

Friends Meeting House, Hartshill

112 Castle Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, CV10 0SG

National Grid Reference: SP 32619 94471



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has medium heritage value. Its modern design by Frederick Gregory creates a light and spacious interior and an exterior which is bold and striking. It was built on the site of an earlier Quaker school and master's house dating from the mid eighteenth century; the site has high heritage significance.

Evidential value

The current meeting house is a modern building with low evidential value. However, it was built on the site of an earlier Quaker school and master's house which gives the site medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house itself has low historical significance. However, the site has high historical value as a site of a former Quaker school which adds to the local context to Quakerism in the area; some historic furnishings are retained in the present meeting house. Hartshill is located close to the birth place of George Fox, the Founder of the Society of Friends.

Aesthetic value

This modern building has medium aesthetic value and makes a neutral contribution to the character of the townscape. It was designed by Frederick Gregory who is known to have experimented with different roof forms in Quaker meeting houses.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a building developed for Quakers and in use since it opened in 1972. The building provides a local community focus and its facilities used by a number of local groups.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Central England*

- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0033440*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *North Warwickshire Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Hartshill*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1972*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Frederick Gregory*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *14 December 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *William Waddilove*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp.640-641.

Clare Barnett and Rebecca Dyde, *Local Meeting Survey*, October 2015.

Hartshill, <http://www.1624country.org.uk/Hartshill.htm>

<http://www.hartshillquakers.org.uk/>

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

2.1 Historical background

Hartshill is located three miles south west from what was once known as Drayton in the Clay (now called Fenny Drayton), the birth place of the founder of the Religious Society of Friends, George Fox.

In 1677 George Fox was at Hartshill at the house of Nathaniel Newton, in 1704 a barn given by Nathaniel Newton was used as meeting house for Hartshill. A new meeting house was built in 1720 but was subsequently destroyed by a fire. A request was made in Nathaniel's will for his wife, Sarah, to build a meeting house on the village green. Sarah died before Nathaniel, and so he undertook the building of a purpose-built meeting house in 1740. Following the death of Nathaniel, he bequeathed to the Trustees a piece of land (where the

present meeting house stands) for a school and school master's house be built. The exact date of the buildings are unknown, but it is suggested that they were built by 1754.



Figure 1: Barn where Hartshill Friends held their early meetings.

Hartshill Meeting ceased in 1838, as a result of declining members. Some thirty years later Arthur Naidh and Edwin Brewin moved into the area and the Meeting was revived.



Figure 2: Purpose-built meeting house in Hartshill Green dating from 1740, undated image (Hartshill MH Archive)



Figure 3: meeting house dating from 1740 sold in the 1970s, now a dwelling

During the 1950s, the condition of the meeting house, school and school master's house was deteriorating and it was becoming costly to undertake regular repair and maintenance work. By the mid-1960s an Elder, Rex Harrod suggested that a request should be made to the Monthly Meeting for a new meeting house. Following this the Friends began a campaign of fundraising for the new buildings, and by 1972 the new meeting house designed by Frederick Gregory was completed, at a cost of £25,000. An image on an appeal leaflet for a new meeting house reveals that the building was initially designed as single-storey. The building was built with a two-storey range to the south to accommodate the warden.

The new building was located at the rear of the school and school master's house which were eventually demolished. The 1740 meeting house on the village green was sold, and was later converted into a dwelling.

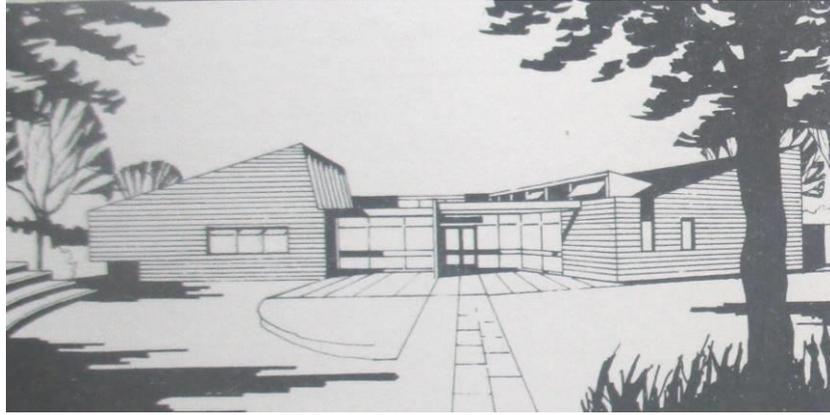


Figure 5: Initial design of meeting house on appeal leaflet (Hartshill MH Archive)

In 2011, following a Disability Access Audit extra foyer space was created in the meeting house to provide easier access around the ground floor and a fully accessible WC was added.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

