

Friends Meeting House, Stevenage

21 Cuttys Lane, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 1UP

National Grid Reference: TL 24139 24101



Statement of Significance

A meeting house of the 1950s by William Barnes, which has been much altered with later additions, though the original meeting room survives. The building is of medium heritage value.

Evidential value

The meeting house dates from 1959 and is of low evidential value because it has little potential to yield evidence human activity in the past.

Historical value

The Stevenage meeting was established at this location in 1959 as part of the development of the new town. The building and site have medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The original design by William Barnes has been virtually submerged in later additions, though the original meeting room survives. It is a pleasant space, but as a whole the building is of low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has been in continuous use by Quakers and other local community groups for over fifty years and is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Hertford & Hitchin*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0001790*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Stevenage Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Stevenage NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *None*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1959; additions made in 1965 and 2014*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *William Barnes; 2014 additions by Andrew Boakes*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *22 October 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Unaccompanied*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol.1, p.268
Local Meeting survey by David Hindle, June 2015
Local meeting archives

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

2.1. Historical background

An early meeting gathered in two barns owned by William Bradley which were registered in 1709. In 1954 a site was purchased from the Stevenage Development Corporation and a new meeting house was erected 'that would express Quakerism in this day and age and which would nevertheless be suitable for letting to other cultural bodies'. The architect for the new building was William Barnes, a Quaker architect from Letchworth. A quiet room was added in 1965 and a day room for adults with learning disabilities in 2014.

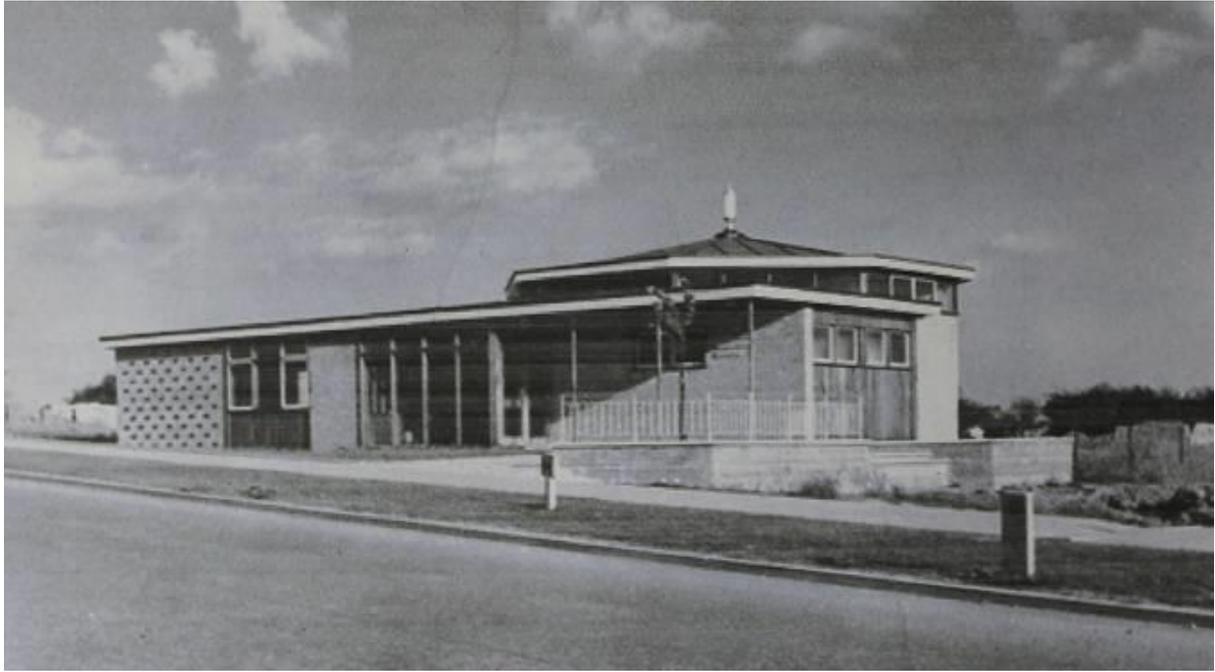
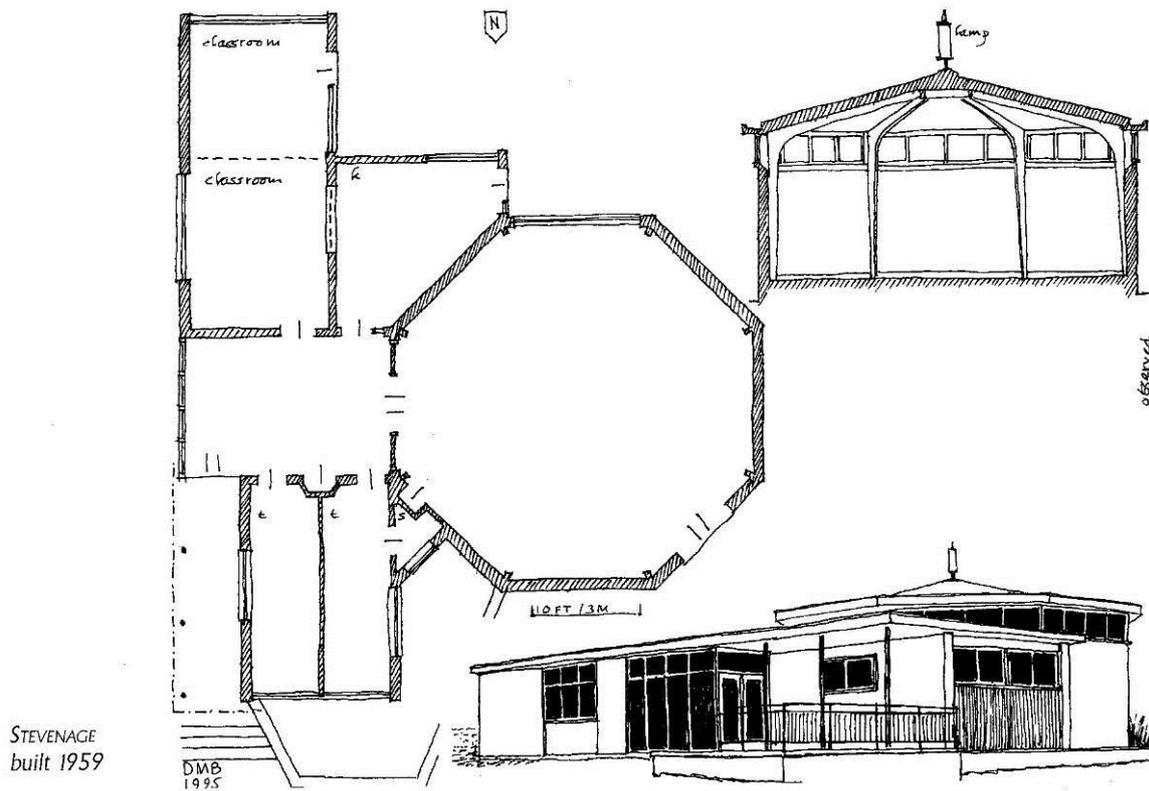


