

***Friends Meeting House, Aberystwyth***

*Maes Maelor, Penparcau, Aberystwyth, SY23 1SZ*

*National Grid Reference: SN 58901 80304*



***Aberystwyth meeting house is a 1950s former Methodist mission hall, acquired as a meeting house in 1995. The recently refurbished building has an attractive frontage and some heritage significance as a mid-twentieth century religious building.***

***Evidential value***

***The building and site appears to have has no evidential or archaeological value***

***Historical value***

***Aberystwyth meeting has a history stretching back to 1895, but this is the first meeting house to belong to Quakers in the county. As a 1950s former mission hall, the building has medium historical value.***

***Aesthetic value***

***The meeting house is a simply designed building that meets the needs of the meeting and local community; it has modest architectural value.***

***Communal value***

***The building has high communal value as a meeting house, also used by local community groups.***

## **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Wales*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0004410*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Ceredigion County Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *N/A - Cadw*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Aberystwyth*
- 1.7 Listed status: *No*
- 1.8 Cadw reference: *N/A*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1953-4*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Unknown*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *17 November 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Marion Barter*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Elizabeth Darlington*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Detached burials grounds are at Llangurig SN 945802 and on the coast at Llwyngwril SH 59214 10163.*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:  
*Aberystwyth Meeting House Appeal leaflet, 1990s*

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

### **2.1. Historical background**

The meeting at Aberystwyth dates back to 1895, with short breaks, and met in rented rooms until they were able to purchase the present building in 1995, the first meeting house ever in the county. The building was first built as a Penparcau Methodist mission hall in 1954, to serve a local authority housing estate built on the south edge of the town in the 1930s. The original architect is not known, but the building was part-funded by the Joseph Rank Benevolent Trust, as recorded on a plaque in the lobby dated December 1954. The Friends paid £75,511 for the building in February 1995 and raised a further £59,000 to improve the building including re-roofing, new windows and a ramp to the side, designed by architect Lionel Curtis, a member of the meeting.

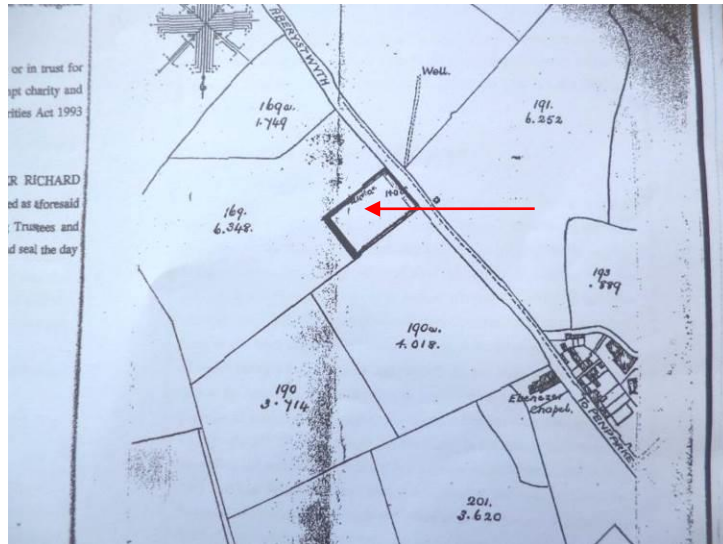


Fig.1: the site of the meeting house prior to the development of housing in Penparcau (Aberystwyth Meeting archive)

