

## ***Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green & Redditch***

*6 Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8NR*

*National Grid Reference: SP 00784 73572*



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

***The building has medium heritage significance as a meeting house purpose-built in 1969, with an innovative approach to the design of the roof structure, a timber hyperbolic paraboloid roof. This technique was pioneered in Britain and was briefly popular during the mid-twentieth century.***

### ***Evidential value***

***This is a purpose-built structure of relatively recent date, on site of a former meeting house dating from the twentieth century. It is of low evidential value.***

### ***Historical value***

***The meeting house has low historical significance, however Barnt Green Meeting provides a local context for the evolution of Quakers in the area from the beginning of the twentieth century.***

### ***Aesthetic value***

***The meeting house has high significance for aesthetic values due to the quality of the timber hyperbolic paraboloid roof which demonstrates the advancing construction technologies being developed by architects in the post-war years. Internally, the roof design creates an interesting ceiling of both concave and convex curves, lit by clerestory windows.***

### **Communal value**

***The meeting house was built for Quaker use. However, it is also a community resource. The building is used by a number of local groups and has high communal value.***

### **Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Central England*

1.2 Property Registration Number: 0001050

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Bromsgrove District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Barnt Green*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1969*

1.13 Architect (s): *Jolley Edward Associates*

1.14 Date of visit: *26 October 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Sean Tomás Beag*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Resident warden's bungalow 6b Sandhills Drive.*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Booth, L.G., *The design and construction of timber hyperbolic paraboloid shell roofs in Britain: 1957-1975*, Construction History, Volume 13, pp.67-90, 1997

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.83-87.

The Village, *Are we Christian?*, pp.34-35, January 2015.

Michael Andrews, Local Meeting Survey, September 2015.

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

### **2.1 Historical background**

The founding of both a local meeting and a meeting house in Barnt Green was a result of work by a local Quaker, John Gibbons. In the late nineteenth century John Gibbons and his family lived in Barnt Green and travelled to Longbridge, the nearest place for Quaker worship every Sunday. John Gibbons purchased a plot of land on Sandhills Road, in the centre of Barnt Green Village in the early twentieth century. Butler (1999) notes that Mission work is recorded to have been carried out in Barnt Green in 1904 under the care of Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting. Gibbons constructed a building which was better known as the 'tin tabernacle' (Fig.1) in 1904. It was built to accommodate 110 people and cost £150. This became the home for local Quakers for the next sixty five years until it was replaced by the present building in 1969. The meeting house was built to the designs of Edward Jolley Associates and cost £14,000. For many years the building was used as both a village hall and a place for worship.



Figure 1: Barnt Green's 'tin tabernacle' (1904) to the right, date unknown  
(Barnt Green Archive)

In 2004, a ramp was installed to the main entrance of the meeting house and a small extension was built to the west side of the south block to accommodate a fully accessible WC.

