

Friends Meeting House, Acomb

The Green, Acomb, York, YO26 5LR

National Grid Reference: SE 57149 51293



Statement of Significance

Acomb meeting house is a modest building, adapted in the beginning of the twentieth century from a former Primitive Methodist Chapel, probably built to the designs of Henry Mannering in c.1824 or 1846. It is located in an attractive position facing the Village Green and makes a positive contribution to Acomb Conservation Area; the building has medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

The property originated as a Primitive Methodist Chapel, and the twentieth century alterations illustrate the building's transformation for Quaker use. The site is within an Area of Archaeological Importance and has medium archaeological potential.

Historical value

The meeting house is of high historical value, as a building built for Non-conformist worship. It was built as a Primitive Methodist Chapel in c1824 or 1846 and was purchased for Quaker use in 1911.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has medium aesthetic architectural and townscape value for its frontage to the main street facing the Village Green.

Communal value

In addition to its historic use by the Methodists and Quakers, the meeting house is also now used by the wider community. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *York*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0012320*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *City of York Council*

- 1.5 Historic England locality: *Yorkshire and the Humber*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *York*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Acomb*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c1846*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *25 April 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Stephen Parry and Kevin Sell*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, M.D, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 718.

Neave, D. Leach, P. and Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire York and the East Riding* ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1952), pp.179.

Roberts, H.E, *Researching Yorkshire Quaker History: A Guide to Sources*, University of Hull, 2003, pp. 25-26.

Kevin Sell and Paul O’Kell, Local Meeting Survey, January 2016.

University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Carlton Hill Collection, York Monthly Meeting Estates Book, 1964 (MS/DEP/1981/2/YORK/1/40/1).

City of York Council, Acomb Conservation Area Appraisal, 2001
<https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3507/ca03acombpdf>

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

2.1. Historical background

Acomb Meeting was established in c1905. To begin with Friends met in each other’s homes and from 1906 in Foresters’ Hall until a former Primitive Methodist Chapel was purchased for £200 in 1911. The Methodist Chapel was built in c1824, according to Butler (1999), whilst Pevsner gives a date of 1846. The chapel faces Acomb Green and was built to the designs of Henry Mannering. In 1846 the building was better known as the Bensons Chapel. Following the purchase of the meeting house in 1911, £240 was spent on furnishing the building following subscriptions from local Friends, including Joseph Rowntree. The meeting house was formally opened on 4th February 1911.



Figure 1: An early nineteenth century photograph of The Green (Acomb MH Archive)

A photograph taken in the late nineteenth century appears to show the gabled frontage of the building was then brickwork, with a side porch; since then the walls have been rendered and the porch area to the north east has been remodelled.

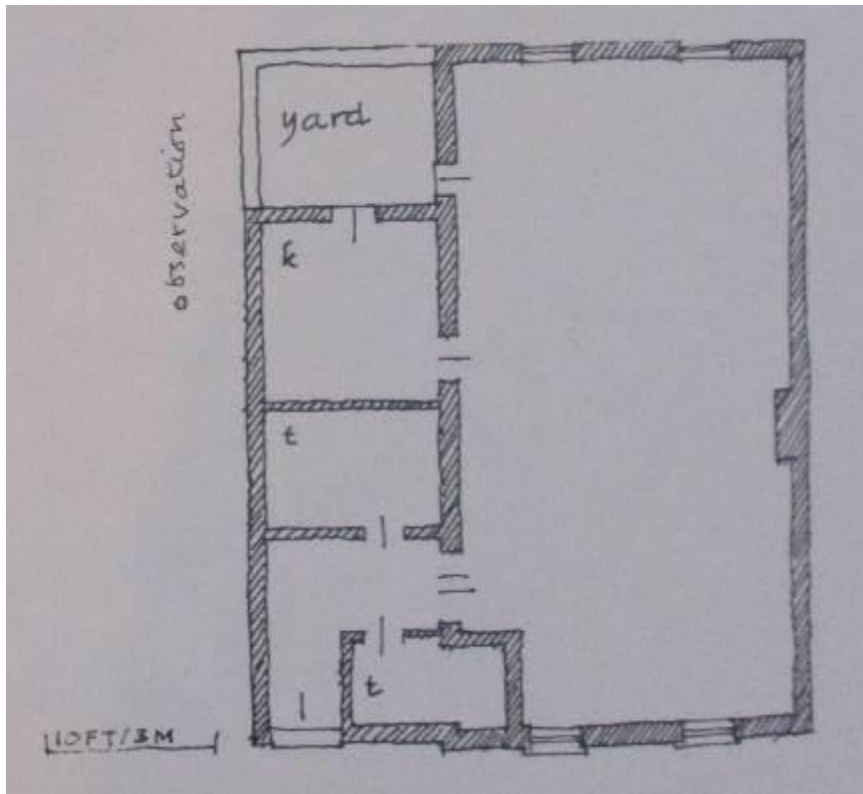


Figure 2: Ground floor plan of the meeting house, as reconstructed by Butler (north is at the bottom left corner: not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. II, p.718)

