



Report to Area Meeting from the Future of Victoria Terrace Working Group

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1. Background and introduction: The remit of the working group

In August and October of 2008, South East Scotland Area Meeting "considered the history and prospects for the Quaker Meeting House at 7 Victoria Terrace". The end result was the creation of a "short-life working group", requested to report back to Area Meeting in June 2009. The group consists of the Friends named above, convened by Henry S. Thompson. Further details on the history and remit of the group can be found in Appendix A to this report.

The group has taken as its fundamental goal to gather as much information as possible to assist Area Meeting in clarifying its vision for the future Quaker presence and witness in Central Edinburgh, the part 7 Victoria Terrace might play in that future, and the costs and benefits of alternative ways forward in this regard.

This report has three main sections, organised chronologically, covering the history of the Quaker ownership of 7 Victoria Terrace, its current situation, and a range of possibilities for the future. These are preceded by a brief 'executive summary' of our

work and its conclusions, and followed by a collection of background material.

Throughout our work we have not seen it as our task to make any overall recommendations, but rather to gather the information necessary to support Area Meeting as it seeks answers. We feel strongly that it is for Area Meeting, gathered in Meeting for Worship for Business, to discern the right way forward.

2. Executive summary of work and conclusions

The working group met a total of twelve times throughout the first five months of 2009. Over the course of those meetings we invited a number of people to join us to share their particular perspectives on the matter:

- Alastair Cameron and Don Stubbings, who briefed us on Area Meeting's perspective;
- John Phillips, Area Meeting Treasurer;
- Anthony and Sue Buxton, Meeting House Managers;
- Mark Hutcheson, Clerk of Area Meeting Trustees;
- Ken Jobling, Convenor of Area Meeting Fabric and Maintenance Committee.

We also solicited information from a number of different constituencies via questionnaires and held two open meetings, at which around 60 Friends and attenders, mostly, but not entirely, from Central Edinburgh, shared with us their answers to the question "What is your vision for the Quaker

presence and witness in Central Edinburgh for the *next 20 years?*"

Our conclusions can be summarised in terms of a sequence of choices, each leading to a situation with costs and benefits. The primary choice is, do we stay in 7 Victoria Terrace, or do we leave it? If we leave, do we attempt to find somewhere which provides essentially the same facilities as 7 Victoria Terrace, or somewhere more modest, or more than one place? Do we look for somewhere to share, or somewhere of our own? If we stay, do we reduce our use, and with it our costs, do we continue more-or-less as at present or do we try to do more? How do each of these choices align with our vision for Quaker presence and witness in Edinburgh?

3. The past

3.1. Origins

We moved to 7 Victoria Terrace from premises at 28 Stafford Street some 20 years ago. At that time the Meeting was growing and we needed more space.

The Meeting Room at Stafford Street was upstairs with no lift so access was a problem. It was an L-shaped room which made it difficult to sit in a circle as in 7 Victoria Terrace and you could get "lost" at one end or the other of the L-shape and not hear or see the rest of the meeting. There were a number of smaller problems, which added up to a lot of discomfort:

- The coffee room was a bit of a squash.

- The children were in the basement in three small rooms. The young people were like sardines in the smallest room. The crèche was at the front of the building and the 5-12s at the back—neither room was very big and there was very little room for storage.
- There was lack of office space.
- Letting possibilities were minimal and the Meeting House was not open to all during the week.

A property developer had approached the Meeting several times offering to purchase the building on very attractive terms, and after a series of Meetings for Business and threshing sessions the Preparative and Monthly Meetings agreed to the move, even though we didn't know at the time we left where our new home would be. In the end we spent nearly two years at Gilles College in Marchmont, first while we found a new home, and then while it was refurbished for us.

What have we gained from the move?

We have considerably more space at 7 Victoria Terrace.

We have a beautiful meeting room that is light and airy and creates a feeling of calm and the sense that it is a place of worship.

There are rooms that can be let out.

The Meeting House is in a central position in the city, which means it is accessible to lots of people.

Disabled access has been difficult lately with the nearby building work going on, but this is now completed.

The position also offers lots of possibilities for Quaker outreach and for the Meeting House to be a Quaker centre.

There is plenty of space for coffee and tea after Meeting for Worship on a Sunday and for lunch as well.

There are also quiet areas for sitting and talking.

There is space for a good-sized library.

The children's space is improved although the crèche is rather dark and small and out of the way but other spaces are quite flexible.

In the past the young people have used the youth café at 6 Victoria Terrace which provided a good opportunity for local community building.

Very recently we have acquired access to the Scottish wild life garden in Johnston Terrace. This is very welcome for all but particularly for the children—a garden opens up lots of possibilities for fun and learning.

Over the years the Meeting House has hosted many link group weekends. These have allowed young people from all over Scotland to come together for a residential weekend, to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, to learn more about

being a Quaker and benefit from being with like-minded young people.

It is hard to quantify/evaluate just how important these events are, but speaking to young Quakers now in their twenties and thirties they say how important these events have been for their own spiritual development. If we are going to keep our young people involved with Friends we need to care for and nurture them. 7 Victoria Terrace is an ideal place to do this.

3.2. Building structure

The building was in quite a poor state when it was purchased by the Monthly Meeting. Apart from the internal work which gave us the basic rooms layout, substantial repair work had to be undertaken to repair badly weathered sandstone on the exterior and some roof repairs were also necessary. Urgent repair to stonework was necessary in 2007-8 to make the building safe and opportunity was taken, while the scaffolding was in place, to do general stonework improvement with a view to preventing the need for further such work for the next 20 years or so.

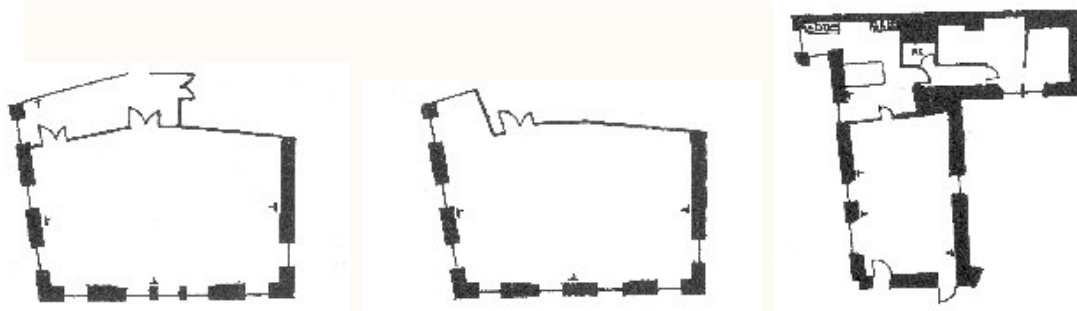


Figure 1. Meeting Room, Hall, Library and Kitchen and Crèche

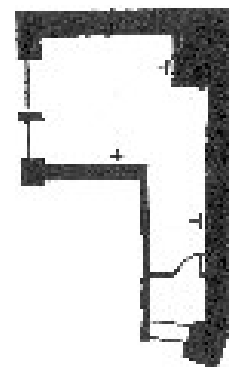
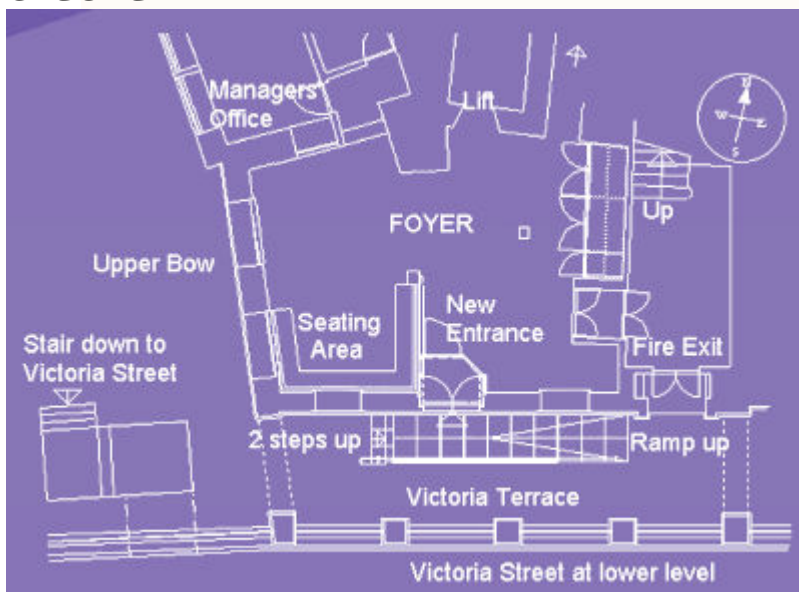


Figure 2. Foyer and Bow Room

There follows a description of each room, working down from the top.

- The second floor **Meeting Room** and its lobby are substantially unchanged, except for redecoration, since 1988. Ceiling-mounted fluorescent light fittings started to fail during the early 2000s and were difficult to access for maintenance because of their height from the floor. They were replaced in 2006 by suspended fittings, a year or so after the room was redecorated and re-carpeted. The hearing

loop system was upgraded in 2003 with the installation of four suspended microphones, but users are not entirely satisfied: apparently the microphones still pick up too much ambient noise.

The high **roof space** above the Meeting Room was largely uninsulated and had been very difficult to access (except by pigeons, whose leavings littered the floor). This was remedied in 2004 with the installation of a hatch from the lobby, a fixed steel ladder above the suspended ceiling height and an inspection platform. Some strengthening work was done to the beams, which have a large and fragile span, the area was cleaned and blown recycled paper insulation was put in (2007). The roof space cannot be used for storage because it lacks the necessary structural strength.

- The first floor **Hall** had served as a gym during the Boys Brigade years and, except for redecoration, was substantially unchanged when we upgraded the building. Ceiling-hung scaffold bars for the suspension of theatre lighting and curtains were installed in 1995, from which theatre loudspeakers are also hung, with a transverse bar, wired for lighting, added some years later. The blue and yellow colour scheme of 1988 was replaced by a two-tone green scheme in 1997, when some of the wooden wall-barring, a gym feature, was removed, and this was replaced in turn by a neutral buff colour scheme in 2008, when a

storage cupboard was added in the passage linking this room to the Library.

- The **Library** has been largely unchanged during the past 20 years apart from twice being redecorated and once re-carpeted. A decorative stained glass window has been added, given by Nancy Selkirk in memory of John, her husband, and made by their son.
- Little was spent on the **Kitchen** when the building was purchased and, if it is to continue to be used to prepare food for public consumption, it is now in need of significant upgrading to meet current food hygiene regulations. The commercial dishwasher has been replaced once and a domestic gas cooker replaced by a second commercial gas cooker. Electric water heating has been replaced by a through-flow gas water heater.
- The **Bow Room**, accessed from the foyer by a corridor (with two steps) and with its own outside door to Upper Bow, was, for the first 20 years of Quaker ownership, let to charities (most recently International Voluntary Service) for office hours use, with the Monthly Meeting retaining the right to use it in the evenings and at weekends. It was redecorated and re-carpeted in 2002. International Voluntary Service, who rented the room at considerably less than its commercial value, moved out in 2008, at which point the room became available for meeting use throughout the week.

- Little has been done to the double **Crèche** room on the first floor, except for redecoration. This is awkward of access, through a narrow corridor which leads off the kitchen and can only otherwise be accessed from the tenement common stair. There is a lavatory off the corridor between the kitchen and this room.
- There are **two mezzanine floors** (not shown in the plans) in a flat-roofed extension behind the main building. The upper of these, above first floor level, houses **toilets**. The women's toilets, which house two lavatory cubicles and two wash hand-basins, were upgraded in 1996. There is one small lavatory room for men. The lower floor has one toilet room with a single lavatory and hand-basin (and for much of the 20 years housed the washing machine). Adjacent to this is a **small room**, known as the teenagers' room during early Quaker occupation, when there were a number of teenagers in the Meeting. This is now known as Room 5 and is used mostly for one-to-one meetings; it can accommodate only four or five at most.
- The **Foyer** is fairly spacious, but its adaptability is inhibited by two structural pillars. This space was originally a shop under the Original Secession Church. At that time the entrance was in its present position under the Victoria Terrace arches. At some point in the twentieth century, that original entrance was made into a window and a new entrance made on the Upper Bow elevation. When the decision was

taken in 2002 to make the building wheelchair-accessible, it proved impossible to add a ramp to the Upper Bow entrance, so the original Victoria Terrace entrance was re-opened and a stone ramp installed. At the same time, the foyer was completely refurbished and redecorated, with the installation of a seating area, also suitable for informal meetings, and a reception desk.

During the past ten years, spacious storage cupboards have been built into an alcove in the eastern end of the foyer and in the passage linking the foyer to the Bow Room.

A tiled passage leads from the foyer past doors to under-stair storage and a small cleaner's cupboard and on to a utility area with Belfast sink, in which the washing machine is now fitted. Off this is an **accessible toilet** and a small shower room, which has in the past been used by residential groups but which is more commonly used for further storage.

- The **managers' office**, situated between the foyer and the Bow Room, is quite small, with room for a single person to work. It has a timber-barrelled ceiling installed in the 1950s, when this style was in vogue.
- The Meeting House interleaves with the **adjacent tenement building**, which was built about 30 years after the Original Secession Church. The Boys' Brigade purchased both buildings in the 1950s and made the link

through at first floor level, where the levels were very similar (the difference evidenced by the slight dip as one enters the Library from the lobby). The two tenement flats at this level were incorporated in the main building and provide the present Library, Kitchen and Crèche Rooms, while one ground floor flat provided the present Managers' Office and Bow Room. The other ground floor flat was retained by the Boys' Brigade for income and let as an office, first to a taxi company and in recent years to the 6 Victoria Terrace Youth Cafe project. One second floor flat was sold to the Boys' Brigade caretaker, who lived there until 2004, when she sold it to a member of the Meeting. The other four flats were offered to the Meeting, which bought the fourth floor two-bedroomed flat in 1987. The Meeting also rented a single-bedroomed flat on the third floor (Flat 3F2), which was eventually also purchased in 1995. The remaining two flats were bought by a member of the Meeting, who subsequently sold them to other local Quakers.

The net result of all this is that of the six flats on the stair, one is owned by the Boys' Brigade, three are in private (Quaker) hands, and two are owned by the Area Meeting:

The spacious top floor two-bedroomed flat Occupied by the Managers. Some basic improvement work was done to this when it was purchased and secondary glazing has subsequently been installed in both bedrooms. It is in

reasonable order and has gas-fired central heating, but the roof is poorly insulated.

The third floor flat Currently occupied by the assistant manager, has, for most of the past 20 years been occupied by Meeting House staff. There was a period in the late 1990s when it was not required for this purpose. It was then refurbished, refurnished and let for income until it was again required for staff. Gas-fired central heating was installed in 2004.

3.3. Outline history of building use

The principal reasons which led to the decision to purchase the Victoria Terrace building were:

1. The Meeting had grown in size and included a significant number of families with children. A more suitable Meeting Room was needed, with separate spaces for children's and teenagers' groups, for the serving of refreshments and for social activity.
2. A suitable building in a central location would enable the Meeting to serve the community by providing meeting rooms, primarily for charities and grass roots organisations.
3. A central location would enable both Quakers and others to access the building easily, whether by public or private transport, and would give Quakers a higher profile in the city.

To service this building it was decided to appoint wardening staff who would be in sympathy with these aims and who would develop the use of the

building along these lines. The first wardens appointed were Lise Bech and her partner, Ian Ramsey.

Early developments in Meeting House use

Quaker use of the building developed well in the early years while Ian and Lise were wardens, as did community use. A group, which included Lise and Ian, saw from the beginning the opportunity offered by the August Festival Fringe to develop the use and profile of the building. Lise was an able vegetarian/vegan cook. She and Ian had 'green' concerns and it was decided to run the Library as the 'Rainforest Cafe' for two weeks during the Fringe, raising money for rainforest charities. The Hall and Meeting Room were offered for exhibition and concert use concurrent with this.

After Ian and then Lise left, Mark and Anna Twinam-Cauchy, a student couple, were wardens for a short while. When they left, a rota of volunteer keyholders was set up to open up, service organisations renting rooms and welcome callers. A support group of Friends, which included Archie Campbell and Jennie Nielson was put in place, with the specific purpose of ensuring a Quaker profile for the building. By 1994, they were running a rota to staff the building on Wednesdays to greet visitors, advise any who had problems and explain Quakerism.

Phil and Pat Lucas were appointed as wardens in late 1994, sharing a full-time post. They were asked to continue the development of community use, with a specific objective of attempting to achieve a

balance between costs and income, and with the work of raising the Quaker profile of the building in the community. They were invited to join the Festival Committee, clerked at that time by Bronwyn Harwood, which was already engaged in exploring the development of the Festival Fringe involvement (see below).

Use of the Meeting House and income from lettings develop

Income from lettings in 1994 was about £14,000. Given stable management and the resulting improved standards of service offered to users, this grew quite rapidly with increasing use of the building. As lettings increased, there were some small tensions regarding Quaker use during the week. Quaker committees had been accustomed to turning up, sometimes without booking, and finding there was a room available. They now found they had to book and then had to book longer and longer in advance to ensure a room was free. An attempt was made to solve this problem by setting the Library apart one evening each week for Quaker use, but this (unsurprisingly) failed—the evening so reserved seldom suited the committee that wanted it—so committees and groups which were unable to plan sufficiently in advance became accustomed to meeting in homes.

A two tier letting charge system has been developed over the years, with a lower charge for charitable and grass-roots groups and higher charges for local and national government and commercial groups and classes. There has been some measure of

negotiation on charges at the discretion of the wardens/managers, with, for example, new grass-roots groups being given use below the charitable rate until they became established. An eye has been kept on rates charged by comparable buildings in the neighbourhood and there has been co-operation on this, especially with Augustine United and St Columba's-by-the-Castle. The busyness of the building increased steadily until, for several years, it was about as full as it reasonably could be, from 9 am until 10 pm six days per week and often with Sunday afternoon and evening use as well.

Facilities and equipment have been steadily developed over the years, with digital projector, laptop computer and wireless internet availability now added to the familiar flipcharts, TV and DVD player and overhead projectors.

Increase in the use of the building necessitated an increase in staff and it was particularly important to ensure continuity of standards of service during the managers' absence on holidays and days off. There has been a deputy warden/manager appointed for the past 12 years or so and this has usually been a residential post, with the appointee occupying the smaller flat. Deputy managers have included Andy May, Doug Kline, Finn Pollard, Philip Davies, Mary Woodward and Tom Nisbet. Additional staffing, all paid, has been provided by members of the Meeting and by students, also usually attenders or members. The role title of the wardens was changed to managers some 7 or 8 years ago, this job title more accurately reflecting the managerial responsibility the post now carries.

Quaker Link Scotland

At the time that Phil and Pat Lucas were appointed, Marion Morton was clerk of General Meeting for Scotland. She was also part of the group providing a Quaker presence in 7 Victoria Terrace and she combined these two roles by doing her General Meeting work in the Meeting House Office one day a week, providing cover for a wardens' day off.

A General Meeting group was then looking at developing the Quaker base and presence in Scotland, including the appointment of an administrative assistant to support the General Meeting Clerk. It was thought by some that this should be Edinburgh-based, working from 7 Victoria Terrace. Quaker Link Scotland was born. Phil Lucas was, early in 1995, appointed to the Quaker Home Service Outreach Committee and he, followed by Pat, were appointed General Meeting Outreach Function Group conveners, so one aspect of the Quaker Link Scotland development was that the Edinburgh Meeting House became an outreach base for Scotland. Enquirers packs were sent to Scottish enquirers from here, in consultation with Quaker Home Service Outreach in Friends House. There was thought that the Bow Room could become the Quaker Link Scotland office.

There was concern in some other Scottish Area Meetings about Scottish Quaker affairs becoming too Edinburgh-based, which may have contributed to the end of Quaker Link Scotland's short life, but the fatal blow was that, when the paid administrative assistant post was advertised, the

successful candidate lived on the Moray coast and preferred to work from home. The General Meeting clerkship at the same time moved away from the South East. When Pat and Phil Lucas's outreach appointments came to their end, it was no longer appropriate to send enquirers' packs to Scottish enquirers from the 7 Victoria Terrace office, (although they continued to do so for a year or two on a voluntary basis). The last vestiges of Quaker Link Scotland thus disappeared.

Venue 40—the Festival Fringe

The Festival Fringe involvement started in the very early days and owed much to the enthusiasm and skill of Lise Bech (in the kitchen/cafe) and Ian Ramsey (developing the use of performance and exhibition space). When they left, a Festival Committee clerked by Andrew Farrar and Bronwyn Harwood took up the development (amid some difficulties as they did not have the support of the new wardens) and the cooking skills of members of the local Meeting were co-opted. It was at this time that voluntary staff from without the area were first brought in.

The Festival Committee introduced a tiered seating rake to the hall, turning it into a 65 seat black-box theatre, for the first time in August 1995. Use of the theatre that year was dominated by one theatre group, which was reluctant to share facilities with others. Setting up the theatre in this way involved considerable hire costs, so the Committee decided for 1996 to take firmer control and, in order to recoup hire costs, to run for three weeks. Use of the

space developed over subsequent years until there were up to six shows per day, six days each week, with the café now open also for three weeks. The increased staffing this required was provided almost entirely from volunteers, many of them Quakers from other parts of Britain or the world, who are accommodated in Friends' homes. Exhibitions continued to be organised in the Meeting Room, but the Local Meeting became uncomfortable with the annual transformation of this room. Continuation of the Fringe involvement was endorsed but use of the Meeting Room for exhibitions ceased. The Festival Committee works through the year, but a considerable proportion of the organisational work falls on the Meeting House managers.

Recent developments

Pat and Phil Lucas retired in April 2007 and Sue and Anthony Buxton succeeded them as Meeting House managers, also sharing one full-time job. The changes that have taken place during the past two years reflect in part their priorities for the development of the building and developments in health and safety and particularly food hygiene regulations and the way in which these have been interpreted.

An early-bird meeting for worship has been initiated at 8 am each weekday for 30 minutes. Use of the Meeting House kitchen has been tightened up and restricted with home-made food not permitted to be brought in or served. The ambiance of the hall and library have been improved through redecoration and new table storage. Food and drinks (other than

water) are no longer served in the Meeting Room or its lobby, which has resulted in a great improvement in the cleanliness of the carpet. Groups using the second floor during the day and requiring refreshment come down to the Library for that purpose, usually taking the Library out of use as a place for separate meetings at those times. The lettings calendar is considerably less busy than it was four or five years ago; this may be due in part to the difficulty of access during the building work on the terrace, in part to the current recession and in part to the impact of the more stringent enforcement of Health and Safety regulations.

3.4. Outline financial history

The Monthly Meeting sold the previous Meeting House premises in Stafford Street in 1987 and bought Victoria Terrace, a listed building, and one adjacent flat in 6 Upper Bow, for £138,000 with the sale proceeds. (A further flat in 6 Upper Bow was purchased in 1995 for £25,000). A fund raising appeal and a contribution (for stonework) from Historic Scotland covered a further £360,000, which was used for external repairs, complete internal remodelling, purchase of furniture and equipment, as well as common repairs to 6 Upper Bow.

From the outset it had been intended that the new Meeting House, given its central position and the variety of rooms available, should become a community resource and, additionally, be able to generate an income to help offset management and maintenance costs.

In 1994 the new wardens/managers appointed were explicitly, as a part of their jobs, expected to develop the full use of the building and generate an increased income from the letting of the property to outside organisations. As can be seen from the attached income and expenditure table, this proved to be successful with differential charges being levied of small voluntary organisations and larger government or other public sector bodies some of which had long term, fairly permanent, arrangements to regularly hire out parts of the property. A significant, but fluctuating, contribution to the funds has been received from the Festival Fringe Committee over most of those years.

Notes 19941997200020012002200320042005200620072008**Running Expenditure**

Staff Costs	[1]	8.4	11.6	16.5	17.9	19.7	22.5	30.3	29.9	31.4	35.1	39.4
Services (inc. Council Tax)	[2]	9.7	6.8	6.8	9.4	8.0	8.8	10.6	11.2	14.5	14.6	14.3
Cleaning Purchases, maintenance and repairs	[3]	1.3	3.2	3.5	3.6	3.8	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.3	6.9	8.8
Total		20.8	30.2	37.4	52.0	51.2	57.8	55.4	68.5	80.8	89.7	85.1

Income

Lettings		18.6	29.3	38.6	41.4	50.0	55.4	55.2	52.5	57.1	57.0	50.7
Festival Fringe Committee	[4]	5.4	1.0	3.7	2.5	3.0	5.0	7.0	4.0	9.5	6.5	4.0
Total		24.0	30.3	42.3	43.9	53.0	60.4	62.2	56.5	66.6	63.5	54.7

Operating surplus/deficit

[5]	3.2	0.1	4.9	-8.1	1.8	2.6	6.8	-12.0	-14.2	-26.2	-30.4
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Exceptional Expenditures

Redevelopment of Foyer	[6]						5.8	34.7	29.4			
External Stonework	[7]											29.7
Consultancy	[8]											8.3
Total							5.8	34.7	29.4			38.0

1. Staff costs relate to usage of the building, the changing roles of staff and increased remuneration.
2. Council tax on flats, water, electricity and gas, phone and Internet.
3. Major items: Roof access and toilets upgrading (2001); redecoration (2005 and 08); roof repair and insulation (2006); lift upgrading (2007).
4. Festival Committee: sum remitted for use of 7 Victoria Terrace. Other sums used for external charities and for Kelso Meeting House Appeal.
5. Contributed to/made up from Area Meeting
6. Approximate cost, 2003-05.
7. Approx cost incurred during 2008.
8. Mainly architect (quinquennial review)

Figure 3. 7 Victoria Terrace: income and expenditure 2000-8 (All figures shown are thousands of pounds)

For about the first 15 years, until 2004, of its operation, there was a rough balance between income and expenditure associated with 7 Victoria Terrace. From 2005 onwards there has been a growing gap between the two. This can be attributed to a combination of reduced income from lettings, especially in the last two years, and the cost of redecoration including new carpets, improvements to the lift, roof repairs and insulation to the property having been undertaken. There has also been an increase in staffing costs over the same period with them assuming greater responsibility for internal financial matters and providing more intensive cover from 0900 to 2200 each weekday. The difference, ranging from £12,000 to £30,000 *per annum*, has reduced Area Meeting's contribution to Britain Yearly Meeting.

For some time the Area Meeting has each year tried to set aside some money as a reserve for use for its buildings. It had built up a considerable reserve by the end of the 1990s but decided to use this in its entirety for the purchase of the new meeting house in Kelso. All legacies received by Area Meeting since then have been set aside in a reserve fund, and this, together with a special appeal for extra funds, permitted us to undertake the foyer development work and, most recently, during 2008, the restoration of the building's stonework. The reserves are currently low as a result of that recent expenditure.

Given the limited number of rooms that are available to let, the management costs per letting have proved relatively high. This has been

exacerbated as higher health and safety standards are imposed by law and the expectations of user groups about the service provided also increase. Furthermore there are both routine and one-off capital costs that have to be met both to keep the building safe, wind and watertight as well as to meet disability access legislation for properties open to the public. While the routine maintenance and repairs can be met from regular letting income, contributions from Friends and attenders and donations, specific appeals have had to be made for the redevelopment of the foyer and new entrance costing nearly £70,000. In 2008 the cost of the stonework repairs of about £30,000 was largely met by two legacies recently left to the Area Meeting.

Lettings are not of course the only use made of the building. Central Edinburgh Local Meeting worships there, Local, Area and General Meeting groups have meetings there, and study days and workshops organised by Local and Area Meeting are held there, as well as weddings, memorial meetings and the occasional party. Following a principle established at the time of purchase, Central Edinburgh Local Meeting pays Area Meeting for its use of the building on Sundays, at a rate originally set at half the charitable letting rate. This decision has been reviewed on several occasions, and the rate is now more than half the charitable rate, being approximately £65 for each Sunday, or £3,300 per annum (see [Figure 5](#)).

[Appendix D](#) shows an estimate of the cost of Friends' use of 7 Victoria Terrace during 2008, based on the full charity rate. If we subtract from the total

shown there of approximately £17,000 the amounts which Area Meeting reclaim from Central Edinburgh Local Meeting (£3,300) and the Festival Fringe (£4,000), the remaining £10,000 represents 35–40% of the gap between income and expenditure in 2007 and 2008.

Summary

Referring to Figure 3, what this means is that up until 2005, Area Meeting was getting a very substantial amount of worship, meeting, outreach and function space for free, that in 2005 it paid the charitable rate for that space, and thereafter has been paying what is only now approaching a commercial rate for that space. Any consideration of the impact on the Area Meeting of moving out of 7 Victoria Terrace must consider this perspective very seriously.

4. The present

4.1. Building use

Meeting for Worship

At present there is a meeting for worship on Sunday mornings at 1100 which sixty plus people attend. After meeting there is coffee or tea in the library, and then a simple lunch (soup, bread and cheese) in the hall. Central Edinburgh is a big meeting and people value the opportunity to get to know each other better over lunch.

There is a mid-week meeting for worship on Wednesday at 1230 which up to twenty people attend. Some people like a smaller meeting or perhaps cannot always manage a Sunday. This meeting for worship lasts about thirty minutes and is also followed by a simple lunch.

People who completed a questionnaire felt the library was a good place to have this meeting for worship and lunch afterwards.

People felt it was important to have a central location that is normally accessible by bus. The building itself is not so good for the less physically able and some people do rely on buses coming close to the Meeting House. Access within the Meeting House is good but the toilets need improving.

There is also now an early bird meeting for worship on weekdays at 0800 lasting thirty minutes. This is a small meeting, but valued by those who come.

Elders are currently looking at having another meeting for worship on Sundays, either at 0930 or Sunday evening.

Children's meeting for worship takes place every Sunday. The children meet at 1100 for their own programme and join the adult meeting at 1145

On the second Sunday of the month there is an all age meeting for worship held in the hall to which all are welcome. This meeting for worship is programmed, normally lasts thirty to forty minutes,

and is well attended by families and other regular attenders from the meeting.

We occasionally have “special” all age worship such as the welcome of new babies and children. This is an Area Meeting event, and others from Area Meeting come along to be part of this. The most recent of these took place in December 2008 and was held in the meeting room. It was very positively received. This event can only take place at 7 Victoria Terrace because of the need for a large meeting room in which to hold it.

In summary, many varied activities happen around and in connection with Meeting for Worship, requiring both large and small rooms and benefiting from ancillary facilities such as the library and kitchen.

Lettings

Since 2000 income from lettings has increased gradually until 2008 when there was a small decline. A major contribution to this was the loss of two major ‘clients’: The Traverse Theatre, who moved to their own (new?) premises, and the City of Edinburgh, who cut back on external training.

The main use of the Meeting House as a venue is for voluntary and community groups who want a relatively cheap but central location for one-off meetings, or a series of meetings, or one day conferences with a good ambiance. (People frequently say they do not like the formal service

they get from hotels). We are not in the market for corporate events.

This means our clients cannot afford commercial rates that would bring us a clear profit. However the small number of rooms available limits the number of staff required for cleaning and catering.

7 Victoria Terrace is not in the same league as other large Meeting Houses such as Friends House or Manchester Mount Street, to be a large Quaker centre.

The Meeting House is open every day from 0900 to 2200 and five hours on Sunday. The managers, Anthony and Sue Buxton, are employed to share a 37.5-hour-per-week post, but in practice often work more than that.

Tom Nisbet, assistant warden is employed for three days a week. In addition there are a number of staff working a varying number of hours a week. The current goal is to always have someone on the front desk, with one or two other staff during the day depending on the volume of booking.

To give an idea of the pattern of non-Quaker lettings we have taken a recent six-week period and with the help of the Managers have looked at the groups who used the Meeting House and the number of lets. The figure below summarises the results.

Group type	Number of groups
Political Party	4
Young People	2
Health Training	3
Professional Body	7
Self-care	5
Church Group	5
Art Gallery	2
Rail	3
Yoga Class or similar	2
Social Interest	11
Environment	3
Spiritual Healing	2
Peace	5
Education	3
Educational Training	3
Charity	4
Grassroots	1
City of Edinburgh	1

Figure 4. Non-Quaker groups using the Meeting House: showing number of people and the rooms used

In all there were approximately 113 lets to 66 different groups during the six-week period from 6 April to 17 May 2009. Costs will depend on size of group, length of time they needed space, which room(s) they rented and what rate they were charged: following Area Meeting policy, there are

two basic rates, depending on for-profit versus not-for-profit status. (The Managers have discretion to charge a reduced rate in a few cases—this amounts to only a few hundred pounds per annum at most.) There is also a cost for refreshments, including tea, coffee and/or lunch. The above figures can give only a rough picture of current lettings, and are not complete, but are included to give a sense of the breadth and volume of letting.

We do not have quantitative information from the non-Quaker users of 7 Victoria Terrace regarding how they rate the premises. However there were over sixty groups using the building which feels very positive, and the feedback forms the Meeting House Managers solicit contain many very warm endorsements.

It is unclear if we should or could increase income by raising the letting rates. Trustees are aware the lettings levels have fallen, especially daytime use. A possible reason for this could be greater competition in the area for the level of provision we offer. Our letting charges are comparable with other churches/halls in the area.

On the plus side it is an advantage having managers on site and we have a good informative website.

The challenge for Meeting House staff is to strike a balance between the lettings business as a business, on the one hand, and supporting the role of the Meeting House as the face of Quakerism in Edinburgh. The evidence we had available to us

suggests they are responding admirably to this challenge.

Festival Fringe

The use of the building for the Festival is a major undertaking (see in section 3.3). The main hall is made into a small theatre with raked seating. Several small theatre groups rent this space during the Festival.

There is also the Café that runs at the same time—from around 1000-1800. The income from this has increased over the years but again last year there was a drop. The main income is from the theatre lettings. Although the café does not make much of a profit it adds to the feel and ethos of the venue.

The Festival Fringe activity is an Area Meeting activity, organised by an Area Meeting committee. Area Meeting both bears the cost of lost lettings during August, and the increased wear-and-tear that being a venue entails. Area Meeting also determines the division of any profit between itself and designated charities.

Summary of input from Quaker Groups which use the Meeting House

See Questionnaire A in Appendix B

People felt they were not entirely dependant on Victoria Terrace but for meetings it was felt to be

accessible, convenient and the "right" place to meet. Good access by public transport.

Disabled access is difficult at present but will improve when the building work on the Terrace has finished.

Victoria Terrace was felt to be "our spiritual home". Meeting there creates, through the silence, an atmosphere of stillness and worship.

It is necessary to meet at Victoria Terrace to do practical tasks and allow access to resources.

The building is ideal for young people's link weekend—there is no other Quaker building in Scotland that is big enough. We do need to nurture and care for our young people if we are going to keep them involved with Friends.

People did feel they could meet elsewhere if necessary. Occasionally they did so out of choice for practical reasons such as babysitting.

The overall room size, location, comfort and facilities are considered to be good. The building is ideally placed for outreach.

Some Quaker groups had a problem booking rooms for the times they requested and asked if there could be some priority booking for Quaker groups.

The service offered by meeting house staff is very good.

4.2. Building finances

The table below summarises the 2008 income and expenditure and demonstrates the dependency on lettings and members and attenders' contributions for income. As far as expenditure was concerned, 2008 was what could be considered a fairly unusual year with elements of one-off capital expenditure on the stonework and the fees for the architect's quinquennial technical review of the property that we have to have to plan for its future maintenance.

Notes £,000

Expenditure

Salaries		39.7
Premises	[1]	54.0
Capital expenditure	[2]	29.7
Total		123.4

Income

Donations	[3]	2.7
Lettings	[4]	50.7
Transfers	[5]	34.0
Total		87.4

Shortfall	[6]	-36.0
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1. Includes services, cleaning, equipment and furniture purchases and architect's fees
2. Building work—external stonework
3. For the meeting house and specifically building work
4. External £47,400 and Central Edinburgh meeting £3,300
5. From the capital account (legacies) £30,000 and the Festival Fringe account £4,000
6. Made up by Area Meeting

Figure 5. 7 Victoria Terrace: Revised summary of 2008 income and expenditure, including capital project

Of the total 2008 shortfall, roughly £9,000 is owed to one-off expenditures, leaving only £27,000 owed to ongoing operations, that is, roughly the same as that for 2007.

A number of modifications and improvements have been suggested, or are indeed required in some cases, about which decisions need to be taken in the near future:

Roof access Access to the roof above the flat, for example for gutter repairs, is very difficult and needs to be improved. This work will be carried out shortly.

Windows Some of the windows on the south-west side of the building urgently require repair or replacement and insulation needs to be improved. A plan is being drawn up for their phased replacement and this is currently being costed.

Kitchen Health and safety requirements have stipulated improvements to the kitchen likely to cost in the region of £30,000 if cooking is to be undertaken and offered for sale, for example in conjunction with the Café at the time of the Festival Fringe. Lower-cost options with reduced facilities are also possible.

Toilets These are not up to the standard of the rest of the building. Plans for extending and improving them have been costed at around £50,000.

Crèche Plans for re-structuring the crèche rooms and their access to come directly from the library have been costed at around £5,000.

Heating It has been suggested that the heating for the building should be upgraded or replaced, possibly involving a shift to renewable sources, building on work done some time ago by an Environmental Improvement group.

5. The future

Against the background of the information presented so far, we now turn to considering the future. On the one hand there are the practicalities: Do we stay in Victoria Terrace, or do we leave? In either case, further choices will have to be made. We briefly summarise these in the following subsection. But equally important are our goals: what do we *want* for Friends' presence and witness in Edinburgh in the future? In the second subsection below we attempt to pull together what we've learned from Friends and attenders on this question over the last six months.

5.1. Practicalities

Stay in Victoria Terrace

If we stay in Victoria Terrace, the financial issues must be addressed, at the very least by an explicit acknowledgement by Area Meeting of the financial situation. Broadly speaking there are three options: cut back on what we do, continue pretty much as at present, or try to do more. These options are explored below.

Do Less

One option would be to do less than at present. That would almost certainly mean reducing the hours that the building is open

- The building is currently open to the public from 0900 to 2130/2200 Monday to Friday depending on bookings and 0930 to 1700 on Saturday depending on bookings. The Meeting House office is open 0900 to 1700 weekdays.
- Sundays—1000-1500 for Quaker use. Bookings may be taken for 1500 to 1700

Several staff work flexibly to cover these periods: there is always someone at the front desk when the building is open.

Reasons for reducing the opening hours : reducing costs—heating, lighting and staff cover and reducing wear and tear on the fabric of the building

Reasons for not reducing opening hours: reduced lettings and reduced income, as well as reduced facilities for Quakers and non-Quakers using the building and reduced opportunities for outreach.

Hospitality, information and outreach: the Meeting House is centrally located and attracts many visitors—reduced opening hours would limit contact with the public, it may affect bookings if enquiries are not answered in person (rather than on-line or by leaving a message on an answer-phone) and may reduce first-timers coming to Meeting for Worship.

Other alternatives—all of which would reduce costs, reduce income and contact with the general public, visitors, newcomers and passers-by therefore reducing outreach opportunities:

- Reduce activities to Quaker activities only—this would reduce opening hours and lettings and increase costs per capita.
- The Festival Café—the café could go and/or drinks and snacks alone could be provided for visitors.
- The Meeting House as a Festival Venue—events/opening hours could be reduced and income would be reduced.
- Reduce or cancel Christmas lunch and other social activities involving the preparation of food and serving of food and drink.

It is important to underline that the impact of the kind of changes listed above is both uncertain, and in the main likely to affect the overall financial picture only modestly.

It is clear from our initial consultations that any significant reduction in activity would change the feel of the Meeting and affect the users of the building.

Steady On

The meeting could continue to be open for Quaker and non-Quaker activities but we could look for savings and raise money to meet the cost of essential maintenance and upgrading of facilities.

- The kitchen does not meet Health and Safety standards to prepare and serve food to the public. An alternative is to serve vegetarian food only and ask for donations from the public. Trustees are actively exploring this area: the working group does not feel that the exact nature of the trade-offs between regulation, enforcement and kinds of use has yet been clearly established, so that an informed decision can be taken with respect to the kitchen in particular.
- We could plan for the future to include a schedule of works—upgrading basic facilities—the windows, toilets, heating and consider what is required to improve the layout of the rooms and food preparation facilities as they affect members of the meeting and lettings.

Do More

The Quakers and non-Quakers who responded to our questionnaire and Worship Sharing sessions said they value the building, its central location and what is available in the Meeting House. Successive Meeting House Managers have continually improved the appearance of the Meeting House. Doing more in the Meeting House and with the Meeting House could include:

- Offering more activities/learning opportunities on Quaker concerns to Quakers and non-Quakers

- Offering more activities/learning opportunities on Quaker Faith and Practice and other aspects of Quakerism—past and present
- Becoming an information centre on Quakers in Scotland
- Becoming a national resource for Quakers in Scotland
- Becoming a centre for groups sharing similar values.

There are probably many more visions for the Meeting House and to support these a strategy for fund raising on a larger scale would need to be put into operation.

Leave Victoria Terrace

Leaving Victoria Terrace would in turn require further choices to be made:

- Would we look to own our own premises (build/refit/share)?
- Or hire (Sole tenant/share)?
- One venue (central, or not?) or several?

One of the prime motivations for leaving Stafford Street was that though central it was not 'visible' to the public; it had no lettings of rooms, no display windows and no involvement in the Festival. If these still matter they would be requirements for in any candidate alternative premises.

If we decide to sell Victoria Terrace in order to buy, lease or even share somewhere else it would probably be necessary to sell at least one of the two

flats as well. 7 Victoria Terrace was valued at £385,000 in November of 2007 (*before* the current slump in property prices), at which time the two flats together were valued at £370,000. The official rateable value (reflecting a fair-market annual *rental* value) for 7 Victoria Terrace is £14,600, which is rather low in terms of the £385,000 valuation.

We explored the cost of moving elsewhere. Minimum accommodation for our own use only would be:

- 1 Meeting Room
- 1 Children's Room
- Library
- Kitchen (for heating up only)
- Lavatories
- Office (?)

Preferably, for our own needs and possible lettings or sharing, we would be looking for:

- 2 Meeting Rooms
- 2 Children's Rooms
- Kitchen (for cooking)
- Library
- Lavatories
- 2 Committee rooms
- Office

A central location would be in the area bounded by High Street to Queen Street and Queensferry Street. to Leith Street.

Alternatively, we might have more than one Meeting House to replace Victoria Terrace; this would mean no central Edinburgh Meeting. Possible areas would include Portobello, Trinity/Grantont, Leith Walk/London Road or around Cameron Toll and the Commonwealth Pool.

If we could find no suitable venue for our exclusive use we might share with, say, 7th Day Adventists, a play group, an Open Door or community hall that was not required on a Sunday.

However, it would be necessary for us to be the 'chief' occupants if we wish to be able to arrange mid-week or evening meetings, and have some say over publicity displays and lettings. We would probably want to be in charge of lettings, including festival events such as poetry readings, plays, small musical events, and so on. We would not have a café, but might offer light refreshments and have an exhibition on walls other than those of the Meeting Room.

We carried out a survey of commercial property of a reasonable scale in and around the centre, and there was nothing available for under £250,000 that was anywhere near large enough. Finding *any* premises including one room of approximately 800 square feet (the size of the current meeting room and of the hall) was itself difficult, and we found no premises at all with *two* such rooms.

One possibility we are aware of but did not explore in detail is taking over, or sharing, other church premises. There was some suggestion that for

example the Methodist property off Nicholson Square might be, or be about to be, available. It seemed at best unlikely that a move to such premises would result in a situation materially different from our current one.

5.2. The Vision

From the returned questionnaires and the discussions we have had it is clear that the majority of users of the premises would prefer to remain in Victoria Terrace if this is financially possible.

It is felt that we should be in the centre of Edinburgh for a number of reasons, such as the presence of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish offices of financial, church and corporate bodies, such as Christian Aid. This would enable us to present our Quaker witness to these bodies and to the general public, including the large numbers of tourists and visitors to the city. However, it cannot be assumed that Friends in Scotland outwith Edinburgh would be happy to recognise us as a Scottish Quaker Centre. Indeed, there are Friends in the Area Meeting who do not have any feeling of 'ownership' of 7 Victoria Terrace nor any sense of involvement in its activities. It is also the case that not all members of Edinburgh Central welcome the disruption and disturbance arising from our Festival activities.

Overall, we feel that most people have been positive about staying in Victoria Terrace because it is central and visible, available and open. Such doubts as were expressed were about finance and the Festival.

5.3. Conclusions

7 Victoria Terrace is owned by Area Meeting, and it is for Area Meeting to determine its use. Once the outline of a future for Friends in Edinburgh is discerned, whether it means retaining Victoria Terrace or disposing of it, further questions will have to be asked and answered, detailed options explored, specified and costs and benefits assessed. The Working Group has done its best to bring together as much information as possible to assist Area Meeting in the discernment process regarding the fundamental questions: What is our vision? Stay or go? If we go, whither? If we stay, on what terms? Beyond that, and against the background of the answers to *those* questions, further work will be needed before the next set of decisions can be considered.

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix A: Remit from Area Meeting

South East Scotland Area Meeting 25 October 2008

Remit for short-life working group - New vision for the Quaker presence in Edinburgh

Background

On 30 August 2008, Area Meeting considered the history and prospects for the Quaker Meeting House at 7 Victoria Terrace.

The following minute was made:

Minute 7: The future of 7 Victoria Terrace

Partly in the light of repairs and alterations due to the building over the next few years, we have taken this opportunity to reconsider some of the uses of 7 Victoria Terrace.

Don Stubbings and Mike Perks have given us a brief summary of its uses since 1987, and of its main costs and revenues, and we thank them for providing such a good basic introduction to our discussion.

We want to discuss this further, and in particular to decide what God wants of us in running 7

Victoria Terrace, both for Quakers, and the wider Scottish and British communities.

We ask Nominations Committee to bring forward to October AM names for a Working Group to explore this. We hope the group will speak with the Managers of 7 Victoria Terrace, with Central Edinburgh and all other local meetings in the Area Meeting and with the Trustees, with a view to making recommendations to AM in June 2009.

7 Victoria Terrace is home to some of us, and we have heard that all meetings in the Area Meeting benefit from it, thought they may not bear the full burden of running it.

Remit

*It was agreed at Area Meeting on 25 October that the **purpose** of the working group is **to enable Area Meeting to reach a revived vision of the Quaker presence in Edinburgh**, recognising that it is now over 20 years since we moved to Victoria Terrace, and that our worshipping and community activities are greater than in the late 1980s.*

The working group will:

1. review the present operation of 7 Victoria Terrace, including but not restricted to: the uses of the building through lettings and other activities and the income generated thereby; the operational, maintenance and capital costs associated with the building; the demands on people, including our paid staff and our

- membership, in operating and maintaining the building at its present level of activity; *its accessibility to all*; the balance between Quaker and wider community use
2. consider options for the future, including but not restricted to: extending the lettings and community activity; generating additional funds by more commercial letting; restricting the building to mainly Quaker use; *making it available to Scotland-wide Quaker use*; selling the building and moving elsewhere
 3. report to Area Meeting by June 2009 with a proposed statement of what Quakers wish to achieve through our presence in Edinburgh and how our property will contribute to this, *to encourage South East Scotland Area Meeting to unite around a clear vision for the future.*

Operation of the group

The working methods of the group will be in line with the above minute, *ie* **the group will consult widely within Area Meeting** in reaching their conclusions. This may be through discussions with individuals or groups as appropriate. In addition, the group may wish to find out how other Quaker meeting houses are used and managed in similar settings. It may be that special meetings are required to discuss issues that bring forward a variety of differing views ('Threshing Meetings' – see QFP, 12.26).

The working group will have a membership of 8, with a convener appointed by Area Meeting. Nominations Committee are asked to propose

members who come from different local meetings, and have interests including the arts, children, and the community, as well as having the necessary skills in finance and strategic thinking. Membership of will include at least one Elder and one Overseer.

It is envisaged that the commitment will be fairly intensive over the period Dec 2008-June 2009. Meetings will probably need to be monthly, and work will be needed between meetings to ensure the breadth of consultation required by the AM minute.

Minute of Nominations Committee held 9 November 2008

Min.3 Nominations required for forthcoming Area Meeting (7 Dec)

Working Group on future of 7 Victoria Terrace:

Following the approach set out in the remit agreed by AM on 25 October, we agree to approach the following people to join the group:

Laurie Naumann
Phil Lucas
Rufus Reade
Madeleine Harding
Brian Mayes
Henry Thompson
Alison Burnley
Eileen Schott

We ask Andrew to invite Henry Thompson to convene the group; we ask Alastair Cameron (w/f

Marjorie Farquharson) to attend the first meeting of the group if possible to set out the background and intention.

6.2. Appendix B: Questionnaires for different user groups

A. For QUAKER GROUPS and COMMITTEES who use 7 Victoria Terrace

South East Scotland Quakers bought the present Meeting House about 20 years ago to meet the needs of a growing Quaker meeting and to serve the community by providing a meeting place in Central Edinburgh, especially for charities and grass-roots organisations. Twenty years later, we wish to assess how well this nineteenth century building (which is quite expensive to maintain and update) is meeting the needs of both Quakers and other users. Please help by completing this questionnaire and returning it, either to the person who gave it to you or to the Meeting House Office. Thank you very much.

1.
 - a. How dependent are you on the 7 Victoria Terrace building?
 - b. Do you feel it is essential that you meet at 7 VT? If so why?
 - c. If the meeting house is not available could you meet elsewhere? e.g. in people's homes
 - d. If you already meet elsewhere why do you choose to do so? e.g. convenience, more intimate atmosphere, baby-sitting problems.
2. How well does the building meet your needs with regard to: (please ring the appropriate response and add any comments in the space)

- a. Room size: Good - Reasonable - Not so good
 - b. Location: Good - Reasonable - Not so good
 - c. Facilities: Good - Reasonable - Not so good
 - d. Access: Good - Reasonable - Not so good
 - e. Comfort: Good - Reasonable - Not so good
 - f. Availability (including opening hours):
Good - Reasonable - Not so good
 - g. Service offered by staff: Good -
Reasonable - Not so good
3. If your group is a larger one e.g. Scotland GM, is it vital to have the whole meeting house available?
 4. If you are involved in planning young people's residential events does the meeting house meet your needs?
 - a. Is there anywhere else in Scotland you could use bearing in mind the need to keep costs low for the young people?
 - b. Do the facilities for preparing food for the young people meet your needs?
 - c. Do you have any other comments about 7 VT as a venue for young peoples residential events?

B. For MEMBERS and ATTENDERS at CENTRAL EDINBURGH MEETING

South East Scotland Quakers bought the present Meeting House about 20 years ago to meet the needs of a growing Quaker meeting and to serve the community by providing a meeting place in Central Edinburgh, especially for charities and grass-roots organisations. Twenty years later, we wish to assess how well this nineteenth century building (which is

quite expensive to maintain and update) is meeting the needs of both Quakers and other users. Please help by completing this questionnaire and returning it, either to the person who gave it to you or to the Meeting House Office. Thank you very much.

Please put a cross in the appropriate space and add any helpful comments in the space between questions. Leave no mark where you feel you have no useful response to make.

1. In general, how well do you feel the building meets the needs of the Central Edinburgh Quaker meeting?

Very well Well Adequately Inadequately
—

2. How important is it to you that the Meeting House is located in the centre of the city?

Very important Quite important Not important

3. How would you describe the accessibility of the Meeting House location?

Excellent Good Fairly good Not very easy Difficult

4. How would you describe internal accessibility to all the rooms and facilities you use?

Excellent Good Fairly good Not very easy Difficult

5. How well does the foyer meet your needs as a meeting, greeting and information space?

Very well ___ Well ___ Adequately ___ Inadequately ___

6. How well does the Meeting Room meet the needs of Sunday worship?

Very well ___ Well ___ Adequately ___ Inadequately ___

7. How well does the building meet the needs of our children and young people?

Very well ___ Well ___ Adequately ___ Inadequately ___

8. How well do the Library and Hall rooms meet their Sunday uses?

Very well ___ Well ___ Adequately ___ Inadequately ___

9. How well do the kitchen and its equipment meet their Sunday use?

Very well ___ Well ___ Adequately ___ Inadequately ___

10. Do you feel the building represents good value for money for the Area Meeting which owns it?

Yes ___ No ___ Don't know ___

11. If you visit the building other than on Sundays, how well does it meet your needs?

Very well __ Well __ Adequately __ Inadequately __
—

12. Please add comments below, if you wish, on any other aspect of the Meeting House, its current use and suitability for that use. Add your name if you wish.

C. For MEMBERS and ATTENDERS at EDINBURGH MIDWEEK MEETING

South East Scotland Quakers bought the present Meeting House about 20 years ago to meet the needs of a growing Quaker meeting and to serve the community by providing a meeting place in Central Edinburgh, especially for charities and grass-roots organisations. Twenty years later, we wish to assess how well this nineteenth century building (which is quite expensive to maintain and update) is meeting the needs of both Quakers and other users. Please help by completing this questionnaire and returning it, either to the person who gave it to you or to the Meeting House Office. Thank you very much.

Please put a cross in the appropriate space and add any helpful comments in the space between questions. Leave no mark where you feel you have no useful response to make.

1. In general, how well do you feel the building meets the needs of Midweek Meeting?

Very well __ Well __ Adequately __ Inadequately
—

2. How important is it to you that the Meeting House is located in the centre of the city?

Very important __ Quite important __ Not important __

3. How would you describe the accessibility of the Meeting House location?

Excellent __ Good __ Fairly good __ Not very easy __ Difficult __

4. How would you describe internal accessibility to all the rooms and facilities you use?

Excellent __ Good __ Fairly good __ Not very easy __ Difficult __

5. How well does the foyer meet your needs as a meeting, greeting and information space?

Very well __ Well __ Adequately __ Inadequately
—

6. How well does the Library room meet the needs of Wednesday worship?

Very well __ Well __ Adequately __ Inadequately
—

7. How well do the kitchen and its equipment meet their Midweek Meeting use?

Very well __ Well __ Adequately __ Inadequately
—

8. If you visit the building other than on Wednesdays, how well does it meet your needs?

Very well __ Well __ Adequately __ Inadequately
—

9. Do you feel the building represents good value for money for the Area Meeting which owns it?

Yes ___ No ___ Don't know ___

10. Please add comments below, if you wish, on any other aspect of the Meeting House, its current use and suitability for that use and add your name at the bottom if you wish.

D. For LOCAL MEETINGS in South East Scotland Area Meeting

South East Scotland Quakers bought the present Meeting House about 20 years ago to meet the needs of a growing Quaker meeting and to serve the community by providing a meeting place in Central Edinburgh, especially for charities and grass-roots organizations. Twenty years later, we wish to assess how well this nineteenth century building (which is quite expensive to maintain and update) is meeting the needs of both Quakers and other users. Please help by completing this questionnaire and returning it, either to the person who gave it to you or to the Meeting House Office. Thank you very much.

It would be helpful to have your feelings and responses to the following questions as to how you use and see the use of the meeting house which belongs to us all.

