

Quaker Meeting House, Ashburton

Foales Court, off North Street, Ashburton, Devon, TQ13 7QE

National Grid Reference: SX 75574 69951



Statement of Significance

The meeting house is a converted Plymouth Brethren Chapel which originally was two cottages. It has medium significance.

Evidential value

The building was derelict by 2009 and much had to be replaced and repaired during the conversion. The original planform of the cottages or the chapel is no longer readily apparent, although the outer walls still contain original fabric. The meeting house has medium evidential value.

Historical value

The building is part of the later development of a medieval burgage plot behind the main street. It was a Plymouth Brethren Chapel from c.1850 to c.1950. It has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a vernacular building of local stone with two large round-arched windows to the rear. The windows and most of the interior date from 2013. The building has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building was a Plymouth Brethren chapel for about a hundred years and is now a Quaker meeting house which is also used by local community groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Devon*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0316060*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Dartmoor National Park Authority*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Ashburton*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Ashburton*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *Not known (restored and converted in 2013)*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *12 May 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Mary Yeatman*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
Devon and Dartmoor Historic Environment Record, HER no. MDV7908
Architectural drawings by Rud Sawyer Architects, Totnes
'A short history of Quakerism in Totnes and Ashburton', booklet
Local Meeting survey by Michael Baker, March 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

There were early Quakers in Ashburton although historical records are sparse. A licence for a meeting house was granted at some point between 1689 and 1789. During and after the Second World War, meetings were held at Waterleaf Farm and later in private houses. In 2004, a Quaker wedding in St Lawrence Chapel in Ashburton led to regular meetings in the town. In December 2009, a former Plymouth Brethren Chapel in poor condition was acquired by the Devon Area Meeting who converted it to Quaker and community use. The architects for the conversion, which included the insertion of an upper floor, were Rud Sawyer Architects. The meeting house opened in September 2013.

The building had been converted in about 1850 by the Plymouth Brethren from two cottages and had been used as a chapel until about 1950. From then until 2008, it was used as a wood store by a local hardware store.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building has an oblong plan and the entrance elevation faces southeast. The materials are rubble stone with a pitched roof with asbestos-cement tiles. The southeast elevation has a new central entrance door. (Prior to 2013, there was a door on the projecting wall of the short southwest elevation, with a window above; both are now blocked up with matching stone.) The southwest gable is hung with asbestos-cement tiles; the northeast gable is boarded with timber. There is a first-floor window (replaced in 2013) on the northeast elevation, above a lean-to porch belonging to the neighbouring property (Basil Cottage). The long northwest elevation (overlooking a private garden) has two round-arched windows with Gothic tracery. (The windows are sympathetic timber replacements of 2013.)

The ground floor has a lift in the south corner and a stair in the east corner. The rear part of this floor is a full-length room with a kitchen and dado panelling; it is lit by the lower part of the northwest windows and by opaque glass slabs in the floor above. There is also a toilet beside the lift and an accessible toilet beside the stair. Upstairs is a large ceiled meeting room with five ceiling beams. It is lit by the upper part of the northwest windows and a window at the east corner. Along the northeast wall is a kitchenette. As in the downstairs room, there is a vertical dado.

2.3 Loose furnishings

Some fragmentary panels with biblical inscription and pieces of stained glass from the former Plymouth Brethren Chapel are currently in storage.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is accessed by Foales Court, an alleyway off North Street. The narrow alleyway allows only oblique views of the meeting house. The building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is currently unlisted and is not considered to be a candidate for listing. It might, however, be considered a curtilage structure to Foale's Cottage (grade II), which abuts at the southwest.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

'As one of the county's most important medieval towns, an early borough, wool centre and stannary town, Ashburton has high archaeological potential' (conservation area appraisal). The meeting house site is near the medieval centre of Ashburton and also has high archaeological potential.