

Friends Meeting House, South Manchester

82 Wythenshawe Road, Northenden, Manchester, M23 0DF

National Grid Reference: SJ 82212 90070



Statement of Significance

The inter-war meeting house is of medium heritage significance. The building has an attractive appearance characterised by its simple domestic architectural style, designed by Hubert Castle. The design reflects the character of the surrounding Wythenshawe Estate, developed from 1931 as a satellite suburb for Manchester, designed by Barry Parker.

Evidential value

South Manchester meeting house has an overall low level of significance for evidential value, as a building constructed in one phase. The Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record has not identified the site as having archaeological potential.

Historical value

The inter-war meeting house is within Wythenshawe, laid out by Barry Parker as a planned garden city suburb in south Manchester. The building has medium historic significance as part of this overall development.

Aesthetic value

The building is designed in a simple domestic revival style with a mansard roof. The form and detailing of the building complements the design character of Wythenshawe estate; the building has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a building in use by the Quakers since 1939. The building provides a local community focus and its facilities are used by local and social groups with diverse interests.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Manchester & Warrington*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0000480*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Manchester City Council*
- 1.5 Civil parish: *Manchester*
- 1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.7 Listed status: *No*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1939*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Hubert Castle*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *9th September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *John Wright*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.57.

Historic England, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction*, 2010

Nick Clifford, *Local Meeting Survey*, June 2015

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

- 2.1. Historical background

A Quaker meeting was first established in Wythenshawe in 1936, and three years later a meeting house was built to the designs of Hubert Castle. The 1939 meeting house was built in the heart of Wythenshawe, laid out by Barry Parker from 1931, intended as a Garden City for Manchester and notable as the largest municipal satellite suburb in Europe. The design of the building reflected the mansard cottages built in 1931, designed by Barry Parker for Manchester City Council. The total cost of the building was approximately £3,000.

Proposals to alter the meeting house were drawn up by Paul Mauger in the 1960s, and in 1963 the meeting room was widened, and the classroom and amenity facilities were re-arranged. In 2001 the warden's flat on the first floor was separated from the meeting house; access was previously from within the meeting house.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The Quaker Meeting House was built to the designs of Hubert Castle in 1939, and altered in 1963 by Paul Mauger. It is built of red and brown brick laid in stretcher bond with rosemary clay tiles covering a mansard roof. The core of the building, with later additions forms an irregular L-plan; the building divides into a two storey block to the south containing the entrance hall, children's meeting room, ancillary spaces and a flat at first floor, with a single storey flat-roofed block to the north, containing the single volume meeting room. Additions include a single-storey rectangular range to the north-west to accommodate the expansion of the meeting room in 1963.

The south front elevation has an entrance to the left (east) side of this elevation with a single timber door via a ramped access. The ground floor has two 5-light windows with a doorway leading to the flat above. The upper floor is within the mansard roof lit by five dormer windows. The gable ends have a brick corbelled verge detail with a single window opening at first floor and central doorway; the east end has an additional window at ground floor and signage for the meeting house. There is a small single storey projection on this elevation for the WC facilities. Adjoining the north elevation is the single storey flat roofed meeting room and kitchen, which has three large windows to east and west elevations. To the north of this elevation, is the single storey extension (1963).

Inside, the main meeting room, children's meeting room, kitchen and WC facilities are accessed via a lobby area with white plastered walls, carpeted floor and a 4-pane central ceiling light. The interior of the main meeting room has plainly painted walls and ceiling with six pendant lights, the flooring is carpeted and the room is lit by windows on the east and west walls. To the west is a low extension supported by three steel stanchions.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The seating consists of a mixture of pine chairs (Fig.1) and contemporary chairs in the meeting room. There is a small oak table (Fig.2) in a central position within the meeting room, made in memory of Gerald and Nora Shaw.



Figure 1: Meeting house chair



Figure 2: Oak table in memory of Gerald and Nora Shaw

2.4. Attached burial ground

No attached burial ground.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is situated on the corner of two main roads (Princess Parkway and Wythenshawe Road) in a suburban setting to the south of Manchester. The grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which add to the landscaped character of the area. The boundary trees restrict views to the meeting house from the two main roads. To the north of the meeting house is a car-parking area and a small children's garden.

The meeting house is within the planned satellite suburb of Wythenshawe, laid out by Barry Parker. The area is predominantly residential, the housing generally of small terraces and semi-detached properties set back from the road with front gardens. On the opposite side of Wythenshawe Road is Wythenshawe Park, 109 hectares of open parkland.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and not considered to be a future candidate for listing, but it has some local heritage interest. May merit inclusion on a local list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site has low archaeological potential. It is unlikely that there would be any significant archaeological remains on the site; the site was not previously developed. At the time of this study, the site was not identified as a site of archaeological interest by the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent quinquennial inspection (undertaken in 2011) made a number of recommendations, and the Friends have addressed all the necessary work.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *Not applicable.*

3.2. Maintenance

Following the quinquennial survey in 2011, some recommendations have been addressed including removing trip hazards, minor repairs to the roof, external redecoration, and minor repairs to the rainwater goods. The Friends have sufficient funds for the maintenance of the building and have a five-year maintenance plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not currently use the Sustainability Toolkit. However, the Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting had an energy assessment report undertaken for all their properties in December 2012.

- Climate change & energy efficiency: Since 2001 the meeting has replaced windows with uPVC, installed loft insulation, a high efficient boiler and zone control of heating.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Recycling takes place in accordance with the local authority's scheme.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: The grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs, including a small children's garden, providing a wildlife habitat.
- Transport: Friends and other users of the meeting house car-share where possible.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. These include a kitchen area, WCs (including one fully accessible) and two meeting rooms.

3.5. Access

A Disability Access Audit has not been undertaken, but some access improvement works have been carried out. In the late twentieth century an access ramp and handrails were installed. The meeting house has a hearing loop system.

The transport links for the meeting house consist of local buses with services running seven days a week from central Manchester. There is a small on-site car park to the north of the meeting house. There is currently no secure on-site area to store bicycles.

3.6. Community Use

The meeting house is in community use for 20 hours each week. There is a lettings policy. Friends have the right to refuse proposed bookings if the aims, policies and practices of the organisation or individual are in serious conflict with Quaker beliefs.

The meeting house has two rooms available to hire. The rooms are usually hired out for a half a day or full day. If booked in advance the whole meeting house can be let.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The area has low crime levels and there has been no heritage crime at the site.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no immediate plans for change at the meeting house.

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 modified, and the meeting room was widened in 1963. There is scope for further change, and no heritage constraints.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local meeting use: The meeting house is currently being used for wider community use by a number of groups as well as by the local meeting, and there is scope for further change if required to meet community needs.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: There is a strong membership of Friends and closure appears to be unlikely. In the event of being laid down, there may be scope to continue the existing community use with some adaptation to the building, subject to viability. The first floor of the meeting house has been converted into residential use, and there may be scope to convert the whole building into a residential dwelling.

Part 5: Category 3