

Friends Meeting House, Kirkby Stephen

High Street, Kirkby Stephen, CA17 4SH

National Grid Reference: NY 77412 08322



Statement of Significance

The building has medium heritage significance as a meeting house created in 1929 in a former stable and coach house wing at a nineteenth century house. The building has an attractive exterior and setting off the High Street in Kirkby Stephen. The interior has been recently refurbished to improve energy efficiency and contains no historic features.

Evidential value

The meeting house exterior has some evidential value as the building's features reveal the former stable and coach house use, but the interior retains no historic fabric.

Historical value

The present building was built as the stable and coach house wing to a large house, at an unknown date in the early nineteenth century. The site has been associated with Friends since the late 1920s, when the meeting was established. The building and site has high historical value, for its Quaker connection and also as the location of the first YHA in the Lake District, but the interior has low historical significance as there are no remaining historic features.

Aesthetic value

The frontage facing the High Street has high significance as an example of early Victorian domestic architecture, set behind an attractive garden enclosed by stone walls and iron railings. The rear wing, now the meeting house has some vernacular architectural features relating to the former stable and coach house. The interior has been attractively refurbished but has no heritage features on view. The aesthetic value of the building exterior is high, and it contributes to the conservation area.

Communal value

The building was adapted for Quaker worship and business in 1929, and has been a community resource ever since. The spiritual and social use gives the building high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Kendal & Sedbergh*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0033600*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Eden District Council*
- 1.5 Civil parish: *Kirkby Stephen*
- 1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/A*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Kirkby Stephen*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1929*
- 1.13 Architect (s):
- 1.14 Date of visit: *10 June 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *David Petrie*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *flat in same building*
Detached burial ground: Devon Gill (NGR: 730996)
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Bibliographic references:

David M. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses of the Lakeland Counties* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1978).

Cuttings scrapbook belonging to the meeting, including extracts from *The Friend*, 23 August, 1929 and 7 March 1930

Plans of the building held by the meeting.

David Solloway, *Local Meeting Survey*, March 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1652, Kirkby Stephen was the place of a confrontation between James Naylor, a well-known early Friend, and the vicar, which led to Naylor's imprisonment in Appleby gaol. The modern history of Quakers in Kirkby Stephen dates from 1927 when two families moved to the town from Yorkshire. The building now used as the current meeting house was bought by Friends for £425 in 1929 from Edith and Alice Thompson, owners of the Manor House in Kirkby Stephen, an early nineteenth century building. The Thompsons sold the former stable and coach house wing to Joseph Clampitt, a Friend in Kirkby Stephen. The old stables became the meeting room, the harness room a kitchen and the coach house was used as a garage. Benches were brought here from other meeting houses, including from Kendal, and the meeting house was formally opened on 27 February in 1930. Some stones from Ravenstonedale meeting house were incorporated into the doorway. The first floor over the stable was used by other groups including from 1930, the first YHA in the Lake District. In 1981 the meeting house was refurbished and the upper floor was adapted as a flat with a separate entrance from the front facing the road. The whole was refurbished in 2007, to designs by Space Designed Solutions.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house occupies the ground floor of a 2-storey wing to the north end of a large house, probably built in the first half of the nineteenth century. The building is constructed from limestone, neatly coursed and dressed to the west side and roughly coursed to the other elevations, with sandstone rock-faced quoins. The roof is hipped to the west and has barge boards to the east, laid with Cumbrian slate to the north and concrete tiles to the south pitch. The rainwater goods are aluminium and there are photovoltaic panels on the south pitch. The 2-storey rectangular wing is aligned east-west and the main meeting house entrance is on the north side. The modern door is to the left, with a small window to the left and three tall windows to the right on the ground floor. There is one window to the first floor; all windows are uPVC in historic openings. The right return faces the High Street and has a glazed modern door to the centre, modern uPVC windows to ground floor kitchen and three windows to the first floor flat. The left return is the east gable end with a modern sash to the ground floor and a large window to the first floor, a former taking-in door. The rear elevation facing south has a large blocked cart shed door with segmental stone head, now infilled with a window, and a modern door to the left that formerly served the stable; the first floor flat has two modern windows.

The plain, simple interior was recently refurbished. The main meeting room has plain plaster walls, a suspended ceiling, all new joinery and building services and a carpeted floor. Leading off the meeting room, there is a modern kitchen, lavatories and a small meeting room.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting house contains one pine bench and a small oak table, but the meeting uses loose chairs arranged in a circle for meetings.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

Kirkby Stephen is a market town in east side of Cumbria, with a hinterland of farmland and scattered villages. This part of the long High Street is lined with eighteenth and nineteenth century houses, some set behind gardens, and other directly onto the street. The general historic character of the area is Georgian although the town has medieval origins. The meeting house is part of a large house situated towards the south end of the Kirkby Stephen's High Street; the meeting house is to the rear and is accessed by a narrow drive leading to a small yard. At the front of the building there is a large garden containing a mature beech tree, bounded along the north side by stone walls, with attractive iron railings and a gate. There is a detached burial ground at Doven Gill, at NGR730996.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed, and is unlikely to meet national criteria, although it may be eligible for a local list as part of an attractive group of early nineteenth century buildings.

2.7. Archaeological potential

The site may have some archaeological potential as it is within the outskirts of medieval Kirkby Stephen, subject to the levels of past ground disturbance.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The building was the subject of a QI more than five years ago and was refurbished in 2007. Works carried that were recommended included replacing a downpipe and repairing a roof valley, but some re-pointing is needed to external walls.

ii) Attached burial ground: *n/a*

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting has the funds it requires, with additional funding from the area meeting, to maintain the building. There is no maintenance plan but the building is adequately watched over by the Area Meeting Properties Committee.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has an energy performance certificate for the first floor flat: this is in Band D, with an energy efficiency level of 57 and energy impact level of 84. The meeting has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact including

Energy efficiency: new floor insulation, insulated hot water tank and a new condensing boiler.

Maintenance: the flat's windows have been replaced in double glazing and a large beech tree in the front garden is well maintained.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has access to all the amenities it needs with good, recently renewed facilities including a kitchen, two toilets, plus one for disabled people and a large and a small meeting room. The Meeting room holds about 40 people and the smaller Committee room holds 12. The flat on the first floor is let commercially.

3.5. Access

The Meeting House is accessible to people with disabilities, with one step at the front door, but is level inside. The fire exit door is accessible to a wheelchair. The meeting house is close to the town centre and there is free parking on the street, with one space on the site. Public transport is poor; there has been no bus service since 2014.

3.4. Community Use

The meeting house is potentially available for 72 hours per week, and is let for an average of 8 hours per week. The meeting does not have a lettings policy, but the room is let to worship groups connected with churches in the town. The location is good, the meeting room warm, quiet and comfortable with good facilities and reasonable charges.

3.5. Heritage Crime

There has been no heritage crime or anti-social behaviour and the area is considered to be generally well-cared for and has low levels of crime and deprivation. The meeting has not needed to contact local police.

3.6. Plans for change

The building has been refurbished very recently and there are no plans for further changes.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

i) As a Meeting House only: the meeting house is a recently refurbished building and has no heritage constraints that would prevent the interior being changed in the future. The exterior facing the High Street is part of the character of the conservation area, and change would be difficult here.

ii) For wider community use, additional to local Meeting use; there are no heritage constraints that would prevent wider community use.

iii) As a consequence of being laid down as a Meeting House and passing into secular use: if the meeting were to be laid down, the whole building could easily be adapted for either residential use, or the ground floor could be used for a community or business use, subject to local planning.

Part 5: Category: 3

