

## ***Friends Meeting House, Marazion***

*Beacon Road, Marazion, Cornwall, TR17 0HF*

*National Grid Reference: SW 51849 30701*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house at Marazion is the oldest purpose-built meeting house in Cornwall. Erected in 1688/89 on the site of an earlier burial ground, it was altered in 1742 and c.1880 and extended in 1961-62 and 2007. Features of note include the fine ministers' and elders' stand, and the historic sash windows. Overall, the meeting house has exceptional significance.***

### ***Evidential value***

***The meeting house is an important survival from the early days of Quakerism in Cornwall. Its built fabric can potentially reveal more about its history and use, for example, to clarify if there ever was a north door. The meeting house***

***has exceptional evidential value. The site in general has high archaeological potential.***

**Historical value**

***The local meeting has strong associations with George Fox who wrote his Epistle to the Seven Parishes at Marazion. Built shortly before the Act of Toleration came into force, the meeting house largely retains its original planform, and some original and historic furnishings and fittings. It has exceptional historical value.***

**Aesthetic value**

***The meeting house is a small building in the vernacular tradition which conveys the Quaker testimony of simplicity. The most elaborate item is the ministers' and elders' stand. The building has high aesthetic value. The modern extension is relatively unobtrusive.***

**Communal value**

***The building is primarily a Quaker place of worship; it is used only occasionally by community groups. It has medium communal value.***

**Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Cornwall*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0006620*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Cornwall Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Marazion*

1.7 Listed status: *II\**

1.8 NHLE: *1143785*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Marazion*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1688/89*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *9 May 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Tony Fitt*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *detached burial ground at Land's End*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Beacham, P. and N. Pevsner, *Cornwall (Buildings of England)*, 2014, p. 339

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 66-67  
Lidbetter, H., *The Friends Meeting House*, 1979, p. 13  
Stell, C., *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, p. 36  
*Friends' Meeting House, Marazion, Cornwall*, guidebook, 1999  
Griffith, P., 'Quaker Burial Grounds in Cornwall', typescript, 2002  
Fitt, T., brief history on the website,  
<http://swquakers.org.uk/meetings/cornwall/marazion#notices>  
Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, HER no. 138570 (Meeting House) and 29146 (burial ground)  
Historic England Archive, red box collection photos by C.F. Stell of 1969  
Local Meeting survey by Tony Fitt, April 2016

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

### 2.1 Historical background

George Fox, founder of Quakerism, visited Marazion in 1656, before being arrested and imprisoned in Launceston Castle. While in Marazion he composed his Epistle to the Seven Parishes of Land's End. Initially, Quakers in Marazion attended the meeting at Land's End, until, in 1671, it was agreed to meet at John Taylor's house in Marazion. Taylor made land available for Quaker burials of which the first recorded took place in 1682. He donated this as well as the land for the meeting house, although the date appears to be unclear (Butler gives 1677, Stell and the local guidebook have 1687). In 1687, it was decided to build a new meeting house; this opened on 6<sup>th</sup> day in 11<sup>th</sup> month 1688 (i.e. the January in the year that started in March 1688 under the pre-1752 Julian calendar). In 1742, major repairs took place which may have included the partial rebuilding the gable wall and one of the side walls, some re-fenestration, as well as, possibly, the creation of a new entrance door. (The removal of the entrance door in the centre of the south wall to the west end also happened at Come-to-Good (*qv*), albeit later in the eighteenth century.) The window replacing the south door appears to date to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century; thus, the former south door might not have been blocked up immediately after the creation of the west door in c.1742.

Between 1800 and 1841, meetings alternated with Penzance until meetings ceased at Marazion in 1842. By 1879, the building was in poor condition and demolition was proposed. This prompted an offer to repair it at private expense (according to the local meeting's website this was a legacy from Devon). This commenced in 1880 and included the rebuilding of the (originally thatched) roof at a lower pitch. In 1918, the meeting reopened informally and in 1944 became a regular meeting. In 1961-2, a small extension was built, comprising toilets and a small kitchen-cum-children's room. Electricity was also installed, replacing oil lamps. At the time, there was no direct internal connection between the meeting house and the extension, although a new external door was created at the east end of the north wall. In 2007, the architect Matthew Robinson of Helston (a member of the meeting) made internal alterations which included the removal of the original toilets in the extension and their replacement with an accessible toilet in a small extension at the northeast. A new door was cut in the east wall, beside the stand, which allowed direct access between the extension and the meeting house. The door in the north wall was blocked up.

