

Friends Meeting House, Swindon

79 Eastcott Hill, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 3JF

National Grid Reference: SU 15167 84223



Statement of Significance

A meeting house of 1901 which has been much altered and extended. Its overall heritage significance is low.

Evidential value

The primary evidential value lies in the inscribed stone panel on the frontage. There is little otherwise to denote the meeting house function. The building is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting was established at this location in 1901, on a site acquired with the support of the Cadbury family. Over a century of Quaker use lends the site medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

What survives of the 1901 building is much altered, and the 1970s addition is functional in character. The building is of low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is used by local groups and charities and as such has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Oxford & Swindon*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0009020*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Swindon Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Swindon NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1901; 1976*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established; B. S. Associates*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *21 June 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Steve Russell, Elspeth Wollen*
- 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. 2, pp. 688, 911
Local Meeting Survey, by Steve Russell, April 2016
Quinquennial Inspection Report, April 2015

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

2.1 Historical background



Figure 1: The 1901 meeting house in 1968 (Swindon Local Meeting)

Quaker meetings began in Swindon in the 1890s. An Adult School was established in 1894, but was discontinued the following year. The meeting restarted in 1899, and a site on Eastcott Hill was acquired, Edward Cadbury contributing £250 of the purchase price of £350. The builder was William Nichols of Gloucester (Butler, p. 911). Originally rectangular on plan and with a small entrance lobby (figure 1), just under half of this building survives today, in greatly altered form. The alterations were carried out in two main phases, the first in 1976 when the rear half of the building was demolished and a two-storey addition built, with classrooms below and a flat above (later used as offices). This cost £28,500 and the architects were B. S. Associates (Oxford). By 1987 structural problems had developed in the remaining older part and rebuilding was considered; in the event it was strengthened, remodelled and repaired in 1989 at a cost of about £30,000.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

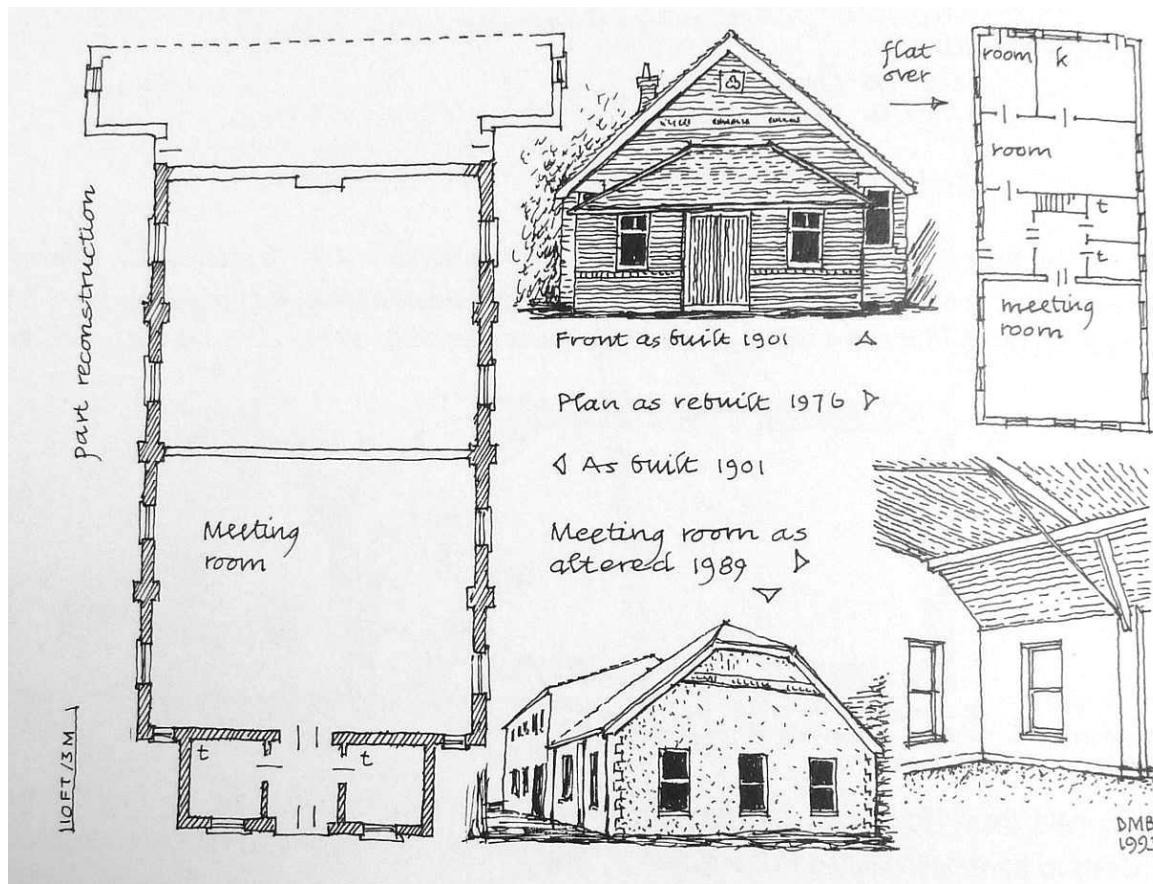


Figure 2: Plans and elevations, from Butler, 1999, p. 688

The present building consists of two elements: a single-storey front range, built in 1901 and remodelled in 1989, which contains the meeting room, and a two-storey range behind, built in 1976 and containing a long children's room with a small committee room off, kitchen and WCs. At first floor level there was originally a one-bedroom flat for the warden, two children's/general rooms and a WC. The residential element is now in office use. The front range is built of dark red brick laid in stretcher bond, except for the front elevation which has been rebuilt or refaced with a render finish, but still incorporates a long stone panel inscribed FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE. At the sides, the two bays are separated by brick buttresses, with windows between. This range has a half hipped roof clad with artificial slates. The rear range is functional in design, also brick built, with a concrete tile roof of shallow pitch. Rainwater goods throughout are of uPVC.

The entrance is at the side, leading into a hall lobby in the rear range. The meeting room gives off to the right, and is a roughly square space, with plastered walls, steel roof trusses and ties, and a pine boarded finish to the ceiling.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of particular note in the meeting room. The children's room contains a collection of ercol chairs.

2.4 Attached burial ground

Not applicable.

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Eastcott Hill lies to the south of the town centre, and is lined with houses of mostly early twentieth-century date. The meeting house is set back from the road behind a low brick wall, and there is an 'in-out' circulation route around the building for vehicles.

2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

Low.