

Religious Society of Friends Meeting House

7 Moncrieff Street



Image: Charles Collins, 2015

Summary of heritage significance

- The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Meeting House has historic significance as the meeting place for Wellington's Quaker community since its construction in 1929.
- The building has architectural significance as a good example of the neo-Georgian style that the architect William Gray Young used for many of his domestic designs.
- The building is authentic as it has retained a significant amount of its original form and details.

District Plan:	Map 16 reference 218
Legal Description:	Lot 17 DP 9089 (2001 Inventory)
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Category II - 3648
Archaeological Site:	Pre-1900 human activity on site
Other Names:	Friends' Meeting House
Key physical dates:	1929
Architect / Builder:	Architect: William Gray Young Builder: Trevor Brothers
Former uses:	Meeting House
Current uses:	Meeting House
Earthquake Prone Status:	(124 Served) – expires 01/06/2027 SR 225022

Extent: Cityview 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

When the New Zealand Company ship Olympus first arrived in Wellington in 1841, it brought with it two Quakers, Thomas and Jane Mason. Members of the Religious Society of Friends were also among the settlers who assisted in establishing the town of Nelson.¹ However the numbers of Quakers in colonial New Zealand was minimal.² Since their faith did not have need for churches, meetings were often held in members' houses.

Despite this, meeting for worship in Wellington was not formally established until 1902 when a Wellington Monthly Meeting was inaugurated.³ Funds were gradually raised for a purpose-built Meeting House, with some of the contributions coming from England and other parts of New Zealand. It was originally decided to build in Abel Smith Street – “to fill a spiritual and social need in a less favoured community” - but the site was thought too small and so a section at Moncrieff Street was chosen instead. Architect William Gray Young of Gray Young, Morton and Young designed the house and it was built by Trevor Brothers, whose tender was £1,381. (Total cost of land, improvements and furnishings was put at £3,350).⁴ By 1929 work on the meeting house was completed.

As the house neared completion it was described to Friends in a special letter.

“The Meeting House...is planned to accommodate eighty persons. It is equipped with electrical lighting and heating and has, opening out of the front hall, two cloak rooms and a room fitted to provide for the preparing of meals and the holding of committees.”⁵

When they completed the building Trevor Brothers were fulsomely thanked by the Friends.⁶ Before the building of the house, meetings were attracting average attendances of 17. At some point a detached classroom was built on the property but by the early 1950s the Friends had outgrown the main building. In 1954 a children's room was added to the house at a cost of £591.⁷

By 1997 the size of the Meeting House was no longer able to accommodate the members of the Wellington Friends, and so it was decided to construct a new annex to the building. These plans for alterations also included the widening of the courtyard and disabled access. The new alterations were completed in 1999.⁸

Moncrieff Street remains the centre of Friends' activities in Wellington.⁹

¹ Quakers in Aotearoa, 'History of Quakerism in New Zealand,' <http://quaker.org.nz/history-of-quakerism-in-new-zealand>, accessed 15 August 2012.

² Mark Derby. 'Diverse Christian churches - Quakers and Unitarians,' Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 28-Apr-11 <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/diverse-christian-churches/2>, accessed 15 August 2012.

³ Summary of history from 'Quakers, Wellington Region,' Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴ Correspondence - R.V. Hughes to 'Friends,' September 1929, MS Papers 6000-25, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ MS Papers 6000-25.

⁷ MS Papers 6000-25.

⁸ Kayla Wilson, 'The Religious Society of Friends Meeting House: Conservation Plan,' unpublished report prepared for MHST 520, Victoria University of Wellington (2011), p.9.

⁹ History taken from: Wellington City Council, "7 Moncrieff Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), MONC1.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1929	Building	(00056:80:B7689)
1954	Children's room	(00056:474:B35776)
1964	Alterations to meeting house	(00058:375:C16040)
2006	Construction of annexe	(00078:1598:45338)

