

WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

England & Wales · Charity number 1134534

Details

Other names	NORTH SOMERSET AND WILTSHIRE AREA QUAKER MEETING
Status	Registered
Legal form	Other
Registered	2010-02-26
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Friends Meeting House Whiteheads Lane Bradford-On-Avon BA15 1JU
Phone	01225 480782
Email	info@wwesquakers.org.uk
Website	www.wwesquakers.org.uk

Activities

Objects: THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GENERAL RELIGIOUS AND CHARITABLE PURPOSES OF THE SOCIETY IN THE REGION OF WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING AND BEYOND

Activities: Part of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers): - supporting Quaker Meetings - spreading the Quaker message - undertaking service - funding concerns - providing pastoral care of Quakers in need - maintaining/developing Meeting Houses as places for worship and witness - administering the Area Meeting -supporting Britain Yearly Meeting

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Individuals, Makes Grants To Organisations, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services
- **What:** Religious Activities
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET.
- Bath And North East Somerset
- Somerset
- Wiltshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£167,648	£141,897	-	-
2023-12-31	£127,332	£161,335	-	-
2022-12-31	£157,820	£101,549	-	-
2021-12-31	£169,198	£137,105	-	-
2020-12-31	£112,365	£111,469	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Barbara Jane Ridhiwani		2023-01-01
CORA ROSE GALLAGHER		2026-03-01
Christopher James Douglas Pollock		2022-09-11
John Flynn		2024-06-09
Juliet Anne Solomon		2025-09-14
Sally Louise Harris		2021-10-01

WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

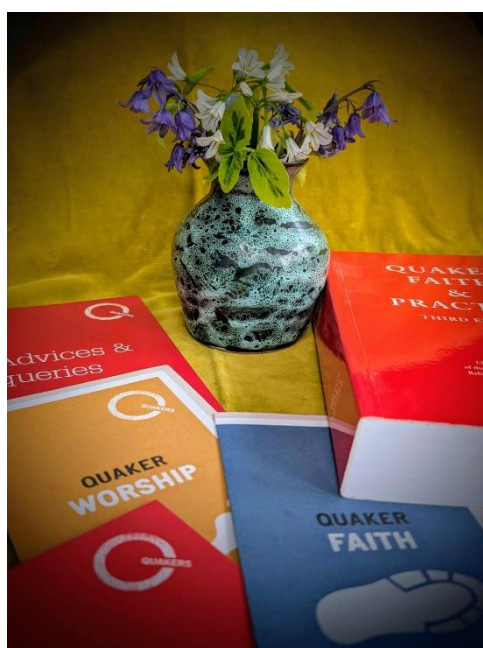
England & Wales - Charity number 1134534

Accounts

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

**West Wiltshire & East Somerset
Area Quaker Meeting**

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2024



West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting

Registered address:
Friends Meeting House
1 Whiteheads Lane
Bradford on Avon
BA15 1JU

Registered Charity Number: 1134534

email: info@wwesquakers.org.uk

www: www.wwesquakers.org.uk

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Status, Trustees & Custodian Trustee

West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting is one of around seventy Area Meetings which make up The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, also known as Britain Yearly Meeting or Quakers in Britain. It is an unincorporated charity (registered number 1134534) and has existed in its current form since November 2008.

The Trustees serving during the period from 1 January 2024 up to the date on which this report was adopted were:

- Chris Arnold (Bradford on Avon)
- Robin Brookes (Devizes), ended 8 June 2024
- John Flynn (Devizes), appointed 9 June 2024
- Nicola Grove (Frome), resigned 9 February 2025
- Sally Harris (Bath), Clerk
- Debbie Nightingale (Chippenham)
- Chris Pollock (Trowbridge)
- Barbara Ridhiwani (Bath), Treasurer

Custodian Trustee:

- Friends Trusts Limited, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

The term *Friend* refers to a Member of the Society. The term *Attender* refers to a person who is not a Member of the Society but who regularly attends its meetings for worship.

This report of the Trustees naturally speaks for our Area Meeting and its six constituent Local Meetings. *We* and *our* therefore generally mean those in that wider group, except in the Reports of the Life of our Local Meetings where they generally mean those in the Meeting in question. Where appropriate, it is made clear that these plural pronouns indicate the Trustees specifically.

Charitable object

The object of the Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Society in the region of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting and beyond.

These purposes are carried out in ways that bring public benefit. We Trustees confirm that we have given due consideration to the Charity Commission's published guidance on the Public Benefit requirement under the Charities Act 2011.

Meeting together

The right holding of public meetings for worship (in our constituent Local Meetings) and regular meetings for church affairs (in all the constituent Local Meetings and for the Area Meeting as a whole) forms a key part of our role in providing a public benefit.

Meetings for worship

Our six Local Meetings hold public meetings for worship every Sunday. They take place in our meeting houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes, and in rooms that are rented in Bath, Chippenham, and Frome where we do not have premises. At Trowbridge, Friends and Attenders gather in rented premises twice a month with others joining them online in a blended meeting for worship. On other Sundays, Trowbridge meeting for worship takes place online. Some Local Meetings hold additional meetings for worship at different times of the week and in different venues.

Our meetings for worship are open to people of all ages, but from time to time we offer some that are specifically designed to be "all-age" meetings for worship in which some pre-arranged elements are included.

Across our Area Meeting, some meetings for worship are also held entirely online, while some are blended. This arrangement, started during the Covid-19 pandemic, continues to be particularly valuable for those whose ability to travel to Meeting or meet in person is more limited.

Meetings for church affairs

Meetings for church affairs take place regularly in each of our six Local Meetings and at Area Meeting. At these meetings, we gather in a spirit of worship to make practical decisions about running our meetings and, for those matters which require more consideration, to discern what is in right ordering. The unity we seek in a discipline of silent waiting depends on our willingness to seek the truth in what others say, and so to reach a sense of the right way forward—a practice that we find is different from the secular idea of consensus.

At each Area Meeting, we consider the appointment of role-holders and receive reports from our representatives and from Trustees, exercising discernment throughout. We also receive a report from our Membership Clerk and consider any applications for membership. In 2024, two adults and two young people applied for, and were accepted into, membership. We received two transfers-in to our Area from other Area Meetings and made two transfers out. Sadly, seven of our Members died during the year.

Figure 1: Analysis of Member and Attender numbers over ten years			
Year	Members	Attenders	Total
2015	181	120	301
2016	187	130	317
2017	190	131	321
2018	192	133	325
2019	189	124	313
2020	186	117	303
2021	178	124	302
2022	169	147	316
2023	169	120	289
2024	166	133	299

Each year, we summarize the changes in the numbers of Members and Attenders across our six Local Meetings (see Figure 1, above). In 2024, our membership has continued to follow a downward trend ending the year with 166 members, three fewer than in at the end of 2023. However, we are being joined by new Attenders exploring the Quaker way, and we plan to build on the *Curious about Quakers?* series of open meetings which were held in Bath during the autumn.

The impetus to seek out those who might find a spiritual home among Quakers builds on the key issues for our Area Meeting discerned by Trustees during their annual strategy day. At Area Meeting in session, we heard that our ageing community and slowly declining membership numbers make us vulnerable to non-viability as an independent charity in the next ten years. We recognised, of course, that there is a difference between seeking new people to help us to run our Local and Area Meetings and engaging in outreach for the benefit of those who might find a home among Quakers. We are clearly committed to the latter purpose.

Four Friends attended a national residential conference on the Future of British Quakerism in October 2024. The message coming from this significant event tied in

closely with the conclusions from our Trustees' strategy day on the need for change and our growing awareness of the risks we face both as an Area Meeting and in the Society of Friends more widely.

Our Area Meetings in session bring other opportunities to engage with national Quaker matters. This year, we considered the structural changes taking place in Britain Yearly Meeting and the revision of our "book of discipline", *Quaker Faith & Practice*. We invited the Team Leader of the national Youth Development Project to tell us about the project and, in particular, the work being carried out in our area by our regional Youth Development Worker. The speaker had previously been a Youth Development Worker herself and was able to speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the project. Friends came away with a fuller appreciation of its creative engagement with young people.

The average attendance at our four Area Meetings in 2024 was approximately twenty-five, seven fewer than in 2023. We hope to find ways of encouraging greater participation in these meetings.

Charitable activities

Our charitable activities are grounded in worship together. They arise following discernment in our meetings for church affairs and mostly take place separately in our Local Meetings rather than jointly across the Area Meeting. Separate reports from each of the Local Meetings towards the end of this document give a good flavour of the life and activities in our communities in 2024. As Trustees, we receive updates at each of our meetings to keep us informed.

Quakers in Britain have had a longstanding involvement with prison work and concern for matters relating to criminal justice. One of our Members serves as Quaker Prison Chaplain at HMP Erlestoke. Her dedicated work at the prison was recognised this year in a letter from the Governor.

Many of our Local Meetings join in the laying of a white or a mixed poppy wreath on Remembrance Sunday. Friends engage with the event organisers beforehand, if possible, to explain that white poppies symbolise both military and civilian victims of war. Devizes Friends hold a weekly peace vigil in the centre of Devizes and the Bath Stop War weekly peace vigil is supported by Friends living locally. We also hear of individual Friends who are involved with anti-war campaigning and protest.

An Open Day was held in the Quaker Burial Ground in Bath this year as part of wider events marking the 400th anniversary of the birth of George Fox and timed to coincide with national 'Heritage Open Days 2024' in early September. It was a fine day during which sixty-nine people came through the door, of whom sixty were non-Quaker visitors. Chippenham Meeting participated in their local Heritage Open Days with a display of material about Quakers generally and the history of Quakers in Chippenham, in particular. During the national Quaker Week, Bradford on Avon Meeting took a stall

in the weekly market and Frome Meeting held a peace talk. Our involvement in all such events provides an opportunity to promote our faith by making written material available and through conversations with interested members of the public.

Children from two local schools came into Devizes Meeting House to hear about Fairtrade and to participate in a workshop. This visit built on a similar occasion last year when school children came to hear about our way of worship.

A programme of five public meetings held in Bath entitled *Curious about Quakers?* attracted some who had little or no knowledge of the Society of Friends, alongside more familiar faces. Feedback was positive and encouraging, and further sessions are being planned.

Both our meeting houses hold an Eco Church Silver Award. Solar panels at Devizes have been providing renewable energy to the Meeting House for the past six years. Although it has not proved practicable to install solar panels at Bradford on Avon, there will be other energy-saving measures that can be undertaken.

Friends and Attenders in our meetings are aware of the climate emergency and are encouraged to take what steps they can in their daily lives to reduce their carbon footprint. Some are individually involved with groups working on ecological and greening activities in their communities, including Sustainable Devizes and Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon where the Meeting also hosted a twice-monthly Climate Café throughout 2024 for those with climate anxiety.

Local Meetings make voluntary collections for Quaker and other charities as part of our overall charitable activities. Many Friends and Attenders in our meetings are also individually involved in charitable and community activities that are not part of our Area Meeting. Often these are further examples of Quaker faith in action, and in many cases those Friends and Attenders will be cared for and supported by others in our Meetings.

Children and young people

There is an active children's meeting at Bradford on Avon Local Meeting with planned activities each week. From time to time, the children are taken out on Sunday morning to the garden of a Friend who lives nearby. The children's meeting is often enriched by families from local meetings where provision for children is less frequent or not possible.

Young children also come to Bath Local Meeting and attendance is slowly growing. Their presence is always welcome and the children's volunteers ready with age-appropriate activities on two Sundays each month.

Our young people between the ages of eleven and eighteen have benefited greatly from the enthusiastic engagement of our regional Youth Development Worker employed by Britain Yearly Meeting. He encourages the group of young people to form

bonds, to play together, and to explore “coming to know each other in the things that are eternal”. Two were welcomed into membership during the year.

Four of our young Friends attended the Summer School Gatherings for their respective age groups this year, and three attended Junior Yearly Meeting in London. The Area Meeting gladly provided support for their attendance, knowing how valuable it is for those growing up in our meetings to meet up with their peers.

During the year, the Trustees renewed the agreement with Britain Yearly Meeting to fund and support youth development work in our region for a further three years. Our youth development region also includes Bristol and North Somerset area meetings, enabling costs and support to be shared across all three area meetings.

In our children's meetings, we frequently draw on themes relating to the natural world and how we care for our environment. The same principles of loving care for the environment are followed through in the work with our young people. Notable events this year included visiting a city farm and travelling to Spiceland Meeting to camp together over a weekend.

Work behind the scenes

Much of our work as Trustees is carried out behind the scenes. It involves caring for Friends and others to whom we have a duty of care, looking after property, checking on rented premises, and managing our finances.

We held six regular meetings of the Trustees in 2024, three of which were online. We also met for a Strategy Day and held one additional meeting for urgent business.

Caring for Friends and others

We reviewed our Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Resources during the year. As part of its adoption by Area Meeting in the previous year, we had agreed to review its operation at the end of the first year, and we made some minor improvements. Friends and Attenders continued to take part in online safeguarding training with the safeguarding support organisation ‘Thirtyone:eight’ and to attend in person training.

We had no safeguarding incidents to report in 2024.

We were responsible for looking after three employees during 2024: our Warden at Bradford on Avon, the Meeting House Manager at Devizes, and, in an experimental move, a newly-appointed Burial Ground Manager at Bath who we employed for one year from mid-February 2024. The employees held regular meetings with the Area Meeting Supervisor of Employees to talk through the various elements of their roles and allow for confidential discussion about any matters which they might wish to raise.

Our employees are paid at a rate which is at or above the Real Living Wage pay-rate and is reviewed annually. We also review our pay rates for others who provide services

for us and are satisfied that their rates are above the living wage pay-rate. Our Area Meeting is a member of the Living Wage Foundation.

Caring for Friends and Attenders includes proper handling of the personal data held by Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. This is a legal requirement under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

No data breaches were recorded in 2024.

Our responsibilities include caring for those who live in our meeting houses. We have a tenant at Devizes and both a warden and tenants at Bradford on Avon.

Looking after property

The two meeting houses have their own local committees to deal with routine and low-cost matters relating to their premises, with Trustees being responsible for commissioning any more complex and costly work.

The hoped-for installation of solar panels on two roof areas of the Meeting House at Bradford on Avon did not go ahead. The erection of scaffolding on the narrow lane alongside the building, necessary to access the more favourably-orientated roof surface, would have required the road to be closed, and that would have prevented traffic access to properties beyond the Meeting House. Seeking the necessary permissions would have been both costly and unlikely to succeed. Installing panels solely on the section of roof that is accessible from within the grounds would have generated insufficient energy due to its orientation and smaller area. Preparatory work to survey the roof structure and improve access to the roof space has been beneficial nonetheless and should be of use in future.

There have been instances of unusually heavy rainfall during the year which have caused flooding in the centre of Bradford on Avon, but fortunately did not affect the Meeting House. A CCTV survey of the drainage around the meeting house was commissioned to make sure that the building was adequately protected, and minor repairs carried out accordingly. Also, a sign indicating the route for wheelchair access was added next to the main entrance—a simple and effective accessibility improvement.

At Devizes Meeting, the kitchen window in the meeting house was replaced. Problems with damp in some areas of the Meeting House flat were addressed by installing demand-controlled ventilation. The bathroom shower was replaced and parts of the flat redecorated.

Both properties have small gardens which are managed in an environmentally responsible manner.

The Area Meeting owns a Burial Ground in a residential area of Bath. It is made available to the local community on request as a quiet space and a gentle form of outreach. The garden is managed organically, with a wildflower area and mown paths.

It benefited from the care of a manager and a self-employed gardener this year, in addition to help from Bath Meeting members and attenders. The shelter erected in 2023 is proving to be a valuable addition to the garden. Though burials no longer take place, ashes may be scattered by arrangement.

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that health and safety matters are properly handled and risks reduced. As is our normal practice, we audited the systems and processes at both meeting houses and at the Burial Ground and were satisfied that good care is being taken.

Checking on rental premises

Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge Local Meetings continued using the same rented venues for their meetings as in the previous year. As part of our annual health and safety audit, the Trustees carry out risk assessments of the spaces which we hire and obtain evidence of health and safety checks from the premises' managers.

A hearing loop system was installed in the room used on Sundays by Bath Meeting. The Church which provides the rented space agreed to extend its existing loop system for our benefit and our Trustees agreed to match the cost with a payment for provision of the service from a recent legacy. Bath Meeting's relationship with the Church has continued to work well since the Meeting moved there during 2022.

Both Chippenham and Trowbridge Meetings have worshipped in the same premises for many years and have long-established good relationships with their respective landlords. Arrangements at Frome Meeting are less satisfactory because there is no space for children to meet and the available hours on Sundays are limited. Friends are seeking an alternative venue which could better serve the needs of their Meeting and increase their visibility in the local community.

Managing finance

The Trustees are responsible for managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. At each Trustees' meeting, we receive an up-to-date report from the Bookkeeper and the Area Meeting Treasurer summarising the financial affairs across the Area Meeting.

We operate with centralised bank accounts such that all receipts and payments authorised by Local Meetings go through the Area Meeting bank accounts. Our Bookkeeper liaises closely with Local Meeting treasurers, meeting together to share and support each other.

The decision taken in 2023, following the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House, to invest reserves in the Epworth Cash Plus Fund for Charities was put into effect early in 2024. This low-risk fund is easily accessible and suitable for holding our reserves while we seek to discern clearly our needs for the future. We receive regular updates from the Fund Manager on its changing interest rates.

Financial review

The full accounts are set out on pages 17–25.

There was an overall surplus in 2024 of £25,751 (2023: £1,099,624 including gain on sale of Bath Meeting House; 2022: £56,271; 2021: £32,093, 2020: £897). We believe we are now moving towards a period of greater financial stability following the turbulent years of the Covid pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and more positively, the renting out and subsequent sale of Bath Meeting House.

Income

Total Income in 2024 was £168k (2023 £1,261k, including £1,134k from sale of Bath Meeting House, 2022 £158k, 2021 £169k, 2020 £112k).

Voluntary Income totalled £69k, of which Regular Giving donations from Friends & Attenders was £63k, a very welcome increase of 12.7% on the previous year (£56k in 2023, having dropped from £67k in 2022). We also received a legacy of £4k.

Income from our properties (mainly flat rentals and lettings) was nearly £36k in 2024. This is lower than the nearly 50k reported in 2023 when we received rental income for Bath Meeting House in quarter 1.

Income from Interest was £62k in 2024. This is significantly higher than the £19k total in 2023 reflecting the deposit of proceeds from the sale into an Investment Fund early in 2024.

The chosen Investment Fund, the Epworth Cash Plus Fund for Charities, is a charity in its own right, originally set up for the Methodist Church for holding its short-term liquid funds. It is a Common Deposit Fund, which means that the funds of multiple clients are carefully pooled and invested across many different banks in many countries, which helps keep the risk low. Epworth Investment Management Ltd (the Fund's manager) is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Our Trustees had not previously managed funds of this size and were surprised at the purchaser's unexpected decision to complete the sale in March 2023 rather than 2024. It then took time to research our investment responsibilities and options, adopt appropriate policies and arrange the opening of the Epworth account by our Custodian Trustee, Friends Trusts Ltd. We also found that the controlled movement of the much larger-than-normal sums from our bank accounts to Friends Trusts Ltd and onwards was a slow process due to bank rules intended to safeguard all parties. Trustees note that the Epworth initial rate of interest in March 2024 was 5.1%, and that this gradually reduced to 4.6% in December 2024, and has since continued to drop slowly.

Expenditure

Total Expenditure in 2024 was £142k (2023 £161k, 2022 £102k, 2021 £137k, £111k).

The largest elements of expenditure (see also Note 4) were as follows: *Grants to Quaker Charities* £63k, *Property repairs and running costs* £30k, *Staff Costs* (Warden and Property Managers) £18k, *Life of the Meeting* £11k (including training, books, IT costs, refreshments, subscriptions to The Friend magazine, and support & materials for children), *Rent of Premises* (Bath, Frome, Chippenham & Trowbridge), *Fees and Taxes* £9k, and *Governance / Accountancy* £6k.

The Grants to Quaker charities included the routine passing across to Britain Yearly Meeting of £31k, a proportion of regular donations from our local members and attenders, to support national structures and work. Secondly, following concerns discussed at Area Meeting regarding conflict in the Occupied Territories, Trustees authorised a donation of £1,000 to EAPPI the Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme in Palestine & Israel. This is a well-recognised, long-standing partnership of 18 Christian organisations from the UK and Ireland, led by Quaker Peace and Social Witness, a part of Britain Yearly Meeting. Thirdly, in autumn 2024, Trustees considered the general reserves position of our charity at the end of 2023 and discerned that they could make up to £30k available to further Quaker work via UK Quaker charities in accordance with our charitable objectives. Information was gathered from the Charity Commission and other websites and recommendations were put to December's Area Meeting, where further discernment resulted in a decision to give £30k of grants to the six Quaker charities listed in note 10 of the annual accounts.

Property repairs & running costs in 2024 were lower, at £30.5k, than in 2023 (£39k) when the Devizes pump was replaced. Costs in 2024 included £14k for regular items such as cleaning, utilities and gardening services. Repairs and servicing were £4k. One-off costs at Devizes included a new ventilation system in the flat to prevent mould (£5.4k), and some redecoration plus various repairs / replacements (£3.5k). At Bradford on Avon we surveyed and repaired the drains (£1.5k) partly in response to repeated flooding lower down in the town. We also invested in better roof access (£1.4k) in the hope of installing solar panels, but once the scaffolding requirement became apparent, it was acknowledged that the currently proposed scheme could not sensibly go ahead. Better access to our roof should nevertheless be useful in future. At Bath, we covered the £2k cost incurred by Manvers Street Baptist Church of installing a hearing loop system in the room we rent on Sundays. This will also be of benefit to other users of the room.

Staff Costs were £18k in 2024, higher than the £14k in 2023, partly relating to our 12-month experiment in employing a Burial Ground Manager from February 2024. We have since decided to revert, for the time being, to having a Quaker volunteer carry out the oversight role for our walled garden, supported by increased hours of contract gardening, and other Quaker member input where needed.

'Life of the Meeting' costs were lower at £11.5k in 2024 than in 2023 (£15.5k). The main reason for this is the change from up-front annual payments to Britain Yearly Meeting for providing us with a Youth Development Worker, to monthly payments from October 2024. Discussions were held with Britain Yearly Meeting colleagues, Bristol

Area and North Somerset Area trustee representatives and we subsequently agreed to continue funding the Youth Development Worker for three more years. When deciding on share of costs between us, the numbers of members and children were considered, as well as the relative resources available to the three Area meeting charities. Our contribution is now £1,321 a month. We expect this cost to be higher for the full twelve months of 2025.

As usual, we supported a number of Friends and Attenders to attend conferences and training (£2.4k). These included young people attending the national Quaker Junior Gathering, a conference for Prison Chaplains, and a conference on The Future of British Quakerism. Training sessions have been attended on Safeguarding, and the annual conference of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers.

Reserves

Trustees recognise the need to hold cash reserves, sufficient to meet both normal expenditure in the Area Meeting together with any unexpected expenditure that might arise. Following examination of last year's accounts, our Trustees reviewed the reserves to ensure they are still at acceptable levels and consider what donations could be made from any surplus.

We ended 2024 with £279,516 of available 'Reserves' (Net Current Assets) in our Unrestricted Fund. This is an increase from £254,634 at the end of the previous year.

We ended 2024 with £1,427,102 in Restricted Funds, of which £20,868 relates to the Frome Building Fund and £1,406,234 relates to the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House (see note 14 for details).

Governance and administration

Governing document

The charity was originally registered in 2010, constituted by the Governing Document of North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (adopted 9 November 2008). On 5 June 2011, the Governing Document was amended to reflect the change of name to West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting, after a change in its constituent Local Meetings. Following a decision taken at Area Meeting on 27 June 2021, it was further amended to allow meetings for church affairs to be held solely online or combined with those attending in-person.

On 22 January 2020, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting agreed a Scheme with the Charity Commission that clearly established the governance responsibilities of the Area Meeting for the three meeting houses owned at that time (Bath, Bradford on Avon, and Devizes) and the Bath Burial Ground. As the Area Meeting is not an incorporated charity, Friends Trusts Ltd is named in the Scheme as the Custodian Trustee for the Area Meeting and its assets. The title deeds to the properties are held

by Friends Trusts Ltd., which is also now the named account holder for our Epworth investment.

Relationship with Britain Yearly Meeting & related organisations

On 9 June 2024, our Area Meeting entered into a Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations forming the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. The memorandum acknowledges that we are all part of one faith group sharing a common set of beliefs and practices. We have a relationship to each other, we support each other, and we hold each other to account. It describes how we should support and communicate with each other for the benefit and right ordering of the whole community of Quakers in Britain.

Trustees' appointment and training

Trustees are Members of the Area Meeting, appointed by the Area Meeting following nomination by the constituent Local Meetings.

Before any nomination is made, the Clerk to the Trustees obtains two references with an emphasis on financial integrity, one from within the Religious Society of Friends and one from outside. The nominee completes the probity declaration based on the Charity Commission's pro-forma confirming that they are a fit and proper person to oversee financial, governance and employment matters in the Area Meeting. The nominee is also required to sign the necessary Safeguarding declarations.

One new Trustee joined us during 2024. The Clerk to the Trustees ensures that new Trustees understand their terms of reference, have access to past Minutes and to key documents, in particular the Governing Document and the Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings.

Trustees receive notice of any upcoming courses and webinars and are encouraged to attend those that are relevant. Our finance team benefits from the training provided through our membership of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT). Several Trustees participate in the e-forums and sessions run by Britain Yearly Meeting where information and ideas are shared and discussed.

Bankers

- CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ
- Triodos Bank UK Ltd, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS
- The Co-operative Bank p.l.c., 1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP

Investment manager

- Epworth Investment Management Ltd, Methodist Church House, 25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF (formerly at 9 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4PE)

Insurers

- Congregational & General Insurance plc, Currer House, Currer Street, Bradford BD1 5BA

Examiner of accounts

- Hannah Pettifer ACA, OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Lane, Bath, BA2 2EL.

Looking ahead

As Friends we seek to live out and promote the distinctive elements of our Quaker faith and practice. We are convinced that these are of value to society and that we should endeavour to share them with the communities in which we live.

We are continuing the work begun in our Local Meetings last year in discerning how to strengthen our Meetings and how to make good use of the proceeds from the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House. The necessity for outreach—and a wish to be better at it—were common themes in the minutes coming forward from Local Meetings. So too was a hesitation to act in ways that might feel like proselytising.

The *Curious about Quakers?* sessions referred to earlier in this report engaged with newcomers in an open way which allowed for questioning and exploration. This is a model which we hope to build on during 2025.

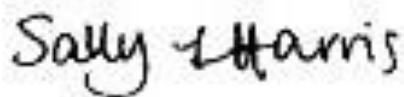
We anticipate being ready to adopt a new website for our Area Meeting during 2025, under the Quaker Meetings Network umbrella. We are hopeful that this will enable more people to find our Meetings and to explore what we offer, with more readily accessible links through to national Quaker websites and information. In a complementary way, the national *Discovering Quakers* online initiative is already providing a link between enquirers (who may be anywhere) and the Local Meetings they might like to discover.

At present, many of us carry out administrative tasks for our meetings which are common to other charities and organisations, such as managing property and employees, safeguarding, data protection, and gathering and distributing information for business meetings. We are planning to pay for administrative help to release more of our time for living our faith and the more vital action associated with outreach. We also hope to simplify and reduce the administrative demands on our time and resources. And in a bit of welcome synergy internally, the Quaker Meetings Network website will also enable us to simplify our back-office records management by using its data storage facility.

In our Area Meeting, we find that we have much in common with other Area Meetings across the country. Feedback from our Friends who attended the Future of British Quakerism conference suggests that the impetus for change is widespread. We are fortunate in having already streamlined our financial procedures and in having found a clear way forward in selling our Bath Meeting House—which in turn has strengthened our financial position.

Most of all, we need to ask how we need to prepare and adapt ourselves to be able to make the most of our opportunities—and of the opportunities for assuring the continuing existence of Quaker communities, insights and wisdom in society.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 25 July 2025
and signed on their behalf by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Harris". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Sally" and the last name "Harris" clearly distinguishable.

Sally Harris, Clerk to the Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of the report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Hannah Pettifer ACA
OCL Accountancy
141 Englishcombe Lane Bath, BA2 2EL

Date: 30/07/2025

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2024

		Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
	Notes				
Incoming Resources					
Voluntary Income - Donations and legacies		69,499	-	69,499	58,326
Investment income		61,496	869	62,366	19,317
Other income		35,783	-	35,783	49,689
Total Income from Charitable Activities		166,779	869	167,648	127,332
Gain on Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House		-	-	-	1,133,627
Total Incoming Resources	3	166,779	869	167,648	1,260,959
Resources Expended					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		141,897	-	141,897	144,170
Other (Depreciation)		-	-	-	-
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities		141,897	-	141,897	144,170
Fees re Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House		-	-	-	17,165
Total Expenditure	4	141,897	-	141,897	161,335
Net income (loss) on ordinary activities		24,882	869	25,751	1,099,624
Transfer between Funds		-	-	-	-
Net income after Transfers between Funds		24,882	869	25,751	1,099,624
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		982,903	1,426,233	2,409,135	1,309,511
Total funds carried forward	9	1,007,785	1,427,102	2,434,887	2,409,135

Continuing operations

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2024

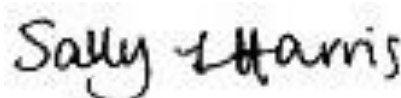
		Unrestricted	Restricted	2024	2023
	Notes	Fund	Funds	Total	Total
		£	£	Funds	Funds
				£	£
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	6	728,269	-	728,269	728,269
Current Assets					
Debtors	7	11,788	-	11,788	14,221
Cash at bank and in hand		150,600		150,600	1,711,762
Investment with Epworth	15	133,906	1,427,102	1,561,008	-
		<u>296,294</u>	<u>1,427,102</u>	<u>1,723,396</u>	<u>1,725,983</u>
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	8	(16,778)	-	(16,778)	(45,116)
Net current assets		<u>279,516</u>	<u>1,427,102</u>	<u>1,706,618</u>	<u>1,680,867</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		1,007,785	1,427,102	2,434,887	2,409,135
Net Assets		<u>1,007,785</u>	<u>1,427,102</u>	<u>2,434,887</u>	<u>2,409,135</u>
Funds					
Unrestricted funds				1,007,785	982,903
Restricted funds				1,427,102	1,426,233
Total funds	9			<u>2,434,887</u>	<u>2,409,135</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 25 July 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Barbara Ridhiwani - Trustee and Treasurer



Sally Harris - Trustee and Clerk to Trustees



The notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2024

1 Employees

The average number of employees during the year was 3.

2 Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefits entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (effective 1 January 2015)* and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is included on the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year-end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

Cash at Bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account. Our investment with the Epworth Cash Plus Fund is highly liquid (normally available within 2 working days) and is identified separately on the Balance Sheet.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will normally result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount.

Tangible fixed assets

The valuation of the meeting houses is subject to review. The Trustees consider that insured replacement cost is an unsuitable valuation basis because it does not reflect current values. Nor is the open market value considered appropriate for property held for Quaker-supported work. Recognition of underlying value at £350,000 each for the two remaining meeting houses plus £20,000 for the burial ground site in Widcombe, Bath gives a total of £720,000.

There are no assets that require depreciation at present. 'Improvements to property' are treated in the same way as 'land and buildings' with no depreciation being charged since it is assumed repairs and replacements will maintain the value of the property at the current book value or more.

Costs of equipment and fittings such as boilers, radiators, pumps and electrical systems, pipes, drains, windows and doors are not capitalised where such items are integral to the building and they simply replace or upgrade a pre-existing system or equipment. These costs are instead included in current year expenditure under 'Repairs and running costs'.

