

Northumbria Area Meeting Summary

Quakers were prominent in the industrial development of the North East. Meeting Houses were built in Sunderland and Newcastle in the late seventeenth century, but neither survives. Quakerism was also strong in the rural farming areas, the earliest surviving rural Meeting House being that at Coanwood (1760, listed Grade II* and now in the care of the Historic Chapels Trust). Only one Meeting House still in use was purpose-built as such - Allendale. This is also the only one with an attached burial ground. The other four buildings used by the Area Meeting were converted to Quaker use at various times in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. While only Allendale is listed (Grade II), all five are of at least local architectural and historical interest. All but one are well-used by the wider community and all but one are in fair to good condition.

Allendale Meeting House

The oldest Meeting House in Northumberland still in regular use for Quaker worship, and on the site of a late seventeenth century predecessor. It forms part of important historic group comprising Meeting House, burial ground and cottage in an idyllic location on the west bank of the East Allen. The seventeenth century building was replaced in 1735 and the Georgian replacement in turn rebuilt in the 1860s. Nevertheless, the present building bears many typical characteristics of a late Georgian Meeting House, and may incorporate fabric from its predecessor. Its interior is of typical plain character, and retains some of the early benches and stand, as well as the shuttered screen between the two principle spaces. Outside, there is a burial ground which is at least as old as the earliest Meeting House here, with several marked graves. There is also a separate cottage and an outbuilding with privy. Although access issues and the lack of up-to-date facilities currently hinder wider use of the building, the building is of high communal value as a historic site which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the local area.

Monkseaton Meeting House

An interesting late Georgian vernacular survival, originally a single storey cottage for farmworkers, which was extended and adapted in the early twentieth century, initially for residential use and then as a Meeting House. The property retains its original thick stone walls on the ground floor, and features such as panelled doors and sash windows with shutters. The early twentieth century alterations illustrate its transformation to a higher status private dwelling and then to a Meeting House. In addition to its use by Friends, the Meeting House has a long history of wider community use, currently constrained by issues relating to damp and access. The building makes a positive contribution to the Monkseaton Conservation Area.

Newcastle Meeting House

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 a red brick and ashlar design of the late nineteenth century, in Queen Anne style, which makes a positive contribution to the Gosforth Conservation Area. 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. In addition to its use by Friends, the Meeting House is well used by the wider community.

Stocksfield Meeting House

A former Co-op store, probably built in about 1910 to serve the local mining community, and in use as a Meeting House since 1991. Although modest in size and the facilities it offers, the building is prominently placed on a corner site and its attractive original shop front makes a positive contribution to the local scene.

Sunderland Meeting House

As at Newcastle, Quakers have worshipped publicly in Sunderland since the late seventeenth century, and the present building, in Roker, is their third in the city. This is a former residential property believed to have been built about 1901, when Roker was being developed as a high class seaside resort. Its first recorded owner was a timber merchant, and the house is notable for the quality of its internal fitting out. Original features include mosaic floors, decorative plaster ceilings, a fine staircase and timber and marble fireplaces with stained glass and decorative tile inserts. It remained a family home until 1969, when it was adapted for the Quakers by Martin Lidbetter, Architect. The Meeting House overlooks Roker Park, a registered Historic Park and Garden, which opened in 1880 and is the centrepiece of a designated Conservation Area. The meeting house has good facilities and is well used by the wider community.

Architectural History Practice Ltd

2016