

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

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

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2025



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 2025 up to the date on which this report was adopted were:

- Chris Arnold (Bradford on Avon), resigned 31 December 2025
- John Flynn (Devizes)
- Cora Gallagher (Chippenham) appointed 1 March 2026
- Nicola Grove (Frome), resigned 9 February 2025
- Sally Harris (Bath), Clerk
- Debbie Nightingale (Chippenham) to 28 February 2026
- Chris Pollock (Trowbridge)
- Barbara Ridhiwani (Bath), Treasurer
- Juliet Solomon (Frome) appointed 15 September 2025

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.

Religious practice, service, and charitable activity

The right holding of public meetings for worship and regular meetings for church affairs is at the heart of our public service. It is one of the most important ways in which we fulfil our purposes as a charity.

Meetings for worship

Our six Local Meetings hold public meetings for worship every Sunday. They are open to people of all ages. From time to time, we also offer some that are specifically designed to be "all-age" in which pre-arranged elements are included. Meetings for worship 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.

All of these are advertised on our websites and on notice boards outside the respective premises. People can walk in off the street and be welcomed, whether they are seeking solace in difficult times or are merely curious about the form of worship that is common in the British Quaker tradition. Some may stay to join us as new Attenders, interested in exploring the Quaker way. We built on the *Curious about Quakers?* open meetings which were held in Bath during the autumn of 2024 by holding a series of monthly

evening *Quaker Conversations* across six months in 2025, designed to deepen our shared awareness and understanding of our beliefs.

Across our Area Meeting, some meetings for worship are 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. It has helped us to be more inclusive in our outreach and in maintaining contact. Some Local Meetings hold additional, often small, meetings for worship at different times of the week and in different venues, some of which may not be open to the public.

Some meetings for worship have special functions, as for example when two people are married according to Quaker practice. Although these occasions happen relatively infrequently, they always bring great joy to our Meetings. Sadly, Quaker memorial meetings after the death of one of our number seem more common, but these too are often deeply rewarding for all present especially those who were closest in life. As in our routine meetings for worship, anyone may contribute spoken ministry. It is our common experience that those who find themselves in Quaker worship for the first time rapidly gain a sense of the pattern and depth of the ministry recalling the life of the deceased Friend and many then feel ready to contribute themselves.

Meetings for church affairs

Meetings for church affairs take place regularly within each of our six Local Meetings and collectively at the Area Meeting level. 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 truths 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. This too is something that we regard as an important contribution to society—showing that community decision-making can be well done through listening to each other and without majority voting.

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. There is no obligation to become a Member of the Religious Society of Friends, and it is common to find Attenders whose history in Quaker meetings is as long as that of some Members. If a sense of formality in joining might stand in the way of religious practice, we find that Attenders are no less valued for their presence in and contributions to our community—and in their service then to the wider public.

In 2025, three adults were accepted into membership. We received two transfers into our Area from other Area Meetings and made one transfer out. Two Friends resigned from membership. Sadly, three of our Members died during the year.

Our Area Meetings in session provide opportunities to engage with national Quaker matters. This year, for example, we heard from three Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting about the range of Quaker work carried out in our name—a valuable encouragement for our own Quaker witness and to our own giving to support such work financially.

Local Meetings appoint representatives to attend an Area Meeting, but any local Friend can go and participate. This mix is evident in the average attendance at our four Area Meetings in 2025, which was approximately twenty-six—similar to the previous two years. Though we recognize that, in these days of circulation of papers by email to all Friends, more must receive them than previously, we are always alive to ways of encouraging greater presence and participation in these meetings.

A charitable activity that prompts further charitable activity

As indicated above, our practice of worship and the offering of that opportunity to the communities in which we live is, in itself, a charitable activity to advance religion. We welcome new enquirers and those who wish to attend our meetings for worship as part of their faith journey. We seek to deepen the religious and spiritual understanding of both Attenders and Members, willing to accept new Members who find our ways suit them. We do not, of course, seek to *convert* people from other religions or none, but we do seek to promote mutual understandings fostered by a spirit of enquiry and founded in respect for differences.

Bath Friends, for example, were instrumental in the founding of an Interfaith Group in the city many years ago, and in 2025 a current Friend was elected its new Chair. He has been enthusiastic in looking to the Group's future. In late October, he gave his personal reflections on interfaith opportunities in Bath at a public meeting hosted by the local branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society, alongside the local Imam, an Anglican priest, the mayor's humanist chaplain, and a prominent commentator on environmental and interfaith matters.

Following an invitation from a breakfast fellowship group of Church of England parishes in Wiltshire, one of our Friends joined them for breakfast and gave a talk afterwards. Prior to the visit, he had an opportunity to visit all eleven of the churches from which the fellowship group members were drawn. It allowed him to link some of their history and changes in religious practice to developments in the history and practice of Quakers. We value highly such wider contact and the fostering of mutual understanding.

A plaque to commemorate the site of the old Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting House built in 1718 and its burial ground was unveiled in October close to the historic site, as a joint venture between local Quakers and the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust. The event provided welcome and helpful publicity for the Local Meeting in advertising the longstanding presence of Quakers in the town as well as including the whereabouts of the current meeting house on the new plaque.

In Bath, where Friends rent rooms in Manvers Street Baptist Church and have established good relations over the last few years, a plaque of a different sort has been installed. The Church agreed that instead of tying a Quaker banner to the railings on Sunday mornings to publicise our presence, we could have a metal sign made and fixed to the railings to advertise our Sunday meetings for worship on every day of the week.

While we Quakers do not have a fixed creed—wishing to be open to new expressions of what we value—we do identify some of those values as “testimonies”, traditionally focusing attention on peace, equality, simplicity and truth, and latterly also on environmental sustainability.

