

Friends Meeting House, Preston Patrick

Preston Patrick, Milnthorpe, LA7 7QZ

National Grid Reference: SD 54228 84035



Statement of Significance

Preston Patrick Meeting House has high significance as the site of a meeting house and burial ground since the 1690s. The current building is a modest, attractive example of a Victorian meeting house with attached cottage, incorporating some earlier joinery and structure. The site also contains a cottage, gig house, stable and schoolroom block and the tranquil rural setting in 1652 Country is part of its importance.

Evidential value

The meeting house has high evidential value, as a building incorporating fabric from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The site, including the burial ground is likely to have archaeological potential.

Historical value

Quakerism has a long history in this area; George Fox spoke nearby in 1652 and the Westmorland Seekers were active in Preston Patrick; Mabel Benson, John Camm, John Audland and other Westmorland Seekers are buried in the burial ground. The building has high historical significance as a late 17th century meeting house, rebuilt in 1876. The gig house, stables and schoolroom also have high historical value and illustrate past Quaker transport provision and commitment to local education.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has medium aesthetic significance as a modest example of a Victorian meeting house that retains some earlier joinery, but the site as a whole has high aesthetic value for the tranquil rural setting and the ensemble of historic Quaker buildings.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as the local focus for Friends since 1691, but it is not well used by the community outside the Friends due to its rural location. It has medium communal value overall.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Kendal & Sedbergh*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0002850*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *South Lakeland District Council*
- 1.5 Civil parish: *Preston Patrick*
- 1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/A*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *N/A*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1869*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not identified*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *10 June 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Meg Hill*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *attached cottage, separate former gig house, stables and schoolroom, detached burial ground at NGR SD539 865*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *Yes*
- 1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses of the Lakeland Counties* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1978), pp. 109-111.

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 2, pp. 665 - 668.

Arthur Kincaid, *The Cradle of Quakerism, Exploring Quaker Roots in North West England*, 2011, pp38-40

www.kendal-and-sedbergh-quakers.org.uk

Meg Hill, *Local Meeting Survey*, March 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Preston Patrick is in the heart of the area known as 1652 country; on 16 June 1652, George Fox preached to a group known as the Westmorland Seekers in a chapel at Preston Patrick; this group of which eight were from the village, played a pivotal role in early Quakerism in the north of England. In 1689, Thomas Camm, who had been severely fined for non-payment of the tithe, bought a plot of land for £6 on the lane south end of the village, from William Lord Montgomery. The meeting house was built by 1691, and a burial ground opened. The photograph (Figure 1) by Kendal photographer J.H.Hogg shows the meeting house was similar to other vernacular meeting houses in the area, with a full-height central meeting room, and a women's meeting room probably to the west end, heated by open fire. The external stairs may have led to the gallery. This meeting house closed in 1833 due to a decline in members, but was rebuilt on the same site in 1869 after a revival, at a cost of £232, apparently retaining external walls and some joinery fittings. The attached caretaker's cottage was built in about 1876. Stables, a gig house and a first floor classroom for Sunday school were built in a separate building, also in the 1870s. In the 1960s the west end of the meeting house was used as a hostel for overnight accommodation, a purpose-built extension for a shower and lavatories was added and the kitchen created in the former women's meeting room.



Fig.1: undated 19th century photograph, by J.H.Hogg, of the meeting house built in 1691 (framed photograph in Preston Patrick meeting house).

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The 1691 meeting house was re-built in 1869, incorporating structure from the 1691 building, and it occupies the same footprint. The architect for the Victorian rebuilding is not known. The building is constructed of local limestone rubble with a rendered finish and stone dressings. The roof is laid with Cumbria slates with stone ridges, metal ventilator and cast-iron rainwater goods. The building is aligned east-west with a cottage attached at right angles to the east end. The south front has a gabled porch to the left with a door facing east and a semi-circular headed sash with margin glazing to the south. The meeting house is lit by a pair of segmental-headed sashes with margin glazing to south and north elevations. The west gable end has two small windows to the ground floor and one to the first floor former gallery; at the south-west corner is a small twentieth century extension with pitched slate roof, also rendered. The house at the east end faces east, and is built of snecked limestone under a slate roof. The east elevation has a central gabled porch, 4-pane sashes windows and half dormers to the upper floor; the later lean-to outrigger to the north side extends into the adjoining field.

