

Quaker Meeting House, Wigan

76 Swinley Road, Wigan, WN1 2DL

National Grid Reference: SD 58210 06564



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has medium heritage significance as a former Victorian house converted for use as a meeting house in the 1970s, retaining some original external architectural detailing.

Evidential value

The meeting house has an overall low level of significance for evidential value. The Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record has not identified the site for any archaeological interest.

Historical value

Little is known about the early history of 76 Swinley Road, in terms of its architect and occupiers. As a typical Victorian house which was converted to meeting house use it has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has medium aesthetic value. It is an attractive late Victorian building which retains much of its original external architectural detail. It makes a positive contribution to both the conservation area and street scene.

Communal value

The building is in use as a Quaker meeting house and for community groups. The meeting house has a medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Hardshaw and Mann*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0001810*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Wigan*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Wigan Lane*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1890*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *4th June 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Unaccompanied*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.345.

Wigan Council, *Wigan Lane Conservation Character Appraisal*, 2007.

Rachel Grimshaw, *Local Meeting Survey*, March 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

A Wigan Meeting was formed in the nineteenth century and by 1901 Friends were renting rooms for use of the meeting. In 1971 the Friends bought the present building for £4,000. Repairs and alterations were carried out at a cost of £2,500 to enable meetings for worship

to take place on the ground floor. In 2011, the upper floors were converted into two flats and one bedsit, designed by Anthony Grimshaw Associates.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house building was built as a terraced house in the late nineteenth century. It is built in red brick laid in English garden wall bond with red terracotta detailing, some sandstone, and a Welsh slate roof. It is three storeys over a basement. The ground floor has a canted bay window with sashes and a terracotta decorative frieze with floral detailing. The entrance to the left of the bay has a square headed doorway with brick pilasters and rectangular over-light. Upper floors have sash windows and decorative brick work, with a gabled dormer to the third floor.

The porch has decorative geometric floor tiles and glazed tiles to dado level. The doorway into the lobby area has timber beading with glazing with a rectangular over light. The meeting room, smaller meeting room and ancillary facilities are accessed via a small corridor with white plastered walls, decorative cornices, and carpeted floor. The staircase leads to the converted flats on the first and second floor. The main meeting room is roughly square in plan with plain plastered walls, picture rail, decorative cornice, chimney breast and fireplace. The floor is carpeted and the room is lit by the bay window on the south wall. The seating includes a bench on one wall, and modern loose chairs arranged in a circle.

The smaller meeting room is rectangular in shape with plain plastered walls, the ceiling has decorative cornice and a Victorian ceiling rose.

Kitchen and WC facilities are to the rear of the property where there is also access to the basement area.

2.3. Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in Swinley a suburb north of Wigan which developed during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. The residential Swinley Road is within Wigan Lane Conservation Area and lined with three-storey and two-storey villas, some built in an 'Arts and Crafts' style, and a mixture of interwar properties. The properties have small boundary walls and hedges and the street is lined with trees together creating pleasant suburban character.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed. Not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site is likely to be of low archaeological potential. The Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record was consulted and no records have been identified for the site.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. A quinquennial inspection has not been carried out. In recent years the Friends have been dealing with a number of major repair issues including dry rot within the building. Repairs have now all been resolved.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *Not applicable*

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting house does not have a five-year maintenance and repair plan, however one of the members is an architect and is able to monitor the meeting house on a regular basis. Repairs and maintenance that need to be undertaken are ongoing, funded from the Liverpool meeting (the building owners).

3.3. Sustainability

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

- Climate change and energy efficiency: central heating installed.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: the meeting house uses the local authority recycling scheme.
- Building maintenance and refurbishment: maintenance is taken seriously at the meeting house which is seen as integral to sustainability by the Friends. When new window frames were installed, sustainable timber was used.
- Transport: Friends car-share where possible or members walk to the Meeting.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. These include a kitchen area, a WC and two meeting rooms.

3.5. Access

The Friends have actively tried to identify areas where reasonable solutions can be found for improvements to access by having a Disability Access Audit undertaken in 2008 and liaising with Wigan Council's planning department. 76 Swinley Road was built as a house and there are limitations in providing level access into the property due to the levels of the building at the front and rear. Internally the building has level access and facilities have been introduced for the partially-sighted including external stair nosing and a grab and hand rail have been installed.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. Bus services run seven days a week, however trains do not commence early enough for members to make the Meeting on a Sunday. On-site parking for cars and bicycles is available.

3.6 Community Use

The Friends use the meeting house two Sundays a month (two hours each) along with intermittent meetings throughout the year. The meeting house is let for six hours each week. The Meeting does have a lettings policy. The Friends let the building out for two reasons:

- 1) As outreach: a service to their local community and to enhance local awareness of Quakers.
- 2) As a commercial enterprise, for revenue to pay for the building and other Friends' activities.

The Friends exercise discretion in the selection of tenants, provide inexpensive accommodation for charities and other worth causes. Members of the Meeting are allowed to use the Meeting House for free.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house is located in an area which is generally well cared for and has low crime levels. Two isolated incidents have occurred in recent years which were not reported to the local police; the entrance gate was damaged by local children and stone flags were stolen during a phase of building works.

3.8. Plans for change

There are 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. Scope for extensions is limited due to the tight boundary of the site and proposed alterations to the exterior must protect or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already used for other community uses and has the necessary facilities to accommodate the community groups. However, there are constraints in providing improving access into the building.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House. The upper floors have been converted into flats and a bedsit previously, there would be scope to convert the ground floor back into a flat.

Part 5: Category: 3