

**West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting  
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)**

Registered Charity Number 1134534



Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of  
Friends in Britain

Friends Meeting House  
1, Whiteheads Lane  
Bradford-on-Avon  
BA15 1JU

**Annual report of the Trustees 2012**

## Annual Report of the Trustees

### Public Benefit

Trustees work to ensure that income and property are used to further the Area Meeting's objectives as set out in our Governing Document adopted in June 2011 on the creation of the new Area Meeting. During 2012, this work has included:

- Managing the finances of the Area Meeting and its six constituent Local Meetings
- Maintaining three Meeting Houses with the assistance of House/Premises Committees at Bath, Bradford-on-Avon and Devizes
- Employing resident wardens for two Meeting Houses (Bradford-on-Avon and Devizes) and a management company for the third (Bath); appointing a new warden for Bradford-on-Avon
- Embarking on the process of developing or updating policies on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and on health and safety
- Supporting Friends' attendance at courses and conferences
- Keeping ourselves informed about proposed changes in regulations on marriages and civil partnerships
- Responding to Friends' concerns on sustainability and equal marriage
- Reviewing how we are managing with the rotating Clerkship of Area Meeting.

### Trustees in post in January 2012

Judith Eversley	Bath (Trustee), Clerk
Sally Harris	Bath (Deputy)
Gordon Whittle	Chippenham (Trustee)
Jean Thomson	Devizes (Trustee)
Margaret Williams	Frome (Trustee)
Catherine Whybrow	Frome (Deputy)
Chris Pollock	Trowbridge (Trustee), Treasurer.

### People

Alan Pleydell was confirmed as the Trustee representing Bradford-on-Avon at Area Meeting in March 2012.

### Governance & Finance

We continue to revise and update our Reference Documents, the detailed guidance on right stewardship of finance and property. We began the year not yet knowing the outcome of the 2011 annual appeal for financial support from Friends ('the Schedule'). By the year-end, we were reassured that our finances were in a good state.

We can confirm that there were no serious incidents or other matters in the course of the year which we should bring to the attention of the Charity Commission.

### Property

We own three Meeting Houses: Bath, Bradford on Avon & Devizes. The other three Local Meetings use rented property. We also maintain the Burial Ground at Widcombe, Bath. Apart from routine repairs and maintenance at the three Meeting Houses, some special expenditure was necessary. The quinquennial survey was carried out at Bradford-on-Avon and resulted in work being undertaken to correct defects identified. Also at Bradford-on-Avon, lead was stolen from the roof in January; the stolen metal was replaced with black rubber, on professional advice. A welcome improvement in Bath was installation of gas-fired central heating at the York Street Meeting House, after two years without adequate heating. With the support of Trustees, Bath Friends embarked on an Appeal for £150,000 to finance installation of disabled access to the Upper Room and improvements to the kitchen and toilet facilities.

### **Our bankers**

CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

Triodos Bank, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AS

### **Our Insurers**

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

### **Our Accounts Examiners**

Blomfields, The Courtyard, 33 Duke Street, Trowbridge BA14 8EA

### **The life of our Area Meeting**

In our report to AM last year, we said that we felt our AM was in good heart, with fewer, but better, Area Meetings, with a good balance of the practical and the spiritual. In 2012, we feel this continued, with three well-attended AMs.



At Chippenham in March we thought creatively about ways to continue the process of fostering strength and a sense of belonging in our Area Meeting. In small groups we shared ideas written out on 6 strings of bunting, celebrating our coming together as an Area Meeting.

June AM was held in Bath, where Jennie Fairweather, who has completed the Woodbrooke course on 'Equipping for Ministry', helped us to think about our individual gifts and where they may lead us in ministry.

At November AM in Devizes, we heard a lively and inspiring talk by Katie Frost from Friends House about 'The Ministry of Money' in which she presented ideas for fund-raising and communicating our witness. This was timely for Bath LM as it prepared to launch an appeal for the building work.

Trustees believe that these meetings contribute to a sense of belonging to the AM, that their liveliness and depth mean that more people come to AM, and that through them we get to know each other better 'in the things that are eternal'. We find that the Friends who clerk AM are growing in confidence. We need to work hard between Area Meetings now that there are only three a year and no AM Clerk to maintain continuity. One of our actions this year has been to put together two short checklists to help any Local Meeting hosting AM to be sure that business matters are followed through and followed up.

