

Friends Meeting House, Wrexham

Holt Road, Wrexham, LL13 8HN

National Grid Reference: SJ 34134 50778



Statement of Significance

The Wrexham meeting house is a modern building, built on the site of a 1960s meeting house. The building has no heritage significance, but Wrexham had a meeting in the early eighteenth century, on a nearby site where the burial ground is now a small public garden.

Evidential value

The building and site appears to have has no evidential or archaeological value.

Historical value

The meeting itself has a history stretching back to the early 1700s, associated with a burial ground on Holt Street, but the existing building and site has no historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a simply designed building that meets the needs of the meeting and local community; it has modest architectural value.

Communal value

The building has high communal value as the Wrexham meeting house and a place valued by local community groups for meetings and to let.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *North Wales*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0026430*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wrexham County Borough Council*
- 1.5 National heritage body: *Cadw*
- 1.6 Community: *Acton*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/A*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *2006*
- 1.13 Architect: *Ainsley Gommon of Hawarden*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *9 November 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Gerry Craddock*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burial ground at Holt Street, Wrexham,*
NGR SJ 33706 50455
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
D.Butler, The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, 1999, Vol 2, p867-868
<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/7917/details/FORMER+FRIENDS%27+MEETING+HOUSE%2C+HOLT+STREET%2C+WREXHAM/>

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1661, Friends held meetings in a house they hired, and in 1708, Butler states that they 'bought for £32 premises as meeting house and burial ground'; the building was a pair of 'newly built cottages with gardens in the lower part of Chester Street, now Holt Street, registered the same year [1708]'. By the mid eighteenth century the meeting had ceased and by 1800 the building had been demolished, but the burial ground continued in Friends' ownership. This plot of land was exchanged with the local authority for a new meeting house site on Holt Road in 1963. The old burial ground, now known as the Peace Garden is managed by the local authority as a public open space. The new meeting house was built in

1965, a 'Vic Hallam' pre-fabricated structure designed by Kenneth H.Evans and costing £3500. When this reached the end of its functional life, a new meeting house was built on more or less the same footprint in 2006.



Fig.1: the 1965 meeting house on the same site.



Fig.2: inside the 1965 meeting house

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The single-storey meeting house built in 2006 is constructed of red brick with a concrete tiled roof, plastic rainwater goods and timber windows. It is aligned roughly north-south with the gable end facing the road and the entrance on the east elevation. This side elevation has a roughly central door, with a ramp sheltered by a lean-to canopy on posts, with three plain timber windows to the left for the main meeting room, and a corner window to the right for a smaller meeting room. The rear elevation has similar windows, and the plain roof is detailed with barge boards and boxed fascia.

Inside, the meeting house is arranged with a spacious central entrance lobby from where doors lead into all the rooms. The main meeting room used for meetings for worship is to the south end of the building, with a kitchen, lavatories and smaller meeting room to the north

end. The main meeting room has a sloping ceiling below the roof soffit with roof lights, plain plastered walls and a carpeted floor.

2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting retains some furnishings from the previous 1960s meeting house, including chairs and a table.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is on the east edge of Wrexham town centre, with a community night shelter managed by a housing association immediately adjacent to the east, and a supermarket and social housing close by. The meeting house is on a level site, said to have been a gravel pit in the past; the land rises fairly steeply behind the site. To the front of the plot, the car park and garden is bounded by a low stone wall, with a post and wire fence; there is no gate to secure the site. The access from Holt Road is shared with the night shelter. There is a detached burial ground, at the site of the demolished eighteenth century meeting house, at Holt Street, in the centre of Wrexham, at NGR SJ 33706 50455, owned and maintained by the local authority as a Peace Garden.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed. The meeting house is a simple modern building and would not meet criteria for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site is said to have been a gravel pit in the past; the Historic Environment Record does not have any information on the archaeology of the site.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey by Gerry Craddock

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: The meeting house is in good condition. The last QI was in 2011.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *N/A*

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the Meeting House and the gardens, although they do not have a 5-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. They installed a solar panel array in 2012, on the roof facing south-south-west.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has good facilities to meet its own needs and for those who hire the rooms, with two meeting rooms (one large and one small), a spacious foyer, a kitchen and two WC's in the Meeting House.

The meeting house is accessible by bus and close to the town centre. There is parking on site, but no specific secure parking for cycles.

3.5. Access

No access audit has been completed, but the building was designed to provide good access for people with disabilities; there is a hearing loop, level access within the meeting house and from outside via a ramp with handrail. There is a designated disabled person's parking bay next to the entrance ramp, and a WC suited to disabled people. Some measures have been taken to accommodate partially sighted people.

3.6. Community Use

The building is used for four hours a week by the meeting and for at least 18 hours a week by community groups. During elections it is used as a polling station. The meeting has a lettings policy which states that the building 'must not be used for activities that conflict with Quaker values and certain organisations may be refused bookings on these grounds'. The policy particularly encourages lettings to 'local voluntary organisations and charities'. The building is in a good location with parking, and is attractive because it is warm, quiet, and well-priced.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been some anti-social behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse in the grounds, related to the adjacent night shelter. The meeting has a good relationship with the management of the night shelter to resolve any issues. Some crimes or incidents have taken place but not been reported; there is no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team. The area is generally well-cared for but there is some crime and deprivation and the meeting reports that the community does not have high confidence. Heritage crime is not an issue as the building is modern.

3.8. Plans for change

The meeting is considering enclosing the currently open porch, and also plans to create a seating area in the entrance lobby, to make better use of the space.

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 serves the meeting well and offers flexibility for further alteration as required. There are no heritage constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use. The meeting house provides good quality rooms and facilities for community use, and the building offers scope for further alteration as required. There are no heritage constraints.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House. As a modern building, there are no heritage constraints and if the meeting was laid down, the building could easily be adapted for community or another use.

Part 5: Category: 4