

Friends Meeting House, Malvern

1 Orchard Road, Malvern, WR14 3DA

National Grid Reference: SO 77742 45594



Statement of Significance

Malvern meeting house has medium heritage significance as a building purpose-built for Friends in 1938. It was designed by architect J.R.Armstrong who worked for the Bournville Village Trust and has some connections with the Cadbury family. The meeting house interior retains 1930s features and has a good set of Bryn Mawr furniture and its exterior contributes to the conservation area.

Evidential value

This is a purpose-built structure dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, not on a site of a former building. It is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house has medium historical value, as a 1930s meeting house built to serve an established meeting in Malvern. It has some associations with the Cadbury family who attended meetings when on holiday at their house Wind's Point near here.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is a neo-Georgian domestic style building, designed by an architect associated with Bournville Village Trust, J.R.Armstrong. The tiled roof, casement windows and simple brick detailing are typical of small inter-war meeting houses. The building contributes to the conservation area and

retains a little altered interior with Bryn Mawr furnishings; it has high aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house was built for Quaker use. However, it is also a community resource and has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Worcestershire & Shropshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0012500*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Malvern Hills District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Malvern*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/A*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Great Malvern*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date: *1937 - 38*

1.13 Architect: *J.R.Armstrong*

1.14 Date of visit: *25 November 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*

1.16 Name of contacts made on site: *Paul Wyatt and Cally Law*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites:

Detached burial ground: Ironbridge NGR SJ6656904977

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Alan Brooks and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Worcestershire*, 2007, p460

David Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, Vol 2, 1999, p698

The Malvern Gazette, 9 July 1938:

<http://www.worcesteranddudleyhistoricchurches.org.uk/index.php?page=malvern-friends-meeting-house>

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

2.1. Historical background

There is no record of Quakers meeting in Malvern before the 1850s, but during the nineteenth century the growth of the spa resort led to Friends meeting for worship. By 1856, a large room over a stable in the Portland Road area was being rented for meetings; the rent was paid by Hereford meeting and derived from rental income from the house next to their meeting house off King Street (qv).

In 1937, Friends purchased a plot of land on Orchard Road from Malvern Hills District Council and an appeal was launched for funding. The Cadbury family encouraged the meeting to build a new meeting house; the family attended meetings when on holiday in the area and since 1887 had owned Wind's Point in the Malvern Hills as a holiday home. The Cadbury connection may also have resulted in the choice of architect as J.R. Armstrong was an architect for the Bournville Village Trust; his other buildings include Weoley Hill United Reformed Church (1933) and Rubery Congregational Chapel (1928). The builder was W. James and the building cost £1500. The meeting house was formally opened on 2 July 1938 by Charles Cadbury. Like Bournville meeting house, the Malvern meeting room was built with a large platform at one end which could be used as a stage. In 1952, a small children's room was added onto the north-west corner at a cost of £400, and in 1992 a further addition was made for a small meeting room and kitchen by infilling a space on the east side.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

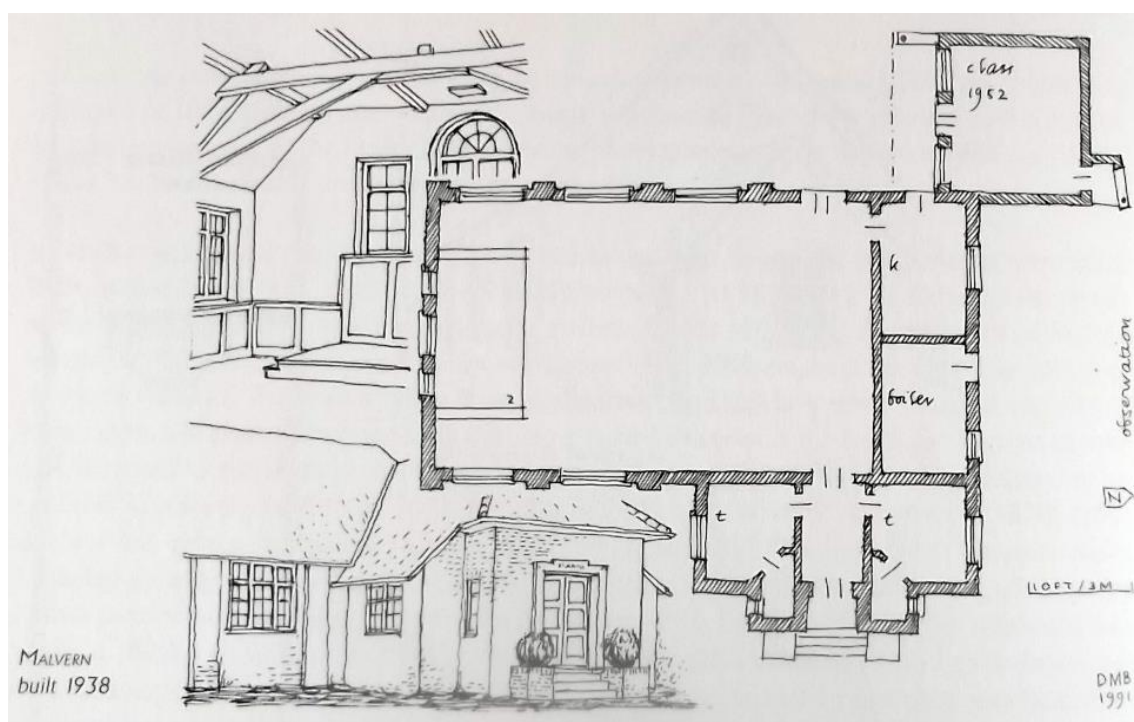


Fig.1: Plan and sketches by Butler prior to extensions in 1992 (Vol 2, 1999, p698)