The interior of the south porch leads to two doors, one on the right to the large meeting room and the left doorway to the smaller meeting room, now a kitchen at the west end. A stone staircase rises against the west wall inside the porch to a first floor room, formerly the gallery and now a library and small meeting room. The meeting room has a ministers' stand at the east end, with eighteenth century panelling to the rear wall and turned balusters to the front rail, re-used from the 1691 meeting house. The west wall has late seventeenth century wainscot panelling, below vertically sliding pine shutters. The north and south walls are lined with a pine tongue and grooved dado. The floor is laid with pine boards and the walls and ceiling are plain plaster. There are cast-iron ventilators on the walls. The kitchen to the west end is in the former small meeting room, with a blocked fireplace to the west wall. Above this room is a small library or meeting room, with exposed purlins.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting house contains a set of around a dozen pine benches which appear to be nineteenth century, arranged around the edge of the room, with a plain oak eighteenth century table in the centre of the room.



Fig.4: table and benches

2.4. Attached burial ground

The burial ground lies on the south side of the meeting house and slopes up to the south boundary wall. The rectangular space is enclosed with drystone walls, with pine trees to the south side and a gravel parking area to the north alongside the meeting house and former gig house. Gravestones are laid flat in the grass and there are no standing headstones. The burial records are held in the strong room at Kendal Friends Meeting House, with copies at the Preston Patrick meeting house; the earliest burial is thought to date from 1685.



Fig.5: view from south-west across burial ground with meeting room to left and former schoolroom to right

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house and burial ground lies on the west side of a narrow lane that runs south-west from the scattered hamlet of Preston Patrick towards the A65. It is surrounded by pasture fields and although the M6 motorway is only half a mile away, this is a quiet rural area. The east side of the grounds is enclosed by the 2-storey stables and classroom building, which is now rented out to a business for office use. The shared entrance has curved stone walls and stone gate piers. The attached cottage has a private enclosed garden.



Fig.2: school room, now office, from the lane



Fig.3: entrance and cottage from the lane

There is a detached burial ground about two miles to the north at Birkrigg, at NGR SD539 865. The burials there include Mabel Benson, John Camm, John Audland and other early Westmorland Seekers.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed, but given it incorporates structure and fabric from the 1691 meeting house it could be a candidate for listing. There have been some alterations but these do not substantially affect its significance. It would certainly be eligible for local listing, subject to local authority resources.

2.7. Archaeological potential

The site is likely to have some archaeological potential as the burial ground has been in use for several hundred years and the building dates from 1691.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. No QI has been carried out recently.
- ii) Attached burial ground: Optimal/generally satisfactory. The grass is regularly mown and well-maintained by the meeting. The visual character and tranquillity of the burial ground is partly affected by car parking for the office user in the former school room.

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting does not have a 5-year maintenance plan. The meeting is small but does have sufficient resources to maintain the building and the site.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has installed sheep's wool insulation in the roof and temporary secondary glazing to windows. The grounds are managed to encourage wildlife.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting benefits from a large meeting room, a kitchen and a shower and two toilets in the later extension. There is on-site parking at weekends, and secure parking for bicycles.

3.5. Access

An access audit has not been undertaken, but the meeting house has level access from the parking area. There is one toilet suitable for those with disabilities in the former school room (now offices) opposite. The first floor is not easily accessible but there is a handrail on the staircase. There is a hearing loop, but no particular changes have been made for people with sight impairments. The meeting house is on a small country lane without any public transport and most people therefore drive to meetings.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting house is used by the local meeting for two to three hours per week, and although it is technically available for community use for 40 hours per week, it is not used except by Quakers, largely because of its remote location and the availability of more convenient venues. There is no lettings policy. The former caretaker's house is let to social tenants via the local Council. The former schoolroom and gig house is rented to a business for office use during the week.

3.7. Vulnerability to Crime

There have been no reports of heritage crime or anti-social behaviour, and the meeting house is in an area that is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels and low deprivation.

3.8. Plans for the future

The meeting has no plans for the future.

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 could be further adapted to provide new facilities if required, but there is no demand for change at present. The building is not listed, but the historic fabric such as the panelling should be retained in future refurbishment.

ii) For wider community use, additional to local Meeting use: the meeting house could be further adapted to provide new facilities if required, but there is no demand for change at present.

iii) As a consequence of being laid down as a Meeting House and passing into secular use: the site and building has a long history of Quaker use and it would be regrettable if it were to be laid down. The burial ground and the historic features of the meeting house should be treated sensitively if a new use were to be considered. The listing of the buildings may be an option, to ensure their future long-term protection.

Part 5: Category: 2