

## ***Friends Meeting House, Wells-next-the-Sea***

*Quaker Yard, Church Street, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, NR23 1HZ*

*National Grid Reference: TF 91978 43092*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The building has high significance as a small late Georgian meeting house on an earlier Quaker site, which was extended in the early twentieth century. The heritage value of the building now lies principally in the exterior, as internal alterations in 1983 resulted in the loss of the aesthetic and historical value of the interior.***

### ***Evidential Value***

***The building stands on the site of an earlier meeting house which existed in 1697; the burial ground also came into use in the 1690s. The present mid-Georgian building has been altered and extended but there may be traces of early fabric both above and below ground. The building and site has some evidential value.***

### ***Historical Value***

***As evidence of Quaker heritage in Wells extending over three hundred years, the meeting house has high historical value.***

### ***Aesthetic Value***

***The older part of the building with its brick and flint walls has picturesque qualities, while the newer part is more institutional in character. The 1983 works eroded the character of the interior. The building has medium aesthetic value.***

***Communal Value***

***During its history the building has served several functions, as a place of worship, as a mission hall and more recently as a meeting place for the wider local community. It has high communal value.***

**Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Norfolk and Waveney*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0011870*

1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Ltd*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *North Norfolk District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *Wells-next-the-Sea*

1.7 Listed status: *II*

1.8 NHLE: *1230509*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Wells*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1783, 1913*

1.13 Architect(s): *original builders not known; 1983 internal alterations by Peter Codling*

1.14 Date of visit: *27 June 2014*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Mary Cundy*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *adjacent cottages, which apparently belong to the meeting, and a large timber shed in the garden to the north of the burial ground*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *yes*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 459–60  
Local Meeting survey by the Wells Meeting Premises Committee, 2014 and 2015

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

### 2.1 Historical background

The earliest meeting house in Wells was acquired in 1697, with a surrounding burial ground, which was acquired in 1699. This first building was replaced by the existing building on the same site in 1783 (date on building). Immediately to the west was the parish workhouse. The meeting closed in 1882 and the building was used for a time by a Seamen's Mission. It was re-opened in 1903 as a Mission Meeting, for which an extension was added towards the road in 1913 to provide a larger meeting space which could be divided by a folding screen, together with small additions on the east and north sides for a porch and kitchen. Significant internal alterations were made in 1983 to provide a lettable upper storey in the older building and the ground floor was also subdivided by new walls to allow for the provision of modern amenities. The whole building was re-roofed in 2006.

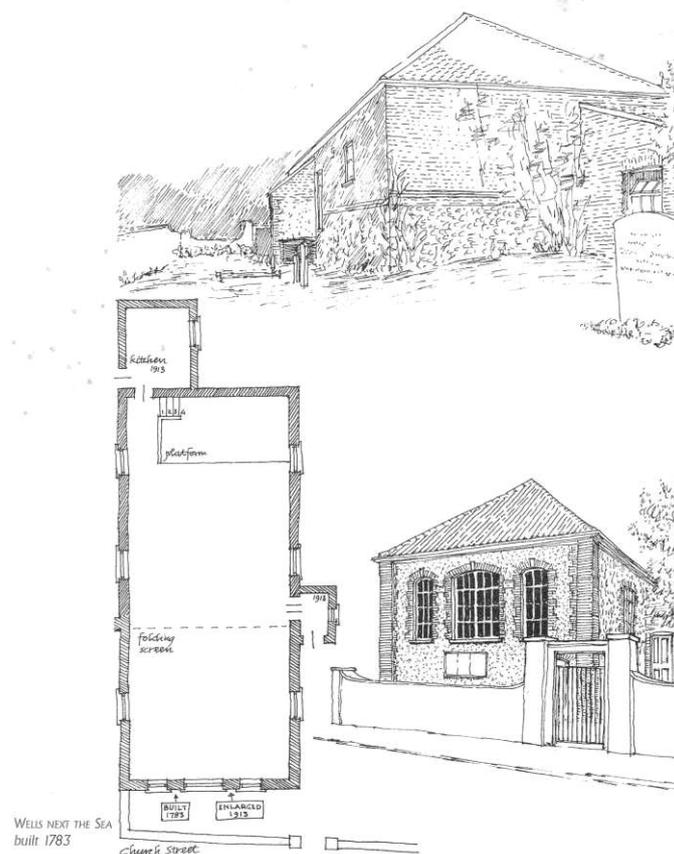


Fig.1; Front and rear views of the meeting house and the ground floor plan in 1981, before the internal alterations of 1983 (Butler (1999), vol.1, p.460). North is at the top.

### 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The building is rectangular on plan, built with the south end to Church Street. The older northern part has walls of red brick laid in English bond, on a brick and flint base, with a brick on edge cornice. The 1913 southern part has walls of carrstone with red brick dressings. Both phases are below one roof, hipped at both ends and covered in blue pantiles. The Church Street elevation is three bays wide with large segment-headed windows, the

central window wider than those on either side. On the east side elevation are various sash windows of different sizes and set at different heights, with a small central projecting porch up steps set across the join between the two phases of building. The west elevation has similar fenestration, with a window lighting a basement below the south end. The north wall is blind.

The interior is now almost wholly of 1983, with flush doors and other fittings from this date. The meeting space occupies its original position at the north end of the building but appears to have no surviving early fittings. A small room has been formed at the south end next the street and there is a lobby with kitchen and toilet facilities in the space between the two rooms.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room has no early fittings.

### 2.4 Attached burial ground

There is a burial ground on the north and west sides of the building, laid out as a garden. Presumably the 1913 extension is built on what was once part of the burial ground. There are several small headstones of which the earliest, to Phoebe Lesley, dates from 1840. The burial ground is still in use for the interment of ashes only. Records of burials since 1840 are kept by the meeting.

### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house building fronts onto Church Street, once known as Workhouse Street, which runs at right-angles to the old High Street, which is itself some way inland from the Quay. The road was formerly the principal east/west route through Wells. The space between the building and the street is enclosed by a red brick boundary wall with brown brick gate-piers. West of the meeting house towards the parish church the road is lined with modest cottages; eastwards it is lined with mostly twentieth century houses. There is said to be a detached burial ground at Fakenham, at one time the private property of the Peckover family (NGR: TF 92189 29514). See also Butler (op.cit.). Wells is an area of low-waged employment and high property prices, the latter due to its popularity for the second-home market.

### 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house was listed grade II in 1974; since then the alteration of the interior space took place in 1983. This seems regrettable, but the space may already have been compromised by previous alterations. The list entry is very brief and would benefit from amplification.

### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The original use of the site is not known, but it has been in almost continuous use by the Quakers since the late seventeenth century and there are also burials from this period. The site has at least medium archaeological potential, depending on the degree of disturbance to below-ground archaeology.

## Part 6: List description

Name: FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE

List entry Number: 1230509

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, CHURCH STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Norfolk	North Norfolk District Authority		Wells-Next-the-Sea

Grade: II

Date first listed: 13-Jun-1972

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

1793 CHURCH STREET (North Side) Friends Meeting House TF 9143 615/3/62 II

1783 altered and with 1913 extension. Red brick, with part flint. Pantile roof o Casements with glazing bars, and segmental heads. Toothed eaves. Chamfered plinth.

Listing NGR: TF9197843092