Our witness to peace continues to be a key anchor-point in a troubled world, and it is often instrumental in bringing new enquirers to a Quaker meeting. In Devizes, Friends continue their weekly peace vigil in the town centre, and the Bath Stop War weekly peace vigil outside Bath Abbey is supported by Friends living locally. On Remembrance Sunday we join in wreath-laying ceremonies in our town centres, adding white poppies to symbolise both military and civilian victims of war—taking care, where we can, to engage with event organisers beforehand to explain this additional aspect of our remembrance in the hope that it will contribute to our becoming a more peaceful society.

A Friend from Quaker Peace & Social Witness visited Bradford on Avon Friends to talk about peace education. It was a family-friendly event that enabled parents of young children and two of the older under-18s to attend. One consequence was a decision to donate peace education resources to four local schools. Four of Bradford on Avon’s young people laid the white poppy wreath on behalf of the Meeting at the Remembrance Day event in town and one of them published a peace-related poem in the national Quaker weekly, *The Friend*.

After holding a programme of five public meetings entitled *Curious about Quakers?* in 2024, Bath Local Meeting turned to deepening understanding across a series of six, monthly, evening discussions in 2025. In *Quaker Conversations*, local Friends facilitated conversation on six topics:

- How do we approach meeting for worship?
- How do Quakers make decisions?
- What does the peace testimony mean to us?
- What place for the Bible?
- How do we ‘do’ community, and look after each other?
- How do we reach out to others?

Quakers in Britain have had a longstanding involvement with prison work and concern for matters relating to criminal justice. A Friend from Chippenham Local Meeting serves as Quaker Prison Chaplain at HMP Erlestoke, with another Friend visiting in support.

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. Both our meeting houses—at Bradford on Avon and Devizes—hold an Eco Church Silver Award. Solar panels at Devizes have been providing renewable energy to the Meeting House for the past seven years.

Some of our 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.

Attendance with other Friends at our meetings for worship is part of the context for our individual lives as Quakers and the ways in which we live out our Quaker witness. From the regular hearing and giving of ministry through the post-meeting conversations over hot drinks and biscuits to the opportunities to bring a “concern” before our Meeting or to seek other Friends’ participation in a “meeting for clearness”, our religious practice in our communities provides the source and touchstone for testing our “leadings”. We rely on our practice together and our sense of community to test our understanding of what we should or should not do with other supportive Friends around us.

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 2025. As Trustees, we receive updates at each of our meetings to keep us informed.

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.

A small number of young children also come regularly to Bath Local Meeting. Their presence is always welcome and the children’s volunteers are ready with age-appropriate activities on two Sundays each month.

At Frome Meeting, Friends have engaged with parents and our Youth Development Worker to find a way to hold children’s meetings in their hired space. So far, attempts to find a venue better suited to these aspirations have not been successful.

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”. Highlights of the year included visiting the Wildlife Photograph of the Year exhibition in Bristol, going for a hike up Kelston Roundhill, a weekend’s camping at Street Quaker Meeting, and a “silly sports day” in Barton Country Park at Bradford on Avon.

Two of our young people attended the Young Person's Programme at Britain Yearly Meeting and the Summer School Gatherings for their respective age groups. 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.

Sustainability issues and learning about nature continue to play an integral part in our children’s meetings where we frequently draw on themes relating to the natural world and how we care for our environment.

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 2025 and also came together with Area Meeting Clerks for our annual strategy meeting.

Caring for Friends and others

We reviewed our Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Resources during the year and made some minor changes to procedures. Friends and Attenders continued to take part in online safeguarding training with the safeguarding support organisation ‘Thirtyone:eight’ whilst others attended in person training.

We had no safeguarding incidents to report in 2025.

We began the year with three employees. The Burial Ground Manager’s one year contract ended in February (as reported in the following section) and our Devizes Meeting House Manager’s employment ended in November. She is continuing to manage the lettings in a voluntary capacity for the time being. Our employees held regular meetings with the Area Meeting Employee Support Officer 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. It 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 2025.

Our responsibilities include caring for those who live in our meeting houses. We have a warden and tenants in the two flats on the first floor of Bradford on Avon Meeting House and had a tenant for the first eight months of the year in the first floor flat at Devizes Meeting House.

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.

External repairs and redecoration at ground floor level took place at Devizes Meeting House towards the end of the year. The higher-level stage which required scaffolding followed early in 2026, completing the planned schedule of external work. No other planned major work has taken place in either of the two meeting houses. The small meeting room in Bradford on Avon Meeting House was redecorated during the year. Its Warden continues to look after the building diligently and attend to all minor repairs, as do the Premises Committee at Devizes.

In early January 2026, a burst pipe in the roof space at Devizes Meeting House caused serious flood damage to the flat and some parts of the ground floor below. Once the rooms have dried out, planned work to refurbish the flat will be put in train and affected areas on the ground floor redecorated.

Both of our Meeting Houses have small gardens which are managed organically and in ways which encourage biodiversity.

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. Though burials no longer take place, ashes may be scattered by arrangement. In mid-February 2025, the Burial Ground Manager's employment contract ended; she has continued working for us as self-employed on the same basis as our other long-term self-employed gardener.

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. A revised Health and Safety Policy was adopted in November and will be put into practise during the next cycle of checks.

Checking on rental premises

Bath, Chippenham, Frome, and Trowbridge Local Meetings continued holding meetings for worship in the same rented venues as the previous year. As part of our annual health and safety audit, risk assessments of these hired spaces were carried out either by Trustees or by office holders in the Local Meeting.

