

Quaker Meeting House, Hemel Hempstead

1 The Alleys, St Mary's Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 5ZB

National Grid Reference: TL 05672 07875



Statement of Significance

An early eighteenth-century meeting house and burial ground. The building was enlarged and altered by the addition of a dwelling in 1808. After the last war the building was further enlarged and the meeting room fittings removed. The building is of medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

Much of the fabric of the original building of 1718 and the additions of 1808 is presumably incorporated in the present structure, which was restored and enlarged in the 1950s and 1970s. The building as a whole is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

A reasonably well- preserved example of an early eighteenth century Quaker meeting house with an early eighteenth-century burial ground, all of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

The exterior of the original building is attractive, but its original character has been altered by later additions. The 1950s renovation destroyed much of the original character of the interior. The building is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by Quakers since 1718, with a break between 1905 and 1947 and since that date has also been used by other local community groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Luton & Leighton*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0016310*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Dacorum Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *Hemel Hempstead NPA*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1262907*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1718; enlarged 1808, 1950s, 1970s*

1.13 Architect (s): *original architect not known; modern alterations by Paul Mauger*

1.14 Date of visit: *30 September 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Audrey Pitchforth*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burial ground at Wood End*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1 p.256

Stell, C, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Eastern England*, 2002, p.136

Hertfordshire HER, ref. no. 10205

Local Meeting survey by Audrey Pitchforth, June 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

The date of the first meeting in Hemel Hempstead is not known, though a place was registered in 1699. In 1718 Quakers purchased a plot of land as a site for a meeting house and burial ground and a new meeting house was built in that year, largely superseding an existing meeting house 2 miles away at Wood End. A dwelling was built onto the north end of the meeting house in 1808 and the old building was re-fronted to match the new addition. The fortunes of the meeting had declined by the end of the nineteenth century and no regular gatherings were held between 1905 and 1948.



Fig.1 The west front of the meeting in 1949 (local meeting archives)

Following the revival of the meeting in 1949 the building was restored and enlarged in 1958. An extension was built at the rear containing new classrooms with a flat above. Inside the old building the women's and children's shuttered gallery was removed to enlarge the main meeting room and the original west entrance was blocked (fig.2). The additions were in a neo-Georgian style. Further alterations were made in 1974 which added another classroom and improved the entrance. It may have been at this time that the stand in the meeting room was removed; two newel posts from the stand were re-used in a modern staircase (Stell). The architect for all the post-war work was Paul Mauger. The headstones in the burial ground were moved to line the walls in 1951. In 2002 a small studio flat was formed on the upper floor of the new extension, which is leased to tenants.