Going concern

In the opinion of the Trustees, the charity continues to be a going concern.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

3 Income

	2024	2023
	£	£
Donations	65,499	58,326
Legacies	4,000	-
Interest	62,366	19,317
Rental and Lettings Income	35,783	49,689
Sub-total	167,648	127,332
Gain on Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	note 14	-
Total Income	167,648	1,133,627
		1,260,959

Donations from Members and Attenders in 2024 were higher than in 2023, but not as high as 2022 (£68k).

The increase in Interest (Investment Income) reflects the higher rate of interest earned in the Epworth Cash Plus Fund for Charities, once that investment arrangement was completed.

Rental and Lettings income is lower in 2024 as there was no rental income from Bath Meeting House.

4 Expenditure

	2024	2023
	£	£
Warden & Property Managers	note 13	17,554
Rent of Premises, Fees & Taxes	8,937	13,849
Insurance	3,521	7,843
Repairs & running costs	30,481	3,370
Life of the Meeting	11,462	39,351
Donations to Quaker charities incl BYM	note 11	15,543
Donations to individuals and Non Q charities	note 11	63,160
Governance Costs	note 12	1,150
Sub-total	141,897	58,774
Fees relating to Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	note 14	450
Total Expenditure	141,897	4,990
		17,165
		161,335

In 2024 we employed a part time Bath Burial Ground Manager, which increased staff costs this year.

Life of the Meeting expenditure was higher in 2023 mainly due to the Youth Development Worker scheme moving from an annual, up-front payment in 2023 to a monthly payment starting from October 2024.

Repair costs were lower in 2024. The previous year had been particularly high due to the replacement of the sewage pump system at Devizes Meeting House.

Trustee Remuneration

During 2024 Trustee Debbie Nightingale acted as a self-employed bookkeeper for our Area Meeting. Her fees for that year totalled £3,663 (2023 : £3,143) and are included in Examination and accountancy (see also note 12). Debbie's hours are capped at 25 per month and are normally fewer.

Trustee expenses

Trustees' reimbursed expenses of £895 (2023: £1,159) were paid to five trustees and are included in Quaker work in the Statement of Financial Activities. These cover training course fees and reimbursement of incidental expenses.

5 The role of volunteers

Practical voluntary service is at the heart of all our Quaker Meetings, at local, area, and at a national level. All Friends and Attenders take part. There are many opportunities, including welcoming at the meeting house door, assisting with the running and clerking of meetings for worship, serving on working groups for the care

of premises and gardens, pastoral care, working with our young people and managing safeguarding, as well as trusteeship, and representing our area on national bodies.

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold property £	Improvements to property £	Plant and machinery £	Totals £
Cost				
At 1 January 2024	720,000	8,269	-	728,269
Additions in year	-	-	-	-
Disposal in year	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2024	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2024	-	-	-	-
Disposal in year	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2024	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net Book Value				
At 31 December 2024	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>
At 31 December 2023	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>

There were no transactions in 2024 that altered our Fixed Asset values in the account. The 2023 improvement to property relates to a shelter constructed in the Burial Ground on a new concrete base, with a paved pathway leading to the doorway.

7 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	11,570	9,160
Other debtors	218	4,833
Prepayments		228
	<u>11,788</u>	<u>14,221</u>

Trade Debtors comprise gift aid to be claimed (£9k), and lettings income due.

The Other Debtors for 2024 is the deposit interest received in January 2025 for the cash held in our Triodos Reserve bank account.

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Suppliers paid after year-end	4,403	5,729
Donations from Giving owed to Britain Yearly Meeting	11,295	7,741
Area Meeting approved donations:		
To Britain Yearly Meeting	-	15,000
To Quaker Housing Trust	-	15,000
Funds to pass over (Acting as Agent)	-	125
Rent received in advance	-	-
Accrual for Examination & Payroll	1,080	1,522
	<u>16,778</u>	<u>45,116</u>

There were fewer closing creditors in 2024 as all authorised donations to Quaker Charities were paid before the year end (see Note 11).

9 Movement in funds

	At 01.01.24	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.12.24
Unrestricted funds	£	£	£	£
General fund	982,903	24,882	-	1,007,785
Restricted funds				
Bath Friends MH Fund	1,406,234	-	-	1,406,234
Frome Building Fund	19,999	869	-	20,868
Sub-total Restricted funds	1,426,233	869	-	1,427,102
Total funds	2,409,135	25,751	-	2,434,887

Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	166,779	(141,897)	24,882
Restricted funds			
Bath Friends MH Fund	-	-	-
Frome Building Fund	869	-	869
Sub-total Restricted Funds	869	-	869
	167,648	(141,897)	25,751

Additional note on Fund Accounting

The former book value of the Bath Friends Meeting House, plus the Gain on the Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House, less the costs associated with the Sale are being shown as a 'Restricted Fund'. This follows earlier correspondence between our Area Meeting's solicitor and the Charity Commission intended to clarify the legal situation of the property, based on documentation over 100 years old. Correspondence covered questions of whether Trustees were entitled to sell it and whether they would be free to use the proceeds for our charity's general purposes.

A 'Scheme' agreed with the Charity Commission in early 2020 confirmed the property was not held as 'permanent endowment', and trustees were entitled to market and sell it, however the trustees were advised to retain the proceeds and use only interest earned, unless buying another Meeting House. Trustees would be able to apply to the Charity Commission to loosen this restriction at a later date if needed. This was acceptable to Trustees at the time in order to be able to make progress on selling the property, especially as there was no specific plan for the use of the sale proceeds at that time.

The Frome restricted fund represents an amount originally set aside from general funds by the Trustees for the provision of a meeting house in Frome. There are no current plans to use this fund. In 2024 some effort has been made to look at archival documents and we discovered more about the origins of the fund over 30 years ago. However there is still some uncertainty over the origins. It is clear that the fund has grown substantially over many years by accumulating a share of interest received.

The remaining funds are the combined unrestricted funds of the constituent local Quaker meetings which can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives, at the discretion of the Trustees, who normally consult with Members at an Area Meeting over major non-urgent expenditure.

10 Related Party disclosures

Two of our three employees were members of our worshipping communities, as is our Area Meeting bookkeeper, who is also a Trustee (see Note 4).

11 Grants and Donations paid

	2024	2023
	£	£
Individuals		
Grants to Individuals (training & other)	750	-
Charities		
* Britain Yearly Meeting via annual giving	31,295	27,741
Britain Yearly Meeting additional donation	16,000	15,000
Quaker Housing Trust	4,000	15,000
Quaker Social Action	4,000	-
Friends World Committee for Consultation	4,000	-
Quaker International Education Trust	1,000	-
The Friend Publications Ltd	1,000	-
Ecumenical Accompaniers, Palestine & Israel (BYM)	1,000	-
Other Quaker charities (12 payments in 2024)	865	1,033
sub-total to Quaker charities	63,160	58,774
Non Quaker charities (4 Non-Q charities)	400	450
total	64,310	59,224

* Donations via regular / annual giving are included in these accounts, as Gift Aid is claimed by Area Meeting. A part of these donations is then passed to Britain Yearly Meeting according to the donors' instructions.

The following amounts were collected at our Meetings for Worship, but do not form part of these accounts.

	2024	2023
	£	£
Acting as agent collections:		
Quaker charities	579	498
Non Quaker charities	270	175
	849	672

12 Governance & Accounts remuneration

	2024	2023
	£	£
Bookkeeping services (see note 4)	3,663	3,143
Payroll services	455	442
Independent Examination Accounts	1,110	1,081
Accounts software subscription	403	324
	5,631	4,990

13 Staff Costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
Staff remuneration: Warden & Property Managers	16,306	12,700
Council tax paid for Warden's flat	1,212	1,150
Expenses relating to supervision of staff	36	-
	17,554	13,849

Employee numbers during the year were 3 (2022: 2). Total 2024: 0.70 whole time equivalent (0.61wte for 2023).

As has been normal in recent years, the charity continues, as a small employer, to claim the Employment Allowance against the employers Class 1 NICs, which covered the full liability to HMRC.

There were no employee benefits, other than statutory employer pension contributions. No employee had employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2023: Nil).

14 Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath in 2023

Notes relating to the sale process and prior leasehold agreement

a) The highest bidding potential purchaser was chosen, following a competitive bidding process. The purchase price exceeded the Surveyor's valuation obtained in advance of marketing.

b) Trustees were confident that the purchaser was appropriate, and not in conflict with any Quaker principles.

c) Contracts were exchanged in March 2021, early in the Covid-19 pandemic, and for reasons including economic uncertainties, the Parties agreed that the intended purchasers would occupy the building under a leasehold arrangement, while proceeding with alterations, and would pay all building maintenance, utilities and insurance costs in the interim. It was further agreed that the sale would be completed by 31 March 2024 at the latest. In the event, the purchaser requested to complete the sale a year before the deadline and this took place on 31 March 2023.

d) The rental income received in 2021, 2022 and 2023 from the intended purchaser has been added to our charity's Unrestricted Fund, and, like the interest received on the sale proceeds, is available for use for our general charitable purposes.

Gain on Sale

	2023
	£
Proceeds of sale of Bath Meeting House	1,466,000
less book value of the property	(330,000)
less depreciated value of mobility access lift	(2,373)
Gain on sale of Meeting House realised in 2023	1,133,627
less professional fees* re sale completion incurred in 2023	(17,165)
Gain on sale less costs incurred in 2023	1,116,462
less professional fees* incurred in prior years	
2019	8,935
2020	15,416
2021	18,250
2022	-
	42,601
Gain on sale less all related costs	1,073,861

*Professional fees include:

i) legal fees relating to the sale process;

ii) legal fees to achieve clarity with Charity Commission regarding legal entitlement to sell the Building;

iii) estate agent fees re marketing the building and running a competitive bidding process;

iv) surveyor fees re a confidential report to trustees on the building and its estimated value prior to marketing process. This is a legal duty for all charities, aimed to ensure fair value will be obtained for charity beneficiaries when a property is sold.

Meeting House Restricted Fund

Spending of the 'gain on sale' less all related costs is restricted, as explained in note 9. However, accounting transactions relating to the property and its sale were not treated as restricted in prior years. This was adjusted in the 2023 accounts as follows:

		2023
Transfers from Unrestricted to Bath Friends MH Restricted Fund		£
Book value of property		330,000
Depreciated value of mobility access lift		2,373
Professional fees incurred in prior years, in relation to the sale		<u>(42,601)</u>
Total Transfers between Funds in 2023	(note 9)	289,772
 Add Gain on sale less costs incurred in 2023	 (see above)	 <u>1,116,462</u>
Total Bath Friends MH Restricted Fund at end of 2023	(note 9)	<u>1,406,234</u>

15 Custodian Trustee – Friends Trusts Ltd

West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting (WWESAM) is one of around seventy Area Meetings which make up The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, also known as Britain Yearly Meeting or Quakers in Britain. WWESAM is an unincorporated charity (registered charity no. 1134534) and has existed in its current form since November 2008.

Friends Trusts Ltd (registered charity no. 237698) acts for WWESAM as our Custodian Trustee in relation to our investment with the Epworth Investment Management Ltd, and ownership of our land and buildings at Devizes, Bradford on Avon and Bath. This custodian trustee arrangement is in line with the arrangements for other unincorporated Quaker Area Meeting charities.

West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting is not acting as Custodian Trustee for any other organisation.

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2024

	2024	2023	2022	2021
		£	£	£
INCOME				
Voluntary Income				
Regular Giving donations	63,252	56,146	67,426	71,871
Other Donations	2,247	2,180	994	12,650
Legacies	4,000	-	-	2,000
	<u>69,499</u>	<u>58,326</u>	<u>68,420</u>	<u>86,521</u>
Investment Income				
Interest (Epworth Cash Plus Fund)	61,008	-	-	-
Interest (Bank Deposit Accounts)	1,358	19,317	423	64
	<u>62,366</u>	<u>19,317</u>	<u>423</u>	<u>64</u>
Other income				
From properties, rent etc	35,783	49,689	88,976	79,350
Gain from sale of Bath Friends MH		1,133,627	-	-
HMRC Job Retention Scheme	-	-	-	3,264
Total income	<u>167,648</u>	<u>1,260,959</u>	<u>157,820</u>	<u>169,198</u>
EXPENDITURE				
Charitable activities				
Warden & Property Managers	17,554	13,849	12,339	12,480
Rent of Premises, Fees & Taxes	8,937	7,843	6,034	2,073
Insurance	3,521	3,370	2,697	3,424
Repairs & running costs	30,481	39,351	21,139	22,985
Life of the Meeting	11,462	15,543	9,423	8,800
Grants to Quaker charities incl BYM	63,160	58,774	43,491	35,942
Grants to individuals and Non Q charities	1,150	450	415	100
Fees relating to the Sale of Bath Friends MH		17,165	-	18,250
Repayment of Bath Meeting House Appeal		-	-	26,304
	<u>136,266</u>	<u>156,345</u>	<u>95,539</u>	<u>130,358</u>
Other				
Depreciation of plant & machinery	-	-	791	1,055
Support costs				
Governance costs				
Examination & accountancy	5,631	4,990	5,219	5,692
Total resources expended	<u>141,897</u>	<u>161,335</u>	<u>101,549</u>	<u>137,105</u>
NET INCOME	<u>25,751</u>	<u>1,099,624</u>	<u>56,271</u>	<u>32,093</u>
	2024	2023	2022	2021

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Reports of the life of our Local Meetings in 2024

Bath

2024 brought the sad news of deaths of two of our longest-standing Friends, both of whom brought a lot of wisdom and joy to our Meeting. They are still missed. We attended Memorial Meetings for both. We welcomed several new Attenders during the year and feel blessed with their continued participation in our Meeting. We welcomed an application for membership from a longstanding Attender and saw the growth of our twice-monthly Children's Meeting with three children regularly attending and some families visiting us for the first time. In addition to our Sunday morning meeting for worship at Manvers Street Baptist Church, the Tuesday evening online meeting for worship, and worshipping group at the Chocolate Quarter retirement community in Keynsham, we also supported a new worshipping group at Lambrook Court retirement community in Larkhall. Two fellowship groups have also met regularly. We have run several "getting to know one another" sessions after Meeting for Worship and these have proved popular. Our practice of holding monthly shared lunches after Meeting for Worship continues to thrive.

We collaborated with Manvers Street Baptist Church to have a hearing loop installed in the room we use each week for our Sunday Meetings for Worship, funding this from a recent legacy. The Church will oversee and pay for the maintenance of the system. It has also responded favourably to our request to put up a permanent sign publicising our presence on the outside of the Church.

Donations to Quaker work, locally and nationally, increased during the year.

We continued with the "Care of Bath Meeting" group acting as Nominations Committee and contributing to the preparations for our Business Meetings. We appointed a new Assistant Clerk.

We appointed a Burial Ground Manager in February on a one-year contract, in addition to the part-time freelance gardener, with a member of our meeting acting in liaison with and between these roles. At the end of 2024, we reviewed the role of Burial Ground Manager and agreed not to continue with it beyond the year's contract. From February 2025 we will have two part-time freelance gardeners. Bath Local Meeting took a leading role in organising an Open Day in the Burial Ground to coincide with the anniversary of George Fox's birthday. The event was well publicised and sixty-nine people attended, sixty of whom were non-Quakers. We also held a picnic for Friends in the summer. We have welcomed a few local people into the garden space during the year and hope to hold further events, including the occasional meeting for worship in the Burial Ground in 2025.

We signed up to "Discovering Quakers" but did not have any referrals through this channel in 2024. Members of our Meeting have attended regular updates from this new group.

In early 2024 we held a series of meetings at which Bath Local Meeting could explore what we need to flourish and how we could contribute towards Area Meeting's consideration of how to use the money raised from the sale of Bath Meeting House. At the end of this process we agreed the following minute:

We see many opportunities. We want to make the most of what we have in Bath, at Manvers Street Baptist Church, as a worshipping community, of our heritage as Bath Quakers, and of ourselves. We want to build on that Spirit among us to become a more purposeful community than we are at present. We feel we have the potential to make Quakers more conspicuous, and more effective in Bath; we have shared ideas about this and how this could be achieved, but there is much more to be learned and discerned on this point. We are united in exploring what our options might be, including from other Meetings and situations. We are in unity about wanting to do this together. We don't yet know where it will take us.

In the autumn we ran a series of weekly evening discussions, titled *Curious about Quakers?* This was publicised within Bath and in our Area Meeting and it was hoped that we would attract some new people interested to find out more about Quakers. Of the twenty-two different people who attended one or more session, six were interested outsiders/occasional attenders. Of thirteen evaluation respondents, eight answered 'yes' and five 'maybe' to show their interest in attending more meetings of this kind. Our elders plan to arrange more sessions like this covering different aspects of Quakerism in 2025.

We continued to engage with the wider community in Bath. We have been active members of the Bath Interfaith Group since its inception and have continued to hold a place on the management committee of this group. Our representative spoke at the group meeting with the Mayor on 16 September on the theme of "a home for everyone". We are active participants in Café B&NES, a Christian-based network of groups concerned with environmental issues. We heard from one of our members about a new initiative, the Bath Open Table Network, a growing partnership of Christian worshipping communities which welcome and affirm people who are members of LGBTQ+ community plus their families and friends, and anyone who wants to belong to an accepting loving community.

We continued to give witness to our peace testimony and some of our members are regular participants in the weekly peace vigil outside Bath Abbey. We placed a white and red poppy wreath at the War Memorial and added white poppies in the civic display outside the Abbey on Remembrance Sunday. One Friend, acting on her Quaker pacifist concern, took part in a demonstration in London at an arms fair; she was arrested with two other Friends from our Area Meeting. We heard early in 2025 that they have been found guilty and been given a six-months' conditional discharge and ordered to pay £300 costs each.

We sent a minute supporting proposed changes to the Quaker marriage declarations to our Area Meeting.

We were reminded that our Meeting has supported the awarding of a grant to the Amos Trust for the provision of a school bus in the village of Um Al Kheir on the West Bank. We heard of the destruction of homes in the village and invited Friends to make individual donations to the Trust.

Bradford on Avon

2024 has been another year of growth for Bradford on Avon Meeting. Average attendance on Sundays is now around thirty adults and several children in the Meeting House, plus one or two Friends joining on Zoom. We continue to meet blended every Sunday, although there have been a few occasions when we switched off the big screen, as nobody had joined us remotely.

Our mid-week meeting for worship on Wednesday evenings has also slightly grown, with a core of five to seven Friends supporting it now on a regular basis. Most of our mid-week meetings from May until mid-September were held outdoors in our peace garden.

Children's meetings are offered every Sunday throughout the year, mostly at the Meeting House and around once a month outdoors at Frankleigh House garden. Sundays when no children turn up have now become a rare exception, partly because Bradford on Avon Meeting now acts as a magnet attracting families from a wider geographical area, as we continue to be the only Local Meeting in our Area Meeting that offers children's meeting every Sunday.

Elders organised various events throughout the year: one on the essence of Quakerism, aimed at those relatively new to Friends; a meeting for learning on Quaker business method (it is worth noting, in this context, that we are pleased to report that attendance at our local business meetings averages around fifteen); a blended meeting on Quaker United Nations Office's work on climate justice; and a session on spoken ministry.

Our four Fellowship Groups saw a big reshuffle at the beginning of the year. A new initiative running throughout the year involved informal get-togethers over croissants and coffee before Sunday meeting for worship once a month. Our healing group continued to meet regularly.

In July, we held our annual outdoor meeting for worship in the country park by the Tithe Barn, finishing off with singing the George Fox song. The 400th anniversary of the birth of George Fox was also celebrated at an open day at the Bath Quaker Burial Ground in September, with support from several Friends from Bradford on Avon Meeting. During Quaker Week, we had a stall with leaflets and free cookies at the weekly market. One of our members helped to plan and run a series of evening events under the title *Curious about Quakers?* organised by Bath Friends. We signed up to the "Discovering Quakers" initiative in September.

Other outreach activities revolved around our history. We added a history page to our website and liaised with the Town Council and Preservation Trust about putting up a green plaque at the site of the old 1718 Quaker Meeting House. It looks promising that the plaque will be installed at some point in 2025. We also gave financial support to Bradford on Avon Museum for the publication of the book *Testaments in Stone - The Nonconformist Chapels of Bradford on Avon* that features extensive passages about Quakers.

In the wider community, our Quaker Meeting took the lead this year in the ecumenical World Day of Prayer Service, prepared by Christian women from Palestine and locally held at the United Church. On Remembrance Sunday, we laid, as usual, a wreath of white poppies after the Remembrance Service. Unusually, this time it was laid by two of our under-sixteens who, along with their mother, had been welcomed into membership earlier in the year. As our Area Meeting Membership Clerk tells us, we are now very likely the Local Meeting with the largest number of child members (currently 7) anywhere in Britain.

Our Meeting House hosted several national Quaker events in 2024: a planning weekend of Young Friends General Meeting, a day workshop of Meeting House Matters, and the AGM of Quaker Asylum & Refugee Network. We also welcomed the regional Youth Group for their winter boardgames afternoon. The most unusual visitor to the Meeting House was a hedgehog.

Ongoing attempts to get solar panels installed on the Meeting House roof were eventually abandoned, owing to the difficulties of erecting scaffolding on Whiteheads Lane. As part of the process, a new loft hatch with drop-down ladder was installed in the warden's flat and a partial roof survey conducted.

Many Bradford on Avon Friends continue to be actively involved in peace and sustainability issues. Our children's meetings frequently include nature-related topics, and our monthly newsletter featured even more sustainability-related articles than in previous years. Since January 2024, we host, free of charge, twice-monthly Climate Café evenings for people with climate anxiety. Our Meeting House garden continues to be managed in a way that is good for bees, butterflies, moths, and slow-worms. A bird-feeder, however, proved more popular with rats than birds, and was given away as a result.

Chippenham

Attendance at our meetings for worship has grown slowly but steadily throughout the past year and we draw strength from our fellowship and ministry.

Our regular activities have continued. The Bible study group meets regularly at a Friend's house and our newsletter keeps us in touch with those unable to attend meeting for worship and with the lives of all of us.

During the year we have continued to meet together for shared lunches, often combined with other activities. We have twice held such an event where each of us brought along an item or photograph which meant something to us. This was a fun way of learning more about each others' lives and was particularly interesting for some of our more recent new attenders.

As part of Heritage Open Days, The Cause, where we meet and which was the original Quaker Meeting House in Chippenham, was open to the public and we had a display about Quakers and our Meeting in particular.

In one of our discussions after meeting for worship, we considered the proposed changes to the marriage procedure in the next edition of *Quaker Faith & Practice*. This was interesting as it led to further discussion of some of our personal journeys to Quakers and as a result of the meeting we were able to send our thoughts to the Revision Committee. On another occasion, when we hosted the September Area Meeting, we led a discussion more generally on the proposed revision of Quaker Faith & Practice. We are now planning to hold a regular discussion group after meeting for worship on a Sunday every two months.

Recently, a Friend who regularly attended our Meeting as a visitor died and left a sum of money to us. With this money we have purchased, for each member, copies of two booklets by Ben Pink Dandelion, *Living the Quaker Way* and *Celebrating the Quaker Way*. Doubtless these will lead to further discussions and hopefully shared lunches. We are also hosting a Woodbrooke workshop entitled "Hope as Practice", where we will be joined by Friends from across the Area Meeting.

Our Area Meeting Prison Chaplain is a member of Chippenham Meeting and has been the Chaplain since the end of 2016. She finds this role hugely rewarding and is fortunate to have two Quaker volunteers who support her—though she emphasises that more volunteers are needed in this very important role caring for others in society.

As part of our efforts to live sustainably, as many of us as are able, walk, cycle or use public transport to get to meeting for worship and we continue to be environmentally aware as possible in our daily lives.

We try to nurture our Meeting and all who come to join us. We are mindful that Quakerism is not a religion but a way of life and try to follow *Advices & Queries* no. 27, "Let your life speak."

Devizes

Several members maintain contact with a Friend who has moved into a care home.

One or two new people have joined us for our meeting for worship on Sundays and we maintain a Zoom link twice a month which has several regular joiners.

Our midweek meeting for worship continues to attract around six people each week and is followed by coffee and chat. Some of us regularly bring a packed lunch. We are

thinking of starting a shared lunch on a monthly basis to encourage more socialising between members. We also plan to restart a discussion group which lapsed during the pandemic. In April we held a threshing meeting to think about the future of the Devizes Meeting. Work is needed to decorate the outside of the building and the garages, and we need to be thinking of the future. Following the meeting, plans are being considered for future management of the building to ease the load upon us.

We are planning redecoration of the building and have already replaced the original kitchen window with a new double-glazed one.

Sadly, for the first time we have had a prowler after dark, so we have now adjusted the outside lighting to remain on during the dark hours. We hope this will reassure our tenant and hirers who use the building in the evening.

The young man who helps us in the garden has continued to come but has had a break during the winter months. We are encouraging the growth of wildflowers on the canal bank and using more perennial plants rather than annuals to attract pollinators.

Our work for the Eco church scheme has been on hold since the pandemic but we aim to continue to develop our efforts. We have been following the Woodbrooke Eco church group since it started. One of our members will attend the Eco gathering in October.

In support of a visit from a Kenyan Fairtrade tea producer, we held a workshop for two schools. Children produced posters with what they had learned. These were later displayed at an event at the Town Hall.

We held a short meeting for worship and laid a wreath of white poppies at the Devizes war memorial as we usually do for Remembrance Sunday. A few stalwart members stand in the market place each Saturday in solidarity with those currently suffering from war and persecution. This gives an opportunity for conversation with passers-by. Occasionally people stand with us and some add a message on a paper dove which we then display on strings.

A new constitution has been proposed for Churches Together in Devizes and it is hoped to revive the links between local churches.

We have held a series of “Death Café” sessions at which people could discuss issues around death and bereavement. At one meeting we invited a solicitor to talk to us about powers of attorney. These were open to members of other local churches as well as our Meeting.

Frome

Frome Friends meet in person each Sunday at Christchurch Parish Hall. There are usually about fifteen people present. We work within the limitations of the hall and keep an active watch for alternative premises. This is mainly because we are unable to offer children’s meetings at present as we do not have space. We are working with our Youth Development Worker for the West of England to find other ways to bring children and

young people into the life of our Meeting. Last year, this included meeting up with families in the park and arranging a treasure hunt.

We paused our weekly readings from *Advices & Queries* at meeting for worship in autumn 2024, and instead read a passage from *Quaker Faith & Practice* in meeting, focused on the theme of ministry. The readings were included in our newsletter for those who could not be present. The readings often led to discussion in our "Afterthoughts" sessions, following meeting for worship. We have returned to reading from *Advices & Queries*, and are looking at other ways to use *Quaker Faith & Practice* more in the life of our meeting, such as at breakfast meetings.

One of our joys in 2024 was the number of enquirers and new attenders that we welcomed during the year. Some contacted us via "Discovering Quakers" and national websites; others may have come because of publicity for our Quaker Week events, including a peace talk, and an "open Sunday" meeting. These events may not have had the response we wanted at the time but seem to have generated interest in our Quaker Meeting in a different way.

Amongst our sorrows were the deaths of members of our Quaker community including one for whom we held a memorial meeting, and another whom we were pleased to accept into membership shortly before her death.

Our community still meets up in different ways beyond our Sunday worship:

- Mid-week worship at a Friend's home once a month.
- Monthly Zoom meetings for the "Quantum Quakers" considering quantum science and links to Quakerism.
- Our longer term "Light" group.
- A "Short read" group which meets fortnightly, hosted by a Friend in their home.

We thank all our Friends who contribute to the life of our Meeting in these and other ways.

Trowbridge

We continue to meet at the Trowbridge Future Hub on the first and third Sunday as a blended meeting, and Zoom-only on other Sunday mornings. We have not been able to resume weekly in-person meetings (stopped at the start of the COVID pandemic) as we don't have enough Friends who are able to commit to opening up—we need two people to manage this safely. Although we remain committed to weekly Zoom meetings to include those unable to attend in person, we would welcome being able to meet in person every week. With this in mind, we are exploring whether there are any other suitable premises available we could use which don't require two people to open up. This too is a challenge!

Our Care of Trowbridge Meeting group continues to meet every three months to consider eldership and pastoral care. The loss of our pastoral care Friend meant that this role has now been shared between the Care group, with each group member

having responsibility for two other Friends in the meeting. We shall review how well this works in our next meeting for worship for business.

We remain involved with Area Meeting through our trustee who reports to us at our business meetings; two Friends helped at Devizes when Area Meeting was held there in June. In an after-meeting discussion group, our trustee led a session about changes to Britain Yearly Meeting and possible changes in the way Area Meeting may look in the future. We also signed up to "Discovering Quakers", the new outreach service and although the one enquiry we had wasn't followed up, we remain optimistic.

Our "schedule giving" remains steady and we have been able to make donations to a number of Quaker causes over the year. Our modest outgoings mean we are financially self-sufficient.

2024 was a year which saw Trowbridge Meeting weather the loss of two much valued Friends. This had a big impact on an already small meeting, and we feel the absence of their loving wisdom and good sense.

There is a risk of meetings like ours becoming insular and not as mindful of Quaker discipline as we could be, so we are always very happy to welcome Friends from other meetings to join our worship. This links Friends in the Meeting who are not so aware of the larger Quaker community with wider Quaker concerns and beliefs.

WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

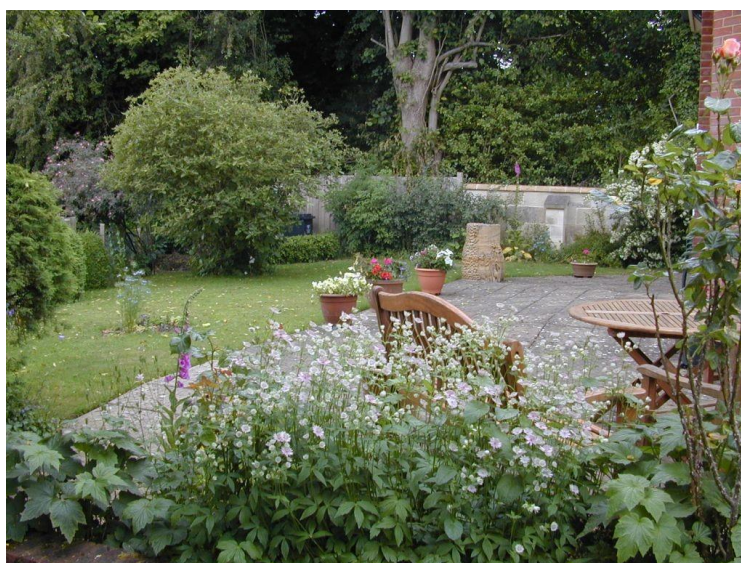
England & Wales - Charity number 1134534

Accounts

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

**West Wiltshire & East Somerset
Area Quaker Meeting**

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2023



The garden at Devizes Quaker Meeting House

West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting

Registered address:
Friends Meeting House
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Bradford on Avon
BA15 1JU

Registered Charity Number: 1134534

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Status, Trustees & Custodian Trustee

West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting is one of around 70 Area Meetings which make up The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, also known as Britain Yearly Meeting. It is an unincorporated charity (registered number 1134534) and has existed in its current form since November 2008.

The Trustees serving during the period from 1 January 2023 up to the date on which this report was adopted were:

- Chris Arnold (Bradford on Avon), appointed 1 January 2024
- Robin Brookes (Devizes), ended 8 June 2024
- John Flynn (Devizes), appointed 9 June 2024
- Nicola Grove (Frome), appointed 1 January 2023
- Sally Harris (Bath), Clerk
- Angela Le Grice (Bradford on Avon), ended 31 December 2023
- Debbie Nightingale (Chippenham)
- Chris Pollock (Trowbridge)
- Barbara Ridhiwani (Bath), Treasurer, appointed 1 January 2023

Custodian Trustee:

- Friends Trust Limited, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

The term *Friend* refers to a Member of the Society. The term *Attender* refers to a person who is not a Member of the Society but who regularly attends its meetings for worship.

