

Friends Meeting House, Bromley

46 Ravensbourne Road, Bromley, London, BR1 1HP

National Grid Reference: TQ 40196 68816



Statement of Significance

A modest design of the early 1960s, well-detailed and little-altered, and of overall medium significance.

Evidential value

The building is of post-war date, and is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The building is of relatively recent date, and is of low historical value.

Aesthetic value

Although architecturally unassuming, the building is well-detailed, and won a Civic Trust Award in 1962. The interior offers pleasant spaces with attractive original finishes. The meeting house is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house is well used by local community groups, and this level of use could be enhanced by building improvements. It is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *South East London*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0028600*
- 1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *London Borough of Bromley*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *London*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Bromley NPA*
- 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): *1961-2*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Paul V. Mauger*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *8 October 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Beth Allen*
- 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. 1, pp. 278-9
Bromley and Kentish Times, 9 March 1962
Local Meeting Survey, by Fiona Swift, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

The predecessor Meeting was at Hayes, where Friends met at 19 Holwood Road until 1960. In 1959 Eric Corby prepared plans for a meeting house at Bromley, but these were not progressed, and Paul V. Mauger, a Quaker, was appointed instead. The present site when acquired was occupied by The Vale, a house of about 1882 which had been converted into flats. This was demolished and a meeting house seating 100 built in 1961-2 from Mauger's designs, at a cost of £15,000. The builders were Syme & Duncan of Beckenham. The design won a Civic Trust Award in 1962.

In 2011 a canopy was built at the side of the meeting house (having been allowed on appeal), providing outdoor protection for playgroup users.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

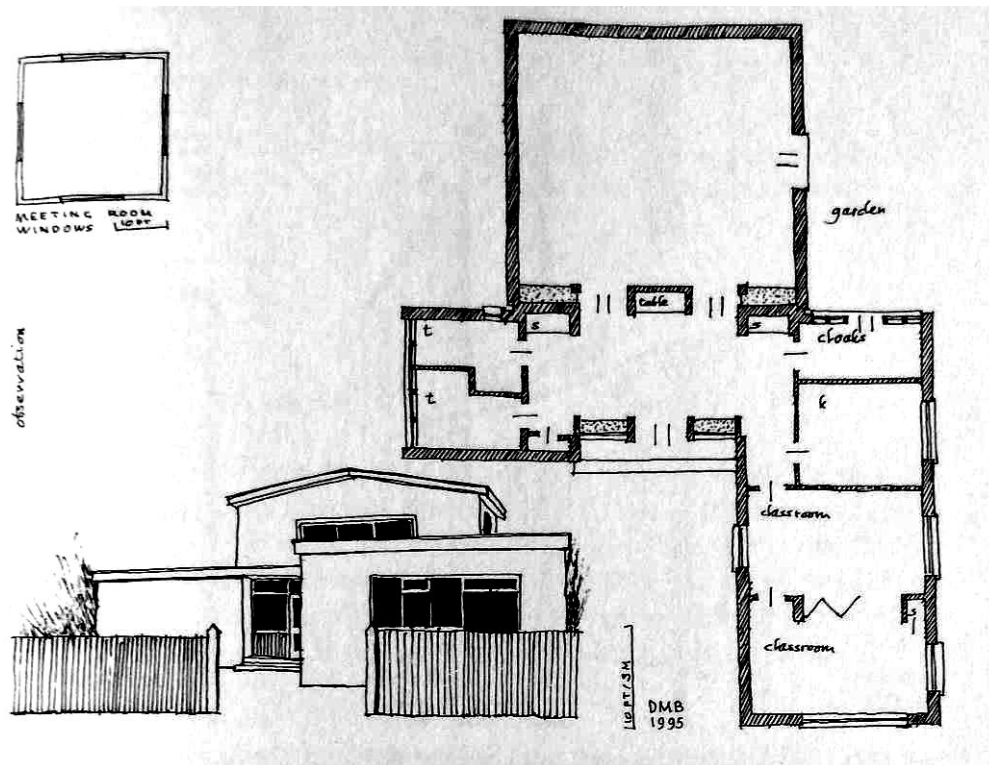


Figure 1: Plan and elevation, from Butler, 1999, p.279

The meeting house was built in 1961-2, from designs by Paul Mauger. It is of brick cavity wall construction, consisting of a double height space for the meeting room, which is clad with pale stock bricks and has a shallow pitched copper-clad roof, with lower ancillary spaces projecting in front, of a darker, plum-coloured brick, and with flat, felt roofs and timber fascias. The windows in the lower element are of metal Crittall type, while the high level windows to the meeting room are of stained hardwood, set within raised concrete surrounds. At the side is a lightweight canopy over a play area, added c.2011.



