

## ***Friends Meeting House, Newcastle upon Tyne***

*West Avenue, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 4ES*

*National Grid Reference: NZ 24307 67866*



### ***Statement of Significance***

*A red brick and ashlar design of the late nineteenth century, in Queen Anne style, originally built as a working men's club and later a masonic lodge before becoming a Meeting House in 2011. The building makes a positive contribution to the Gosforth Conservation Area, and is of medium evidential value and high historical, aesthetic and communal value.*

### ***Evidential value***

*The building has only been a Meeting House since 2011, and the evidence for its previous uses is not very apparent. Its primary evidential value resides in the items reused from*

*previous Meeting Houses in Pilgrim Street and Archbold Terrace, notable an early front door and the stone inscription formerly over the entrance.*

### **Historical value**

*Quakers have worshipped publicly in Newcastle since 1698, and the present building is their third in the city. This building is exactly two hundred years younger than the Newcastle Meeting, and was originally built as part of the civic and residential suburban development of Gosforth. In its time it has been used as a men's club and a masonic lodge, before becoming a Meeting House in 2011. It is of high local historical value.*

### **Aesthetic value**

*The Meeting House has high aesthetic townscape value for its architectural design, internal spaces and for its contribution to the townscape of the local Conservation Area.*

### **Communal value**

*In addition to its use by Friends, the Meeting House is well used by the wider community and is of communal value by virtue of its positive contribution to the character and appearance of the local Conservation Area.*

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Northumbria*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0009810*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Newcastle City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *North East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Newcastle upon Tyne*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *Not applicable*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Gosforth*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1898*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Hicks & Charlewood*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *18 April 2016*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *John Thompson*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *None*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, Vol. 1, pp. 478-81

Local Meeting Survey, by John Thompson, Jan. 2016  
Archaeological Research Services Ltd, *Photographic Building Record*, August 2010  
Napper Architecture Design Landscape, *Design and Access Statement*, 2010 (including historical report by Grace McCombie)

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

### 2.1. Historical background

Until 1689 Friends were unable to acquire property in Newcastle, and met in Gateshead. In 1697 a site on the north of the Tyne, in Pilgrim Street, was acquired for a burial ground and Meeting House, opening in the following year. The Meeting House had the usual arrangement of two chambers, but with a loft reached by an external stair; it was placed discreetly behind a doorkeeper's cottage and was reached by a side passage. The remainder of the site was set aside for burials, and remained in use until 1862.

The Meeting House and cottage were rebuilt in 1805, enlarged over part of the burial ground in 1813 and nearly doubled in size by the acquisition of the adjoining plot to the south in 1829. In 1833 a new street, Manors, was laid out to the east, allowing an extension of the burial ground and the building of a day school. In 1868 a women's meeting room and a schoolroom were added. The evolution of the site by 1897 is shown in Butler's plan at figure 1. This was followed in 1903 by the adaptation of existing accommodation to form a mission hall, seating about 350. A twentieth-century photograph showing a glimpsed detail of the Pilgrim Street frontage, including the front door and inscription over (both reset at the present Meeting House) can be seen [here](#).

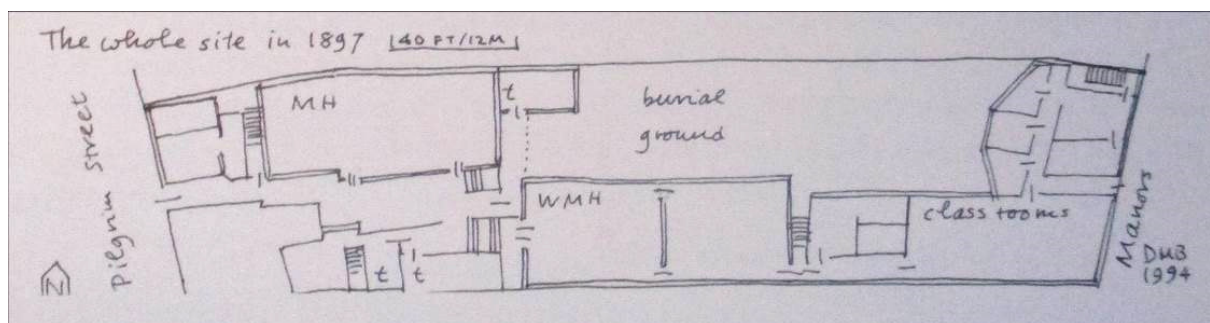


Figure 1: Plan of Pilgrim Street complex by 1897, from Butler, Vol. 1, p.479

In 1952 the Meeting began to consider the future of the Pilgrim Street site, influenced by the Corporation's plans for the development of the area. It was decided to build a new Meeting House, and the old buildings were last used in June 1961. They were then demolished to make way for a road scheme. The door and entrance inscription were salvaged and incorporated in the new Meeting House, an addition built at the back of a house of c1870 at 78 Jesmond Street, acquired in 1957. The new premises opened in 1961. Dramatic alterations to the building and its setting came in 1975 with the construction of the inner city motorway, and the building acquired a new address - 1 Archbold Terrace. It was adapted in 1982 and partially let as offices.

Further development around Archbold Terrace, together with rising maintenance costs, led to a decision to seek more appropriate premises, and the present building in West Avenue, Gosforth was acquired in 2010. This had been built in 1898 as a working men's club, from designs by the Newcastle architects Hicks & Charlewood. The building was altered and slightly extended at various points after 1925, when it became a masonic lodge (the alterations are described and illustrated by McCombie). Adaptations for the current use took place in 2010-11 and included the removal of structures at the rear and the installation of a

new staircase and lift. This work was carried out under the direction of the Newcastle-based architects Napper (contractors: Koru). Again, the door and entrance inscription from Pilgrim Street were salvaged and incorporated (photos centre left and bottom right at top of report). The new Meeting House opened in September 2011. The paved frontage area, including new railings and front garden, was completed in 2013.