Administering day-to-day finance

The Trustees are responsible for handling 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 at Area Meeting in session from time to time to share and support each other.

Financial review and reserves policy

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

There was an overall surplus in 2025 of £85,993 (2024: £25,751, 2023: £1,099,624 including gain on sale of Bath Meeting House; 2022: £56,271; 2021: £32,093, 2020: £897).

Income

Total Income in 2025 was £214k (2024: £168k, 2023: £1,261k, including £1,134k from sale of Bath Meeting House, 2022 £158k, 2021 £169k, 2020 £112k). The main reason for much higher income in 2025 than recent years (setting aside the gain on sale of a meeting house) was that we received two generous legacies of nearly £49k total, compared to legacy income in 2024 of £4k, and zero in both 2023 and 2022.

Voluntary Income (including legacies) totalled £117k, of which Regular Giving donations from Friends & Attenders was £65k, a small increase on the previous year (£63k).

Income from our properties (mainly flat rentals and lettings) was nearly £30k in 2025, down from £36k in 2024, and nearly £50k in 2023 when we received rental income for Bath Meeting House prior to its sale. The flat rentals were lower in 2025 as our tenant left at the end of August.

Income from Interest was £67k in 2025 (2024: £62k). Almost all of this reflects interest from a full year in the Epworth Cash Plus fund, without withdrawals. The interest rate was 4.6% in December 2024 and has continued to drop slowly throughout 2025 to 3.6% in December 2025.

Expenditure

Total Expenditure in 2025 was £128k (2024: £142k, 2023: £161k, 2022: £102k, 2021: £137k, 2020: £111k).

The largest elements of expenditure (see also Note 4) were as follows: *Grants to Quaker Charities* £42k, *Property repairs and running costs* £26k, *Life of the Meeting* £25k (including training, books, IT costs, refreshments, subscriptions to *The Friend* magazine, and support & materials for children), *Staff Costs* (Warden and Property Managers) £15k

All other categories of expenditure (rent of premises, insurance, governance, and grants to individuals and non-quaker charities) were under £7k each.

The Grants to Quaker charities included the routine passing across to Britain Yearly Meeting, a proportion of regular donations from our local members and attenders, to support national structures and work. In 2025 this totalled £30k. Towards the end of 2025 Trustees considered the general reserves position of our charity and recommended a further donation to Britain Yearly Meeting of £10k, and a donation of £1k to EAPPI the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel. The latter is a well-recognised, long-standing international partnership of Christian organisations. In the UK and Ireland, its work is coordinated by Quaker Peace and Social Witness, a part of Britain Yearly Meeting. We decided to make fewer donations to Quaker charities in 2025 than in 2024 because of plans to carry out renovations in early 2026 whose costs could be around £25,000, and to recruit a live-in Warden for our Devizes Meeting House during 2026 as well as finding some administrative assistance for Trustees.

Property repairs & running costs, at £26k in 2025, were lower than in 2024 (£30k). Costs included £15k for routine items, such as cleaning, utilities and gardening services. Repairs and servicing of £11k included £7k for works identified at Devizes Meeting House in the Quinquennial Survey (scaffolding, external maintenance, flat-roofs and paintwork etc). Looking ahead to 2026, we are now aware of substantial additional emergency repair costs that have arisen at Devizes Meeting House following a burst pipe incident in January. It is too early to put a final estimate on this, but it may be of the order of £20,000 and correspondence with insurers is on-going. In the process we have also located and removed some panelling containing asbestos. Overall, property management continues to provide challenges for our Trustees.

‘Life of the Meeting’ costs were far higher in 2025 at £25k (2024: £11k) chiefly due to a full year of funding of the Youth Development Worker at £1,321 per month (£16k). The cost of this post is shared with Bristol, and North Somerset Area Meetings, in an equitable and agreed proportion, and runs for 3 years from 1 October 2024. The cost recorded in 2024’s accounts was lower partly due to a change in payment arrangements from annual-in-advance to monthly standing order.

Alongside routine administrative costs, the ‘Life of the Meeting’ expenditure includes supporting several Friends and Attenders to attend conferences and training (£3k).

These included young people attending the national Quaker Junior Gathering, a conference for Prison Chaplains, 'Radical Hearts, Open Minds' events, and an Area-wide gathering for fellowship and spiritual nurture held at Devizes Meeting House. Training sessions have been attended on Gift Aid, Trusteeship, Safeguarding, and the annual conference of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers.

Staff Costs were £15k in 2025, lower than the £18k in 2024, because our 12-month experiment with having a part time Burial Ground Manager came to an end in February and our Meeting House Manager at Devizes stood down from her employment in November. We are grateful to all our employees for their service during the year.

Reserves policy

Trustees recognise the need to hold unrestricted cash reserves, sufficient to meet both a period of normal expenditure in the Area Meeting and any unexpected expenditure that might arise. To do this, we start out by estimating nine months of expenditure based on the pattern of the previous three years. Then we add known commitments, and a reasonable allowance for contingencies. The resulting figure is our baseline reserve.

Our unrestricted cash reserves (equal to Net Current Assets) at the end of 2025 total £365,130. In the absence of other special factors, after following our normal methodology, this would suggest that we are holding approximately £100k more than our need, which could be released for use on charitable activities.

However, the interest generated from the cash invested after selling Bath Friends Meeting House has added to our unrestricted reserve. It is enabling us to maintain the value of the sum invested facilitating the possibility of future purchase of premises within our Area Meeting. We are aware that property prices fluctuate and vary across our geographical area and that property inflation does not follow the same pattern as RPI or CPI so the extent of this requirement is uncertain. We also know it is possible that property ownership could seem less important to our future, and that we might want to approach the Charity Commission to de-restrict the funds resulting from the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House. While we have yet to discern the way forward, we are keeping our options open by holding greater cash reserves.