1.3 Occupation history

1929 Religious Society of Friends

1.4 Architect

William Gray Young (1885-1962) was born in Oamaru. When he was a child his family moved to Wellington where he was educated. After leaving school he was articled to the Wellington architectural firm of Crichton and McKay. In 1906 he won a competition for the design of Knox College, Dunedin, and shortly after this he commenced practice on his own account. He became a prominent New Zealand architect and during a career of 60 years he designed over 500 buildings. His major buildings include the Wellington and Christchurch Railway Stations (1936 and 1954 respectively), Scot's College (1919), Phoenix Assurance Building (1930) and the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) Chambers (1950). At Victoria University College of Wellington he was responsible for the Stout (1930), Kirk (1938), and Easterfield (1957) buildings, and Weir House (1930). Gray Young also achieved recognition for his domestic work such as the Elliott House Wellington, (1913). His design for the Wellesley Club (1925) earned him the Gold Medal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1932. He was elected a Fellow of the Institute in 1913, served on the executive committee from 1914-35 and was President from 1935-36. He was also elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and achieved prominence in public affairs.¹⁰

2.0 Physical description

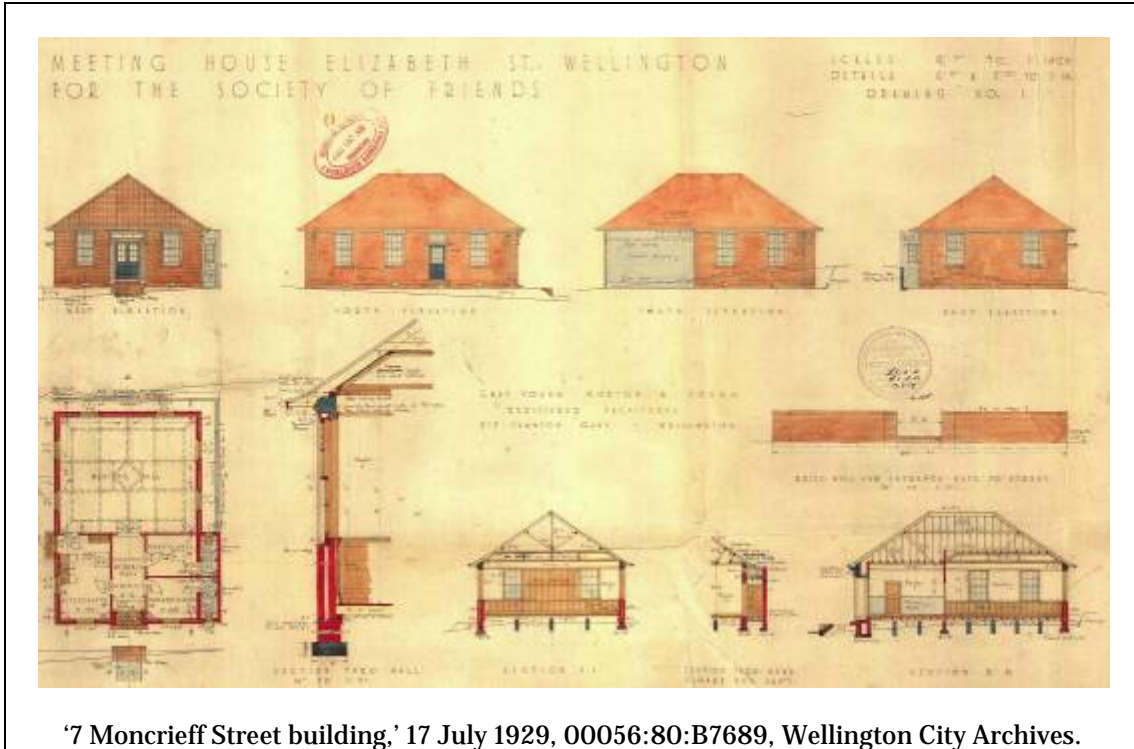
2.1 Architecture

The Friends Meeting House is a single-storey building that could be mistaken for a domestic building but for the words 'Friends House' inscribed in plaster over the front porch. It is Georgian in style, with a central porch flanked by a double-hung window on each side, the sashes divided into six small panes. The roof is hipped, sheathed in tiles and has broad eaves on all sides. The walls are double-skin cavity brickwork, resting on a concrete footing and with a reinforced concrete beam running above the windows at eaves level. Timber floor framing is totara. The brickwork is plastered around the porch, which has a small bracketed hood over it.

The building has a single rectangular plan. The front portion has a central hall with service rooms on either side, while the whole of the back is occupied by the Meeting Hall, a very elegant room with coved ceiling and timber panelling. A small Arts and Crafts style table and a set of chairs are almost certainly original furniture in this space.