This report of the Trustees naturally speaks for our Area Meeting and its six constituent Local Meetings. *We* and *our* therefore generally mean those in that wider group, except in the appended reports from our Local Meetings where they generally mean those in the Meeting in question. Where appropriate, it is made clear that these plurals indicate the Trustees specifically.

Charitable object

The object of the Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Society in the region of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting and beyond.

These purposes are carried out in ways that bring public benefit, and we Trustees ensure that we have due regard to the Charity Commissioner's guidance in this respect.

Meeting together

The right holding of public meetings for worship (in our constituent Local Meetings) and regular meetings for church affairs (in all the constituent Local Meetings and for the Area Meeting as a whole) forms a key part of our role in providing a public benefit.

Meetings for worship

Public meetings for worship are held every Sunday. They take place in our meeting houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes, and in rooms that are rented in Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge, where we do not have premises. The arrangements are made by our six Local Meetings. Some hold additional meetings for worship at different times of the week and in different venues from normal. One of our local meetings held several Sunday meetings for worship outdoors during spells of warmer weather.

Our meetings for worship are open to people of all ages, but from time to time we offer some that are specifically designed to be “all-age” meetings for worship where programmed elements are included.

Across our Area Meeting, some meetings for worship are also held entirely online, while some are a blend of in-person and online. This arrangement, started during the Covid-19 pandemic, continues to be particularly valuable for those whose ability to come together in one place is more limited.

Meetings for church affairs

Meetings for church affairs take place regularly in each of our six Local Meetings and at Area Meeting. At these meetings, we gather in a spirit of worship to make practical decisions about running our meetings and, for those matters which require more consideration, to discern what is in right ordering. The unity we seek in a discipline of silent waiting depends on our willingness to seek the truth in what others say, and so to reach a sense of the right way forward—a practice that we find is different from the secular idea of consensus.

At each Area Meeting, we consider the appointment of role-holders and receive reports from our representatives and from Trustees, exercising discernment throughout. We also receive a report from our Membership Clerk and consider any applications for membership. In 2023, three people applied for, and were accepted into, membership. We received two transfers-in to our Area from other Area Meetings. Sadly, these increases were matched by one transfer-out, two resignations and two deaths.

Each year, we summarize the changes in the numbers of Members and Attenders across our six Local Meetings (see Figure 1, below).

In 2022 we noted that the number of Members was the lowest in ten years, and for 2023 we note that it remains at that same lowest level. And while the proportion of Members within the total of Members and Attenders has risen (to 58.5% from 53.5%

the year before), this has only happened because of a significant drop in the number of Attenders. The 120 Attenders in 2023 are also an equal-lowest figure in ten-years, apart from the 117 encountered in 2020— which should perhaps be discounted as anomalous in the first year of Covid lockdown. We continue to find it difficult to fill roles within our Meetings, especially where these must be filled by Members.

Post-Covid, and the disruptions that the pandemic wrought across our communities, we are conscious of the need to think about the opportunities and threats that the future may bring, as well as reflecting on how our strengths and weaknesses may affect our future.

Figure 1: Analysis of Member and Attender numbers over ten years			
Year	Members	Attenders	Total
2014	175	141	316
2015	181	120	301
2016	187	130	317
2017	190	131	321
2018	192	133	325
2019	189	124	313
2020	*186	117	*303
2021	†178	124	†302
2022	169	147	316
2023	169	120	289
* Under-reported by 2 in the Report for 2020 but correct here			
† Over-reported by 1 in the Report for 2021 but correct here			

Throughout the year, all our Local Meetings have sought to reflect on our future, with a view ultimately to discerning how best we might use our financial resources from the sale in 2023 of Bath Friends Meeting House. This process has been shaped by an Enquiry Steering Group set up by the Area Meeting Trustees (see Figure 2, below).

It is our practice to arrange an event or activity, or to invite a speaker, for the second half of each Area Meeting after the business has been concluded. Speakers were invited on two occasions in 2023.

- Jenny Allott, Secretary to the Quaker Housing Trust, gave a presentation on the work of the Trust. The Quaker Housing Trust was set up by Yearly Meeting in 1967 to take forward Friends' concerns on housing and homelessness. Since then, using donations from Friends, Quaker Housing Trust has provided grants and loans for social housing projects for those in genuine housing need. Small to medium-size charities have also been supported to create housing for people at points of transition in their lives, for example arriving as refugees and asylum seekers or recovering from addiction. After Jenny's presentation to us, the Area Meeting agreed to donate £15,000 to the Quaker Housing Trust.
- We heard from three members of the public who are involved in non-violent direct action in response to the climate crisis. We recognized this is a contentious issue on which different Friends have different views. Our aim in the session was to open a space for us to listen to one another's concerns, deepen our understanding of others' actions and so reflect in a new way on our own positions. We heard about their involvement in non-violent direct action, such as Just Stop Oil. All emphasised that being in possession of the facts was critical. Following their

testimonies the Meeting broke into small groups to share responses and reflections. Feedback from the groups was then received by the Meeting as a whole.

The average attendance at Area Meeting in 2023 was approximately thirty-two. At our final Area Meeting in 2023, we decided to change our current practice of appointing new clerks on each occasion of Area Meeting. A clerking team has now been appointed to serve from 1 January 2024. We hope this will help to improve continuity as we look forward to our future.

Figure 2: The following extracts from a document presented by the Enquiry Steering Group in March 2023 give a good indication of our aspirations.

Looking forward, imagining our future

We know how good it feels to have returned to being together, face to face, in our Meetings for Worship—and that we’ve learned to use other means to allow Friends to join in who would not otherwise be able to be present in person. *Quaker Faith & Practice* 2.57 gives a sense of that togetherness combined with new challenges:

to all, waiting in expectancy, at moments and in some measure is given a sense of the living touch of God. At such moments there may come the kindling of mind and heart which impels obedience to speak under the immediate promptings of the Holy Spirit. This is the ministry of inspiration, the prophetic ministry in the true sense, when the spoken word pierces to the heart of our relationship with God, unveils the living presence of Christ in the midst of the worshipping group and in its separate members, opens to our sight the way we must tread if we would realise that Spirit in and through our ordinary daily activities and find the creative response to the challenges of our time.

It feels natural to look forward again, post-pandemic, and to consider the ways in which we can look after ourselves in our own Quaker communities, be part of our wider social communities, and to contemplate our Quaker witness in the world around us.

Our Area Meeting Trustees, with the agreement of Area Meeting, have set up an Enquiry Steering Group to help us in this—not as a group to *deliver* something new, but to provide prompts and some structure for the reflective process. There are two Trustees in the group [...] and other Friends from across our Area Meeting [...].

We are seeking to develop a set of queries, designed as open questions about our future. We expect this process would involve leading Friends through these queries over several months. Friends in Local Meetings and Area Meeting would come together periodically to reflect, to consider one or more of the queries, and to seek the way forward for our Area and Local Meetings.

There are two specific opportunities that are triggers for this Quakerly quest:

- a) For the first time, we have a share in a member of staff employed by Britain Yearly Meeting to be a Local Development Worker.
- b) We also have the proceeds from the sale of Bath’s Meeting House.

Together, these could provide unprecedented openings to meet needs and develop our life and witness in Local Meetings (Bath, Bradford on Avon, Chippenham, Devizes, Frome, Trowbridge) and in the Area Meeting as a whole.

Charitable activities

Our charitable activities are grounded in worship together and follow from discernment, in our meetings for church affairs, of the actions we should take. They take place across the Area Meeting, often carried out in our Local Meetings. Separate reports from each of the Local Meetings towards the end of this document give a good flavour

of the life and activities in our communities in 2023. As Trustees, we receive updates at each of our meetings to keep us informed.

Friends and Attenders in Bradford on Avon used the foyer of the public library for an exhibition during Quaker Week entitled *What kind of world would you like to live in?* In Devizes, the opportunity was taken during Quaker Week to invite a class from a local school to the Meeting House. During their visit, the children heard a short talk and participated in a discussion about Quakers ending with a short Meeting for Worship.

Many of our local meetings join in the laying of a white or a mixed poppy wreath on Remembrance Sunday. Friends engage with the event organisers beforehand, if possible, to explain that white poppies symbolise both military and civilian victims of war. Devizes Friends hold a weekly peace vigil in the centre of Devizes and the Bath Stop War weekly peace vigil is supported by Friends living locally. We also hear of individual Friends who are involved with anti-war campaigning and protest.

Quakers in Britain have had a longstanding involvement with prison work and concern for matters relating to criminal justice. One of our Members is a prison chaplain at HMP Erlestoke. Our Area Meeting provided the funding for her to attend the Quakers in Criminal Justice Conference.

Sustainability is a concern for many Friends and Attenders across the Area Meeting. Bath Local Meeting held two five-session series of Eco-Together meetings which were well attended. The sessions, devised by a Bath-based environmentalist, covered energy, transport, food and resources, and included positive steps for responding to climate change. The Meeting also carried out a travel survey to coordinate transport to Area Meeting and reduce fossil fuel use.

Both our meeting houses have received an Eco Church Silver Award. Solar panels at Devizes have been providing renewable energy to the Meeting House for the past five years. We have also been taking steps to enable the addition of solar panels at Bradford on Avon.

Friends and Attenders are aware of the climate emergency and have taken steps to reduce their carbon footprint. A Devizes Friend participated in the Climate Justice Gathering weekend organized by Woodbrooke. Others are individually involved with the groups working on ecological and greening activities in their communities including Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon, Sustainable Devizes, Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil.

Local Meetings make voluntary collections for Quaker, and other, charities as part of our overall charitable activities. Of course, many Friends and Attenders in our meetings are also individually involved in other charitable and community activities that are not part of our Area Meeting. Often these are other examples of Quaker faith in action, and in many cases those Friends and Attenders will be cared for and supported by others in our Meetings.

The Area Meeting owns a Burial Ground in a residential area of Bath. It is made available to the local community as a quiet space and a gentle form of outreach. Burials no longer take place. An area of the garden is provided where ashes may be scattered. Printed leaflets on the outside wall about Bath Quakers and the Burial Ground are available for members of the public who are interested to learn a little about the Quakers. The leaflets include a contact number for those wishing to visit and see what lies behind the wall.

Children and young people

There is an active children's meeting at Bradford on Avon Local Meeting with planned activities each week. From time to time, the children are taken out on Sunday morning to the garden of a Friend living nearby. The children's meeting is often enriched by families from local meetings where provision for children is less frequent or not possible.

Our young people between the ages of eleven and eighteen have benefited greatly from the enthusiastic presence of a regional Youth Development Worker employed by Britain Yearly Meeting. First Kirsty Philbrick then Zephyr Blofeld have encouraged our young people to form bonds, to play together and gradually "come to know each other in the things that are eternal". They have met up for walks, picnics, camping, baking, lantern-making, an apple festival, and a "Light the Night" event.

We were glad to fund a young Friend from Bath Local Meeting to attend *Facilitation and Leadership 2023*, a weekend conference for finding out how to facilitate activities for other young Quakers.

Senior Conference and Junior Gathering provide further opportunities for young Friends to meet others. Two of our young people attended Junior Gathering in 2023. Those of us with personal experience of such occasions know how valuable they are, and we are glad that our young Friends are sharing that experience.

Zephyr Blofeld's responsibilities span three area meetings including ours. The current three years of funding for his regional activity ends during 2024 and the Trustees of all three have agreed to continue to provide funding for a further three years.

Work behind the scenes

Much of our work as Trustees is carried out behind the scenes. It involves caring for Friends and others to whom we have a duty of care, looking after property, checking on rental premises, and managing our finances.

We held eight routine meetings of the Trustees in 2023, four of which were online. We also met for a Strategy Day.

Caring for Friends and others

Our new Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Resources was adopted by Area Meeting early in 2023 following a long and careful period of consultation and discernment. The Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator subsequently visited each Local Meeting in turn, taking time to explain the procedures and help Members and Attenders to understand what is needed for our current safeguarding arrangements. Individuals also took part in online safeguarding training with the safeguarding support organisation, Thirtyone:eight.

We had no safeguarding incidents to report in 2023.

We were responsible for looking after two employees in 2023: our Warden at Bradford on Avon, and our Meeting House Manager at Devizes. Both held regular meetings with the Area Meeting Supervisor of Employees, which provided an opportunity for confidential discussion about any matters which they wished to raise.

Our employees are paid at a rate which is above the living wage pay-rate and is reviewed annually. We also review our pay rates for others who provide services for us and are satisfied that their rates are above the living wage pay-rate.

Caring for Friends and Attenders includes proper handling of the personal data held by Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. This is a legal requirement under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

No data breaches were recorded in 2023.

Our responsibilities include caring for those who live in our meeting houses. We have a tenant at Devizes and both a warden and tenants at Bradford on Avon. Necessary work at the Devizes Meeting House during the year was carefully scheduled to cause minimum disruption to our tenant.

Looking after property

The two meeting houses have their own local committees to deal with routine matters relating to their premises, with Trustees being responsible for commissioning any more complex and costly work.

Both the neighbouring properties which adjoin our land at Devizes have trees growing on or near the boundary. These had become a risk to our property, in particular to the high retaining wall on the east side. A considerable amount of time was taken up during the year in correspondence and negotiation regarding the trees and vegetation on the boundaries before agreement was reached and the necessary work safely carried out by the landowners.

Major work to replace a 30-year-old waste-water pump and associated electric system at Devizes Meeting House was completed satisfactorily using a local firm.

Through Wiltshire Council's *Solar Together* scheme, we obtained a quote from an installation company to install solar panels on the roof of Bradford on Avon Meeting House. The property is classified as non-residential, such that we were obliged to seek planning approval to position the panels for maximum effect. This was granted early in 2024. We have also commissioned a roof survey to check what enabling work may be required.

Internal and external redecoration was carried out at Bradford on Avon Meeting House, as recommended by the quinquennial survey, and the side entrance door was replaced with a watertight door.

The new shelter in Bath's Burial Ground was completed in the spring of 2023 providing us with both a practical and attractive facility. We were very pleased with the work of our contractor. She described the end result as "a locally sourced, low impact, hand crafted, accessible shelter, which will last at least 35 years, over twice that of a treated timber kit design". The garden is maintained by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable self-employed gardener, and by volunteers from Bath Meeting with support from Grow for Life and Good Gym, two local charities whose members help with heavier work and enjoy coming to the garden.

At the end of 2023, a decision was taken to experiment with employing a manager for the Burial Ground as it was proving difficult to appoint a volunteer Burial Ground Steward from within Bath Local Meeting. We hope this new post will enable the continuing development of the garden as a tranquil space and for outreach to the local community.

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that health and safety matters are properly handled. As is our normal practice, we audited the systems and processes at both meeting houses and were satisfied that good care is being taken. A risk assessment for the Burial Ground was also carried out and followed up.

Checking on rental premises

Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge Local Meetings use rented rooms for their meetings. Trustees check the risk assessments which are provided by the premises managers as part of our annual health and safety audit.

There have been no changes in 2023 to the venues hired. However, Frome Local Meeting is hoping to find premises where it would be possible to hold children's meetings, as their current venue has insufficient space.

Managing finance

The Trustees are responsible for managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. At each Trustees' meeting, we receive an up-to-date report from the Bookkeeper and the Area Meeting Treasurer summarising the financial affairs across the Area Meeting.

We operate with centralised bank accounts such that all receipts and payments authorised by Local Meetings go through the Area Meeting bank accounts. Our Bookkeeper sends regular finance reports to Local Meeting treasurers so they can exercise control over their funds and take decisions on expenditure, within agreed financial parameters.

We drew up and agreed a process for taking some decisions using emails between our routine Trustees' meetings, recognising that such decisions are necessary from time to time, typically in cases where there is some urgency in considering a quotation for work to be undertaken.

In previous years, our Area Meeting funds have been deposited in accounts held with two different banks, with Trustees taking the view that this was appropriate and safe, given the level of funds held at the time. These circumstances changed significantly following the sale of the Meeting House in Bath at the end of March 2023. Holding a much larger cash balance necessitated a review and update of some of the bank mandates and of our system for moving and reporting on larger amounts. An account was also opened with a third bank.

Trustees sought guidance from other Quaker Area Meetings with significant reserves and researched short-term options for investment or earning interest. We agreed an investment policy and met with two ethical investment companies before selecting one to place the funds with for the time being. As our Area Meeting was in the early stages of developing ideas for use of the money, we have not chosen at this stage to lock into either medium- or longer-term investments whose value could either rise or fall.

Since our Area Meeting charity is not incorporated, the practical investment arrangements have been made through our custodian trustee, Friends Trusts Ltd, a separate charity (registered number 237698) set up alongside Britain Yearly Meeting to assist non-incorporated UK Quaker charities such as ours. With its help, we were able to invest our reserves cash early in 2024 in the Epworth Cash Plus Fund, a fund for liquid assets that pays over 5% interest, at present. The fund is low risk as it spreads its funds across many banking institutions internationally.

Epworth Investment Management was originally set up by the Methodist Church for its internal investment. It is an ethical investment company with a policy of engagement with institutions with which it is involved. However, the banking institutions in which the Cash Plus Fund invests do not themselves claim to be ethical and Trustees are aware that we are accepting a level of compromise at this time. We would not intend to keep all of the investment in this Fund in the longer term.

Trustees are aware that significant further work and further learning and advice will be needed in due course when there is more clarity about what our Area Meeting intends for its future. We will also review the situation if international interest rates fall back from their current levels, which are much higher than has been usual since the 2008 international financial shock.

We reviewed our reserves policy accordingly, to allow for these additional funds to be held while beginning to discern what Friends and Attenders may need and want for our Area Meeting in the future.

Annual accounts for 2023

The full accounts are set out on pages 18-26.

Trustees are pleased to report an overall surplus this year of £1,099,624 (2022: £56,271; 2021: £32,093, 2020: £897). This is a very healthy position for our charity and is the result of the successful sale of Bath Friends Meeting House (BFMH) at the end of March 2023, following two years of leasing to the intended purchaser under a contract arrangement developed during the pandemic. The building had been marketed in early 2021 after Trustees and members of Bath Local Meeting concluded that it no longer met our needs, being too large and unwieldy to manage as a listed building, particularly as available volunteer time was continuing to fall.

Income

Total Income in 2023 was £1,260,959, (2022 £158k, 2021 £169k, 2020 £112k, 2019 £118k).

£1,134k of this unusually large income total relates to the sale of BFMH to Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd. Our contract with them was for lease then sale, by 31 March 2024 at the latest. At their request, the sale took place a year earlier on 31 March 2023. The sale price (£1,466k) was significantly higher than the notional value of the building previously held in our accounting system (£330k), and all the excess therefore appears in the 2023 income figures as a one-off 'gain on the sale'. Most of this income is considered 'Restricted' as the Charity Commission expect us not to spend the capital unless buying another Quaker Meeting House, unless we apply to the Commission to remove this restriction. Further details are included in the notes to the accounts.

Having received the sale proceeds a year earlier than expected, the Trustees took actions to earn interest on the sum. We took time to investigate the steps necessary to achieve a larger return while keeping our investment arrangements as ethical as we could, and at low risk. This was a learning curve and included two interesting online meetings with investment companies. Income from interest received was £19,317 in 2023 compared to £423 in 2022. From early 2024, the cash was placed in Epworth Cash Plus Fund where it will earn a larger return.

Rental and lettings income in 2023 was just under £50k compared to £89k in 2022, since in 2023 we received only three months' rent from Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd under the agreed contract, prior to the completion of the sale. Our remaining Meeting Houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes enjoyed lettings income similar to pre-Covid times. We are grateful to our Warden & Bookings Manager who have worked patiently to achieve this.

We note that regular giving from Friends & Attenders in 2023 is markedly lower (at £56k) than in the preceding three years (2022 £67k, 2021 £72k, 2020, £70k). Analysis showed that this is the result of both lower numbers of givers and lower average levels of giving. Trustees believe this is due to rapidly increasing costs of living leading to lower disposable incomes, and perhaps the knowledge that our funds have been boosted by the sale of the meeting house. Trustees will observe what happens to donations income in 2024.

Expenditure

Total Expenditure in 2023 was £161,335 (2022 £102k, 2021 £137k, 2020 £111k).

The major items of expenditure this year have been the legal and estate agent fees relating to the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House (£17k), repairs and running costs of £39.4k (£21.1k in 2022) including a replacement for the sewage pump system at Devizes Meeting House (£10.6k), redecoration at Bradford on-Avon Meeting House (£5.5k), and a replacement door necessary to prevent occasional flooding (£4.8k). There were also works to remedy damp issues in the flat attached to Devizes MH. There was some limited expenditure on tree maintenance at Devizes, but higher costs were avoided. After much evidence-gathering and correspondence, Trustees succeeded in getting neighbouring land-owners to remove a row of around twenty fast-growing young trees near the boundary, that appeared to have been neglected and whose growth threatened to make unsafe the high retaining wall above the meeting house car park.

Other expenditure included a £15k additional donation to Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM), the national Quaker body (£10k in 2022). This helped to offset the decrease in annual giving allocated by individual donors to BYM which fell from £33.0k in 2022 to £27.7k in 2023. We also made a donation of £15k to the Quaker Housing Trust.

We contributed £8k to BYM to support the Youth Development Worker for our area plus Bristol and North Somerset Area Meetings. This covered the full year in 2023, whereas in 2022 we only paid for four months due to the post being vacant for a time.

As usual, we supported a number of Friends and Attenders to attend conferences and training, both online and in-person. Topics included safeguarding, trustee training, prison ministry, church financial management, leadership training, spiritual nurture, and training for Quaker Registering Officers (for weddings). Some of our young people were supported to attend Junior Gathering, one of the national events for Quaker teenagers.

Reserves

Trustees recognise the need to hold cash reserves, sufficient to meet both normal expenditure in the Area Meeting together with any unexpected expenditure that might arise. Following examination of the 2022 accounts, our Trustees reviewed the reserves held to ensure they are still at acceptable levels. Following that process we were able

to recommend two £15,000 donations from our unrestricted fund, as noted above. This was approved by Area Meeting as recorded in Minute 23.65.

We ended 2023 with £254,634 of available 'Reserves' (Net Current Assets) in our Unrestricted Fund. This is an increase from £237,505 at the end of the previous year.

We ended 2023 with £1,426,233 in Restricted Funds, of which £19,999 relates to the Frome Building Fund and £1,406,234 relates to the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House. Note 9 and Note 14 in the Accounts give details regarding accounting for the sale and the calculations behind the Restricted Fund values.

Governance and administration

Governing document

The charity was originally registered in 2010, constituted by the Governing Document of North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (adopted 9 November 2008). On 5 June 2011, the Governing Document was amended to reflect the change of name to West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting, after a change in its constituent Local Meetings. Following a decision taken at Area Meeting on 27 June 2021, it was further amended to allow meetings for church affairs to be held solely online or combined with those attending in-person.

On 22 January 2020, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting agreed a Scheme with the Charity Commission that clearly established the governance responsibilities of the Area Meeting for the three meeting houses owned at that time (Bath, Bradford on Avon, and Devizes) and the Bath Burial Ground. As the Area Meeting is not an incorporated charity, Friends Trusts Ltd is named in the Scheme as the Custodian Trustee for the Area Meeting and its assets. The title deeds to the properties are held by Friends Trusts Ltd.

Trustees' appointment and training

Trustees are Members of the Area Meeting, appointed by the Area Meeting following nomination by the constituent Local Meetings.

Before any nomination is made, the Clerk to the Trustees obtains two references with an emphasis on financial integrity, one from within the Religious Society of Friends and one from outside. The nominee completes the probity declaration based on the Charity Commission's pro-forma confirming that they are a fit and proper person to oversee financial, governance and employment matters in the Area Meeting. The nominee is also required to sign the necessary Safeguarding declarations.

Two new Trustees joined us at the start of 2023 and a third joined at the start of 2024. The Clerk to the Trustees ensures that new Trustees understand their terms of

reference, have access to past Minutes and to key documents, in particular the Governing Document and the Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings.

Trustees receive notice of any upcoming courses and webinars and are encouraged to attend those that are relevant. Several Trustees also participate in the e-forums and sessions run by Britain Yearly Meeting where information and ideas are shared and discussed.

Bankers

- CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ
- Triodos Bank UK Ltd, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS
- The Co-operative Bank p.l.c., 1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP

Investment manager

- Epworth Investment Management Ltd, 9 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4PE

Insurers

- Congregational & General Insurance plc, Currer House, Currer Street, Bradford BD1 5BA

Examiner of accounts

- Hannah Pettifer ACA, OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Lane, Bath, BA2 2EL.

Looking ahead

The Enquiry Steering Group was laid down in March 2024, having fulfilled the purpose for which it was set up. Friends and Attenders had engaged deeply with the process described earlier in this report, and responded with ideas about the ways in which the Area Meeting might move forward. These included developing our Quaker presence and addressing the needs in our communities, with the benefit of our newly available funds. We Trustees have asked the Area Meeting Clerking Team to join us in considering the responses at our annual Strategy Day. We intend that this should consider wider questions about our future as well as addressing questions about the use of the greater financial resources now available to us after the sale of the Bath Friends Meeting House.

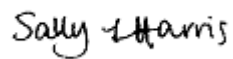
We can already see that developing our Quaker presence means, in part, developing our web presence. Our Area Meeting has recently joined the Quaker Meetings Network and is benefitting from its guidance in creating a new website. We hope this will open new avenues of outreach for our Area Meeting. We hope also to give further consideration to the best use of our Local Development Worker and Youth Development Worker, roles which are shared with neighbouring Area Meetings.

During the year, we became aware of area meetings which are grouping together in various ways to share the workload of Trustees, as legislative and compliance

demands become more complex. We are currently involved in exploring such a possibility for ourselves, following an approach from Bristol Area Meeting to three of its adjacent area meetings. This offers yet another opportunity for collaboration between Quaker communities in our region.

We welcome the engagement with thinking about our future, and the opportunities that additional financial resources and staff may bring in their wake. We find that we have much in common with our neighbouring Quaker Meetings and are heartened by this as we look forward.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 16 August 2024
and signed on their behalf by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Harris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'S' and a distinct 'H'.

Sally Harris, Clerk to the Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of the report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Hannah Pettifer ACA OCL Accountancy 141 Englishcombe Lane Bath, BA2 2EL

Date: 23/08/2024.....

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2023

		Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Funds	2023 Total Funds	2022 Total Funds
	Notes	£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources					
Voluntary Income - Donations and legacies		58,326	-	58,326	68,420
Investment income		18,951	366	19,317	423
Other income		49,689	-	49,689	88,976
Total Income from Charitable Activities		126,966	366	127,332	157,820
Gain on Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	14	-	1,133,627	1,133,627	-
Total Incoming Resources	3	126,966	1,133,993	1,260,959	157,820
Resources Expended					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		144,170	-	144,170	100,758
Other (Depreciation)		-	-	-	791
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities		144,170	-	144,170	101,549
Fees re Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	14	-	17,165	17,165	-
Total Expenditure	4	144,170	17,165	161,335	101,549
Net income (loss) on ordinary activities	9	(17,204)	1,116,828	1,099,624	56,271
Transfer between Funds	14	(289,772)	289,772	-	-
Net income after Transfers between Funds		(306,976)	1,406,600	1,099,624	56,271
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		1,289,878	19,633.19	1,309,511	1,253,240
Total funds carried forward	9	982,903	1,426,233	2,409,135	1,309,511
Continuing operations					
All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.					

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2023

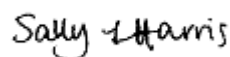
		Unrestricted	Restricted	2023	2022
	Notes	Fund	Funds	Total	Total
		£	£	Funds	Funds
				£	£
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	6	728,269	-	728,269	1,052,373
Current Assets					
Debtors	7	14,221	-	14,221	14,806
Cash at bank and in hand		285,530	1,426,233	1,711,762	255,271
		<u>299,750</u>	<u>1,426,233</u>	<u>1,725,983</u>	<u>270,077</u>
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	8	(45,116)	-	(45,116)	(12,939)
Net current assets		<u>254,634</u>	<u>1,426,233</u>	<u>1,680,867</u>	<u>257,139</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		982,903	1,426,233	2,409,135	1,309,511
Net Assets		<u>982,903</u>	<u>1,426,233</u>	<u>2,409,135</u>	<u>1,309,511</u>
Funds					
Unrestricted funds				982,903	1,289,878
Restricted funds				1,426,233	19,633
Total funds	9			<u>2,409,135</u>	<u>1,309,511</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 16 August 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Barbara Ridhiwani - Trustee and Treasurer



Sally Harris - Trustee and Clerk to Trustees



The notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2023

1 Employees

The average number of employees during the year was 2.

2 Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefits entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (effective 1 January 2015)* and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is included on the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

Cash at Bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will normally result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount.

Tangible fixed assets

The valuation of the meeting houses is subject to review. The Trustees consider that insured replacement cost is an unsuitable valuation basis because it does not reflect current values. Nor is the open market value considered appropriate for property held for Quaker-supported work. Recognition of underlying value at £350,000 each for the two remaining meeting houses plus £20,000 for the burial ground site in Widcombe, Bath gives a total of £720,000.

Depreciation is provided on any 'plant & machinery' additions to the buildings at 25% on reducing balance in order to write off each of such assets over its estimated useful life. 'Improvements to property' are treated in the same way as 'land and buildings' with no depreciation being charged since it is assumed repairs and replacements will maintain the value of the property at the current book value or more.

Costs of equipment and fittings such as boilers, radiators, pumps and electrical systems, pipes, drains, windows and doors are not capitalised where such items are integral to the building and they simply replace or upgrade a pre-existing system or equipment. These costs are instead included in current year expenditure under 'property costs'.

Going concern

In the opinion of the Trustees, the charity continues to be a going concern.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

3 Income

		2023	2022
		£	£
Donations and Legacies		58,326	68,420
Deposit account interest		19,317	423
Rental and Lettings Income		49,689	88,976
Sub-total		127,332	157,820
Gain on Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	note 14	1,133,627	-
Total Income		1,260,959	157,820

Donations from Members and Attenders in 2023 were on average lower and from fewer donors than in 2022.

The increase in Deposit account interest reflects the capital receipt generated from the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House which was deposited in our interest-bearing Reserve Account on an interim basis. Rent was received up to the date of sale under a lease agreement signed in 2021 and ending on 31 March 2023.

4 Expenditure

		2023	2022
		£	£
Warden & Lettings Manager	note 13	13,849	12,339
Fees, rents, taxes		7,843	6,034
Insurance		3,370	2,697
Repairs & running costs		39,351	21,139
Life of the Meeting		15,543	9,423
Donations to Quaker charities incl BYM	note 11	58,774	43,491
Donations to individuals and Non Q charities	note 11	450	415
Governance Costs	note 12	4,990	5,219
Depreciation on Plant & Equipment		-	791
Sub-total		144,170	101,549
Fees relating to Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	note 14	17,165	-
Total Expenditure		161,335	101,549

Life of the Meeting expenditure was higher in 2023 mainly due to the restarting of the Youth Development Worker scheme.

Repair costs were higher in 2023 as these included £10,600 to replace the sewage pump system at Devizes Meeting House, together with £4,800 to replace a door and £5,600 for redecoration at Bradford on Avon Meeting House.

Depreciation in 2022 related to the mobility access lift at Bath Friends Meeting House which was sold with the building.

Trustee Remuneration

During 2023 Trustee Debbie Nightingale acted as a self-employed bookkeeper for our Area Meeting. Her fees for 2023 totalled £3,143 (2022 : £3,394) and are included in accounting. Her hours are capped at 25 per month and are normally fewer.