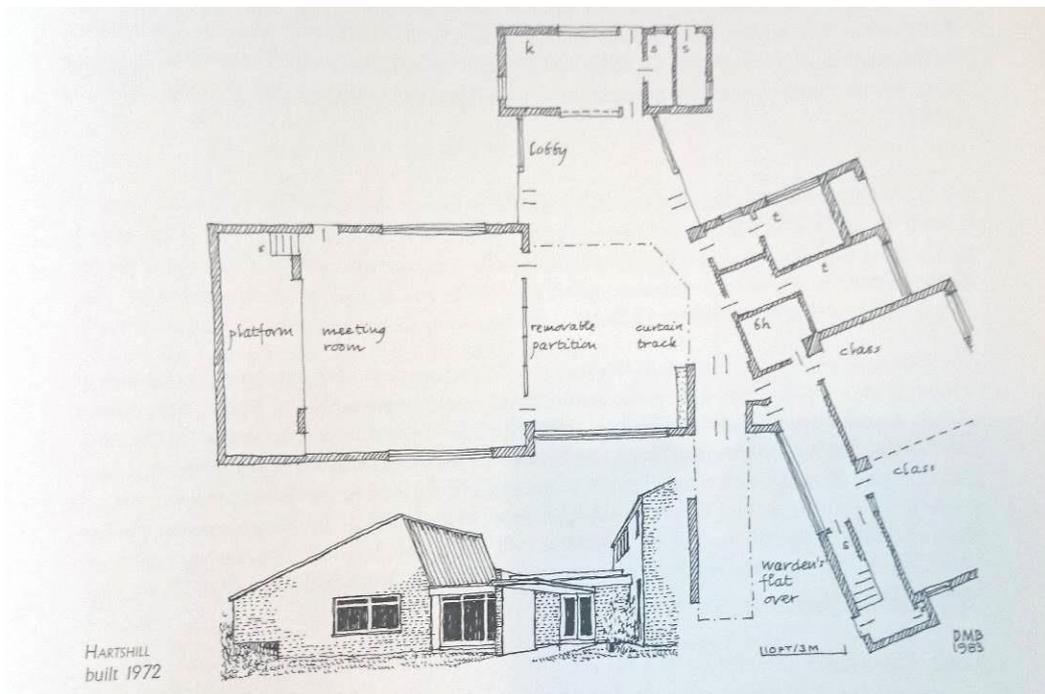


Figure 6: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as reconstructed by Butler (north to the left; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.641)

The meeting house was built to the designs of Frederick Gregory and opened in 1972. It has a complex plan formed of three ranges: meeting room to the north range, central lobby area and the southern range comprising the smaller meeting rooms, toilet facilities and first floor warden's accommodation. It is built of brown brick laid in stretcher bond, the monopitch roofs are predominately covered in concrete tiles.

The west elevation forms the principal frontage; the entrance is reached via a canopied passage leading to the flat-roofed lobby area, well-lit by full length windows. The warden's accommodation and smaller meeting room to the south are aligned at an angle (north east to south west), designed with a mono-pitched roofs; the southern range is shallower with five rectangular windows and entrance to the warden's accommodation, whilst the northern meeting room is expressed by a lean-to range and row of clerestory windows. To the south

east of this range, the fenestration consists of four rectangular windows at first floor, two central windows flanked by double patio doors at ground level. A shallower lean-to the north east provides additional storage facilities whilst the south west elevation has three rectangular windows. To the north of the entrance the meeting room range is characterised by its saltbox roof with glazing to the southern roof face. The western elevation has a 5-light window and to the left of this there is a rectangular recess to the north west corner at ground level, features replicated to the rear (east) of the meeting room in addition to a rear exit; the north elevation of the meeting room is blind. To the east of the complex is a further smaller lean-to adjoining the lobby area containing the kitchen facilities, this has been further extended by a flat roofed structure with polycarbonate sheeting providing an area in use as a heritage room with information relating to the history of Hartshill Meeting.

Internally, the main meeting room, smaller meeting rooms and ancillary facilities are accessed via a pleasant, spacious and well-lit lobby area. The interior of the main meeting room is a dramatic space, dominated by the sloping ceiling with the south face being most prominent with a series of vertical narrow windows. The walls are plastered and plainly painted and the hardwood flooring is laid in a cube pattern. A stage area to the north end is separated by a curtain. To the south, moveable timber panels allow expansion of the meeting room into the lobby area if required. There is fixed seating lining the east and west walls.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The lobby area contains a bell and key which were salvaged from the former school room which stood on this site (1743 – 1972).



Figure 7: Bell and key from former Quaker School dating from 1740

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

There is no burial ground on the same site as the meeting house. However, a rose bed within the grounds is used as a place to scatter ashes.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Hartshill is a village within the borough of North Warwickshire, four miles north-west of Nuneaton and twenty-four miles west of Birmingham. The area to the south-west of the meeting house is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Hartshill Castle; the ruins are Grade II listed. The general area of Castle Road is characterised by late twentieth century housing comprising small terraces and flat roofed 3-storey blocks, and interspersed within this modern development are a houses dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. To the north of Castle Road is the village green where the former meeting house dating from 1740 has been converted into a dwelling. The former burial ground is located here (NGR SP 32599 94560) with burials recorded from 1714 until 1787; prominent Quaker Benjamin Bartlett is buried here.

