

Quaker Meeting House, Wilmslow

1a Bourne Street, Wilmslow, SK9 5HD

National Grid Reference: SJ 83975 81109



Statement of Significance

The building has medium heritage significance as an example of purpose-built stables and carriage shed built in 1831 to serve for the original meeting house, extended in the 1880s for school room use and in the twentieth century for use as a meeting house. The interior's aesthetic value has been diminished slightly by the twentieth century additions. The 1830s meeting house, listed Grade II*, remains on site but no longer in Quaker use.

Evidential value

As a building dating from 1831 and altered in phases, the building has medium evidential value. The burials on the site could yield evidence about past Quakers; the burial ground has high evidential value.

Historical value

The present meeting house is an early nineteenth century stable and carriage house range, adapted and extended in 1881 and again in 1995 to form the current venue for worship. The building has been in Quaker use since it was first built in 1831 but has undergone changes which illustrate the evolution of Quaker activity in the area. The meeting house is considered to have high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a handsome former stable and coach house range, characterised by its functional style and plainness. The design, materials, form and detailing of the building, along with the former meeting house and burial ground, gives the site high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The site remains in primarily Quaker use, but is also a valued community resource. The building and site contribute to the character of the area and have high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *East Cheshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0002900*

1.3 Owner: *Friends Trust*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Cheshire East Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *North West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Wilmslow*

1.7 Listed status: *Listed as part of the curtilage of the former Friends Meeting House (grade II*)*

1.8 NHLE: *1222185*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1831*

1.13 Architect (s): *Unknown*

1.14 Date of visit: *28th April 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Judy Harman and Gary Kershaw*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Former Friends Meeting House*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.52-53.

Clare Hartwell, Matthew Hyde, Edward Hubbard and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cheshire*. 2nd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp.672.

Nancy Mottram, *Quakers in Wilmslow 1653 – 1995 text by Arthur Ledger, 1995.*

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

2.1. Historical background

The history of Quakerism in Mobberley begins in 1653 when Friends would meet in each other's houses. By 1693, the year of the Toleration Act, Friends decided to build a meeting house in Morley, on a leasehold site. This provided the Friends meeting house for the next 140 years until the lease expired in 1830; the building was subsequently converted into three cottages.

In 1831, the Friends purchased a large plot of land which was part of the Lindow Common. A new meeting house, stable, carriage shed and burial ground were built in the same year. By 1881, the meeting house was unable to accommodate children at Sunday school or meet the demand for adult education at the time. The single-storey stable and carriage shed (Fig.1) was altered to provide a two-storey building to accommodate the children's school and adult education classes.

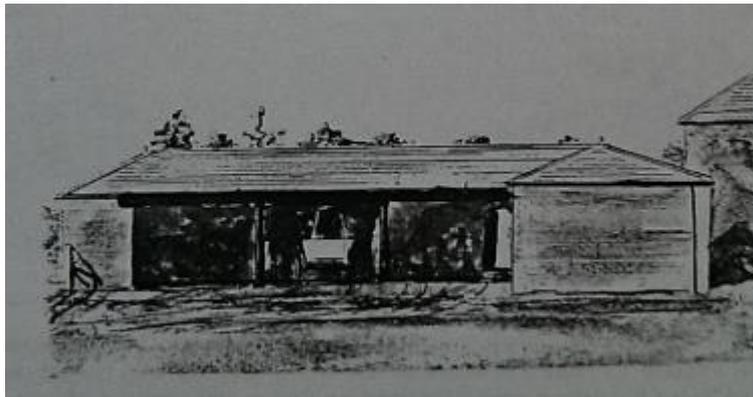


Figure 1: Reconstruction of the original carriage shed and stable. Drawing by Arthur Ledger.

