

Quaker Meeting House, Bradford on Avon

1 Whiteheads Lane, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1JU

National Grid Reference: ST 82739 61077



Statement of Significance

The meeting house was converted in the early 1970s from a late Victorian house with some earlier elements and has been slightly enlarged since then. As a whole the fabric is of medium heritage significance.

Evidential value

The meeting house incorporates fabric from the later eighteenth century and later nineteenth century, all of which may illuminate the past function of the building. The slate lining of the internal walls of the nineteenth-century building is a rare known example of this practice. The building is of high evidential value.

Historical value

Quakerism in Bradford on Avon has a history dating back to the 1660s, but the present site was only acquired by the Quakers in the late 1960s. The site has medium historical value, principally for its pre-Quaker existence.

Aesthetic value

The street front of the building is a pleasing example of late Victorian domestic architecture and the building is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house has been used by Quakers continuously since the 1970s and is also well-used by other local groups. The building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *West Wiltshire & East Somerset*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0013390*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wiltshire Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Bradford on Avon*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Bradford on Avon*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *probably late eighteenth and later nineteenth century*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *2 August 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Ann Warren and Klaus Huber (warden)*
- 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. 675-6
Fassnidge, H., *Bradford on Avon Past and Present*, 1988
Stell, C. *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South-west England*, 1991, p. 210
The Friend 1970, 36, 747

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

2.1 Historical background

An early meeting house with a burial ground in Cumberwell on the northern edge of Bradford on the Bath Road was replaced in 1689 by a new meeting house on the same site. The building is shown on Andrews & Dury's 1767 map of Wiltshire. It was sold in 1813. Meanwhile, Friends purchased a site off St Margaret Street in the centre of town south of the river and built a new meeting house there in 1718, which was used until 1799 when the meeting lapsed. The building was finally sold in 1902 and demolished in 1965. The site is now a car park. The Bradford on Avon meeting revived in the 1960s and a late Victorian house next to a former Brewery in Whiteheads Lane was purchased in 1969 and converted to provide a meeting room with other accommodation and a flat on the first floor (this was later converted into 2 flats, one for a warden and one for letting). Extensive refurbishment and some further alteration were carried out in 2002/3.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The principal part of the present meeting house was built in the late nineteenth century as a dwelling house. It has walls of Bath stone and roof-coverings of pantiles. The main (east) front to the street is of ashlar masonry, three windows wide and two storeys high. On the ground floor is a central doorway flanked by windows; on the first floor are three windows. All the windows have large-paned timber sashes and all the openings have deep reveals with moulded segmental heads. The right-hand (north) bay is a cross wing with a gable-end to the street. The north and west walls are of squared and coursed masonry. The north front has doorway on the ground floor and a single window to the right of the storey above. Attached to the west front is a modern single-storey extension with walls of stone and render and a monopitch roof covered in butyl. Next to it is a modern metal stair leading to the flats on the upper floor of the meeting house. The main east range returns at the south end with a further range of building which is both older and taller. The north front of this range is faced in ashlar masonry and is two storeys high and two windows wide. The west front is of coursed rubble and is blind with a half-gable to the single-pitch roof.

The meeting house accommodation is on the ground floor. The main meeting room was originally a principal living room with a chimneybreast on one side. The walls are plain plastered, with timber skirtings and chair rails and a simple moulded cornice. Apparently all the walls in the main rooms have linings of slate, plastered over. Slate lining is mentioned in the 1867 edition of Joseph Gwilt's *Encyclopaedia of Architecture* as being used in the Manchester area, but there appear to be very few known surviving examples of the practice.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest within the building.

2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/A

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting fronts a steep narrow lane running north from the centre of Bradford on Avon. Immediately south of the meeting house towards the river is a building which was formerly a brewery. Behind the meeting house car park is a small four-storey mill, currently empty and derelict (see illustration above).

2.6 Listed status

The building is not listed. Although parts of the building probably date from the late eighteenth century, the main fabric dates from the later nineteenth century and has been considerably altered. The building is not a candidate for the statutory list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

There have been buildings with the present footprint on the site since at least the 1830s and probably earlier. The site has medium archaeological potential.