Cash not required for operational purposes is held together with our two restricted funds in the Epworth Cash Plus Fund for Charities. We receive regular updates from its Fund Manager on its changing interest rates. This low-risk fund is easily accessible and suitable for holding our reserves while we seek to discern clearly our needs for the future. In 2026, Trustees plan to engage a financial adviser to guide us.

We ended 2025 with £1,622,160 in the Epworth Fund, comprising our restricted reserves (equal to £1,427,480) and £194,680 of unrestricted reserves. We also held £183,609 of unrestricted reserves in bank accounts.

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 and undertake safeguarding training.

One new Trustee joined us during 2025 and a second early in 2026. 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

In July 2025, all available Trustees and members of the Area Meeting Clerking Team gathered for a strategy meeting. They made the summary report of this event widely available to all in our Area Meeting. It was circulated first in mid-August, then referred to in the September Area Meeting in session, and finally was used as a basis for discernment about our future at the December Area Meeting in session.

This looking forward drew on prominent features of our recent past.

We picked up again on our Members' ageing profile, and noted small developments in our outreach that might help to attract "people outside our meetings for whom the Quaker way would be a joy if only they knew of it." Nonetheless, in 2025, our membership continued to follow a slowly declining trend, ending the year with 165 members, one fewer than at the end of 2024.

Figure 1: Analysis of Member and Attender numbers over ten years			
Year	Members	Attenders	Total
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
2025	165	131	296

National data suggests that Members of Britain Yearly Meeting declined in number by twenty per cent from 2014 to 2024. We appear to have bucked that trend, but this may be simply a feature of the West Country being a nice place to which Friends retire—almost maintaining our numbers but increasing our average age.

We noted also that our regular income from donations and lettings tends to be less than our regular expenditure. “Given the rise in the cost of living faced by everyone” we noted, “it would not be surprising if this were to become the norm.” This risk is mitigated by interest from the sale proceeds from Bath Friends Meeting House that boosts our regular income—and legacies that come to us from time to time.

At the December Area Meeting in session we drew all of this together as we sought to discern the way forward.

We decided that we would try to raise the profile of Quakers in Devizes by seeking to appoint a warden for its Meeting House, who would be able to live in the flat there once it was refurbished. (Those plans were delayed in 2026 by the burst water pipe diverting attention and adding to the work to be accomplished.)

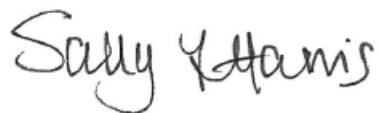
We agreed to appoint a part-time administrator to relieve us of many routine tasks, so that Friends in key roles can focus more time and effort on the bigger picture of our future as an Area Meeting.

Noting that we can use the interest from our proceeds-of-sale investments in the immediate future, we also raised the longer-term question of whether we should be seeking to maintain the *value* of that investment—potentially for the purchase of premises somewhere in our area in the future. On the other hand, we know it is possible that property-ownership could seem less important to our future, and that we might want to approach the Charity Commission to de-restrict the capital investment from the sale of Bath Friends Meeting House, so that it could be used for wider Quaker purposes.

There is much that is unknown as we look ahead. There could be a revival in the numbers of those following the Quaker way, or it might be that we shall settle in some new organisational way as a smaller and “simple Quaker church supported by a simple

charity” in accordance with our national strategic vision. What is not in doubt is the commitment and clarity with which we engage with our future.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 28 May 2026
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 letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

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 2025.

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").

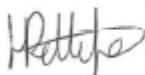
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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: 22/05/2026

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2025

		Unrestricted	Restricted	2025	2024
	Notes	Fund	Funds	Total	Total
		£	£	Funds	Funds
				£	£
Incoming Resources					
Voluntary Income - Donations and legacies		116,976	-	116,976	69,499
Investment income		66,852	378	67,230	62,366
Other income		29,647	-	29,647	35,783
Total Income from Charitable Activities		213,474	378	213,853	167,648
Total Incoming Resources	3	213,474	378	213,853	167,648
Resources Expended					
Charitable activities					
Quaker work		127,860	-	127,860	141,897
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities		127,860	-	127,860	141,897
Total Expenditure	4	127,860	-	127,860	141,897
Net income (loss) on ordinary activities		85,614	378	85,993	25,751
Transfer between Funds		-	-	-	-
Net income after Transfers between Funds		85,614	378	85,993	25,751
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		1,007,785	1,427,102	2,434,887	2,409,135
Total funds carried forward	9	1,093,399	1,427,480	2,520,879	2,434,887
Continuing operations					
All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.					

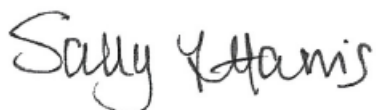
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025

		Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
Fixed Assets	Notes				
Tangible assets	6	728,269	-	728,269	728,269
Current Assets					
Debtors	7	21,250	-	21,250	11,788
Cash at bank and in hand		183,609	-	183,609	150,600
Investment with Epworth		194,680	1,427,480	1,622,160	1,561,008
		<u>399,539</u>	<u>1,427,480</u>	<u>1,827,020</u>	<u>1,723,396</u>
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	8	(34,409)	-	(34,409)	(16,778)
Net current assets		<u>365,130</u>	<u>1,427,480</u>	<u>1,792,611</u>	<u>1,706,618</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		1,093,399	1,427,480	2,520,879	2,434,887
Net Assets		<u>1,093,399</u>	<u>1,427,480</u>	<u>2,520,879</u>	<u>2,434,887</u>
Funds					
Unrestricted funds				1,093,399	1,007,785
Restricted funds				1,427,480	1,427,102
Total funds	9			<u>2,520,879</u>	<u>2,434,887</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 28 May 2026 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 2025