Trustee expenses

Trustees' reimbursed expenses of £1,159 (2022: £949) were paid to four trustees and are included in Quaker work in the Statement of Financial Activities. These cover training course fees and reimbursement of incidental expenses.

5 The role of volunteers

Practical voluntary service is at the heart of all our Quaker Meetings, at local, area, and at a national level. All Friends and Attenders take part. There are many opportunities, including welcoming at the meeting house door, assisting with the running and clerking of meetings for worship, serving on working groups for the care of premises, pastoral care, working with our young people, as well as trusteeship, and representing our area on national bodies.

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold property £	Improvements to property £	Plant and machinery £	Totals £
Cost				
At 1 January 2023	1,050,000	-	31,601	1,081,601
Additions in year	-	8,269	-	8,269
Disposal in year	(330,000)	-	(31,601)	(361,601)
At 31 December 2023	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2023	-	-	29,228	29,228
Disposal in year	-	-	(29,228)	(29,228)
At 31 December 2023	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net Book Value				
At 31 December 2023	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>
At 31 December 2022	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,373</u>	<u>1,052,373</u>

The improvement to property relates to a shelter constructed in the Burial Ground on a concrete base, with a paved pathway leading to the doorway.

7 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	9,160	11,100
Other debtors	4,833	173
Prepayments	<u>228</u>	<u>3,533</u>
	<u>14,221</u>	<u>14,806</u>

Trade debtors comprise gift aid to be claimed (lower in 2023) and lettings income due.

Other debtors for 2023 include deposit interest received in January 2024 in relation to the cash held following the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House.

Prepayments in 2022 include the insurance premium for 2023. The 2024 premium was not prepaid.

There were no closing debtors relating to the restricted proceeds of the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House.

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Suppliers paid after year-end	5,729	6,214
Donations owed to Britain Yearly Meeting	7,741	4,526
Area Meeting approved donations:		
To Britain Yearly Meeting	15,000	-
To Quaker Housing Trust	15,000	-
Funds to pass over (Acting as Agent)	125	249
Rent received in advance	-	550
Accrual for Examination & Payroll	<u>1,522</u>	<u>1,399</u>
	<u>45,116</u>	<u>12,939</u>

There were no closing creditors relating to the restricted proceeds of the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House.

9 Movement in funds

	At 01.01.23	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.12.23
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	1,289,878	(17,204)	(289,772)	982,902
Restricted funds				
Bath Friends MH Fund	-	1,116,462	289,772	1,406,234
Frome Building Fund	19,633	366	-	19,999
Sub-total Restricted funds	19,633	1,116,828	289,772	1,426,233
Total funds	1,309,511	1,099,624	-	2,409,135
Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:		Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
		£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General fund		126,966	(144,170)	(17,204)
Restricted funds				
Bath Friends MH Fund		1,133,627	(17,165)	1,116,462
Frome Building Fund		366	-	366
Sub-total Restricted Funds		1,133,993	(17,165)	1,116,828
		1,260,959	(161,335)	1,099,624

Additional note on Fund Accounting

The former book value of the Bath Friends Meeting House, plus the Gain on the Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House, less the costs associated with the Sale are being shown as a 'Restricted Fund'. This follows earlier correspondence between our Area Meeting's solicitor and the Charity Commission intended to clarify the legal situation of the property, based on documentation over 100 years old. Correspondence covered questions of whether Trustees were entitled to sell it and whether they would be free to use the proceeds for our charity's general purposes.

A 'Scheme' agreed with the Charity Commission in early 2020 confirmed the property was not held as 'permanent endowment', and trustees were entitled to market and sell it, however the trustees were advised to retain the proceeds and use only interest earned, unless buying another Meeting House. Trustees would be able to apply to the Charity Commission to loosen this restriction at a later date if needed. This was acceptable to Trustees at the time in order to be able to make progress on selling the property, especially as there was no specific plan for the use of the sale proceeds at that time.

The Frome restricted fund represents an amount originally set aside from the general fund by the Trustees for the purposes of purchasing a meeting house in Frome. In recent years there has been little progress with this project.

The remaining funds are the combined unrestricted funds of the constituent local Quaker meetings which can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives, at the discretion of the Trustees.

10 Related Party disclosures

The work on the Burial Ground Shelter built during the year cost £8,269. This was undertaken by Rowena Bashforth who occasionally attends Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting. More than one quote was sought for the project before the contract was agreed.

11 Grants and Donations paid

	2023	2022
	£	£
Individuals		
Grant to enable attendance at young people's event	-	125
Institutions		
* Britain Yearly Meeting via annual giving	27,741	33,026
Britain Yearly Meeting additional donation	15,000	10,000
Quaker Housing Trust	15,000	-
Other Quaker charities (14 payments in 2023)	1,033	465
sub-total to Quaker charities	58,774	43,491
Non Quaker charities (5 Non-Q charities)	450	290
total	59,224	43,906

* Donations via annual giving are included in these accounts, as Gift Aid is claimed by Area Meeting. A part of these donations is then passed to Britain Yearly Meeting according to the donors' instructions.

	2023	2022
	£	£
Acting as agent collections:		
Quaker charities	498	285
Non Quaker charities	175	588
	672	873

These amounts flow through Area Meeting bank accounts, but do not form part of these accounts.

12 Governance & Accounts remuneration

	2023	2022
	£	£
Bookkeeping services (see note 4)	3,143	3,394
Payroll services	442	404
Independent Examination Accounts	1,081	989
Accounts software subscription	324	431
	4,990	5,219

13 Staff Costs

	2023	2022
	£	£
Staff remuneration: Warden & Lettings Manager	12,700	11,198
Council tax paid for Warden's flat	1,150	1,094
Expenses relating to supervision	-	48
	13,849	12,339

Employee numbers during the year were 2 (2022: 2). Total 0.61wte for 2023 (2022: 0.62wte).

In both 2023 and 2022, the charity claimed the Employment Allowance against the employers Class 1 NICs, which covered the full liability to HMRC.

There were no employee benefits, other than statutory employer pension contributions. No employee had employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2022: Nil).

14 Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath

Notes relating to the sale process and prior leasehold agreement

a) The highest bidding potential purchaser was chosen, following a competitive bidding process. The purchase price exceeded the Surveyor's valuation obtained in advance of marketing.

b) Trustees were confident that the purchaser was appropriate, and not in conflict with any Quaker principles.

c) Contracts were exchanged in March 2021, early in the Covid-19 pandemic, and for reasons including economic uncertainties, the Parties agreed that the intended purchasers would occupy the building under a leasehold arrangement, while proceeding with alterations, and would pay all building maintenance, utilities and insurance costs in the interim. It was further agreed that the sale would be completed by 31 March 2024

at the latest. In the event, the purchaser requested to complete the sale a year before the deadline and this took place on 31 March 2023.

d) The rental income received in 2021, 2022 and 2023 from the intended purchaser has been added to our charity's Unrestricted Fund, and, like the interest received on the sale proceeds, is available for use for our general charitable purposes.

Gain on Sale

	£
Proceeds of sale of Bath Meeting House	1,466,000
less book value of the property	(330,000)
less depreciated value of mobility access lift	(2,373)
Gain on sale of Meeting House realised in 2023	<u>1,133,627</u>
less professional fees* re sale completion incurred in 2023	(17,165)
Gain on sale less costs incurred in 2023	<u>1,116,462</u>
less professional fees* incurred in prior years	
2019	8,935
2020	15,416
2021	18,250
2022	-
	<u>42,601</u>
Gain on sale less all related costs	<u>1,073,861</u>

*Professional fees include:

- i) legal fees relating to the sale process;
- ii) legal fees to achieve clarity with Charity Commission regarding legal entitlement to sell the Building;
- iii) estate agent fees re marketing the building and running a competitive bidding process;
- iv) surveyor fees re a confidential report to trustees on the building and its estimated value prior to marketing process. This is a legal duty for all charities, aimed to ensure fair value will be obtained for charity beneficiaries when a property is sold.

Meeting House Restricted Fund

Spending of the 'gain on sale' less all related costs is restricted, as explained in note 9. However, accounting transactions relating to the property and its sale were not treated as restricted in prior years. This has been adjusted in the 2023 accounts as follows:

	£
Transfers from Unrestricted to Bath Friends MH Restricted Fund	
Book value of property	330,000
Depreciated value of mobility access lift	2,373
Professional fees incurred in prior years, in relation to the sale	(42,601)
Total Transfers between Funds in 2023 (note 9)	<u>289,772</u>
Add Gain on sale less costs incurred in 2023 (see above)	<u>1,116,462</u>
Total Bath Friends MH Restricted Fund at end of 2023 (note 9)	<u>1,406,234</u>

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2023

	2023 £	2022 £	2021 £	2020 £
INCOME				
Voluntary Income				
Annual giving donations	56,146	67,426	71,871	70,478
Donations	2,180	994	12,650	1,602
Legacies	-	-	2,000	2,000
	<u>58,326</u>	<u>68,420</u>	<u>86,521</u>	<u>74,080</u>
Investment Income				
Deposit account interest	19,317	423	64	433
Charitable activities				
Grants	-	-	-	1,330
Other income				
From properties, rent etc	49,689	88,976	79,350	23,157
Gain from sale of Bath Friends MH	1,133,627	-	-	-
From Local Authority Grants	-	-	-	10,000
HMRC Job Retention Scheme	-	-	3,264	3,365
Total income	<u>1,260,959</u>	<u>157,820</u>	<u>169,198</u>	<u>112,365</u>
EXPENDITURE				
Charitable activities				
Warden's & Manager's pay	13,849	12,339	12,480	12,633
Fees, rents & taxes	7,843	6,034	2,073	4,739
Insurance	3,370	2,697	3,424	8,806
Repairs & running costs	39,351	21,139	22,985	23,498
Life of the Meeting	15,543	9,423	8,800	3,823
Grants to Quaker charities incl BYM	58,774	43,491	35,942	34,241
Grants to individuals and Non Q charities	450	415	100	1,190
Fees relating to the Sale of Bath Friends MH	17,165	-	18,250	15,416
Repayment of Bath Meeting House Appeal	-	-	26,304	-
	<u>156,345</u>	<u>95,539</u>	<u>130,358</u>	<u>104,346</u>
Other				
Depreciation of plant & machinery	-	791	1,055	1,406
Support costs				
Governance costs				
Examination & accountancy	4,990	5,219	5,692	5,717
Total resources expended	<u>161,335</u>	<u>101,549</u>	<u>137,105</u>	<u>111,469</u>
NET INCOME	<u>1,099,624</u>	<u>56,271</u>	<u>32,093</u>	<u>897</u>
	2023	2022	2021	2020

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Reports of the life of our Local Meetings in 2023

Bath

2023 began with the sad news of the deaths of two of our oldest and longest-standing Friends and Attenders, who are still missed. We attended Memorial Meetings for them both in Kelston Roundhill Barn. We also welcomed an application for membership from a former Member and longstanding Attender. In addition to our Sunday morning Meeting for Worship at Manvers Street Baptist Church and the Tuesday evening online Meeting for Worship, one worshipping group and two fellowship groups also met regularly. Our practice of holding monthly shared lunches after meeting for worship was reinstated, providing a further opportunity for fellowship.

In 2023, we did a lot of work towards implementing the new Safeguarding policy. We agreed to change the name of Overseers to Pastoral Friends. We agreed that the Care of Bath Meeting group—which we set up in the first year of lockdown and reinstated in 2022 as a way to manage the Meeting’s administration—should take on the work of our local Nominations Committee, in the continuing absence of a Nominations convenor. We continued to develop new ways of managing the necessary work with a small group of Friends willing to take on multiple roles.

The Bath offshoot of the Area Meeting Enquiry Steering Group did a great deal of preparation work on ‘whither Quakers in Bath?’, planning meetings for learning, threshing and discernment to take place in 2024. This was all designed to help us discern the future of Quakers in Bath and the best way forward to achieve our aspirations.

The Burial Ground took up much of our time and energy. Our Burial Ground Steward had unavoidably to step down halfway through the year, and this revealed just how much work had been quietly done in the background. As none of us felt able to take on this role, we decided that the best way forward would be to recruit a Burial Ground Manager to maintain and develop this space, now the only property in Bath owned by Quakers. Advertisements were placed at the end of the year. The Burial Ground Shelter was completed and is a magnificent success. We were able to hold one Meeting for Worship there before the summer weather ended. We engaged a part-time gardener to help with the work of the Gardening Group, which also dwindled in numbers towards the end of the year.

Two Friends from our team of children’s volunteers were prepared to hold a children’s meeting on every second and fourth Sunday but family attendance on Sundays has, sadly, been infrequent.

Two Friends attended the Spiceland Summer Settlement at Uffculme, hosted by West Somerset Area Meeting, and several Friends attended Woodbrooke in-person retreats and courses online. One Friend, acting on her Quaker pacifist concern, was arrested in London at an arms fair demonstration and is awaiting a court hearing.

In furtherance of the Meeting's commitment to sustainability, two small groups followed the Eco Together programme, consisting of six and seven Friends in each group. Eco Together is a five-session, small-group programme, created by a Bath-based environmentalist. The first introductory session established our Quaker concern for the Earth and each other, which grew as we shared our experiences. The following four sessions were themed on energy, transport, food and resources. Each session involved a discussion around four powers that individuals can use: lifestyle, advocacy, communication, and community. The programme provides a comprehensive Information Pack, and detailed Activity Sheets offering positive steps for responding to climate change. It was well received and everyone found something new that they could commit to.

Bradford on Avon

Bradford on Avon Local Meeting continues to be a vibrant and quite large Meeting. Attendance on Sundays exceeded 30 adults in the Meeting House several times in 2023, with other Friends joining on Zoom, and children. We continue to meet in a blended format every Sunday and frequently welcome Friends from other Local Meetings who join us online on those Sundays when their own Local Meeting does not offer a Zoom or blended option.

We were pleased to welcome one of our regular Attenders into membership. The list of new Attenders keeps growing. Our oldest Attender died at the age of ninety-two, just days after having still been part of our meeting for worship via Zoom.

Our mid-week Meeting for Worship on Wednesday evenings remains small but steady. Occasions when the welcomer stays on their own continue to be rare.

Children's meetings were offered every single Sunday throughout the year, mostly at the Meeting House and occasionally outdoors at Frankleigh House garden. The first Sunday without children during the year was at the end of May—though there were plenty of children at a vineyard in the afternoon (see below). One family moved abroad in the summer, and we did have a few more Sundays during the rest of the year when no children turned up. On the other hand, both our meeting for worship and our children's meeting are frequently enriched by families from other Local Meetings, now that we have become the only Meeting in our Area Meeting that offers a children's meeting every Sunday.

Our outdoor meeting for worship, planned for July, was rained off. In September we welcomed our regional Youth Development Worker and a group of young people to our premises. Following lunch and games in the Meeting House, they headed on to the Bradford on Avon Apple Festival in the country park.

The biggest highlight of the year was a Quaker wedding on the afternoon of Sunday 28 May, held outdoors at Avonleigh Orchards & Vineyard at the northern end of Bradford on Avon. Over sixty people, including many children, attended the happy

occasion, which was blessed with perfect weather and much birdsong during the meeting for worship.

Our four fellowship groups kept meeting regularly and are gearing up for a reshuffle exercise in early 2024. The Healing Group also continued to meet, usually online.

Our elders were again busy organising sessions after Sunday Meetings. In 2023, these included one on our peace testimony (held on New Year's Day), two sessions on Quaker structures, and two sessions on the topic of reparations arising from Yearly Meeting 2022.

Other events to note were one last performance from Journeymen Theatre at St Margaret's Hall in March, another give-&-take event in September, and a Quaker exhibition on the topic "What kind of world would you like to live in?" in the foyer of the Public Library during Quaker Week.

Several Friends continued to be active in campaigning. One Friend once more spent a lot of time on her bike to raise money to support projects in Palestine. Others went to protest against the DSEI arms fair in London, where two of our Members were arrested. Another Friend kept being involved with Just Stop Oil, following previous involvement with Insulate Britain, and was given a suspended prison sentence later in the year.

Our Meeting House continues to be used a lot for Area Meeting activities. Three of four Area Meetings during the year were held in Bradford on Avon now that our Area Meetings are blended. However, it was decided that Area Meetings should be held in different locations again. If necessary, Area Meeting will pay for suitable venues. We have offered to provide the mobile parts of our blended meeting gear where appropriate.

Room hire picked up during 2023 and is now similar to pre-2020 levels, although the main meeting room remains somewhat underused.

The 'warm space' offering we started in November 2022 was withdrawn in early February, owing to low take-up.

Our Warden was kept very busy in the summer, thanks to the installation of a new side entrance, an extensive redecoration programme, and Wiltshire Council's Solar Together scheme. The project to install solar panels on the Meeting House roof has become more complex than anticipated and is still work in progress.

Several Friends continue to be involved in Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon, Extinction Rebellion, and Just Stop Oil. Realizing that Friends are not in unity about the methods of XR and JSO, we decided to invite speakers from JSO to give brief personal testimonies during our December Area Meeting, as a way of starting a discussion on this topic.

Our newsletter has featured many environmental hints and tips and a series of reports about our newsletter editor's travels around several European countries, with a particular focus on simplicity and resilience. In November, our Local Meeting for church affairs decided to sponsor a climate café by waiving the hire charge for their meetings that are designed to address climate anxiety. They will be starting in the new year, and several Friends are involved in this initiative.

Chippenham

Although Chippenham Meeting continues to be small, we are not as small as we once were, with more regular Attenders now joining us. It is a joy on a Sunday morning to look around the circle and see Friends of long standing and of new. During the past year we have also held several meetings for worship at a Friend's farmhouse where we can sit in the open-sided barn and enjoy the quiet of the countryside broken only by the song of the birds.

We have held several shared lunches, often preceded by a discussion. One such was discussing the question of the money raised by the sale of Bath Meeting House. We also enjoyed sharing lunch with Sally Harris when she came to speak to us about Safeguarding, and recently with a representative from The Leprosy Mission who gave a very interesting and moving talk. Earlier in the year, we joined with Devizes Meeting to see the Swarthmore lecture, an annual event to which we look forward. Again this was preceded by a shared lunch—and followed by tea and cakes. Most recently, we met at a Friend's for meeting for worship, lunch and sharing of an item—poem or prose—which meant something to us. One Friend brought the harp he had made and entertained us—a gentle and peaceful sound.

Food seems to feature rather a lot for Chippenham Meeting but it does perhaps offer a relaxed time in which we can enjoy Friends' company and support those who may find it easier to open up in less formal situations.

The Bible Study group continues to meet regularly and is much valued by those able to attend. We also enjoy the newsletter compiled by two of our number which helps keep in touch with Friends who are not able to attend meeting for worship regularly.

The Cause, which was the original Quaker Meeting House in Chippenham, was opened this year for Heritage Days and we had a display there about Quakers and our Meeting in particular.

One Friend is the Quaker Chaplain at Erlestoke Prison. In our recent Interfaith Week, she gave a talk about Valerie Taylor, a very special person who is a great example of interfaith working in Bangladesh.

Another Friend works in Bangladesh and recently sent us the following: *I'm working in Dhaka again, and some of my office colleagues weren't born when I first came here. So I'm trying hard not to be a fusty old bloke! I'm working on transport planning projects, and Dhaka was recently acclaimed as the slowest world capital (due to traffic*

congestion), and also is regularly among the world's top five cities for air pollution. Sometimes team members, including me, feel discouraged that our proposals and recommendations aren't acted upon. But we keep trying. In our office we have Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, possibly Shinto (I haven't asked), and other faiths, and we all get along fine and with respect for each other. There are not many Quakers in Bangladesh; I haven't come across any in recent years, but then I don't circulate much beyond work. Quaker South Asia Interest Group focuses on South Asia, including Bangladesh, and we are encouraged to check out their website.

In previous years, Chippenham Meeting has been able to lay a white poppy wreath at the War Memorial after the conclusion of the official town ceremony. We decided that this year we would ask again to be included with other local organisations and to this end two Friends met with the Chairman of the Wiltshire Royal British Legion branches. We had a very friendly and positive meeting and left having been reassured that he could see no reason why we should be excluded. Unfortunately we received an email shortly afterwards informing us that this would not be possible. We were disappointed but laid our wreath as usual after the ceremony. Sadly, less than a week later our wreath disappeared from the War Memorial which has not happened before.

As individuals we contribute to the life of our Meeting in whatever way we can, and also to the life of our wider community. We continue to support community lunches and the Chippenham Street Pastors and try to live out our Quaker conviction. We also try to live our lives in as sustainable a way as possible, ever mindful of our responsibility to the planet and all life on it.

We look forward to the year ahead, taking strength from the fellowship we enjoy in our own Meeting and the wider Area Meeting.

Devizes

There are regularly between six and nine people attending our mid-week meeting for worship which is appreciated by those who attend. Sadly, our membership is increasingly frail and unable to attend meetings due to their own health or because they are caring for others. We send them our love.

We continue to hold blended meetings on Sundays but are restricting them to twice monthly rather than weekly.

Before Christmas, we began holding a vigil for peace every Saturday morning between 11 o'clock and midday in the marketplace. We have invited other Devizes residents to join us. Normally around nine people stand in solidarity with those suffering from war and violence around the world for up to an hour.

We showed the Salter Lecture to a small group on 3 October and followed the video with a discussion. The lecture entitled 'How the love we are will guide us through ecological collapse' was originally given by Rupert Read to the Quaker Socialist Society.

During Quaker week, we welcomed a class from Bishop's Cannings School to the Meeting House. We ate a packed lunch together and then had a tour of the building and garden. This was followed by a short talk/discussion about Quakers. We finished with a mini meeting for worship which the children took very seriously. They returned to school by the 49 bus which they were able to catch at the top of the drive.

Churches Together in Devizes has been in the doldrums for some time, made worse by the Covid lockdowns. We are beginning to share activities again and a list of activities is circulated monthly.

We are currently holding several Friends in the light as a result of deaths and illness. We also held a memorial meeting for a Member who died last year and were pleased to welcome several members of the family.

The Meeting House garden continues to be managed for wildlife and people. Our tenant in the flat has seen a badger on the lawn. We continue to hold occasional working parties to maintain the garden and building. Following major work on the sewage pump, we are planning the redecoration of parts of the building. We will also be undertaking work in the flat upstairs after removal of mould that had formed in the stairwell.

Bookings continue to go well and the building is in regular demand by the local community.

One of our Members attended the online Woodbrooke Climate Justice Gathering in November and is also joining with members of other meetings to share ideas about Eco Church. One of the ideas is to help devise a way for Meetings to adapt the questions in the survey to suit Quaker contexts.

Several members continue to be active in Sustainable Devizes.

Since the demise of Traidcraft, it has been harder to promote Fairtrade. Nevertheless, we held a coffee morning before Christmas which may be the last for a while. We are supporting Wiltshire Fairtrade groups as they work to bring a tea farmer to the county to celebrate thirty years of the Fairtrade mark. We thank a member who has left Devizes recently for her work to support Fairtrade in the Meeting.

A wreath of white poppies was laid at the Devizes war memorial after the main Remembrance Day event on 12 November and we stood quietly in remembrance of all who have died or whose lives are affected in war.

Frome

Last year, we reported to Area Meeting that we were still facing many challenges in re-connecting with all our local Friends and Attenders, and in developing more of a recognised presence in our community. Since then, we have worked hard to repair connections that were weakened by the pandemic. We have put in place some of the ideas from our discussion groups, including our "circle of support". For those Friends

who opted to take part, the circle links them with two other Friends and forms a network of contacts and support which connect our meeting together. At a time when we are unable to find enough Friends to serve on the pastoral care group, this dispersed approach means that we can all take part in 'helping one another up with a tender hand'.

Frome Friends continue to meet in person each week at Christchurch Parish Hall. We have encountered some challenges in meeting at the hall through the winter, such as poor acoustics, which we have not been able to solve as yet. We are learning to speak more slowly and clearly however! After another extensive search for suitable alternative accommodation, we have concluded for now that the parish hall is the best venue available. The limitations of the hall have not deterred Friends as between ten and twenty of us regularly gather together for worship. We have started to read from *Advices & Queries* each time we meet. Although we are unable to offer children's meetings at present, as we do not have space, our all-age worship sessions and shared lunches are working well. We have welcomed enquirers and new Attenders during the year.

We no longer hold a mid-week Zoom meeting for worship as we have gradually returned to meeting in person. There are other ways in which we build our community, including:

- Mid-week worship at a Friend's house once a month;
- Winter Sunday evening epilogues on Zoom, which have led to occasional Zoom meetings for the 'Quantum Quakers';
- Our longer-term Experiment with Light group;
- A 'Short read' group which meets fortnightly at a Friend's house;
- Taking part in events in the wider community, such as the Frome Children's Festival, and 'Quiet Time' at the Good Heart Cafe;
- Engaging with Friends from around the country, at Britain Yearly Meeting, and Spiceland Summer Settlement.

We thank all our Friends who contribute to the life of our meeting in these and other ways.

More recently, we have arranged a series of meetings as part of our Sunday worship to consider the questions set by the Area Meeting Enquiry Steering Group. We have also agreed a rota of 'supporting elders' to hold our meetings for worship when our one elder cannot be present. In setting up the rota we have been mindful of the guidance on holding meetings for worship as set out in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 12.12.

We are conscious that many people who attend may not know much about what it means to be a Member of the Religious Society of Friends. We now have a regular short slot after Meeting for Worship, where Friends very briefly describe their journey into membership. Not only does this broaden our understanding; it helps us learn more about each other and is really enlightening and interesting.

In conclusion, our meeting has repaired many of the connections that were frayed or broken by the pandemic, although we have some way to go in encouraging Friends to take up more traditional roles within Quakers. We also need to turn our attention to our presence in the wider community, and hope that the output from the Area Meeting Enquiry Steering Group will help us in our work.

Trowbridge

Life at Trowbridge Local Meeting in 2023 continued much as it did the previous year, though thankfully without the challenges experienced previously during the pandemic. Our numbers at meeting for worship continue to vary between five and ten Friends most weeks—a steady core with others attending less regularly.

We continue to meet on Zoom every week, and in-person at The Hub with a blended meeting every fortnight. Our low numbers—along with the need for two people to open up at the Hub—make returning to that venue every week too much of a challenge at present. However, holding a blended meeting twice a month with Zoom-only meetings on the remaining Sundays means that meeting for worship is available to everyone on a weekly basis. No-one is excluded because they are unable to attend in person.

We have held after-meeting information sessions about ministry and the Quaker business method; contributed to the Area Meeting Enquiry Steering Group, and hosted a session with two Trustees to discuss the way ahead for Area Meeting. One Friend shared his experiences of being a Quaker Life Representative Council representative; two Friends attend the monthly weekday meetings for worship with Frome Local Meeting; and another member of the meeting held an open auction of her artwork to raise funds for a local charity. Friends on an individual basis are involved in climate change action, local community initiatives, and much more.

We have established a 'Care of Trowbridge Meeting' group which includes our pastoral care Friend and three or four other Friends who all work together to provide eldership and pastoral care, in the absence of formally-appointed elders. The group meets every three months to consider the life of the meeting and its members, and appears to be an appropriate way of caring for a very small meeting.

The Hub, where we meet on the Seymour housing estate, is run by Trowbridge Future, a local charity that runs various community projects, and we are pleased to be able to support them with the rent we pay. There have been occasional logistical problems trying to match our needs as a meeting with a space which can become very crowded, and Trowbridge Future have worked very hard to remedy any problems as quickly as possible.

As ever, we welcome visitors, whether in person or on Zoom. We meet in person on the first and third Sundays of the month, and on Zoom the other weeks.

WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

England & Wales - Charity number 1134534

Accounts

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

West Wiltshire & East Somerset
Area Quaker Meeting

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2022



Spring in the Bath Burial Ground

West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting

Registered address:
Friends Meeting House
1 Whiteheads Lane
Bradford on Avon
BA15 1JU

Registered Charity Number: 1134534

email: info@wwesquakers.org.uk

www: www.wwesquakers.org.uk

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Trustees & custodian trustee

The Trustees serving during the period from 1 January 2022 up to the date on which this report was adopted were:

- Robin Brookes (Devizes)
- Rob Gallagher (Chippenham), appointed 20 March, resigned 11 September 2022
- Nicola Grove (Frome), appointed 1 January 2023
- Sally Harris (Bath), Clerk
- Alison Hillis (Trowbridge), resigned 13 March 2022
- Elaine Hunter (Frome), also Area Meeting Treasurer, ended 31 December 2022
- Angela Le Grice (Bradford on Avon)
- Debbie Nightingale (Chippenham)
- Chris Pollock (Trowbridge), appointed 11 September 2022
- Barbara Ridhiwani (Bath), appointed 1 January 2023

Custodian Trustee:

- Friends Trust Limited, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

The term *Friend* refers to a Member of the Society. The term *Attender* refers to a person who is not a Member of the Society but who regularly attends its meetings for worship.

This report of the Trustees naturally speaks for our Area Meeting and its six constituent Local Meetings. *We* and *our* therefore generally mean those in that wider group, except in the appended reports from our Local Meetings where they generally mean those in the Meeting in question. Where appropriate, it is made clear that these plurals indicate the Trustees specifically.

Charitable object

The object of the Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Society in the region of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting and beyond.

These purposes are carried out in ways that bring public benefit, and we Trustees ensure that we have due regard to the Charity Commissioner's guidance in this respect.

Meeting together

The right holding of public meetings for worship (in our constituent Local Meetings) and regular meetings for church affairs (in all the constituent Local Meetings and for the Area Meeting as a whole) forms a key part of our role in providing a public benefit.

Meetings for worship

Public meetings for worship are held every Sunday. They take place in our meeting houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes, and in rooms that are rented in Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge, where we do not have premises. The arrangements are made by our six Local Meetings.

The Covid-19 restrictions which had affected our meetings over two years ended on 24 February. Meetings for worship gradually resumed their normal pattern of gathering in person for an hour every Sunday morning, with local Friends adapting to this change at their own pace. As the year progressed, numbers attending our meetings for worship increased, which is most encouraging. Some local meetings held all-age worship from time to time.

The facility to stay at home and join others in worship has proved valuable for those whose ability to congregate was more limited. Across our Area Meeting, we held meetings for worship that were entirely in-person, entirely online, and blended.

Meetings for worship were also held across the Area Meeting at different times of the week and in different venues from normal. Outdoor meetings for worship took place at several of our local meetings over the course of the year. On Sunday evenings, a new half-hour online “Epilogue” for Friends in Bath and Frome was introduced. This is greatly valued by those attending.

Meetings for church affairs

Meetings for church affairs take place regularly in each of our six Local Meetings and at Area Meeting. At these meetings, we gather in a spirit of worship to make practical decisions about running our meetings and, for those matters which require more consideration, to discern what is in right ordering. The unity we seek in a discipline of silent waiting depends on our willingness to seek the truth in what others say, and so to reach a sense of the right way forward that is different from the secular idea of consensus.

One of our Local Meetings, for example, which rents space in a Church building was informed that the premises was to be sold. Friends considered the options available to them and decided to move to rooms in another Church. Another Local Meeting which also rents Church premises is finding the space too limiting. There is no separate room where children can meet so it was decided to offer all-age worship followed by a shared lunch every two months.

Decisions on how to invest our charitable funds are an example of matters requiring careful discernment by Trustees at their meetings for church affairs. Anticipating the proceeds from the sale of the meeting house in Bath, Trustees considered ethical options for depositing the proceeds and how best to spread the risk involved with holding larger sums of money than usual.

At Area Meetings, we consider matters such as membership, appointment of role-holders, and reports from our representatives and from Trustees, exercising discernment throughout. Our practice is to appoint new clerks on each occasion from the host Local Meeting and for the hosts to invite a speaker or arrange an event for the second half of each meeting after the business has been concluded.