Reading the accounts of the life of our Local Meetings on the following pages, one is struck by the wide range of activities undertaken by Meetings and the individual Friends in them, by the careful balance between looking inwards and looking outwards and by the balance between action and reflection.

Judith Eversley  
Bath Trustee and Clerk to Trustees  
May 2013

## BATH

Bath Quaker Meeting is called to an interweaving ministry of:

- worship and spiritual nurture
- fellowship
- witness - the practical expression of our testimonies to peace, simplicity, equality, integrity, truth and sustainability.

In 2012 we have **strengthened the spiritual roots of our meeting and ourselves** by meeting together for worship and discernment, to learn about Quaker practices, and to share poetry and favourite passages from Quaker Faith and Practice and the Bible. A discussion group meet monthly fearlessly tackling topics ranging from the world economic systems, through creativity and pilgrimage, to Celtic spirituality. Another small group worked with the Becoming Friends study pack to explore our spiritual journeys. Friends are generous in sharing their insights and experiences via our newsletter.

Highlights of the year were three extraordinarily nourishing occasions of fellowship and shared spiritual exploration: A quiet day at Ammerdown in the spring where we reflected through meditative walking, art and dance. A Kindlers 'Deepening Worship' workshop in the autumn invited us to cross thresholds and delve deeply into worship and ministry. And last but not least the joyful sharing of laughter, food, dance and music at our Christmas shared meal and talent show.

Quaker Week prompted us to consider how we **speak out in the world**: we experimented with Quaker Quest's challenging 'speaking with a confident Quaker voice' exercises and invited friends and family to join us for a meeting for worship and shared lunch.

With its prominent central location, Bath Friends Meeting House is a great asset for speaking out for **peace**. Friends' concern for Palestine led to us hosting, in partnership with the Bath Network for Peace and Justice in Palestine, a well attended and profoundly moving talk from Hamed Qawasmeh, a UN Human Rights Officer in Hebron, and Erella Dunayevsky. Hamed and Erella are both members of 'The Villages Group' - a Palestinian and Israeli partnership supporting villagers in the Nablus area. We also hosted walkers from the Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda on their walk towards a nuclear free future.

Bath Friends Meeting House is in daily use **strengthening the local community**: B&NES council are our main tenant, using the Meeting House to host school parties visiting the Roman Baths. Other regular hirers include the AA and Bath People's Assembly. In the quiet of an Interfaith 'Silence as a Meeting Place' afternoon and the buzz of 'Party in the City', Bath International Music Festival's annual free music extravaganza, we have met with and welcomed the local community. But perhaps the most successful community venture this year has been the simplest - dedicating one of our external notice boards for community notices.

Building **community** requires us to engage with our neighbours. In September Bath Abbey changed the time of their services so that the Abbey bells ring for the first 15 minutes of our Sunday meeting for worship. By reaching out to the Abbey in friendship, this potential cause for conflict has been transformed into the unexpected delight of a flourishing friendship with the Abbey bell ringers who have visited meeting for worship to listen with us and invited us to visit them in return.

In a positive step towards **justice**, we registered in March 2012 as a Fairtrade place of worship. The theme of justice continued through a talk from local Oxfam campaigner Janine Woodward about her experiences visiting Oxfam projects in Zambia.

We continue to grapple with the demanding task of discerning the way forwards for the Meeting House. We are committed to **using this resource well**, developing the building as a place of worship and community. 2012 has seen significant progress including the installation of new, more energy efficient central heating and the morale boosting acquisition of new chairs and carpet. Income from lettings now covers day-to-day running costs and we have agreed to launch an appeal to fundraise for the £150,000 needed to: install disabled access; take further steps towards making the building environmentally **sustainable**; replace the current cramped kitchen and dilapidated accessible toilet with spacious, well designed facilities; and develop the main room as an attractive environment - a space that feeds your soul.

## BRADFORD-ON-AVON

Our Meeting has functioned well during 2012, and we have become practised at our use of a co-clerking team of seven to run the business of the Meeting, an excellent House Committee, a good group of Elders to whose meetings all are welcomed, and the continuing success of oversight via Fellowship Groups. We have continued to try to maintain an awareness of the wider Society of Friends and of our spiritual values by inviting speakers from departments of Friends House, by study groups – we held an excellent series on Prayer led by one of our Attenders who is also a Church of England clergyman, for example, and by holding meetings to create awareness of our values and why we hold them.