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. 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

	2025	2024
	£	£
Donations	68,296	65,499
Legacies	48,680	4,000
Interest from Epworth Cash Plus fund	66,301	61,008
Other Interest Received	929	1,358
Rental and Lettings Income	29,647	35,783
Total Income	<u>213,853</u>	<u>167,648</u>

Our income from Donations increased by 4% over 2024. Our income in 2025 was greatly increased by the generous legacies of two Friends. The Interest reflects the first full year of proceeds from the sale of Bath Meeting House being invested in the Epworth Cash Plus Fund. Rental income decreased as our Devizes rented flat became vacant during the year.

4 Expenditure

		2025	2024
		£	£
Warden & Property Managers	note 13	15,277	17,554
Rent of Premises, Fees & Taxes		6,790	8,937
Insurance		3,577	3,521
Repairs & running costs		26,145	30,481
Life of the Meeting		25,101	11,462
Donations to individuals and Non Q charities	note 11	1,947	1,150
Donations to Quaker charities incl BYM	note 11	42,210	63,160
Governance Costs	note 12	6,814	5,631
Total Expenditure		<u>127,860</u>	<u>141,897</u>

Our warden & property managers costs were lower in 2025, as our 12-month experiment with a Burial Ground Manager post came to an end and, in part, because our Meeting House Manager stood down from employment towards the end of the year. Rent, Fees and Taxes were higher in 2024 due to professional surveyor fees. Repairs and running costs were lower in 2025 but are expected to be greater in 2026 (see the Financial Review, page 11).

Life of the Meeting expenditure was far higher in 2025 than in 2024 mainly due to the Youth Development Worker being supported for a whole year under the new arrangement where we pay monthly and our contribution is higher. In the earlier arrangement it was paid annually and the final annual payment fell in late 2023 but covered much of 2024. It had not been our practice to record a prepayment on this item.

Fewer Donations from reserves were approved in 2025. This is outlined in greater detail in the Financial Review, page 11).

Trustee Remuneration

During 2025 Trustee Debbie Nightingale acted as a self-employed bookkeeper for our Area Meeting. Her fees for that year totalled £4,895 (2024: £3,663) and are included in Examination and accountancy (see also note 12). Debbie's hours are capped at 25 per month and are normally fewer. More hours were done than in 2024, and an increased rate was approved by Trustees.

Trustee expenses

Trustees' reimbursed expenses of £860 (2024: £895) were paid to four trustees and are included in Quaker work in the Statement of Financial Activities. These cover training, conference and course fees and

reimbursement of some travel and accommodation expenses. One Trustee attended the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers Conference and another attended Yearly Meeting 2025 in London.

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 2025	720,000	8,269	-	728,269
Additions in year	-	-	-	-
Disposal in year	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2025	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2025	-	-	-	-
Disposal in year	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2025	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net Book Value				
At 31 December 2025	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>
At 31 December 2024	<u>720,000</u>	<u>8,269</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>728,269</u>

There were no transactions in 2025 that altered our fixed asset values in the accounts.

7 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £	2024 £
Gift Aid due from HMRC	10,123	9,057
Trade debtors	1,018	2,513
Other debtors	1,570	218
2025 Interest received early in 2026	5,299	-
Expected reimbursement of grant	<u>3,240</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>21,250</u>	<u>11,788</u>

Other debtors in 2025 relates to the part of a 2025 legacy, received in 2026.

8 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Suppliers paid after year-end	4,123	4,403
Donations from Giving owed to Britain Yearly Meeting	14,445	11,295
Area Meeting approved donations:	-	-
To Britain Yearly Meeting	10,000	-
To Britain Yearly Meeting for EAPPI	1,000	-
Grant to return to BYM when re-imbursement received	3,240	-
Accrual for Examination & Payroll	1,601	1,080
	<u>34,409</u>	<u>16,778</u>

EAPPI is the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, a programme co-ordinated by British Quakers on behalf of 16 churches and NGOs.

Note that approved donations are confirmed at the mid-December Area Meeting. 2024 approved donations were all paid before 31 December 2024 but 2025 approved donations were paid in January 2026.

9 Movement in funds

	At 01.01.25	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31.12.25
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	1,007,785	85,614	-	1,093,399
Restricted funds				
Bath Friends MH Fund	1,406,234	-	-	1,406,234
Frome Building Fund	20,868	378	-	21,246
Sub-total Restricted funds	<u>1,427,102</u>	<u>378</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,427,480</u>
Total funds	<u>2,434,887</u>	<u>85,993</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,520,879</u>

	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Movement in funds
	£	£	£
Net movement in funds included in the above are as follows:			
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	<u>213,474</u>	<u>(127,860)</u>	<u>85,614</u>
Restricted funds			
Bath Friends MH Fund	-	-	-
Frome Building Fund	<u>378</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>378</u>
Sub-total Restricted Funds	<u>378</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>378</u>
	<u>213,853</u>	<u>(127,860)</u>	<u>85,993</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 several donations and one unrestricted legacy received by the Local Meeting during the years 1980 to 2000 for the provision of a meeting house in Frome, to which interest has been added. Investigation of archival documents to establish the source of donations and existence of any restriction is ongoing. There are no current plans to use this fund.

