

**West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting,  
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Registered Charity Number 1155009**

**Trustees Annual Report and Accounts  
for 1 January – 31 December 2017**

**Note**

This report accompanies the Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2017.

**Reference information**

The charity is part of the Religious Society of Friends (Britain Yearly Meeting). It was registered on 15 December 2013 as West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting (WSAQM), Charity Number 1155009.

**Contact Address**

Co-Clerk to Trustees:

Margaret A. Stocks, Langarth, Honiton Road, Churchinford, Taunton, Somerset. TA3 7QZ (Tel: 01823 601014 Email: [mstocks2@me.com](mailto:mstocks2@me.com))

**Names of those acting as trustees during 2017**

Barry Allen, Shirley Anthony, Faith Cartwright, Brian Collingridge (from July 2017), Kathy Gollin (from July 2017), Chris Jeffery (until March 2017), Jefferson Horsley (Co-Clerk until April 2017), Margaret Stenhouse, Margaret Stocks (Co-Clerk), Philip Parratt (ex-officio, Treasurer)

**Names of key officers in 2016**

WSAQM – Clerkship shared.

WSAQM Business Team Clerk: Huw Morgan.

WSAQM Communications Clerk: Anna Mullett.

WSAQM Treasurer: Philip Parratt, Cornhill House, 15 Main Road, Westonzoyland, Bridgwater TA5 2EW.

**Names and addresses of other relevant organisations or persons**

Bankers:

Charities Aid Foundation Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

Monmouthshire Building Society, Monmouthshire House, John Frost Square, Newport NP20 1PX

Independent Examiner:

Jodie Loveday, Brook House, 5 Mountfields Park, Taunton TA1 3BH

Other principal advisors:

Friends Trusts Ltd. and Quaker Stewardship Committee,  
Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

**Meeting House Addresses**

Minehead Meeting House, 9 Bancks Street, Minehead TA24 5DJ

Spiceland Meeting House, Uffculme, Cullompton EX15 3AZ

Taunton Meeting House, Bath Place, High Street, Taunton TA1 4EP

Wellington Meeting House, High Street, Wellington TA21 8RA

(There are also local Meetings in hired premises in Burnham-on-Sea, Bridgwater, and Ilminster.)

## **Governance**

The charity is registered with the Charity Commission and operates under the terms of the Scheme issued on 28 July 2014. It is constituted under a Governing Document and Terms of Reference for Trustees agreed by West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting (WSAQM) in 2007. The Area Meeting (AM) also agreed a Memorandum of Understanding between Trustees and Local Meetings in 2007 and by each Local Meeting during 2008. These were updated during 2013. Trustees are nominated by their Local Meetings and appointed by AM. They report to AM annually and on matters of principle or major ongoing items as needed.

The charity functions in accordance with Quaker Faith and Practice of Britain Yearly Meeting in its meetings for business as an Area Meeting and in Trustees' meetings as well as following the documents referred to above. Decisions in both bodies are made on the basis of seeking unity under the guidance of the Spirit with the clerk of that body minuting these at the time.

New Trustees are given copies of the Charity Commission Scheme, Governing Document, Terms of Reference and the Memorandum of Understanding mentioned above as well as recent minutes. One of the Trustees is available for briefings ahead of and after nomination and appointment of new Trustees. Several training opportunities provided by Quaker Stewardship Committee and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre have been taken up and the current clerk to Trustees attended a training session on high quality clerking. Support from Quaker Stewardship Committee and staff in Friends House is obtained as needed.

West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting recognizes seven Local Meetings and has set up Trustees and various committees for particular tasks. The Area Meeting and each Local Meeting have a Treasurer and operate bank accounts. Annual accounts are produced by each and inspected. The Area Meeting is a constituent part of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) within the Religious Society of Friends and a member of Bristol and Wessex Quakers Regional Gathering and relates to these as appropriate or required. Friends Trusts Ltd acts as custodian trustee for the properties owned by the Society within the Area Meeting. Some funds are allocated to Elders and Overseers for use at their discretion for members in need or for spiritual and educational development of members, attenders and Meetings.

