

Former Meeting House, Woburn Sands

Hardwick Road, Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK17 8QH

National Grid Reference: SP 92781 35533



Statement of Significance

Hogsty End (now Woburn Sands) was one of the most important early Quaker centres in Buckinghamshire. Now laid down as a meeting house, the present building is not of special architectural interest but the site as a whole is of medium heritage value.

Evidential value

The present meeting house stands on the site of an earlier seventeenth century building and the burial ground has been in use since the 1680s, so the site has medium evidential value.

Historical value

Hogsty End was one of the earliest meetings in this area and the site has high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The present building is a pleasant late Victorian structure in the Vernacular Revival style and is of medium heritage value.

Communal value

A building on this site was used by Quakers almost continuously between 1673 and 1947. After that date the present building became a public library, and will now serve the local community as a day nursery. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Luton & Leighton*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *2015914*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Ltd.*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Milton Keynes Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Woburn Sands*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Woburn Sands*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1901*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Usher and Anthony of Bedford*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *29 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Mervyn Dobbin and Helen Osborn*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 pp.255
The Friend 1901 p.838
Milton Keynes HER, ID ref. MMK3580
Local Meeting survey by Mervyn Dobbin, June 2015
Local Meeting archives

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

2.1. Historical background

A group of Friends in the Bedfordshire/Buckinghamshire area around Woburn was settled as early as 1655. At Woburn Sands, formerly known as Hogsty End, a half-timbered house was bought as a meeting house in 1672 and a plot of adjoining land was bought c1687 for use as a burial ground. The meeting closed in 1873 but it was revived as a mission meeting, for which in 1896 the old building was repaired. The mission work grew and in 1901 the old building was demolished and replaced by a new building on the same site. Much of the money for the new building was donated by Joseph Pease MP (1828-1903). In 1947 the meeting was discontinued and the building was leased to Buckinghamshire County Council and adapted

for use as a local public library. In recent years the library was closed and the building, with the use of half the adjoining burial ground, has recently been leased to new tenants for use as a children's day nursery.

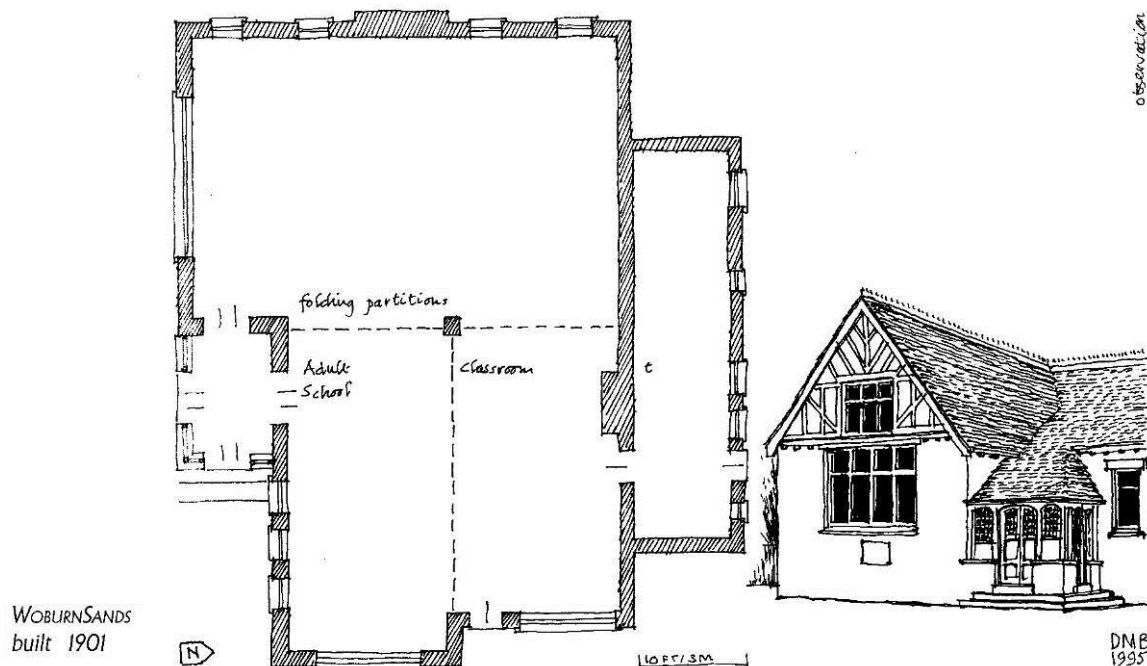


Fig.1 Ground plan and perspective view from *Butler* vol.1, p.255

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The 1901 meeting house building is in a simplified vernacular style typical of its date and is L-shaped in plan with a main range containing the original meeting room aligned north/south and a slightly lower range at right-angles under a double-pitched 'M' roof, which originally contained two classrooms. A timber entrance porch is set in the angle between the two ranges. The walls are faced with red brick laid in English bond, the pitched roofs are covered with tiles and have decorative cresting. The gabled south end of the meeting room has a large four-light mullion and transom window with a smaller window above rising into the gable which is half-timbered with pebbledash infill. Beneath the main window is a large stone plaque inscribed:

FRIENDS MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD IN THE PARISH FROM ABOUT THE YEAR 1659. THE BURIAL GROUND WAS PURCHASED IN 1674. HOGSTY END MEETING HOUSE STOOD HERE 1675-1901. THE MEETING HOUSE WAS OPENED 12 MONTH 8 1901.

The timber porch is reached up steps, and now has an approach ramp behind a brick parapet. On the east elevation facing the road, one of the cross-roofs has a hipped end, while the other has a half-timbered gable. The other external elevations are more simply treated. Across the rear elevation is a single-storey lean-to structure which is probably a later addition.

Internally the building was originally designed with three main spaces divided by full-height folding timber screens. This arrangement still survives. All three spaces have parquet floors and vertical boarded timber dados, and what appear to be modern ceilings with acoustic panels.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings related to the meeting.

2.4. Attached burial ground:

The burial ground lies on the north side of the building. It is enclosed by timber fencing, much of which has been renewed in connection with the new day-nursery use. As part of the same fencing exercise, the burial ground has been subdivided. The part next the building will be used as a children's play area. The other part, which has a number of headstones, will not be open to the children. The ground is still open for burials.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The building stands on the western edge of the village of Woburn Sands surrounded on three sides by modern houses and gardens.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and is probably not a candidate for the statutory list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

High: The present building stands on the site of an earlier building dating back to 1672 and possibly earlier. The attached burial ground has been open since the 1680s.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

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

3.2. Maintenance

The repair and maintenance of the building is the responsibility of the lessee. Substantial remedial work has been carried out to the roof, new electrics have been installed throughout the building and the fire safety system has been upgraded.

3.3. Sustainability

Sustainability concerns are a matter for the tenant.

3.4. Amenities

The building has all the amenities it needs, although provision is fairly basic.

3.5. Access

The building is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building; there is no accessible WC, no hearing loop and no special provisions for partially-sighted people. There has not been a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house has been leased to a Children's nursery for 10 years from June 2015. It is assumed that the building will be in use for 40 hours per week.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been some vandalism in the past but no general crime or heritage crime. The site has been made more secure and the burial ground fenced in connection with the new day-nursery use. The locality is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There has been no contact with the Local Neighbourhood Policing team, this is a matter for the lessee.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no plans for significant 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 is currently laid down

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use; the internal spaces are well-suited for the new day-nursery use: the meeting is currently laid down

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the meeting is currently laid down

Part 5: Category: 3