

Friends Meeting House Southport

Court Road, Southport, PR9 9ER

National Grid Reference: SD 34242 17729



Statement of Significance

The post-war meeting house is characterised by austere design and plain materials. The building has a relatively low heritage and architectural significance and its value is mainly communal.

Evidential value

Southport meeting house has an overall low level of significance for evidential value. The Merseyside Historic Environment Record has not identified the site for any archaeological interest.

Historical value

The meeting house building has low historical significance, however Southport provides a local context for the evolution of Quakers in the area from 1826.

Aesthetic value

This modern building has low aesthetic value and makes a neutral contribution to the character of the townscape.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a building developed for the Quakers which has been in use since it opened in 1960. The building provides a local community focus and its facilities are used by a number of local groups.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Hardshaw and Mann*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0012380*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council*

- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Southport*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 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): *1960*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Kenneth Evans*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *4th June 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Michael Booth*
- 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.378-379.
- Kelly's Directory of Lancashire 1895
- Fattorini Artist Craftsmen since 1827 website: http://www.fattorini.co.uk/About_Us.aspx
- Historic England, Pastscape - North Sefton Magistrates Court, website
<http://www.pastscape.org.uk/>
- Elizabeth Rowland-Elliott, *Local Meeting Survey*, March 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Meetings have taken place in Southport since 1826 and the first purpose-built meeting house on Lord Street was constructed in 1838. With a steady growth in the number of Quakers in the area a larger meeting house was needed; a plot of land was purchased on Portland Street and a meeting house opened there in 1865. The building was sold in 1955 to Southport's Jewish community for £4000, and the funds from the sale of this property went towards the cost of the present meeting house in Court Road. This was built to seat sixty people, designed by architect Kenneth H Evans; it opened in 1960. Prior to the new meeting house being built Friends held their Meetings at a room rented at 45 Weld Road, Birkdale. In 1993 a single storey extension was built to provide a classroom which was subsequently converted into a library.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

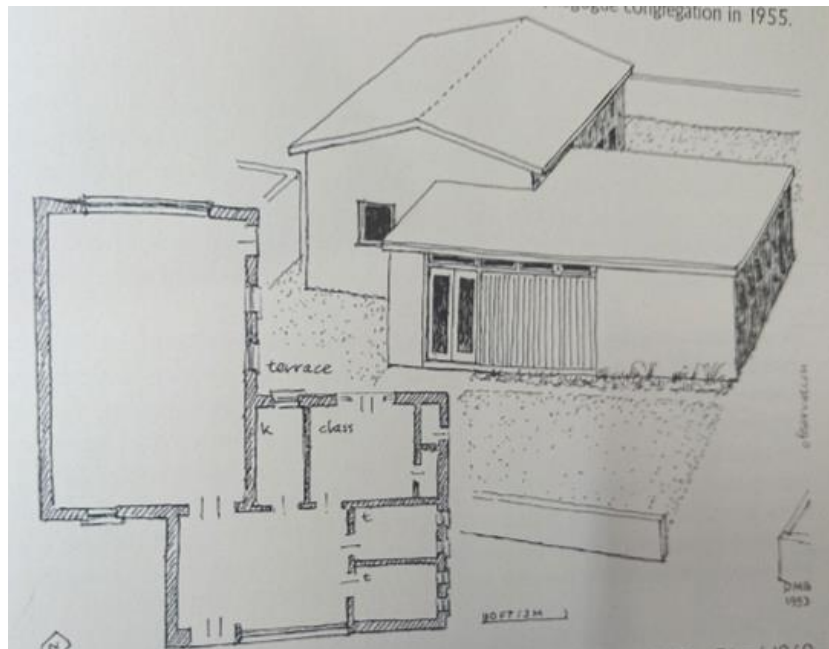


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as built, by Butler (north is to the bottom left corner; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 1, p.379)

The Meeting House was built from designs by the architect Kenneth Evans and opened in 1960. The building is formed of two components; a larger single-storey block for the meeting room aligned north-west to south-east, with a pitched roof, and a single-storey flat roofed element containing ancillary rooms and the lobby, together forming an L-plan. The building is faced in golden brown brick laid in stretcher bond, with some timber boarding and roofs covered in felt.