We were joined by the Head of Witness & Worship from Britain Yearly Meeting on one occasion to help us reflect on how Quakers are perceived in wider society, how different words and descriptions might help diverse communities to understand what we believe is important, and what we have to offer.

We engaged with the decision at Britain Yearly Meeting that it should become an actively anti-racist body and the related impetus to make reparations in some meaningful form for the exploitations of the slave trade.

Another time, we met Jac Blacker, our new Local Development Worker—a post shared with other Area Meetings in the West Country—and learned more about this new role and its scope.

One of our *Advices & Queries* exhorts us to “Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal”, so these occasions give us good opportunities to explore matters that are important to our local communities in the wider context of Quakers nationally—and to look forward (see also *Looking ahead*, toward the end of this report).

Each year we summarize the changes in the numbers of members and attenders in the constituent Local Meetings of our Area Meeting.

Year	Members	Attenders	Total
2013	174	131	305
2014	175	141	316
2015	181	120	301
2016	187	130	317
2017	190	131	321
2018	192	133	325
2019	189	124	313
2020	*186	117	*303
2021	†178	124	†302
2022	169	147	316
* Under-reported by 2 in the Report for 2020 but correct here			
† Over-reported by 1 in the Report for 2021 but correct here			

The figures for members and attenders for 2022 are slightly above the average for the preceding nine years (316 against 311). However, the proportion of members in that total for 2022 is the lowest in ten years (53.5% compared with a previous minimum of 55.4% and a maximum of 61.4%). It is heartening to see the evidence of new attenders finding our Quaker meetings, though we are also conscious that many of our roles in meetings must be filled by members. The 2022 total of members is the lowest in ten years. While, in 2022, one member moved into our area and one person became a

member “by conviction”, five members moved away, three resigned their membership, and three died.

Charitable activities

Our charitable activities are grounded in worship together and follow from discernment, in our meetings for church affairs, of the actions we should take. They take place across the Area Meeting, often carried out in our Local Meetings. Separate reports from each of the Local Meetings appended after the Trustees’ Report give a good flavour of the life and activities in our communities in 2022. As trustees, we receive updates at each of our scheduled meetings to keep us informed.

The Area Meeting owns premises for two of our local meetings. Once Covid-19 restrictions ended, both were again open for hire by organisations serving the community. Friends at Bradford on Avon Meeting wished to support those in their local community who were badly affected by sharply rising energy costs and high inflation. They chose to respond by offering “free soup and a warm welcome” in the meeting house to members of the public on Saturdays from November as part of the Town Council’s *Warm Spaces* project. This also involved undertaking safeguarding training, carrying out a risk assessment, and registering the meeting house as a food business.

The Area Meeting also owns a Burial Ground in Widcombe, a residential area of Bath. It no longer has capacity for burials but provides an area of the garden where ashes may be scattered. The garden has been sensitively developed over the year and made available to the local community as a quiet space. Printed leaflets about Bath Quakers and the Burial Ground have been made available outside the Burial Ground and are being taken regularly. An Open Day was held in the early autumn which attracted a good number of visitors from the local neighbourhood. Some thoughtful conversations took place as well as quiet contemplation. Slips carrying extracts from our *Advices & Queries* were scattered on seats around the garden to prompt reflection.

Quakers in Britain have had a longstanding involvement with prison work and concern for matters relating to criminal justice. One of our members is a prison chaplain at HMP Erlestoke. Our Area Meeting provided the funding for her to attend the Quakers in Criminal Justice Conference.

Local Meetings make voluntary collections for Quaker, and other, charities as part of our overall charitable activities. Of course, many Friends and attenders in our meetings are also individually involved in other charitable and community activities that are not part of our Area Meeting. Often these are other examples of Quaker faith in action, and in many cases those Friends and attenders will be cared for and supported by others in our Meetings.

A new Youth Development Worker joined us in 2022, taking the place of the previous role holder for our West Region of Area Meetings. During the year, Zephyr Blofeld has been able to build on the strong foundations already established. He has formed bonds

with the young people in the region through meet-up sessions, sharing meals, playing games, and even a candlelit banquet! In collaboration with the Youth Development Worker in Yorkshire, he arranged a weekend residential event in Shropshire which three of our young people attended. This was a huge success and demonstrated the value of going away as a community together.

Senior Conference and Junior Gathering provide further opportunities for young Friends to meet others aged 15-18 and 11-14, respectively. We funded a young Friend to attend each of these events in 2022. Those of us with personal experience of such occasions know how valuable they are, and we are glad that our young Friends are sharing that experience.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a concern for many Friends and attenders across the Area Meeting, and many are individually involved with the groups working on ecological and greening activities in their communities including Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon, Sustainable Devizes and Extinction Rebellion.

A Friend in our Area Meeting has been carrying out nonviolent actions of civil disobedience under conscience demanding urgent government action to tackle the climate crisis. The Area Meeting has requested that her name be added to the Meeting for Sufferings Courts and Prison Register maintained by Britain Yearly Meeting.

Two sustainability and climate change events were held at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre which were attended by Friends from two of our Local Meetings. The support and encouragement from such events helps to renew our determination to use sustainable means of transport, and to reduce, reuse and recycle. This message is also being spread to hirers of our premises.

The message about not wasting energy is well understood across our Area Meeting. Replacing older equipment with more energy-efficient equipment in the warden's flat contributed to a reduction in electricity consumption in the year. Solar panels at Devizes meeting house continue to function well and to generate electricity that reduces our demand on the grid.

Work behind the scenes

Much of our work as Trustees is carried out behind the scenes. It involves caring for Friends and others to whom we have a duty of care, looking after property, checking on rental premises, and managing our finances.

We held eight meetings of the Trustees in 2022. Six took place entirely online, using Zoom, and two were blended with most Trustees gathering together in person.

Caring for Friends and others

We began 2022 with our initial appraisals of the new, revised, and simplified guidance on safeguarding. This had been issued by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM, the national Quaker charity) as an update to the policy and procedure documents we had adopted a few months earlier and represented a big step forward. The Trustees created a working group including Friends from across the Area Meeting to help in the major review that this would entail. Following the resignation of our Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator/lead Trustee for Safeguarding, our Clerk to the Trustees became the default lead Trustee for Safeguarding, and she led the significant review and editorial work required to meet the BYM expectations for deploying the “model”, using “templates” and selecting relevant items from the “toolkit”. Professional help was sought from a Friend in a neighbouring Area Meeting to help us in contextualising our local needs, also informed by wider discussion undertaken in our Local Meetings and at our Area Meeting.

We tested new forms and procedures during the appointment of new Trustees in the latter part of 2022, and arranged for training to be adapted to the revised expectations and in anticipation of the adoption of the new Policy, Procedures, and Resources from the toolkit. The Trustees reviewed progress and experience gained in the pilot use of the new documentation and training, and planned for a formal adoption of the revised package in early 2023.

Greater understanding with this second approach to safeguarding helped to generate wider engagement across the Area Meeting. Though the process of re-evaluation was long and complex, we ended the year with a sense of progress and achievement. In particular, we benefited from the use of an expert Friend from outside our Area Meeting in providing training for the Trustees and other members of the working group, and we have reached a better understanding of how awareness training can help in the widespread ownership of safeguarding as a concept for us all to embrace.

We had no safeguarding incidents to report in 2022.

We are responsible for looking after two employees: our Warden at Bradford on Avon, and our Meeting House Manager at Devizes. Both held regular meetings with the Area Meeting Supervisor of Employees giving an opportunity for confidential discussion about any matters which they wish to raise.

Our employees are paid at a rate which is above the living wage pay rate. We reviewed our pay rates for others who provide services for us and are satisfied that their rates are also above the living wage pay rate.

Caring for Friends and attenders includes proper handling of the personal data held by Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. This is a legal requirement under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We reviewed how each Local Meeting and the Area Meeting stores the personal data of its Friends and attenders to ensure proper procedures were in place.

No data breaches were recorded in 2022.

Looking after property

The two meeting houses have their own local premises/house committees to deal with routine matters, with Trustees being responsible for commissioning any more complex and costly work. Such work arose during the year at Devizes meeting house which is on land lying below the level of the main thoroughfare and adjacent to the Kennet and Avon canal. The two pumps which transfer wastewater from the building uphill to the main drain had been well-maintained over the years but were showing signs of needing to be replaced. Sourcing suitable replacement pumps and finding a suitable contractor to carry out such critical work has been a considerable task and was ongoing at the end of the year.

Trustees are responsible for ensuring that health and safety matters are properly handled. As is our normal practice, we audited the systems and processes at both meeting houses and were satisfied that good care is being taken. A risk assessment for the Burial Ground was also carried out and followed up.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 came into effect during the year. Its provisions were found to be relevant to our Bradford on Avon meeting house because the property includes more than one residential flat. The requirements of the Act were taken into account, accordingly.

Trustees follow good practice in commissioning five-yearly surveys for each of the meeting houses. The quinquennial survey on Bradford on Avon Meeting House took place during the year and its report will inform plans for future maintenance.

Work that started in 2021 to provide a water supply to the Bath Burial Ground was concluded satisfactorily by the end of March 2022. Planning permission to erect a simple shelter has been granted and will be carried out in 2023.

The lease of Bath Meeting House to Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd continued throughout the year. Responsibility for the care of the building lies with the leaseholder during the period of the lease. At the time of compiling this report, it is now known that the sale of the building was completed at the end of March 2023, thereby bringing the leasing arrangement to a close.

Checking on rental premises

Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge Local Meetings use rented rooms for their meetings. The Church where Bath Local Meeting was renting space closed during the year and the Meeting was able to find another Church with suitable space for Sunday rental. Trustees check the risk assessments which are provided by the premises managers as part of our annual health and safety audit.

Managing finance

Trustees are responsible for managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. At each Trustees' meeting, we receive an up-to-date report from the Bookkeeper and the Area Meeting Treasurer summarising the financial affairs across the Area Meeting.

We operate with centralised bank accounts such that all receipts and payments authorised by Local Meetings go through the Area Meeting bank accounts. Our Bookkeeper sends regular finance reports to Local Meeting treasurers so they can exercise control over their funds and take decisions on expenditure, within agreed financial parameters.

Annual accounts for 2022

The full accounts are set out on pages 15–21.

Trustees are pleased to report an overall surplus this year of £56,271 (2021 £32,093, 2020 £897, 2019 £-13,059). This is a very healthy position for our charity and is largely driven by increased income in the last 2 years.

Income

Total Income in 2022 was £157,820 (2021 £169k, 2020 £112k, 2019 £118k).

Both 2022 and 2021 income were significantly boosted by rent from Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd, which took on full responsibility for the Bath Meeting House premises from spring 2021 onwards. The rent was received under a contractual arrangement to lease the site for a period and then to purchase at some point before March 2024. This was agreed due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. In early 2023, we were informed that Topping wished to end the agreement and proceed with the completion of the sale in late March 2023. Trustees are currently considering short term investment strategies for the proceeds, as well as initiating a process to discern what Friends and attenders may need and want for our Area Meeting in the future.

Other 2021 and 2020 lettings income was financially affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. We were able to claim against insurance for some lost income and in 2022, received £8,774 as the final settlement of our claim for loss of earnings. 2022 saw a return to greater normality and our Meeting Houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes began to see lettings income recover. We are grateful to our Warden & Bookings Manager who worked consistently to bring lettings at Bradford on Avon and Devizes respectively, closer to pre-Covid levels.

We note that Friends' & attenders' regular giving this year is lower at £67k than in the preceding two years (2021 £72k, 2020, £70k). Given the health of other income, this is not an urgent concern. Other donations were £12k lower in 2022 than 2021, largely due to one-off 2021 donations to the Bath Burial Ground, following the closing down of

the Bath Meeting House Appeal and some donors choosing to redirect their earlier earmarked donations rather than requesting that these be returned.

Expenditure

Total Expenditure in 2022 was £101,549 (2021 £137k, 2020 £111k, 2019 £131k).

Expenditure in 2022 was £35k lower than 2021 but the bulk of this difference relates to the £26k repayment of donations in 2021 following the closing down of the Bath Meeting House Appeal. There was also a real reduction in expenditure from spring 2021 onwards in relation to the Bath Meeting House as the Area Meeting was no longer responsible for the maintenance, insurance, rates and utilities of this listed, city-centre property.

At Bradford on Avon this year, we completed the quinquennial survey of the Meeting House. This will help us to plan future expenditure alongside the routine maintenance work at both our meeting houses. Trustees are also conscious of the sharp increase in fuel costs and inflation during 2022.

We are pleased to report support for those attending conferences and training this year. The majority related to safeguarding awareness, reflecting the commitment to this work throughout our Area Meeting. Other support has been for Trustee training, for our Prison Minister, and for spiritual nurture.

Reserves

Trustees recognise the need to hold cash reserves, sufficient to meet both normal expenditure in the Area Meeting together with any unexpected expenditure that might arise. Following examination of the 2021 accounts, our Finance Team reviewed the reserves held to ensure they are still at acceptable levels. Following that process we were able to recommend an additional £10,000 donation from our unrestricted fund to Quaker work at a national level. This was approved by Area Meeting and paid to Britain Yearly Meeting at the end of 2022. We ended the year with £237,505 of available reserves in our unrestricted fund.

Governance, including bankers, insurers, and examiner of accounts

Governing document

The charity was originally registered in 2010, constituted by the Governing Document of North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (adopted 9 November 2008). On 5 June 2011, the Governing Document was amended to reflect the change of name to West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting, after a change in its constituent Local Meetings. Following a decision taken at Area Meeting on 27 June 2021, it was further amended to allow meetings for church affairs to be held solely online or combined with those attending in-person.

On 22 January 2020, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting agreed a Scheme with the Charity Commission that clearly established the governance responsibilities of the Area Meeting for the three meeting houses (Bath, Bradford on Avon, and Devizes) and the Bath Burial Ground. As the Area Meeting is not an incorporated charity, Friends Trusts Ltd is named in the Scheme as the Custodian Trustee for the Area Meeting and its assets. The title deeds to the properties are held by Friends Trusts Ltd.

Trustees' appointment and training

Trustees are members of the Area Meeting, appointed by the Area Meeting following nomination by the constituent Local Meetings.

Before any nomination is made, the Clerk to the Trustees obtains two references with an emphasis on financial integrity, one from within the Religious Society of Friends and one from outside. The nominee completes the probity declaration based on the Charity Commission's pro-forma confirming that they are a fit and proper person to oversee financial, governance and employment matters in the Area Meeting. The nominee is also required to sign the necessary Safeguarding declarations.

The Clerk to the Trustees ensures that new Trustees understand their terms of reference, have access to past Minutes and to key documents, in particular the Governing Document and the Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings.

Trustees receive notice of any upcoming courses and are encouraged to attend those that are relevant. Trustees attended charity trustee training provided by a local firm of solicitors, and by Thirtyone:eight on safeguarding. Several trustees also participate in the e-forums run by Britain Yearly Meeting where information and ideas are disseminated and discussed.

Our bankers

- CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ
- Triodos Bank, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS

Our insurers

- Congregational & General Insurance plc, Currer House, Currer Street, Bradford BD1 5BA

Examiner of accounts

- Matthew J Bryant FCCA. OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Lane, Bath, BA2 2EL.

Looking ahead

As an illustration of our meetings for church affairs earlier in this report, we mentioned our reflections on how we engage with the communities of which we are a part. We

noted that this depends to some extent on the language we use to talk about our experiences and how we might convey our sense of the right way to live. These reflections were given added impetus as we gradually emerged, in 2022, from the experience of the pandemic and our restricted interactions with each other and our wider communities.

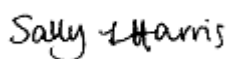
The observations we have made about our numbers of members and attenders make us ask questions about the future. What do we want our meetings to be like in twenty years' time? How will they develop? How can we best use the resources we have to foster a developing Quaker presence in the places where we meet? Trustees engaged in an analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) during the year. While our gradually declining numbers and ageing membership might be prompts for serious reflection, we recognised also that we have new staff capabilities in our Local Development Worker and Youth Development Worker.

We also noted that a considerable sum of money would be received from the sale of Bath Meeting House by March 2024 at the latest. (In the event, completion took place twelve months earlier.) In anticipation of this, it felt important to take a step back to address wider questions about our future as an Area Meeting.

To this end, Trustees have started a process to encourage both adventurous enquiry and spiritual discernment in the minds of individual Friends, in Local Meetings, and at Area Meeting. Trustees set up a small steering group comprising a range of Friends from across our local meetings, and including two Trustees, to help with this process—chiefly by seeking to design a programme of events that might run over a year or so. The group first met in the final quarter of 2022, hoping to engage Friends from across our Area in 2023.

We have not lost sight of the need to look for ways to make the administration of our affairs simpler as legislative and compliance demands become more complex.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 19 May 2023
and signed on their behalf by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Sally Harris, Clerk to the Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of the report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Matthew J Bryant OCL Accountancy 141 Englishcombe Lane Bath, BA2 2EL

Date: 12-06-2023.....

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2022

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 Total Funds £
Income and Endowments from					
Donations and legacies		68,420	-	68,420	86,521
Charitable activities					
Grants received for Quaker work		-		-	-
Investment income	3	331	92	423	64
Other income		88,976	-	88,976	82,614
Total income		157,728	92	157,820	169,198
Expenditure					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		100,758		100,758	136,051
Other (Depreciation)		791	-	791	1,055
Total expenditure		101,549	-	101,549	137,105
Net income		56,179	92	56,271	32,093
Transfers between funds				-	-
		56,179	92	56,271	32,093
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		1,233,699	19,541	1,253,240	1,221,147
Total funds carried forward		1,289,878	19,633	1,309,511	1,253,240

Continuing operations

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 Total Funds £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	1,052,373	-	1,052,373	1,053,164
Current Assets					
Debtors	6	14,806	-	14,806	24,651
Cash at bank and in hand		235,638	19,633	255,271	190,384
		250,444	19,633	270,077	215,035
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	7	(12,939)	-	(12,939)	(14,959)
Net current assets					
		237,505	19,633	257,139	200,076
Total assets less current liabilities					
		1,289,878	19,633	1,309,511	1,253,240
Net Assets					
		1,289,878	19,633	1,309,511	1,253,240
Funds	8				
Unrestricted funds				1,289,878	1,233,699
Restricted funds				19,633	19,541
Total funds					
				1,309,511	1,253,240

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 19 May 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Barbara Ridhiwani - Trustee

Barbara Ridhiwani

Sally Harris - Trustee

Sally Harris

The notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022

1 Employees

The average number of employees during the year was 2.

2 Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefits entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (effective 1 January 2015)* and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is included on the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

Cash at Bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will normally result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided on plant & machinery at 25% on reducing balance in order to write off each of such assets over its estimated useful life.

The valuation of the meeting houses is subject to regular review. The Trustees consider that insured replacement cost is an unsuitable valuation basis because it does not reflect current values. Nor is the open market value considered appropriate for property held for Quaker-supported work. Recognition of underlying value at an average of £350,000 for the three meeting houses and Burial Ground gives a total of £1,050,000.

Going concern

In the opinion of the Trustees, the charity continues to be a going concern.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022

	2022	2021
3 Investment income		
Deposit account interest	<u>£ 423</u>	<u>£ 64</u>

4 Trustees' remuneration and benefits

During 2022 Trustee Debbie Nightingale acted as a self-employed bookkeeper for our Area Meeting. Her fees for 2022 totalled £3,394 (2021: £3,420). Her hours are capped at 25 per month, and are normally less.

Trustee expenses

Trustees' reimbursed expenses of £949 (2021: £474) paid to four trustees are included in Quaker work and cover training courses and reimbursement of incidental expenses. The increase in the year reflects greater activity as the pandemic effects reduced.

5 The role of volunteers

Practical voluntary service is at the heart of all our Quaker Meetings, at local, area, and at a national level. All Friends and attenders take part. There are many opportunities, including welcoming at the meeting house door, assisting with the running and clerking of meetings for worship, serving on committees for the care of premises, pastoral care, working with our young people, as well as trusteeship, and representing our area on national bodies.

6 Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold property	Plant and machinery	Totals
Cost	£	£	£
At 1 January 2022 & 31 December 2022	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>31,601</u>	<u>1,081,601</u>
Depreciation			
At 1 January 2022	-	28,438	28,438
Charge for year	<u>-</u>	<u>791</u>	<u>791</u>
At 31 December 2021	<u>-</u>	<u>29,228</u>	<u>29,228</u>
Net Book Value			
At 31 December 2022	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>2,373</u>	<u>1,052,373</u>
At 31 December 2021	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>3,164</u>	<u>1,053,164</u>

7 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022	2021
	£	£
Trade debtors	11,100	21,369
Other debtors	173	512
Prepayments	<u>3,533</u>	<u>2,770</u>
	<u>14,806</u>	<u>24,651</u>

2022 debtors comprise lettings income due, gift aid to be claimed, and 2022 interest, received 2023. Prepayments at the end of 2022 include insurance premium of:£3,318.

2021 debtors included £16,705 agreed insurance claim re Covid-19 loss of lettings income, received 2022. Prepayments at the end of 2021 include insurance premium of:£2,581

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		2022	2021
		£	£
Suppliers paid after year-end	1	6,214	2,821
Donations owed to BYM	2	4,526	10,432
Funds to pass over (Agent)	3	249	8
Rent received in advance	4	550	33
Accrual for Examination & Payroll	5	1,399	1,664
		<u>12,939</u>	<u>14,959</u>

9 Movement in funds		At 1.1.22	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.12.22
		£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds					
General fund		1,233,699	56,179		1,289,878
Restricted funds					
Frome Building Fund		19,541	92	-	19,633
Total funds		<u>1,253,240</u>	<u>56,271</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,309,511</u>
Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:			Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
			£	£	£
Unrestricted funds					
General fund			157,728	(101,549)	56,179
Restricted funds					
Frome Building Fund			92	-	92
Total funds			<u>157,820</u>	<u>(101,549)</u>	<u>56,271</u>

Additional note on Fund Accounting

The Frome restricted fund represents an amount originally set aside from the general fund by the Trustees for the purposes of purchasing a meeting house in Frome. In recent years there has been little progress with regard to this project. Further discussions and investigations are needed, and Trustees will consider whether to move these funds back to the general fund or proceed in some other way. In particular, the upcoming sale of the Bath Meeting House will lead to wide-ranging discussion about the future requirements of Quakers in the area.

The remaining funds are the combined unrestricted funds of the constituent local Quaker meetings which can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives, at the discretion of the Trustees.

10 Related Party disclosures

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 December 2022.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022

11 Contributions and grants paid

Accounts detailed statement (final pg)		2022	2021
Individuals		£	
	Grant to enable attendance to young people's event	125	-
Institutions			
See i)below	BYM annual giving via schedule	33,026	35,432
	BYM additional donations to national Quaker work	10,000	-
See ii)below	Repayment of Bath Meeting House Appeal	-	26,304
	Other Quaker charities (10 payments)	465	510
		43,491	62,246
	Non Quaker charities (4 Non-Q charities)	290	100
		43,906	62,346

i) BYM schedule contributions are included in our accounts as gift aid is claimed by WWESAM.
ii) BMHA funds were dispensed according to the donors' instructions and the restricted fund was closed.

	2022	2021
Acting as agent collections, not forming part of accounts	£	
	Quaker charities	-
	Non Quaker charities	8
	873	8

(2021: Reduced due to fewer in-person meetings during Covid pandemic)

12 Governance & Accounts remuneration	£	£
Bookkeeping services (per Note 4)	3,394	3,420
Payroll services accrued	404	674
Independent Examination Accounts (pt2021&2022)	989	1,134
Accreditation Fees/Software subscription	431	464
	5,219	5,692

13 Staff Costs	£	£
Staff remuneration:Warden & Lettings Manager	11,198	11,427
Council tax paid for Warden's flat	1,094	1,053
Expenses relating to supervision	48	-
	12,339	12,480

Employee numbers during the year were 2 (2021: 2). Total 0.62wte for 2022 (2021: 0.65wte).

In both 2022 and 2021, the charity claimed the Employment Allowance against the employers Class 1 NICs, which covered the full liability to HMRC.

There were no other employee benefits, other than statutory employer pension contributions. No employee had employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2021: Nil).

**Detailed Statement of Financial Activities
for the year ending 31 December 2022**

	2022 £	2021 £	2020 £	2019 £
INCOME				
Voluntary Income				
Annual giving donations	67,426	71,871	70,478	63,556
Donations	994	12,650	1,602	5,970
Legacies		2,000	2,000	-
	<u>68,420</u>	<u>86,521</u>	<u>74,080</u>	<u>69,526</u>
Investment Income				
Deposit account interest	423	64	433	469
Charitable activities				
Grants			1,330	700
Other income				
From properties	88,976	79,350	23,157	46,976
From Local Authority Grants			10,000	
HMRC Job Retention Scheme		3,264	3,365	
Total income	<u>157,820</u>	<u>169,198</u>	<u>112,365</u>	<u>117,671</u>
EXPENDITURE				
Charitable activities				
Warden's & Manager's pay	12,339	12,480	12,633	12,900
Fees, rents, taxes & insurance	8,731	23,747	28,961	39,165
Meeting house improvements				10,262
Repairs & running costs	21,139	22,985	23,498	19,486
Life of the meeting	9,423	8,800	3,823	11,428
Grants to institutions	43,781	36,042	35,431	32,512
Grants to individuals	125			1,437
Repayment of Bath Meeting House Appeal		26,304		
	<u>95,539</u>	<u>130,358</u>	<u>104,346</u>	<u>127,190</u>
Other				
Depreciation of plant & machinery	791	1,055	1,406	1,875
Support costs				
Governance costs				
Examination & accountancy	5,219	5,692	5,717	1,665
Total resources expended	<u>101,549</u>	<u>137,105</u>	<u>111,469</u>	<u>130,730</u>
NET INCOME	<u>56,271</u>	<u>32,093</u>	<u>897</u>	<u>(13,059)</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Reports of the life of our Local Meetings in 2022

Bath

Over the period of this report we had three deaths, one new member, and numerous visitors.

After leaving York Street at the end of March 2019, we worshipped at the Bath Central United Reformed Church on Grove Street, except when we worshipped online during the pandemic restrictions. By January 2022, those restrictions began to ease. But then we learned that this building, too, was being sold. We appointed a small group to search for premises, considered our options at a Threshing meeting, and booked an experimental meeting for worship in March 2022 in a central and accessible place which felt welcoming. Thus we moved to Manvers Street Baptist Church (MSBC), in the downstairs Milsom Room, where we continue to worship on Sundays, 10:30–11:30.

Other meetings for worship have continued. An in-person Sunday meeting is held at the Chocolate Quarter in Keynsham, 10:30–11:00 on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Online meetings remain popular for transport and health reasons, so Sunday morning online Zoom meetings continue, now lasting for forty-five minutes, but reduced to twice monthly on the first and third Sundays, 10:30–11:15. Tuesday Zoom meetings continue, 18:00–18:30. On some Wednesdays, a small group meets for fellowship and worship in a Friend's house.

Optimistically, we started Sunday in-person children's meetings weekly for a time, but this proved unsustainable without having sufficient carefully appointed Friends available (including the criminal records checks with the Disclosure & Barring Service that we seek in order to comply with the requirements for appropriate safeguarding). Now children's meetings are offered on second and fourth Sundays.

Worship is at the centre of our being as a meeting. Vocal ministry is offered in around three-quarters of Meetings for Worship. In-person attendance numbers range between twelve and twenty-four. There is a rota to greet, to set up, and pack up afterwards.

The group formerly known as "overseers", recently renamed "pastoral Friends", meets regularly to consider the needs of individual Friends and the whole meeting. Their remit sometimes overlaps with elders who also meet regularly to focus on spiritual needs. Further "supporting elders" have been appointed for when the core elders are thinly stretched. We have not had a nominations committee, due to the lack of a convenor which led to the laying down of that group. As a result, a Care of Bath Meeting group was set up. This currently consists of the Clerk, Correspondence Clerk, Trustee, convenor of elders, and the pastoral Friends convenor. They consider issues to be brought for discernment at our monthly or bi-monthly local business meetings. The Care of Bath Meeting group meets regularly and is open to any Friend interested in attending. Another thread weaving us together is the "Green Book" giving members' and regular attenders' contact details, which has been thoroughly updated. There is a small WhatsApp group for chat, connecting us in yet another way. A weekly online

“epilogue” for Bath and Frome Friends is run by a single Friend on Sundays, 20:30–21:00.

Communication is necessary for community, and there’s a lively weekly update email sent by our Correspondence Clerk, faithfully listing all our local meetings along with events of Quaker interest. We are holding a monthly bring-your-own picnic lunch in the room after meeting, but this has not yet attracted many to stay, so may need re-thinking. We have several fellowship groups, which served as vital online links during periods of restricted social gathering.

Our Quaker community, along with communities all over the world, was affected by the events of the last two years. Nowhere was this more evident than in the moments after the Sunday worship. In the early days at MSBC, Friends dispersed rapidly without staying to talk with one another. This reluctance to engage was undoubtedly due to the combination of Covid isolation and the disruption of the move. Happily, this improved latterly, with more animated chat, tea, and biscuits following meeting, as we grow to know each other in trust and affection.

It follows that Bath meeting was more inward than outward looking in 2022. But there is something to build upon. Our attractive website www.bathquakers.org has been well maintained throughout and is worth a look.

This autumn we recorded receipt of the final report of a three-year Quaker Peace and Social Witness grant that we supported, prompted by a Friend who had served as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). The grant provided funding for school transport for children and the Palestinian community, resulting in its firm establishment for the future.

Finally, the Bath Burial Ground illustrates the transformation that results from devoted effort and attention. The Burial Ground Committee, initiated by one Friend inspiring others, has become our one and only truly Quaker space. And the garden’s beautiful, diverse harmony is being shared with other groups. Plans have recently been approved for a new, open shelter to be built in the garden. There couldn’t be a better symbol for our meeting and its aspirations than an open shelter and lush garden to be shared.

Bradford on Avon

2022 was a good year for Bradford on Avon Meeting. The Meeting has clearly grown, attracting several new regular attenders, including more families with children. A typical Sunday towards the end of 2022 would see 25–30 adult Friends and several children attending in person, with four or five more Friends joining via Zoom. We continue to meet in this blended way every Sunday, to include those Friends for whom joining in person is not an option because of geography or health. We also started to welcome Friends from Bath Meeting on those Sundays when Bath does not offer a Zoom meeting.

Our mid-week meeting for worship on Wednesday evenings was offered every week. It is now supported by a nucleus of four regularly attending Friends (including one who attends Chippenham Meeting on Sundays). Average attendance rose from two to three. Occasions when the welcomer remains on their own have become rare.

Children's meetings were offered every single Sunday throughout the year, mostly at the Meeting House and once a month outdoors. Most outdoor meetings were held in the garden of Frankleigh House. There were a few Sundays without children, while on some Sundays the number of children reached double figures. One highlight was a garden party in April where the children's group made head-dresses for everyone.

Our four Fellowship Groups kept meeting regularly, and so did the Healing Group.

In March, our Elders organised a blended meeting on conflict in Meetings, with facilitators from Bristol Area Meeting—one present in person, the other one joining via Zoom. This session eventually resulted in a paper, “Constructive steps for dealing with conflict in Meeting”, that was adopted by our local business meeting in May.

Other events to note were an after-meeting walk in late March, our annual outdoor meeting for worship with children's activities in July, and a display in the public library and a give-&-take event at the Meeting House during Quaker Week in the autumn.

One Friend helped raise £10,000 for IT equipment for a school in Tubas, West Bank, by cycling from Bradford on Avon to Manchester, amongst other things, and then visited Tubas in the autumn.

