

Friends Meeting House, Great Ayton

High Green, Great Ayton, Middlesbrough, TS9 6BJ

National Grid Reference: NZ 56308 10633



Statement of Significance

The Great Ayton site was acquired in 1700 for both a meeting house and a burial ground, and the present building was opened in 1722. From 1841 it was closely associated with the adjacent Quaker school. The building was enlarged and greatly altered in 1967 to allow it to function as a performance space for the school and was again refurbished in 2001, after the school had closed. As a result of these alterations, all sense of the original character of the interior has been lost. The burial ground has been enlarged several times and is now of a considerable size. Overall, the building and burial ground together are of high heritage significance, despite the altered state of the meeting house interior.

Evidential value

The external walls of the original 1720s building largely survive and the fabric may contain other surviving elements of the early building. The building and burial ground are of medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is of high historical value as a centre of Quaker worship since the 1720s, for its association with prominent local Quaker families and for its long association with the Friends' North of England Agricultural School between 1841 and 1996.

Aesthetic value

The stone exterior of the building towards Ayton Green is of modest aesthetic value, but does make a contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The original interior has been lost. The building is of medium aesthetic value

Communal value

As a place of Quaker worship, having a long association with a prominent local school, and now well-used by other community groups, the meeting house has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Teesdale & Cleveland*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0026360*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Hambleton District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Great Ayton*
- 1.7 Listed status: *II*
- 1.8 NHLE: *1150641*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Great Ayton*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c.1722; extended 1967/68; refurbished 2000/1*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established; Charles Spence; Edwin Trotter*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *17 May 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Carole Avison*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Friends' school east central building (Grade II), Friends' school west central building (Grade II), Numbers 6 and 8 (lodge to Friends' school) and wall attached (Grade II).*

There are also a number of detached burial grounds on the North York moors, at Danby Botton, Didderhow, Guisborough, Laskill, Lealholm, Lowna and Skelton (see section 2.5 below)

1.18 Attached burial ground: Yes

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.2 pp.723-5.
Stell Christopher, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting houses in the North of England*, RCHM 1994. pp.209
North Yorkshire County Council Historic Environment Record, ref. DNY 3151
Bennetts, Jim, *Guisborough Monthly Meeting Burial Grounds*, typescript (1976)
Local Meeting survey by Carole Avison, December 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

A meeting at Great Ayton was settled in 1698 and an old house was purchased in 1700 'with 8 yards on the backside with a convenience to build a meeting house'. A new building had been erected by 1722, with a burial ground attached. Among the Quakers in the Ayton meeting were members of the Richardson family, who were prosperous farmers and tanners. William Richardson erected a large and handsome house for himself next to the meeting house in 1760, and also purchased land to extend the Quaker burial ground in 1787. On his death in 1794 the house passed to Philip Heselton, his son in law. Heselton's son, also Philip, sold the house and 74 acres of land in 1841 to Thomas Richardson, who had made a fortune as a founding partner of the Quaker broking house Richardson, Overend and Gurney, and was the founder and principal benefactor of the Friends' North of England Agricultural School. The school was established in Heselton's mansion, which was soon enlarged, and the pupils attended meetings in the adjacent meeting house, which was separated from the mansion by a passage with an archway facing Ayton High Green. According to Butler, Thomas Richardson also purchased additional land for the burial ground, which was further enlarged in 1873 and 1885.

In 1967 the old meeting house building was considerably enlarged at the east end to accommodate a performance space for the school and the internal partitions and fittings of the meeting house were swept away, though the ceilings with their ventilator recesses were retained. After the school closed in 1996, most of its buildings were converted to residential use. The meeting house was refurbished in 2001 for Quaker use and further alterations were made to the interior, including the insertion of an upper floor at the west end.