In the 1960s the Meeting changed its name from Morley to Wilmslow Meeting. By 1986, the meeting house required substantial repairs and alteration to enable the building to meet modern requirements for Friends' use. The Friends began a fund-raising campaign, however, by 1993 a decision was made to sell the meeting house and part of the land; the former is now in office use. It was decided to retain the stable and school house building as the new meeting house, and in 1994, architect Neil Collins was appointed to reconfigure the building. This work was completed in 1995 and the meeting house was first used by the Friends for worship on 21st May 1995.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The former stable, carriage shed and Sunday School, now the Meeting House, was built in 1831, and the first floor added in the 1880s. It is built in red brick laid in Flemish bond, the hipped roof is covered in Welsh slates, the windows all have a segmental brick heads and stone sills with terracotta corbel detailing below. The two-storey building forms an L- plan with an east-west range (former carriage house) to the west of the south-eastern range.

The entrance is on the south front with the entrance doorway in an infilled open bay at the east end; the ground floor retains the remnants of the open-fronted 3-bay carriage shed with cast iron columns supporting a timber beam spanning the elevation; the three bays are infilled with modern brick. There are three 4-pane sliding sash windows at first floor. The

projecting south eastern range has a 4-pane sliding sash window to ground floor, a 4-pane window to the first floor and a small 2-light horizontal window to the west side and to the south -able end.

The east elevation has 4-pane sliding sash windows at ground and first floors, with a single window to the left of the ground floor window and porch with doorway to the right. To the far right of the elevation is a 12-pane narrow vertical window. The north rear elevation has a 12-pane vertical window to the left, one 4-pane sash to the ground floor with a doorway to the right and two 4-pane sliding sash windows at first floor. To the far right of the elevation are two large rounded 12 pane vertical windows. The west elevation has a single 4-pane sliding sash window at first floor level. A former doorway has been infilled at ground floor level, converted into a circular window with frosted glazing with the inscription 'Friends Meeting House'.

The main meeting room, kitchen and WC's are accessed via an irregular shaped lobby area with white plastered walls, carpeted flooring and a staircase which leads to the meeting rooms, strong room and toilet on the first floor. The interior of the main meeting room is a large single space, double-height in volume, located in the east wing. The walls and ceiling are plastered and painted white, the flooring is carpeted and the room is lit by windows on the north, south and west walls. The north and south walls have projecting piers and beams which once supported a former first floor when the building was arranged over two levels in 1881, the first floor since removed. The seating consists of benches from the 1831 meeting house and loose chairs arranged in a circle around a central table.

The staircase in the lobby leads to a landing on the first floor of the south wing which accommodates the strong room, two meeting rooms (used for children) and a toilet.

2.3. Loose furnishings

Historic benches (Fig.2) are located throughout the meeting house and there is a historic table with barley sugar legs and hidden storage compartments (now located in the children's room (Fig. 3). They were removed from the original meeting house which was sold in 1995.

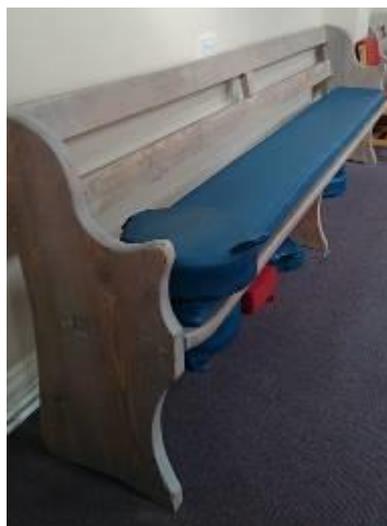


Figure 2: Historic benches from the original meeting house.



