

Littlehampton Quaker Meeting

(Friends Meeting House)



Littlehampton Quaker Meeting House was built in the mid 1830s as a 'Penny School' (or 'Dame School' as they were sometimes known). The L-shaped building had a single schoolroom with an attached schoolteacher's house at the east end and accommodated approximately 60 pupils. The school was run initially by Dissenters rather than the established church. With the population expansion in Littlehampton, the school moved to a new building in East Street. The old building was then acquired by the Plymouth Brethren, who eventually abandoned it and moved to the Argyll Hall in River Road, Littlehampton.

The Quakers had started meeting in Littlehampton in 1952, initially using Members private houses. They sought a permanent Meeting House and eventually purchased the former school when it became available in 1965. The Friends Meeting House, as it is now known, was listed Grade II by English Heritage in 1975 and is one of 913 Grade II listed buildings, and 960 listed buildings of all grades within Arun district. These days Littlehampton Quakers are a small but lively community of adults and children who seek to explore spirituality.

About 20-30 people come to our Meeting for Worship on Sundays at 10:30 am for an hour. If you are new to Quaker Meetings you will be made welcome (but not pressurised) and briefly told what to expect. Our Meetings are held in silence, which some newcomers find comfortable but some may need time to get used to. The silence may occasionally be broken by someone who "ministers" (i.e having listened to God or the Spirit within, they wish to share a thought or insight with the Meeting).

The end of the Meeting is indicated by two elders shaking hands and all may follow suit. The clerk to the Meeting then invites contributions from anyone in "Afterwords", this being opportunity to comment on the ministry given during Meeting, share personal news or talk about local, national and international events. This is followed by coffee and informal chat.

Every 1st Saturday in the month there is an Open Morning at the Meeting House. This used to raise funds for a particular charity and there is coffee, home-made cakes and stalls selling things like photo-cards, bric-a-brac and books. There is always a theme to an Open Morning with an activity associated with it. Families with children are particularly welcome at these events and there are always suitable activities for them.

Littlehampton Quakers are very happy to hire their rooms to community groups and has been instrumental in stimulating use of the building for activities such as discussion for older people, mindfulness meditation, yoga and Qi-gong. The local history society use Friends Meeting House on a regular basis, as do groups supporting people with issues such as alcohol misuse and youth offending.