Our Meeting House has seen increased use for Area Meeting activities. In September, we offered our premises to Frome Friends for enabling AM to be held in a blended way, which Frome Friends gratefully accepted. This kind of arrangement looks likely to become more regular in future.

Room hire to outside users has somewhat recovered, although not yet to a pre-pandemic level. It is interesting to note that most of our room hire income now comes from mental health-related one-to-one sessions in the small meeting room, rather than from group bookings in the main meeting room as it used to be in the past.

From early November on, we opened our Meeting House as a “warm space” with a soup lunch on Saturdays, as our response to the cost-of-living crisis many people are faced with.

Sustainability remains an important issue for Friends in our Meeting. Several Friends continue to be involved in Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon and Extinction Rebellion, and one Friend became very active for Just Stop Oil. Another Friend attended the Living Witness Sustainability Gathering at Woodbrooke in late August. We were pleased to note that our Meeting House gas consumption was the lowest since records started in 2010, about a quarter less than in 2021.

Chippenham

Chippenham Meeting has had much to be thankful for this last year as we have seen our numbers grow with more regular attenders at meeting for worship. At the same time, we have also been able to continue our monthly Zoom meetings to include Friends who are housebound or have moved further away. Two Friends produce our regular newsletter which also helps to keep us informed and in touch.

We have gradually increased our activities after the isolation imposed by Covid and have enjoyed several shared lunches, and at one of these we were joined by our Local Development Worker. We also met at a Friend's farm for a couple of outdoor meetings for worship and reinstated our Bible study group. With Friends from other local Meetings, we watched the 2021 Swarthmore lecture, took part in a study day led by Ben Pink Dandelion, and enjoyed a walk one sunny Saturday starting and finishing at Holt. We were also able to lay our white poppy wreath at the War Memorial in November.

Our Elders and Overseers group hold a meeting every two months followed by supper.

One member of our Meeting is the Quaker Chaplain at a local prison and goes each week into HMP Erlestoke, where currently there are two registered Quakers. They hold a monthly Quaker meeting and she feels very fortunate to be supported by two Quaker volunteers from other local Meetings. The theme of this year's Quaker Prison Chaplains' Conference was creativity in chaplaincy work.

Individually, Friends attend the Quaker South Asian Interest Group and the Quaker Lesbian Group as well as helping at community lunches. Others work with Wiltshire Mind and Alcoholics Anonymous or do sterling work as foster carers.

We do not own our own Meeting House but try to behave responsibly, for example using only the lighting where necessary, closing doors to keep in warmth, and not boiling more water than we need for our coffee after meeting! Friends who are able also take care to walk, cycle, or take public transport to Meeting for Worship. These are small contributions but hopefully do make a difference. Once again this year, our white poppy wreath was completely recyclable with a willow wreath, rosemary and bay from our gardens, and hand stitched poppies. In our own homes we continue to try to use all resources as responsibly as we can.

As the days lengthen, we look forward to being able to meet up more often for social events as well as meeting for worship, all of which help meld us into a group of friends as well as Friends.

Devizes

We now meet in person on Sundays with continued assistance from Zoom to enable those who can't attend in person to join us. This has proved successful with up to nine people in the Meeting House and three or four online.

On 14 January, we were joined by members from the Area meeting for a very enjoyable study day with Ben Pink Dandelion entitled “Renewing Quaker Community”. Now we need to use the ideas discussed to produce actions that can help us deepen the spirituality of our Meetings.

Following the study day, Devizes Meeting has reinstated a post meeting coffee time which we now hold in the meeting room so that those online can join us. The aim is to use the time to talk about aspects of Quaker life.

Our mid-week meetings are continuing on Tuesday mornings at 11.30. Following the half-hour quiet meeting, we can stay to chat or discuss topics of concern over a packed lunch and coffee. There are usually around four to six people though occasionally only one person comes along. It is an opportunity to meet socially as well as in worship. We decided not to make this a blended meeting for the benefit of those who prefer a simple face-to-face arrangement.

We struggle to promote social events within the Meeting. It is hoped that we will be able to go for walks together as the weather improves.

Several of our members are either sick or are carers and we keep them in our thoughts.

We recorded the death of a Friend in December 2022 after a long illness. She was well remembered in Devizes though latterly she attended Chippenham Meeting.

In September, the two boilers in the kitchen were replaced by a single one for both heating and hot water. We are supported in our care for the building and garden by our contract cleaners and gardener. We remain a member of the Living Churchyards project and manage the garden with wildlife in mind.

Bookings for the use of the building have picked up since the middle of 2022, attracting groups requiring a peaceful environment.

In October, one of our members attended a Conference at Woodbrooke to discuss all aspects of our commitment to minimising climate change. One of the workshops about the Eco Church scheme discussed how Quakers can support each other in this. Woodbrooke has taken on the role of promoting Eco Church as a way forward. We hope to revive our efforts to make progress with this challenge, encouraging hirers to support our efforts to reduce our environmental footprint particularly through recycling.

Our support for Fairtrade has been through continuing to use Fairtrade products in the Meeting House while members have been able to order products from Traidcraft. We held a successful Fairtrade coffee morning at the Meeting House in December. Sadly, Traidcraft has now gone into administration so the Devizes Fairtrade Group will need to decide how to go on without a one-stop supplier for events.

A wreath of white poppies was laid at the war memorial on the afternoon of Remembrance Sunday.

Frome

"An act of love. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never put it out."

From the poem "Carrying a Candle" by Jan Sutch Pickard

Since the beginning of 2022, Frome Friends have been meeting in Christ Church Hall, Park Road, Frome. We decided against returning to The Key Centre when it became available later in the year due to the increased cost of renting it. There are aspects of our new accommodation that are disappointing: the acoustics are poor, there is no separate space for a children's gathering and we are unable to keep our bookcase/display cupboard. We continue to explore ways of overcoming these challenges.

We have 55 people on our mailing list, of whom over 30 make an active contribution to our Quaker witness in various ways. Attendance has increased during the year although some friends still prefer not to attend in person; some of us sometimes join Zoom sessions from other Meetings. We have been joined by new friends, some have come from other Meetings, others fresh to Quakers. It has been a joy to welcome parents with young babies and children on several occasions. We now hold an all age worship session every second month, followed by shared lunch. On a sadder note, an elderly Friend died in December and we remember her with much affection.

In February we held two Zoom sessions to explore ways of "Simplifying Meeting". Following these discussions, a questionnaire was sent out to Friends and we then held two in-person sessions to explore three specific concerns:

- Community, fellowship and social occasions
- Meeting for worship, ministry and spiritual nourishment/growth
- Alternative ways of providing pastoral care and eldership

The following initiatives have emerged from these discussions.

Once a month, a midweek meeting for worship has been held in a Friend's home, which has been well attended. There is a fortnightly "Short Read" house group that considers a few short texts each time and this has led to some very deep and spiritual discussion, often with humour.

A Friend who is an associate tutor for Woodbrooke led a five-week discussion group on the Gospel of Mary, using the friendly study method devised by Quakers, which was held in the Good Heart café in Frome. This was well received and we hope to have further discussions in 2023. On a Sunday evening, there is a half hour Zoom "Epilogue", which is attended by Friends from Bath and Frome and has been greatly valued by the attendees. A monthly "Light Group" of five or six Friends continues to meet in a Friend's house. We also enjoyed a summer tea party in the beautiful garden of our Correspondence Clerk.

Friends individually continue to belong to and support a wide range of groups locally that reflect our testimonies on peace, integrity, equality, and sustainability. As a

Meeting, Friends responded to an appeal to knit blankets and also to donate essential goods for refugees.

As we do not own our own meeting house, we are spared some issues on sustainability. Friends who are physically able to walk to Meeting do so; many Friends are involved in groups working on ecological and greening topics and individually we strive to reduce our use of plastics and fossil fuels.

At the end of the year, we implemented a new system for providing pastoral care, based on a “circle of support” in which a Friend is connected to the two people on either side. Some Friends who are not able to be actively involved in our Meeting are connected to one person who will keep in touch with them. This will be coordinated by our pastoral care group and Meeting will review this system after a year.

Trowbridge

This year began with Trowbridge Local Meeting once again meeting only on Zoom; the winter spike in Covid infections caused us to consider whether it would be wise to continue with in person meetings, which we had only just restarted. We felt that the Hub’s very small meeting room made social distancing difficult, and we decided to postpone in-person meetings until the infection rates dropped. We returned to our regular hour-long weekly Zoom meeting for worship until March, when we finally returned to the Hub.

With no extra financial outlay, but “smart tech” knowledge from our (now) trustee, we hold a blended meeting for worship on the first and third Sundays of each month, with zoom-only meetings on the second and fourth Sundays. This means that Friends who cannot be with us in person due to health or mobility problems, or who live elsewhere, can join meeting for worship every week if they choose.

We know that many meetings locally and nationally are struggling with the issue of finding Friends to undertake the work required to keep their meetings viable. Trowbridge LM finds itself facing this challenge.

Meeting in person twice a month is a pragmatic response to one difficulty of being a very small Meeting. Our numbers vary from five to ten attending, either in person or online; this means that we have a very limited number of active Friends who are able and willing to open up at the Hub or host our Zoom meetings. We are currently considering how to ensure that our role-holders are supported, which may mean we appoint a small group to care for the life of the Meeting, rather than the traditional elders and overseers.

Although small in number, Trowbridge Friends are enthusiastic at getting together, either in the park with coffee and chat and dogs attending, or eating cake and ice cream in a shady spot in a back garden during the August heatwave.

We cherish the silence of our Sunday morning meeting for worship; we begin each meeting with a reading chosen by one of us, and these can range from traditional

Quaker sources, from other faiths and none. All are chosen with care and are a gift to share with Friends attending in person and on zoom.

Without a meeting house to run or much “business” to attend to, we have a simple life within our meeting. Some of us are active with concerns both Quakerly and in the wider world, but other Friends in the Meeting look no further than Trowbridge LM. We accept that for some of us, the silence and simplicity is what we are seeking, with no involvement in the larger Quaker family, including Area Meeting. We are also aware of the danger of becoming cosy and inward-looking. We were delighted to welcome visitors from Bath and Frome LMs this year, and encourage Friends to join us either at the Hub or on zoom any Sunday.

For Trowbridge Friends, “small is beautiful”, and although we face challenges, we are clear that we value our small Meeting and want to keep our Quaker light shining.

WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

England & Wales - Charity number 1134534

Accounts

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

**West Wiltshire & East Somerset
Area Quaker Meeting**

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2021



West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting

Registered address:
Friends Meeting House
1 Whiteheads Lane
Bradford on Avon
BA15 1JU

Registered Charity Number: 1134534

email: info@wwesquakers.org.uk

www: www.wwesquakers.org.uk

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Trustees & custodian trustee

The Trustees serving in 2021 were:

- Robin Brookes (Devizes)
- Sally Harris (Bath), Clerk, appointed 1 October 2021
- Alison Hillis (Trowbridge), resigned 13 March 2022
- Elaine Hunter (Frome), Area Meeting Treasurer
- Angela Le Grice (Bradford on Avon)
- Kate Macdonald (Bath), Clerk, 28 June 2021 to 30 September 2021
- Debbie Nightingale (Chippenham)
- Jane Stephenson (Bath), Clerk, ended 27 June 2021

Unless otherwise indicated, Trustees remain in post at the date of adoption by the Trustees of this report.

Custodian Trustee:

- Friends Trust Limited, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

The term *Friend* refers to a Member of the Society. The term *Attender* refers to a person who is not a Member of the Society but who regularly attends its meetings for worship.

This report of the Trustees naturally speaks for our Area Meeting and its six constituent Local Meetings. *We* and *our* therefore generally mean those in that wider group, except in the appended reports from our Local Meetings where they generally mean those in the Meeting in question. Where appropriate, it is made clear that these plurals indicate the Trustees specifically.

Charitable object

The object of the Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Society in the region of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting and beyond.

These purposes are carried out in ways that bring public benefit, and we Trustees ensure that we have due regard to the Charity Commissioner's guidance in this respect.

Meeting together

The right holding of public meetings for worship (in our constituent Local Meetings) and regular meetings for church affairs (in all the constituent Local Meetings and for the Area Meeting as a whole) forms a key part of our role in providing a public benefit.

Meetings for worship

Public meetings for worship are normally held every Sunday. They take place in our meeting houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes, and in rooms that are rented in places where our Meetings do not own their own meeting houses, in Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge. The arrangements are made by our six Local Meetings.

During 2021, four of the six meeting venues were closed for parts of the year due to the continuing Covid-19 pandemic. Like many other religious bodies, our Local Meetings moved to worship online. In this, they continued to adapt to the circumstances with methods learned during earlier lockdowns in 2020. Joining details were made publicly available via our websites and other notices (such as in the doorways to our normal premises). Our Local Meetings found that some new faces joined in worship, and that there were more opportunities to attend worship with those from other Local Meetings from time to time.

Learning from experience, both meeting houses were equipped in 2020 to enable Friends and attenders at home to join in “blended” meetings. Such blended meetings continued throughout 2021 during those periods when meeting houses were open but some of us chose, or were obliged, to avoid gathering with others in person. Blended meetings proved impracticable in our existing rented premises but began to be part of our thinking for the future.

In addition, across the Area Meeting, meetings for worship were also held on various days and at various times. During the summer months, outdoor meetings for worship took place once a week in the early evening in Bath Meeting’s Burial Ground in Widcombe.

In these ways, while the pandemic prevented the holding of meetings for worship in the traditional manner, across the Area Meeting we adapted our practice. We learned that online meetings brought the opportunity to welcome those who might have been unable to attend in person in the past, and that we could worship with others who were in different locations.

Meetings for church affairs

At our meetings for church affairs, we gather in a spirit of worship to make practical decisions about running our meetings and, for those matters which require more consideration, to discern what is in right ordering. The unity we seek in a discipline of silent waiting depends on our willingness to seek the truth in what others say, and so to reach a sense of the right way forward that is different from the secular idea of consensus.

Several of our Local Meetings, for example, considered whether to attend their local remembrance ceremony to lay a white poppy wreath. They chose to do so, thereby bearing witness to our testimony to peace.

Decisions on how to spend our charitable funds are another example of matters requiring careful discernment. Trustees considered that the cost of providing a mains water supply to the Burial Ground was in right ordering as it would greatly help with maintenance and could increase the prospect of wider community use of our quiet garden.

Meetings for church affairs take place regularly in each of our six Local Meetings and at Area Meeting. As with meetings for worship, meetings for church affairs were also adapted to Covid-19 restrictions by holding them online or a blended format.

At Area Meetings, our practice is to appoint new clerks on each occasion from the host Local Meeting and for the hosts to invite a speaker for the second half of each meeting.

On one such occasion in 2021, we heard a joint presentation on racism from the Inclusion & Diversity Coordinator for Quakers in Britain and the Quaker Youth Worker, then participated in a workshop. Moved by Britain Yearly Meeting's commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist faith community, some Friends set up a reading group to deepen our understanding of the issues raised.

At two consecutive Area Meetings, we started to learn about Britain Yearly Meeting's "Simpler Meetings" project. First, we heard from the Head of the Ministry and Outreach team for Quakers in Britain about how the ways that we meet and work have changed, at Friends House in London as well as in Area and Local Meetings. We heard how some Quaker structures have not changed for centuries, even as the number of Quaker members has decreased.

The Simpler Meetings project grew out of this changing context. The project ran for three years, exploring how we could live and work together in simpler ways. At a second meeting, we gave further consideration to making our Meetings work in simpler and better ways and explored the questions: What is working well in our Meeting? What ideas do we have to make things simpler / better?

Each year we summarize the changes in the numbers of members and attenders in the constituent Local Meetings of our Area Meeting.

Year	Members	Attenders	Total
2013	174	131	305
2014	175	141	316
2015	181	120	301
2016	187	130	317
2017	190	131	321
2018	192	133	325
2019	189	124	313
2020	*186	117	*303
2021	179	124	303
* Under-reported by 2 in the Report for 2020 and now corrected here			

The figures for 2021 are similar to those of 2013, though they have fallen again by almost 7% in four years from the high point in 2018. Considering the same issues,

Trustees noted, in the first part of their “Strategy Day”, that national membership records for the Society show a steadily declining line amounting to 13.9% from 2011 to 2020.

Charitable activities

Our charitable activities are grounded in worship together and follow from discernment, in our meetings for church affairs, of the actions we should take. They take place across the Area Meeting, often carried out in our Local Meetings. Separate reports from each of the Local Meetings are appended after the Trustees’ Report: these give a good flavour of the life and activities in our communities in 2021. Trustees receive updates at each of our scheduled meetings to keep us informed.

Local Meetings also make voluntary collections for Quaker, and other, charities. Opportunities for such collections after meetings for worship were fewer in 2021 because of premises being closed.

The Area Meeting owns two meeting houses. Both were open for hire by organisations serving the community during the periods in 2021 when public health restrictions allowed.

The Area Meeting also owns a Burial Ground in a residential area of Bath. Having reached its capacity for burials some time ago, this walled garden is being sensitively reconfigured as a quiet space for Friends and the community to enjoy. An agreement was made during the year for a local therapeutic group to use the garden from time to time in the warmer weather.

Young people in the Area Meeting have formed strong bonds with those in two neighbouring Area Meetings. Weekly get-togethers online became routine over the year, with others from Yorkshire and Gloucestershire joining in. All of this was supported by a Youth Development Worker employed by Britain Yearly Meeting to work on behalf of our Area Meeting in conjunction with two neighbouring Area Meetings. The three Meetings provide the funding for this employed worker, and we renewed a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the Meetings to manage the arrangement for a further three years.

The young people’s weekly online meetings for games, cooking and discussion continued through the autumn, alternating West of England gatherings and joint sessions with Sheffield/Yorkshire young people. As the Covid-19 risk declined, it was possible to resume monthly face-to-face sessions. The December meeting was hosted by Bath, using a room at Manvers Street Baptist Church: it was the first time in the life of the project that one of those in-person sessions had taken place somewhere other than Bristol, which had normally been the most convenient location. We were glad to pay back a little of the generous hospitality our young Friends and attenders have enjoyed.

Quakers in Britain have had a longstanding involvement with prison work and concern for matters relating to criminal justice. One of our members is a prison chaplain at HMP Erlestoke. Our Area Meeting provided the funding for her to attend the Prison Chaplains Conference.

Of course, many Friends and attenders in our meetings are also individually involved in other charitable and community activities that are not part of our Area Meeting. Often these are other examples of Quaker faith in action, and in many cases those Friends and attenders will be cared for and supported by others in our Meetings.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a concern for many Friends and attenders across the Area Meeting, and many are individually involved with the activities in their communities, with environmentally concerned groups including Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon, Sustainable Devizes, and Extinction Rebellion.

Two Friends from our Area Meeting went to Glasgow in November 2021 at the time of the COP26 (26th Conference of the Parties) negotiations to limit and reduce the effects of anthropogenic global warming. They joined the protests that sought to influence the policymakers, demanding real change to make a difference. Closer to home, two silent vigils were held in Devizes during the Conference upholding delegates as they made their pledges to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment.

Work has been carried out in recent years to reduce the carbon footprint of our two meeting houses. The solar panels at Devizes are continuing to function well. At Bradford on Avon, the records of annual fuel consumption showed a reduction compared with the previous year.

Many of our meetings and much of our business remained online during the year, to reduce the risks of catching and spreading Covid-19. Travelling less has reduced our carbon footprint and shown us a more sustainable way of being together. We will continue our new practice of holding blended Area Meetings where the technology makes it possible.

Work behind the scenes

Much of our work as Trustees is carried out behind the scenes. It involves caring for Friends and others to whom we have a duty of care, looking after property, checking on rental premises, and managing our finances.

We held six meetings of the Trustees in 2021. Five took place online, using Zoom, and one in-person (but socially distanced) meeting was held at Bradford on Avon Meeting House during a brief period of greater confidence in the state of public health.

Caring for Friends and others

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM, the national Quaker charity) issued guidance on safeguarding policy and procedure in response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). BYM's Recording Clerk commented: "The report makes recommendations for improving safeguarding across religious organisations and settings. We look forward to considering the details and any implications for Quaker communities."

"All faith bodies," he said, "including Quakers, need to examine the organisational and cultural barriers which put children at risk of abuse." He went on "The Inquiry's findings are fair, clear and helpful. The Inquiry has prompted Quakers to make improvements, such as creating a new national case management database. Quakers in Britain now work much more closely with local Quaker groups to record and share information appropriately." Our Area Meeting considered and adopted the guidance during the year, in order to play our part in exercising particular care for children and vulnerable adults in our meetings. We appointed Alison Hillis as our Safeguarding Coordinator, and she started introducing the guidance to those who hold relevant roles in our Meetings. Like other parts of BYM, we have signed up with thirtyone:eight, the specialist safeguarding organisation (previously the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service known as CCPAS), to provide the necessary training.

We had no safeguarding incidents to report in 2021.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has been a further area where Trustees have been particularly conscious of needing to exercise due care themselves and to promote a coordinated approach across our Local Meetings. Throughout the year, Trustees checked risk assessments relating to their six venues and advised on how to reopen safely when public health restrictions on social mixing were eased. For the meeting houses, this duty of care included hirers as well as Friends and attenders.

We are responsible for looking after two employees: our Warden at Bradford on Avon, and our Meeting House Manager at Devizes. Both had regular meetings with the Area Meeting Supervisor of Employees. Such meetings provide an opportunity to raise both routine, and Covid-19-related, questions and for any matters of doubt or concern to be addressed.

Caring for Friends and attenders includes proper handling of the personal data held by Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. This is a legal requirement under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We created a new role of Local Meeting Data Steward during the year to provide additional focus in this area.

No data breaches were recorded in 2021.

Looking after property

Public health restrictions continued to affect the running of our meeting houses in Bradford on Avon and Devizes in 2021. Both were opened again for meetings for

worship and for hirers during periods when it was safe to do so. Such decisions were agreed with Trustees, based on careful risk assessments.

The two meeting houses have their own local premises committees to deal with routine matters, with the Trustees being responsible for ensuring that health and safety matters are properly handled. We carried out an audit of the systems and processes during the year and were satisfied that good care is being taken.

Trustees follow good practice in commissioning five-yearly surveys for each of the meeting houses. The quinquennial survey on Devizes Meeting House took place during the year and its report will inform plans for future maintenance.

The reconfiguration of Bath Meeting's Burial Ground continued throughout the year, led by its local committee and overseen by Trustees. Accessibility from the road outside has been improved, and a mains water connection was in train at the end of the year, with the aim of making management of the garden during dry weather much easier. Plans to erect a simple shelter are in progress.

The lease of Bath Meeting House to Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd began early in the year and continued at the year end. (It will finish when the sale is finally completed.) Trustees continued work on the legal aspects of the arrangements and were delighted to be invited to see the transformation of the building in a guided tour before the bookshop opening.

Checking on rental premises

Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge Local Meetings use rented rooms for their meetings. The Trustees check the risk assessments which are provided by the premises managers as part of our annual health and safety audit. During 2021, we also looked at particular risks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Inadequate ventilation and insufficient room for Friends to be socially distanced meant that meetings for worship and for church affairs had to be moved online for much of the year.

Managing finance

Trustees are responsible for managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings. At each Trustees' meeting, we receive an up-to-date report from the Bookkeeper and the Area Meeting Treasurer summarising the financial affairs across the Area Meeting.

We operate with centralised bank accounts such that all receipts and payments authorised by Local Meetings go through the Area Meeting bank accounts. Our Bookkeeper sends regular finance reports to Local Meeting treasurers so they can exercise control over their funds and take decisions on expenditure, within agreed financial parameters.

Annual accounts for 2021

The full accounts are set out on pages 13–20.

Trustees are pleased to report an overall surplus for the year of £32,093. This comprises £55,116 unrestricted surplus, less the distribution of £23,023 from the Bath Meeting House Appeal Fund. We ended the year with £180,535 of available reserves in our Unrestricted Fund.

All those who are part of the life of our Meetings are invited to make donations to support local, regional, and national Quaker work. Our income for the year includes £71,871 from such donations. We encourage donors to look beyond the local need for funds and are pleased to report that half of total donations in 2021 were allocated by Friends to support national work under the auspices of Britain Yearly Meeting.

2021 was the second year seriously affected by the global Covid-19 pandemic. While donations from Friends and attenders remained stable, our Meeting Houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes suffered from lack of lettings income. However, this was offset by income at Bath, where Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd has leased the Meeting House in advance of their forthcoming purchase of the premises. Our employment costs were offset to some extent by receipts through the Government Job Retention Scheme, and we are glad that our Warden and Meeting House Manager are working to get the lettings back up to pre-Covid-19 levels.

Following the exchange of contracts with Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd in March 2021, work began in earnest to contact all donors to the restricted Bath Meeting House Appeal. Trustees are pleased to report that we have distributed all of the fund, according to the wishes of the original donors. One of the suggestions given to donors was to allow Bath Meeting to use their donation towards the refurbishment of the Burial Ground and £8,491 was redirected in this way.

Bradford on Avon received a legacy of £2,000 during the year. Trustees also note the bequeathed holding of shares in the Community Interest Company *Abolish Empty Office Buildings* (Reg No 32137R) which remain unrealised and are therefore not accounted for in the balance sheet.

Trustees recognise the need to hold cash reserves in our Unrestricted Fund, sufficient to meet the normal expenditure in the Area Meeting, areas flagged up in the quinquennial surveys, and any unforeseen special expenditure that might arise from our properties. Our policy was reviewed and revised this year with the help of our Finance Team. Trustees are satisfied that the reserves we hold continue to be at acceptable levels.

We supported those attending conferences and training this year. This included Trustee training, support for our Prison Chaplain, safeguarding awareness training, and a course to improve the delivery of blended meetings. All these courses help us to better serve Quaker work in our Area Meeting.

Governance, including bankers, insurers, examiner of accounts

Governing document

The charity was originally registered in 2010, constituted by the Governing Document of North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (adopted 9 November 2008). On 5 June 2011, the Governing Document was amended to reflect the change of name to West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting, after a change in its constituent Local Meetings. On 27 June 2021, it was further amended to allow meetings for church affairs to be held solely online or combined with those attending in-person.

On 22 January 2020, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting agreed a Scheme with the Charity Commission that clearly established the governance responsibilities of the Area Meeting for the three meeting houses (Bath, Bradford on Avon, and Devizes) and the Burial Ground in Widcombe. As the Area Meeting is not an incorporated charity, Friends Trusts Ltd is named in the Scheme as the Custodian Trustee for the Area Meeting and its assets. The title deeds to the properties are held by Friends Trusts Ltd.

Trustees' appointment and training

The Trustees are members of the Area Meeting, appointed by the Area Meeting following nomination by the constituent Local Meetings.

Before any nomination is made, the Clerk to the Trustees obtains two references with an emphasis on financial integrity, one from within the Religious Society of Friends and one from outside. The nominee completes the Charity Commission's pro-forma trustee declaration that they are a fit and proper person to oversee financial, governance and employment matters in the Area Meeting.

The Clerk to the Trustees ensures that new Trustees understand their terms of reference, have access to past Minutes and to key documents, in particular the Governing Document and the Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings.

During the year, Trustees attended charity trustee training provided by a local firm of solicitors, and from thirtyone:eight on safeguarding. Trustees receive notice of any upcoming courses and are encouraged to attend.

Our bankers

- CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ
- Triodos Bank, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS

Our insurers

- Congregational & General Insurance plc, Currer House, Currer Street, Bradford BD1 5BA

Examiner of accounts

- Michael J Wilcox ACMA. OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Lane, Bath, BA2 2EL.

Looking ahead

As Trustees, we look forward to close engagement with our Area Meeting in session, and our Local Meetings, as we hope to emerge from the constraints and unfamiliarities of the pandemic period. There is much that we can do together to learn from the recent past.

We are fortunate in many ways. Our overall financial position is good. We have now been joined by a new Local Development Worker who will be serving Area Meetings including ours across the region. The transfer, and progress towards the completion of the sale, of Bath's Meeting House to Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd has simplified our management of properties. It has also brought some temporary income that has more than offset reductions caused by the loss of rental income during the pandemic.

Our numbers remain relatively stable, while we have noted a significant decline in national membership records across the last decade. Perhaps we are also fortunate to be part of an area to which Friends like to retire.

Our experience of the pandemic has shown us that some Quaker practice can be varied with good effect for different circumstances. Putting this alongside the lessons of the Simpler Meetings project—disseminated in large part through online seminars and web-based information—it is plain that there is much to think about for our future. To have both the financial means to do this, and new regional staff to help us, means that Trustees and our Area and Local Meetings face a time of opportunity that can significantly counter the risks and threat of ageing and decline.

Quakers tend not to proselytize, but we know that outreach is welcomed by those who would embrace our community and our religious practice. As we return to our meetings in person—as well as maintaining some good new online practice both for worship and for business and community purposes—we must hope to find the means to speak to the conditions of those around us as well as those already within our communities.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 18 July 2022
and signed on their behalf by



Sally Harris, Clerk to the Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I confirm that there are no other matters to which your attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Michael J Wilcox
OCL Accountancy
141 Englishcombe Lane
Bath, BA2 2EL



Date: 2/8/22

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 Total Funds £
Income and Endowments from					
Donations and legacies		86,521	-	86,521	74,080
Charitable activities					
Grants received for Quaker work		-		-	1,330
Investment income	3	54	10	64	433
Other income		82,614	-	82,614	36,522
Total income		169,188	10	169,198	112,365
Expenditure					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		109,747	26,304	136,051	110,063
Other		1,055	-	1,055	1,406
Total expenditure		110,801	26,304	137,105	111,469
Net income		58,387	(26,294)	32,093	897
Transfers between funds		(3,271)	3,271	-	-
		55,116	(23,023)	32,093	897
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		1,178,583	42,564	1,221,147	1,220,250
Total funds carried forward		1,233,699	19,541	1,253,240	1,221,147

Continuing operations

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 Total Funds £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	1,053,164	-	1,053,164	1,054,218
Current Assets					
Debtors	6	24,651	-	24,651	15,690
Cash at bank and in hand		170,843	19,541	190,384	170,772
		<u>195,494</u>	<u>19,541</u>	<u>215,035</u>	<u>186,462</u>
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	7	(14,959)	-	(14,959)	(19,533)
Net current assets		<u>180,535</u>	<u>19,541</u>	<u>200,076</u>	<u>166,929</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>1,233,699</u>	<u>19,541</u>	<u>1,253,240</u>	<u>1,221,147</u>
Net Assets		<u>1,233,699</u>	<u>19,541</u>	<u>1,253,240</u>	<u>1,221,147</u>
Funds	8				
Unrestricted funds				1,233,699	1,178,583
Restricted funds				19,541	42,564
Total funds				<u>1,253,240</u>	<u>1,221,147</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 18th July 2022 and signed on its behalf by:

Elaine Hunter - Trustee

Elaine Hunter

Sally Harris - Trustee

Sally Harris

The notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2021

1 Employees

The average number of employees during the year was 2.

2 Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefits entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (effective 1 January 2015)* and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is included on the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

Cash at Bank and In hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will normally result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided on plant & machinery at 25% on reducing balance in order to write off each of such assets over its estimated useful life.

The valuation of the meeting houses is subject to regular review. The Trustees consider that insured replacement cost is an unsuitable valuation basis because it does not reflect current values. Nor is the open market value considered appropriate for property held for Quaker-supported work. Recognition of underlying value at an average of £350,000 for the three meeting houses and burial ground gives a total of £1,050,000.

Going concern

In the opinion of the Trustees, the charity continues to be a going concern.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2021

	2021	2020
3 Investment income		
Deposit account income	<u>£ 64</u>	<u>£ 433</u>

4 Trustees' remuneration and benefits

During 2021 Trustee Debbie Nightingale acted as a self-employed bookkeeper for our Area Meeting. Her fees for the year totalled £3,420.