The meeting house is set back from the road with a small brown brick boundary wall and the front garden is well planted with trees and shrubs. A sweeping drive from Castle Road leads to an area of car parking to the south-west of the meeting house. To the rear of the building is a garden which is being developed as an eco-garden with a plastic bottle greenhouse. To the east of the meeting house is Hartshill allotment site.



Figure 8: Eco-greenhouse made from bottles

2.6 Listed status

Not listed. The meeting house is not considered to be a future candidate for listing. The modern design by known architect Frederick Gregory may merit inclusion on the local authority's local list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house is built on site of a former Quaker school and master's house dating from the mid-eighteenth century; it is therefore likely to be of medium archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent quinquennial inspection (undertaken in June 2015 by Barnsley Bate, chartered building surveyors) found the building to be in good working order. Recommendations for the next twelve months include repairs to the pitched roof verge pointing, flat roof membrane and changes to external vent grilles to incorporate louvres, Since the last quinquennial survey Friends have undertaken external re-pointing, installed a combi boiler, decorated fascias and soffits, canopy has been enclosed and accessible entrance provided.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable.

3.2 Maintenance

The building is well-maintained by the meeting and a five year maintenance and repair plan is in place following the quinquennial survey. Central England Area Meeting issue an 'Annual Inspection of Premises Questionnaire' each year. Maintenance needs are considered following the inspection. The questionnaire is divided into two parts:

1) Maintenance items of a routine or cyclical nature. For example, have the gutters and down pipes been cleaned our regularly?

2) Structural and other defects which may give cause for concern, and actions required or taken as a result of the quinquennial survey. For example, does the roof leak?

The questionnaire was completed by David Ritchie and Stephen Ball in September 2014 and there was no record of any problems or issues with the building. The Friends have sufficient funds for the maintenance and repair of the building.

3.3 Sustainability

Although the meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit steps have been taken to improve sustainability including:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: addition of double glazing to most windows, cavity wall insulation, installation of solar panels in January 2016, installation of individual heaters and development of an eco-garden.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: the meeting house uses the local authority recycling scheme.
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: addition of a foyer to add extra disabled access, aluminium frames and double glazing to foyer, large double glazed aluminium windows to meeting room, fascias and guttering replaced and, large flat roof replaced with rubber roofing.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the meeting has a large garden part of which is being developed as an eco-garden with a plastic bottle greenhouse and a focus on sustainability. At the front of the meeting, the main border has been developed as a George Fox garden with plants connected to the time and memory of George Fox.
- Transport: the meeting house can be accessed by public transport and car parking is available.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. This includes the main meeting room, large foyer, classroom, kitchen and WC facilities (including baby changing and a fully accessible WC). The meeting house currently has a resident Friend.

An on-site car park is available. No secure parking for bicycles. However, bicycles could be chained to the gate or brought into the meeting house if necessary. The meeting house is served by local bus services (48 and 776) which run seven days a week, reduced hourly service on Sundays. The meeting house is 3.5 miles from Nuneaton railway station.

3.5 Access

A Disability Access Audit was undertaken in 2011. Recommended changes implemented from the audit include a fully accessible toilet, hearing loop, and extra foyer space to allow easier access around the building. There is level access into and throughout the meeting house. The external steps have white nosings to accommodate the partially-sighted. The most recent quinquennial inspection in 2015 acknowledged that the premises are accessible to the front of the property and circulation within the premises is also possible. The survey suggests the consideration of ramps to the rear fire exit routes.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 5 hours and community use for 10 hours each week. The meeting house has the potential to be let for 120 hours each week (three meeting rooms). The three rooms (meeting room, foyer or classroom) can be booked for either morning, afternoon or evening sessions or all day, and all lettings include use of the kitchen facilities. There is a lettings policy. Conditions for use of the meeting house include the prohibition of using tobacco or other smoking materials, alcohol, gambling and the building may not be used for commercial use. The meeting house is popular for lettings due the quietness of the building, flexible space available and price.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

No heritage crime has been recorded, and the area is generally well cared-for and has low levels of crime and deprivation. The meeting has not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but would do so if necessary.

3.8 Plans for change

No future 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 used only by the local Meeting: The meeting has all the facilities it needs and there should be no need for any alterations in the short term. There are no heritage constraints and the building could sustain further alterations, however the roof form and style designed by the architect Frederick Gregory should be retained.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already used for other community uses and has the necessary facilities which have recently been improved to accommodate the community groups.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: In the event of closure, the building could be used for a secular use, e.g. as a community centre

Part 5: Category: 3