

Quaker Meeting House, Minehead

9 Bancks Street, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 5DJ

National Grid Reference: SS 96890 46112



Statement of Significance

The meeting house was built in 1903 by the Plymouth Brethren for their own use, but passed into commercial use after the First World War. It was acquired by the Society of Friends in 1975. The architect has not been identified. The building is a modest but attractive example of Edwardian architecture and is of medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

It seems unlikely that there are any archaeological deposits beneath the meeting house which is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The building has a varied history, beginning with the Plymouth Brethren and including use as a church hall and a photographic studio. The Quaker connection begins only in 1975. The building is of medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a pleasing and typical example of Edwardian architecture and is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house was built in 1903 as a place of public worship. It has been used by Quakers since 1976 and increasingly by other local groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *West Somerset*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0024250*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *West Somerset Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Minehead*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Minehead, Wellington Square*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1903*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *10 October 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Faith Cartwright*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *detached burial ground at Alcombe*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
 - Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, p. 541
 - Sully, Michael, *Quakers in Minehead from the 1650s to the present day*, Minehead Museum Project Series 4, 2016
 - Victoria County History of Somerset* (forthcoming)
 - Local Meeting survey from Chris Lawson, April 2016
 - Information on deeds provided by Chris Lawson

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

2.1 Historical background

Friends were meeting in Minehead by 1674 and by 1689 had built a new meeting house with a burial ground behind the market place. In 1717 Susan Turner leased land at Alcombe on the outskirts of Minehead for a burial ground, presumably replacing the earlier one. The meeting was discontinued in 1814 and the meeting house was converted to a school and then demolished in 1822 (Sully). The Alcombe burial ground was leased to Wesleyan Methodists in 1846, who built a chapel on the site in 1850. The meeting revived in 1938 and gathered at first in hired rooms. In 1975 Friends purchased a building in Banckes Street which had been erected in 1903 for The Plymouth Brethren but was sold in 1908 to the Parish Church and used as a church hall until 1958, when passed into commercial use as a photographer's

studio and shop. The building was adapted internally and opened for meetings in 1976. A suspended ceiling was added to the main meeting space in 1998 and improvements were made to the toilets and kitchen in 2000.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building is single-storeyed and rectangular on plan, with an outshot on the north side. The walls are faced with red sandstone, with dressings of Ham Hill stone and the pitched roof is covered with slate. All the architectural detail is concentrated on the gabled west-facing street front. The central doorway has a moulded segmental head set in a stone surround. On either side are rectangular window openings with a single transom and moulded heads. Above the entrance is a triple window with small-paned glazing set in a stone surround. The northern outshot has an opening with a moulded segmental head which was originally a doorway but has been converted into a window. The side elevations are much plainer, with red brick dressings to the window openings.

The entrance door leads into a full-height lobby, where the roof trusses are visible up to collar level. A stair leads up to an open loft. The main meeting room has a match boarded dado, plain plastered walls and a modern suspended ceiling with lighting panels which was inserted in 1998.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/A

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

As the recent edition of Pevsner's *Buildings of England* notes, Banckes Street is a minor civic centre, with the former Reading Room, the Public Library, the Masonic Hall, the Church Institute, the United Reformed Church and what is now the Friends Meeting House grouped loosely together in a turning off the High Street.

On the outskirts of Minehead in Combeland Road, Alcombe (NGR SS977449), is the site of a former Quaker burial ground dating from 1717. The ground was leased to the Methodists in 1846 and a chapel built. The site was sold out of Friends' ownership in 1935 and is now a private house and garden.

2.6 Listed status

The building is not a candidate for the statutory list or the local list, though it does form part of an interesting group of modest public and semi-public buildings dating from the decades either side of 1900.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The earlier settlement centres of Minehead are elsewhere, and the site has low archaeological potential.