

FARFIELD  
NEAR ADDINGHAM  
WEST YORKSHIRE LS29 0RQ

HISTORIC CHAPELS TRUST

TRADITION: SOCIETY OF  
FRIENDS ('QUAKER')

BUILT: 1689

CONGREGATION ACTIVE UNTIL:  
1816-19, THEN AGAIN 1890s

LISTING: GRADE II\*

OS GRID REFERENCE: SE076518

DATING FROM 1689, ONE OF  
THE OLDEST QUAKER MEETING  
HOUSES IN THE WORLD

# FARFIELD FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE



## TRANSPORT

The meeting house is two miles west of Addingham on the B6160. It is on the Dales Way where it crosses the B6168 Ilkley Road. (Please take care as sight lines are poor). The Dales Way Association organises events and lists accommodation.

There is parking for two cars only, but please not block access to our neighbours' houses.

Ilkley Station is 5 miles away; the 74 bus operated by Pride of the Dales from Ilkley Station to Bolton Abbey Station passes the meeting house – ask the driver to let you off at Farfield.

## VISIT US

The meeting house is normally open during daylight hours throughout the year. No toilet facilities on site. Small picnic area adjacent, but please take any rubbish away with you.

## HISTORY & BACKGROUND

In 1654 a Yorkshire yeoman, Anthony Myers of Catgill, near Bolton Abbey, encountered the message of the travelling Quaker preachers William Dewsbury, Christopher Taylor and Gervase Benson. He gave them hospitality, and arranged meetings for silent Quaker style worship at his house, Farfield Hall.

In around 1666 he granted The Society of Friends (often known as Quakers) a 5,000 year lease of land for a burial ground, on part of which the meeting house was built in around 1689. This was the year in which the Act of Toleration was passed by parliament, allowing freedom of worship to Quakers and other nonconformists, so long as they pledged oaths to the King of allegiance and supremacy, and rejected the idea of Transubstantiation (i.e. were not Catholics). Farfield Meeting House's significance therefore lies in its very early date of foundation. It is an excellent early example of a Quaker meeting house.

It would appear that the meeting house also served as a family chapel, evidenced by the five large table tombs of the Myers family. By 1728 a George Myers was Lord of the manor of Addingham, and had Farfield Hall rebuilt in the Palladian style, a building which survives nearby. The Myers inhabited Farfield Hall until 1905, ending the Quaker connection, although the meeting house had fallen out of use for worship almost a century earlier, in 1816-19 with a short period of re-use in the 1890s.



*The simple roof structure.*



*The benches and elders' 'stand'.*

WE WELCOME VISITS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. THE MEETING HOUSE IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR HIRE. BUT YOU MAY PICNIC IN THE SMALL ADJACENT BURIAL GROUND

To find out more visit [www.hct.org.uk](http://www.hct.org.uk) or contact [chapels@hct.org.uk](mailto:chapels@hct.org.uk)

THE HISTORIC CHAPELS TRUST | ST. GEORGE'S GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
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Volunteers help HCT look after the Meeting House.

## THE EXTERIOR

The whole site is enclosed by a high stone wall. In the graveyard are five large low table tombs, as well as a number of smaller slabs, all dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Gravestones were first prohibited in Quaker burial grounds by a Minute of London Yearly Meeting (the Quakers' governing body) in 1717 which also urged the removal of those existing.

This was renewed in 1766, presumably because many still remained in place even then. It was not until 1850 that it was decided that plain headstones of uniform design were not inconsistent with Quaker principles. Even plain table tombs like these have aristocratic associations, so are most unusual in a Quaker burial ground at any date.

## THE INTERIOR

In common with other Quaker meeting houses, the building is a simple one, with single-cell stone walls, mullioned windows and paved stone flooring. Apart from loose benches, the only fitting is the customary Elders' stand.

Quaker practice traditionally frowns upon ostentation, even the varnishing of wooden furniture. Along with the table tombs in the grounds, Farfield provide an unusual contrast to more typical early Quaker meeting houses.

Regardless, the building serves overall to provide an excellent impression of a seventeenth century meeting house, and, with the exception of a north light inserted to facilitate the meeting house's use as an artist's studio, stands much as it was in 1669.



## THE DALES WAY

The 78 mile Dales Way long distance footpath passes immediately behind Farfield Meeting House as it makes its way from Ilkley to Lake Windermere. Today many visitors to this spot are walkers, who pause in their journey to experience its welcome and tranquillity – both enduring characteristics of the Quaker tradition.

## SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

Following a period in agricultural use, then as an artist's studio, the meeting house was transferred to the care of the Historic Chapels Trust in 1994, as the first building the Trust took on. A programme of repairs was completed shortly afterwards.

## FURTHER READING

H. Godwin Arnold, 'Early Meeting Houses', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol. 8, 1960)

Christopher Stell, *An Inventory of nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in the North of England* (London, 1994)