## **Objectives**

WSAQM pursues its object of the furtherance of the religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends through holding meetings for worship in seven different locations on Sunday mornings and in some places at other times. Open meetings on the basis of Quakerism or current issues in society are held from time to time, and acts of witness and meetings in public places held or supported on particular matters of concern throughout the year. Each Local Meeting (LM) - and the Area Meeting itself - provides opportunities for learning, discussion and fellowship, not least in developing understanding of being Quakers today. A Newsletter is produced 3 times a year. The national weekly magazine for the Society of Friends, 'The Friend', is available for visitors' use, mostly stored in the LMs' libraries for ease of reference.

## **Public Benefit**

The charity provides public benefit through the provision of regular public meetings for worship, fostering the spiritual life and development of its members and attenders, co-operation with a range of voluntary bodies with similar aims and the availability of premises owned by the charity for use or hire to a wide variety of bodies in the communities in which they are placed. Meetings also support financially and practically a number of charitable activities, run by Quakers and by others, in line with their principles. The film company Purple Field Productions receives particular support from the Area Meeting for its innovative

work in highlighting issues faced by disadvantaged people in African and Asian countries and through its training of local film-makers in those locations.

## **Risk assessment**

During 2013 and 2014, Trustees spent time looking at the risks to which the charity is exposed and noting measures taken or needed to mitigate them. The main risks are seen as:

- Fire, theft, damage and structural problems to its premises
- Accidents to people making use of its property or attending its events
- Financial difficulties due to falling levels of contributions from members and LMs and from drops in interest rates or collapse of banks due to factors beyond the charity's control
- Falling numbers of members and increasing difficulties in getting office holders
- Misappropriation of funds by officers
- Acting illegally either in ignorance or in pursuit of witnessing to Quaker values
- Not caring properly and legally for children and others within its Meetings
- Not fulfilling Data Protection requirements
- Failing to make proper tenancy and employment arrangements
- Trustees failing to understand or carry out their role properly

The survey of LMs done for Trustees in 2015 highlighted the difficulty most were finding in filling necessary posts on both LM and AM committees. This situation is on-going. To alleviate the problem within Trustees, a new approach had been agreed. The required number of Trustees could fall to a minimum of 6 and the balance of both full and sub-group Trustee meetings will change. There were 2 full and 4 each of sub-group meetings during 2017. This was reviewed at the October full meeting, when it was agreed to continue with this system in 2018. It will be reviewed again at the full meeting in October 2018.

The Treasurer on behalf of Trustees arranges insurance for property and third party purposes and asks Local Meetings for updated information as needed. Local Meetings are expected to act legally and responsibly in relation to health and safety, disability, child protection, data protection and fire precautions. A Data Protection Officer reminds LMs and others of the responsibilities. Trustees provide support for these matters. The help of Quaker Stewardship Committee and Friends House staff is sought whenever needed and information published by them is consulted.

Financial reserves are held in CAF, major banks or Building Society accounts; none are currently directly linked to stock market conditions.

The Local Meetings and the Area Meeting have been made aware that treasurers should not function in isolation and encourage appropriate systems to be in place.

The AM belongs to the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service and follows their advice on ensuring the safety of children, including obtaining the statutory checks on those working with children and young people. Policy papers for the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults were prepared, agreed and distributed to all LMs during 2016. A range of policy papers are in preparation. These will be distributed to all LMs during 2018.

## **Achievements and performance**

WSAQM comprises Local Meetings in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Ilminster, Minehead, Taunton, Spiceland and Wellington. Total membership is about 240 members and attenders. Apart from Burnham-on-Sea, which meets monthly, all Local Meetings hold regular weekly public meetings for worship on Sundays. Taunton offers two Sunday meetings, one in the morning and one in the evening as well. Spiceland arranges monthly midweek meetings in

Tiverton and Wiveliscombe. Minehead holds a monthly lunchtime meeting for worship followed by a soup lunch. Most meetings hold regular groups for spiritual nurture, discussion and widening the understanding of Quakerism. Some offer public events on social and international issues. A Quaker Tapestry Roadshow of 20 embroidered panels was held at the Temple Methodist Church in Taunton in 2017. This was a joint Methodist and Quaker venture. This community project, which had its origin in Taunton Meeting in 1980, illustrates aspects of Quaker faith and the work it has inspired.