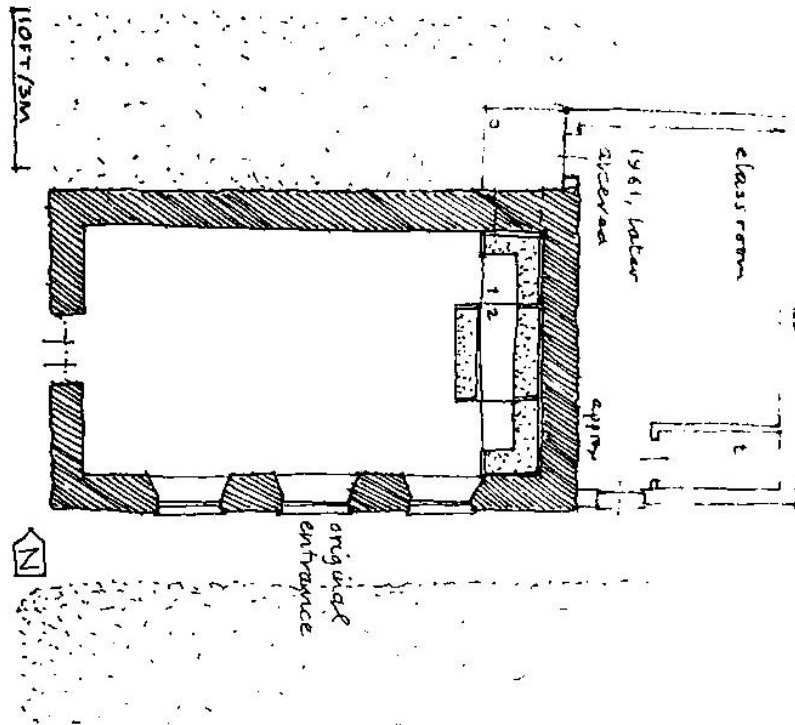


Figure 1: Plan of the meeting house before the 2007 alterations (north is at the top; not to scale) (Butler, vol. 1, p. 67)



Figure 2: Detail from a nineteenth-century watercolour, showing the meeting house and St Michael's Mount (see photo top left on page 1 for a modern view) (Marazion Meeting House)

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The main long elevation faces southwest. For ease of reference, the following description uses cardinal directions, i.e. as if the building's main elevation faced due south.

The meeting house was built in 1688/89. It was remodelled in 1742 and c.1880. The materials are granite rubble walls and some cob in the rear (north) wall. The scantle slate roof has a gable to the west and is hipped to the east. The single-storey meeting house had originally a single-cell interior, with the stand at the east and the south entrance later moved to the west. The extension wraps around the east end, with the new toilet extension to the west of the northeast corner. The porch of the extension has a short slope of slates; the remainder is flat-roofed.

The south elevation has a symmetrical arrangement of three two-light hornless sash windows, of 6/6 panes each. The outer windows with some crown glass probably date from

1742 when the meeting house was partially refenestrated. Internally, they have wide ovolo moulded glazing bars. The central window is a late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century copy with thin glazing bars. All three windows have nineteenth-century external shutters with chamfered stiles and rails.

The west elevation has a twelve-pane two-light casement window in the gable above a door under a hood on shaped brackets. The four-panelled door itself might be of the nineteenth century and has chamfered stiles and rails to match the shutters. But the bowtell-moulded doorframe might be from the eighteenth century. The north elevation has no doors or windows, although the nineteenth-century watercolour (figure 2) shows a door here.

The interior of the meeting room is open to the roof which has four trusses with tie beams, all part of the new roof of c.1880. At the east end is the original ministers' and elders' stand comprising a raised bench with panelling and shaped ends, with a balustrade of splat column balusters with a moulded handrail and square newel posts with knob finials. In the southeast corner are lower-level wallbenches, those at the northeast were removed when the connecting door to the extension was inserted. The former northeast door is now blocked to the meeting room; to the north (i.e. inside the new toilet) it forms a cupboard recess. The floor of the meeting house is of timber, with some brick cobbles just inside the west door. There is a horizontal-panelled softwood dado on all four internal walls. (There seem to be no evidence of the west gallery suggested by the writer of the list entry.) The modern extension contains a room with a kitchenette, as well as the accessible toilet. There is a brown ceramic plaque at the external southwest corner, commemorating the date of the construction.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

There are nine benches with inverted Y-shaped ends and no armrests, probably of the nineteenth century.

### 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

The attached burial ground was first used in 1682. Prior to 1711, there were no headstones as Marazion Friends proudly proclaimed in a letter (quoted in Griffith). Today there are about 21 surviving headstones, with the earliest one dating from 1805 (for Rebecca Richards). Most of the headstones date from the nineteenth century and are of the standard arched shape for Quaker headstones. However, there are some interesting variations, including a top shaped like a Tudor arch, and the use of a florid Italic typeface. Nineteen headstones are located in the garden to the west and northwest of the building, and have been moved to the edges of the lawn. There are also three from the early twentieth century to the south of the entrance to the site. The burial ground is no longer used for burials. There is no maintenance plan.

### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located at the corner of Beacon Road (formerly Meeting House Lane) and Back Lane, at the northern edge of Marazion. The town slopes down to the coast, allowing views from the meeting house to St Michael's Mount over the rooftops of the houses to the south. Entrance to the site is at the west via a narrow lane and a brick and granite gateway (erected in memory of a member of the meeting). To the east and very close to the meeting house is a modern residential house.