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

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

11 Grants and Donations paid

	2025	2024
	£	£
Individuals		
Grants to Individuals (training & other)	<u>1,767</u>	<u>750</u>
Charities		
Non Quaker charities (4 Non-Q charities)	<u>180</u>	<u>400</u>
Quaker charities		
* Britain Yearly Meeting via annual giving	30,445	31,295
Britain Yearly Meeting additional donation	10,000	16,000
Quaker Housing Trust	-	4,000
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	1,000
Other Quaker charities (10 payments in 2025)	<u>765</u>	<u>865</u>
sub-total to Quaker charities	<u>42,210</u>	<u>63,160</u>
Total to Individuals and Charities	<u>44,157</u>	<u>64,310</u>

* 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. All Acting as Agent collections were paid out before the end of 2025.

	2025	2024
	£	£
Acting as agent collections:		
Quaker charities	753	579
Non Quaker charities	<u>229</u>	<u>270</u>
	<u>982</u>	<u>849</u>

12 Governance & Accounts remuneration

	2025	2024
	£	£
Bookkeeping services (see note 4)	4,895	3,663
Payroll services	461	455
Independent Examination Accounts	1,080	1,110
Accounts software subscription	378	403
	<u>6,814</u>	<u>5,631</u>

13 Staff Costs

	2025	2024
	£	£
Staff remuneration:Warden & Property Managers	13,634	15,974
Council tax paid for Warden's flat	1,274	1,212
Employers contribution to pension costs	348	332
Expenses relating to supervision of staff	21	36
	<u>15,277</u>	<u>17,554</u>

Employee numbers during the year decreased from 3 to 1. Total 2025 whole time equivalent: 0.61 (.70 wte for 2024). 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.

The employer's contribution to pensions is made from unrestricted funds, and paid to NEST (the national stakeholder pension scheme).

There were no employee benefits, other than statutory employer pension contributions. No employee had employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2024: Nil).

14 Custodian Trustee – Friends Trusts Ltd

West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area 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. The Area Meeting 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 West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting 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 2025

	2025	2024	2023	2022
			£	£
INCOME				
Voluntary Income				
Regular Giving donations	65,073	63,252	56,146	67,426
Other Donations	3,223	2,247	2,180	994
Legacies	48,680	4,000	-	-
	<u>116,976</u>	<u>69,499</u>	<u>58,326</u>	<u>68,420</u>
Investment Income				
Interest (Epworth Cash Plus Fund)	66,301	61,008	-	-
Interest (Bank Deposit Accounts)	929	1,358	19,317	423
	<u>67,230</u>	<u>62,366</u>	<u>19,317</u>	<u>423</u>
Other income				
From properties, rent etc	29,647	35,783	49,689	88,976
Gain from sale of Bath Friends MH	-	-	1,133,627	-
Total income	<u>213,853</u>	<u>167,648</u>	<u>1,260,959</u>	<u>157,820</u>
EXPENDITURE				
Charitable activities				
Warden & Property Managers	15,277	17,554	13,849	12,339
Rent of Premises, Fees & Taxes	6,790	8,937	7,843	6,034
Insurance	3,577	3,521	3,370	2,697
Repairs & running costs	26,145	30,481	39,351	21,139
Life of the Meeting	25,101	11,462	15,543	9,423
Grants to individuals and Non Q charities	1,947	1,150	450	415
Grants to Quaker charities incl BYM	42,210	63,160	58,774	43,491
Fees relating to the Sale of Bath Friends MH			17,165	-
	<u>121,046</u>	<u>136,266</u>	<u>156,345</u>	<u>95,539</u>
Other				
Depreciation of plant & machinery	-	-	-	791
Support costs				
Governance costs				
Examination & accountancy	6,814	5,631	4,990	5,219
Total resources expended	<u>127,860</u>	<u>141,897</u>	<u>161,335</u>	<u>101,549</u>
NET INCOME	<u>85,993</u>	<u>25,751</u>	<u>1,099,624</u>	<u>56,271</u>
	2025	2024	2023	2022

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Reports of the life of our Local Meetings in 2025

Bath

Bath Friends have had a busy year. We have welcomed new people and explored new ways to build our community.

Our community and caring for one another

We recorded the death of four members/long-standing attenders. We have welcomed several new attenders, including some younger people, and feel blessed by their contributions to the life of our Meeting. We joyfully welcomed one of our attenders into membership.

We have begun to develop resources for our children's meeting by drawing on events during the calendar year. Three children frequently attend our twice-monthly children's meeting, and we welcome other visitors. Area Meeting's Deputy Safeguarding Officer came to talk to us about safeguarding and one of our members led a session on safeguarding for those running our children's meeting.

Two fellowship groups meet regularly. We have run several short sessions after Sunday meeting for worship designed to help people to get to know each other, and our monthly shared lunches continue to thrive.

Our donations to Quaker work, locally and nationally, decreased slightly during the year, but we received generous legacies from two Friends.

Our "Care of Bath Meeting" group continues to act as our Nominations Committee and contributes to the preparations for our business meetings.

Two self-employed gardeners worked for us in the Burial Ground. Despite the dry summer, the garden offered colour and interest throughout the year. Several people visited the garden and we received two requests from families of deceased members to scatter their ashes there. Two meetings for worship were held during summer. We made plans to purchase new benches in 2026.

Six of us attended the Area Meeting awayday held in September at Devizes Meeting House.

Our worship and opportunities for learning

In response to changing patterns of attendance, we agreed to reduce the frequency of our Tuesday evening online meetings for worship from every week to twice a month. These opportunities continue to be valuable to those who are unable to go to in-person meetings or are unable to attend for a full hour. We continue to hold twice-monthly meetings for worship online and we have begun to explore whether we should hold more blended meetings.

