

Friends Meeting House, Glasgow

38 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow, G2 4PS

National Grid Reference: NS 58103 65788



Statement of Significance

Glasgow meeting house has medium heritage significance as a typical example of a remodelled city centre terraced house. The former residential building was built in the 1860s and is typical of early Victorian planned development in Scottish towns and cities, continuing Georgian architectural traditions. The building has been associated with the Quakers since 1992, and was previously occupied by the Royal Artillery Club.

Evidential value

The building and site has low evidential significance and limited archaeological potential.

Historical value

The building has medium historical value as the only surviving element of a formal Victorian development in Glasgow city centre. It was associated with the Royal Artillery Club from the mid twentieth century and has been a Quaker meeting house for less than 25 years; it has low significance for this connection.

Aesthetic value

The building has medium architectural value as a typical example of former terraced housing, built as part of a formal street layout in the Georgian

tradition, but now an isolated fragment in the streetscene. The interior has been altered and retains features of several phases.

Communal value

The meeting house has high communal value as a place of Quaker worship since 1992 and as a building valued by the wider community.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *West Scotland*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0010780*

1.3 Owner: *West Scotland Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Glasgow City Council*

1.5 Historic Environment Scotland: *Glasgow, Clyde and Ayrshire*

1.6 Civil parish: *Glasgow*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 Reference: *Not applicable*

1.9 Conservation Area: *Central*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *1860s; 1992*

1.13 Architect: *Not known; Frank Burnet Bell and Partners*

1.14 Date of visit: *30 June 2016*

1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Martin Mansell*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *None*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. II, pp. 878-882.

Glasgow meeting house website: <http://www.glasgowquakers.org/where-we-are/building-history> and <http://www.glasgowquakers.org/who-we-are/quakers-in-glasgow>

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

2.1. Historical background

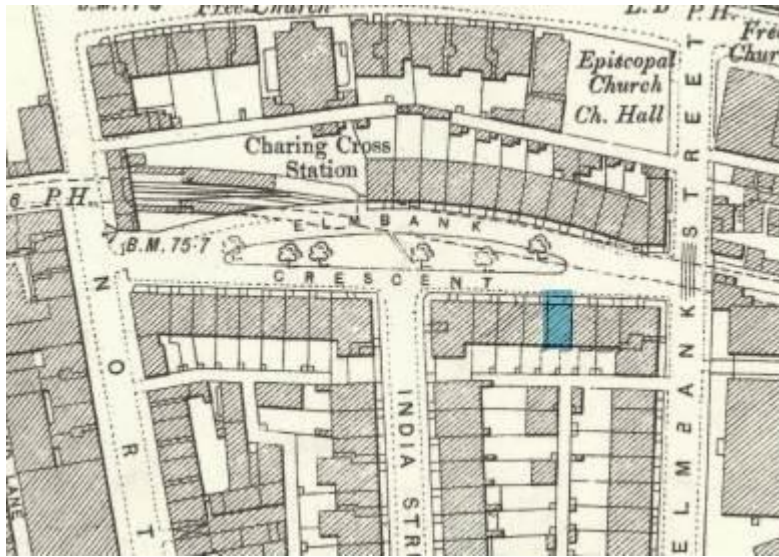


Fig.1: extract from 19th century OS map, illustrated on the Glasgow Meeting website.

Friends first met in Glasgow in about 1660 and used a meeting house near Trongate. By 1730 Friends were meeting in a building in Stirling Square, which they sold in 1791. The meeting was relatively small at this time; in 1815 they moved to a meeting house on North Portland Street, which closed in 1921. After this, they held meetings at the Literary and Philosophical Society on Bath Street until 1944 when the meeting acquired a former townhouse at 16 Newton Terrace, which eventually proved too small and was sold in 1991. The present meeting house building was bought in 1992 from the Royal Artillery Club and refurbished by architects Frank Burnet Bell and Partners. The building was originally built as a townhouse in the mid nineteenth century, as depicted on the map in Figure 1; the area has since been transformed by redevelopment. A lift was installed and an internal wall removed to create a large full-depth meeting room on the first floor, as part of the 1990s work.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building was first built as a house or tenements in c 1860, the designer is not known. It is built of sandstone, with render to the front elevation, and a slate roof. The frontage facing north is two storeys plus attic and basement, and three bays wide, in classical style. The entrance door is up steps to the left, with outer double doors below a cornice on console brackets. The windows to the right and to the first floor are plate glass sashes set in matching moulded architraves. The parapet to the attic is balustraded above a moulded cornice. The front basement area has solid walls flanking the steps and pavement. The rear elevation is plainer, with fair-faced sandstone and paired or single sashes to four storeys. The west elevation is now exposed and rendered, following the demolition of attached buildings, with a modern fire escape stair.

The interior has an inner panelled and glazed door below a transom light, leading into the staircase hall. The two lower flights of the staircase were remodelled for the Royal Artillery Club in the mid twentieth century in coloured cement render; from the first floor the staircase has a cast-iron balustrade and moulded treads, and is top-lit. Some plaster cornices and architraves survive on most floors from the original domestic building, but the internal layout has been altered in several phases with recent partitions, a lift and some spaces combined.

2.3. Loose furnishings



Fig.2: pine benches, originally in The Pleasance meeting house, Edinburgh

In the first floor meeting room there are six pitch pine benches, originally from The Pleasance meeting house in Edinburgh, which closed in 1939; the benches were bought for the Newton Terrace meeting house in 1944. They probably date from the mid 1800s and have open railed backs and solid bench ends.

The meeting also owns a desk said to have been used by Elizabeth Fry, which they are considering giving to a museum in Glasgow.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting



Fig.3: the site east of the meeting house is being cleared for redevelopment

Elmbank Crescent was laid out and developed with townhouses in the mid nineteenth century, but all of these except the meeting house building have been demolished. The character of the area has been transformed by late twentieth and twenty first century high rise development, including an ugly multi-storey car park on the north side of the street. West of the meeting house a 1970s office block has been partly demolished and the site (owned by Glasgow City Council) is awaiting redevelopment. East of the meeting house is an early twentieth century sandstone block, now the offices of Scottish Opera. To the south, the rear of the site is dominated by a tall office block, recently constructed. The street is on the north-west side of the grid of streets forming Glasgow city centre, a densely urban cityscape. Charing Cross railway station is at the north-west end of the street.

In Partick, off Keith Street there is a tiny burial ground used by Quakers in Glasgow from 1711 to 1857. There is also a burial ground in a field near the village of Kirkintilloch, still maintained by the meeting (exact location not known).

2.6. Listed status

Not listed

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site was on the north-west edge of the expanding Victorian city centre, developed for housing and railway infrastructure. The building's basement will have destroyed any early archaeology below the building, and the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low.