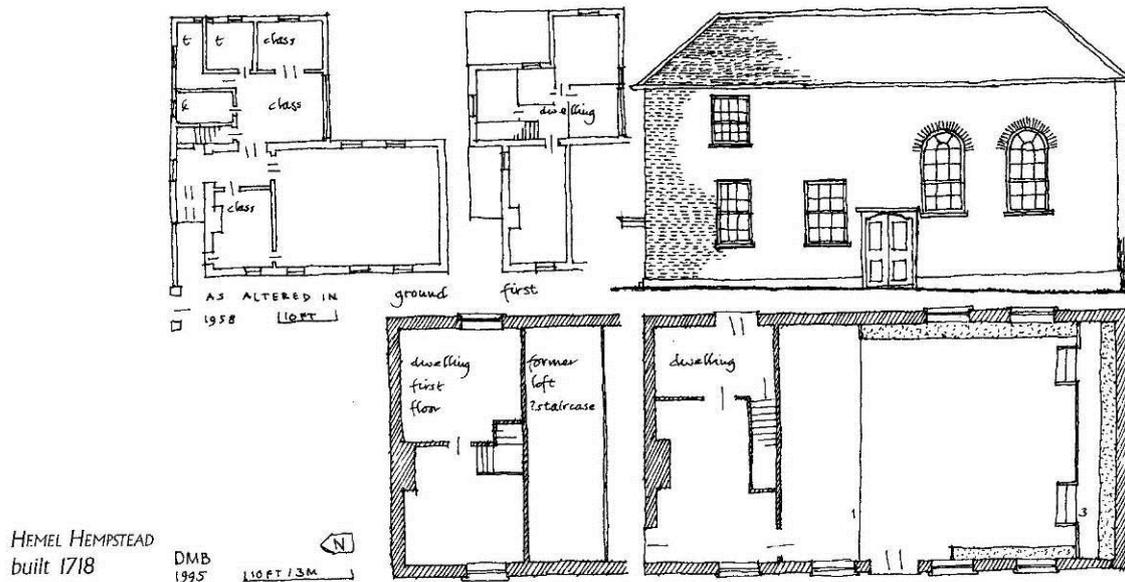


Fig.2 West elevation and plans in 1808 and 1958 (Butler)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The old meeting house building is rectangular on plan, with walls of red and blue brick laid in Flemish bond and a pitched hipped roof covered in tiles. The principal front faces west. There was originally a central entrance, now bricked-up. To the left of the former entrance are two tiers of sash windows, of which the upper right hand window was inserted in the 1950s. To the right of the former entrance are two tall round-headed windows, which Stoll suggests may have replaced a double tier of smaller windows but which were certainly in existence by 1949 (see fig.1). The north and south end walls are blind. The east side also has two round-headed windows but is now largely hidden by the modern additions, which are all in a sympathetic neo-Georgian style, with sashed windows and hipped, tiled roofs. Entrance to the building is now through the later part. Internally, the meeting room occupies the southern two-thirds of the old building and is a full-height space with a modern parquet floor and plastered walls, boarded to the height of the window cills. There was originally a loft at the northern end, but no trace of this survives.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of interest.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The rectangular burial ground lies on the west side of the meeting house and is enclosed by an old red brick wall. It has been in use since 1718 and there are records of burials c1850-1900 in the meeting house office. The gravestones were moved in 1951 and placed against the burial ground walls. There are some gravestones which pre-date 1750. Many of the headstones commemorate members of the Cranstone family who were local ironmasters in the period 1850-1900. There is no formal management plan for the care of the burial ground.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house stands on rising ground on the eastern edge of the old town of Hemel Hempstead, in an area which has been extensively redeveloped with modern low-rise housing. There is a detached burial ground at Wood End (NGR: TL 083098) which is let to a tenant until 2020.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is properly listed at grade II.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house and burial ground occupy an old site which probably 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): Optimal

3.2 Maintenance

A quinquennial inspection has not been carried out. There are adequate funds to maintain and repair the building; income from letting helps to cover maintenance costs. The meeting does not have a 5-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include the following:

- Walls and roofs have been insulated
- An energy efficient boiler has been installed
- Secondary double glazing has been installed throughout the meeting house premises and two flats.

The building does not have an Energy Performance Certificate but would consider obtaining one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the meeting house, which contains a main hall, library and classroom, toilets refurbished in 2006 and a new kitchen installed in 2012. There is no resident warden.

Public transport is adequate. There is a 15 minute bus service on weekdays but the Sunday bus service is poor and threatened with closure. Parking in the area is poor and congested. There is secure storage for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and inside the building, an accessible WC and a hearing loop. There are no special facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was carried out in 2006 and the recommended changes have been made. Level access into the building was formed and new toilets, including a disabled toilet, were installed.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the building for approximately 3 hours per week. The building is notionally available for community lettings for a maximum number of 120 hours per week (3 rooms) and is used for approximately 21 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Extreme groups are excluded. No alcohol is allowed. No advertising is permitted which implies that the local meeting is responsible for a particular event. Any group which aids social integration (like AA) may receive reduced terms. Users value the good standard of facilities and decoration and hirings have increased over the past two years.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime at the site and there has been no heritage crime. The locality is generally well cared-for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but Friends would consider making contact is appropriate.

3.8 Plans for change

There are no plans for change at present.

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 significant change within the old meeting house building, which is governed by the constraint of listed building legislation.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the old meeting house has already been considerably extended to provide additional facilities and living space. Scope for further expansion is limited.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the meeting house building could doubtless find an alternative community or residential use.

Part 5: Category: 2

Part 6: List description (s)

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1262907

Location

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, ST MARY'S ROAD

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

County	District	District Type	Parish
Hertfordshire	Dacorum	District Authority	

Grade: II

Date first listed: 18-Jun-1948

Legacy System Information

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 433807

List entry Description

Details

ST MARY'S ROAD 1. 5252 Friends Meeting House TL 0507 1/14 18.6.48.

II 2. 1718, restored 1808, altered 1860. Red brick, hipped tiled roof. 2 storeys, with single storey part of the same height. Wide eaves cornice Meeting room has 2 tall round arched flush sash windows 2 storey part has 2 flush sash windows under flat arches to each floor.

Listing NGR: TL0567207875