

Friends Meeting House, Fritchley

Chapel Street, Fritchley, Belper, DE56 2FR

National Grid Reference: SK 35791 53011



Statement of Significance

The purpose-built late nineteenth century meeting house has special interest for the character and appearance of the building and its grounds in the conservation area, for its historical connections with dissenting Quaker meetings, and for its largely intact furnishings. The building and site has high heritage significance.

Evidential value

The building incorporates evidence for historic changes, and is testament to the resources of Fritchley Quakers. Evidential value is relatively low.

Historical value

The meeting house has special historical interest as the premises of a dissenting meeting which did not become part of the Quaker mainstream until the 1960s, after a century of independence. It had links with similar dissenting meetings in the UK and in Canada. The Quaker community was very prominent in the village of Fritchley, playing an important part in the nineteenth and twentieth century history of the place. There is high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is of relatively low key appearance, although it utilises brick as a building material in an area where stone was more usual. The interior, which retains the original partitions and furnishings, including loose furnishings, has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house acts as a focus for the activities of local Friends and although there is relatively little community use of the building, it has communal value as part of the local scene, but is of relatively low communal value overall.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Nottingham and Derbyshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0032090*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Amber Valley Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Crich*

1.7 Listed status: *Not Listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/A*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Fritchley*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1897*

1.13 Architect (s): *J. A. Woore*

1.14 Date of visit: *19 November 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Jill Holley*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Three houses in the village are in Quaker ownership and privately rented*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Lowndes, W. *The Quakers of Fritchley* (Fritchley Preparative Meeting, rev. ed. 1986)

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, p. 127-8

Hartwell, C. Pevsner, N. Williamson, E., *The Buildings of England Derbyshire* (Yale University Press, London and New Haven, forthcoming).

Holley, J., Volunteer Form, November 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1863 a Quaker named John Grant Sargent bought a mill in Fritchley which had been converted to make bobbins. He settled in the village. At around this time the Society of Friends had been moving towards a greater emphasis on scriptural rather than inward spiritual beliefs, with a more relaxed attitude to the traditional dress, courtesies and forms of speech which had characterised the Quaker way of life. Sargent was opposed to these changes and began a separate meeting in Fritchley initially in the 'cottage meeting house' adjoining the bobbin mill. Although the meeting maintained a relationship with that at Toadhole Furnace (now laid down) and used the burial ground there, the Fritchley meeting became a centre for dissent from mainstream Quaker thought and practices, identifying itself as a 'chosen remnant'. A formal split or schism with the London Yearly Meeting was in effect by 1868. The Fritchley meeting maintained links with other dissenting Quakers in the UK and in North America.

In 1896 the existing meeting house was found to be in poor repair and the decision to build a new one was taken. The designer was J. A. Woore, who went on to go into partnership with Naylor & Sale, a Derby architectural practice. A firm connected with Woore continues in Derby as Woore Watkins Architects. Builders mentioned in the records are Joseph Radford and Hugh Wake, of whom the latter was the joiner responsible for the furnishings. The building was designed to incorporate an extensive library which had been started in 1873. The meeting house opened in October 1897 and was registered as a place of worship in 1898. Thirty-five Fritchley Quakers emigrated to Canada in the period up to 1913. They set up a meeting house in Saskatchewan called Halcyonia, which maintained links with Fritchley until the late twentieth century. It still exists and is described as an independent conservative meeting. During 1909 J. A. Woore built or rebuilt four houses in Fritchley, Quaker properties which came to the meeting as a bequest, three of which continue in Quaker ownership. Electricity was installed in the meeting house in 1960. The Fritchley meeting became part of the wider Quaker community and joined the London Yearly Meeting in 1968, after a century as an independent meeting.

Disabled toilet facilities were added in 2004-5.



Figure 1. The meeting house in c. 1908 (Fritchley meeting collection).

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is constructed of hard red brick laid in English garden wall bond with a slate roof, bracketed eaves cornice, concrete dressings and sparing use of blue brick. The building has a pitched roof, and is of single volume and of one storey, with attached boiler house and toilets at the rear, also executed in brickwork. The elevations are articulated with slightly sunk panels defining the bays. The main entrance is in the gable end, with a central door with later timber canopy (shown in a photograph of 1979). It is a double door with strip fanlight, apparently the original or a copy of the original joinery. It is flanked by sash windows. A plaque above the door bears the words: 'Friends' Meeting House 1897'. The side elevations each have three large sash windows. The south-west side incorporates a door. This opening and the windows show signs of alteration, suggesting that the windows have been replaced and reduced in size at some point, probably in the mid twentieth century and before 1979, when a photograph shows them as they are now.

The interior is subdivided by means of matchboard partitions which do not rise to the full height of the ceiling. They form two rooms flanking a passageway which gives access to the main meeting room. The timber door into the main room from the passage appears to be a replacement or an insertion. There is an arch-braced timber roof ceiled in at tie-beam level. Fixed furnishings take the form of a matchboard dado and a stand at one end of the room. Of the smaller rooms, each is connected to the central corridor by two sets of doors, although there is no sign that the spaces were ever subdivided. One has been adapted to provide basic kitchen facilities and the other is an office with coat hooks and the meeting's library in glass-fronted bookshelves and other shelves, probably not all of the same period.

