

Friends Meeting House, Wigtown

Chapel Court, South Main Street, Wigtown, DG8 9ET

National Grid Reference: NX 43454 55260



Statement of Significance

The meeting house occupied a building dating from the 1970s formerly in use as a veterinary centre and converted into a meeting house in 2009-10. It has low heritage significance.

Evidential value

This building is of relatively recent date. The Dumfries and Galloway Historic Environment Record has not identified the site for any archaeological interest.

Historical value

The buildings intended use was as a veterinary centre which was built in 1970. The Wigtown Meeting was established at this location in 2008. The building and site have low historical value.

Aesthetic value

This modern building has low aesthetic value and makes a neutral contribution to the street scene.

Communal value

The building has been in use by Quakers and community groups since 2010. It has medium communal value

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *West Scotland*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0033350*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Dumfries and Galloway Council*
- 1.5 Historic Environment Scotland: *Dumfries and Galloway*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Wigtown*

- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 Reference: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Wigtown*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1970s; 2010*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established; A. Paterson of Port William*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *10 May 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Ian and Helen Macdonald*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
- Janette Walkinshaw, Local Meeting Survey, May 2016.

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

2.1. Historical background

Wigtown Meeting had its origins as the Newton Stewart Meeting, which was a satellite meeting of Dumfries. Friends would meet in the Red Cross Hall, Newton Stewart for worship. There were a number of Friends living in and the surrounding area of Wigtown and a decision was made to move the meeting to Wigtown in the late twentieth century and subsequently the name of the meeting changed to Wigtown Meeting. In the beginning, Friends would meet in each other's homes and in community halls. At the start of the twenty-first century a Friend left a legacy to be used by Dunblane Meeting. The Friends of Dunblane Meeting were looking for a new premises but the properties in the area were expensive and the West Scotland Area Meeting instead used the funds to allow for a premises to be purchased in Wigtown for use as a meeting house. A property in Chapel Court, a former veterinary centre, was purchased in 2008.

The property required alteration for use as a meeting house. The Friends appealed to other Local Meetings and Area Meetings to raise funds of £50,000, this was quickly raised by the generosity of Friends. During 2009 and 2010, work was undertaken by A Paterson of Port William to improve access into the building, provide a kitchen and social area, installation of wall and ceiling insulation, new uPVC windows and an entrance canopy.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building is a functional design of 1970, original in use as a veterinary centre. The single storey, L-planned building is built with an initial lower course of red brick, above three courses of stone and the elevations are predominately covered in roughcast. The north to south range forms accommodation for the social room, library and ancillary facilities whilst the east-west range contains the meeting room. The western elevation of the north-south range forms the principal elevation into the building which is covered by a timber canopy

with polycarbonate roof. The fenestration of the building consists of side and top-opening casements, along with top-opening casement windows and single windows all upvc. A door further door opening is located to the west giving access into the Quaker garden.

Internally, the main meeting room, library, social area and ancillary facilities are accessed from a spacious and light hallway. The western wall of the library facing into the corridor has large panes of glazing which further adds to the light and airy feel of the meeting house. The main meeting room is accessed through double doors and leads into a rectangular shaped room with plain plastered walls and ceiling with flooring covered in carpet. To the east wall, is a fitted plain cupboard.

2.3. Loose furnishings

No furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground.

Not applicable.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in Wigtown which is fifty miles west of Dumfries and is better known as the Book Town. The building itself is located to the rear of properties which line South Main Street, known as Chapel Court. The building is accessed through a passage between the Old Bank bookshop and Chapel Court which leads into a large car parking area and the meeting house is situated to the south of this. Opposite the access passage to the meeting house is the Square Town Hall (County Buildings) listed category B and was built in 1862-3 and designed by the architect Thomas Brown of Broan and Wardrop in a French Gothic style. In front of the Square Town Hall is a bowling green which sits in between South Main High Street and North High Street and the marked cross is located in parliament square to the west of the bowling green. The two streets are lined with a number of listed properties which date from the nineteenth century and collectively fall within Wigtown Conservation Area.



Figure 1: View towards Square Town Hall

The immediate setting of the meeting house includes a pleasant garden area to the east with a small area of landscaping at the entrance of the building. The site does not have an official boundary, however, small sections of fencings enclose the garden area to the east and a small area to the south. With the building sited to the south of a car park this area is bounded by a stone wall and to the south an opening provides views across Southfield Park. To the west of the meeting house is Wigtown Baptist Church.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed. The building is not considered to be a future candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Dumfries and Galloway Historic Environment Record was consulted and there are no known HER's for the site. The site of the meeting house from analysing historic OS maps was formerly the garden of one of the properties lining South High Street. The site has low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

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

3.2. Maintenance

A quinquennial survey has not been undertaken. Extensive refurbishment was undertaken in 2010 and at present a quinquennial survey is not considered necessary. There is no formal five year maintenance and repair plan at present. However, Friends undertake an annual inspection of the building and undertake maintenance work when required. The meeting has sufficient funds to maintain and repair the building. West Scotland Area Meeting has a buildings fund and Wigtown Meeting is currently increasing their reserve fund.

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. It has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: extensive insulation has taken place.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: use of council recycling scheme.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the site has a garden area which is well planted with trees and shrubs providing wildlife habitats.
- Transport: Friends are encouraged to car share.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. These include a meeting room, library, kitchen, toilets and storage facilities. There is no resident warden.

On-site car parking is available. The meeting house is served by a local bus service which runs seven days a week, with a reduced service on a Sunday. There is no secure bicycle parking but bicycles may be kept in the garden if required.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access into and throughout the building, a hearing loop, facilities for the partially-sighted and an accessible toilet. A Disability Access Audit was undertaken during the refurbishment works in 2010.

3.6. Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 4 hours each week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 40 hours per week. It is used for an average of 4 hours per week. The meeting has a formal letting policy. The inclusion or exclusion criteria for potential groups are decided by the meeting. The meeting decides on a case by case basis to determine whether groups are able to use the meetinghouse for free, for example local charities or self-help groups. Users value the building for its good location, warm welcome, pleasant atmosphere, and price.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

No heritage crime or anti-social behaviour has been recorded, and the area is generally well cared-for and has low levels of crime and deprivation. There is no Local Neighbourhood Policing Team in the area.

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: The meeting house has been altered and extensively refurbished in 2010. At present it fulfils the needs of the meeting.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is well used by a number of local groups and following the refurbishment in 2010 the building now has all the facilities to support these groups.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The buildings former use was as a veterinary centre. In the unfortunate event of closure the building could be capable of conversion into commercial use.

Part 5: Category: 4