Fig.1 The meeting house in 1959 (Local meeting archives)



Local sources:
appeal [1956], illus.

Sources for the drawing:
architect's plan; photo *The Friend* 1959, 521.

Fig.2 The original plan of the building, with a section of the meeting room and a perspective sketch of the building, *Butler*, vol.1 p.266. (Butler's compass direction is wrong: north is to the left)

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The 1950s meeting house consisted of single-storey flat-roofed range on the north side towards the road containing an entrance lobby, kitchen and cloakrooms with an octagonal meeting room behind and rising above the rest (figs. 1 & 2). The northern entrance range has been considerably rebuilt and has also been extended southwards at both ends, partially enclosing the meeting room, of which only two sides are now exposed. The external walls are faced with yellow stock brick. The roof of the meeting room is covered in copper, the remaining flat roofs are covered in felt. The entrance front to the north has a projecting central canopy with a blind brick wall to the right; both canopy and wall are part of the 2104 alterations. To the left of the canopy is part of the original fore building, with a partly-glazed timber panel and a section of plain brick studded with darker bricks in a manner typical of the 1950s. The west elevation is entirely of 2014 and has vertical timber facing with strip clerestorey windows. The east elevation is less altered, with some original timber and glass wall-panels. The octagonal meeting room still rises slightly above the rest of the building, with largely blind brick walls on the two sides still exposed and continuous strip windows under the eaves of the tented roof, which is topped by a lamp finial.

Most of the interior has been considerably altered and modernised, but the meeting room remains largely unchanged, with exposed timber laminated trusses. Both the walls and ceiling of the meeting room are lined with acoustic panels.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose fittings of heritage interest

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house stands on the eastern side the centre of Stevenage, near the 1950s reinforced concrete parish church of St Andrew and St George by Seely and Paget, between a small park and a residential area which is separated from the town centre by the busy dual carriageway of St George's Way.

2.6. Listed status

The building is too recent and too altered to be candidate for the statutory list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The 1959 meeting house was built on a greenfield site, which has low archaeological potential.