

Quaker Meeting House, Swansea

Page Street, Swansea, Wales, SA1 4EZ

National Grid Reference: SS 65015 92973



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a Tudor Revival house of 1858 which was acquired for Quaker use in 1967. It has overall medium heritage value.

Evidential value

The building is an important remnant of the formerly Victorian residential character of the area. Its original planform is still discernible and it retains a few original and historic internal features. It has medium evidential value.

Historical value

Originally known as Pagefield House, the meeting house was built in 1858, along with several other Victorian houses in St Helen's Road. Since 1967, it has been a Quaker meeting house which is partially in office use. It has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The aesthetic value lies mainly in the two main street elevations in the Tudor Revival style which are of high quality. The rear elevations and the interior have undergone some alterations and are of less interest. Overall, the building has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house was originally a private house and since 1967 has been primarily a Quaker place of worship. The upper floors are rented as offices

and the ground floor is regularly let to community groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *South Wales*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0004590*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *City and County of Swansea Council*

1.5 National heritage body: *Cadw*

1.6 Civil parish: *Swansea*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 Cadw ref.: *11631*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1858*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *29 June 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Allan Prys-Williams*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *the Annex*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 865-6

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust HER, PRN 03530w

RCHAMW, Coflein website, NPRN 11807, 19557, 91405, 9036

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends met from 1656 in the house of William Bevan who in 1692 gave the site of the first meeting house and burial ground. This was located on the east side of the High Street, near the later railway station. It is likely that the first meeting house was an existing house which was adapted. It burnt down in 1720 and was probably immediately rebuilt. By 1798, it was deemed inconvenient and a new meeting house was erected on the other side of the burial ground in 1808-09. It was replaced in 1899 by a new, larger meeting house which was able to cater for the whole range of activities including bible classes and adult school. Its construction cost £1,200 and it opened on 29 June 1899. (This account is based on Butler. The Coflein website has a different sequence of dates: a rebuilding of 1876 was followed by

extensions in 1899, 1909 and 1929.) The meeting house was destroyed by bombing in 1940-43. In 1960, the site was sold and redeveloped with a Post Office.

The current building was acquired in 1967 and opened as a meeting house in 1968. This is a detached Victorian house of 1858 known as Pagefield House (1880 OS map). In 1901 this had been part of the Swansea estate sale of R.J. Nicholls (RCHAMW, C19915, sale particular). In c.1985, minor alterations were made, including the removal of a stone parapet to the front bay window (which was the subject of an emergency recording by the Royal Commission). In 2001, internal alterations were made. The ground floor is used as a meeting house; the upper floor is let as offices.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house originally had a C-plan but the space between the two rear wings has been filled in with a single-storey toilet block (possibly of the 1960s). The southeast elevation faces St Helen's Road, the northeast elevation Page Street. The house is of two storeys with an attic and a cellar. The materials are orange brick with Bath stone dressings. The northwest and the southwest elevations are mostly rendered. The slate roofs have ridge cresting; the gables are decorated with fretwork bargeboards. The three end-stacks all have ornamental terracotta chimney pots. A string course between the ground and first floors continues along the two main elevations, as does a dentil cornice under the eaves. The southeast elevation has a projecting gabled wing to the right which has on the ground floor a canted bay window and above two casement windows under Tudor-style drip moulds. The gable has a blind window recess with cill, architrave and drip mould. The left bay has one French window with a casement above, both under Tudor drip moulds. (In front of the French window is a paved area with a canted plan like the bay window; historic maps show this to have been a projecting glazed structure, possibly a small conservatory.) The northeast elevation is of four bays, two of which are part of a slightly projecting gabled wing to the left. This wing has on the ground floor a casement window beside a gabled entrance porch with the date '1858' in a quatrefoil above a Tudor arched entrance. Above the entrance is a casement window beside a blind window recess; above them is a projecting corbelled chimney stack. The two bays to the right have a French door beside another entrance and a modern window on the ground floor with two casements above. The northwest rear elevation has a modern porch (with details to match the remainder of the house), several modern windows, and two sash windows (a small sash of six over six panes in the gable, and a larger six over six sash on the first floor in the right-hand bay).