The AM held 3 full business meetings in 2017, dealing with membership and associated matters as well as hearing reports from LMs and from representatives to national bodies and various conferences. Special Area Meetings for Worship were held at various MHs and some all-day meetings on special topics appropriate to extending Friends' knowledge and understanding of a range of themes were also held. Another Quiet Day was arranged at Spiceland in October.

A Warden is now in place at Taunton Meeting House. The new premises have hosted a range of events during 2017 and the building is hired by many local groups on a regular basis.

The AM's "Green Group" has been re-named the Earth Action Group. It continues to link together those with this particular concern. It provides meetings a series of articles and encouragement to live more sustainably.

Elders and Overseers held meetings to look at matters of mutual interest.

## **Trustees**

Trustees started the year as they ended 2016, but again one of the co-clerks later needed to stand down. A new co-clerk was appointed. The two sub-groups (Finance and Property [F&P] and Policy and Communications [P&C]) have met several times and the meetings for the full group have been maintained. In this way we have been able to reduce the need for unnecessarily detailed consideration of situations during full meetings.

Our link with the Charity Commission is the WSAQM Treasurer, Phil Parratt.

Trustees met twice as a full group for scheduled meetings and once for an extra single – focus meeting during 2017. The F&P sub-group met three times, with some additional ad hoc meetings with representatives of the Taunton Meeting House Management Committee (TMHMC). The P&C sub-group met four times. Faith Cartwright and Kathy Gollin attended a Trustee training course at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham.

We started the year with 8 Trustees and finished it with 8. During this year we had one Trustee from every meeting except Taunton (2 Trustees) and Burnham, who were unable to appoint. However, the risk posed by changing the system and number of full Trustee body meetings was highlighted when 1 Trustee needed to resign for personal reasons and another through unexpectedly serious ill health. This left the F&P sub-group with just 2 Trustees. They were then effectively making significant decisions on behalf of the whole group. It was fortunate that Wellington and Spiceland Meetings were later able to appoint Trustees who had the skill sets to join that sub-group. The system will once again be reviewed in October 2018.

Taunton Meeting House has experienced increased numbers of lettings. The appeal of the building and the visible presence of a Warden have been factors in this.



The Taunton Meeting House Management Committee is currently clerked by Peter Burgoine and Sigurd Reimers, both of Taunton Meeting.

We have appointed a warden, who is part of the TMHMC and who oversees the implementation of the operational plan for the TMHMC with its targets and performance requirements. We will continue to rely on professional advice where necessary.

During the year the Policy and Communications Group started to review the policy documents we hold and have also made new policy documents in several areas in which it is deemed to be good practice. This is continuing and we are looking at models of storage which would be easily available to all who visit our Meetings for Worship and our Meeting Houses. Faith Cartwright continues as our Data Protection Officer for the AM and Judith Blaker as our representative in relation to the Heritage Project.

The cottage at Spiceland has had some major electrical improvements. Further, probably expensive, work to make the cottage properly safe and get it up to a reasonable letting standard is underway.

The quinquennial survey on Wellington was completed in 2015. These quinquennial reports are helpful and necessary for acquiring a professional overview of the state of the buildings and for indicating work to be done.

As shown by the LM survey, undertaken in 2015, most LMs were then facing difficulties with human and financial resources. This is ongoing. We, as Trustees, continue to consider how best we can help.

Trustees still wish to be in a position to provide financial support to any initiative which Area Meeting considers important. In 2017 one of the interest-free loans was converted into a donation.