The meeting house was built in 1937-1938, designed by architect J.R. Armstrong. The cavity wall construction is faced in a buff brick laid in stretcher bond, and the roof is laid with Roman clay tiles with cast-iron rainwater goods. The roughly L-plan building is arranged with the entrance facing east, the 4-bay main hall is aligned north-south at the south end and ancillary rooms are to the north. The hipped roof porch has deep eaves and double panelled

doors in a moulded stone architrave with FRIENDS HOUSE in bronze lettering to the lintel, and timber casements to the side elevations. To the left of the porch the main hall has two 3-light timber casements to the east elevation, three 3-light casements and part-glazed doors to the north elevation and an arched window flanked by smaller casements to the south gable end. The ancillary room additions to the north end of the building have similar timber casements and fire exit doors.

The interior retains 1930s features including a tiled lobby floor, oak boarded floor in the hall and oak veneer doors. The hall has an oak panelled dado, a platform or stage to the south end and an exposed braced collar truss roof on concrete corbels. At the north-west corner is a 1952 extension built as the children's room and a small meeting room and kitchen added in the 1990s, in similar style. A folding screen allows the small meeting room to be combined with the lobby space on its south side.

2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting contains a good collection of oak furniture made at the Bryn Mawr furniture workshop in the 1930s, including chairs, tables, benches and standard lamps designed by Arthur Reynolds. The factory was established in 1930 by Paul Matt in South Wales, under an initiative led by Friend Peter Scott to provide employment during the Depression.



Fig.2: Bryn Mawr oak chair and table



Fig.3: Bryn Mawr bench and chairs

2.4. Attached burial ground

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

Great Malvern is an attractive small town that developed as a spa resort in the nineteenth century, with villas and hotels laid out on streets that contour the steep hillside facing east. The Malvern Hills rise above the town to the west. The meeting house is situated on a leafy residential street on the south side of Great Malvern, within the conservation area. It contributes to the character of this part of the conservation area, although it is not identified as a building of local interest in the local authority appraisal. Neighbouring properties are detached and semi-detached houses of mainly nineteenth century date and the buildings of Malvern College are close by to the south-east. The meeting house is set back from the street behind a car park and lawned garden, with low stone walls with timber gates to the front. There are shrubs and mature trees, and some planted in memory of deceased Friends. The Peace Post on the front lawn was installed in about 2008.



Fig.4: the setting of the meeting house

There is a detached burial ground at Darby Road in Ironbridge, still in use and managed by the Coalbrookdale Trust (NGR SJ6656904977). This is grade II listed; list entry 1206383. Friends in Malvern look after a Peace Garden at Malvern Cube on Albert Road. Originally designed by Matthew Jackman in 2010 for a garden show, the contemplative garden is laid out to reflect the Quaker tenets of peace, truth, simplicity and equality and is now also used for growing vegetables.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed. It is a simple example of a 1930s meeting house and has some historic value for its association with the Cadbury family and Bournville, but has been slightly altered. It is a marginal candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house was built on a garden in a nineteenth century street and the archaeological potential is considered to be low.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey by Peter Bevan

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground: N/A

3.2. Maintenance

A quinquennial inspection was in progress at the time of the survey (2015) and a new 5-year maintenance plan is being prepared. Works recommended in the previous QI were carried out prior to 2015, including the building of the rear access ramp, loft insulation, a second entrance door and new kitchen fittings. The meeting has enough funds for maintenance but not for major structural alterations.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit but has undertaken some measures to reduce its environmental impact:

Climate change and energy efficiency: secondary glazing, new internal door and loft insulation. The meeting is planning a heat audit of the exterior envelope and is considering cavity wall insulation.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, including a kitchen installed in 1992, WCs, small and large meeting room. There is no warden's accommodation.

The meeting is accessible by public transport, within half a mile, and there is parking on site and on surrounding streets.

3.5. Access

A disability access audit was completed in 2012, and some works were subsequently carried out. The building has level access throughout the interior. There are steps to the front entrance with a handrail, and a ramp was installed to the rear entrance with clear signage from the car park at the front. There is a hearing loop. The external step nosings are painted white and some signs are designed to assist people with poor sight.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting house is quite well used and potentially available for 5 and a half days per week from 9am to 10pm (about 70 hours). The meeting books it for up to 1.5 days a week (about 18 hours) and other community groups use it for a total of 30 hours. To avoid conflicts between users due to noise, only one meeting room is available at a time. The meeting has a Lettings Policy that excludes alcohol, party political events, and any with a specific militarist connection. Use is free to members unless they are charging in which case a payment for electricity is requested. It is popular due to the reasonable price, welcoming feel and peaceful atmosphere.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The meeting reports that there is no sign of general crime, heritage crime nor anti-social behaviour at the Meeting House. The only incident reported is the theft of a garden bench which was not reported to police. Friends have not developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and are not sure they would consider this. The locality is generally well-cared for and community confidence is high, with low levels of crime and deprivation.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no plans for change, apart from improvements to the building's energy efficiency.

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 already been sympathetically extended and could be further altered without affecting its heritage value.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is a well-equipped building that is fairly well used for community activities and could be further adapted as required.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: If the meeting no longer required the building, its presence in the conservation area would probably generate a need to find a new use for the building, rather than demolition and site redevelopment. It could be adapted for other uses such as business, community or in theory residential. The loose furnishings have some heritage value.

Part 5: Category: 3