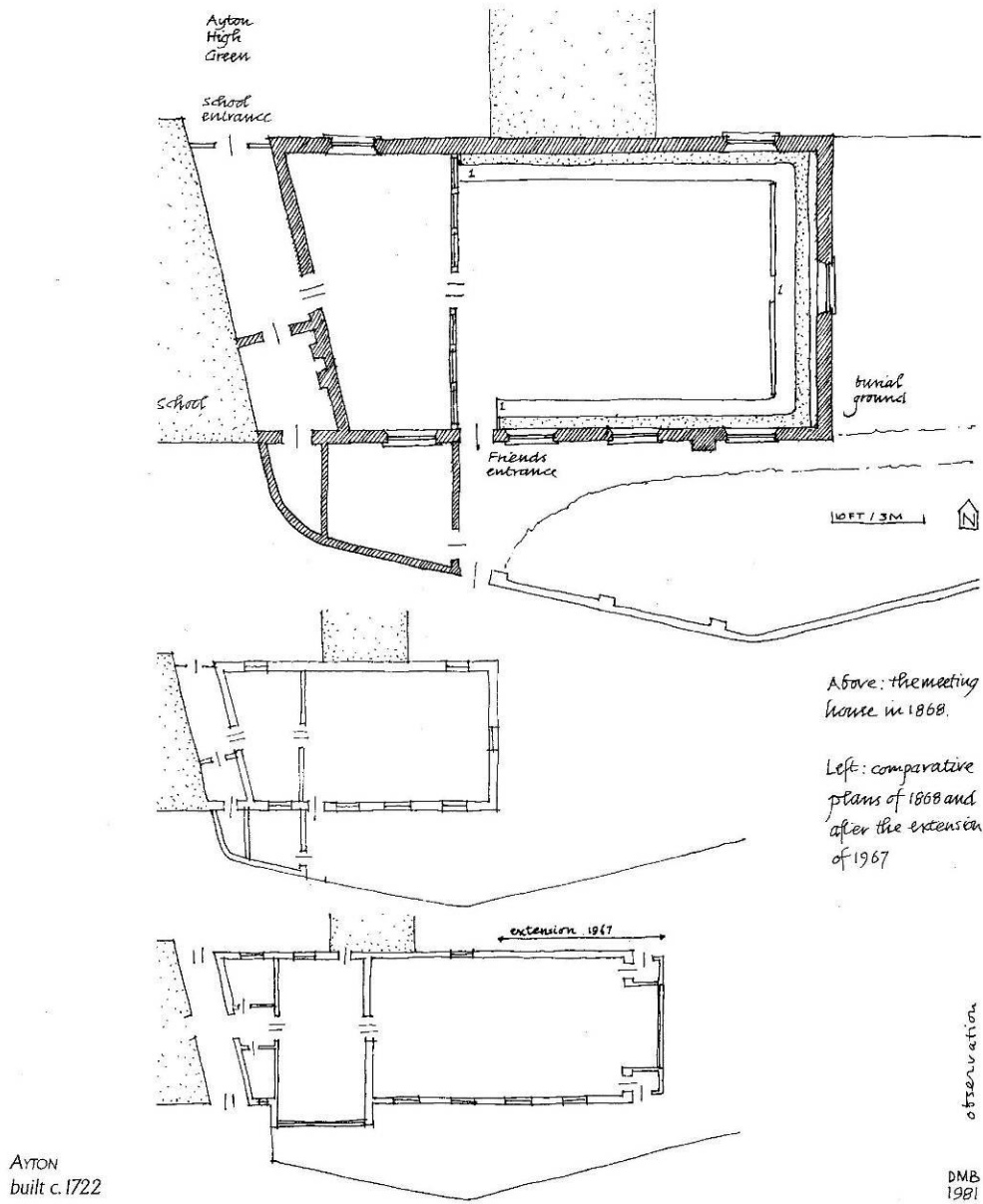


Fig.1 Plans showing the development of the meeting house to 1967, *Butler 1999 vol.2 p.723*.
The plans do not show the latest (2001) changes at the west end of the building.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The High Green at Great Ayton is a rectangular open space at the centre of the village. The meeting house built in the 1720s lies at the south east corner, with only a short section of its north elevation exposed. What can be seen is a front of coursed, squared tooled sandstone with a plinth, now all painted, and a pitched roof covered in graduated Lakeland slate. To the right of the front is a stone elliptical arch, originally for a cross-passage between the 1760s mansion and the meeting house, but now with a modern timber and glass screen which forms the main meeting house entrance. To the left of the arch are two rectangular window openings, both with modern 8/8 small-paned sash windows. The left-hand opening was made in 1967. The remainder of the north wall, visible from the burial ground, is faced with red brick and dates largely from the 1960s or later. The south side of the building is faced with coursed squared sandstone with large modern window openings. The modern east side towards the burial ground is weatherboarded with a large six-light window.