Our elders organised a series of six evening sessions of “Quaker conversations” where, in a group normally numbering around fourteen, we asked ourselves questions:

- How do we approach Meeting for Worship?
- How do Quakers make decisions?
- What does the peace testimony mean to us?
- What place for the Bible?
- How do we do community and look after each other?
- How do we reach out to others?

A briefing about Quaker Voices on Mental Health was held after a meeting for worship in May.

During 2025, we started discussing how we might become a more purposeful Meeting and laid plans for three sessions in early 2026 focusing on our faith-led witness, on worship and meetings for learning, and on community and caring for one another. We agreed that the whole Meeting will consider suggestions from these sessions as opportunities to deepen our sense of purpose and community.

Our faith-led witness and reaching out

We continued to engage with Bath’s wider community. One of our members was elected as Chair of the Bath Interfaith Group. Another visited a primary school to talk about Quakerism and respond to pupils’ questions. And we have a representative on the Bath Open Table Network, a partnership of Christian groups which welcome and affirm people from the LGBTQ+ community and their families and friends.

We continued to give witness to our peace testimony, with some of our members being 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 Day. One Friend, acting on her Quaker pacifist concern, took part in a demonstration against the proscription of Palestine Action in London and was arrested for her action alongside some other Quakers.

We engaged with our local Member of Parliament, following the lead of Quakers in Britain on three issues: giving support for the Private Member’s Climate and Nature Bill which had its second reading in January 2025; asking the Government to debate the recent changes to citizenship eligibility for refugees arriving irregularly; and voicing concern about the police raid on Westminster Meeting House, where six young people were arrested while meeting there about their concerns for the climate and for Gaza.

Bath Meeting members support broader Quaker work by taking roles as Area Meeting Trustees (Clerk, and Treasurer); Area Meeting representative on Meeting for Sufferings; and non-executive director of The Quiet Company (the trading arm of Britain Yearly Meeting). One of our members attended the Quakers in Criminal Justice Conference and has begun to support the Area Meeting Quaker Chaplain at Erlestoke Prison. Another brings us reports of her involvement with Quaker Voices in Mental Health Network.

Bradford on Avon

Bradford on Avon Meeting continues to be a large and vibrant Meeting. Average attendance on Sundays is thirty adults (including two joining remotely) and five children and young people. Our Wednesday evening meeting is small, but steady, with an average attendance of three. Local business meeting attendance averages thirteen Friends. The blended meeting option on Sundays still attracts sufficient takers to keep it going every week. Once a month, Sunday meeting is preceded by a social time over coffee and croissants.

Children's meetings continue to be offered every Sunday throughout the year, mostly at the Meeting House and roughly once a month outdoors at Frankleigh House garden. Since June, we have a monthly "Yabber and Yarn" meeting for young people aged about 11+ that runs in parallel with the children's meeting for the younger ones. Once again, we welcomed the regional Quaker Youth Group for a boardgames afternoon.

Elders organised meetings for learning on "sharing what inspires us" and "what do we mean by worship?" as well as an activity on "awesomeness" or "sense of the sacred" for December Area Meeting. In June, a Friend from Quaker Peace & Social Witness talked to us about peace education, in a family-friendly event that enabled parents of young children and two of our older under-18s to attend. One outcome of this session was that we decided to donate peace education resources to four local schools. Peace was a recurring topic for our young people, with four of them laying the white poppy wreath on our behalf at the Remembrance Day event in town and one of them publishing a peace-related poem in *The Friend*.

Pastoral care continues to be provided corporately through our four fellowship groups that meet up on a regular basis. The healing group also continued to meet, usually blended to include one or more former members of our Meeting now living elsewhere.

Meeting House bookings had their ups and downs over the year, ending with a surge of new bookings for early 2026. Two outside users had their hire charges waived by our local business meeting: Wayfinders climate and community café (since January 2024) and Kindwaves, a new charity promoting more kindness in schools, whose trustees occasionally meet at the Meeting House. Both Wayfinders and Kindwaves work on issues very much in tune with our Quaker ethos, and members of our Meeting are actively involved in these initiatives.

A plaque to commemorate the 1718 Quaker Meeting House and burial ground (that also tells people where our current Meeting House is) was unveiled on 5 October at the back of Westbury House near the historic site. This was a joint venture of Bradford on Avon Quakers and the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust.

Sustainability issues and learning about nature keep playing an integral part in our children's meetings and our monthly newsletter.

The situation in Palestine gravely concerns many of us. Since the proscription of Palestine Action in July, four Friends from our Meeting have been arrested over the following months for taking part in “Lift the Ban” protests organised by Defend our Juries. Several other Friends continue to be very involved in Bradford on Avon Friends of Palestine and regularly attend the weekly vigil in Westbury Gardens. In August, one of our octogenarian Friends raised over £7,000 with a 400-mile cycle ride (including riding 260 miles with a broken arm): the money was split between Medical Aid for Palestinians, a project in Tubas (West Bank), and a UK-based homeless charity.

Chippenham

Chippenham Meeting has grown steadily this year. We have several regular attenders and one Friend has renewed her membership. We have also had a steady stream of visitors. The ever-growing circle on a Sunday morning is a source of joy and strength.

We continue to enjoy shared lunches and after-meeting discussions. Some of us were also able to attend an awayday at Devizes which was an opportunity to get to know others from the wider Area Meeting. Various activities were on offer such as singing, led by a Chippenham Friend in his yellow glasses and colourful shirt, also crafts and walks—something for everyone. The day was organised by a small group from our local Meetings including one from Chippenham.

