

Quaker Meeting House, Bradford on Avon

1 Whiteheads Lane, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1JU

National Grid Reference: ST 82739 61077



Statement of Significance

The meeting house was converted in the early 1970s from a late Victorian house with some earlier elements and has been slightly enlarged since then. As a whole the fabric is of medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house incorporates fabric from the later eighteenth century and later nineteenth century, all of which may illuminate the past function of the building. The slate lining of the internal walls of the nineteenth-century building is a rare known example of this practice. The building is of high evidential value.

Historical value

Quakerism in Bradford on Avon has a history dating back to the 1660s, but the present site was only acquired by the Quakers in the late 1960s. The site has medium historical value, principally for its pre-Quaker existence.

Aesthetic value

The street front of the building is a pleasing example of late Victorian domestic architecture and the building is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by Quakers continuously since the 1970s and is also well-used by other local groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *West Wiltshire & East Somerset*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0013390*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wiltshire Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Bradford on Avon*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Bradford on Avon*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *probably late eighteenth and later nineteenth century*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*

1.14 Date of visit: *2 August 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Ann Warren and Klaus Huber (warden)*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.2, pp. 675-6

Fassnidge, H., *Bradford on Avon Past and Present*, 1988

Stell, C. *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, p. 210

The Friend 1970, 36, 747

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

2.1 Historical background

An early meeting house with a burial ground in Cumberwell on the northern edge of Bradford on the Bath Road was replaced in 1689 by a new meeting house on the same site. The building is shown on Andrews & Dury's 1767 map of Wiltshire. It was sold in 1813. Meanwhile, Friends purchased a site off St Margaret Street in the centre of town south of the river and built a new meeting house there in 1718, which was used until 1799 when the meeting lapsed. The building was finally sold in 1902 and demolished in 1965. The site is now a car park. The Bradford on Avon meeting revived in the 1960s and a late Victorian house next to a former Brewery in Whiteheads Lane was purchased in 1969 and converted to provide a meeting room with other accommodation and a flat on the first floor (this was later converted into 2 flats, one for a warden and one for letting). Extensive refurbishment and some further alteration were carried out in 2002/3.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The principal part of the present meeting house was built in the late nineteenth century as a dwelling house. It has walls of Bath stone and roof-coverings of pantiles. The main (east) front to the street is of ashlar masonry, three windows wide and two storeys high. On the ground floor is a central doorway flanked by windows; on the first floor are three windows. All the windows have large-paned timber sashes and all the openings have deep reveals with moulded segmental heads. The right-hand (north) bay is a cross wing with a gable-end to the street. The north and west walls are of squared and coursed masonry. The north front has doorway on the ground floor and a single window to the right of the storey above. Attached to the west front is a modern single-storey extension with walls of stone and render and a monopitch roof covered in butyl. Next to it is a modern metal stair leading to the flats on the upper floor of the meeting house. The main east range returns at the south end with a further range of building which is both older and taller. The north front of this range is faced in ashlar masonry and is two storeys high and two windows wide. The west front is of coursed rubble and is blind with a half-gable to the single-pitch roof.

The meeting house accommodation is on the ground floor. The main meeting room was originally a principal living room with a chimneybreast on one side. The walls are plain plastered, with timber skirtings and chair rails and a simple moulded cornice. Apparently all the walls in the main rooms have linings of slate, plastered over. Slate lining is mentioned in the 1867 edition of Joseph Gwilt's *Encyclopaedia of Architecture* as being used in the Manchester area, but there appear to be very few known surviving examples of the practice.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest within the building.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/A

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting fronts a steep narrow lane running north from the centre of Bradford on Avon. Immediately south of the meeting house towards the river is a building which was formerly a brewery. Behind the meeting house car park is a small four-storey mill, currently empty and derelict (see illustration above).

2.6 Listed status

The building is not listed. Although parts of the building probably date from the late eighteenth century, the main fabric dates from the later nineteenth century and has been considerably altered. The building is not a candidate for the statutory list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

There have been buildings with the present footprint on the site since at least the 1830s and probably earlier. The site has medium archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/A

3.2 Maintenance

The building was extensively refurbished in 2002/3 and is in good condition. The last Quinquennial Inspection was made in April 2012 by Jonathan Miles RICS. The building was found to be well-maintained with no major structural problems. Most of the recommended work has been carried out. There is a 5-year maintenance and repair plan. The meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the building.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit or equivalent and since 2011 has implemented several measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: improving insulation, some double-glazing, most lighting now LEDs, new efficient boiler installed and thermostat made tamper-proof
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: water meter in warden's flat, Council collects green waste from the lane, paper and bottles etc are recycled
- Wildlife and nature conservation: Peace garden is maintained with wildlife in mind, swift boxes have been fitted to the wall.
- Transport: cycle racks have been installed.

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate and would not consider obtaining one because energy is regularly monitored and everything possible has been done to reduce consumption.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs within the meeting house. These include a large meeting room, library, small room, kitchen and lavatories. There is a self-contained flat on the first floor occupied by the warden, and a second small flat. The meeting is easily accessible by public transport. There is parking space for 8 cars on site.

3.5 Access

The ground floor of the meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access from outside and throughout this floor, an accessible toilet, a hearing loop and some facilities for partially-sighted people (though these are being reviewed). A Disability Access Audit was conducted in 2002/3 and most of the recommendations were implemented in the subsequent refurbishment.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 6 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 78 hours per week. It is used for an average of about 45 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy on the website. No alcohol or specific political party use is permitted. Free use was until recently given to those with shared values (e.g. Churches Together, Amnesty and Climate Friendly Bradford); now all users will pay the standard rate. Users value the building for its town centre location, and as a calm, quiet warm space.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are few signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site, partly because the warden is vigilant. In 2012 an attempt was made to steal the lead from the toilet roof but the thieves were disturbed (they were later arrested but released). The roof is now covered with grey butyl. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low levels of deprivation and high community confidence. There is an established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

It is planned to add solar panels to the building when they provide a fair return on investment.

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 is a recent conversion and has all the facilities it currently needs, but 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: as above, there is probably some scope for change if required, subject to Planning and Conservation Area constraints.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the building could certainly serve another secular use, if closed.

Part 5: Category: 3