

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:
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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.

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, Curren House, Curren 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.

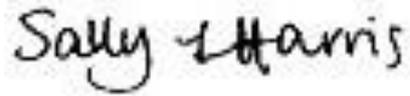
We anticipate being ready to adopt a new website for our Area Meeting during 2025, under the Quaker Meetings Network umbrella. We are hopeful that this will enable more people to find our Meetings and to explore what we offer, with more readily accessible links through to national Quaker websites and 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 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 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	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
	Notes	Fund	Funds	Funds	Funds
		£	£	£	£
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		<u>166,779</u>	<u>869</u>	<u>167,648</u>	<u>127,332</u>
Gain on Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House		-	-	-	1,133,627
Total Incoming Resources	3	<u><u>166,779</u></u>	<u><u>869</u></u>	<u><u>167,648</u></u>	<u><u>1,260,959</u></u>
Resources Expended					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		141,897	-	141,897	144,170
Other (Depreciation)		-	-	-	-
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities		<u>141,897</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>141,897</u>	<u>144,170</u>
Fees re Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House		-	-	-	17,165
Total Expenditure	4	<u><u>141,897</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>141,897</u></u>	<u><u>161,335</u></u>
Net income (loss) on ordinary activities		24,882	869	25,751	1,099,624
Transfer between Funds		-	-	-	-
Net income after Transfers between Funds		<u>24,882</u>	<u>869</u>	<u>25,751</u>	<u>1,099,624</u>
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		982,903	1,426,233	2,409,135	1,309,511
Total funds carried forward	9	<u><u>1,007,785</u></u>	<u><u>1,427,102</u></u>	<u><u>2,434,887</u></u>	<u><u>2,409,135</u></u>

Continuing operations

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2024

		Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Funds	2024 Total Funds	2023 Total Funds
	Notes	£	£	£	£
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

Barbara Ridhiwani

Sally Harris - Trustee and Clerk to Trustees

Sally Harris

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 probably 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	<u>35,783</u>	<u>49,689</u>	
Sub-total	167,648	127,332	
Gain on Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	note 14	<u>-</u>	<u>1,133,627</u>
Total Income	<u>167,648</u>	<u>1,260,959</u>	

Donations from Members and Attenders in 2024 were higher than in 2023, but not as high at 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	13,849
Rent of Premises, Fees & Taxes	8,937	7,843	
Insurance	3,521	3,370	
Repairs & running costs	30,481	39,351	
Life of the Meeting	11,462	15,543	
Donations to Quaker charities incl BYM	note 11	63,160	58,774
Donations to individuals and Non Q charities	note 11	1,150	450
Governance Costs	note 12	<u>5,631</u>	<u>4,990</u>
Sub-total	141,897	144,170	
Fees relating to Sale of Bath Friends Meeting House	note 14	<u>-</u>	<u>17,165</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>141,897</u>	<u>161,335</u>	

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	<u>1,426,233</u>	<u>869</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,427,102</u>
Total funds	<u>2,409,135</u>	<u>25,751</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,434,887</u>
Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:		Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
		£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General fund		<u>166,779</u>	<u>(141,897)</u>	<u>24,882</u>
Restricted funds				
Bath Friends MH Fund		-	-	-
Frome Building Fund		<u>869</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>869</u>
Sub-total Restricted Funds		<u>869</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>869</u>
		<u>167,648</u>	<u>(141,897)</u>	<u>25,751</u>

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	<u>(2,373)</u>
Gain on sale of Meeting House realised in 2023	1,133,627
less professional fees* re sale completion incurred in 2023	<u>(17,165)</u>
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>-</u>
	<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 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.