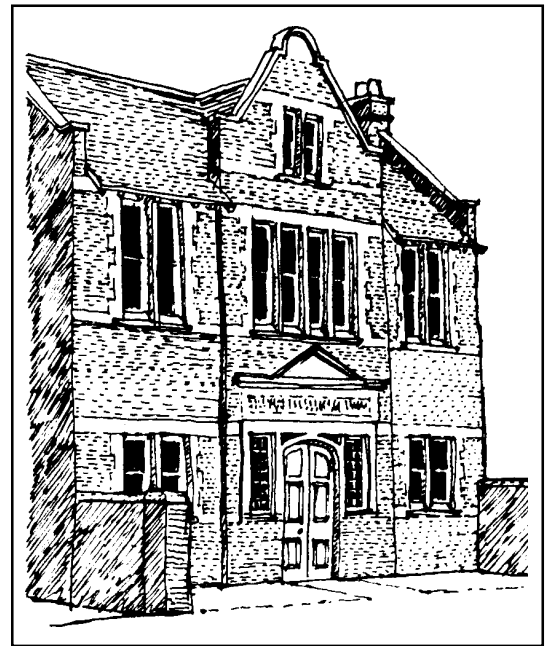


1985 ... Warwick Place

A Handbook on the care of Quaker Meeting Houses

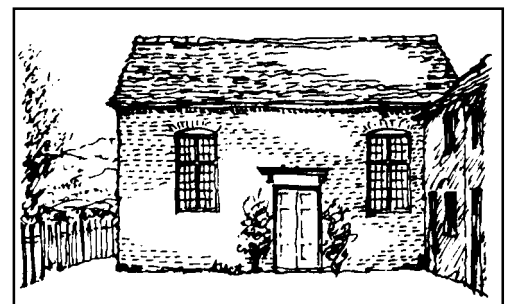


1903 ... Portland Street



1836 ... Manchester Street

The sketches illustrate the whole succession of Quaker Meeting Houses in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire



1702 ... Manchester Walk

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PROPERTY
RECORDING CLERK'S OFFICE
LONDON
1996

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.1 Introduction

A conference was held at Woodbrooke late in 1988, encouraged by the Recording Clerk's Office, to which came Friends concerned in one way or another with the care of our meeting houses. We discussed many aspects of care, not only in building maintenance but in the details of management and use. We talked about which body should be expected to know what the others are doing. By the end we were more than ever aware of the variety of practice and of circumstance within the Society. It was clear to us then that we had a responsibility to share our experience more widely, and thus the Care of Meeting Houses Group came into existence. This Handbook is one outcome; we look on our text as a reminder of good practice for those who wish to be reminded, and as an opportunity for Friends to compare methods and results.

The contributors have in their several ways been involved for many years in almost all aspects of the care and running of meeting houses. Having now set down our thoughts and experience, we know we still have as much to learn as to offer. This is why we present the Handbook in loose leaf form. Let us know how you find us, and where we might offer a way which works better.

A handbook is nothing if not handy, and we have tried to keep it so, concise in essentials and easy on navigation. Where greater detail is offered it is placed in an appendix (the number prefixed with an 'A') safely out of the way until it is needed. Those who read through the text from cover to cover will become aware of some repetition. This we felt to be unavoidable, as we expect most people will use only part of it. Some of the text will inevitably seem obvious to a few. This we cannot help, we just have to get it all down in good order, in the certain knowledge that some day somebody will be glad of it.

The Care of Meeting Houses Group has now been laid down. From 1993 its continuing functions, including revision of the Handbook, have been taken over by the Advisory Committee on Property set up by Meeting for Sufferings as a sub-committee of Finance and Property Committee.

Address for correspondence on the Handbook:

Advisory Committee on Property, Finance Department, Friends House,
Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

.2 Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the help of those Friends who prepared papers on which we based certain sections. We also thank several Quaker bodies for permission to use papers prepared by them, in whole or part. We are particularly grateful to The Centre for Accessible Environments for permission to reproduce several pages from their book *Design Guidance Notes for Developers* as appendix A302.1. We would also like to record our thanks to the staff at Friends House concerned with producing from our text this document.

.3 Book of Discipline

Quaker Faith and Practice, chapter 15 on Property and Trusteeship, provides much good advice to those concerned with the care of Meeting Houses.

.4 Why have a Meeting House?

Wherever a few are gathered, in whatever premises, Quakers can hold a meeting for worship; and Friends individually or in small groups can pursue their concerns with success. However, many of us find that the presence and effectiveness of the group is extended immeasurably by having its own meeting house. Sooner or later the meeting will want its premises to serve such needs as these:

- as a place for the local Meeting for Worship,
- as a place for Monthly and General Meetings,
- as a physical Quaker presence in the neighbourhood,
- as a centre for outreach,
- as a place to call others to Quaker concerns.

A house-group can fulfil only the first of these, no matter how effective the group is as a meeting for worship. A hired room may serve the next one as well, but cannot extend its facilities beyond that. The fact of owning its own premises will enable the meeting to do all these things, at times and in ways of its own choosing. However ownership necessitates the acceptance of responsibilities. If we are to be seen as an enlivening presence in our community we must take up these responsibilities seriously, so that we speak not only through our lives, but through our buildings too.

.5 Update

This is a new edition of the Handbook, which will also need updating from time to time with the issue of replacement sheets.

The Charities Acts 1992 and 1993 bring significant changes to the procedures required by law of our Society as regards property matters. The reader is referred to Chapter 15 of *Quaker Faith & Practice* for more detailed information regarding this.

.6 Scotland, Wales and off-shore islands

Much of the Handbook is relevant no matter in which part of Britain a Meeting House is located. However Scottish law and practice differs from English and in this update material regarding Scotland, Wales and off-shore islands is presented as new Appendix A002.1