Trustee expenses

Trustee expenses of £474.63 (2020: £421.78) are included in Quaker Meeting activities.

The expenses, paid to 5 Trustees, cover training courses and reimbursement of incidental expenses.

5 Tangible fixed assets	Freehold property	Plant and machinery	Totals
Cost	£	£	£
At 1 January 2021 & 31 December 2021	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>31,601</u>	<u>1,081,601</u>
Depreciation			
At 1 January 2021	-	27,383	27,383
Charge for year	<u>-</u>	<u>1,055</u>	<u>1,055</u>
At 31 December 2021	<u>-</u>	<u>28,438</u>	<u>28,438</u>
Net Book Value			
At 31 December 2021	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>3,164</u>	<u>1,053,164</u>
At 31 December 2020	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>4,218</u>	<u>1,054,218</u>

6 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade debtors	24,139	15,337
Other debtors	<u>512</u>	<u>353</u>
	<u>24,651</u>	<u>15,690</u>

Following our insurance claim for loss of lettings income due to Covid-19 at Bradford on Avon and Devizes Meeting Houses, we have included a provision for an agreed amount totalling £16,704.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2021

7 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade creditors	13,294	18,196
Other creditors	1,664	1,337
	<u>14,959</u>	<u>19,533</u>

8 Movement in funds	At 1.1.21	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.12.21
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	1,178,583	58,387	(3,271)	1,233,699
Restricted funds		-		
Frome Building Fund	19,531	10	-	19,541
Bath Meeting House Appeal	23,033	(26,304)	3,271	-
	<u>42,564</u>	<u>(26,294)</u>	<u>3,271</u>	<u>19,541</u>
Total funds	<u>1,221,147</u>	<u>32,093</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,253,240</u>

Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
Unrestricted funds	£	£	£
General fund	169,188	(110,801)	58,387
Restricted funds			
Frome Building Fund	10	-	10
Bath Meeting House Appeal	(26,304)	-	(26,304)
	<u>(26,294)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(26,294)</u>
Total funds	<u>142,894</u>	<u>(110,801)</u>	<u>32,093</u>

Additional note on Fund Accounting

The Frome restricted fund represents an amount originally set aside by the Trustees for the purposes of purchasing a Meeting House in Frome.

Funds raised by Appeal for the refurbishment of Bath Meeting House were all dispensed according to the donors' instructions during the year and the bank account was closed at the end of 2021.

The remaining funds are the combined unrestricted funds of the constituent meetings which can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives, at the discretion of the Trustees. .

9 Related Party disclosures

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2021

10 Contributions and grants

Accounts detailed statement (final pg)		
Individuals	There were no grants to individuals during 2021	
Institutions	£	
BYM annual giving via schedule	35,432	see note i) below
Repayment of Bath Meeting House Appeal funds	26,304	see note ii) below
Quaker charities (8 transactions)	<u>510</u>	
	62,246	
Non Quaker charities (2 transactions)	<u>100</u>	
	<u>62,346</u>	
i) BYM schedule contributions are included in our accounts as gift aid is claimed by WWESAM.		
ii) BMHA funds were dispensed according to the donors instructions and restricted fund closed.		
The number of transactions for other payments shows that none is materially significant to require individual disclosure.		

Acting as agent collections, not forming part of accounts	£
Quaker charities	
Non Quaker charities	<u>8</u>
	<u>8</u>
(2020: £546)	

11 Governance & Accounts remuneration	£
Bookkeeping services (per Note 4)	3,420
Payroll services/Furlough Claims (Blomfields)	674
Independent Examination Accounts (pt2020&2021)	1,134
Accreditation Fees/Software subscription	<u>464</u>
	<u>5,692</u>

12 Staff Costs	£
Staff remuneration:Warden & Lettings Manager	11,427
Council tax paid for Warden's flat	<u>1,053</u>
	<u>12,480</u>

We received Job Retention Scheme payments during 2021 of £3,264 (2020: £3,365)
There were no Employers National Insurance contributions due.
There were no other employee benefits.

**Detailed Statement of Financial Activities
for the year ending 31 December 2021**

	2021 £	2020 £	2019 £
INCOME			
Voluntary Income			
Annual giving donations	71,871	70,478	63,556
Donations	12,650	1,602	5,970
Legacies	2,000	2,000	-
	<u>86,521</u>	<u>74,080</u>	<u>69,526</u>
Investment Income			
Deposit account interest	64	433	469
Charitable activities			
Grants		1,330	700
Other income			
From properties	79,350	23,157	46,976
From Local Authority Grants		10,000	
HMRC Job Retention Scheme	3,264	3,365	
Total income	<u>169,198</u>	<u>112,365</u>	<u>117,671</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Charitable activities			
Warden's & Manager's pay	12,480	12,633	12,900
Fees, rents, taxes & insurance	23,747	28,961	39,165
Meeting house improvements			10,262
Repairs & running costs	22,985	23,498	19,486
Life of the meeting	8,800	3,823	11,428
Grants to institutions	36,042	35,431	32,512
Grants to individuals			1,437
Repayment of Bath Meeting House Appeal	26,304		
	<u>130,358</u>	<u>104,346</u>	<u>127,190</u>
Other			
Depreciation of plant & machinery	1,055	1,406	1,875
Support costs			
Governance costs			
Examination & accountancy	5,692	5,717	1,665
Total resources expended	<u>137,105</u>	<u>111,469</u>	<u>130,730</u>
NET INCOME	<u>32,093</u>	<u>897</u>	<u>(13,059)</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Reports of the life of our Local Meetings in 2021

Bath

Our Zoom meetings for worship were so well received that we increased their duration from thirty to forty-five minutes each Sunday morning and continued to hold shorter evening meetings for worship via Zoom on Tuesday evenings. Many of us were in well-established fellowship groups, also meeting by Zoom, which enriched our lives. For some Friends and attenders who prefer not to meet by Zoom, our “technology-free” meetings for worship continued on Wednesday mornings for those worshipping in their own homes.

We were able to return to in-person meetings for worship for two months in the autumn and winter, in rooms at the Bath Central United Reformed Church (BCURC). However, we decided to pause again in December after another increase in the local and national Covid-19 infection rates. One in-person children’s meeting was held. Friends and attenders in Keynsham also resumed their twice-monthly meetings at The Chocolate Quarter retirement village.

In March, we finally said farewell to our Meeting House in York Street. Following the exchange of contracts with, and the completion of this first phase of the sale to, Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd we laid down our premises committee. The former appeal fund was closed and the money which had been donated was returned with thanks or redistributed according to the original donors’ wishes.

We began to consider where we might want to move to, and how we can accommodate Friends and attenders meeting both in person and remotely via Zoom—including the possibility of arranging “blended” meetings. This process was accelerated by the news, late in the year, that BCURC might move from its current premises.

We increased activity in our Burial Ground in Widcombe. We were prompted to consider building a simple shelter that might encourage use of this quiet space by a wider community—in particular by a local therapeutic charity—and facilitate more open-air meetings for worship in the summer months. We made an agreement with the charity to use the Burial Ground for its work. A pre-planning advice application for the shelter was considered favourably by the Council. We also arranged for a new mains water connection to the Burial Ground after the experience of a prolonged, very dry, summer period. With no further space for burials, we reviewed our policy on interring and scattering ashes, and determined to make a formal record of all those buried in the Burial Ground, those whose ashes had been scattered there, and those who were remembered there in other ways.

Those of us working with children in our Meeting began to update their training and, where necessary, checks with the Disclosure & Barring Service, in line with new guidelines for safeguarding.

We continued to support the Quaker Youth Project financially and with volunteers. We also made plans to send two Young Friends to Young Friends Gathering in spring 2022 with the help of our Quaker Youth Worker.

In March, we hosted Area Meeting and welcomed the Inclusion & Diversity Coordinator for Quakers in Britain to help us to think about contemporary racism.

One of our Friends attended the 26th Conference of the Parties to protest at the failure of governments, industry, international finance, and other parties to take effective action to halt or even to slow down climate change.

As the minutes from our business meetings show, we welcomed new names in the array of Friends giving their time and energies to keep the administration of our Meeting in good order, and we thanked those who had served us who were stepping down. For much of the year, we had to contend with some separations imposed by being able, or not, to meet in person or via Zoom, and to respect and accommodate as best we could individuals' limitations and choices. We were busy and productive in groups and worked hard to avoid forgetting or leaving anyone out. We looked forward to becoming one gathering again with a new place to hold our meetings in 2022.

We presented a wreath of white poppies at the annual commemoration of the war dead at the memorial in Victoria Park. We wired the wreath to the railings, but it was again taken a few days later.

We remembered two of our community who died in 2021 and two who died in 2020. We said a fond farewell to a long-standing Friend who moved to a new job in Devon. We welcomed a new member of the Meeting.

Bradford on Avon

Unlike many other meeting houses and churches, Bradford on Avon Meeting House remained open for worship on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, a typical Sunday morning worship would bring together three or four of us, for whom joining on Zoom was not feasible, in the Meeting House, with the warden's laptop sitting in the corner to make the link with twenty-five or so on Zoom. A typical Sunday Meeting towards the end of the year would consist of one large circle of around twenty in the Meeting House, with eight to ten others joining over Zoom, clearly visible on a new large screen, with visibility in the other direction improved through a good quality wide angle camera. Sound quality in both directions also improved, and Friends commented that they felt more included.

Attendance on Wednesday evenings remained very low but steady.

Earlier in the year, we continued with the occasional all-age meeting for worship to include our children, who now range between about one and nine years old. Later, we resumed our monthly children's outdoor meetings in Frankleigh House garden. Following a couple of trial runs, weekly children's meetings in the Meeting House

restarted in October—except once a month, when the monthly outdoor meetings take place.

Our four fellowship groups met more regularly than in the past—mostly online to start with, then gradually shifting to in-person or “blended” meetings.

The Healing Group met regularly online.

During 2021, we were saddened by the deaths of five long-standing Friends. We were pleased to end the year on a high note by welcoming a new member of our Meeting.

The first significant event in 2021 was our annual social evening. This time it was held online on 6 February, with around forty attending, most wearing hats!

In April, we held an online event on “Our White Privilege: an exploratory discussion” that was well attended and thought provoking.

Our elders organised various “blended” events over the course of the year: a worship-sharing session on ministry; a session called “This I affirm”, on our beliefs and experiences; an informative presentation from Quaker Peace & Social Witness entitled “Quakers, climate justice, and COP26”; a highly participatory session on “How our Local Meeting works”; and finally, as part of Area Meeting in December, a session on the Simpler Meetings project.

Together with the local Amnesty group, we brought another Journeymen Theatre production to Bradford on Avon: “Back Door Parole” played in June to a socially distanced capacity audience of seventy in St Margaret’s Hall.

Rounding up our list of activities in the year, we had a successful give & take event in June, and our annual outdoor meeting for worship near the Tithe Barn in July.

One Friend raised over £7,000—by cycling twenty-two miles per day for fifty-one consecutive days—for providing computers and IT support to children in Tubas, in the West Bank. Others joined her for some days.

Chippenham

2021 was another strange year during which we met sometimes on Zoom, occasionally in a Friend’s barn, and latterly at our usual meeting place. Nonetheless, it was a year in which we saw our Meeting grow, with three new regular attenders and more Friends feeling able to meet in person, such that we are averaging ten present on most Sundays. At these meetings, we sometimes lit a candle in a wooden candle holder made by prisoners from HMP Long Larten. A beautiful piece of work, it reminded us to think of those held in custody.

We held several Bible study evenings in one of our homes.

Our increasing confidence in using technology was one positive outcome from the periods of lockdown and we held a regular monthly Zoom meeting which enabled

Friends and attenders from further away—or who are unable to get out—to join in worship.

We met once in the barn at one Friend's farm and appreciated the silence and peace it offered. With its earth floor and high roof, it felt like a place where early Quakers might have met.

Once again, we were able to lay a white poppy wreath at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday. With sustainability in mind, we made our own wreath this year using willow for the base and stitching into it twenty-four white poppies surrounded by sprigs of bay picked from our gardens.

Our further efforts at improving our sustainability as a Meeting were more difficult. As many of us as possible walk or cycle to meeting on a Sunday, so although meeting by Zoom reduced our travel footprint a little it was not significant. We also meet in rented premises where we had no control over heating, lighting, *etc.* Individual Friends continued to try to adapt personal behaviour to reduce their carbon footprint by being environmentally thoughtful in running their households and encouraging family and friends to do likewise.

One Friend in our Meeting continued her work as a prison chaplain. She has now been a Quaker prison chaplain for five years and well remembers her first day and how daunting it was to go inside and walk around the prison. Now, with more experience and knowledge, she is more relaxed and feels that she is able to contribute in all areas of the prison community. Her work is varied and fulfilling, and she is supported by two Quaker volunteers who come into the prison once a month for Quaker meeting and meet her regularly to discuss her work there.

We looked forward to again being able to meet socially as well as at meeting for worship, and again to strengthening the Quaker ties that bind us.

Devizes

We had a mixed year with “blended” meetings beginning and then being interrupted as the omicron Covid-19 variant took hold. While still meeting only online, we hoped to be able to see each other in person soon. There were members we had not seen for a long while and we missed them—though some have kept in touch through friendship groups.

We had planned memorial meetings for two of our number, but they had to be postponed due to the pandemic. We hope to hold them as soon as possible.

We were saddened by the death of our last warden who had also served as an elder in our Meeting.

We were sorry to lose another from our community who left to move to New Earswick for family reasons. We wished her and her husband well in their new home.

We were able to let out our rooms in periods when that was permitted and were pleased to enable some groups to support their clients and members.

We asked hirers, Friends, and attenders to take great care when using the building and were pleased that they helped us by adhering to the precautions we asked them to follow. We were grateful for the support of our contract cleaner, who willingly adapted to the changes we had to make.

We continued to use the services of a local gardener on a weekly basis to keep the garden in order and others from our Meeting came along to help at work parties. The garden is much appreciated by hirers.

On 2 October, after much delay, we were pleased to welcome a member of Woodbrooke's staff to lead a workshop called "Exploring Quaker Spirituality". He gave us much food for thought and we plan to continue to discuss the ideas raised that day.

We held two silent vigils in the market place during the COP26 climate negotiations, supported by some from other Meetings and friends from Sustainable Devizes. Our aim was to uphold the delegates to the conference as they made their pledges to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment.

We laid a wreath of white poppies at the Devizes war memorial, remembering those who had died or suffered in war and conflict.

On 20 November, we held a Fairtrade coffee morning and were pleased to see friends from around the town. Some popular items were not available due to the transport problems during the pandemic, but we had sales of over £90. We recognized that producers in poorer parts of the world were encountering more difficulties due to the virus as well as climate change, and that they needed our help even more than usual.

Frome

Frome Friends continued to find ways to meet for worship, despite the Key Centre still being unavailable as our normal venue for meeting because of the pandemic. Those who were happy with technology met every Wednesday evening via Zoom, and we thanked our Friend who hosted these virtual meetings. Some Frome Friends worshipped via Zoom with Bath Friends on Sunday mornings. We were also able, on occasion, to hold in-person meetings for worship in Friends' gardens and in the Great Elm village hall. We were grateful to all who made this possible. Unfortunately, we were not able to hold any children's meetings in 2021.

We know that some have not been able to join in as they would have liked with these different ways of worship. Others miss the stability of a regular place to meet. We considered alternative places, but many venues were unavailable or unsuitable during the pandemic. Our pastoral care group worked hard in reviewing this, in the hope of finding a more permanent home. In December, they identified a possible long-term place for us to meet, so Frome Friends looked forward to meeting in Christchurch

Parish Hall, Park Road in the new year (2022). We thanked the group for their diligent work in seeking out this venue.

We held our first meeting in person in central Frome at the *Cheese and Grain* on 24 October and continued to do so throughout the winter—except for the first Sunday in the month when we gathered at Great Elm village hall. The wider life of our small Meeting has also been constrained by the pandemic, although we valued the opportunities for fellowship after Zoom meetings. We also held evening meetings online to hear and reflect on poems by George Herbert and Gillian Allnut. In the autumn, our small Light Group started to meet again once a month in a one of our homes.

The Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator held two Zoom meetings to update Frome Friends who hold particular responsibilities covered by the new safeguarding procedures.

We were joyful that two of our number held their commitment ceremony at Bradford on Avon meeting house on 1 October.

We held a meeting in the autumn that was open to all Area Meeting Friends. Introduced by the recently retired Director of the Prison Reform Trust, it considered the question of whether we can engage in peace building without directly addressing social and criminal justice.

We looked forward to resuming meeting for worship in person in Frome in 2022 while also being able to enjoy worship with the wider Quaker community through modern technology.

Trowbridge

Already a simple meeting, we became even simpler in 2021.

We were quieter. One Friend resigned and reported feeling better for it—quite humbling. Ministry was rare on Zoom, but we maintained our long tradition of reading at the start of worship from sources Quaker and beyond: we continue to find this a rich practice and circulating the readings by email is making them more widely accessible. The Seymour Community Hub, where we had met, became a fresh food bank and a team base for services for local young people, so we needed to disband our library and release our book trolley. The book trolley was greeted with joy by a nearby village playgroup with few resources. The books went to good homes, and to The Bookbarn near Radstock which recycles books without resorting to landfill. Thus we became paperless, except for *The Friend* and our own contact list. Thankfully, we are all on email and telephone, so keeping in touch is unaffected.

We were mostly in good spirits and managed two simultaneous but separate Zoom and in-person meetings before the omicron Covid-19 variant halted us for a few weeks.

Some of us were very appreciative of two other Area Meeting-wide Quaker groups on Zoom: our Quaker Youth Worker and young Quakers' anti-racist group, and more recently an anti-racist reading group facilitated by a Bath Friend. These both shifted consciousness and the capacity for finding both physical positioning and peaceful words to question and to create boundaries for moments when silence would be actively condoning inhumane behaviour and perspectives. We were deeply grateful to those organising and participating in these groups.

We were also grateful for those who, through their skills and work, upheld the Area Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting, which makes it possible for us to continue being here as a Quaker meeting.

We looked forward to meeting again in the park for coffee and to resuming our meetings in person.

WEST WILTSHIRE AND EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

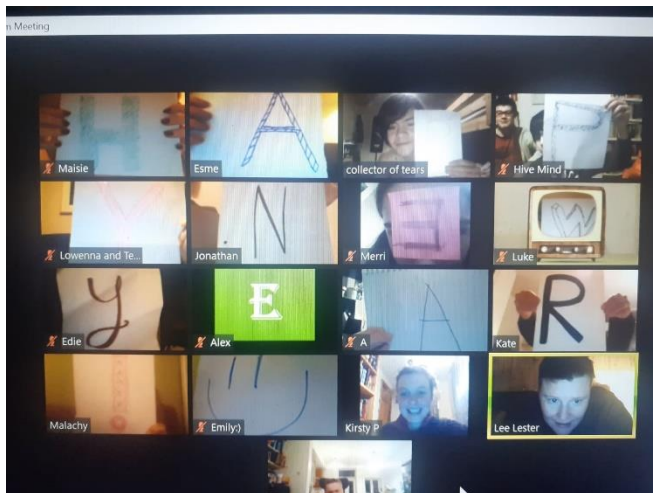
England & Wales - Charity number 1134534

Accounts

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting

Annual Report of the Trustees 2020



West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting

Registered address:

Friends Meeting House

1 Whiteheads Lane

Bradford on Avon

BA15 1JU

Registered Charity Number 1134534

Email: **info@wwesquakers.org.uk**

A different year

This report was compiled after almost a year of public health restrictions caused by the coronavirus / Covid-19 pandemic experienced by the world in 2020, continuing into 2021 when this report was completed. We recognise that this report may have a particular historical interest for future readers, for its evidence of how Friends adapted Quaker practices in this year, for the new vocabulary of pandemic that we now use with familiarity, and for references to the new technology most of us have learned to use to meet and communicate.

Here are the words and phrases used in this report that we now use routinely in everyday speech, but which only a year ago were used only by specialists or had not even been coined.

Kate Macdonald, editor

blended meetings / together while apart

Coronavirus / Covid-19 / covid

covid secure / lockdown / furlough

shelter in place / socially distanced

breakout groups / muted / Zoom

Build Back Better

Annual Report of the Trustees 2020

Trustees in 2020

- Bath: Jane Stephenson (Trustee and Clerk), Kate Macdonald (Deputy Trustee)
- Bradford on Avon: Angela Le Grice (Trustee)
- Chippenham: Debbie Nightingale (Trustee)
- Devizes: Robin Brookes (Trustee)
- Frome: Elaine Hunter (Trustee & AM Treasurer)
- Trowbridge: Alison Hillis (Trustee)

Charitable object

The object of West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, primarily in its administrative area of West Wiltshire and East Somerset, and also beyond.

In times without public health restrictions our Meetings for Worship are open to the public and to Friends and Attenders, for worship each Sunday as well as occasionally at other times during the week, such as the Wednesday evening meeting held at Bradford on Avon Meeting House and on Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings at Bath Meeting at the Central United Reformed Church. We also support the emerging Chocolate Factory Worshipping Group in Keynsham. Voluntary collections are regularly made during our

Meetings for Worship for passing to Quaker and other charities in furtherance of our charitable purpose.

Public benefit

The work of Trustees ensures that income and property are used to further the Area Meeting's objectives as set out in our charitable purpose and in the Governing Document adopted in June 2011. We are aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on our responsibilities concerning public benefit. Our activities as Quakers are, we hope and believe, beneficial to the public. While we focus our activities on the 'protected characteristic' of those who join with us in Quaker worship, our Meetings for Worship are open to everyone. We strive to do no harm, and our work does not benefit individuals financially or for their personal gain.

In 2020 this work included:

- Managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six Local Meetings.
- Supporting the business and life of the Area Meeting in the absence of an appointed clerk to Area Meeting.
- Learning more about how to uphold policies on safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk from harm, and health and safety.
- Working with Bristol Area Meeting, North Somerset Area Meeting and Quaker Life on the centrally-financed Youth Development Worker project, to encourage and facilitate participation by 11- to 18-

year-old Friends in Meetings across the West of England.

- Providing a Quaker Prison Chaplain for HMP Erlestoke.
- Managing the impact of the public health restrictions on how we use our Meeting Houses at Bradford on Avon and Devizes.
- Protecting the well-being and job security of the Resident Warden at Bradford on Avon Meeting House and the Hirings Manager at Devizes Meeting House, with the help of local Friends serving on House / Premises Committees.
- Managing the legal preparations for the sale of Bath Meeting House, and progressing the sale.
- Managing the maintenance and development of Bath Burial Ground.
- Renting out flats at Bradford on Avon and Devizes Meeting Houses, and garages at Devizes.
- Supporting Friends' attendance at courses, conferences and Quaker events.

The Meeting Houses were open for hire and use, in line with our religious and charitable purposes, by community groups to use them for their own meetings. These include environmental groups, self-help groups, the University of the Third Age, yoga, meditation and Pilates groups. The Devizes Meeting House is used by local Muslims for worship, until they can build a mosque. Where public health restrictions permitted, we made the rooms available for hire for the public benefit.

Sustainability

Oversight: strengthening our community's work for better sustainability

We are committed to supporting our young people and integrating work with them more closely with Quaker strategic work and the life of our Meetings. In that we unite with the wider Britain Yearly Meeting strategy of creating a simpler, sustainable and inclusive organisation.

Bradford on Avon Friends have committed themselves to supporting the Build Back Better campaign locally and nationally.

Eldership: our commitment to sustainability in our faith

All Meetings accepted the challenge of meeting online using Zoom (though other video conferencing services are available), which led to a delighted new appreciation of how we can avoid using petrol and meet more people online.

We continued to be cognizant of the need to keep finding ways to reduce our consumption and our ecological footprint in the world.

Our awareness of nature and its blessings was profoundly strengthened during the first lockdown in spring 2020 when the air pollution we have normalised disappeared, and the natural world became louder and more necessary in our lives.

Right ordering: Quaker core activity and property as these relate to sustainability

Trustees and Bath Friends continued to actively develop the Bath Burial Ground with the intention of making this

available to the wider public as a green space for reflection and quiet leisure.

Witness: work for policy and system change

We considered how we could support the international movement to establish legislation making ecocide a criminal matter, and while we did not find unity as an Area Meeting, Friends learned much about this matter.

Bradford of Avon Meeting hosted meetings of support groups for Extinction Rebellion, and Friends took part in XR activities, with Diana Francis arrested for her participation.

We laid wreaths containing white poppies for peace at war memorials on Remembrance Sunday.

Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles

The Quaker Youth Project hosted a workshop at Area Meeting in March which enabled young people to connect with other Quakers of all ages and focus on what we are all called to do in the face of the climate and ecological crisis.

Devizes Meeting invested in a PAT tester, which will lengthen the life of electrical devices, for the Meeting and the community.

Governing document

The charity was originally registered in 2010, constituted by the Governing Document of North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain (adopted 9 November 2008). On 5 June 2011 the Governing Document was amended

to reflect the change of name to West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting, after a change in its constituent Local Meetings.

Governance and conduct

Six members of the Area Meeting Finance & Property Committee make up the Trustee body. They are appointed by Area Meeting following nomination by the constituent Local Meetings. If the Local Meeting can bring forward a second name, a deputy is also appointed.

The appointment of Trustees is subject to receipt of satisfactory references, one from inside the Society of Friends and one from outside, which must refer particularly to financial integrity. A nominated Trustee must also sign a formal Trustee Declaration based on the pro-forma document from the Charity Commission, which establishes that the Friend is a fit and proper person to oversee financial, governance and employment matters in the Area Meeting. These probity checks are carried out by the Clerk of the Committee who also ensures that new Trustees have access to past Minutes and key documents.

Trustees work under the guidance of Quaker Stewardship Committee; they all receive a copy of the QSC Handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings. They take part in training, and attend briefings and conferences organised at Friends House and Woodbrooke.

In 2020 Trustees attended training provided by a local firm of solicitors (Stone King, in Bath) on subjects of interest to trustees and charities, and from Thirtyone:Eight (previously the Churches Child Protection

Advisory Service) on safeguarding. Our Treasurer attended training for Quaker Treasurers. Trustees are grateful for the advice and support given by staff, officers and committees of Britain Yearly Meeting, and for the fellowship experience at gatherings of Trustees.

The Trustees met nine times in 2020, initially at Meeting Houses and, after March 22 when lockdown began, in virtual video conferencing online using Zoom. We were able to hold a socially distanced but in-person Strategy Day at Bradford on Avon Meeting House in September during a brief cessation of lockdown, which was much enjoyed. We reviewed our roles as Trustees for the Area Meeting and made plans for the better provision of succession planning, a new Safeguarding Coordinator, and better storage of our paper and digital records.

Future plans

Trustees are planning to support the wishes of the Area Meeting in the coming year by:

- Developing the Quaker Burial Ground at Bath as a beautiful space for worship and community. We are keen to make the space more accessible and to improve facilities for visitors.
- Helping to fund a Regional Youth Worker - working alongside the Area Meetings of Bristol and North Somerset, as this post will no longer be funded centrally.
- Enabling our local meetings to install improved technology and to enable greater access to our meetings.

Property, employment and other management

We own Meeting Houses in Bath, Bradford on Avon and Devizes. Chippenham, Frome and Trowbridge local meetings rent rooms at (respectively) a local community centre, school and church for their Meetings. We also own and maintain the Burial Ground at Widcombe, Bath, and welcomed the establishment of a Steering Committee and Steward for its maintenance.

Trustees agreed a scheme with the Charity Commission for all the properties held by Area Meeting at the end of December 2019. This scheme details the legal basis on which properties are held by the Charity. Friends Trusts Ltd is the Custodian Trustee for all properties held by the Charity and none are permanently endowed.

Our responsibilities as employers in 2020 were uppermost in our minds during the public health restrictions. While the Meeting Houses in Devizes and Bradford on Avon remained closed we used the government's furlough scheme to cover the salaries of our Hirings Manager and Warden. We kept in close touch with them to ensure that their concerns about their homes, salaries, work and mental and physical health were allayed as much as possible.

In other areas, Trustees continued to attend to all the management matters recorded in the 2019 report. We successfully applied for a coronavirus grant to help with our properties' costs, and managed the closure and reopening of the Meeting Houses and Burial Ground under changing public health restrictions, and established new risk assessment procedures and

guidance for meeting in person when it was possible during the pandemic. We supported Bath Local Meeting by managing the sale of its Meeting House, and the subsequent negotiations with the buyer through our agents and solicitors.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding was on the agenda of every meeting of Trustees. No incidents were reported during 2020.

From the middle of 2020 we began to revise our safeguarding documents to take into account the new model safeguarding documents drawn up by Britain Yearly Meeting in consultation with Thirtyone:Eight. This work will be completed in 2021, led by Alison Hillis as Safeguarding Coordinator and supported by her deputy, Judith Eversley.

Youth development work

The three-year legacy-funded Quaker Youth Work pilot project continued throughout 2020, growing in ambition and scope despite – yet partly because of – the sudden and dramatic changes occasioned by lockdown.

Monthly evening meetings mostly in Bristol were rapidly replaced by weekly and even bi-weekly video calls; the planned residential weekend went ahead as a virtual residential, with a full timetable including shared meals, online craft, cooking and exercise breaks, Epilogues of course, and a bedtime story. Meeting online meant that young Friends from further afield could participate. This has been true in general for most of the year: Quaker youth work in the west of England is now even more

firmly embedded in national Quaker youth work. The work in our region, so well led by Kirsty Philbrick, has been exemplary in drawing in 'More Ages', bringing Quaker communities together across the generations.

The project has now been externally evaluated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the evaluation has been shared widely in Britain Yearly Meeting. This minute from Quaker Life Central Committee sums up a general feeling: 'We have been enthused to hear of all the great youth work being done and only wish we had the resources to afford much more of this.' The local support group representing our Area Meeting, North Somerset Area Meeting and Bristol Area Meeting is prepared to build on the success of this project in creating Quaker communities.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

GDPR issues are a standard agenda item at Trustees' meetings. No data breaches were recorded this year. We heard that Bath Meeting was revising its practices for data protection and management with a new Data Steward.

Finance

Our financial position and financial arrangements are set out in the Annual Accounts, available separately.

The Covid 19 pandemic was the dominant feature for our 2020 financial position, resulting in greatly reduced income from lettings of our Meeting Houses. We monitored our finances closely throughout the year, and took all possible steps to minimise outlay. Our Warden at

Bradford-on-Avon and our Bookings Manager at Devizes were furloughed, and we benefited from the Government Job Retention Scheme. We also received grant assistance from Bath & NE Somerset Council.

During 2020 we successfully marketed Bath Meeting House, and progressed the sale with our chosen purchaser, Topping & Company, Booksellers Ltd. This process was complicated and protracted by the current situation, but we hope that contracts will be exchanged in the first quarter of 2021. There have been unavoidable professional costs associated with the sale.

We are very thankful that our members have continued to maintain their regular donations. The level of giving has increased this year: a very positive response to the financial challenges of the current situation. The tenants of our rented property have also been able to continue with their payments. This has helped to reduce the financial impact of the pandemic on our reserves. We continue to monitor our finances closely, using the Quickbooks program that was set up last year.

Reserves Policy

Trustees recognise the need to hold cash reserves in our Unrestricted Fund, sufficient to meet both the normal pattern of expenditure in the Area Meeting (6-12 months expenditure) and also any unforeseen special expenditure that might arise from our properties. The reserves we hold are still at acceptable levels.

