

Friends Meeting House, Wincanton

Between 30/32 High Street, Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 9JF

National Grid Reference: ST 71500 28617



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a small rectangular brick structure built in the 1904, by the Bracher family to replace a previous meeting house which stood on the family burial ground behind a row of cottages in Wincanton High Street. The building retains its original stand. It is not listed and is of medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

There is small likelihood of archaeological remains below the building which is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house occupies the site of an earlier meeting house built in 1832. The long historical connection with the Brachers, prominent local Quakers, gives the building and site at least medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a very modest turn of the century brick structure, with some vaguely Tudor stone detailing and is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by Quakers since 1904 and with the newly improved accommodation is just starting to be used by the wider community. It is of medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Somerset*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0005380*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *South Somerset District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Wincanton*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Wincanton*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1904*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*

1.14 Date of visit: *26 August 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Richard Porter*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *The meeting house plot also contains numbers 30 & 32 High Street (Listed Grade II, list entry number 1274063) and an outbuilding known as the barn, recently converted to a meeting room. All these buildings once belonged to the Bracher family and are now owned by the Area Meeting. There are detached burial grounds at Yeovil, Ashcott and Greinton.*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.2, pp. 552-3

Somerset HER No.18532

Local Meeting survey by Richard Porter, April 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends' meetings were held in Wincanton from c.1700 but the first meeting house was not built until 1832. It was a small building, the private property of the Bracher family, and stood on the Bracher family burial ground behind a row of shops and houses fronting the High Street. A new meeting house was built on the same site by Edwin Bracher in 1904 and bequeathed to Friends in 1911 for £300. In recent years, a detached barn or outbuilding between the meeting house and the range of buildings on the street frontage has been refurbished and converted into a meeting room with a kitchen and toilets.