As in Area Meeting, the meaning of Membership has taken the consideration of Elders and the Meeting as a whole, as well as the process for entering into Membership. Bradford-on-Avon Meeting has a large number of regular Attenders who take a full and active part in the running of the Meeting, but who do not seem to be ready to take the final step of applying for membership! Whilst on the subject of Membership, we had the death of a well-loved Friend, both of Bradford and Bath, Dick Phillips. He was a great singer and a leading light in the Herschel Society, so his packed service at Bath Crematorium had a good variety of ministries.

The Meeting is very supportive and enthusiastic about the recently-introduced new-style Area Meetings, which happen less frequently during the year and concentrate much more on fellowship and spirituality than business. We also recognise that this throws more of a burden on the shoulders of our AM Trustees, and we are sincerely grateful for their hard work on our behalf.

Support for Celia Feane, prison chaplain at Erlestoke near Devizes, continues, and several of us attend the monthly meeting for worship she organises for inmates and find it an enriching and uplifting experience. We're also lucky in having Friends who serve on a wide variety of national and international Quaker committees and groups, and they bring stimulating insights to the rest of the Meeting. The variety of local community groups present in Bradford-on-Avon is astonishing, and we take a full part in them, as well as letting our rooms to many of them.

The House Committee, and particularly the 'Greening Group' has been very active in more or less completing the sustainability plan for our Meeting House – in particular an environmental 'LEAF fund' grant was obtained to line our meeting rooms walls with special insulating material, all which work, although expensive, will result in a much better carbon footprint for us. There remains attention to our lighting in the main meeting room, to be effected during 2013. We have made our works carried out available to the section of the Quaker Website dealing with sustainable buildings.

Our warden since June 2009, Bonnie Grotjahn, gave notice in July and we were pleased to be able to appoint her successor Klaus Huber by mid-September, shortly following her

departure. As he was in post from the beginning of October, we managed a very short interim period without difficulty and have been very thankful for the speed and efficiency with which he has taken on the role.

We are grateful that the new AM Treasuring arrangements are working well and our thanks are due to Sally Harris for her excellent book-keeping and to Chris Pollock our AM Treasurer for his help and guidance; LM treasurers value the opportunity to meet together at AMs.

## CHIPPENHAM

It has been a good year for Chippenham Friends. We enjoy an encouraging regular attendance of 10-13 people at Meeting for Worship on Sundays at The Cause. In 2011-2012 we had noticed a gradual increase of Attenders; this year we have been delighted to welcome two Friends into Membership, and another established Friend join us via transfer. Margaret Sadler, previously of Abingdon, brought with her to Chippenham many years of Friendly experience and service, whilst Carolyn Long and Labake Teidi our new Members have contributed to the life of our Meeting consistently for some years. The presence of Labake's son also enriches our Meeting after some years of 'childlessness'

We have held a number of enjoyable events during the year. In April our Friend Grace Crookall-Greening gave an interesting talk after Meeting for Worship on the 'History of Pacifism in the Labour Movement'- a subject dear to her heart. A summer picnic in Celia and Edward James' garden provided an opportunity to both socialise and say farewell to Deb Evans and her partner who were moving to Yorkshire. In September Labake skilfully led us in a well attended and thought provoking exercise on 'What it means to be a Quaker.

In November we were pleased to be invited to hold a Meeting for Worship at a URC church in a rural location near Corsham. The building was originally a Friends Meeting House, built outside the Borough walls in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This Meeting for Worship in the beautifully maintained building was attended by Chippenham Friends and members of the URC congregation.

In December a midweek Meeting for Worship and lunch was held at the home of our Friend Joyce Utting. Other shared lunches have been held in Friend's homes and at The Cause.

In March Labake and Jill Jesshope along with representatives from other Chippenham Churches responded to an invitation from our Local MP Duncan Hames to meet him and comment on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill currently before parliament. In addition to listening to Anglican and Baptist ministers views, they were able to clarify how Quakers make decisions and to contribute personal and Quaker perspectives on Equality.

Our bi-monthly Newsletter flourishes and is enjoyed by many. In addition to highlighting dates and other news it provides an opportunity for Friends creative talents to be expressed and shared. We consider this informs and connects us in new ways.

We in Chippenham consider ourselves blessed by the rich diversity and gifts that Friends bring to our worshipping Community. Service and Ministry are deepening, diverse and much appreciated. From gestures of quiet thoughtfulness, like Helga's lovely biscuits on Sundays, to Friends service on behalf of our Meeting and the wider Community, we continue to travel hopefully.