The original entrance with the datestone leads into the central hall. The staircase is at the centre of the northwest wall; this is now only accessible via the new northwest porch and not from inside the ground floor. The two rooms along the southeast front are now the meeting room (photo bottom left on page 1). The room has a timber floor, a blocked chimneybreast at the southwest and a narrow clerestory window to the north (just above the roof of the infill toilet block). A vine scroll cornice described in the 1998 GGAT survey of Swansea chapels might be hidden under a suspended ceiling. The room at the west corner is a children's room; that at the north corner is a modern kitchen with an external entrance. Between the kitchen and the original porch is the library with has modern French doors in an original opening with window shutters. The offices on the upper floors were not inspected, nor was the inaccessible cellar.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting house has elegant 1960s-style chairs and a table.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house occupies a corner site between St Helen's Road and Page Street. The neighbouring building just to the west is the 'Sun Alliance House', a tall office building which makes a negative contribution to the setting of the listed meeting house.

Towards Page Street the site is enclosed by a rubble stone boundary wall with gate piers in front of the porch with pyramidal caps. In front of the right bay of the southeast elevation is a rubble stone and quoin screen to with a door opening and a former window; this screen was part of a small extension (shown on historic maps). There are matching quoined wall fragments (with modern railings) further north along Page Street between the house and the Annex. The boundary wall continues as a retaining wall along St Helen's Road, which is at a slightly lower level than the front garden.

To the rear of the meeting house are a small car park and the linear building now known as the Annex which is a former coachhouse and stable (northwest elevation shown in photo bottom right on page 1). This has been recently refurbished and contains one large room, a toilet, an accessible toilet and a kitchenette. During the refurbishment, the entrance was moved to the centre of the southeast elevation and sympathetic double glazing was installed.

The former burial ground on the old site in the High Street has been leased for 999 years to a local housing association.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is correctly listed at grade II. Its list description (see Part 6) needs to be updated to reflect a couple of changes. The Annex might be regarded as a curtilage structure which is also covered by the listing.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

It is not known if there were any buildings on the site prior to 1858. The archaeological potential is considered to be low.

Part 3: Current use and management

Volunteer survey not received

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable

3.2 Maintenance

Information not provided

3.3 Sustainability

Secondary glazing has been installed throughout the meeting house, as well as roof insulation and LED lighting in corridors.

3.4 Amenities

Information not provided

3.5 Access

There is level access to the building via the side entrance to the kitchen. There is an accessible toilet.

3.6 Community Use

Information not provided

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

Information not provided

3.8 Plans for change

The meeting is planning to install railings to the front gardens to provide a safe environment for a crèche or nursery (planning permission of 2013).

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 required by the meeting. The planned enclosure of the front garden will improve the general safety of the building, as well as encouraging the use of the lawn. As the meeting house is a listed building, any extensions or alterations have to be well-considered and sympathetically designed and require the relevant consents.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: At present, the meeting house has all the required amenities. As the meeting house is all on one level, there are no access requirements.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: In the unlikely event of closure or disposal, a new sympathetic use would need to be found for this listed building. Due to the central location this is likely to be an office use, rather than residential.

Part 5: Category: 3

Part 6: List description(s)

Pagefield House (Quaker Meeting House)

Record ID: 11631

Local Authority: Swansea

Community: Castle

Location: Set back from street on corner with Page Street.

Easting: 265596

Northing: 192926

Date Listed: 6/18/1986

Last amendment: 3/30/1987

Grade II

History: Dated 1858. Tudor revival.

Exterior: 2-storey and attic house, red brick and pale stone dressings. 3 windows S front with advanced gable wing on right. Turnerised slate roofs with ridge cresting, cusped and fretted barge boards, end stacks with ornamental chimney pots. Plain quoins, bracket eaves, weathered stringcourse. Cross-windows under Tudor drip moulds (attic window blocked), small splayed bay with openwork parapet to ground floor right. 4 window side elevation, cross-gable to left with corbelled chimney and offset gabled porch with dated quatrefoil over drip mould to 4-centred entrance arch. Square 1 storey rubble and parapeted extension forward from right hand bay. Other details as before. Rubble boundary wall with pyramidal caps to gate piers.