## **Reports from Local Meetings**

### *Bridgwater*

Bridgwater Meeting is a small worshipping group numbering, at a Meeting for Worship, from 4 to 12. Numbers have been depleted of late by family caring commitments, whether of the young or old. While our usual room at Bridgwater Arts Centre was being redecorated we met in the bar, and once joined Spiceland Meeting. As weather allows we use the BAC courtyard garden. We met once at Ramscombe Great Woods, and have joined the Area Meetings for Worship (leaving a smaller Meeting at BAC). On two occasions the lack of a key among us meant we could not use BAC and we held Meeting at the home of our Friend Val Pennock nearby. We continue to hold Meetings for Worship at the home of our Friend Mary Usher. Two children's meetings were held. Friends from the Meeting serve Area Meeting in several roles.

We have held occasional study groups, one to discuss the decriminalisation of drug use, one to discuss Outreach, another to discuss Mental Health in our Meeting. We arranged a performance at the Arts Centre by The Journeyman Theatre Company of "Feeding the Darkness" (October 29th 2:30-4:30). We are collecting funds to "twin" the BAC toilets with one in the Third World.

### *Burnham-on-Sea*

We remain a very small Meeting. We continue to meet on the first Sunday of the month, with numbers in attendance ranging from 2 to 7, with children from time to time. We continue to meet in the Community Centre, which we share with another Church Group. We held an all-age MfW on the first Sunday of December 2017. We have been unable to hold any discussion groups or house groups, but we have met with two Attenders for coffee and a chat.

### *Ilminster*

Ilminster Friends have seen quite a few changes since our last report. Firstly we heard that due to county council cuts the adult learning centre where we have met for many years would be closing. Luckily we found a room behind a café/sweetshop in the centre of the town. This has the advantage of making us a more obvious presence in the town. Also, the room is used as a workshop during the week for people with learning disabilities, so we feel the rent that we pay is being put to good use. This may yet be a temporary accommodation as we still search for a suitable property in the town to buy for a Meeting House with the generous donation we have been given.

The second change is that we are trying shared oversight by having 3 home groups, which meet regularly. Other members of the Area Meeting have been very helpful by sharing their experiences of this.

We continue to have strong links with the church in Ilminster and with charity Purple Field Productions.

### *Minehead*

Like many other meetings we have been challenged by declining health and a reduction in our regular attendance.

Attendance at our Meetings for worship is usually around 10 to 12 followed by a regular discussion on one Sunday a month on a topic of interest. Our fellowship is supported by our quiet time followed by a simple soup lunch on the first Friday of the month. This normally attracts around 8 to 10 people some of whom come from other churches or simply because they enjoy the opportunity to meet and be social. We are fortunate in having a building which is in generally good repair and which is well used by the local community; this helps to support the financial upkeep of the building as well as providing a valuable venue for various community groups at reasonable cost. During this year we have redecorated the building, using environmentally friendly materials as far as possible. At the end of the year as part of Quaker week activities, we held the exhibition 'The Light that Pushes Me' about peace keeping activities in Africa, this attracted considerable interest and was seen by over 90 visitors to the meeting house. Once again we welcomed Purple Fields Productions(PFP) who showed us their most recent film which was about raising awareness about cerebral palsy in Africa. PFP always brings people from other churches and others into our meeting house and is a mutually rewarding experience. We continue to try to support activities of Churches Together in Minehead wherever possible. Some of our members together, with others from other churches, are working to support Syrian Refugees in Taunton by offering respite and social visits to Minehead. We are considering how we can streamline our administrative processes to enable us to continue to meet the needs and obligations of our meeting within our resources.

### *Spiceland*

At present we have 40 members, of whom about half regularly attend our Meeting for Worship on Sundays. Our affairs are controlled by our Local Meeting for Business which meets at two monthly intervals and which is open to all our members. Our Central Group of six meets every month to carry out more detailed work. A growing feature of our spiritual growth is the *All Age Worship* event every two months which attracts young people under twelve years old associated with our local adult membership from further afield to worship with older members of our Quaker community. Spiceland's extensive outdoor grounds were again open for campers and we continue to manage the Burial Ground on behalf of the Quaker Community in our part of Somerset and Devon. We are open to weddings according to our Quaker practice

In June 2017, we began monthly midweek Meetings advertised as a *Drop into Silence* event at Hemyock Healthy Living Centre; this initiative complements our established midweek Meetings for Worship in the houses of Friends in Tiverton, Wiveliscombe and Kentisbeare. We send representatives to the Meetings of West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting and are represented at the Quaker Meeting for Sufferings which covers all of Britain, both of which

bodies we help to support financially. To promote learning in 2017, we arranged an all-day meeting in support of the Quaker initiative on *Building the New Economy* and we held three meetings in the autumn on the subject of *New Ways of Being a Quaker*

At our Garden Party in June we welcomed people from the whole community and in September 2017 we once again opened our premises for Heritage Week attracting over 60 visitors.