The north-west front elevation of the single-storey flat roofed block has a 1993 extension to the left, built in sympathetic materials to blend with the existing meeting house. Partial views of the gable-end to the larger block can be seen above. The central entrance door with canopy is accessed via a small ramp and/or two steps with railings, to the right of the elevation is a panel of horizontal boarding and the rest of the elevation is plain brick.

The north-east elevation of the main building has no window openings. The gable-end to the south-east has a large window opening with vertical boarding above to the gable. The south-west elevation of the flat roof element has five windows with to the south-east a patio door and single window opening.

The main meeting room, smaller meeting room, library, kitchen and WC's are accessed via a lobby area with white plastered walls, apart from the north-east wall which is fair-faced red brick. The interior of the main meeting room has a light and open feel and is lit by windows to the south west and south east. Walls are plastered and painted white, on the wall to the north-west is a recess which was the former external window prior to the 1993 extension. The room has a suspended tiled ceiling and parquet flooring. The benches are arranged in a square around a central table.

2.3. Loose furnishings

It is not known if the benches are significant and their provenance is uncertain; they may be from the Portland Street meeting house.

In the lobby area is a wall clock with the inscription “A GIFT FROM A FRIEND”. The clock was made by J. Fattorini of Southport, a well-known jeweller specialising in clock and watch making. In 1827 the company was founded by Antonio Fattorini an Italian immigrant who settled in Yorkshire and opened shops elsewhere. A watchmaker called John Fattorini is noted in the 1895 Kelly’s Directory on 18 Union Street in Southport and it is probable that the clock dates from the late nineteenth century and was presumably a gift to the Portland Street meeting house.



Figure 2: A clock donated to the meeting house and made by Fattorini.

2.4. Attached burial ground

Not applicable.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is set back from the street in Court Road. The meeting house is not in a conservation area. The area is predominantly residential, made up of semi-detached houses and bungalows. Directly opposite the meeting house is a terrace of two-storey flat roofed former firemen’s dwellings. The properties form part of a wider complex designed in 1935 by Cooke, Thomas and Dickinson of Birmingham as a purpose-built court building, police headquarters and fire station and constructed in 1938–40.

The immediate setting of the meeting house is defined by a low red brick boundary wall and to the rear of the property is a garden, planted with trees and shrubs which add to the suburban character of the area. The key view of the meeting house is from Court Road.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed. Not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site is likely to be of low archaeological potential. The Merseyside Historic Environment Record was consulted and no records have been identified for the site

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. The Friends have not undertaken a quinquennial survey.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *Not applicable.*

3.2. Maintenance

The Friends do not have a five-year maintenance and repair plan. The warden, along with Friends undertakes an annual inspection of the property.

3.3. Sustainability

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

- Climate change & energy efficiency: Installed solar panels and double glazing.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: Recycling takes place in accordance with the local authority's scheme.
- Wildlife, ecology, and nature conservation: The Friends have a beehive and a wildflower garden.
- Transport: Friends 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), a meeting room and library.

3.5. Access

A Disability Access Audit was undertaken in 2009. As part of this survey recommendations included an accessible disabled toilet and insertion of double doors. These items were promptly actioned by the friends in 2009.

The meeting house has ramped access to the entrance and then level access throughout, a fully accessible WC, hearing loop and facilities for the partially-sighted including coloured markings on the nosings.

The meeting is accessible by public transport. A regular bus service serves the area and the railway station is a ten minute walk away. On-site car parking is available and further car parking available on nearby streets.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately four hours and is in community use for 27-30 hours each week. The Meeting does have a lettings policy. No smoking, alcoholic drinking or gambling is permitted. Those who hire the building must not discriminate

against anyone on the grounds of their race, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability of age. The Friends reserve the right to refuse bookings without an explanation. The meeting house is a popular venue to hire due to its spaciousness, peaceful atmosphere and good rates.

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

No future plans for change.

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: There are no heritage issues to constrain any change that might be desired by Friends. There is scope for additional extensions to the south of the meeting house.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is well used by community groups and there are no heritage constraints, changes could be made to accommodate increased community in the future, if required.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The meeting house is located in a residential area and if a community use was not viable, the meeting house could be adapted for a compatible use or the site redeveloped for housing (subject to planning permission).

Part 5: Category: 4