



The Milford Haven Friends Meeting House is an architectural expression of the Quaker tradition. Opened in 1811, it reflects Quaker faith and history from the emergence of the movement in the 1650s, through British and American heritage, to the practice of Quakers today. The Quaker testimonies to simplicity and equality are evident in the construction, as well as the commitment to community.

You will enter the grounds of the Meeting House through the wrought-iron gate, designed and made by Roy Thedvall, and installed as part of the bicentenary celebrations. It is partly inspired by the 'Divine Light' panel of the Quaker Tapestry in

Kendal, and expresses the Quaker belief that "there is that of God in everyone".

When you enter the porch, you will see two doors before you. The right-hand door takes you into the Meeting Room; the left-hand to what would have been the Women's Meeting Room, which we now call the Library.

The Meeting Room

The Meeting Room is where we gather for Meeting for Worship. The room is plain and simple, with high windows so that no one is distracted. A Quaker meeting creates a space of gathered stillness. We come together in silence, although anyone may speak if prompted to do so by the spirit.

As you enter the room, the elders' bench runs along the wall in front of you. The raised bench was a place where Quakers travelling in the ministry would have sat. Travelling ministers were likely to speak in meeting, bringing inspiration and helping smaller, isolated meetings keep in touch with new developments. The bench immediately below the raised bench was occupied by the elders, and everyone else would have sat on long benches facing them. Meetings today still have elders (who need not be elderly). They are appointed for a limited period to take responsibility for the conduct and spiritual health of the meeting.

It is possible that the men and women sat on separate sides of a central aisle. Today, we sit in a circle around a central table, on which there is usually a vase of flowers, and copies of the Bible and *Quaker Faith & Practice*. Arrangements may differ between meeting houses.

The partition between the two rooms may well have been moveable shutters, which would have allowed the whole space to be used for Meeting for Worship. You can see a model showing this in the Quaker room at the Milford Haven Museum.



The Library

Quakers believe that all people are equal in the eyes of God. From this arises the Testimony of Equality. Women and men always had equal authority to speak in Meetings for Worship. It was realised in the early years though, that some women found it hard to "nay-say" (go against) what their husbands said, especially in the Meeting for Business.

Quakers therefore developed the practice of holding separate meetings for business for men and women; they had allocated responsibilities, but dealt with some issues together. Early meeting houses included a separate women's meeting room. In Britain, these were often smaller rooms, as they were added later. In America, where meeting houses tended to be purpose-built, the rooms were of the same size. The Milford Haven Meeting House shows the influence of its American builders. The practice of separate meetings allowed women to develop a stronger voice than was traditional in those times; and many of the leaders of the women's suffrage movement in the USA in the 19th century were Quakers. The practice of separate business meetings died out slowly during the 19th and early 20th centuries, as women gained equality in other areas of life.

The Children's Room

The annexe to the right was built in 1971 as a home for the Children's Meeting, and to use as a hostel for visiting groups. Everyone is an essential part of the Quaker meeting – children and adults alike. From the early days, it has been the custom for people of all ages to address one another with first names, demonstrating the equality of all human beings. Separate youth meetings were common from the early days and, at national level, the Junior Yearly Meeting plays an important role in encouraging people aged 15 to 18 in Quaker business. The annexe is now home to the Pinocchio Playgroup.



The Nantucket Room

This extension was opened in 2007. Kitchen and toilet facilities bring the building into the 21st century, and improve access for those with disabilities. The ceiling represents a wave, reminding us of our nautical history, and there is an emphasis on bringing light into the building, as we endeavour to seek the light in our personal lives.

The plaque on the front includes a quotation from a poem by Waldo Williams – Pembrokeshire poet, pacifist and Quaker, who worshipped here.

The Burial Ground

The Burial Ground is the final resting place of many of the founders of Milford Haven, as well as later Quakers. Quakers traditionally mark graves just with initials and dates. Here you will see the use of the letter 'm' to denote the month; following the Quaker practice of using 'First Day' for Sunday, 'First month' for January, to avoid using the pagan-based names for days and months.

