

Friends Meeting House, Devizes

Sussex Wharf, The Nursery, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2AE

National Grid Reference: ST 99877 61654



Statement of Significance

A small octagonal meeting room of the early 1990s designed by the Quaker architect William Barnes, which was added to a modest pre-existing dwelling of the 1960s. Taken overall the building is of low heritage significance.

Evidential value

Both the meeting house and the dwelling attached are modern buildings but there may be some archaeological remains of industrial structures from the period when the site was used as a canal-side wharf and the site as a whole is of medium evidential value.

Historical value

Quakers in Devizes have a long history but the present meeting house building is of little historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house is unremarkable externally but the main meeting room is a pleasant space of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house is well- used by Quakers and by other local groups and the building has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *West Wiltshire & East Somerset*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0010270*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Wiltshire Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South West*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Devizes*
- 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): *1994*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *William Barnes*
- 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: *Robin Brookes*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Former meeting house of 1701, 23 High Street Devizes, now a private house, listed Grade II. Detached burial ground at Hillworth Park, Devizes, now subsumed in a public park.*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:
Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 680-682
Local Meeting survey by Robin Brookes, May 2016

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

2.1 Historical background

The Friends meeting in Devizes dates back to the 1670s. A burial ground was established at Hillworth Park, Wicke, in 1665 and a meeting house was built on part of the burial ground in 1690. Friends found the location of this meeting house inconvenient and in 1701 a new meeting house was built on a site in the High Street, which was used until 1827 when the meeting was discontinued. It was sold in 1840, re-purchased in 1858 for a revived meeting which lasted until 1878, used again for meetings between 1903 and 1907, and finally sold in 1929. The building still survives as a private house at 23 High Street. A new meeting was settled in 1980 and in 1991 a plot of land at Sussex Wharf on the Kennet & Avon Canal purchased. The plot already contained a small modern house and warehouse which was used as a meeting room for the Plymouth Brethren. The warehouse was demolished and a new

octagonal meeting room was built, attached to the dwelling house, which was adapted to provide ancillary spaces on the ground floor and a flat for a warden above. The new meeting house opened in 1994; the architect for the new building was William Barnes.

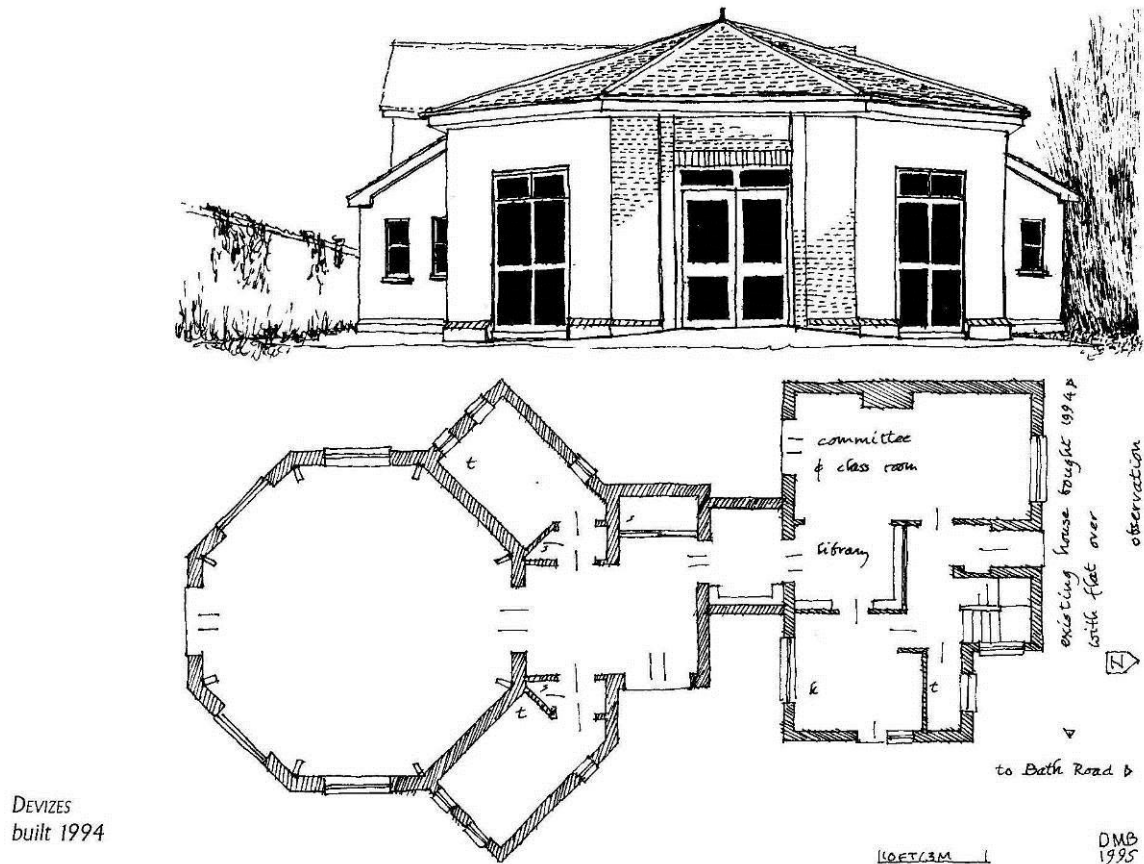


Figure 1: Ground plan and perspective view of east front towards the canal (Butler, vol. 2, p. 681)

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building is formed of two parts. To the north is a modest 1960s dwelling house of two storeys with walls of purple brick laid in stretcher bond and roof coverings of concrete tiles. To the south is the single-storey octagonal meeting room added in the early 1990s, which is linked to the house by a lobby with ancillary spaces. The 1990s building has walls of red brick in stretcher bond and roof coverings of natural slate. The main meeting room faces south towards the canal and has large windows and doors in the principal faces, with smaller windows in the east and west faces. Inside the main meeting room the laminated timber trusses supporting the shallow conical roof are exposed. The room has plain plastered walls and a timber ceiling.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest.

2.4 Attached burial ground

None

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house occupies a secluded site reached by narrow road sloping down off the main A361 to the Kennet and Avon canal. The site was formerly a wharf. Along the eastern side is a tall brick and stone wall enclosing the adjacent property. Along the western side is a bank with tall trees. The meeting has a partial responsibility for the upkeep of the wall.

The seventeenth-century burial ground at Hillworth Park (NGR SU005609) was sold in 1905 and the ground now forms part of the Hillworth Park public open space owned by Devizes Council.

2.6 Listed status

The building is not a candidate for the statutory list or the local list.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

There have been previous buildings on the site associated with the canal. The site is of medium archaeological potential.