

Friends Meeting House, Carlisle

Fisher Street, Carlisle, CA3 8RR

National Grid Reference: NY 39880 56166



Statement of Significance

The simple flat-roofed form of the 1960s meeting house creates a distinctive modernist aesthetic on Fisher Street. The site of the building has high historical significance as a Quaker burial ground acquired in 1681.

Evidential value

The site of the meeting house was formerly a burial ground and has the potential to yield evidence about past Quaker activity.

Historical value

The present meeting house has low historical significance, however the site and Fisher Street have high historical value for the long presence of Quakers in the area. Fisher Street has been home to Quakers since 1681 when land for the first of two burial grounds was purchased. There have been three separate meeting houses on this street.

Aesthetic value

This modern building has medium aesthetic value and makes a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area.

Communal value

The site has been in Quaker use since 1681. The present meeting house is used by a number of local community groups.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Cumberland*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0028300*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Carlisle City Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *North West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Carlisle*

1.7 Listed status: *No*

1.8 NHLE: *Not listed*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Carlisle City Centre*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1963*

1.13 Architect (s): *Hodgson and Tritton*

1.14 Date of visit: *5th May 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *June Hall*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burial grounds at Moorhouse NY 33578 56737, Beckfoot NY 0932 4962, Allonby NY 0818 4362, Newby NY 5850 2149 and Broughton NY 08123190.*

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.83-87.

Patrick Gray, Local Meeting Survey, March 2015.

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

2.1. Historical background

Quakerism in Carlisle began in 1653, when Friends first held meetings for worship in a house purchased in the Abbey and used until 1660. In the late seventeenth century, membership slowly increased and meetings were held in Friends' houses until 1702 when a property was

purchased on Fisher Street for £160. This meeting house was enlarged in 1711 but sold in 1776 due to the substantial repairs required. The same year Friends purchased a plot of land to construct a new meeting house, also on Fisher Street. In 1864 this meeting house was altered by the architect James Stewart. During the early twentieth century the size of the Meeting began to decline and the meeting house became difficult to maintain. The meeting house was sold in 1962 for £7,000.

The location of the present meeting house is to the north-west of Fisher Street on the site of a Quaker burial ground, land for which was purchased in 1681. The meeting house was designed by Hodgson and Tritton architects to seat 100 at a cost of £9,000 and opened in 1963.

In the late twentieth century alterations were made to the meeting house when the cloak rooms were converted for toilet facilities. In 2010, the toilets were altered to accommodate a fully accessible WC.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

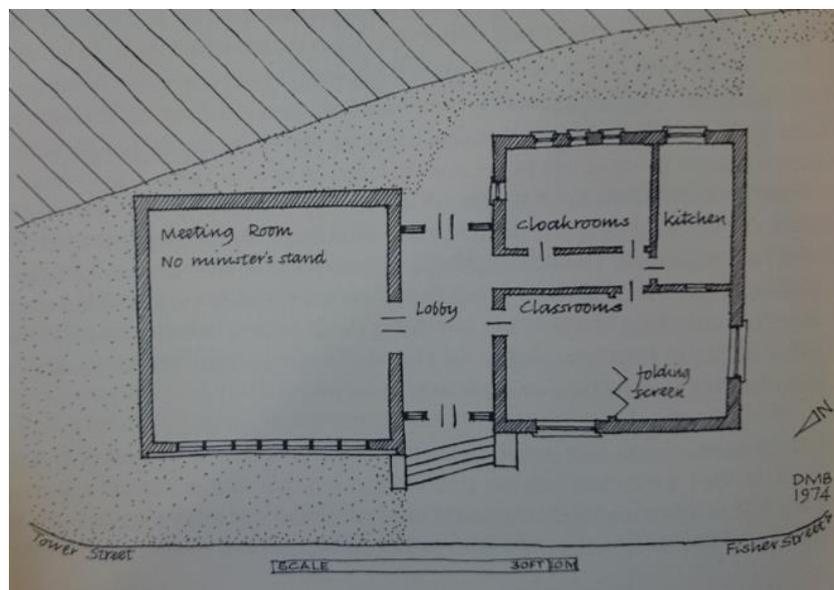


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house by Butler (north is to the bottom left corner; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 1, p.86)

The Meeting House was built from designs by Hodgson and Tritton and opened in 1963. The building is built in brown brick laid in stretcher bond, with some concrete panels with exposed aggregate. The plan consists of two single-storey flat roofed blocks connected by a glazed corridor; the meeting room is in the north block and ancillary spaces and a smaller meeting room are in a rectangular block to the south. The north-west elevation forms the principal frontage with a glazed central entrance with concrete canopy between the two blocks. To the left (north), the cube used as the meeting room is expressed by five vertical windows and the ancillary block to the south has a plain brick front elevation with a single window. The north cube is faced in concrete panels to the north-east and south-west, with plain brick to the blind rear elevation. The south block is faced in plain brick, with a single window to the south-west and three windows to the rear, south east elevation.

The meeting house is entered off the central corridor which forms a lobby. A passage and doorways to the right lead into the ancillary facilities and smaller meeting room. All principal rooms have plain plastered walls, carpeted floors and sloping suspended ceilings. The main

meeting room is square in plan with original double timber doors. There are no fitted furnishings.

2.3. Loose furnishings

Loose furnishings consist of a mixture of wooden benches and modern chairs arranged in a circle around a central table. The provenance the 19th century benches (Fig.2) is not known, but it is possible they were used in the former meeting house in Fisher Street.



Figure 2: Benches in meeting room, Carlisle Meeting House

2.4. Attached burial ground

The meeting house is built on a former detached burial ground land which was purchased by Friends in 1681.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located at the end of Fisher Street and faces Castle Way. To the north-west of the site is Carlisle Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument managed by English Heritage. The meeting house is within Carlisle City Centre Conservation Area. Fisher Street is an attractive setted street containing a number of Grade II listed buildings including the neighbouring properties numbers 1, 3 and 5 Fisher Street, all nineteenth century houses now in office use. The immediate setting of the meeting house is defined by a small landscaped garden to the rear and a car park to the south-west. Along the north-west boundary there are some intrusive railings. The meeting house is part of a forward looking architectural

design not based on surrounding buildings and makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Fisher Street is home to two former burial grounds, one at the site of the present meeting house and a further burial ground towards the middle of Fisher Street, purchased by the Friends in 1699; this site has now been built upon. There are a further five detached burial grounds in the area meeting, some associated with other meeting houses: Moorhouse NY 33578 56737, Beckfoot NY 0932 4962, Allonby NY 0818 4362, Newby NY 5850 2149 and Broughton NY 08123190.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and is not considered to be a potential candidate for listing. The building has a distinctive modernist architectural style and would merit inclusion on a local list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site is likely to be of medium to high archaeological potential, depending on the level of disturbance. The Cumbria Historic Environment Record was consulted and no specific records relate to this site, although the site is in the heart of historic Carlisle. Fisher Street lies just east of the Roman fort and was within the walls of the medieval city. The Quaker burial ground on the site has some archaeological potential.