## DEVIZES

We have welcomed a number of new attenders who now enter with enthusiasm into the life of the meeting.

There have been three sessions using the image of the growth of a tree, to explore, through worship sharing, how we can strengthen our spiritual roots and become a truly gathered community.

Elders and Overseers meet together regularly and have instigated a variety of activities, based on the responses to a questionnaire circulated to find out what activities friends might like to take part in as a group. There have been two buffet suppers. The first involved gathering round to share objects we had brought that we considered significant in our lives. The second had a similar format but involved story telling about special places that had inspired us. Both sessions proved enjoyable and informative, and it was agreed that they had been a wonderful way to get to know one another. There will be two more similar gatherings this year.

In April we hosted the AM Elder's and Overseers meeting, reporting separately from each LM and after lunch dividing into small groups to take part in the Wishing Well exercise. We will again be hosts in May and will be focussing on what is appropriate ministry.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a number of members of the Partnership of Churches joined us for an afternoon meeting for worship. This was followed by refreshments and a chance for those new to our Meeting House to explore the facilities and resources, and to learn about the varied activities that take place there.

We are running fortnightly workshops looking at the practicalities of addressing the various issues highlighted in the Sustainability Toolkit. We have shown Pam Lunn's inspirational Swarthmore lecture. A group of volunteers have engaged in mapping the current footprint of the meeting. Holding many of these events and workshops on Sundays after Meeting for Worship followed by a shared or picnic lunch minimises our travelling. Periodically we have garden working party days when we all get together to tidy the garden and do any maintenance jobs of which we are capable. In July we met for Sunday worship in the Quaker burial ground in Hillworth Park, followed by a picnic in the glorious sunshine.

We were privileged to take part in the Aldermaston to Hinkley Point peace walk, organised by Milton Keynes Buddhists. Some of us walked with them from Marlborough and others prepared food and overnight accommodation. There was a short Meeting for Worship after the meal which was especially meaningful and we were presented with beautiful origami peace cranes by our guests.

Some of our members are involved in the Fair-trade movement and also help with the drop in centre called Devizes Opendoor, an ecumenical initiative, and regularly help around 15-20 people, giving them somewhere to be warm, fed and listened to.

During Outreach Week we hosted a performance of a one act play 'One of Those Despised People' performed by the Quaker Theatre Company. This had been widely publicised and was well attended. The play examined the depth of faith in a future world which is not only suspicious of all churches but views them with hostility.

Although we are none of us getting any younger [we celebrate Marie and Alan Green's Diamond Wedding in April], our monthly children's meeting helps to keep us on our toes. We feel blessed with loving and supportive friendships.

## FROME

2012 has been a more settled year for our meeting and we have been able to move forward together as a worshipping community, both in Local Meeting (LM) and as part of the new, smaller Area Meeting (AM). We continue to have shared lunches on the third Sunday of every month, and our pastoral care group meets about every two months.

We have begun to learn more about each other by starting a series of after-meeting talks by members and attenders about their life stories and spiritual journeys. We have also compiled a poster containing details of activities which Frome friends are involved with and we display this each Sunday. These new initiatives have enabled us to grow as a supportive community.

We have hosted a talk about safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and held a 'Meeting for Learning for Worship' which explored the topic of ministry. We hold two Light Groups every month – one during the day and the other in the evening. Two of our members attended the Regional Experiment with Light Gathering at Redland Meeting House in Bristol in October 2012.

We continue to have a small but regular children's meeting, which held a particularly successful percussion event in September. One young attender participated in the week-long Quaker Summer School at Saffron Walden Friends' School in August.

We report the death of one older, longstanding member of the meeting, and the acceptance into membership of one adult and one child. We have welcomed several enquirers, some of whom have become regular attenders.

One of our members is a trustee for the Quaker tapestry and another is active in the Mendip Community Credit Union.

We have worked with the Frome Area Christians Together (FACT) during their 'More than Gold' project celebrating the London 2012 Olympic Games. Members of meeting assisted at a stand by the library where passers-by were encouraged to write peace messages on hand-shaped pieces of paper, which were later used to cover a large peace dove. The aim was to help the people of Frome think of what gave peace in their lives, and think of ways in which they could support that peace. A member of meeting, assisted by others from meeting, co-ordinated non-competitive children's games on behalf of LM as one of the events during the main weekend of the 'More than Gold' celebrations.