### *Taunton*

Weekly meetings for worship open to all are held at the Quaker Meeting House, Bath Place, Taunton each Sunday morning, on Sunday evenings and on Thursday lunch hour Drop into Silence where a few local office and shop staff and visitors to Taunton attend. Our pattern of small groups, meeting in each other's homes, seems to work well. The recent need to form an additional group reflects a slightly increased population, with numbers at Meetings for Worship occasionally topping thirty and rarely falling below twenty. Our Childrens' Meeting is in good heart, with two families very regularly attending on 3rd Sundays and three others who participate when they can.

Our monthly Study Groups on Quaker Faith and Practice gave us a valuable opportunity to give patient, worshipful attention to our Book of Discipline. In January a "New Economy" Reading Group started and ran until September, using, as a basis for exploring the subject, the booklets published by Britain Yearly Meeting.

The second year of the new Meeting House saw a steady increase in Quaker use by Friends from Taunton and the West Somerset Area. Outside bookings increased also. They include community groups, social and health services, Circles South West, local authorities, trade unions, a community choir, yoga classes and other spirit based groups. All these appreciate the excellent facilities and the atmosphere of calm in the building and even in the garden next to a busy car park.

Several of our members give considerable time and imaginative thought to the supporting of some of the Syrian families in our town, wishing to reach out to people whose lives have been so blighted by their recent past experiences. Wives and mothers of the Syrian families meet here weekly and there are larger gatherings occasionally.

We now have a good quality notice board for Quaker posters and information facing onto the Crescent Car Park, and our window and open door onto Bath Place give us a living presence in a busy thoroughfare. In addition, Taunton Local Meeting now has a Facebook page.

Taunton Meeting funds were agreed in support of the nascent Taunton chapter of Citizens UK. We agreed formally to adopt this concern for an organisation that aims to foster healthy and sustainable local communities and which speaks to many strands of the interests and outreach work of our members in general. Some six Quakers are actively involved, working with several local institutions and faith groups. In Chapter 23.01 in Quaker Faith and Practice we are reminded that as Quakers we should: "Remember your responsibility as citizens for the government of your town and country, and do not shirk the effort and time this may demand. Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind.....Work for an order of society which will allow men and women to develop their capacities and will foster their desire to serve". We welcome the support and upholding of our Friends as we embark on the next stage of this fascinating journey.

We continue to observe Hiroshima Day with a vigil in the High Street. For the first time we had a stall at the Freshers's Fair in September at the Taunton campus of the Bridgwater and Taunton College for FE and HE students where promising contact was made, mainly with

College staff members. As part of national Quaker Week we had a stall in the High Street on 5 October to coincide with our Thursday Drop into Silence.

We are conscious of the blessing and privilege of being in this place, which is undoubtedly both useful and beautiful and which is a source of nourishment to friends and strangers alike, and we hope to recognise our individual and communal responsibility to nurture the interconnectedness of the physical space and the spiritual growth of all who worship and learn within it.

### *Wellington*

Weekly Meetings for Worship continue, much enhanced on the first Sunday of each month, when we hold our Children's Meeting. After enriching and enjoyable activities the children join the Meeting for the last few minutes of stillness before sharing their creativity and learning.

As a large indoor space in the centre of Wellington, there is much potential to expand its community use. Regular users are the Monday morning Toddlers' Group, the Toy Library and the monthly LETS market. Other regular users include two dance groups, a self-help group and a breast-feeding support group (NHS).

Writing workshops to celebrate women's achievements since suffrage began in 1918 have been hosted at the Meeting House – participants have commented on the calm atmosphere and beauty of the building and garden.