Our bankers

CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ

Triodos Bank, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS

Co-op Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP
(account closed May 2020)

Our insurers

Congregational & General Insurance plc, Currer House,
Currer Street, Bradford BD1 5BA

Examiner of accounts

Following best practice, we change the Examiners of our Accounts every few years. For 2020 we have moved this professional service from Blomfields in Trowbridge to Michael J Wilcox ACMA. OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Lane, Bath, BA2 2EL.

The Life of our Area Meeting

We held four Area Meetings again this year – in person in March, and for the rest of the year online – bringing all six Local Meetings together to conduct our joint business. Lockdown prevented national and international conferences and workshops on Quaker concerns from taking place but when these moved online, more Friends found themselves able to attend, which helped to improve and develop our practices.

We encouraged Friends to consider these national and international matters more deeply:

- Build Back Better
- The criminalisation of ecocide
- Assisted dying

Our Area Meetings normally conclude with a talk or a group activity. In 2020 these were:

- March: Friends in the Quaker Youth Project hosted a workshop on the climate and ecological crisis.
- December: Paul Parker, BYM Recording Clerk, spoke to a large gathering of Friends online on what's ahead for Quakers in a Covid world.

Our Membership and Attendance numbers show a continuing decrease over two years, set out in the following table.

Year	Members	Attenders	Total
2013	174	131	305
2014	175	141	316
2015	181	120	301
2016	187	130	317
2017	190	131	321
2018	192	133	325
2019	189	124	313
2020	184	117	301

The Area Meeting website www.wwesquakers.org.uk provides information on the six Local Meetings, notes on Quakerism and links to Britain Yearly Meeting.

Jane Stephenson, Clerk to WWESAM Trustees

Bath

As for everyone else in the world, 2020 has been a strange and difficult year. We lost Shelagh James, Mary Moorhouse, Peter Schrecker and Jim Timoney, who all died this year. We hope to celebrate their lives when we can meet together again.

The year began normally, with plans for gatherings and meetings, and for connecting more with the Bath United Reformed Church community where Bath Friends rent meeting rooms and with the Islamic community at Bath Mosque. We continued to support the group of Friends meeting at the Chocolate Quarter at Keynsham. We had been making plans to hold two Quiet Days during the year at Kelston Old Barn, and to help with the British Yearly Meeting Gathering in August at the University of Bath, but these were quietly set aside until we can meet in person again.

By the end of March 2020, everything had changed. The public health restrictions in place to control the covid-19 pandemic, and to protect the population, caused us to change our ways, but also to carry on doing what we always have done.

We rapidly began using the Zoom program to hold online Meetings for Worship, Meetings for Business, talks on spiritual journeys, Meetings for Learning, a session on Tom Shakespeare's Swarthmore Lecture, and for other Quaker gatherings. We quickly became proficient at the technical aspects of Zoom, and now use it routinely to hold meetings and Meetings several times a week. Those Friends who are able to take part in online meetings have found them effective, sometimes more so than face to

face meetings since we can overcome distances by simply clicking on a Zoom link. (The contribution to the climate emergency from the increased use of computer servers is unquantifiable, but we all rejoiced at the worldwide plummet in air pollution during the year.)

We continue to use old and new ways of keeping in touch with Friends who do not or cannot use digital connections, or who find online meetings inimical to worship. The drawbacks of Zoom meetings (technical glitches, fatigue, the absence of body language and the need to rely heavily on face and voice alone) are outweighed by the advantages: of greeting old Friends and new Attenders who join us remotely, and of finding new ways to stay in fellowship and support each other despite the stringent separations we must follow. We were happy to welcome Frome Friends who came regularly to our Meetings for Worship. By the end of 2020 we were holding two regular online weekly Meetings for Worship. These have been well attended throughout the year, including by Friends, Attenders and enquirers from other parts of the UK and from abroad. Other Friends have continued to hold Meeting for Worship on their own or with family in their own homes, knowing that others are doing the same. Our new fellowship groups worked well over the summer, with some continuing through the winter as well.

2020 also began with plans to accelerate our work to restore and develop the Bath Quaker Burial Ground, with the intention of making it a resource for local Friends and for the community. Despite rising and falling hopes of being able to meet again in person throughout the year, we managed some happy ad hoc Meetings for Worship in

person in the open air at the Burial Ground. While it was closed during the lockdown periods, its new steward Susan Tomes, supported by the new Burial Ground Committee and volunteers, continued to work steadily as its lead gardener, transforming the neglected space into a beautiful and cared-for site of Quaker history to all to enjoy, when we can meet again there in person.



We also began 2020 by being able to finally put Bath Meeting House on the market. After considerable work by Jane Stephenson, our Trustee and the Clerk of Area Meeting Trustees, several sealed bids were considered by the Trustees in March, and they selected their preferred bidder: Topping and Company Booksellers, who propose to move from their rented shop on the Paragon to the Meeting House in York Street. By the end of 2020 the required planning permission was under

consideration by the council, with much public support expressed for the new use of the building.

In March Area Meeting's Young Friends helped Bath Meeting produce an all-age workshop on our Quaker response to the climate emergency. Later in the year we learned about the international move to criminalise ecocide under international law, and were greatly cheered when news broke in November that draft legislation was in preparation. We supported an application to Quaker Peace and Social Witness for a grant to the Hebron International Resources Network to fund a minibus to take Palestinian children to and from school from their homes in the village of Umm al Khair, in the West Bank.

We began to educate ourselves in the issues around assisted dying, in response to the request from Meeting for Sufferings to discern whether a change in the law on assisted dying had become a concern among Friends.

As individuals Friends have continually sought out new ways to meet and share friendship and spiritual growth. We uphold each other actively, and our Clerks, Elders, Trustee and Overseer meet regularly online in our meetings for Care of the Meeting to remind ourselves of how Friends can help each other and extend this support into the community, where we can.

Bradford on Avon

This was the year of finding different ways of caring for each other.

Over 2020 we gathered and Zoomed. Many novices, we learned together and supported the cautious and bewildered to get set up. Sarah White keeps her hand on the tiller every Sunday, hosting and ushering us in. The Zoom net is cast wide, embracing Members and Attenders from near and far, at the Meeting House and at home - solo, couples, family bubbles, young and not so young. We wave madly as we sign off and learned to silently shout 'you're muted' when Friends mouthed words without sound. Meetings often chime to ticking clocks, barking dogs or slurping cups as we gather together prayerfully and gratefully for the fellowship enabled by Zoom. We miss the gathering in real life but have surprised ourselves by the enduring community that has adapted to online meetings. Numbers have been consistently high from week to week, and after Meeting we update those Friends who are not online by phone, or



The snail (or the slow worm) does the holy will of God – slowly.

visits when possible. In a year that has asked us to 'stay at home', and 'shelter in place', and be 'together while apart', Zoom has offered a meeting place where we can hold each other and our communities in the light.

Our Children's Meeting has a regular core of six children aged now between 2 and 8. At the beginning of the year they were able to meet as usual in our smaller meeting room. We have a rota of adults who join the children and at least one of the parents for a variety of activities, planned and unplanned. In good weather they can also make use of our small peace garden just outside.



When the first Coronavirus lockdown was in place the main Meetings for Worship were by Zoom. Two of these, in May and July, were all-age meetings where children were encouraged to share meaningful objects or creativity. In August we went ahead with our usual annual all-age outdoor meeting in the country park. It had to be socially distanced and the weather was not perfect but the children were able to enjoy the park, picnic and games. In August the children also began to

meet monthly in the very large shared garden belonging to one of our members. This worked splendidly as the children loved the freedom and variety of activities it gave and there was an awning for gathering and sheltering if necessary. They were also delighted to welcome a new baby. The November Children's Meeting was cancelled because of the renewed lockdown but we had another all-age Zoom/blended meeting using a YouTube video story. In December the children made decorated clay stars and these were distributed to members of the main Meeting, especially those who had not been able to attend Meeting in person for quite a while. On Christmas Day the children met and played outside.

We had a full shake-up of our fellowship groups in January 2020, resorting to a 'sorting hat' to select four new groups. Since March the fellowship groups have all been meeting via Zoom, with only one group managing to hold any in-person meetings since the first lockdown in March. Frequency has varied between the groups, but overall we have met more often than before lockdown. In all cases there has been a core of around half the group who have met regularly, with others attending more occasionally, and a further group who have not come at all, mainly through lack of access to online meetings or discomfort with talking online, including because of a physical disability such as deafness. For those who have attended, the meetings have been an important source of support and deepening care for one another.

One of the first things that happened in the Meeting House in 2020 was a thorough upgrade of the electrical

installations in the entire building (including in both upstairs flats), mainly to improve fire safety. The Meeting House remained very busy for most of the first quarter of the year. Then, on Sunday 22 March, after a sparsely attended Meeting for Worship, the Meeting House closed its doors for all activities. It re-opened exactly four months later, on Wednesday 22 July, with our first ever blended Meeting for Worship. Outside bookings resumed the following week. They remained understandably at a modest level throughout the rest of the year. On 25 December, a blended Christmas Day Meeting for Worship was held.

The Meeting had three notable community events in 2020. On 31 January we had a Social Evening, and on 2 August we held an Outdoor Meeting for Worship in the park. On 13 December we hosted an online Area Meeting with Paul Parker (BYM Recording Clerk) as speaker, drawing a record attendance of over 50 Friends logging on.

Early in 2020, the Meeting House hosted meetings of a new Extinction Rebellion (XR) Families group. Following discernment made at Meeting for Business in November 2019, the room hire charge was waived for these meetings. Several local Friends are part of the group. In late August, several local Friends took part in XR activities, both regionally and in London. Our Friend Diana Francis was arrested during one of these events.

Our Meeting is so fortunate that our tenants Kevin and Rona are devoted and skilled gardeners. We try to keep them covid secure.

Chippenham

Like everyone else this has been a strange year for Chippenham Meeting, being unable to meet up for worship for most of 2020. During the first lockdown we met at the usual time in our own homes, alone but still feeling spiritually connected with each other. During August and September we were able to meet, socially distanced, in person in The Cause which we followed with coffee at a local hotel. But then it was back to 'meeting' alone at home. We began holding Zoom Meetings for Worship at the end of 2020. We usually get seven to nine attending and we have found it rewarding. We are also mindful that others of our Meeting are also attending but in spirit only.

Sadly during 2020 we recorded the death of our Friends Dorothy Burbidge and Joan Staines. Dorothy was well known in Chippenham for her work with Amnesty International and with CND and she was also a fine poet. In a poem 'Green Learning' she speaks of how we can learn from nature.

And in the city
Though she felt old and ugly and ill dressed,
She was perhaps a little more generous,
A little less greedy
Than she might have been.
She will go back again
And learn some more.

Two Friends have continued to produce our newsletter which is appreciated now more than ever and has helped to keep us linked. We have also, as a small Meeting, been able to keep in touch with each other via email and

telephone with some of us meeting up for walking together when allowed.

Our Friend Cora Gallagher continues her work for Area Meeting as prison chaplain. Most of this year's work has been under Covid restrictions but fortunately the Establishment has had only a few scares and on the whole has been almost Covid-free. Staff, of course, have to remain vigilant and currently no religious services are permitted. Prisoners are not allowed to mix with other wings so they are very much confined to their own wings. They have exercise time in the morning and afternoon. The Chaplaincy Team go out to see the men on the wings so are kept very busy with pastoral care while also trying to support all the staff working at the Establishment.

The Bible study group managed to meet four times between lockdowns and is ready and primed with their next subject for study as soon as actual meetings are allowed.



In November we laid a white poppy wreath at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. As part of our sustainability efforts we have decided next year to make the

wreath entirely from sustainable materials – willow, bay and hand-made recycled fabric poppies. Otherwise our sustainability work has continued on an individual basis as we try to make our homes ecologically and

environmentally as friendly as possible. One Friend gets the message across on her tricycle!



At the beginning of the year when we could still meet we collected funds as a Meeting for Quaker Social Action but since then we have continued as individuals to support various charities, among them Doorway and the local Food Bank.

As we face another year of Covid-related difficulties as well as all the other challenges facing every one of us and our Meetings we take comfort in the strength we gain from each other and being part of the wider Quaker community. We feel indeed that we are Friends and friends together.

Devizes

We lost two elderly Friends in 2020, Jean Walpole and Mary Tigwell. Jean was a Member of the Society of Friends, Mary was an Attender. The deaths of Jean and Mary have been recorded and memorial meetings will be held when it is possible to do so.

During the first pandemic lockdown period we were obliged to close the Meeting House both for Meeting for Worship and hirings, but a lot of work by our Premises Committee went into preparing to reopen and ensure safety for everyone, checked by AM Trustees. As a result, the Meeting House is now able to host a few groups offering essential support to the public, and we are using the Meeting House ourselves. We are grateful for the donation of a television which has been mounted on the wall in the Meeting Room, which has allowed blended meetings to take place. We have also now installed an internet router. We're really getting techy!

Hirings are currently restricted to one booking per room per day, and are asked to be flexible about rooms, days and times. Each group is asked to agree to our procedures before their booking is accepted. We are fortunate that we can use separate entrances for the two rooms and we ask people not to pass from one side of the building to the other. The library is out of use and so is the kitchen. We ask people not to bring in food and drink along apart from water bottles.

Our cleaner comes in to clean after each booking so that there is no risk of cross-infection. So far this has worked well: the hirings are much appreciated and bring in a

small amount of welcome income. Let's hope that we can continue to offer this service to the community.



Chris Dawson, our gardener, has continued to keep the garden tidy for most of the year and his efforts have been supported by work from a small number of Friends, observing the Covid rules, of course. Our Eco church work has not been active during the pandemic but there was a

delightful surprise when after the first lockdown we spotted an orchid growing in the lawn.

The friendship groups, set up after our Threshing Meetings to handle oversight, have worked with mixed success. We have tried to maintain contact with Friends with one Friend calling or emailing a few others. With the advent of Covid 19 these groups have been of some benefit. We plan to initiate a review with each group.

We are also able to exchange news of members during our blended Zoom meetings. One of the positive elements of this has been that one or two members have joined us who are normally unable to come to the Meeting House. It has been so good to see them. Sadly less than half our members join our blended Meetings for Worship despite it being available by landline. There is a longing to 'be back to normal'.

Veronica Franklin has continued to order Fairtrade goods for members and to deliver them though the stall is obviously not there just now.

As in previous years, a few well-spaced members stood in silence near Devizes war memorial as a Friend laid a wreath of white poppies on Remembrance Sunday.

Frome

In common with brothers and sisters throughout the world, the life of Frome Meeting has been very different this year – and in ways we could not have imagined just 12 months ago. While we are very aware of losses and negative changes, there have been unexpected gains and the opportunities for many new learning experiences too. In March, when the first lockdown was announced, Somerset County Council informed us that we would no longer be able to hire the Key Centre to hold our meetings for worship. This coincided with our decision not to hold face to face meetings until further notice, in line with the guidance from Friends House.

We began to meet online on a Wednesday evening, and found that half an hour of worship followed by fellowship time suited us well. While not all Friends wish to participate in Zoom sessions, some Friends whom we previously did not see frequently are now regular attendees. Several Friends have joined Bath Friends on a Sunday Morning and found the practice of being put into breakout groups after worship has enabled them to grow and extend Friendships within the Area Meeting. Individual Friends have also occasionally joined other Local Meetings' Zoom sessions.

Through the facility of Zoom, we have held various committee meetings and discussion groups, and

individual Friends have been able to participate in Area Meeting committee meetings too. Hosting Area Meeting on Zoom in October was certainly a challenge and the co-clerks were pleased that we were not in lockdown, and they were able to be in the same room!



During the summer a few Friends met in very small groups in gardens and 'informally' shared a period of worship. In September a small group was appointed to look into alternative venues for face to face meetings. A village hall in Great Elm has successfully been used on two occasions catering for up to 12 Friends. Plans to use a room in the Town Hall were put on hold in December given the worsening situation of COVID-19.

A major topic that engaged us as a Meeting was the Stop Ecocide Campaign that seeks to criminalise ecocide in international law. Both at Local and Area Meeting level we were in unity concerning the need to protect our planet, but held different views of how to promote this. While Frome does not have a Meeting House to consider, we are trying to focus on ways of making our individual lives more eco-friendly and sustainable. Suggestions from Friends are being collated for distribution within the meeting. It is clear that choices and decisions are not always clear cut. We are aware that many of us are privileged in being able to afford solar panels and non-oil-based heating systems and are in a position to pay more for ecologically friendly goods. The ability to grow one's own food is also not an option for everyone. A group of Friends is leading us in how we may support the 'Build Back Better' campaign as individuals and as a Meeting.

Although we have not been able to have our normal bimonthly collections to support chosen charities, we agreed as individuals to support the outreach work of Christchurch First School (on whose site the Key Centre is built) during the first lockdown.

Our pastoral care group has worked lovingly and conscientiously to stay in touch with all members and attenders of the meeting, either by phone calls, emails, letters or socially distanced meetings. As individuals we have also used a variety of methods to stay in touch with one another, with some Friends having been happier with face to face get togethers than others. Despite efforts of families and friends, there are still those living alone, who have experienced a sense of loneliness and isolation.

—

The Light will lead you out of darkness into the light of life, into the way of peace and into the life and power of truth. – George Fox

Trowbridge

In this first year of living with Covid, we have had an average of nine people attending the weekly hour-long Meeting for Worship on Zoom since March, compared with seven in physical meetings in The Hub the previous year.

The composition of that number is, of course, radically altered. Zoom allowed pets and Northumbrian sparrows to join in, it brought a new Attender, we've kept those who could not have got to the Hub or have to shield, but the expense and difficulty of technology has meant we've missed seeing other Friends, that some decide to 'keep' the Meeting quietly at home, and some make a choice to remain present in the physical world on a Sunday morning and connect with nature or a wider variety of human beings.



There have been moments of simple joy at seeing a familiar face reappear on Zoom after a gap, times of enormous frustration in not being heard or not hearing each other (in addition to the usual misunderstandings and differences!) Inner experiences of meeting over Zoom range from feelings of exposure, uncertainty and awkwardness, to surprise that it's possible to have a sense of gathering at all, to sharing intense personal experiences and beliefs in our discussion on Assisted Dying. Whether being single or double in your Zoom fishtank, reports confirm that it's possible both to relish your particular situation and at other times to feel oppressed by that same situation.

With so many possibilities, the question of 'what is the life of this meeting?' becomes 'what is the meeting?'

Is it all those on Zoom and those waiting to meet again at The Hub?

Is it all those names on the contact list plus those we remember who aren't?

Is it a loose network with many possible overlaps through:

- emailing
- socially distanced coffee in the Park
- who we are holding in heart and mind
- phone calls
- waving through a window
- a garden meeting of six in the cold

- another meeting in a different garden in a heatwave with a different combination of six people!

Through all this activity, have we become any more aware of inclusions and exclusions?

Can one simply feel Quakerly in outlook and feel affinity with the wider Quaker movement without needing a local meeting?

We were astonished and grateful in late spring when a trustee of *The Friend* began sending a free second copy for the duration of the pandemic, directly to Friends living a few miles away under the edge of Salisbury Plain. The simplified Britain Yearly Meeting weekly electronic newsletter, QUAKE, has been important to many. A few Friends have been delighted to take part in conferences and training on Zoom, including The Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies, Safeguarding and the Quaker Life conference. Some listened and watched the Swarthmore Lecture online. Some of us write to MPs and take part in campaigns, mostly online. Some keep an eye on troops – who have had to be kept busy when not at war – taking smoking breaks from exercising on Salisbury Plain.

Being a Meeting the size of a house-Meeting in other places makes it possible for each to be ‘heard’ in a discussion. We have practices which enrich and challenge us: taking it in turns to choose or read a passage at the start of meeting for worship from any source (not only Quaker or Christian), hearing one person’s account of their ‘Spiritual Journey’ this year which is always stunning, and holding a ‘half and half’ meeting before Christmas of half an hour’s silence followed by sharing readings from any source however unQuakerly.

The Hub, where we used to meet, now houses a community fridge. In the back room is our library trolley awaiting our return ... perhaps with a laptop so as not to lose the sparrows.

Illustrations

Cover: Happy New Year from the Quaker Youth Work Project.

19. Laurence Tindall surveys Quaker memorial stones in the Burial Ground, Widcombe, Bath.

21. A slow worm visits Bradford on Avon Meeting House garden.

22. Bradford on Avon Children's Meeting.

26. Chippenham Friends lay a white poppy wreath at the war memorial.

27. Debbie Nightingale's trike with a Quaker message.

29. The Devizes orchid.

31. Frome Meeting Friends' activities in 2020.

34. Trowbridge Friends in contemplation over Zoom.

All photos taken by WWESAM Friends; the Frome montage was made by David Marsh.

Location of our six Local Meetings



Registered Charity 1134534

**TRUSTEES' REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING**

OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Lane, Bath, BA2 2EL

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

Contents of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020

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**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING**

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 December 2020

The Annual Report of the Trustees in 2020 forms a separate document and should be read in conjunction with these financial statements. The information given below is supplementary to the annual report.

Structure, Governance, and Management

Governing Document

The Charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes an unincorporated charity.

Reference and Administrative Details

Registered Charity number

1134534

Principal Address

Friends Meeting House, Whiteheads Lane, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1JU

Trustees

Robin Brookes	
Jane Stephenson	Clerk to Trustees
Angela Le Grice	
Elaine Hunter	Treasurer
Kate Macdonald (Deputy - Bath)	
Debbie Nightingale	
Alison Hillis	

Independent Examiners

Michael J Wilcox FCMA, OCL Accountancy, 141 Englishcombe Ln, Bath, BA2 2EL

Report of the Treasurer

In this unprecedented year, dominated by the global pandemic of Covid-19, we are pleased to report that our overall position has remained stable, with Unrestricted Funds increasing by £789 over the year.

Friends' regular donations within Unrestricted Funds have increased from £63,556 in 2019 to £70,478 in 2020. Of this, the allocation retained in the Area Meeting was £37,176, and the sum sent to Britain Yearly Meeting in support of centrally managed work, was £33,302 (£4,000 more than last year). In addition to regular Giving there were other donations of £1,602, and a Bradford-on-Avon Friend left a legacy of £2,000.

Income from rents & lettings at Devizes and Bradford-on-Avon totalled £23,157 this year, which is less than half the income during 2019, but was about equal to the costs of running those properties (excluding insurance costs and staff salaries).

**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING**

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 December 2020

Trustees are pleased to report a small surplus at the end of a turbulent year. We have successfully applied for Government Grants and the Job Retention Scheme, to help counter the loss of rental income, and the cost of employing and retaining staff during the pandemic.

In Autumn 2018 Area Meeting took the decision to sell Bath Meeting House. There has been no rental income since March 2019 in preparation for this sale, but there have been ongoing costs and repairs. In March 2020, after a period of marketing the building, Trustees chose Topping & Company Booksellers Ltd as their preferred bidder. Topping & Co applied for planning permission to renovate the building as a bookshop and this was granted in December 2020. In the light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Trustees agreed to initially lease the building to Topping & Co before the sale completes by April 2024, at the latest. In March 2021 the sale contract was exchanged and the lease contract completed. In compliance with Charity Law the commercial arrangements for the lease and sale contracts were approved by our independent surveyor.

The Burial Ground, under Bath Meeting's care, has benefitted from works during 2020, enabling it to be enjoyed once again as a peaceful and beautiful space for Friends and others.

During 2020 a Bath Friend bequeathed shares of £2,500 in the Community Interest Company AEOB (Abolish Empty Office Buildings, Registered number 32137R). As we are not able to realise these funds in the short term, we have not accounted for them.

We ended the year with £124,365 of available reserves in our Unrestricted Fund.

Approved by order of the board of Trustees on 17th May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

Jane Stephenson - Trustee



**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING**

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2020

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I confirm that there are no other matters to which your attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Michael J Wilcox ACMA
OCL Accountancy
141 Englishcombe Lane,
Bath, BA2 2EL



Date: 20/4/2021

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2020 Total Funds £	2019 Total Funds £
Income and Endowments from					
Donations and legacies		74,080	-	74,080	69,527
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		1,330		1,330	700
Investment income	3	324	108	433	469
Other income		36,522	-	36,522	46,975
Total income		<u>112,257</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>112,365</u>	<u>117,671</u>
Expenditure					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		110,063		110,063	128,855
Other		1,406	-	1,406	1,875
Total expenditure		<u>111,469</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>111,469</u>	<u>130,730</u>
Net income		789	108	897	(13,059)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
		<u>789</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>897</u>	<u>(13,059)</u>
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		1,177,794	42,456	1,220,250	1,233,309
Total funds carried forward		<u>1,178,583</u>	<u>42,564</u>	<u>1,221,147</u>	<u>1,220,250</u>

Continuing operations

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

**RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING**

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2020 Total Funds £	2019 Total Funds £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	5	1,054,218	-	1,054,218	1,055,624
Current Assets					
Debtors	6	15,690	-	15,690	23,398
Cash at bank and in hand		128,208	42,564	170,772	170,995
		<u>143,898</u>	<u>42,564</u>	<u>186,462</u>	<u>194,393</u>
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	7	(19,533)	-	(19,533)	(29,767)
Net current assets		<u>124,365</u>	<u>42,564</u>	<u>166,929</u>	<u>164,626</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>1,178,583</u>	<u>42,564</u>	<u>1,221,147</u>	<u>1,220,250</u>
Net Assets		<u><u>1,178,583</u></u>	<u><u>42,564</u></u>	<u><u>1,221,147</u></u>	<u><u>1,220,250</u></u>
Funds	8				
Unrestricted funds				1,178,583	1,177,794
Restricted funds				42,564	42,456
Total funds				<u><u>1,221,147</u></u>	<u><u>1,220,250</u></u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 17th May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

Elaine Hunter - Trustee

Elaine Hunter

Jane Stephenson - Trustee

J. Stephenson

The notes form part of these financial statements

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING
Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020

1 Employees and Directors

The average number of employees during the year was 2.

Accounting policies

2

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefits entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (effective 1 January 2015)* and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is included on the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Grants offered subject to conditions which have not been met at the year end date are noted as a commitment but not accrued as expenditure.

Cash at Bank and In hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will normally result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided on plant & machinery at 25% on reducing balance in order to write off each of such assets over its estimated useful life.

The valuation of the meeting houses is subject to regular review. The Trustees consider that insured replacement cost is an unsuitable valuation basis because it does not reflect current values. Nor is the open market value considered appropriate for property held for Quaker-supported work. Recognition of underlying value at an average of £350,000 for the three meeting houses and burial ground gives a total of £1,050,000.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING
Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020

	2020	2019
3 Investment income		
Deposit account income	<u>£ 433</u>	<u>£ 469</u>

4 Trustees' remuneration and benefits

During 2020 Trustee Debbie Nightingale acted as a self-employed bookkeeper for our Area Meeting. Her fees for the year totalled £3900.

There were no such expenses or benefits for the year ended 31 December 2019.

Trustee expenses

Trustee expenses of £421.78 (2019: £818) are included in Quaker Meeting activities.

The expenses, paid to 5 Trustees, cover Trustee training courses & travel.

5 Tangible fixed assets	Freehold property	Plant and machinery	Totals
Cost	£	£	£
At 1 January 2019 & 31 December 2019	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>31,601</u>	<u>1,081,601</u>
Depreciation			
At 1 January 2020	-	25,977	25,977
Charge for year	-	1,406	1,406
At 31 December 2020	<u>-</u>	<u>27,383</u>	<u>27,383</u>
Net Book Value			
At 31 December 2020	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>4,218</u>	<u>1,054,218</u>
At 31 December 2019	<u>1,050,000</u>	<u>5,624</u>	<u>1,055,624</u>

6 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	2020	2019
	£	£
Trade debtors	15,337	14,170
Other debtors	<u>353</u>	<u>9,228</u>
	<u>15,690</u>	<u>23,398</u>

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING
Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020

7 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	2020	2019
	£	£
Trade creditors	18,196	28,567
Other creditors	1,337	1,200
	<u>19,533</u>	<u>29,767</u>

8 Movement in funds	At 1.1.20	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.12.20
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	<u>1,177,794</u>	<u>789</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,178,583</u>
Restricted funds		-		
Frome Building Fund	<u>19,492</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>19,531</u>
Bath Meeting House Appeal	<u>22,964</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>23,033</u>
	<u>42,456</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>42,564</u>
Total funds	<u>1,220,250</u>	<u>897</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,221,147</u>

Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	<u>112,257</u>	<u>(111,469)</u>	<u>789</u>
Restricted funds			
Frome Building Fund	<u>39</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>39</u>
Bath Meeting House Appeal	<u>69</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>69</u>
	<u>108</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>108</u>
Total funds	<u>112,365</u>	<u>(111,469)</u>	<u>897</u>

Additional note on Fund Accounting

The Frome restricted fund represents an amount originally set aside by the Trustees for the purposes of purchasing a Meeting House in Frome.

The Bath Meeting House Appeal consists of funds donated to re-furbish Bath Meeting House. We are in the process of contacting those donors, as we can no longer use the donations as intended. The funds will remain restricted until they are dispensed according to the wishes of those who generously supported the Appeal.

The remaining funds are the combined unrestricted funds of the constituent meetings which can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives, at the discretion of the Trustees. .

9 Related Party disclosures

Except as stated in note 4, there were no related party transactions for the year.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING
Notes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020

10 Contributions and grants

Accounts detailed statement (final pg)

Individuals There were no grants to individuals during 2020

Institutions

BYM annual giving via schedule	£	33,311	see note i) below
Quaker charities (11 transactions)	£	930	
	£	34,241	
Non Quaker charities (4 transactions)	£	1,190	
	£	35,431	

i) BYM schedule contributions are included in our accounts as gift aid is claimed by WWESAM

The number of transactions for other payments shows that none are materially significant to require individual disclosure.

Acting as agent collections, not forming part of accounts

Quaker charities	£	168
Non Quaker charities	£	378
	£	546

(In 2019 this figure was £3,660)

11 Governance & Accounts remuneration

Bookkeeping services (per Note 4)	£	3,900
Payroll services/Furlough Claims (Blomfields)	£	521
Independent Examination of 2020 Accounts	£	816
Accreditation Fees/Software subscription	£	480
	£	5,717

12 Staff Costs

Staff remuneration:Warden & Lettings Manager	£	11,626
Council tax paid for Warden's flat	£	1,007
	£	12,633

There were no Employers National Insurance contributions due

There were no other employee benefits

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)
WEST WILTSHIRE & EAST SOMERSET AREA MEETING
Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2020

	2020	2019	2018
	£	£	£
INCOME			
Voluntary Income			
Annual giving donations	70,478	63,556	60,016
Donations	1,602	5,970	10,365
Legacies	2,000	-	-
	<u>74,080</u>	<u>69,526</u>	<u>70,381</u>
Investment Income			
Deposit account interest	433	469	510
Charitable activities			
Grants	1,330	700	8,000
Other income			
From properties	23,157	46,976	77,485
From Local Authority Grants	10,000		
HMRC Job Retention Scheme	3,365		
Total income	<u>112,365</u>	<u>117,671</u>	<u>156,376</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Charitable activities			
Warden's & Manager's pay	12,633	12,900	11,224
Fees, rents, taxes & insurance	28,961	39,165	41,672
Meeting house improvements (excl Bath Appeal)		10,262	5,087
Bath Meeting House Appeal refurbishment			5,521
Repairs & running costs	23,498	19,486	24,799
Life of the meeting	3,823	11,428	8,706
Grants to institutions	35,431	32,512	29,109
Grants to individuals		1,437	260
	<u>104,346</u>	<u>127,190</u>	<u>126,378</u>
Other			
Depreciation of plant & machinery	1,406	1,875	2,500
Support costs			
Governance costs			
Examination & accountancy	5,717	1,665	1,386
Total resources expended	<u>111,469</u>	<u>130,730</u>	<u>130,264</u>
NET INCOME	<u>897</u>	<u>(13,059)</u>	<u>26,112</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements