

Friends Meeting House, Long Sutton

Langport Road, Long Sutton, Somerset, TA10 9NE

National Grid Reference: ST 46710 25923



Statement of Significance

The present meeting house was erected in 1716/17 at the cost of a London Quaker named William Steele, who also gave money to buy the burial ground and is buried there himself. It is a very handsome small building and the galleried interior is very little altered and may incorporate some woodwork from the earlier meeting house, which itself still survives nearby. The building and its immediate setting are of exceptional heritage significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house appears to contain most of its original fittings and is of high evidential value.

Historical value

A very well-preserved example of an early eighteenth-century meeting house, which has hardly been altered. The building has been in almost continuous use for Quaker worship since 1717 and is of high historical value.

Aesthetic value

A handsome small building of considerable architectural quality. The interior still preserves a great deal of its original character, with raised and fielded panelling which is unusually elaborate for a meeting house. The building is of high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been in more or less continuous use for worship since 1717 and has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Somerset*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0010360*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *South Somerset District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Long Sutton*

1.7 Listed status: *II**

1.8 NHLE: *1346103*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1717 (dated on building); Children's Room Annex 1985*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not known; Annex by Alan and Ann Thomas*

1.14 Date of visit: *26 August 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Pamela Gould*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *gate piers, mounting block (List entry number: 1264720), coach house (unlisted), Friends' Cottages (former meeting house, unlisted), Sutton Court (List entry number: 1056597)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 538-539

Morland, S. C., 'A Mid-Somerset Meeting in the Seventeenth Century: Long Sutton', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society Vol 55 pp4-24 (1986)*

Stell, C. *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in South West England*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1991

Little, B., 'A Village of Tudors and Quakers', *Country Life*, 17 October 1968
The Friend, 1961, p. 329; 1986, p. 842

Somerset Historic Environment Record, No.14242

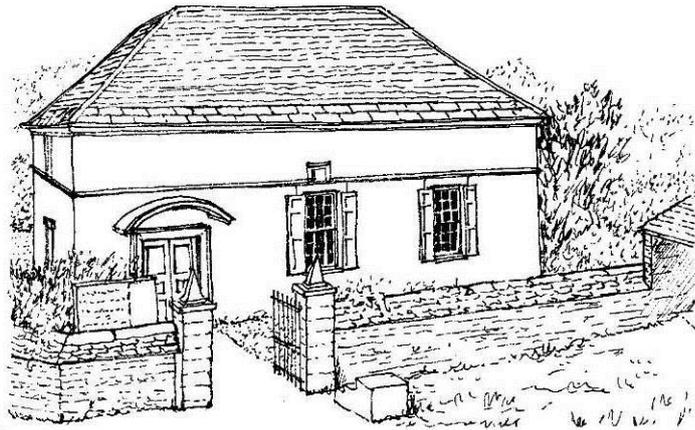
Local Meeting Survey by Pamela Gould, April 2016

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

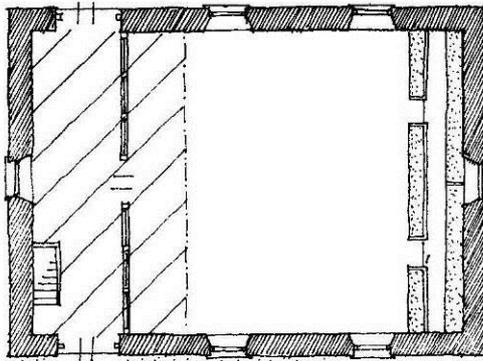
2.1 Historical background

Meetings began at Long Sutton in 1670 and were held in a cottage which was occupied by a poor Quaker called Richard Nowell 'as a Trustee for the service of Truth'. Butler notes (p. 538) that a collection was made at Quarterly Meeting in 1675 towards the building of a new meeting house, but it does not appear that anything was done. In 1704 a London Quaker, William Steele of Bishopsgate, bought an estate in Long Sutton. By his will made in 1715 he left a farm at Upton in trust 'for the poor of the people called Quakers in the County of Somerset' and £200 to 'the people called Quakers of Long Sutton' to provide a new meeting house and burial ground. A large site was obtained immediately across the road from the old meeting house and the new building was opened in 1717. Butler suggests that some backless forms from the old building were re-used in the new minister's stand. The old meeting house building was retained in Quaker ownership and still survives (much rebuilt) as sheltered housing. At his express wish, Steele's body was brought from London for burial at Long Sutton. The meeting was discontinued between 1783 and 1819, when it revived after the closure of the Somerton meeting. The meeting house was extensively renovated in 1961 with major repairs to the roof, porches, boundary walls and coach house. In 1985 a new detached block containing a Children's Room, kitchen and toilets was erected close to the meeting house. The architects for the new building were Alan and Ann Thomas.

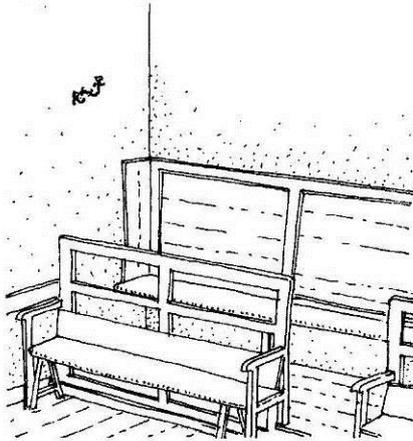
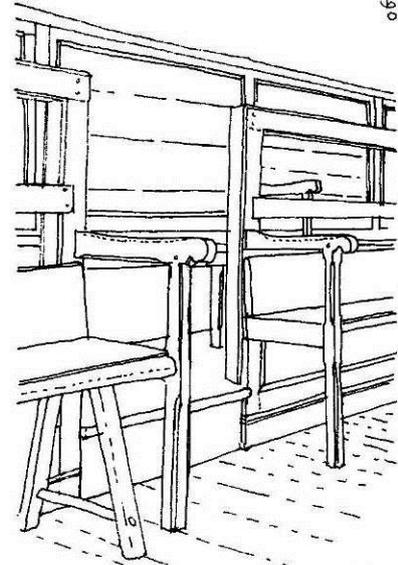
In 1931 Long Sutton Court House, a mediaeval manor house close to the meeting house, was acquired and restored at the cost of the Clark family of Street and vested in the local monthly meeting. It was occupied for a time by Martin Lidbetter, son of Hubert Lidbetter and architect of many twentieth-century meeting houses.



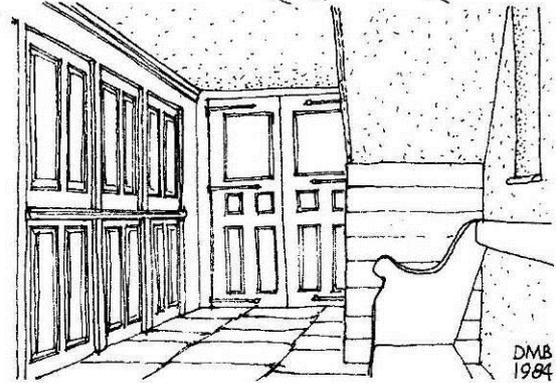
observation



10 FT / 3 M



LONG SUTTON
built 1717



DMB
1984

Local sources:
Stephen C Morland 'Long Sutton meeting', *JFHS* 1986, 4-24.
Stell 1991, 183

Sources for the drawing:
1717: H Godwin Arnold survey 1960; DMB visit 1970.

Figure 1: ground plan, a perspective view and details from the main meeting room.
North is to the bottom of the plan. (Butler, vol. 2, p. 539)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

(also see recent list description below).

The meeting house is rectangular on plan and has walls of coursed blue lias stone and a hipped roof of natural slate with a verge of stone slates. The walls have a low stone plinth, a moulded string course above the windows and a moulded timber cornice below the eaves. The longer north and south walls each have two 9/9 small-paned sash windows with the original thick glazing bars, set in Ham stone surrounds with flat arched heads and with external timber shutters. Towards the east end of both sides is a wide doorway with double doors with raised and fielded panelling set in a moulded timber frame with a heavy segmental canopy. Above the central window on the north side is a small Ham stone plaque with a moulded surround and cornice and the inscription, *Ex Dono/Willm Steell/Anno Dom/1717*. The east end wall has upper and lower central windows, the lower window with a drip-moulding, and the west end wall has a single window above the stand. The lean-to addition below this window, which is mentioned in the statutory list, has been removed.

The interior comprises a single room, with a gallery at the east end above the entrance passage. The floor of the main meeting room is plain boards, the walls plain plastered and the ceiling is coved on all sides with a plaster vault rising to collar level. Across the full width of the west end is a stand with a plain panelled back and fixed seating along the open-railed front. The eastern gallery and the passage below are closed off from the meeting room by raised and fielded timber panelling with moveable shutters. The passage itself has a stone paved floor and contains the original gallery stair which has heavy turned balusters and a lower newel with knob finial. The stair is enclosed in later boxing. The gallery space has plain plastered walls and is now used for storage.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting house and gallery contain a large number of benches with solid shaped ends and railed backs. It is possible that these are the original benches and were formerly ranged in rows and (possibly) fixed to the walls. From the centre of the ceiling hangs a large steel lantern made in the 1980s by Kenneth Clackson, a member of the meeting

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

To the south of the meeting house is a large burial ground enclosed by massive stone walls with gate piers on the north side with pyramid finials. The burial ground is laid to grass and contains many grave markers set in rows. None of these markers is earlier than the 1850s.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house stands some distance north of the centre of the village within the walled burial ground next to a road junction and fronts north to the A372 Langport Road. A short west of the meeting house immediately outside the burial ground boundary is the annex built in 1985. It is a well-detailed small building, square on plan with walls of coursed local stone and a pyramidal roof covered in natural slate. Between the burial ground and the road is a small open space with the coach house and a mounting block. Across the road is the former meeting house, now cottages. A short distance to the west, in its own grounds, stands Sutton Court.

2.6 Listed status

Long Sutton meeting house is a very handsome and well-preserved example of a purpose-built early eighteenth-century meeting house of unusually high quality, retaining most of its original fabric, fittings and furniture.

The building is currently listed Grade II* and could be considered for Grade I (cf Brant Broughton meeting house, Lincolnshire, built in 1701).

The burial ground walls, gate piers and the mounting block are properly listed at Grade II. The cart shed on the road frontage appears to have been reconstructed, but should nevertheless be included in the Grade II listing as a rare survival of this kind of accommodation.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

It appears that the meeting house and burial ground were built and laid out on a greenfield site some distance from the village centre, and the site is probably of 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

The last Quinquennial Inspections was made in 2011 and was carried out by a suitably qualified person. All the recommendations in the report have been carried out except the maintenance of the boundary walls and moving the position of the (listed) mounting block. The local meeting has enough money to maintain and repair the meeting house.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit, but has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact.

- The roof space has been insulated
- Friends are encouraged to share cars to come to meetings.

The meeting house does not have an EPC but the meeting would consider obtaining one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs on site. A modern detached building next to the meeting house contains a children's room, kitchen and toilets. There is no resident warden or caretaker.

The meeting house is badly served by public transport, with nothing on Sundays. There is no parking on site, but a limited amount on the roadside nearby. There is no secure parking for bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access to the entrance passage and then by portable ramp to the ground floor meeting room. There is an accessible toilet in the detached building adjacent. There is a hearing loop and internal steps have contrasting nosings to help partially-sighted people. There has been no formal

Disability Access Audit, but an informal assessment was made in about 2006 which led to the improvements mentioned above.

