



The Association of Talking Friends: Registered Charity no. 299656

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31/ 12/ 2010

The Trustees present their report on the activities of the Association for the year ending 31st/ 12mo / 2010.

Background

This Quaker charity exists to provide those who are visually impaired with audio access to Quaker periodicals and books at low cost. The Association was founded in 1988 under the care of Dorking and Horsham Monthly Meeting and responsibility for its care transferred to Warwickshire Monthly Meeting (WMM), now known as Central England Area Quaker Meeting (CEAQM), during 2007.

Members of CEAQM began recording in October 2007.

The objectives and rules of the Association are defined in its Constitution.

Trustees and Committee Members

The Constitution of the Association requires that there shall be not less than 3 Trustees:

- (b) Trustees shall be appointed by Dorking and Horsham Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), (or by any body to which its functions are transferred in whole or part from time to time), from amongst persons who are and remain Members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).
- (c) A Trustee shall automatically resign on ceasing to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).
- (d) Persons appointed as Trustees may retire at any time of their own volition or at the request of the Appointing Body for the time being.

The following served as trustees during 2010:

Gill Coffin appointed 17/ 7/ 2007
John Lampen appointed 17/ 7/ 2007

Joy Aldworth appointed 12- 6- 2010

The following served as Committee members during 2010:

Anne Austin appointed 17/ 7/ 2007
Joe Coffin appointed 10/ 5/ 2008
Anne Fletcher appointed 17/ 7/ 2007; Equipment Officer
Alan Johnson appointed 17/ 7/ 2007; Clerk of Committee (Note1)
Victor Lobb appointed 17/ 7/ 2007; Treasurer (Note1)
Linda Pegler appointed 17/ 7/ 2007; Membership Secretary
Stella Roberts appointed 10/ 5/ 2008
William Waddilove appointed 17/ 7/ 2007; Website Administrator

Note 1: These Friends were appointed for three years. Other Committee members are appointed for one year, and may be re-appointed subject to their consent at the following AGM.

The committee has not been able to find a technical adviser to report on the quality of recordings on behalf of the subscribers.

Trustees meet with Committee members at least four times in each year.

Trustees and Committee members have a wide range of relevant qualifications and experience, and the Committee includes, as required by the Constitution, one member who is visually-impaired.

Objectives and Activities

The object of the Association is *'to relieve the blind, or the partially sighted, or those labouring under some temporary or permanent incapacity or disability which makes reading a strain, by the provision of equipment, materials and facilities all of whatsoever nature or description to provide for audible reproduction of printed or spoken material and music or tactile reading matter'*.

Members of Talking Friends may subscribe to any or all of *The Friend*, *Quaker Voices*, *Friends Quarterly* and *Towards Wholeness*. All subscribers receive an audio version of *Quaker News*. New subscribers also receive an audio copy of *Advices and Queries*.

Achievements

During 2010, the Association continued to record these publications on cassette tapes and to distribute tapes to subscribers using the Royal Mail 'free postage' concession.

There was a small reduction in the number of subscribers during 2010 and we ended the year with 39 members. The incidence of visual impairment increases with age, and so it is natural that most members are in the older age groups. We welcome new members, and hope that the service will be publicised and used more widely.

There are 11 teams with 25 readers being made up of 8 teams recording *The Friend*, a weekly publication and *Quaker Voices*, and 1 each reading *Friends Quarterly*, *Towards Wholeness* and *Quaker News*.

We have reflected on the priorities for Quakers in Britain in 2009- 2014 published in 'A Framework for Action', and have submitted our response.

In anticipation of the costs arising from the planned introduction of digital recording, we have increased the price of subscriptions to all the journals we record to 50% of the cost of the printed version. This is the first increase in price for several years.

We continue to publicise our service to members and attenders of the Religious Society of Friends in the UK through an updated publicity leaflet, attendance at Yearly Meeting Gathering and through our website: www.talkingfriends.org.uk

We have investigated newer technology for recording and distributing these audio publications. We have sought the views of our subscribers, one of our trustees has carried out a technical evaluation of the technical options, and we have carried out a trial recording of *The Friend* in a CD-based format. The committee has accepted the offer by a trustee who record *Quaker News* on CD and cassette in order to determine subscriber preference. It is anticipated that the experiment will take place in early 2011.

We thank our volunteer readers for their continued commitment to this service, and we also wish to thank Friends at Quaker Life for copying and distributing the recorded materials on our behalf.

The Future

1 Context

Producing Quaker published materials in alternative formats is an important way of honouring Britain Yearly Meeting's commitment to equality. Our audio-publications for

people with a visual impairment are mostly written by and for Quakers, but have a wider appeal.

Our recordings are made on 'compact cassette' tapes, which was the standard format used by organisations offering 'talking books'. This 1960's technology is being replaced by newer, digital media.

2 Transfer to new technology

In last year's report, we stated that we are planning to introduce MAGIX Audio Cleaning Lab editing software to record and edit publications in a digital format on re-usable memory sticks.

This year, in an attempt to broaden our understanding of available digital products, a training session was arranged for a demonstration of Audacity, a free download of digital software.

To keep pace with other providers of information to visually impaired recipients, the association may need to move to using Memory Sticks. Should this be the case, subscribers will have to be provided with a simple 'play' unit which are readily available.

We have asked our subscribers for their views on, and their access to, newer audio technology such as CD players and the internet, and their preferences for such systems. Their response has been mostly welcome, but we shall produce a master cassette tape from the digital recording, for copying to those who continue to prefer to receive cassette tapes.

These recorded CDs or re-usable memory sticks can be sent to our subscribers through the free postage system.

We believe that this proposal will minimise the investment required in new equipment.

Examiner of our Accounts

We thank our Examiner, Peter Ullathorne, a member of CEAQM, for examining our 2010 accounts. He has indicated his willingness to accept reappointment as examiner of our accounts for a further year.