

Friends Meeting House, Pakefield

Pakefield Street, Pakefield, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 0JS

National Grid Reference: TM 53960 90725



Statement of Significance

The building has medium heritage significance as a modest example of a very small meeting house built in 1833 with a burial ground, retaining some original fittings.

Evidential value

It is unclear what if anything was on the site before the present building and whether there may be below-ground remains besides the human remains in the attached burial ground. The building itself retains some elements of an earlier pattern of use. The whole is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

This historical importance of this meeting is wholly local to Pakefield. It is of medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

This is a very modest building of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house serves a small local community for worship and has limited wider community use. It is of medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Norfolk and Waveney*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0007030*

1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Ltd*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Waveney District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *Lowestoft NPA*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed, not locally listed*

1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *c.1833*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*

1.14 Date of visit: *25 June 2014*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Alan Boyce*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Pakefield Mission Hall, St George's Road (see separate report)*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 577

Local Meeting survey by Lucy Parker, 2014 and 2015

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

2.1 Historical background

Pakefield on the southern edge of Lowestoft is the most easterly Friends meeting in England. There appears to have been a meeting at Pakefield since the late seventeenth century. The first record dates from 1671, but there are no records of any early building work and it seems likely that the small number of local Quaker families considered a permanent building unnecessary. According to David Butler, a meeting house certainly existed at Pakefield in the late 1820s but the present building was erected c1833 beside the burial ground on a property

belonging to the Scales family. It was extended 7ft to the north in the late nineteenth century and the small north porch appears to date from the early twentieth century. The meeting house closed in 1966 but was restored and re-opened in 1985.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Pakefield was a working-class maritime community and from the 1890s the meeting house in Pakefield Street was supplemented by the Mission Hall in nearby St George's Street, which offered both a more participatory form of worship and also adult education classes.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The meeting house is a simple rectangular structure with walls of red brick laid in Flemish bond and a pitched roof covered with pantiles and with a coped gables. The gabled north front has a small projecting porch built of red and yellow brick porch flanked by two small windows in the main building. On the long east side elevation the northern extension of the main building is evident in the brickwork. The west side abuts an adjacent house. At the south end of the building is a small enclosed yard. The windows in the north, south and east walls have been replaced in uPVC.

The interior consists principally of the meeting room, which occupies the full extent of the original building. It has plain plastered walls, with a timber dado and the ceiling is raised into the roof space. There is no dais. The north wall of the meeting room consists of panelled timber screens dividing-off a small space which is now used as a kitchen.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The moveable furniture includes a number of handsome pine benches.

2.4 Attached burial ground

It is unclear when the burial ground was opened. It may pre-date the meeting house which stands within the burial ground, which is itself enclosed by a high wall of red brick and flint, with a single entrance on the north side fronting the street which has plain brick gate piers and ornamental wrought iron gates. The burial ground contains a few headstones from the first half of the nineteenth century including some for the Scales family who gave the site. The ground is still open for burials and the scattering of ashes.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Pakeham is a long thin settlement lining the main road along the coast south of Lowestoft. Pakeham Street stands close to the beach and contains a mixture of modest two-storey houses which mostly date from the early twentieth century and open sites, some of which extend to the dunes.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed. It is a very modest building and has probably suffered too many modifications to be a candidate for the statutory list. The perimeter wall of the burial ground makes a positive contribution to the area, and both meeting house and wall could be candidates for a local list, if one was produced for Waveney.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

It seems likely that both the building and the burial ground date from 1833, though the burial ground may be earlier. Apart from the burials, it seems likely that the site has low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground : Generally Satisfactory. The burial ground is fairly small. It is enclosed by a brick and flint wall, with some bushes inside the perimeter, and is mostly laid to grass which is mown from time to time.

3.2 Maintenance

There has been a recent Quinquennial Inspection and there are no significant outstanding works. The Meeting does not have enough money to maintain and repair the building, nor does it have a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. It has no Energy Performance Certificate but might consider obtaining one.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has the usual amenities. There is no resident warden.

3.5 Access

The meeting house has level access throughout but there has not been a Disability Access Audit and there are no special arrangements for people with disabilities.

3.6 Community use

Friends use the building for 2 hours each week. The building is not used for community purposes (but the nearby Mission Hall (q.v.) has some community use).

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area is generally well cared-for and there has been no recorded criminal damage to the meeting house or other anti-social behaviour. There is no established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team but the meeting might consider making contact.

3.8 Plans for change

The meeting is planning to refurbish the kitchen.

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 building is so small that the scope for change is limited, although minor improvements to the amenities would certainly be possible.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the building could doubtless accommodate small meetings other than those for worship.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: it is difficult to imagine a suitable secular use for such a small building which would not involve loss of character to the building itself and perhaps damage to the burial ground.

Part 5: Category: 3