

ACCESS GUIDE:

DARLINGTON FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

This guide was originally written for Jabberwocky Markets by access consultant Kerami Roberts, who provided photos and text. We are grateful to them for allowing us to repurpose the guide to help our visitors get a feeling for the access arrangements at the Meeting House. If you are planning on visiting, and have any queries or requests about access, please feel free to contact us on

manager@darlingtonquakers.org or 01325 466810.

We are committed to making the Meeting House as accessible as possible. If you have any suggestions, please do let us know.



The Meeting House is the place of worship of Darlington Religious Society of Friends, more commonly known as the Darlington Quakers, but it is also used as a community venue by a wide variety of groups. The Meeting House was listed as a Grade II building of special architectural or historic interest in 1952 and is rich with Quaker family heritage telling the stories of Darlington's past. The present building was built in 1839 but the Quakers have occupied a property on Skinnergate since 1678.

Care has been put into creating good access into this lovely building. There is a designated car park, step-free access, ramps and a recently renovated accessible toilet with baby changing facilities. Skinnergate is pedestrianised for some of the day though, so please look at the details below and get in touch with us if you need to.

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL: Do have a look at this access guide to help you decide what support you need to attend safely and comfortably. If there is something we have not covered or that you need, we warmly encourage you to get in touch. We will be discreet, honest and friendly.

TRAVELLING TO THE MEETING HOUSE:

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Darlington has excellent transport links via the railway and roads. For local bus services please get in touch with Arriva [HERE](#). For up to date train information get in touch with National Rail Enquiries [HERE](#) and information about Darlington Train Station can be found [HERE](#). For more information regarding 'Journey care' or 'Journey Assistance' which is help that train companies can give to their ticket holders in need of support click [HERE](#).

The Meeting House is under 5 minutes walking distance from local and national bus stops. There is a fair slope from the bus stands servicing national buses but the paths are smooth.

The train station is further away and those with mobility difficulties may wish to look into either local buses or taxi services.

SKINNERGATE PEDESTRIANISATION:

Skinnergate is part of Darlington's pedestrianised centre which means access to the front of the Meeting House and the car park is restricted at certain times of day. Before 10am (10.30am on Sundays) and after 5pm, vehicles can drive up to the front of the Meeting House and/or enter the car park. There are no restrictions on exit - this can be done at any time of day.



DARLINGTON TOWN PARKING: Please check [HERE](#) for up to date parking information in Darlington Centre. There are car parks within 5 minutes of the Meeting House. If you need to be closer the Meeting House has its own car park behind the building (but see above re pedestrianised times).

WALKING AND ROLLING: Darlington Town Centre is a Victorian market town and has some cobbles and textured pavements to maneuver round. The Quaker Meeting House is on a street that has good, smooth paths and has no slope.

GETTING IN TO THE MEETING HOUSE

Don't be put off by the lovely looking front entrance that has lots of steps! There is a step-free entrance and car park to the rear of the building. Next door to the Meeting House is a shop called 'Footprints' and beyond this is an alley / tunnel to get to the rear car park and step-free entrance.



The short tunnel is well lit (this photo is much darker than it was) and has a motion sensor light that keeps it well lit during the evening. The tunnel is wide and the flooring is smooth stones with no real gaps. There is a very slight slope upwards towards the car park and Burial Ground beyond.



PARKING: The Meeting House has its own small car park behind the building that has a smooth tarmac surface. There are a few patches of slightly loose gravel but generally the surface is great for feet and wheels. As you enter there are 8 'permit only' spaces to the right but on the left the spaces are free to use for visitors to the building. It is possible to pull in super close to the ramp at the back door or to the front door. Please get in touch if you need a reserved space or are concerned in anyway about parking.



ENTRANCE INTO THE BUILDING: There are two ways to get in. At the front of the building there is a stepped entrance that leads to the main vestibule but this entrance is not generally in use.

Instead, most visitors use the step-free access found beyond the fire escape stairs. Keep going round and this entrance will be open and well signposted.



This step-free access has a light door that stays open when pushed and is wide enough for scooters and wheelchairs.

At the door there is a permanent, smooth and steady ramp through the door into the hallway. Immediately to the right is a set of glazed double doors which lead into the main part of the building. The right-hand door is generally clipped back and should be wide enough for most wheelchairs and scooters. However if your chair/scooter is too wide or the door is not clipped back, please either return to the entrance door and ring the doorbell or call 07788 709682 and we will try to send someone straight away to help you. We always recommend that you let the group leader for your activity know before you come, so that they can ensure this door is in the best open position, or contact us direct.



There are two larger rooms in the Meeting House and both have permanent ramps with handrails. The two smaller rooms have flat entrances. The carpet is a tough, thin pile and easy to walk and roll on.

FACILITIES INSIDE THE MEETING HOUSE

FLOORING AND SEATING:

Flooring is mostly hard wearing, thinner pile carpet that is easy to walk and roll on. Seating in the Meeting House is flexible. Do let us or your group leader know if there is anything we can do to enable you to get the most out of your visit. This is easier if we know you are coming but we will accommodate you as best we can if that isn't possible.



TOILETS: There are ladies/gents toilets and an accessible toilet in the main lobby area.

The facilities are quite new and have been renovated with care. There is a baby changing mat to the right as you enter but users are encouraged to 'Think

Access' and keep this shut. There are bins, good hand washing facilities but no changing table for adults or accompanying hoists.



The nearest 'changing places' toilet is at the Dolphin centre, about an 8 minute walk along flat paving. The changing places information can be found [HERE](#)

Toilet here is raised and has suitable grab rails. Plenty of space for wheelchairs but scooters and pushchairs may need to be left outside.



LOOP SYSTEM AND SOUND: There is no current loop system at the Meeting House. For certain events it is possible to amplify speakers using mics and a professional PA system. If this is something that may affect your ability to take part, do please give us or your group leader a call.

CHILL OUT /QUIET SPACE: There are other rooms in this lovely building though they may be being used by other groups. Please talk to your group leader if you think you may need extra space.

HEATING AND LIGHTING: The Meeting House is well lit and well heated. The car park and entrance tunnel is lit on a sensor.

COMMUNICATION:

We have aimed to make all signage (for example of exits, toilets and safety notices) clear and easy to read for all visitors. Our outreach literature is available in larger print if needed – please let us know. For other communication issues, please contact your activity's group leader.