The interior was completely reconfigured in the 1960s and again in 2001. There was originally a small room reached from the cross passage with the main meeting room beyond it to the east, which could be entered directly by a door on the south side (see fig.1). The older part of the building now contains a large lobby with toilets on the lower floor, a first floor room and a large kitchen. The only evidence of the original arrangement is the ceiling with its ventilator recess. The present meeting room is wholly within the 1967 extension and is a large light space with windows on three sides overlooking the burial ground.

2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting room contains a large number of oak benches, probably of early twentieth century date. There are also several oak chairs and benches of similar date with memorial inscriptions to former school pupils.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

The large burial ground is enclosed on two sides by a stone wall and on the other sides by timber fences. There are several mature specimen trees and a large number of grave markers, none apparently earlier than 1825 (Stell). Several members of the Richardson family are buried here. The ground is still occasionally used for burials and more frequently for the scattering of ashes.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

Great Ayton is an attractive North Yorkshire village, popular with commuters. The meeting house is tucked inconspicuously into the south east corner of Ayton High Green, which is the picturesque focus of the village, a rectangular open space. Behind the meeting house the grounds of the former school have been built-up with modern residential blocks of traditional form and materials, separated from the meeting house by a newly-built stone wall on an old boundary line. To the east of the meeting house is the large burial ground.

Great Ayton meeting was until recently part of the Guisborough monthly meeting. A note prepared in 1976 by Jim Bennetts (in local meeting collection) lists all the known detached burial grounds in the monthly meeting's area, some of which were attached to meeting houses which have now closed. Those for which the Guisborough meeting was then responsible were as follows:

Danby Bottom NGR NY688049; Diddershaw NGR NZ 683078; Guisborough NGR NZ 611159; Laskill NGR SE 564907; Lealholm NZ761076; Lowna NGR 685917 (currently in the care of the Kirkbymoorside meeting); Skelton NGR NZ670179

Mr Bennetts' note also lists two other detached burials ground (Great Broughton NGR NZ544062, and St Helena NGR NZ684036) for which the Guisborough meeting had no title.

2.6. Listed status

The building is properly listed at Grade II but the address and list description should be revised. The building is presently listed as 'Friends School East Building', but the school closed in 1996 and has been converted to residential use. The address should revert to the original form as 'Friends Meeting House'. The description is factually inaccurate on several points, and needs a complete overhaul.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Great Ayton is an old settlement and the meeting house stands at the side of the central Green. The meeting house site is considered of high 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): Optimal/generally satisfactory

3.2. Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection was made in February 2014 by Silverstone Building Consultancy Ltd of Newcastle. The building was found to be generally in good condition with only minor defects. All electrical issues have been dealt with but some minor works have not been done. The trees in the burial ground are also inspected regularly and some works have been carried out.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit, but has implemented some measures to reduce its environmental impact. Double glazing was installed in 2000. A new boiler has been installed recently. Paper and plastics are recycled wherever possible. Car sharing is encouraged because there is no public transport on Sundays. The meeting house does not have an EPC.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house - including meeting rooms, library, children's room, kitchen and toilets. There is a weekday bus service but no buses in the evenings or on Sundays. There is some on-street parking and a free car park nearby. There is no secure storage for bicycles.

3.5. Access

There is ramped access to the building by a portable ramp over the (listed) stone steps at the entrance, or via the burial ground at the rear, though this is sloped in parts. There is level access to all ground floor rooms, there is a WC suitable for disabled people and also a hearing loop. There are no special facilities for partially-sighted people. The meeting has not commissioned a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the building for approximately 5 hours per week. The meeting house is available for hire for a theoretical total of 216 hours per week (3 x 72). The pattern of use is varied and more intensive during school terms when the building may be used for up to 24 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy; no alcohol or smoking is permitted, nor use by groups like the National Front or others inimical to Quaker values. Free use may be permitted to groups strongly supported by Quakers. Users value the central location in the village, reasonable charges, good ambience and warm welcome.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been no evidence of general crime or heritage crime. There has been some occasional minor anti-social behaviour by young people in the burial ground. The area is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. Friends have developed a liaison with the local police.

