

Quaker Meeting House, Hereford

21 King Street, Hereford, HR4 9BX

National Grid Reference: SO 50823 39858



Statement of Significance

A meeting house of 1821, built on a narrow site in the heart of medieval Hereford. The building incorporates an existing industrial building, and is of several phases of construction. The interior has been much altered but retains some early nineteenth century features. The meeting house has a small burial ground to the rear, dating from the nineteenth century. The site as a whole is of medium to high heritage significance, although the meeting is not listed.

Evidential value

The building incorporates an existing flannel warehouse or factory and the site is likely to have high archaeological potential due its location within the former walled area of the medieval city. The site has high evidential value and the building is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house has been on this site since 1821, and before this was on another site in the city. The building and site has medium historical value as an example of infill development in the heart of the city, and its association with local Quakers.

Aesthetic value

The red brick building is plain and functional, and as it located on the rear of a city centre plot it does not contribute to the wider street scene. The interior

has been much altered, but retains some early nineteenth century features. The building is of medium aesthetic value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Southern Marches*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0009580*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Herefordshire Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Hereford*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/A*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Hereford*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c1800; 1970s; 2009*
- 1.13 Architect: *Ken Pearce Architects (2009)*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *12 January 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Judith Baresel*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *21A King Street, Hereford*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

David Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, Vol 1*, 1999, pp 244-246

Judith Baresel, *Local Meeting Survey*, October 2015

Philip Thornley, *History of repairs, alterations and leases of Hereford Meeting House*, January 2011

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

2.1. Historical background

Hereford Quakers were meeting by 1676, and in that year their building was attacked by local people on one more than one occasion. In the early eighteenth century Friends built a meeting house on Friar Street (formerly Quakers Lane), set back behind the street frontage buildings and with a burial ground. This was sold in 1807 and later converted to cottages. In

1821 the meeting acquired the site off the north side of King Street, which is said to have been partly occupied by a flannel manufactory, of late eighteenth or early nineteenth century date. Butler notes that this building corresponds with the south part of the present building. Quakers extended this by building a full-height meeting room on the north side in the 1820s. A narrow addition was built on the east side of the meeting room in 1838, extended again in the late nineteenth century to provide a lobby, staircase and a class room. The high iron gallery front was installed around 1851. From c.1958 the first floor was let, with separate staircase access. In the 1960s, some remodelling took place, when the wall between classroom 1 and the main meeting room was moved southwards to its present line, a new staircase, porch and WCs were installed and the solid fuel stove was replaced with electric heaters. The lobby was extended in the 1980s and a suspended ceiling installed in the meeting and a kitchen was provided. In 2009, the first floor tenants inserted a mezzanine floor, designed by Ken Pearce of JBD Architects.