3.6 Community Use

The building is used by Friends for about 2 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings at all times other than Sunday mornings, but is seldom used because the village has other meeting places. The meeting has a lettings policy. No smoking, candles or incense are allowed. Groups attached to the local or area meeting may have free use of the building. Users value the location, tranquillity and reasonable prices.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There has been no general crime but some heritage crime. Lead has been stolen from the flat roof and porch roofs. The theft was reported to the police. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, and high community confidence; any deprivation is well-hidden. There is no established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and Friends would not consider making contact.

3.8 Plans for change

No changes are planned to the meeting house 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: there is very limited scope for change within the building, which is subject to the constraints of listed building control. Any significant change could damage the character of the building. This is presumably why modern facilities were provided in a separate building.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: As above

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the meeting house is not a suitable candidate for alternative use, which would almost certainly be destructive of its historic character.

Part 5: Category: 1

Part 6: List description(s)

Name: THE FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1346103

Location: THE FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE, LANGPORT ROAD

County: Somerset

District: South Somerset

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Long Sutton

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 17-Apr-1959

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 263241

LONG SUTTON CP LANGPORT ROAD (South side) ST4625 12/175 The Friend's Meeting House 17.4.59 GV II*

Quaker Meeting House. Dated 1717. Local lias stone ashlar, Ham stone dressings; hipped Welsh slate roof laid in diminishing courses, over stone slate base courses. Single storey with gallery along east side; 3 bays by one bay. Plinth, string course above windows, timber eaves course: north elevation has 18-pane sash windows with thick glazing bars and panelled external shutters, set in plain Ham stone surrounds; to bay 1 a pair of ornamental fielded panel doors in very heavy moulded frame under segmental leap-covered timber hood, which could be early C20; over centre window small square plaque with hood mould, inscribed "Ex Dono/ Willm Steell/Anno Dom/1717". South elevation a mirror image of the north. east elevation has 2 windows, that to ground floor set lower, being a 12-pane sash under label mould, with shutters; above an 18-pane sash window set directly under eaves course and cutting through string course, again with shutters. West elevation has high window only, below which is a C20 flat-roofed lean-to. Interior completely unaltered: through passage on east side, under gallery, with fielded panelling as partition to meeting room proper and as stair enclosure; balustered staircase, stone flag floor: gallery above plain, screened from meeting room by fielded panelling with sliding shutters. Meeting room severely plain: unadorned plasterwork with rounded cove to ceiling; two cast iron column props inserted under gallery beam; pine plank floor, raised along west wall, which has panelled dado; elm benches, many of which appear to be original; several windows have crown glass panes. Friends' meeting held in the parish by 1662, and there was a licensed meeting-house by 1669. It was closed briefly in 1793 and 1798, but prospered after the closure of the Somerton meeting house in 1828. (VCH, Vol III, 1974; Little, B; 'A Village of Tudors and Quakers'; Country Life 17-10-1968).

Listing NGR: ST4671025923

North and east boundary walls and gateway

Name: NORTH AND EAST BOUNDARY WALLS, AND GATEWAY TO FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1264720

Location: NORTH AND EAST BOUNDARY WALLS, AND GATEWAY TO FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE, LANGPORT ROAD

County: Somerset

District: South Somerset

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Long Sutton

Grade: II
Date first listed: 07-Feb-1986
Legacy System: LBS
UID: 263242

LONG SUTTON CP LANGPORT ROAD (South side) ST4625 12/176 North and east boundary walls, and gateway to Friends' Meeting House GV II

Boundary walls, gates, gatepiers and mounting block. C18 in part, mostly C19 probably. Local lias stone cut and squared walls, with stepped sloped copings, averaging 1.1 metres high: square gate piers with cornice moulded caps having steps and pyramidal finials; cast iron gates opposite north doorway of Friends' Meeting House (q:vl having spear-head finials. Half metre north west of gateway a lias stone mounting block with 3 steps. Contributing generally to setting an important example of a meeting House.

Listing NGR: ST4672625904