

Treasurers' News

New issue 2

Autumn 2008



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How to have a Happy New Year

What might be a new year's resolution for a treasurer? Having a perfect set of accounts and, for area meetings, a trustees' report, certified by the auditor or independent examiner, ready on time? Unlike typical new year's resolutions, this is not unattainable but we need to start earlier than 1 January to attain it. If at all possible, put the necessary arrangements in place beforehand. Involve others who should be contributing to the final product and make sure that all share a common understanding of what is needed from whom and by when. You may well already have accomplished some of the preparation here culled from the Woodbrooke *Advancing in Treasurership* course 2008.

	What	Who	When
Preparation for consolidation	Agree cashbook headings	All treasurers	Earlier in 2008
	All agree format of pro forma and timescale for reporting	All treasurers, trustees and clerks	November 2008
	Request valuation of investments on 31 Dec	AM treasurer	November 2008
	Appoint an examiner/auditor	AM – though trustees may recommend	Earlier in 2008 – or asap
Local/sole accounts	Open the books for 2009	All treasurers	December 2008
	Close the books for 2008	All treasurers	January 2009
	Prepare reports	Clerks	Jan–Feb 2009
	Prepare accounts; send pro forma to consolidator	All treasurers	Jan–Feb 2009
	Check pro formas for consistency	Consolidating treasurer	February 2009
	Examine local accounts	Local examiner(s)	Feb–Mar 2009

Trustees and clerks have important roles in producing the annual report, details of which are to be found in SORP 2005 and, for a charity not subject to statutory audit, in section 6.11 on pages 58–62 of the *Treasurers Handbook* (edition 3.01, available at www.quaker.org.uk/treasurers). It is important that they understand this and do not rely on the treasurer to do everything.

A change for our 2008 accounts is that the income threshold for statutory audit goes up from £250,000 to £500,000 and only this year has to be counted, not the previous two. Unless, that is, the meeting has assets exceeding £2.8 million, in which case the audit threshold comes down to £100,000. (This is liable to be raised to £250,000, perhaps in 2011.)

This programme goes only to the end of February. By then all the pieces are in the consolidator's hands, dates for examination of the AM report and accounts have been agreed with the auditor and *Treasurers' News* issue 3 should emerge with additional relevant material: if you have any, do send it in!

Tom Heydeman, editor

If this is your last year as treasurer please make sure that your successor is known by name and, if possible, email to Andrew McVicar <andrewm@quaker.org.uk> in Quaker Communications Department – and thank you for your service!

Questions I have wrestled with – conclusions I struggle with

Q1. What is a Quaker meeting?

A Quaker meeting is a community of like-minded individuals seeking to understand the will of a silent elusive entity with a capricious sense of humour.

Q2. What level of Quaker meeting is the “charitable unit”?

The Quaker charitable unit is the area meeting because

- that's what **we** decided,
- *Quaker Faith & Practice* says so and
- the Charity Commission accepted our decision because that's where **our** membership lies.
- But we still don't like it because, although we are members of the same AM, we want to remain separate/independent/alooof/select/secret.

Q3. What is the purpose of a Quaker meeting?

The purpose of a Quaker meeting is for public worship, advancing Quaker beliefs/practices and anything else we can label Quakerly.

Q4. What is the Charity Commission?

The Charity Commission (CC) is an interfering government agency that forces Quakers to follow their own testimonies on truth and simplicity by:

- Recognising that any money given to a meeting is given in trust and where there is a trust there are trustees. These are defined as the people legally responsible for the overall management and decision-making irrespective of what they call themselves.
Prior to AMs appointing trustees it was difficult to pin down who made decisions. In practice different groups of people assumed trustee responsibility (and legal liability) for different decisions without realising they were acting as trustees. Quaker obfuscation.
The appointment of AM trustees simplifies this.
- Accepting that the main purpose may be advancing Quaker beliefs but Friends may act under concern, the CC worked

with Quaker Stewardship Committee to produce a governing document with wide enough powers to allow acting under concern. Acting under concern involves the meeting in testing the concern; it does not extend to the meeting becoming a philanthropic group distributing largesse to other groups or becoming a market trader competing with others to sell Fairtrade goods. Of course meetings will wish to help other groups and there are two basic mechanisms to do this.

(i) Hold special collections for the other groups, i.e. acting as a collecting agent so that the collection never belongs to the meeting but always belongs to the group collected for.

(ii) Donate by minute from the meeting's money in furtherance of the meeting's witness in the world. A donation might be in cash or by allowing a group use of the meeting house at a concessionary rate or free. There should be some rationale as to how Quaker beliefs/concerns are advanced by making a gift to the other group. If this can't be demonstrated process (i) is preferable.

- Expecting a single set of accounts that reflect the work of the whole AM. Prior to the need for consolidation LMs often kept their own finances secret from other LMs and their fellow AM members who worshipped at other LMs. The thought that non-Quakers might want to see the accounts was an alien concept to some.
- Recognising that LMs may need to make local decisions and encouraging Quaker Stewardship Committee to develop the idea of written Memoranda of Understanding between AMs and LMs so that all have a clear idea of who does what.

Q5. Why are the accounts so complicated and hard to explain?

My answer to this question will appear in another issue of *Treasurers' News*. Meanwhile, do write in with your disagreements!

David Holmes

Being a Quaker Treasurer – for new and prospective treasurers and those who sometimes feel uncertain.



Each starts at 11.00 am (with bookkeeping) or 6.30 pm (without bookkeeping) on day 1 and ends on day 3 at 3.00 pm (or sooner if you miss an optional afternoon session).

