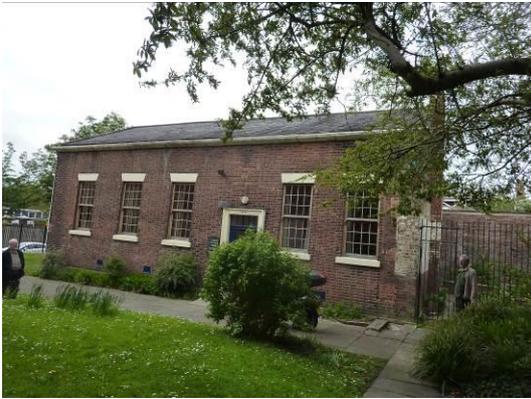


Friends Meeting House, Blackburn

Paradise Terrace, King Street, Blackburn, BB2 1LY

National Grid Reference: SD 68016 27986



Statement of Significance

The building is of high heritage significance as a purpose-built meeting house erected in 1824-6 which retains architectural integrity and some historic fittings. The site has associations with the Sudell family, the pre-eminent Blackburn merchants of the day. The meeting house stands in the historic remnants of an eighteenth century street plan, within the original context of its burial ground.

Evidential value

The building is of one principal phase with relatively minor later alterations and it retains some original or early fixtures, expressing typical meeting house design of the period. The burial ground retains headstones and has the potential to reveal information about past Quaker activity. The site represents a relic of an eighteenth-century streetscape. The evidential value is high.

Historical value

The building reflects the material resources the local Friends and Blackburn's Georgian expansion; the siting of the building in the orchard of the Sudell family's town house also relates to the religious allegiances of historic mercantile families in Blackburn. The building has a legible historic internal plan. The burial ground and its headstones are of additional historical interest; more than half the burials prior to 1840 were of children, reflecting high rates of child mortality in the area. The meeting house and burial ground have high historical significance.

Aesthetic value

The building conforms in many ways to typical meeting house design, and has a simple functional character, usual for this period. The building has medium aesthetic significance.

Communal value

The meeting house and site makes an important and positive contribution to the conservation area, giving historical depth and diversity to the local building stock, as well as providing green open space. A wide variety of local groups regularly use the premises. The site has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Pendle Hill*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0032660*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council*

1.5 Civil parish: *Blackburn*

1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/A*

1.9 Conservation Area: *King Street*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1824*

1.13 Architect (s): *William Wolstenholme (probably a builder)*

1.14 Date of visit: *17 May 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Ian McHugh*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Baines, E., *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster*, Vol 3 (1825), map of Blackburn.

Abbat, D. *Quaker Annals of Preston and Fylde* (Headley, 1931), p. 62-71

Miller, G., *Blackburn the Evolution of a Cotton Town* (Blackburn, 1951) p. 137

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, 292-295

Hartwell, C., & Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England Lancashire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2009) p. 114

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, 'King Street Conservation Area Character Appraisal', June 2009.

Ramage, I., 'Early History of Quakers in Blackburn', typescript, 1974

Lancashire Archives QSP/1796/19; QSP 2637/16; FRL/1/1/17/1-16

<http://blackburn.pendlehillquakers.org.uk/>

Chris Tonge, *Local Meeting Survey*, March 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Records of Quakers in Blackburn date back to 1655, when John Colby and other Friends met together at Rossendale Head. A request to register the house of James Slater, a hatter in Blackburn was recorded in 1760, but it is not known if a meeting was established at that time. In 1793 Blackburn Friends obtained liberty from the Quarterly Meeting to arrange their own meetings, initially in a rented room on Barley Street. In 1809 a building was obtained and registered as a meeting house. A request to register a meeting house on Bank Street in 1813 is recorded, and a meeting house at Snig Brook, north of the centre is marked on a map of 1824. The latter is mentioned by Butler, however other records refer to premises in Clayton Street. In 1823 a site for a new building on Paradise Street was offered to the Friends. It was in a cherry orchard belonging to Alice Sudell, whose family house adjoined the plot. She was the mother of Henry Sudell, the wealthiest and most influential Blackburn businessman of his day. The land cost £386.00 and after tenders for erection of the building were obtained, those prepared by William Wolstenholme were chosen. The drawings and specification survive in the Lancashire Record Office. The building was put up at a cost of £467.00.