## **2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures**

Built from designs by Hicks & Charlewood in 1898, the building was originally a working men's club and later a masonic lodge before conversion to use as a Meeting House in 2010-11. In Queen Anne style, it is built of bright red brick with ashlar dressings under a hipped slate roof. Decorative rainwater goods are of cast iron. The building is of two storeys and five bays, the street elevation with a projecting two-storey canted bay in the middle (over which originally was placed a slate spire). The entrance is in the left hand bay, with panelled door with rectangular fanlight and Tuscan Doric stone surround with three-quarter columns. Each of the windows on the front (north) and flank (west) elevations is provided with a central keystone surmounted by a floating pediment. The windows themselves are glazing bar timber sashes, renewed in 2010-11 and following the design of the originals but incorporating double glazing. On the east flank and rear elevations, areas of render cover the scar of buildings removed in 2010-11. A mainly glazed addition lights the new staircase area.

The entrance lobby from West Avenue leads into a rear hall and well-lit staircase area, the staircase dating from 2010-11. A large meeting room with folding screen occupies the main front space, with a kitchen, office and lift towards the back. The first floor consists of the main meeting room, occupying the entire width at the front, with the lift and WCs at the back. Above, there is storage space in the roof. The main meeting room is entered via a wide oak door with big strap hinges (photo middle left), which is stated in the questionnaire return to be of mid-eighteenth century date (but the door furniture looks more Arts and Crafts, see photo middle left); this came from the Pilgrim Street Meeting House, via Archbold Terrace. The interior spaces are spacious and light but apart from some plain cornices have no architectural features calling for special mention.

## **2.3. Loose furnishings**

There are several open-backed benches from the former Meeting Houses in the main meeting room. New furnishings include the clerk's table, made in c2012 by the Northumberland-based furniture maker Jeremy Cosmo Davies, a textile wall hanging at the bottom of the stairs, using cut and dyed woollen blankets, by Ali Rhind, c2012, and a mixed media artwork depicting *The World in the Universe*, by Caroline Coode c1999. There are framed copies of parts of the Quaker Tapestry.

## **2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)**

None.

## **2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting**

West Avenue is an attractive wide, tree-lined street of mainly residential and mainly late nineteenth or early twentieth century properties, within the Gosforth Conservation Area. The site immediately to the east was previously a magistrates' court but has recently been redeveloped with modern town houses. To the west is a service road which leads into the present rear garden/parking area. Set into the wall here are two fragments from the Pilgrim Street Meeting House: the inscription formerly over the entrance (Friends Meeting House 1698) and part of seventeenth century commemorative stone tablet with crossbones (Abigail Tiz...daughter Sarah Tiz...Departed this day Ano...167...).

## **2.6. Listed status**

The building is not listed, and while not considered to be listable, is of undoubted local architectural and historical interest; it would merit inclusion in the City of Newcastle's local list.

## **2.7. Archaeological potential of the site**

The site forms part of the nineteenth century expansion of Gosforth. No below-ground archaeological significance was identified in the Archaeological Research Services report of 2010. The archaeological potential is considered to be low.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### **3.1. Condition**

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable

### **3.2. Maintenance**

No QIR report is available. The building was fully repaired and renovated in 2010-11. It appears to be in very good condition and is well maintained, but there are some snagging and party wall issues relating to the use of incorrect mortar mixes in the render.

### **3.3. Sustainability**

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. The conversion of the building was undertaken with close attention to energy efficiency and reducing environmental impact, and included solar panels, double glazed windows and heating monitoring. The Meeting House is close to public transport (buses and metro). The gardens are bee and insect-friendly, and waste material is recycled for local authority collection.

### **3.4. Amenities**

The building has been chosen and adapted to meet the current and foreseeable needs of the Meeting. Amenities include two large meeting rooms (that on the ground floor capable of being divided in two) and modern kitchens and WCs.

### **3.5. Access**

The building is accessible for people with disabilities. There is a lift for those unable to use the stairs, and the WCs are accessible. A hearing loop is installed. There is parking at the rear for disabled users, with step-free access to the building at the rear.

### **3.6 Community Use**

In addition to Sunday Meetings, Friends use the building for approximately eight hours a week. The facilities are used by other groups for fifteen hours (out of a possible seventy-two). A lettings policy is in preparation. Alcohol-related activities and political meetings are not permitted. Users cite the good access and location, the attractive 'new' interior, the availability of car parking and affordability.

### **3.7. Vulnerability to crime**

No incidents of crime (including heritage crime) or antisocial behaviour are reported. This is an attractive and affluent area with low levels of crime and social deprivation.

### **3.8. Plans for change**

None at present.

## **Part 4: Impact of Change**

### **4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?**

*i) As a Meeting House used only by the local Meeting:* The building has only recently been adapted to serve the current needs of the Meeting, and no changes are contemplated. There are no heritage constraints governing internal change, but it is desirable that historic items brought here from previous Meeting Houses are safeguarded. Any external changes would need to take account of the building's location in a Conservation Area.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The building is already put to wider use, and is well suited for this purpose. Similar constraints would apply.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* The building was not built as a Meeting House and has been used for a variety of purposes. It makes a positive contribution to the local Conservation Area, and in the event of being laid down it would be necessary to secure a viable and appropriate alternative use which retained its external character and (preferably) the main internal spaces. Appropriate provision would need to be made for the re-use of the historically-associated items, either in a new Meeting House or, failing that, in a local museum.

## **Part 5: Category: 3**