Dates for 2009 are:

Fri 20–Sun 22 Feb
Tue 24–Thu 26 Mar and
Fri 24–Sun 26 Apr 2009

Book as soon as you can.

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Quaker Study Centre

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What donations may meetings make?

Clare Scott Booth, Quaker Stewardship Committee

The basic principle which applies here is that all payments out of charity funds must be made in order to further the objects of the charity concerned. Provided that this basic criterion is met there is no reason why donations cannot be made to non-charities, or indeed to individuals (overseers relief funds, for example). Of course charities make payments to individuals and non-charities all the time, either for goods and services or because they are set up to support those people.

In deciding whether a particular item meets the objectives of the charity you would look at what type of organisation it was and whether the meeting had adopted it as a particular concern – as specified in the approved governing document for area meetings (**5 Application of the Income and Property**: Within X Area Meeting, income and property are used to further the area meeting's object by work such as: ... (iv) funding the concerns that Quaker meetings in the area of X Area Meeting or beyond have adopted or agreed to support). An off-the-cuff donation to Amnesty because we think that would be nice would be less acceptable than one which followed a period of discernment that the meeting had a religious calling and was acting under concern to do something about human rights. I would perhaps expect to see more testing of discernment for a donation to a non-charitable organisation. Size would also be a factor in that a small amount would not be expected to have the same level of scrutiny or testing as a large one.

Equally it is not permissible for a meeting to make a donation to another charity if making that payment does not further the meeting's objects. A donation to a charity for maintaining military museums might be argued to be outwith the objects, as might any charity with no obvious link to Quaker principles – my choir for example. So the purpose of the organisation receiving the funds and the reason for giving them are far more important than the legal status of the receiving body.

[**Editor's note.** This advice supersedes that given on pages 117–118 of the *Treasurers Handbook* (edition 3.01), which will be amended in the next revision.]

Dates for your 2009 diary – details to follow in a future issue

The Annual Conference of Treasurers – Saturday 27 June – Friends House, London
Booking for this opens early in 2009. At least one treasurer from each AM can enjoy this day.

Conference for Trustees & Treasurers – Sunday 28 June – Friends House, London
on themes of topical interest and importance. The twin conferences can be booked together.

Intermediate course for Quaker treasurers – 25–27 September – Woodbrooke
This is a new course to follow on from *Being a Quaker Treasurer*, details follow in a future issue.

Treasurers are very upright folk – you never find one lying on a SOFA

Legacies: help us to help you to help our testators!

by Paul Peros, Legacy Officer

Research shows that this is the time of year when people are most likely to make or remake their wills. Since the Society depends on legacy giving for about a fifth of its income at both local and national level, this is an important piece of information. As Britain Yearly Meeting's legacy officer, I'm the main contact available to Friends for information and advice about wills. But if you have a potential legacy-giver in your meeting, you may well be their first port of call. That's why an integral part of my role is supporting you as treasurers – not just advising legators, but advising you on advising them!



An updated legacy booklet, *A guide to making your will*, was launched at the Annual Conference of Treasurers in the summer and copies were sent out to all meeting treasurers. Articles have appeared in *Quaker News*, with more to come, and a legacy flyer is shortly to appear in *The Friend*. You can download the booklet from www.quaker.org.uk/legacy. These are some of the ways in which we are working together to promote the option of legacy giving, enabling us to leave the Society to our successors in sound financial health.

During 2009 I'll also be working on more ways to help you as treasurers in supporting legacy giving, the first being to produce some materials with up-to-date information about the main advantages of legacy giving (how it helps the legator reduce their inheritance tax bill, for instance), so that those important first conversations with a potential legator can be informative and reassuring. If there are any ways in which I can help you now please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. If you have any experience of legacy giving in your own meeting – examples of good



practice, say, or things which make you reluctant to raise the subject – then please drop me a line, as I'm looking to take your feedback into account when drawing up this material. And, of course, I remain your contact for legacy matters – so if somebody does enquire about legacy giving then I am available to speak to you or to the enquirer, in confidence and without obligation. You can contact me for more details, or with your own legacy experiences, on 020 7866 9509 or paulp@quaker.org.uk.

Cambridgeshire Finance Day

Our Cambridgeshire Area Meeting Finance Day took place in Huntington Meeting House at Godmanchester on Saturday 1st November. The morning sessions were attended by five trustees, six treasurers or assistant treasurers and three other Friends.

Tom Heydeman (Quaker Stewardship Committee) introduced a number of policy topics in a most innovative way in the first session. A number of Area Meeting trustees performed a sketch that portrayed a meeting of the Finance Committee of Much-Rotting-in-the-Marsh. The characters had many problems in their meeting and many strange ways of dealing with them. The sketch was followed by discussion in small groups about what we would or could do if these situations occurred in our own meetings.

The second session was led by Sheila Fletcher, who has examined our area meeting accounts for the past two years. She will be continuing this arrangement in 2009 and so she explained her requirements to us and advised on the correct accounting methods. She also answered individual questions and offered help and advice to treasurers.

Two more Friends joined for the afternoon session on fundraising, which was led by Katie Frost from Quaker Communications at Friends House. She filled us all with her enthusiasm and centred her talk on three of our area meeting's interests – the Congo, Tbilisi and Claridge House. It was lively, inspiring and informative and as one Friend said afterwards, 'I now feel better able to go and promote projects.'

Delia Suffling, Treasurer, Cambridgeshire Area Meeting

For issue 3 send copy to tom@heydeman.eclipse.co.uk by 12 February 2009