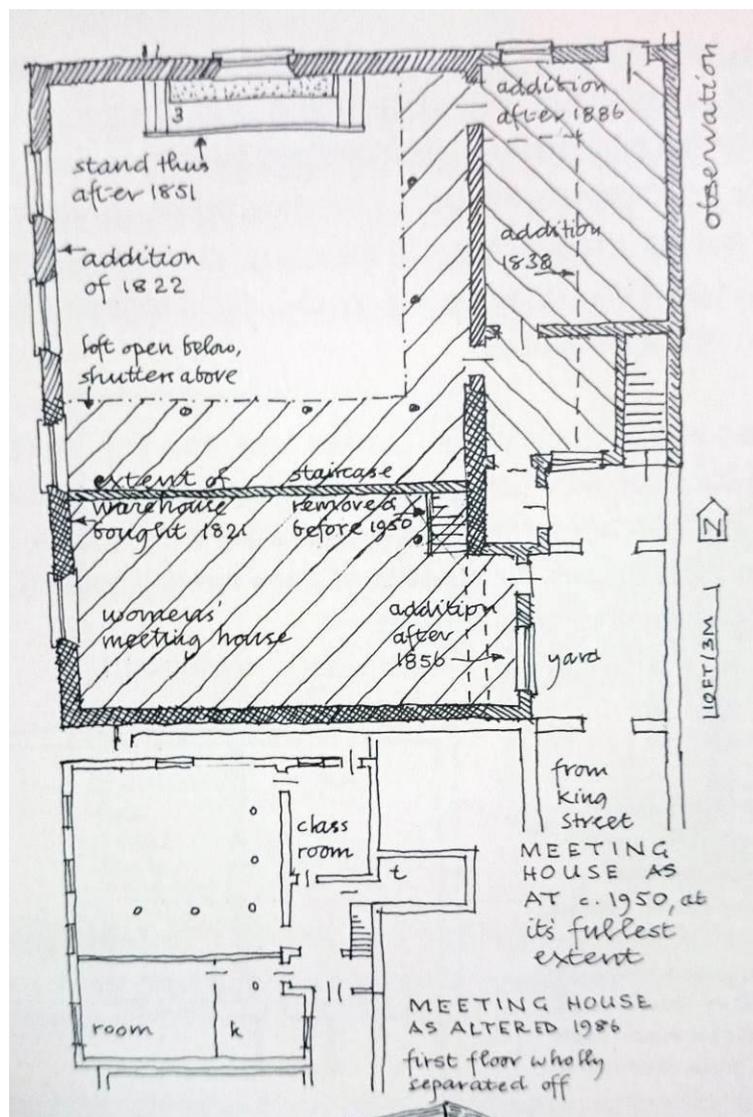


Fig.1: plan as reconstructed by Butler (1999, p. 246)

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was established on this site in 1821 incorporating a former industrial building with a new addition to the north. The roughly rectangular building is built of red

brick laid in Flemish bond with hipped slate roofs and plastic rainwater goods; there is a separate roof over each of the three main elements. The entrance is via a flat-roofed porch on the south-west corner of the building, built in the 1980s with hardwood glazed double doors. The 2-storey range to the south is aligned east-west and largely hidden from view by adjoining buildings; the west elevation has a tripartite sash to the ground floor and a mock sash window to first floor to the east, both with segmental heads. The east elevation has a dentil brick cornice similar to the meeting room north elevation (Butler's plan notes that the east wall is part of a small addition built after 1856). The narrow east range added in the late nineteenth century has segmental-headed sash windows to north and south elevations, and boxed eaves. The north elevation of the full-height meeting room has a 16-pane mock sash high on the wall with segmental head and dentil eaves, with three 20-pane sash windows to the west elevation.

Inside the meeting house has been altered with inserted partition walls and suspended ceilings which obscure some of the historic details and hindering interpretation. The main meeting room has a carpeted solid floor, a suspended ceiling and is lit from the north and west. It retains some early nineteenth century features including reeded architraves and flush beaded panelling to the north wall (formerly the location of the ministers' stand). Other walls have tongued and grooved dado panelling, with some re-set flush panelling above. The main feature of the room is the very high gallery on the south and east sides, carried on slender cast-iron columns with a quatrefoil section, an unusual feature for a meeting house. The gallery is blocked off from the room, but the retained front has panels of gothic iron balustrading, possibly re-set from another building, such as a church. The smaller meeting room to the south of the main meeting room was formerly the women's meeting room and is lit by a large sash window from the west. It has some tongued and grooved dado panelling, a Tobin tube for ventilation and a twentieth century plaster cornice. On the first floor of the south range, the 4-bay roof structure with tie-beam trusses is partly exposed above the inserted mezzanine.



Fig.2: exposed roof in south range, from east (in office use)

2.3. Loose furnishings

In the main meeting room, the seating consists of painted pine benches and modern chairs, arranged in a loose circle.



Fig.3: painted pine benches in the meeting room

2.4. Attached burial ground

The burial ground is situated to the north of the meeting house, and only accessible through the building. It was established after the meeting acquired the site in 1821; the burials appear to date from the middle of the century. Ashes are interred here and recorded on metal plates fixed on the meeting house north wall, but the ground is no longer in use for burials. There are a few mid-nineteenth century memorial stones against the walls, and a large slab laid flat to Celia Evans; the latter is unusually prominent for a Quaker burial ground. The small rectangular area is enclosed with high brick walls and laid to grass with some shrubs and small trees, and there is a small gardener's brick shed to the east side. There is no formal plan for maintenance but the meeting maintain it as a garden.



Fig.4: large grave slab to Celia Evans died 1845



Fig.5: Watson and Benbow grave markers

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

King Street is one of the principal streets in medieval Hereford, lined with shops, offices and cafes; the view down the east end of the street is terminated by the west front of the Cathedral. This part of the medieval city is laid out on a grid with King Street running at

right angles to Broad Street. The river Wye is to the south of the city centre. The meeting house is not visible from King Street and access to it is along a passage off the north side of the street, below late Georgian brick buildings. Facing the passage on the west side is a former town house Number 21a King Street, a late seventeenth century timber-framed building remodelled in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (according to the listing). This Grade II listed building is owned by the meeting and let on a long lease for social housing. Other nearby buildings are in commercial use and a car park wraps around the north and west side of the meeting house site. Hereford attracts some tourism associated with the Cathedral, which is set in an attractive leafy precinct.