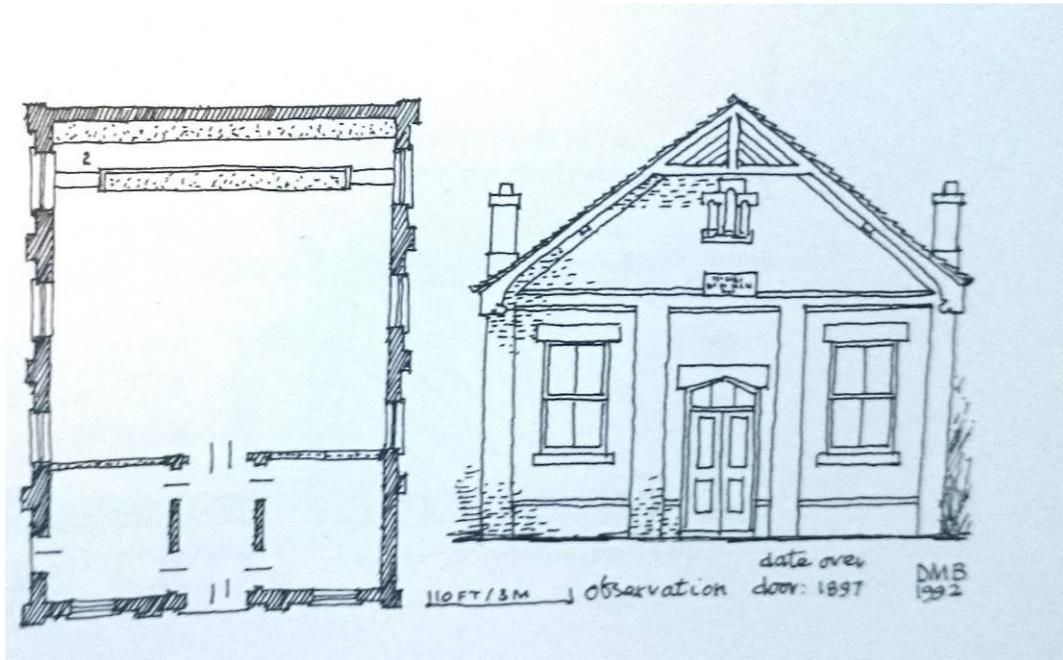


Figure 2. Plan and elevation (Butler, not to scale).

2.3. Loose furnishings

The main room retains original wooden benches. There is a table of unknown date with barley-twist legs.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None. The plot is maintained as a garden.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

Fritchley is a small village to the south of Crich which is now a quiet residential settlement but was formerly a minor industrial centre with a bobbin mill and mineral railway. The nearest meeting house was at Toadhole Furnace, around six miles distant, where the building survives in domestic use and is dated 1743. The burial ground in this location was used by the Fritchley Friends, who also occasionally used that at Bakewell. In accordance with their beliefs the graves did not initially have markers. The Fritchley meeting house stands near the centre of the village at the corner of Chapel Street and Kirkham Lane within its own grounds. The main frontage faces on to Chapel Street where there is a brick wall which drops at the centre with railings flanking an ironwork gate. The other walls have shaped coping stones and pyramidal finials. The general arrangement appears to conform with a photograph of c. 1908, although the Kirkham Lane wall appears to have been altered or rebuilt.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed and considered to be a marginal candidate for listing on account of the relatively unaltered condition and in particular the full set of furnishings, and for historical associations with dissenting Quaker thought and practice.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

None has been identified.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Fair.

ii) Attached burial ground: None, but the small garden is in optimal/generally satisfactory condition.

3.2. Maintenance

A QI was undertaken in 2012 and a number of issues identified. These include problems of damage to and poor condition of the chimneystack. Removal was recommended. The principal problem identified was caused by damp, which is affecting the panelling with the potential to cause damage to the floor as well. A new damp-proof course and complete repointing with replacement of defective brickwork will be required.

It was recommended that the electricity system should be checked by a qualified person, and that a gas safety certificate should be obtained if there is not a current certificate in place.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented the following measures:

- Uses a green tariff for gas and electricity
- Waste is recycled and environmentally friendly cleaning products used
- There is a water butt and composting for garden waste
- There is a commitment to avoid environmentally damaging materials for maintenance and refurbishment
- The garden is managed for wildlife with bird and bat boxes, etc.
- A system of offering lifts to meetings is in place and there is secure bicycle parking.

3.4. Amenities

There is a small kitchen suitable for making drinks but not for preparing food on any scale.

A fully accessible toilet is attached.

3.5. Access

There is on-street parking immediately outside the meeting house, which has level access.

A fully accessible toilet is attached.

The building is not suitable for a hearing loop, and those with visual impairments are offered personal assistance at the meeting house.

3.6. Community Use

The building is used for local and general elections.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The area is situated in a well-cared for area with strong community engagement and with little crime or antisocial behaviour.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no plans for change in the foreseeable future.

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: There is limited scope for change if the present furnishings are to be retained. The partitioned areas are not soundproof, as the partitions do not reach the ceiling, so it is not possible to have more than one activity at a time if noise levels are to be preserved.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local meeting use: It would be possible in theory to host certain groups, perhaps for meetings, but the furnishings mean that there are constraints on the type of activity which could be accommodated.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: There would be constraints on alteration to the exterior and immediate setting as the village is a conservation area. It would be regrettable if the meeting house was laid down. The building is in fairly intact condition, with original furnishings, reflecting its original character and appearance, with strong local historical associations with the area and with the history of dissent within the Quaker movement.

Part 5: Category: 2