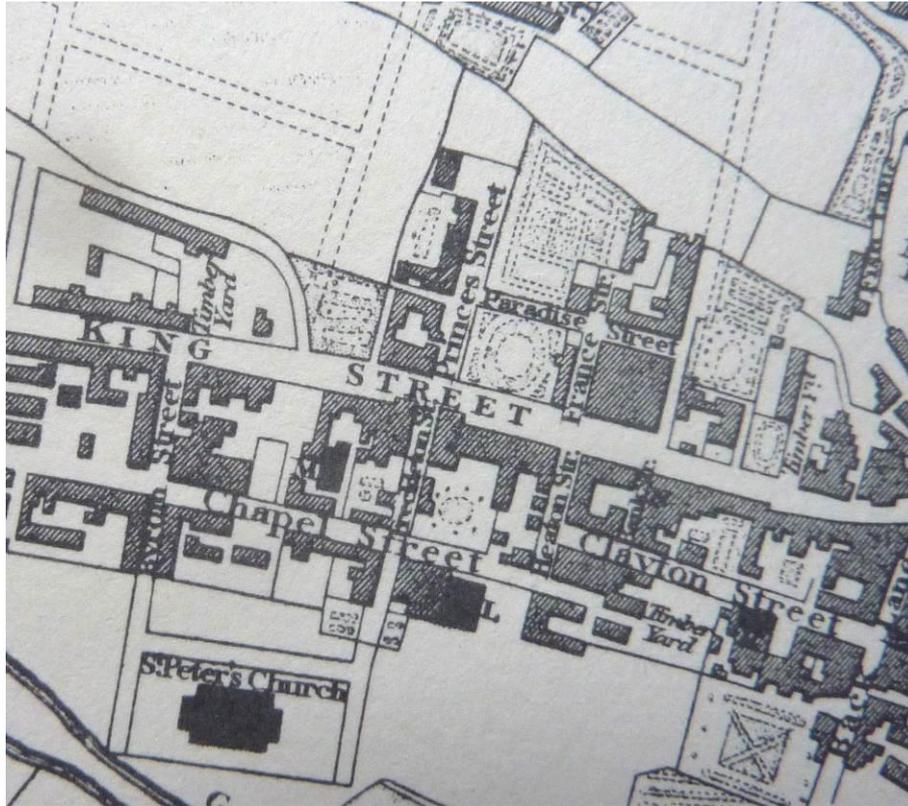


Figure 1. Detail of a map of 1824 surveyed just before the present meeting house was erected. The map shows the gardens and orchards of the houses and villas around King Street and Paradise Street, with the future site of the meeting house on the upper left side. (Baines Directory, plan surveyed by James Gillies)

This part of Blackburn had become popular with mercantile families who built houses on King Street (formerly Sudell Street). The building now numbered 26-34 King Street originated as a town house of a wealthy clothier, Richard Faulkner, in the late 18th century. It was sold to the Sudell family, who laid out a grid of streets on their land, including Paradise Street, where the meeting house stands. As industry and pollution affected the town centre, mercantile families began to leave for the more salubrious suburbs; the Sudell house survives but much altered.

Detailed records of alterations to the building survive, recording redecoration, planting in the burial ground, and works of maintenance and repair. In 1907 an adult school was established within the building, and this may have prompted interior improvements in 1908, which included a new heating system and WCs. In 1909 the 'minister's gallery' was removed from the large meeting room and other works undertaken. In 1928 an extension was built to the rear of the building to house the school. The architect was Lawrence Wilson and the builder and clerk of works was Corder Catchpool, a notable local contractor who designed the layout of the Model Village in Darwen. In the twentieth century there were routine repairs and more major works, due to dry rot. Another phase of alteration followed a survey in 1971. In 1991 vandalism caused serious damage; after this, the rear school room was demolished, new kitchen and toilets were installed and the roof replaced. The sash windows were replaced with similar modern windows. The local authority designated the area as a conservation area in 1994. The problems with vandalism continued and in 2013 a fence was erected along the roadside to restrict access to the site.

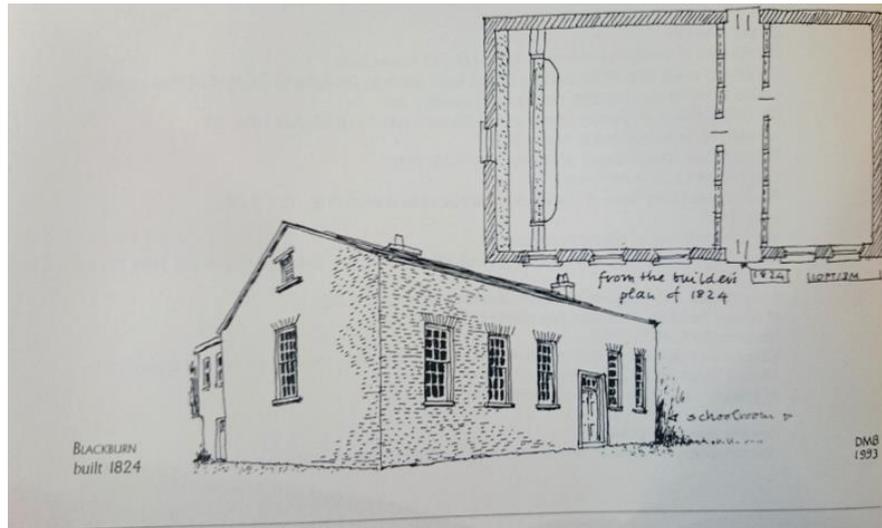


Figure 2. Plan taken from the original of 1824 in the Lancashire Record Office (not to scale) and a sketch of 1993 showing the building much as it is today (Butler, 1999, p. 292). North is to the top left.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was erected in 1824-6, probably to the designs of William Wolstenholme who provided drawings and specifications. The simple architectural treatment is characteristic of the building type and late Georgian period. It is built of brick laid in Flemish bond on a stone plinth, with a slate roof. The original building is of one tall storey and has a rectangular plan with a cross corridor which divides meeting rooms of unequal sizes. The principal entrance elevation is on the long south-east side and of six bays, with tall sash windows (modern joinery) and painted stone sills and lintels. A flat-headed moulded stone doorway in bay three (from the right) is dated 1824, with a fanlight and a panelled door possibly of nineteenth century date. There is a single sash window in the gable end, and an extension of late twentieth century date is unobtrusively built on the north side.

