

## ***Friends Meeting House, Stoke-on-Trent***

*2 Miller Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1QJ*

*National Grid Reference: SJ 85470 46308*



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

***A modest building of 1978 that provides good facilities for both the Quakers and community groups, but has low architectural interest and low heritage value.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***It is likely that there are below-ground remains of earlier terraces dating from the eighteenth century and features associated with the former railway in the surrounding area. The site has medium evidential value for the potential to derive information relating to the areas industry.***

#### ***Historical value***

***The meeting house itself has low historical significance, as a property built for the Staffordshire Football Association in 1978 and converted to a meeting house in the 1990s.***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***This modern building is typical design for its date and has low aesthetic value.***

#### ***Communal value***

***The meeting house has medium communal value. It is situated on the outskirts of Newcastle-under-Lyme and is well used by local groups.***

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

1.1 Area Meeting: *Staffordshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0006520*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *West Midlands*

1.6 Civil parish: *Newcastle-under-Lyme*

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): *1978*

1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *24 November 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Paul Bugeja*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burial ground, Aquinas St, Stoke: SJ 87470 45345*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Bugeja, P., Local Meeting Survey, October 2015.

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp.560.

Dennis, S., *The Early Quaker Movement in Staffordshire 1651 – 1743: From open fellowship to closed sect*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2001.

Staffordshire Area Meeting, *Stoke Quaker Meeting*: <http://www.staffs-quakers.org.uk/Stoke.htm>

*The city of Stoke-on-Trent: Protestant Nonconformity*, in *A History of the County of Stafford*: Volume 8, ed. J G Jenkins (London, 1963), pp. 276-307 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol8/pp276-307>.

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

### **2.1 Historical background**

In the seventeenth century a small group of Friends began to meet in each other's homes in the Keele area. It was not until the early eighteenth century when an informal meeting was established in 1821, better known as the Penkhull Meeting, and formed part of the Leek Preparative Meeting. By the mid-1830s the meeting had become independent and the meeting name changed to Stoke-on-Trent meeting. It was at this time the Friends were in need of a permanent venue for worship. A former Congregational Chapel built in 1823, located in Thomas (now Aquinas) Street in Stoke-on-Trent was acquired by 1834, which was converted for use as a meeting house and the grounds of the chapel were used as a burial ground. By the late nineteenth century this Meeting is recorded to be the largest meeting in the county. In the early twentieth century the repair and maintenance of the meeting house was becoming difficult and costly. As a result, land at Priory Road was acquired for a new

meeting house, however, the Second World War halted any future building. The new meeting house was not completed until 1952 (Fig.1). The one-storey concrete framed building was constructed at the cost of approximately £1,800. The former meeting house was sold to the British Red Cross in 1954. The Friends retained the burial ground.

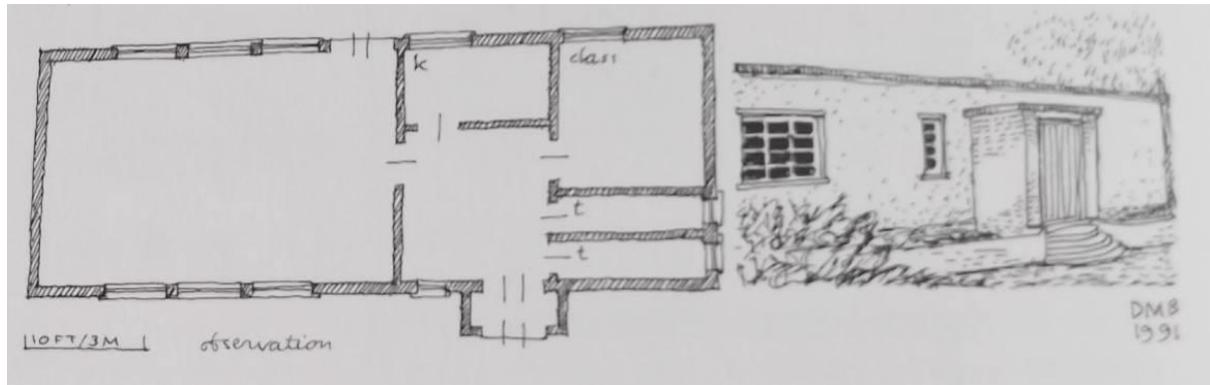


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the Priory Road meeting house, 1952 as reconstructed by Butler (not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 2, p.560)

The Meeting remained at Priory Road until 1988 when it was sold for £62,000. The money was used to acquire the former premises of the Staffordshire Football Association in Miller Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, built in 1978. The building was converted for use as a meeting house and planning permission was obtained in 1994 to undertake alterations to the meeting house to transform the one-storey flat roofed structure to its present form with a pitched roof to provide storage facilities within the roof space.

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house occupies the former premises of the Staffordshire Football Association, built in 1978. It is of hard red brick laid in stretcher bond and a tiled pitched roof constructed in 1995. The plan takes the form of a large meeting room divided from the children's and ancillary rooms by a corridor. The east front elevation has a gabled porch with tongue and groove detailing supported on gallow brackets. To the north of the porch three window openings and to the south a wall mounted bicycle rack. Each gable end has a single window lighting the loft space, and at ground floor a central doorway flanked either side by windows (three to the north gable). The rear elevation to the west is comprised of five windows.

The main meeting room, children's room and ancillary facilities are accessed via a small lobby and corridor. The walls in these areas are a mixture of exposed buff coloured brick and plastered walls, with the floor covered in tiles in the lobby and carpet in the corridor. Access to the loft space is via a small stairwell with a timber balustrade from the lobby area. The interior of the main meeting room is rectangular in shape. The room is well-lit by windows to the south and west. The walls and ceiling are plastered and painted, the floor covered in carpet. A mixture of modern loose chairs arranged in a circle along with three benches from the Leek meeting house which closed in 1839 and two tables crafted by Arthur Robinson in the 1950s which were formerly located at the meeting house in Priory Road.

## 2.3 Loose furnishings

The main meeting room is furnished with modern furnishings but also includes pieces of furniture from other meeting houses. Three benches dating from the eighteenth century which were once located in the Leek meeting house. In addition, two tables were crafted by Arthur Robinson at a time when the Stoke-on-Trent meeting house held their meetings in Priory Road in the 1950s.

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

None.

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

The meeting house is located on the outskirts of Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre, to the west. Miller Street consists of eighteenth century buildings at its entrance and twentieth century buildings to the south, once the former railway tracks had been covered in the 1960s. To the south and south east of the meeting house is Earl Court, sheltered housing, formed of one-storey ranges with a large area of car parking. To the north Miller Street General Practice. The area immediately in front of the meeting house has a small area of landscaping which covers the area to the south of the meeting house. To the north side of the meeting house is a driveway leading to the car park to the west.

The detached burial ground (NGR: SJ 87470 45345) is located at Aquinas Street (formerly Thomas Street) which was once the location of the Stoke meeting in the former Congregational chapel from 1834 until the beginning of the twentieth century. The meeting house no longer remains.

#### 2.6 Listed status

The building is not listed, and it is not considered to be a future candidate for listing.

#### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The Staffordshire Historic Environment Record was consulted and no records have been identified for the site. From early OS maps (1878), the west side of Miller Street was once formed of a row of terraced houses and to the south of the street was a railway cutting. The Newcastle-under-Lyme train station was a short distance away from Miller Street. By 1973, the terraced housing along Miller Street had been demolished and the railway station and track had been covered over. The site has medium archaeological potential.