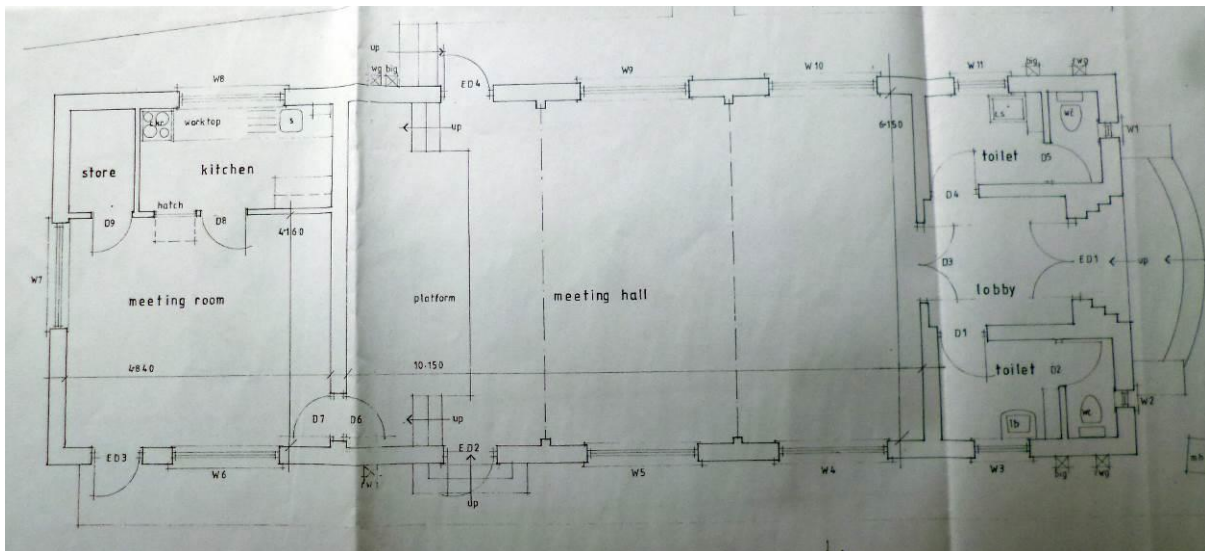


Fig.2: the building in the 1990s prior to refurbishment (Aberystwyth Meeting archive). NB. North is to the top right

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

The single-storey building was built in 1954 as a Methodist mission and adapted for use as a Quaker meeting house in the 1990s. The building is constructed with a concrete portal frame, brick cavity walls, finished in render. The roof is now laid with Marley concrete tiles. The original steel windows were replaced with aluminium double glazing in the 1990s. The building is aligned with the main entrance in the gable end facing the road to the north-east, elevated above the road and reached by a steep flight of steps. The entrance is the building's most striking feature (Fig.3), a Romanesque-style semi-circular arched doorway with four recessed brick arches, keystone and fanlight over the double panelled doors. The Quaker use of the building is expressed in individual lettering above the doorway, in Welsh and English.



Fig.3: main entrance

The interior retains some 1950s details such as the oak parquet floor in the main hall, a stage at the far end of the hall with an oak boarded floor, quarry tiled floors in the cloakrooms and flush doors. The main hall has a 3-bay roof with exposed concrete portal trusses; the roof has recently been insulated and the sloping soffit is now lined with tongued and grooved pine boarding. Walls are plain plastered. At the south-west end of the building behind the stage, and reached by a short staircase, is a smaller meeting room and a kitchen.

### 2.3. Loose furnishings

The meeting uses loose upholstered chairs, which are modern, and owns a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century table that was a gift from Joanna, granddaughter of Corder Catchpool (1883-1952) a notable Quaker.

### 2.4. Attached burial ground: N/A

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

The meeting house is situated on a sloping site overlooking the Rheidol valley, close to the road from Aberystwyth to Cardigan. It lies within a residential estate of social housing called Penparcau, built on the south edge of Aberystwyth. The housing is semi-detached or in short terraces and dates from the 1930s and 1950s. There are open fields used for grazing behind the meeting house and to the north-west side there is a small car park, at the same level as the meeting house; this belongs to a housing association and serves the adjoining houses, but the meeting has the use of one space for disabled people. To the front, the lawned garden is bounded by timber fence, with brick gate piers and steel gates. The flights of steps to the entrance have steel handrails.

The area meeting looks after two detached burials grounds, both over an hour's drive away; one inland at Llangurig, south of the A44 at NGR SN 945802, and one on the coast road north of Twywn at Llwyngwrl, at NGR SH 59214 10163.

### 2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and as a modest 1950s building that has been altered, it is unlikely to meet the criteria for designation by Cadw.

## 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site appears to have been a field prior to the building of the mission hall (Fig.1), and the archaeological potential is probably low.