The Solitary Writers Group, set up by Wellington Friends, meets on the second Saturday of the month and is proving helpful and inspiring. It is also one of the ways in which we support the Food Bank as, instead of a subscription, the writers bring contributions of food.

Wellington Meeting House offers a useful space for Quaker committees and other groups to use as Taunton is now so heavily booked.

The Peace Garden, providing a quiet space in the centre of town, is already much appreciated. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, local families have in recent years enjoyed the Celebration of Light, a peaceful, spiritual part of the town's seasonal festivities; we hope that it will be possible for this event to continue.

We await the result of an architect's survey to identify what we can do to make the Meeting House warmer in winter and more attractive to other users. We are delighted that our building has been described as of 'high heritage significance' in the recent survey of historic meeting houses and we trust that the architect's survey will respect this significance, particularly in respect of the pending updates to the listing description as recommended by Historic England.

## **Financial review**

### *Principal funding sources:*

Each Local Meeting raises money from its members through appeals and fund raising. Those with premises gain income from lettings. The first claim on all of this is for the LM's own needs but the AM expects contributions to be made to its common funds and to BYM. The presentation of the budget and the accounts are used each year as times for informing Friends about the financial situation of the AM.

### *How expenditure has supported objectives:*

Expenditure has included the activities of members, such as outreach work, representation on other Quaker bodies and at conferences, communications and administration. Expenditure on the maintenance and development of properties continues to be considerable (as the accounts show) but ensures that they can remain a base for regular public meetings for worship, Area Meeting activities and available for lettings to their local communities.

#### *Investment policy:*

The AM banks with the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). Funds not needed in the current account are placed on deposit with CAF or Building Societies. Local Meetings may use whichever bank they choose for their charitable collections.

#### *Grant-making policies:*

As well as transfers to the Area Meeting, each Local Meeting passes on some of its funds to the central funds of Britain Yearly Meeting and such other Quaker organisations as wished. Limited donations are allowed to organisations with similar aims but more often special collections are taken for charitable purposes decided by AM or the LM.

#### *Reserves policy:*

Guidance has been received from Quaker Stewardship Committee and the policy is to be reviewed in the light of this advice.

Local Meetings hold, as reserves, sums for their ongoing work and such maintenance needs for which they are responsible; they are encouraged to pass on surpluses to AM funds.

#### *Overview of 2017*

Consolidated accounts have been produced with the co-operation of LM Treasurers. The consolidated accounts and the formal examined accounts have been produced using the Charity Commission's recommended headings.

#### *Summary of Accounts for 2017*

The final payments on the Taunton project were made early in 2017 of some £30,000 and a loan of £20,000 was converted to a donation in 2017 increasing the donation total.

Taunton Centre again increased its hiring income and with the benefit of donation support from AM Friends a surplus was transferred to AM funds. The support donations end in 2018 so any future surplus is likely to be small until loans are repaid.

The funds of the charity meet the reserves policy (see accounts for details), and the Ilminster Fund is a significant additional resource waiting to be put to use. The Bridgwater Maintenance Fund is now exhausted and buildings will be supported from general funds in future.

In 2017 accounting and book keeping arrangements were centralised which, though needing a lot of work, we hope will simplify the work of the LM and AM treasurers. There were teething issues but these are hoped to be behind us.

#### **Key plans for the future**

The Business Team, established to replace the Area Meeting decision-making reliance on appointed clerks, will have its efficiency and effectiveness reviewed at the end of 2018. The centralised book keeping and accounting activity using the Sage accounting system will also be reviewed. Ilminster Friends' search for a property will continue and we will progress the matter of the donated Ilminster funds, which need to be used. Wellington Friends hope to increase the warmth of their building and thereby further increase their lettings. The work of Trustees devolved to sub-groups will be scrutinised and reviewed. The hope is to continue to create structures, physical and human, that will enable the Area Meeting to develop in strength and witness to meet current needs.

Margaret A. Stocks, Co-Clerk to Trustees in 2017,  
on behalf of WSAQM Trustees,  
September 2018