Our Bible study classes continue at various members’ houses and the newsletter is sent out to all. This is particularly valuable to those who are unable to attend meetings in person but it is also a pleasure for everyone to read the articles, poems and reviews submitted.

We organised a day workshop, “Hope as Practice”, run by Woodbrooke on the Road. This was also attended by members from other Local Meetings and was an inspiring and enjoyable experience. We hope to organise another such day in the coming year.

One sadness in November was the vandalising of the white poppy wreath which we had laid at the war memorial. We make a fully-recyclable wreath using bay and rosemary decorated with hand-made white and red poppies. There is also, in the centre, an explanation as to the meaning of the white poppy. In previous years the wreath has been stolen but this year someone carefully cut off all the white poppies leaving only the red ones. We would welcome the opportunity to talk to the person who is clearly distressed by our wreath, but this seems unlikely to happen.

Our Area Meeting Prison Chaplain is a member of Chippenham Meeting and she continues to support prisoners in many ways and to hold regular Quaker Meetings in the prison. She is helped in this role by two other Quaker volunteers.

Another local Friend is the archivist for our Area Meeting and regularly visits the History Centre to catalogue the Quaker records stored there.

We continue to be as environmentally aware as we can, both in our Meeting and in our personal lives. We also take part in wider society with members involved in such things

as supporting local food banks, actively protesting (for example at Arms fairs), writing letters to prisoners, and volunteering in other capacities. We also have members involved in the Quaker Lesbian group and in the Quaker South Asia Interest Group.

We look forward to the year ahead with faith and hope, taking great strength from the fellowship within our own Meeting and as part of Area Meeting.

Devizes

We continued to hold both regular Sunday Meetings for worship and the shorter lunchtime ones on Tuesday. There were blended meetings on Sunday but not on Tuesday.

In August we held our annual Meeting for Worship in the Quaker burial ground in Hillworth Park.

On 20 September, we hosted an awayday for the Area Meeting which was well attended and very enjoyable. A range of activities was available and a delicious vegetarian lunch was enjoyed.

On 6 October, we held a meeting for clearness to discern the way forward for the Meeting House. A range of possibilities was considered. The preferred one was to appoint a warden who could take on the day-to-day running of the building and relieve members of some of the work.

Devizes Peace Vigil continued to take place every Saturday morning from 11 a.m. to 12 noon in the Market Place. We display a banner listing some of the many countries in conflict (this information is obtained from The United Nations) and white doves on which people have written their own peace message. It is a silent vigil in support of World Peace not supporting any one cause and we ask that no one brings a banner supporting any cause. People are welcome to stand with the group for the hour or a few minutes.

We held our usual remembrance meeting at the Devizes war memorial following the town commemoration.

Frome

Frome Friends meet in person each Sunday at Christ Church Parish Hall. About fifteen are present at our main meeting. We are pleased to have welcomed new members who have moved to the area this year, and also new attenders who take part in the life of our meeting as well as worshipping with us.

Since our last report, we have worked with the Local Youth Development Worker to find a way to welcome children to our meeting on a regular basis. This has been a concern of the Meeting for a long time, and we have found a practical way forward for now. As we do not have a separate room for children and families, we set out a children's area in the room where we worship. The space is available for twenty minutes before worship starts as well as during worship. As yet, the family space is not

well-used, but we hope that increasing outreach locally will lead to more families finding us. We are ready to welcome them when they do.

We have developed other new ways of using our rented space within the constraints of the time available to us. For example, we are holding two meetings for worship on the first Sunday of the month. The first meeting is at 9 a.m. and allows those who are not available at the usual meeting time to worship together for thirty minutes. There is time for fellowship afterwards during which others arrive for our regular meeting. We are also holding monthly breakfast meetings starting at 9 a.m. which are an opportunity for us to get to know one another better over a shared meal. We usually have about seven present at these early meetings.

Our community meets up in other ways as well as in Sunday worship:

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

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

Trowbridge

We were pleased to welcome two new regular attenders to the meeting in 2025. They have brought interest and insights about Quakerism, which has in turn encouraged us as a Meeting to consider how we support and encourage enquirers.

We continue to meet in person at the Seymour Hub on the first and third Sunday of each month and every week on Zoom (as a blended meeting when at the Hub). The necessity of having two members to open up motivated us to see if there was anywhere else suitable to meet in Trowbridge which would not need this. Extensive research drew a blank so we are now exploring another way to make the Hub more user-friendly. We have funds which could be used to benefit both the Meeting and the users of the Hub. Run by Trowbridge Future, a local charity, the Hub is a community resource for the people living on the Seymour estate. They work with young people, operate a food bank and community fridge, and run groups supporting people facing many challenges socially and economically.

This year some of us attended Britain Yearly Meeting online in May; some joined the Area Meeting awayday held at Devizes Meeting House in September; some held an after-meeting discussion about how we talk about our spiritual lives; and we held our Christmas meeting at which we shared readings, poems, and fellowship. Our meetings for worship for business are usually attended by everyone, so all have the opportunity to participate in decision-making in our Meeting. In the coming year, we hope to have a worship and fellowship morning away from the Hub, and will continue to donate to Quaker good causes.

The “Care of Trowbridge Meeting” group meets every three months to consider pastoral care and eldership and this appears to work satisfactorily. As a small Meeting we get to know one another well but it is still important for there to be a more formal way of ensuring no one “slips through the net”.

Our Area Meeting trustee keeps us informed about the work being undertaken on our behalf with a report at our meetings for worship for business. This helps maintain our connection with the wider Area Meeting.

We are always very happy to welcome visitors from other Local Meetings. We changed the time we begin meeting for worship to 10.30 a.m. this year, which might make it more convenient for those travelling from other Meetings.