

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

West Wiltshire & East Somerset
Area Quaker Meeting

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2022



Spring in the Bath Burial Ground

West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting

Registered address:
Friends Meeting House
1 Whiteheads Lane
Bradford on Avon
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Registered Charity Number: 1134534

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Trustees & custodian trustee

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

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

Custodian Trustee:

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

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

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

Charitable object

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

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

Meeting together

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

Meetings for worship

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

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

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

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

Meetings for church affairs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Charitable activities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sustainability

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

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

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

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

Work behind the scenes

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

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

Caring for Friends and others

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

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

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

We had no safeguarding incidents to report in 2022.

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

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

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

No data breaches were recorded in 2022.

Looking after property

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

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

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

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

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

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

Checking on rental premises

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

Managing finance

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

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

Annual accounts for 2022

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

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

Income

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

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

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

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

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

Expenditure

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

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

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

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

Reserves

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

Governance, including bankers, insurers, and examiner of accounts

Governing document

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

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

Trustees' appointment and training

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

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

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

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

Our bankers

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

Our insurers

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

Examiner of accounts

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

Looking ahead

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

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

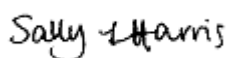
The observations we have made about our numbers of members and attenders make us ask questions about the future. What do we want our meetings to be like in twenty years' time? How will they develop? How can we best use the resources we have to foster a developing Quaker presence in the places where we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

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

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

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

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



Sally Harris, Clerk to the Trustees

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees

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

Responsibilities and basis of the report

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

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

Independent examiner's statement

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

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

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



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

Date: 12-06-2023

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2022

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31 December 2022

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

Continuing operations

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2022

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

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

Barbara Ridhiwani - Trustee

Barbara Ridhiwani

Sally Harris - Trustee

Sally Harris

The notes form part of these financial statements

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

1 Employees

The average number of employees during the year was 2.

2 Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

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

Income

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

Expenditure

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

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

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

Cash at Bank and in hand

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

Debtors

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

Creditors and provisions

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

Tangible fixed assets

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

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

Going concern

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

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

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

	2022	↗	2021
3 Investment income			
Deposit account interest	£ 423		£ 64

4 Trustees' remuneration and benefits

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

Trustee expenses

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

5 The role of volunteers

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

6 Tangible fixed assets

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

7 Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

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

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

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

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

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

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

Additional note on Fund Accounting

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

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

10 Related Party disclosures

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

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

11 Contributions and grants paid

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

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

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

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

12 Governance & Accounts remuneration

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

13 Staff Costs

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

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

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

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

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

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

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Reports of the life of our Local Meetings in 2022

Bath

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bradford on Avon

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chippenham

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Devizes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Frome

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

From the poem “Carrying a Candle” by Jan Sutch Pickard

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

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

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

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

The following initiatives have emerged from these discussions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trowbridge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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