admitted as trustees of property in St John's Street to be used for Quaker worship. Quakers then met, 'in an upper room above an ancient archway in St John's Street'. In 1817 it was decided to build a new and larger meeting house on part of the burial ground which lay behind the old archway. The new building, which opened in 1819, contained two meeting rooms, divided by a central corridor with opening timber partitions on both sides. A single storey heated room was later added to the west end and in 1903 a small toilet block was added at the rear of the building. In 1937 the old archway on the street front and the adjacent cottages were demolished for road widening and a new house was built on part of the burial ground for a caretaker or warden. In 1991 the western meeting room was adapted to provide a smaller meeting room and kitchen on the ground floor with another meeting room on a new first floor.

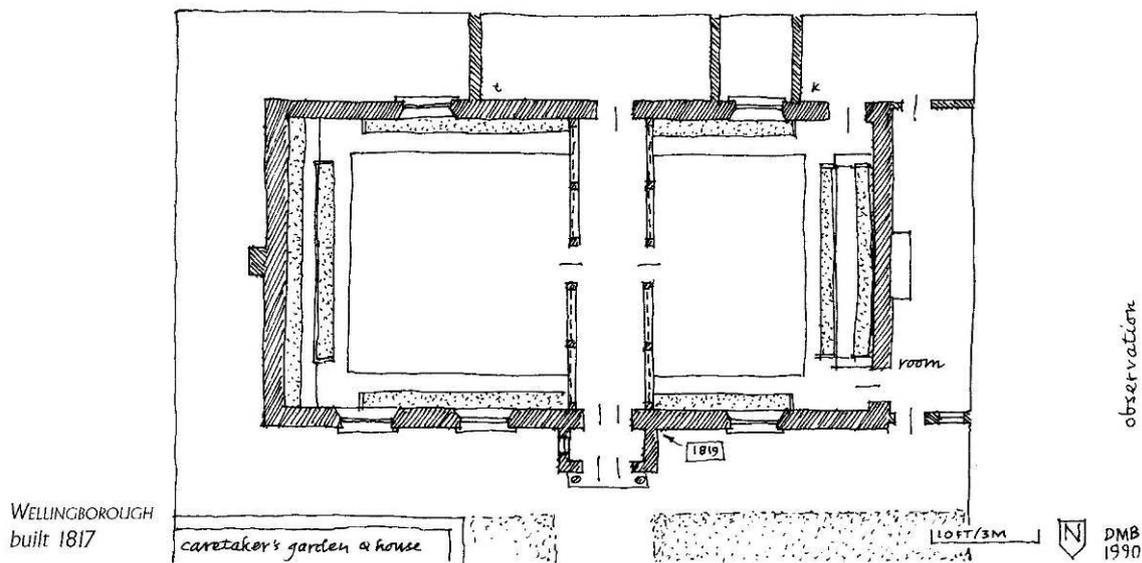


Figure 1: Plan of the meeting house as originally designed, *Butler*, Vol. 1, p. 472

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The 1819 building is rectangular on plan, with a pitched, hipped roof. The walls are of ironstone laid to courses and the roof is covered in Welsh slate. The main (north) front has four tall round-headed windows with timber sashes. The two left-hand windows light the main meeting room. Below the third window is an ironstone porch with a pedimented timber front with Doric columns. Above the window is a small datestone with the date 1819. The east end wall is blind, the west end wall has a one-bay extension with a lean-to roof. The rear (south) wall has single-storey brick addition in the centre with a round headed window to either side. The main meeting room occupies the eastern half of the building. It has a continuous panelled dado with perimeter benches to the side walls and a bench across the full width of the east wall, without a handrail. Some of the original fixed bench seating also survives in the western room.

2.3. Loose furnishings

There is one table dated 1667 and also a number of unpainted pine benches, probably nineteenth century in date, which are thought to have been brought from elsewhere.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

There is a rectangular burial ground on the north side of the meeting house, between the building and the road. The ground is still open for the interment of ashes. The earliest burials appear to date from 1814, and there are rows of plain head stones parallel to the path. The western boundary wall of the burial ground is a composite structure, part brick and part ironstone. Some elements are the end walls of adjoining properties. Most of the burial ground is laid to grass, with two mature pine trees.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting.

The meeting house is well set back behind its burial ground from St John's Street, off Wellingborough High Street. There is a good view of the meeting house from the street, over the low stone wall with steel railings. The street has a mixture of twentieth century residential and commercial properties. Immediately to the rear of the meeting house is a high stone wall enclosing a piece of garden ground in separate ownership. There is a detached burial ground at Winwick, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 10297 80642).

2.6. Listed status

The building is properly listed at grade II.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site is known to have contained 'an ancient archway' (demolished in 1937) and is of medium 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): Generally satisfactory but with one localised problem. The burial ground itself is well-maintained but the western boundary wall, a composite of several different dates and materials and belonging in part to adjacent buildings, will need repair in the fairly near future.

3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection was made in July 2014 by a conservation-accredited chartered surveyor. The building was found to be generally in good condition but with a need for some attention to the rainwater goods and flashings and also for some localised re-pointing. It is intended that all the recommended works will have been done by the time of the next inspection. Area Meeting is responsible for external repairs. Internal works are dependent on donations and legacies.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has implemented several measures to reduce environmental impact. These include improved insulation, secondary double-glazing and photo-voltaic panels on the rear (south) roof slope. Waste is recycled and wildlife

is encouraged in the burial ground. The building has an Energy Performance Certificate (level D-95).

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house - including three meeting rooms of different sizes, a well-equipped kitchen, toilets and a side room currently unused because of planning restrictions. There is no resident warden. The former warden's cottage on the site is let to a tenant.

The meeting house is in the town centre and there is a local bus every day, but most members live in villages where there is no Sunday service. The railway station is about a mile away. There is on-site parking for 5-6 cars and racks for bicycles. Street parking is possible on Sundays.

3.5. Access

All the ground floor rooms are accessible but there is no lift to the first floor. There is an accessible WC and a hearing loop but no specific facilities for partially-sighted people. A safety risk survey has been carried out (date unknown).

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the building for at least 4 hours per week. The building is let to other users on a session basis, with three sessions per day. Last year it was let for approximately 193 sessions. The meeting has a lettings policy. No smoking, alcohol or gambling is permitted. Free hire may be offered to Quaker groups. Users value the competitive pricing, central location, and the ambience of the old building.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been some general crime at the site, with burglary, thefts and a small amount of damage gaining entry. Police have been informed. There has been no heritage crime. The area generally is well-cared for and has low crime levels, but it is a low-wage area and community confidence is not particularly high.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no plans for change at present.

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 interior was altered in 1991. There is probably some scope for further internal change, subject to listed building constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: as above, there may be scope for minor alterations, subject to listed building constraints.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the building could doubtless find another use if the meeting were laid down.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1192305

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, ST JOHN STREET

County: Northamptonshire

District: Wellingborough

District Type: District Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 23-Sep-1950

WELLINGBOROUGH ST. JOHN STREET SP8868SE (South side) 8/140 Friends Meeting house

- GV

Friends meeting house. Datestone 1819. Ironstone ashlar with slate roof. 2-unit plan. Single storey. 4-window range of sash windows with plain arch heads and intersecting glazing bars. Window to right of centre has later C19 porch below. Pair of 8-panelled doors, flanked by wood columns and plain wooden pediment over. Hipped roof with brick stack at end. Datestone above window to left of centre. Single-unit extension to right has C19 panelled door and sash window with glazing bars. Rear elevation similar with some later C19 extensions.

Listing NGR: SP8894868052