Fig.6: north side of King Street and the passageway to the meeting house (centre)



Fig.7: 21a King Street, adjoining the meeting house (just visible to the right)

2.6. Listed status

Not listed, although the adjoining house, No.21a King Street is Grade II. The meeting house has been extensively altered and although of historic interest it is probably not a candidate for listing. The Conservation Officer comments that the Council only has a limited list of buildings of local interest but that it is very likely the Friends Meeting House would be regarded as of local importance.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The Herefordshire Historic Environment Record has an entry for the meeting house (SMR Number 3659-MHE15183). The building is within the Hereford City Area of Archaeological Importance (DHE6405). There was probably an earlier building or activity on the site as the meeting house is inside the Medieval city walls, and built on the rear part of a long burgage plot. A flannel manufactory existed on the site in the early nineteenth century, before this was remodelled and extended for a meeting house. Together with the nineteenth century burial ground, the site is considered to have high archaeological potential. The existing building also has archaeological value as it incorporates part of a flannel manufactory warehouse, built at an unknown date before c1800.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey by Judith Baresel

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The last QI was undertaken in May 2013 by architect Jacqueline Demaus; all recommended work has been professionally costed and all external work was completed by the beginning of this year. The building was completely re-roofed in 2009.

None of the recommended internal works have been carried out, except redecorating the kitchen as the meeting prioritised the external work. Internal work is currently being assessed and will soon be costed in more detail.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *Satisfactory/optimal*

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting will in due course have sufficient funds for maintenance, though this has affected the availability of funds for BYM.

The meeting does not have a formal maintenance plan document, but Business Meeting has taken into account likely future expenditure in overall terms, based on information from the Treasurer and the Premises Group.

3.3. Sustainability

Meeting undertook an 'eco-audit' in 2001 and 2010 and referred to various Quaker publications on sustainability in the process. An up-to-date audit is planned.

Climate change & energy efficiency: All heating is electric and on a 100% green tariff. Rooms are heated individually and only when in use. New energy efficient water heating was installed in the kitchen in 2015.

Resource use, recycling & waste management: Meeting uses FSC/recycled paper products, and recycles waste where possible, but notes that it is difficult to ensure that room hirers follow this approach. The meeting mostly uses eco-friendly cleaning products and will use low impact paints in future internal redecoration.

Building maintenance & refurbishment: Native hardwood has been used for recent door replacement.

Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: The burial ground garden managed organically.

3.4. Amenities

Meeting has good facilities, all on the ground floor. The kitchen was refitted in 2015. There are two toilets, and one is suitable for disabled people. There are a total of three meeting rooms; the large one for around 80 people, one for approximately 25 people and the small room for around 12 people. There is no parking on site, but public car parking is available nearby.

3.5. Access

No audit for disabled access has been undertaken but the Quinquennial survey in 2013 indicated technical shortcomings which the meeting is unable to correct owing to limited space. The Meeting House is accessible to people with disabilities, with level access into and inside the ground floor of the building. There is a disabled WC, but built prior to the current building regulations. There is a hearing loop.

There is some public transport. The main city bus station is a quarter of a mile and some buses stop nearer. Main country bus station and rail station half a mile away. A few buses run on Sundays but most do not run, or run too late for meeting. Trains from Abergavenny, Leominster and Ledbury arrive on Sunday in time for meeting. There is some secure bike parking; an additional stand was installed in 2013.

There are public car parks nearby and free street parking for short periods on weekdays, unlimited on Sundays.

3.6. Community Use

The building is used by Friends for 8 hours a week, and is available for a total of 225 hours a week for other users. Actual community use is 31 hours per week. There is a lettings policy; the meeting excludes political bodies, alcohol consumption and gambling. They encourage anything Quaker, anything of benefit to humanity, animals or the natural world. Doubtful cases are referred to the Clerk of the meeting. Quaker groups use the meeting house without charge. The meeting house is in a good location, has a good atmosphere, reasonable prices, and is also popular as there is a shortage of alternative accommodation in Hereford. The first floor is let to an overseas aid organisation, Concern Universal. No 21a King Street, the adjoining house, is let as a social housing hostel, managed by Aspire Living.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There are no reports of heritage crime, general crime or anti-social behaviour at the Meeting House or the surrounding grounds. The meeting does not consider it necessary to contact the police.

3.8. Plans for change

None, beyond the maintenance referred to above and minor improvements.

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 recently improved internally and no further changes are needed at present. The building is not listed so internal changes are not affected by this constraint.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting us: the meeting house is very well used by community groups, and has been recently improved internally; if further change is needed, this should be possible.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: if the meeting no longer required the building, it would be amenable to change and a range of other uses would be feasible. As it is in a conservation area and the site has archaeological potential, demolition and redevelopment would be challenging.

Part 5: Category: 3