¹⁰ New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies, 'William Gray Young,' accessed 14 August 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=88>

Moncrieff Street is a short blind street of mainly two-storey brick and timber houses. The Friends House is sited very discreetly at the end of the street. A recent addition to the House (1999) is modern in style and closes the whole of the view at the end of the street. The level of authenticity of this building is very high, with elevations and the main interior space unaltered.¹¹



2.2 Materials

- Double skin cavity brickwork
- Concrete footing

2.3 Setting

The building is located at the end of a cul-de-sac and is surrounded by residential properties. Because of the architectural style of the building it discretely fits in with the surrounding houses.

¹¹ Architecture taken from: History taken from: Wellington City Council, "7 Moncrieff Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*.

3.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The building has architectural significance as a good example of the neo-Georgian style that the architect William Gray Young used for many of his domestic designs.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The building is strongly associated with the Religious Society of Friends, a Nonconformist movement whose origins began in 17th century England and who have had a presence in Wellington since 1841.

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

The building is associated with the activities of the Religious Society of Friends in Wellington since 1929.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site reference NZAA R27/270.

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

The building has spiritual value due to its use as a meeting and function hall for the Religious Society of Friends.

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

The building contributes to the identity of the Religious Society of Friends in Wellington.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

The building will have sentimental value to members of Wellington's Religious Society of Friends.

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The building is a skilfully designed example of the neo-Georgian architectural style which was often used by William Gray Young for domestic buildings.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The building has retained most of its original fabric, therefore it has authenticity.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

The building is important on a local level as it has been the centre of worship for over 80 years for members of Wellington's Religious Society of Friends

4.0 Sources

Quakers in Aotearoa, 'History of Quakerism in New Zealand.' Accessed 15 August 2012. <http://quaker.org.nz/history-of-quakerism-in-new-zealand>,

Mark Derby. 'Diverse Christian churches - Quakers and Unitarians,' Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 28-Apr-11. Accessed 15 August 2012. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/diverse-christian-churches/2>,

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Wilson, Kayla. 'The Religious Society of Friends Meeting House: Conservation Plan.' Unpublished report prepared for MHST 520. Victoria University of Wellington 2011.

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'Quakers, Wellington Region.'

Correspondence - R.V. Hughes to 'Friends.' September 1929. MS Papers 6000-25.

Newspapers

Evening Post, Volume CIX, Issue 115, 17 May 1930, Page 7

Evening Post, Volume LXXIV, Issue 152, 24 December 1907, Page 6

Wellington City Archives

Original plans for the Society of Friends meeting house (00056:80:B7689)

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

Background research

The general yearly meeting of the Society of Friends in New Zealand commenced last evening at Friends' House, Moncrieff street, Wellington. Delegates from all parts of New Zealand, numbering about 45, were assembled.

Messages and greetings were brought to the meeting by Overseas Friends W. H. F. and H. Alexander, Maurice Gregory, and Lucy F. Morland from England and William Cooper from Australia.

Letters from five different countries were read, and after a social interlude and supper the meeting was adjourned until this morning. The conference will continue until Tuesday afternoon.

Special meetings for worship will be held to-morrow at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Evening Post, Volume CIX, Issue 115, 17 May 1930, Page 7

The visit to New Zealand of two ambassadors of English Quakerism, in the persons of the Misses Sarah Jane Lury and Elizabeth Rutter, is an event of some importance to those interested in the psychology of religions. The Society of Friends has for many years, both at Home and in America, been steadily declining in numbers. It is doubtful now if, in Conservative England, a Quaker in his quaint garb will be seen in the streets, and the dove-coloured stuff gown of the older Quakeress has given place to vesture of more attractiveness, although modest and becoming when compared with some of the high-priced garments which are the mode of the hour. And yet the Quaker is still a power in the land. He is the controller of the cocoa trade of Great Britain, he is deeply interested in the textile industries, is a manufacturer of thousands of tons of milling machinery, and the largest biscuit factory in the British Empire is his. He is as upright and honest, if, like Barkis, "a little near," as ever he was in old time: and he is a prodigious worker in philanthropy. But this last form of activity he does not parade at all. Those who wish to learn about the Adult School movement must find out for themselves. It has been in operation in Auckland for some time, and only those who teach and are taught know much about it. Misses Lury and Rutter may find the Society of Friends in New Zealand a dwindling quantity, but they will see for themselves that the heaven of Quakerism is at work and working for the good of humanity in this country.

Evening Post, Volume LXXIV, Issue 152, 24
December 1907, Page 6