3.8. Plans for change

There no plans for change to the building

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 has been considerably enlarged and altered from its original early eighteenth century state and much of the building is wholly modern. There is scope for further alteration if required to meet changing needs.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: There is scope for internal alteration, but probably not enlargement.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: If the meeting were to be laid down the building would probably find a suitable alternative use, though the large burial ground which encloses one side might prove a constraint.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description (s)

Name: **FRIENDS' SCHOOL EAST BUILDING**

List entry Number: 1150641

Location

FRIENDS' SCHOOL EAST BUILDING, HIGH GREEN

County: North Yorkshire

District: Hambleton

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Great Ayton

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 23-Jun-1966

Date of most recent amendment: 08-May-1989

List entry Description

GREAT AYTON HIGH GREEN NZ 5610 (south side) 12/45 Friends' School East Building (formerly listed 23.6.66 as Friends' Meeting House GV II Friends' Meeting House, now part of school. Circa 1800. Possibly originally the stable for the house (now School East Central Building, qv). Coursed, squared tooled stone with plinth; graduated Lakeland slate roof. 1½ storeys, 2 bays visible on front. At right an elliptical carriage arch with small window above. 2 large windows at left, one a sash, the other a C20 pivoted casement, both with glazing bars, keystones and projecting cills. North elevation 4 bays to east; west part behind archway completely glazed. Interior converted to teaching space.

Listing NGR: NZ5631910635

Name: **FRIENDS' SCHOOL EAST CENTRAL BUILDING**

List entry Number: 1150642

Location

FRIENDS' SCHOOL EAST CENTRAL BUILDING, HIGH GREEN

County: North Yorkshire

District: Hambleton

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Great Ayton

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 23-Jun-1966

List entry Description

GREAT AYTON, HIGH GREEN (south side), Friends' School East Central Building

23.6.66

GV II

House, now part of school. Circa 1800. Coursed squared tooled stone with plinth, alternating quoins and moulded eaves cornice. Graduated Lakeland slate roof, stone stacks. 3 storeys and attic, 5 bays. Central Roman Doric porch, distyle in antis, up 4 steps. Sash windows with glazing bars, shorter on second floor. 3 added stone-coped attic gables with kneelers; end chimneys. Rear elevation shows central Venetian stair window.

Listing NGR: NZ5629910628

Name: **FRIENDS' SCHOOL WEST CENTRAL BUILDING**

List entry Number: 1315246

Location

FRIENDS' SCHOOL WEST CENTRAL BUILDING, HIGH GREEN

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: North Yorkshire

District: Hambleton

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Great Ayton

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 08-May-1989

List entry Description

GREAT AYTON, HIGH GREEN (south side), Friends' School West Central Building

GV II

School building, dated 1842 on east front. Rendered, with stone plinth and floor bands. Tooled, dressed stone with cill bands on east. Lakeland slate roof, stone stacks. 3 storeys, 6 windows. At left 4 steps to 6-panel double door with plain overlight. 12-pane sash windows in deep reveals with projecting cills. Bracketed eaves gutter. 2 corniced ridge stacks. 3-storey, 6-bay east front has 16-pane sashes with segmental heads. Central shaped raised parapet with clockface and date panel. Square bellcote with ball finial above.

Listing NGR: NZ5628810612

Name: NUMBERS 6 AND 8 (LODGE TO FRIENDS' SCHOOL) AND WALL ATTACHED

List entry Number: 1150658

Location

NUMBERS 6 AND 8 (LODGE TO FRIENDS' SCHOOL) AND WALL ATTACHED, STATION ROAD

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: North Yorkshire

District: Hambleton

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Great Ayton

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 08-May-1989

List entry Description

GREAT AYTON STATION ROAD NZ 5610 (south west side) 12/84 Nos 6 and 8 (Lodge to Friends' School) and wall attached - II Row of cottages altered to form lodge. C18 or early C19. Coursed squared tooled sandstone; Welsh slate roof with stone trim, brick stack. 2 storeys, 6 windows, irregular. Yorkshire sashes with glazing bars (except for 2 later C19 sashes). Entrance at right rear, through stone arch in wall continuous with right return: 4-panel door in plain surround; small first-floor outshut above. Stone gable copings and one ridge stack. Small round window in left return.

Listing NGR: NZ5638710634