Figure 2: Hat hook

The ancillary facilities at the front are L-shaped on plan, incorporating a classroom with foldable partition, kitchen and WCs. Inside the entrance area original boarded timber detailing survives in the doors that connect to the meeting room, in a library area, and in two integral bench seats on either side of the entrance. The meeting room itself is a square double height space, lit on all four sides by rectangular three-light high-level windows. There

is a polished woodblock floor, broad perimeter chair rail, and plastered walls. Acoustic panels line part of the walls and the pyramidal ceiling. Fixed furnishings include hat hooks said to have come from the old meeting house at Peckham (information from Beth Allen, figure 2).

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room seating consists of individual timber chairs. On the wall is a framed calligraphic panel on the theme of George Fox and some of the early Friends, by Elisabeth Barrow, 1995.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house site lies on a corner site within a predominantly residential street, close to the High Street and Bromley South railway station. The garden is at the front, now largely given over to car parking, but there are also a number of mature trees, including a fine catalpa. The building is cut into the site, rising sharply behind. A high-rise residential development forms the backdrop, one of several similar developments now rising in this part of Bromley and changing the character of the area.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed. Although an attractive and little-altered design, the building is not considered to be a candidate for listing. It may be considered a candidate for local listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Low. The meeting house is on the site of an 1880s villa.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

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

3.2. Maintenance

The building is surrounded by a large number of mature trees, which may explain the lack of conventional gutters and deep overhang of the roof of the main meeting room. A QIR was carried out in April 2015 and its recommendations have yet to be implemented. Some minor cracking was noted, possibly associated with structural movement caused by tree roots and shrinkable clay. Recommendations were made about areas where asbestos is present, and also for improving energy efficiency. Not specifically mentioned in the QIR, but noted at the time of the visit, were areas of timber decay, e.g. in the fascia boarding.

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. It is currently reviewing measures to improve its sustainability. These might include cavity wall and roof insulation and double glazing in the windows, as recommended in the QIR. However, resources are limited. The meeting is well placed for local public transport, being a short walk from the railway station

and bus routes. There is off-street parking for up to six vehicles, but it has not been confirmed whether there is secure parking for bicycles.

3.4. Amenities

The Meeting considers that it has the amenities it needs. These include a kitchen, WCs, a meeting for worship and a separate social room.

3.5. Access

There is step-free access into and circulation around the meeting house, and there is a hearing loop. However, the WCs are not designed to accessible standards, nor are there facilities for partially-sighted people. An access audit will be undertaken.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house and its facilities for approximately four hours each week. Others use them for approximately forty-eight out of a possible seventy-six hours. The meeting follows the lettings policy prescribed by BYM. Friends of the Earth and the Film Co-op use the meeting house free of charge but donations are requested. Users cite the peaceful atmosphere, good location i.e. close to public transport, and availability of parking.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting house is in an area considered to be generally well cared for, with low levels of crime and social deprivation, and there is no experience of heritage or other crime. Contact has therefore not been made with the local neighbourhood policing team, but would be if required.

3.8. Plans for change

Lettings are being reviewed to increase use. No other changes are being considered, other than those for repair and improved energy efficiency described above.

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 building is fit for purpose, but may be adapted as required and to meet current legislative requirements (e.g. to provide accessible WCs). There are no formal heritage constraints, although the original internal timber furnishings and finishes add to the character of the place.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building already is used by the wider community. This could no doubt be increased, especially with upgraded facilities and insulation. Again, heritage issues would not be a major factor.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building has modest local heritage value, and in the event of being laid down it would be desirable for a suitable alternative use to be found. However, the building needs investment to meet current standards, and an alternative might lie in site redevelopment (subject to planning).

Part 5: Category: 3