One of us organised a vigil outside Frome library on Hiroshima Day in August. This was supported by other members, who placed peace doves in the tree there, and held a silence followed by readings. Another of us represented Area Meeting at the Quaker Peace and Social Witness conference.

We have considered as a Meeting how to respond to 'Minute 36' from Yearly Meeting Gathering 2011 at Canterbury. We have looked at the 'Sustainability Toolkit' prepared by Friends House as a result but, as we do not have our own Meeting House, and our members and attenders come from a wide rural catchment which precludes reliance on public transport, we felt that a full review was not helpful in our case. Instead we have responded by beginning a series of 'Sustainability and Quaker Values' workshops. These seek to pool and share ideas for sustainable living to provide mutual inspiration and support, and the group intends to share their output with the wider meeting. Individuals from LM are also involved in the local Sustainable Frome group and other sustainability projects.

We support and thank those many members and attenders who are active in their local communities as an expression of their Quaker beliefs. One of our Elders is also a



Quaker visitor at Sidcot School. We recognise that there is the opportunity for us to work towards making cooperative links with the Mount Community where we meet.

During 2012 at least five of our members maintained a strong commitment to Criminal Justice at Shepton Mallet Prison, and worked with youngsters in trouble. One is a Prison Visitor and some attend the regular Shepton Mallet Prison Quaker meeting

Other members are on the committee of the Alternative to Violence Project (AVP), and AVP sessions continued to be run in the Prison throughout 2012. We work closely with the Prison Quaker chaplains at Erlestoke and Shepton Mallet prisons. Several members of our meeting attended the National AVP Conference at Woodbrooke.

Since September 2012 one of our members has been involved with a new group called 'Restore'. This has been formed to provide advocacy to older prisoners, giving them support and friendship when they leave prison.

One of us attended the Quakers in Criminal Justice Conference at Ammerdown. She reported to us that she was encouraged by the youth of the Quakers involved, and heard about work which is being done with the wives and children of prisoners, and about the experiences of long-term elderly prisoners.

We continue to use rotating clerking teams for Local Business Meeting, and rely upon our Correspondence Clerk for continuity and proper communication, both within our local meeting and externally. Written material is distributed by e-mail where ever possible.

We continue to work in partnership with the management at the Key Centre. On the rare occasions when the Centre is not available, for example during the Olympic celebrations and at Christmas, we meet in members' houses.

Our new, more compact, Area Meeting is maturing and answering Frome LM's expressed concern for an AM which is a gathering for spiritual enrichment, for developing our community, and to conduct necessary business. The inclusion of an external speaker at each AM business meeting is a positive change.

## TROWBRIDGE

In the spring of 2012, Trowbridge Quakers moved into a new 'home' at the Community Hub on the Seymour housing estate. We had known for some time that we would have to leave the Halve Social Centre where we had met for many years, as the County Council were planning to close the building. Everyone in the meeting became involved in the search for suitable new premises, and we began to realise that this would not be an easy task. The pressure increased when the Halve was vandalised, and we had to meet elsewhere whilst temporary repairs were carried out.

We heard about the new Community Hub which had been opened through the hard work and determination of members of the Seymour estate residents association. Based in what was once a corner shop, the ground floor Hub includes a café with kitchen, meeting room and disabled WC. The space is light, airy and pleasantly decorated, and though limited in the numbers it can accommodate, it suits our meeting very well. The Hub is used as a café during the week from 10am to 2pm, and other groups use it at other times e.g. Credit Union, Stroke Group, craft groups.

We are very happy to be using accessible, comfortable premises in the heart of a housing estate, where our board hangs outside every Sunday and our information is displayed on the Hub noticeboard – our own small form of outreach.

Trowbridge remains a small meeting mainly consisting of Friends of working age, and Sunday meeting for worship is the focus for us. Members of our meeting give service at

Area Meeting level and we are able to fill the required posts to keep our meeting in right ordering.

Trowbridge Friends are responding to Quaker and other concerns by writing to MPs, supporting pressure groups and financially contributing to causes. Individually we share issues which are of concern in the wider world as well as in Quakerism.

Being a small meeting means that although we are limited in what we can do, we have a great opportunity 'to know one another in that which is eternal'. This is reflected in the depth of silence and quality of ministry which we are able to share when we meet in worship.

We are always very pleased to welcome visitors to our meeting.