

Other Friends' sites near Coanwod

We currently have over 70 places of worship in our care spread across England and Wales. A full list can be found on our website (fofc.org.uk/find-churches) but the closest one to Coanwood Friends Meeting House is:

Biddlestone Roman Catholic Chapel, Northumberland

(approx. 54 miles - open daily)

One of our most remote places of worship, Biddlestone Roman Catholic Chapel is idyllically situated amongst the sweeping landscape of Northumberland National Park. The historic core of this building is a medieval Pele Tower, on top of which a Gothic Revival chapel was raised in the 19th century.

Visiting details:

Clattering Causeway
Coanwood
Nr. Haltwhistle
Northumberland
NE49 0PU
OS grid reference: NT955084
what3words: spires.treetop.scenes



 FRIENDS OF FRIENDLESS CHURCHES

Who are the Friends?

We are a small charity, caring for over 70 historic places of worship across England and Wales. We receive no government funding in England and only a modest grant in Wales. Everything we do depends on people who care – **people like you.**

What do we do?

Since 1957, our mission has been the same: to save disused but beautiful old places of worship of architectural and historic interest from demolition, decay and unsympathetic conversion.

Today, our work is more important than ever, as more and more places of worship face closure and uncertain futures.

We rescue historic places of worship from wrecking balls, we carefully repair and re-open them, and we keep historic churches alive for local communities and visitors to enjoy.

How you can help

You can help our cause becoming a Friend, volunteering your time, donating, or remembering us in your Will. To find out more about our work and sites in our care, visit our website, follow us on social media or contact our team directly - by mail, email or a phone call.

With more support, we could do so much more - **will you join us?**

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 Friends of Friendless Churches

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Coanwood Friends Meeting House, Northumberland

a guide to its history

Set back from the road, across a babbling brook and behind a moss-covered drystone wall, Coanwood Meeting House is a charming, largely unaltered 18th-century structure that powerfully evokes the silence of Quaker worship.

As indicated by the date on the lintel over the door, Coanwood Meeting House was built in 1760. There are several surviving 18th-century meeting houses in Cumbria, however, only Coanwood has been spared major alteration or conversion.

The only notable alteration to this building in the past 250 years concerns its roof. In the 19th century, the original heather-thatch roof was replaced by the current slate roof with its sandstone eave details.

Coanwood Quaker Meeting House came into our care in 2025, having previously been owned by the Historic Chapels Trust since 1993.



History

The meeting house at Coanwood was established by Cuthbert Wigham (1704-80), a significant landowner in the local area. Wigham had converted to Quakerism

following two strange experiences in 1734. Firstly, when coming home from a card party, Wigham suffered a temporary bout of blindness. Secondly, while out walking, Wigham's sword caught his heel, causing him to proclaim several expletives. His reaction evoked a feeling of deep shame, which was exacerbated when he overheard his servant saying, "Our master is no Quaker yet."

Prompted by these events, Wigham converted to Quakerism and, in 1735, obtained a licence from the Quarter Sessions to establish a meeting place in his home, Bournhouse. After spending the following decades cultivating Quakerism in the local area, Wigham donated land and money for the construction of this meeting house.

Interior

The interior of the meeting house is a rare survival of a historic Quaker layout.

In the main meeting room, seven rows of simple open-backed wooden benches face a raised platform, with two additional rows of benches, known as the Elders' benches, facing the opposite direction.

The most easterly bay of the meeting house is a separate smaller meeting room, with a few more benches, some cupboards, and a small fireplace. It is divided from the main meeting room by a panelled wooden screen. The middle panels of this screen hang on hinges and can be lifted, enabling the main meeting room to be enlarged.



In the burial ground are typically simple headstones with round tops and only the initials of the interred and the date of their death in the Julian calendar. Many Quakers and Non-Conformists adhered to this calendar when England adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752.