In 1981 Friends undertook a series of improvements at a cost of £5,000. In 1996 a programme of alteration and refurbishment took place at a cost of £73,000, under the

direction of Potts, Parry, Ives and Young. As part of the latter works a new kitchen was fitted, and a mezzanine floor installed which allowed the provision of a library and new smaller meeting room.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was first built in c1824 or 1846, as a Primitive Methodist Chapel probably to the designs of Henry Mannerling. It is built of red brick and covered in roughcast, with a pitched roof covered in concrete pantiles. The gable-end north-west elevation facing the green has a small 1-light window in the gable apex and two round-arched sliding sash windows at ground floor level, with a plaque above reading "FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE". Against the north-east elevation of the meeting house is a single-storey flat roofed range which provides the main entrance into the meeting house, built in red-brown brick laid in English Bond. The doorway leading into the porch is Tudor-arched with a stone head. . A catslide roof has been added above the porch against the meeting house side wall, with glazing to the gable-end. The side elevation to the north-east has a single 1-light window and the south-west is blind. The rear gable-end elevation to the south-east has two single uPVC top-hung windows.

The entrance lobby from The Green leads into a foyer area with a well-lit staircase, dating from 1996. The ground floor consists of a large meeting room occupying the rear space of the meeting house, with a corridor to the north east with kitchen and WC facilities, and a library is located to the front of the meeting house. The library contains a mezzanine floor which accommodates a small meeting room with a single timber truss exposed to the roof. The main meeting room is entered via double pine doors, the walls are plainly painted with tongue and groove pine panelling to dado height. A further door to the north east leads into the kitchen and to the south of this is a kitchen hatch. A projecting chimney breast is on the southwest wall with blocked fireplace, and the ceiling has a plain cornice with two ceiling roses. The room is lit by windows to the south -east and north-east walls and on the north-west wall is an 8- light window with frosted glass.

2.3. Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground.

Not applicable.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

Acomb is located approximately three miles west from York. The meeting house is located in Acomb Conservation Area, designated in 1975 following the merger of two conservation areas (Front Street and Acomb Green). The meeting house faces the Village Green, the green is triangular in shape and is lined with mature trees and predominately surrounded by buildings dating from the nineteenth century. To the east of the meeting house is a short brick terrace with bay windows and dormers. To the west is a modern building built in a sympathetic style reflecting the architectural style of the neighbouring properties. The village green contains a Grade II listed war memorial, and some properties surrounding the green are Grade II listed (56 and 58 The Green, 25 The Green and 5 The Green).

The meeting house is built directly fronting the pavement on a tight site; it is not set back behind a front forecourt. There are two passageways either side of the building and to the rear of the building is a garden area which is owned by the property to the south-east and not in Quaker ownership.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and not considered to be a future candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The City of York Historic Environment Record was consulted; the meeting house falls within an Area of Archaeological Importance.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable.

3.2. Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection took place in July 2015, undertaken by Graham Saxton of Potts, Parry, Ives and Young. The testing of the electrical equipment and easing of doors has been undertaken following recommendations from the quinquennial inspection. Work not yet undertaken relates to redecoration, minor repairs to the roof, attending to minor movement in the brick work at the entrance and an asbestos management survey. The meeting has sufficient funds to maintain and repair the building. The Friends undertake maintenance and repairs in accordance with the quinquennial survey.

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. The following measures have been implemented to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: use of low energy lighting.
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: implemented in accordance to the quinquennial survey.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: no special arrangements as little waste is produced.
- Transport: regular minibus and/or taxi for groups of Friends.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs including a kitchen, toilets (including one fully accessible) and two meeting rooms. There is no resident warden. No on-site car parking is available but car users are able to park along the nearby streets. Friends are able to secure bicycles to an exterior railing to the meeting house if required. The meeting house is served by a local bus service seven days a week.

3.5. Access

The meeting house has level access into and throughout the first floor but has restricted access to the first floor. The building has a fully accessible toilet and a hearing loop is installed. A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken.

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 4.5 hours each week. The meeting house is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 80 hours per week and is used for an average of 32 hours each week. The Meeting does not have a written policy but would exclude groups that are in conflict with Quaker values. The meeting assesses which groups or individuals may use the meeting house for free on a case by case basis. Users value the building for its good location, pleasant environment, parking and price.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house has been subject to both heritage crime and anti-social behaviour. In terms of heritage crime there has been incidents of lead theft which were reported to the police. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. Friends have developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

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: Although not built as a meeting house, the building lends itself well to its current use, and there is scope for further change.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already put to wider use, but there is scope for further change if needed.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: In the event of the meeting house being laid down, the building could be adapted for alternative uses, subject to planning and conservation area constraints.

Part 5: Category: 4