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

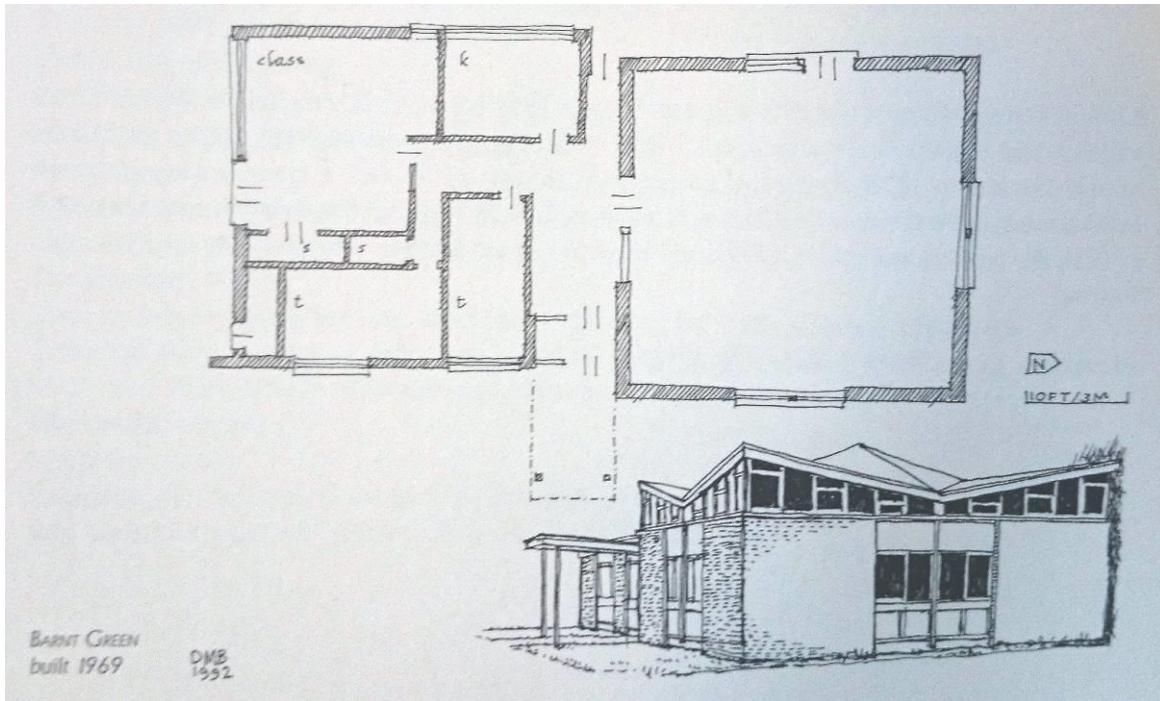


Figure 2: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as reconstructed by Butler (north to the right; not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.692)

The meeting house was built from designs by Edward Jolley Associates and opened in 1969. The building is formed of two components; a higher single-storey block for the meeting room to the north, with a hyperbolic paraboloid roof, and a single-storey flat-roofed element containing ancillary rooms and lobby to the south, the two square elements are slightly offset with a connecting lobby. The building is built in red / brown brick laid in stretcher bond and the roofs are covered in felt. The east elevation forms the principal frontage, an entrance with timber canopy is located to the northern end of the single-storey southern block. To the north, the block used as the meeting room is expressed with wedges of clerestory lighting immediately below the eaves of the hyperbolic paraboloid roof, with a central 4-light window with uPVC panelling to each north, east and west elevation. To the south the ancillary block has two sets of 3-light clerestory windows with plain timber panels below. The south elevation of the south block has a 5-light window with double doorway and a door opening to the east of this elevation. The west elevation has a set of clerestory lighting and a small brick projection to accommodate the 2004 WC extension.

The main meeting room, smaller meeting room and ancillary facilities are accessed via a pleasant well-lit lobby area. The lobby is plastered, walls painted white, with hardwood flooring. The interior of the main meeting room is square in shape and well lit. The striking feature is the ceiling lined with tongue and groove panelling; the parabolic roof structure creates internal concave and convex surfaces, supported by a steel frame. The walls are covered in narrow tongue and groove panelling. The hardwood flooring is laid in a herringbone pattern. There are no fitted furnishings.

## 2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no furnishings of particular note.

#### 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

None.

#### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Barnt Green is a village located in the Bromsgrove District of Worcestershire, twelve miles south from Birmingham city centre. The meeting house is located in Sandhills Road, a gentle curved road with a number of Edwardian properties expressing Arts and Crafts detail and the grade II listed Anglican Church, St Andrews; this was built in 1909-14 to the designs of A. S. Dixon. The defining characteristic of the dwellings are gables facing the road. The road also includes infill development dating from the mid-twentieth century, including the meeting house. To the south of the road is Hewell Road, a linear shopping street.

The meeting house is set back from the road, bounded by a wooden fence and the grounds are well planted with trees and shrubs which add to the mature landscaped character of the area. A modest car park is located to the north, with two bungalows to the south (resident warden and one privately let).

#### 2.6 Listed status

Not listed. The use of hyperbolic paraboloid roofs in places of worship includes the grade II\* listed St John the Baptist Parish Church in Lincoln, constructed in concrete. An example of a timber hyperbolic paraboloid roof is the former Silhouette Factory in Shropshire, built in 1961 and listed grade II. The list description for this now demolished factory notes that Britain pioneered the use of timber for hyperbolic paraboloid construction. The meeting house has a smaller and slightly later version of this roof form; it does not retain original fenestration but the interior is relatively intact. It is considered that the meeting house would merit inclusion on a local list.

#### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record was consulted and no records have been identified for the site. A former meeting house was located on this site previously, however, as the site of an early twentieth century meeting house it is likely to be of low archaeological potential.