Figure 3: Table from the original meeting house

2.4. Attached burial ground

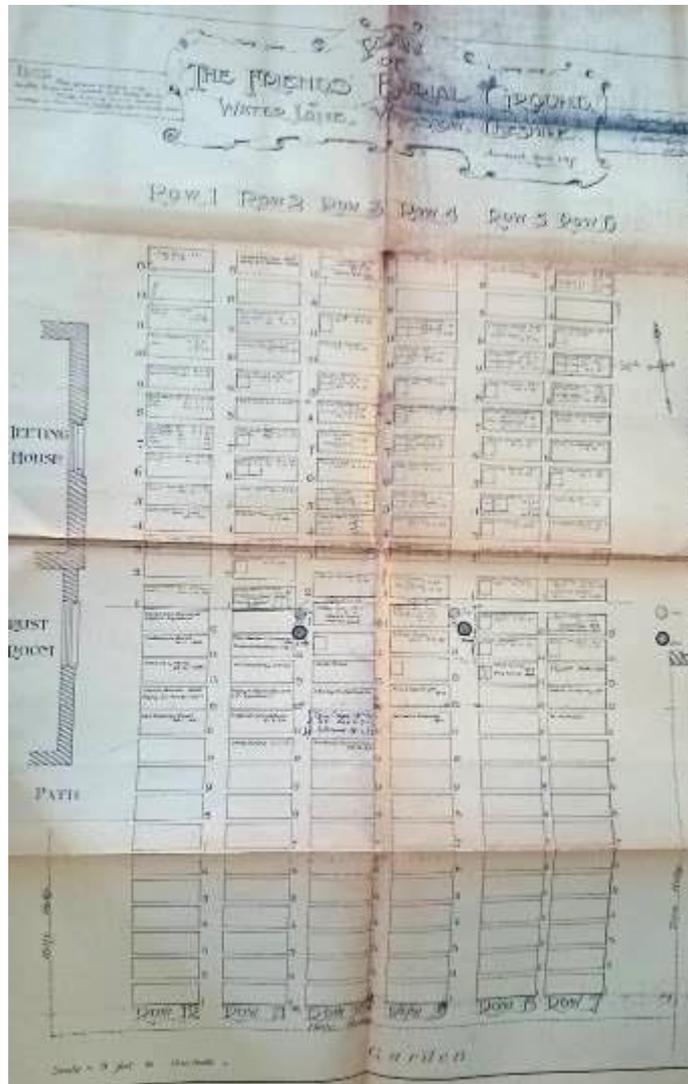


Figure 4: Historic plan of the burial ground (date unknown) (Wilmslow Meeting House archives)

The burial ground once formed an oblong plot to the east of the original meeting house (Fig.4) but has been reduced in extent. It was established in 1831 when the site was acquired

and the first meeting house built. The date range of the burials is from the mid-nineteenth century to 1976. The burial ground is no longer used for burials; the majority of gravestones were removed in 1994 prior to the sale of the original meeting house and some adjacent land. Most of the burial ground has now been replaced by a car park. Some flat gravestones still survive within the surrounding grounds north of the meeting house. The gravestones express simplicity with only the name of deceased, age and date of death inscribed on the stones.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located to the west side of Wilmslow town centre in Cheshire. The area is predominately residential, the housing generally Victorian detached or small terraces with the occasional modern infill. It is set back from the street on the corner of Altrincham Road and Bourne Street. The red brick boundary wall, and the grounds which are well planted with trees and shrubs add to the landscape character of the area. The site of the meeting house is shared with the former meeting house to the east, now in office use (Grade II*) and with the Wilmslow Guild (an adult education centre) to the south-east. The boundary trees restrict views to the meeting house from Altrincham Road. The key views of the meeting house are from Bourne Street and the car park of the Wilmslow Guild.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is currently not listed in its own right. The original meeting house is Grade II* and as the present meeting house falls within the curtilage of the listed building it is also protected by the listing legislation. The building is a handsome Victorian building with features expressing its former use as stables/coach house, but the two phases of alteration, in 1881 and in 1995, have resulted in the loss of most of its furnishing and fittings. On balance, the building is therefore not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house was built in 1831 on part of Lindow Common. The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent quinquennial inspection (undertaken in 2013 by Mellor Braggins) found the building to have been adequately maintained to a good standard for its age and type. Since the last inspection work has been undertaken to the roof and to control damp. Drains and guttering are cleared twice a year. Although the meeting house is in a generally good condition the survey highlighted that there is still water ingress in places which will need to be addressed in the future.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/generally satisfactory.