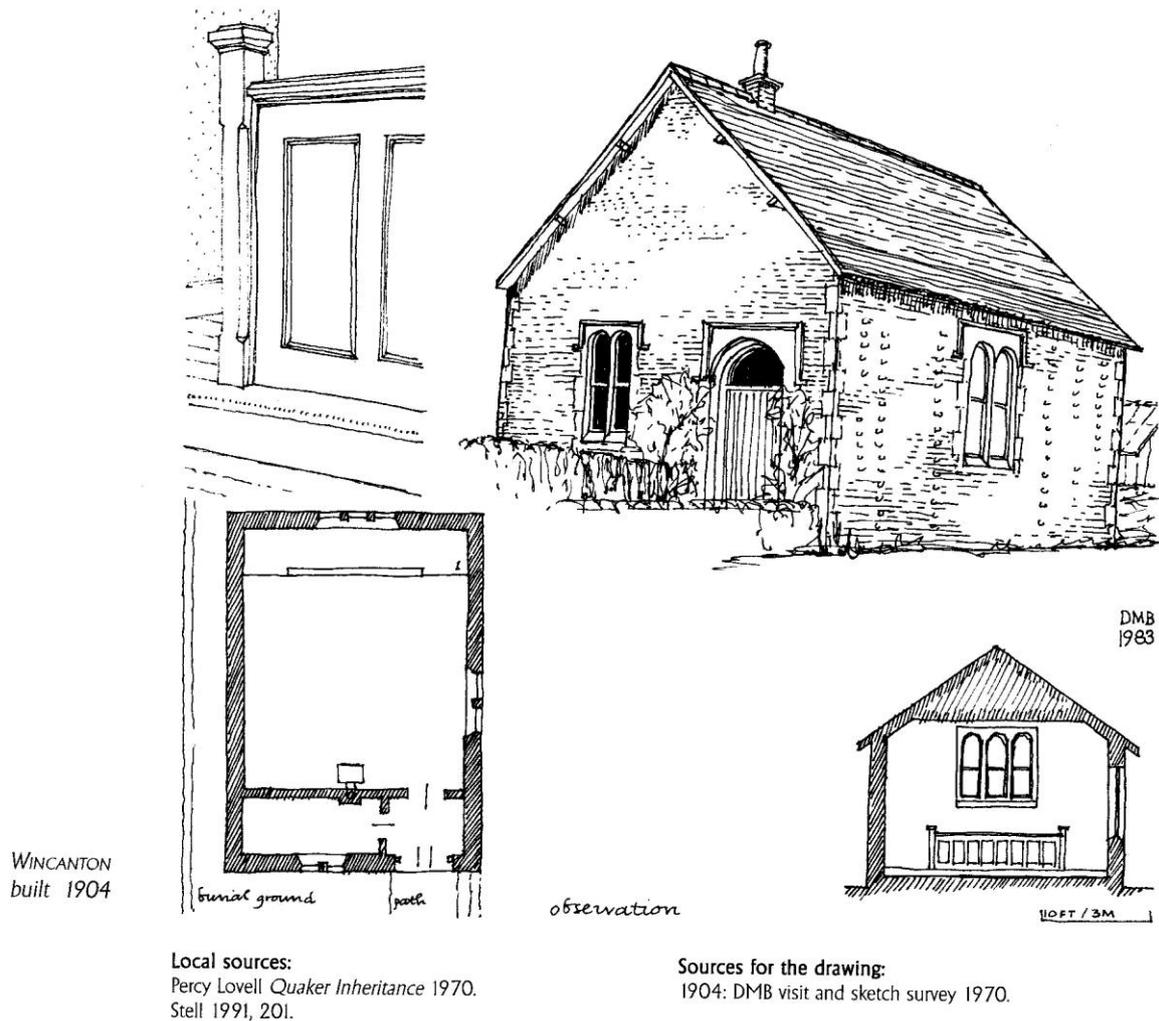


Figure 1: ground plan, perspective view, section and a detail of the stand
North is to the top of the plan; not to scale. (Butler, vol. 2, p. 553)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The Wincanton meeting house is a simple rectangular structure with walls of red brick laid in stretcher bond, relieved by vertical bands of pale headers stamped 'G Jennings Poole Dorset Patent' and with stone dressings and detailing. The pitched roof is covered in plain tiles. The entrance is in the gabled north wall, with a round-headed doorway in a stone surround to the right and a two-light Tudor-style window with a hood-moulding to the left. In the apex of the gable is a small trefoil opening. In the centre of the west elevation is a similar two-light window while the south gable end has a three-light window with a small trefoiled opening above. Set hard against this wall is a modern greenhouse belonging to tenants of part of the site. The plan comprises a rectangular meeting room, with a lobby across the full width of the north end. The meeting room has a plain plastered walls and a ceiling boarded to the level of the roof collars. Across the south end is a raised stand with a panelled front. There are no other fittings.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are several open-backed timber benches ranged round the walls of the meeting room, which probably date from 1904 but could be earlier.

2.4 Attached burial ground

The burial ground is a small rectangular plot immediately north of the meeting house and separating it from the barn. The burial ground is laid to grass with flower borders and is used for the scattering of ashes. There are no grave markers.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house lies behind a row of cottages fronting the High Street and is hidden from public view. Much of the large plot on which the meeting house stands is currently used for commercial horticulture.

There is a detached burial ground at Batt's Corner, Preston Road, Yeovil, which is enclosed by a stone wall and contains grave markers (NGR: ST 55194 16493). There are also burial grounds at Ashcott and Greinton.

2.6 Listed status

The building is not a candidate for either the statutory list or the local list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The site includes the buildings on the High Street frontage as well as the meeting house and barn and is of medium archaeological significance overall.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Fair
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal

3.2 Maintenance

There has been no recent Quinquennial Inspection of the meeting house but the building appears, from superficial inspection, to be in reasonable condition. The adjacent barn and the High Street properties have recently been refurbished. The local meeting has so far had enough money to maintain and repair the building but is struggling. There is a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: insulation and double-glazing (where allowed) to all buildings on the site other than the meeting house, which has secondary glazing.

The meeting house does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. There is a toilet in the meeting house and a disabled toilet and shower, new kitchen and meeting room in the detached former barn. There is no resident Warden. The meeting is not accessible for most members by public transport during the week and there are no services on Sundays. There is no parking on site but ample local parking.

3.5 Access

The meeting house and adjacent barn are both accessible to people with disabilities. There is an accessible toilet in the barn. There is no functioning hearing loop and no specific facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was conducted in about 2005 and the recommended changes (principally the installation of handrails) have been implemented.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house building is used by Friends for about 2 hours per week. The meeting house and barn are theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 80 hours per week and are let for an average of 3 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. No alcohol is allowed on the premises, no party political meetings and no lettings which are contrary to Quaker values. The meeting has only recently acquired a room suitable for lettings but it seems that users value the location, the warmth and the atmosphere.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There no general crime or anti-social behaviour and no heritage crime. The locality is generally well cared-for and has low crime levels, and high community confidence but there is some deprivation. The local meeting has no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but Friends would consider making contact.

3.8 Plans for change

It is planned to give the meeting house a new roof, with associated work.

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 has all the facilities it currently needs in its two buildings. There is probably some scope for change, if required subject to Planning and Conservation Area constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the meeting house is a small building with limited scope for change. The adjacent barn used by community groups is a recent conversion.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the buildings could doubtless serve a wholly secular use if laid down.

Part 5: Category: 3