The principal south-east elevation expresses the interior layout. The doorway leads in to a corridor which separates the east two bay meeting room (formerly the women's room) from the larger three-bay meeting room to the west. The corridor partitions on each side include substantial remains of the movable screens separating the two rooms, including flanges for securing the panels when they were pulled up. There is a set of hat pegs in the corridor which are almost certainly original. Both meeting rooms retain matchboard panelling to dado height, which is ramped up in the larger meeting room, indicating where the position of the former stand. There is a stone fireplace, probably of early nineteenth century date in the smaller room. To the rear of the two rooms the corridor continues, serving a modern kitchen, lavatories, and leading up to a small room. The latter spaces were extended and remodelled in the late twentieth century.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are a number of simple wooden benches probably of early or mid-twentieth century date in the two meeting rooms, but most seating is provided by modern chairs.

2.4. Attached burial ground

The burial ground which stretches on two sides of the building is carefully maintained and incorporates ornamental planting. Simple headstones are laid flat in the ground. More than

sixty burials are recorded; the earliest interment took place in 1828 and the most recent in 1935.



Figure 3. The burial ground

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house survives in its original context within the fenced burial ground, set back from Paradise Street. It stands within the King Street Conservation Area on the west side of the centre of Blackburn. Access is also available via a narrow thoroughfare, Paradise Terrace, running directly from King Street, where there is a brick gateway. The Friends' burial ground is one of the only historic open green areas in the conservation area, preserving part of the site of an eighteenth century orchard. Some buildings in the immediate area reflect the Georgian past as a prime residential area, including the listed Hornby House, others have suffered more radical alteration. A good deal of vacant land and unsympathetic building is in the environs and the meeting house and its setting is an important surviving element of the historic townscape. As the area developed it became a minor centre for dissenting groups, with the establishment of a Roman Catholic Church, a synagogue and a Wesleyan chapel in the environs, probably partly reflecting the relative cheapness of land and lack of restrictive covenants. During the 20th century many of the buildings in the area were adapted or rebuilt for commercial purposes, and King Street became a principal thoroughfare until new traffic systems were introduced in 2002.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed but it is identified as a 'notable unlisted building' in the Conservation Area Appraisal. It is considered that the building may fulfil the criteria for listing at grade II because it dates to before 1840 and is reasonably intact, and for its historical associations.

2.7. Archaeological potential

The Historic Environment Record does not record any finds on the site or occupation earlier than the eighteenth century. The burial ground created on a former orchard, is probably of low-medium archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground: Optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2. Maintenance

There are sufficient funds to meet future maintenance of the building. While there is no current maintenance plan, a building condition survey is to be undertaken during 2015 and it is anticipated that this will provide the basis for future maintenance plans.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not regularly use the Sustainability Toolkit but has implemented or planned measures to reduce environmental impact:

- More efficient gas boiler to be installed during 2015.
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: very little waste produced
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: double glazed windows
- Use of curtains encouraged during winter to reduce heat losses
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: Gardening done with wildlife in mind.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has the required amenities within the building. This includes a kitchen, WCs, large and small meeting rooms and a children's room.

3.5 Access

There is level access into and through all the main spaces of the building, and there is a fully accessible WC. There is also a hearing loop.

There is no on-site parking though parking nearby is available after 3pm and at weekends. Bicycles can be parked safely on site. There are good walking, rail and bus links and an acceptable Sunday transport service.

3.6 Community Use

Rooms are offered at reasonable rates in the town-centre location and are in community use for about fifteen hours per week. There is no written lettings policy, but political or sectarian groups are not permitted to use the premises. Decisions concerning use by various groups and the charges applied are decided on a case-by-case basis.

3.7 Vulnerability to Crime

The meeting house is situated in an area with high levels of anti-social behaviour and crime and was badly affected until security fences were erected in 2014. This has improved the situation. Crimes have been reported and attempts made to contact the neighbourhood police force with little result.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no immediate 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 only: The flexible character of the building and good amenities now in place suggest that the needs of the meeting are currently met.

ii) For wider community use, additional to local meeting use: The building is already in use for other purposes, and is sufficiently adaptable to meet a range of uses.

iii). As a consequence of being laid down as a meeting house and passing into secular use: Closure of the meeting house would be regrettable. While the building would in theory be suitable for community purposes it would be difficult to identify a sustainable use which would protect the historic and architectural character of the building and its setting.

Part 5: Category: 2