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting house has a five year maintenance and repair plan. Friends monitor the meeting house along with undertaking the recommendations stated in the quinquennial survey.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit, the following steps have been taken to improve sustainability:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: twelve inches of loft insulation, draught excluders and LED lighting have installed, and a new condenser boiler, dry lining to walls for added insulation, and aluminium reflectors behind radiators. The Friends have considered photovoltaic panels, however the roof was considered unsuitable.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Food, paper and tins etc are all recycled. The meeting house has no refuse collection.
- Building maintenance and refurbishment: The meeting house met the recommendations of the quinquennial survey which were rated as important / urgent.
- Wildlife, ecology and conservation: Damaged trees removed and new gardens developed which will provide wildlife habitats. The gardens have a self-watering storage device installed.
- Transport: Many of the Friends cycle, walk, use public transport or car-share where possible.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has access to all the facilities it needs, which include kitchen, toilets and large meeting room on the ground floor (including one fully accessible one), and two meeting rooms, one toilet and a strong room on the first floor.

3.5. Access

A Disability Access Audit was undertaken in 1995 during the phase of work to convert the Sunday school into a meeting house. As part of the conversion and survey a small ramp was installed to the main entrance, a ground floor accessible disabled toilet and a hearing loop installed. Level access is available across the ground floor. However, access is limited to first floor with no lift available. There are facilities to for the partially-sighted which include clear signage and contrast coloured nosings on the staircase.

The meeting house has good local transport links, with local bus and train services in the area. There is on-site car parking available for three cars and disabled car parking is available on the adjacent Wilmslow Guild site. There is also secure parking for bicycles.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 5 hours each week with additional use for particular meetings, funerals and weddings. The meeting house is in community use for 16 hours each week. There is a lettings policy: the meeting house has a no smoking, no alcohol and no gambling policy. Rooms are not let to political parties or activities that are not in keeping with Quaker values. There is no charge made for Quaker-related activities. The meeting house is popular for lettings due to its warm and welcoming atmosphere, central good location and well-priced meeting rooms.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The area has low crime levels and there has been no heritage crime at the site.

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: The meeting house currently fulfils all the requirements of the meeting.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is already in community use and has all the required facilities to support this.

ii) Being laid down as a Meeting House. In the unfortunate event of the meeting house being laid down the building could be converted into offices similar to that of the former meeting house on site or alternative Wilmslow Guild (an adult education centre) may acquire the property for their needs.

Part 5: Category: 3

Part 6: List descriptions

(N.B. The list entry and description refers to the former Friends Meeting House, which is part of the property. The meeting house is within the curtilage of the listed building)

Name: **FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE**

List entry Number: 1222185

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, ALTRINCHAM ROAD

County/District District Type Parish

Cheshire East Unitary Authority

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 26-Nov-1981

Date of most recent amendment: 02-Aug-1993

Details

SJ 88 SW WILMSLOW FORMER U.D. ALTRINCHAM ROAD (South Side)

1/238 Quaker Meeting House (formerly listed as 26/11/1981 Friends Meeting House) II*

Quaker Meeting House, 1830. Flemish bond orange brick on sandstone plinth. Hipped Welsh slate roof and 1 brick chimney. Rectangular plan. 1-storey symmetrical 5-bay front. Stone band at impost level of tall semi-circular gauged and rubbed brick headed recesses. These contain semi-circular headed sashes and in the central bay a reeded doorcase with roundels at the corners and a less deep sash above. To right is a lower 1-bay addition. Interior: Very plain and no features of interest.

Listing NGR: SJ8399581115