There is an older burial ground at Land's End (also known as Sennen or Brea burial ground; NGR: SW 37573 27282). It was in use between 1659 and 1789, when in total 36 burials took place. The burial ground no longer belongs to the Area Meeting but is still in Quaker hands and is maintained by Penzance Local Meeting. The boundary walls and a rare seventeenth-century table-tombstone are listed grade II (NHLE entry no.: 1143262).

## 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade II\*.

## 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The site has been used for burials since 1682 and the building was constructed in 1688/89. The site has high archaeological potential.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1 Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. However, there is an area of damp inside at the southeast corner, a shutter is currently being repaired and the bottom of the entrance doorframe is rotted (to be repaired soon).

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Optimal/generally satisfactory

### 3.2 Maintenance

The last quinquennial inspection was undertaken by David Scott, conservation surveyor, in May 2012. All recommended works have been carried out, including the replacement of timber windows lintels, repairs to windows and shutters, and the refixing of loose slates. The local meeting has enough money for routine repair and maintenance. There is no formal five-year maintenance and repair plan other than the QIR and the meeting keeps maintenance and repair under constant review.

### 3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: installation of new timer for heating, use of efficient lightbulbs
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: local authority recycling scheme, compost bin for garden waste
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: avoidance of plastic-based materials where possible and use of sustainable and recyclable materials
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: avoidance of chemical fertilisers and weedkillers; garden has nesting boxes and insect boxes
- Transport: encouragement of car sharing and cycling, holding meetings for worship at times which are convenient for bus travel

The meeting does not have an Energy Performance Certificate.

### 3.4 Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, although the building can be too small for funerals and weddings. There is no resident Warden.

The meeting is accessible by public transport although Sunday buses are limited. There is no parking on site and no secure parking for bicycles. (They can be securely left in the walled garden.)

### 3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities, albeit via a sloping access path to the site which has to be negotiated with handrails. There is level access to the building, an accessible toilet, a hearing loop and some facilities for partially-sighted people. A Disability Access Audit was conducted within the last 10 years and the accessible toilet was installed in 2007.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for 2-4 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 36 hours per week. It is used only occasionally for lettings, partly due to the small size of the building and the lack of parking at the site and nearby. But the garden is open to passers-by and the local meeting is planning the staging of an exhibition of Quakers during the First World War. The meeting has a lettings policy which is generally very inclusive but does not permit the use of alcohol. Free use is only granted to groups whose concerns are closely related to those of Friends.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of general crime or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no heritage crime, general crime or other incidents. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. There is currently no liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the meeting might consider making contact if necessary.

### 3.8 Plans for change

There are currently no plans for change to the 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:* The meeting house has all the facilities the local meeting needs, although there is not enough space for larger gatherings. The most recent remodelling of the extension should obviate any alterations in the near future.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting house is currently not regularly used by the local community, as it is too small for most events and has not on-site parking.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting:* The current average attendance at meetings for worship suggests that closure is unlikely in the near future. It would be highly regrettable should Cornwall's oldest meeting house close. In that case, a new use would need to be found, which ideally would preserve the interior intact.

## **Part 5: Category: 1**

## **Part 6: List description**

Name: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1143785

Location: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, ROSEHILL

District: Cornwall

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Marazion

Grade: II\*

Date first listed: 09-Oct-1987

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

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 69941

MARAZION ROSEHILL, Marazion SW 5130

4/32 Friends' Meeting House

GV II\*

Quaker meeting house. Circa 1688 remodelled 1742 and circa 1880. Granite rubble walls with some cob at the rear. Wooden lintels. Scantle slate roof with gable ends.

Plan: rectangular aisle-less plan with rostrum/pulpit at the east end and doorway originally to middle of south wall (now window) but in the C19 a doorway was cut in the middle of the west gable end. Probably originally there was a gallery at the west end. C20 extension front.

Exterior : Single storey. Symmetrical 3 window south front with probably 1742 paired 12-pane hornless sashes with wide internally ovolo moulded glazing bars and some crown glass; in the former central doorway is C19 copy with thin glazing bars. C19 shutters with chamfered stiles and rails. Left-hand gable end has central doorway with C19 4-panel door in bowtell-moulded (possibly C18) frame and hood over carried on shaped brackets; above the doorway a C19 12-pane 2-light casement.

Interior : original rostrum with simple balustrade with splat column balusters with ovolo moulded cornice to the handrail and to the square-on-plan newel posts with ball finials; original settle with shaped ends behind and flanked by probably later settles at lower level on either side. 1880 roof structure. Cobbled path at the west end. The plan of this meeting house is like the one at Come-to-Good qv., Feock, and there' were probably many other similarities before the C19 alterations. The C18 sashes are particularly notable and rare features.

Sources An Inventory of Non-Conformist Chapels, by Christopher Stell RCHM

Listing NGR: SW5184930701