(Please circle your answer add any comments in the spaces)

1. Does the meeting house meet your needs?

perfectly - satisfactorily - adequately - quite well - not well

2. How do you rate the facilities?

a. location and access ie. buses, parking, other transport, steps

good - adequate - poor - impossible

b. moving around the building - especially if you are disabled in any way

good - adequate - inadequate - impossible

c. opening hours

suitable - unsuitable

d. availability of a room of your preferred choice

good - satisfactory - poor - never what I want when I want it

e. size of rooms

perfect - good - poor - always either too big or too small

f. suitability of rooms

excellent - just right - see above

g. booking system

helpful - could be improved - difficult

h. staff

very helpful - - helpful - unhelpful - unfriendly

i. facilities : catering

excellent - good - restrictive - irritating

j. facilities: clean and comfortable

excellent - good - good enough - cold and dirty

Thank you. We appreciate the time you have taken to do this. We will be studying the feedback as we continue to review how we use the meeting house.

E. For MEETING HOUSE STAFF

South East Scotland Quakers bought the present Meeting House about 20 years ago to meet the needs of a growing Quaker meeting and to serve the community by providing a meeting place in Central

Edinburgh, especially for charities and grass-roots organisations. Twenty years later, we wish to assess how well this nineteenth century building (which is quite expensive to maintain and update) is meeting the needs of both Quakers and other users. Please help by completing this questionnaire and returning it, either to the person who gave it to you or to the Meeting House Office. Thank you very much.

In sections 1 and 2, please circle your choice of answer and add any comments which may help.

1. Based on your personal experience, do you think that the suitability of the building for its present purposes is:

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

2. How do you think users of the building find the following facilities to be:

- a. Access to the building

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

- b. Parking

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

- c. Number & sizes of rooms

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

d. Access within the building

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

e. Cloakrooms & toilets

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

f. Comfort (e.g. heating, catering)

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

g. Support facilities (copying etc)

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

h. Cleanliness

Very good - Good - Satisfactory - Fairly good - Poor

In sections 3 to 8 please use ticks for your choice of answer and add any other comments you wish to make.

3. Would you like to see greater ___ or less ___ use being made of the building?

If “greater”, would this be to enhance Quaker outreach ___ or increase income ___ or improve service to the community and to visitors ___ ?

If “less”, would this be in order to decrease pressure on the building and its staff ___ or to enhance its usefulness to the Meetings in our Area ___ ?

4. Given the acknowledged cost and practical difficulties involved in maintaining the building, do you favour retaining 7 Victoria Terrace as the established local Quaker centre ___ or endeavouring to find alternative accommodation ___ ?
5. If you favour remaining in Victoria Terrace, do you consider the present managerial structure to be satisfactory ___ or in need of review ___ ?
6. If you favour removal, should this be to a central location ___ or to a more outlying area ___ ?
7. In any alternative accommodation would you wish to replicate the functions of 7VT ___ or extend our outreach and service to the community ___ or concentrate on meeting the needs of the Meetings in our area ___ ?
8. Do you consider the provision of accommodation for a resident warden to be essential ___, desirable ___ or unnecessary ___?

Your response to this questionnaire will be of great assistance to us. Please feel free to add your comments on any relevant matter. Thank you.

6.3. Appendix C: Summary of contributions from open meetings

Notes of first Open Meeting, Sunday, 26 April 2008 at 7 Victoria Terrace

What is your vision for the Quaker presence and witness in Central Edinburgh for the next 20 years?

Henry Thompson opened the meeting by sketching in the background to and describing the shape of the meeting, which would have a worship-sharing format, with Friends encouraged to respond individually to the above question, which was posted up in the room Phil Lucas took notes of contributions, without attribution. These are notes, not a verbatim record, and will reflect how Phil heard the contributions. Between 35 and 40 people attended (a very few leaving before the end) and 24 made spoken contributions).

1. Visibility is key—the Meeting as part of the community—inclusive of both those within and outside Quakers.
2. A home not only for the Quaker community but also for those with whose principles and activities Quakers are in harmony.
3. Our building's shop windows make us unusually visible—they encourage people to come in and make it clear what you are getting into. This and our openness to the community are unusual for a religious building and have helped change the attitude of others to Friends. We need to value and develop this.

4. Building could be more of a focus for Quakers in Scotland, perhaps having an office from which Quakers can speak to the Scottish Parliament.
5. An expression of our responsibility and values—care for the environment, peace etc—a focus for us speaking out from a spiritual base. We have responsibility to use our facilities for the community.
6. In the course of the next year or so there will be a Tory government in Westminster, which will probably push Scotland towards independence. This will present a great opportunity for Scottish Quakers to dialogue with Scottish law-makers (freed from the influence of English bishops).

It's difficult for some groups which share our values to find meeting space here. Can we look at ways of using our space more flexibly to increase availability.

7. Could Friends not be encouraged to give more or ways be found to raise more money to ensure we can keep 7VT open?
8. Early Friends often worshipped out of doors or in each other's homes. Our meeting for worship is the most precious things we have to share with others. I would worry if the Meeting had to move out of central Edinburgh but would not be happy if we had to increase commercial use of the building to keep it open.
9. I am a member of another organisation given a building which it can no longer afford to run. This has brought the organisation close to

collapse. Our expenditure on the building must not be allowed to outrun our income.

10. I'm grateful that the question we are addressing today does not mention the building. I hope we can think away from the building. Remember that George Fox referred pejoratively to churches as 'steeple houses'.
11. Responsibility for a property takes time and energy as well as money. Not having this responsibility frees up this time and energy. Ownership of a building is OK only if this is kept in balance. Losing the balance will have a negative impact on the core purpose of the community.
12. Remember this building's enormous capacity for outreach, especially during the Fringe but also throughout the year. This is not reason enough for keeping it, but it must not be forgotten.
13. This Meeting spent 50 years in Stafford Street, 25 of which were spent deciding to move out, a period during which South Edinburgh Meeting was spawned.

Use of rooms by community groups is very patchy—Wednesdays are booked long ahead, Fridays are very quiet.

14. A Meeting is not the meeting house, it's the people. I have been to other Meetings too, but I joined Friends because of the people.
15. Temporary closure of terrace has made access very difficult for some. I hope account is taken of this in judging pattern of use. This meeting house is a precious home and a beautiful place—would deplore it if we moved from city

centre to a tucked-away corner somewhere. Decision taken while at Stafford St to move to a building which would be well used by the community—this is a real pleasure.

16. Struggle with ‘the vision thing’. But my vision is that I want to keep coming to ‘church’—it’s fundamental to my life. We have reconstructed the work of the ‘hireling priest’ in our own distinctive way and the ‘steeple house’ by a functional building that meets our needs. No need to be apologetic about being like other churches in this regard. It tells people that we are here—part of this city’s spiritual space. My vision therefore is of a place as well as a spiritual community.
17. Meeting doesn’t need to be tied to a building. Quality of Dunblane Meeting didn’t change as it moved from place to place.
18. Maybe here in Edinburgh our work does involve using this building—providing a meeting place for other groups may be part of our witness (as long as we can).
19. Strong Quaker community in Edinburgh at the core. One of our strengths in Edinburgh is that we have a variety of Quaker meetings and some fluidity between them. Healthy that Central Edinburgh is available for droppers in (and out). Would be sad if all Meetings were dispersed and small—would make building an inclusive community to bring on the new generation difficult.
20. (After invitation to hear from South Ed Friends, who use a space not their own): Good to have a

place where displays can stay up all the time—we miss this.

21. Emphasis on wider vision important. Strong base to enable Friends to cope with all the rapid changes in society and to promote 'good lives' within and around the community. Rental decline may not last (cf what has happened at Friends House).
22. Could worship happily in a very small Meeting but this building has built up a powerful significance for people all over Scotland, Britain and even the world. This space is very precious and we have a responsibility for it.
23. I belong to a small Meeting in a rented building—difficult to make one's presence known. The presence of the Meeting House—there for all of us in SE Scotland—helps to take us out of our insularity and remind us we belong to a wider Quaker community. Very important for raising our profile and it is a home to come to.
24. This Meeting and the meeting house have enriched my life spiritually and helped me strengthen my witness in the world. Vision is to keep strengthening the spiritual life of the community and from here to continue to take it out in witness. This needs to be even more focussed than it is.

Notes of second Open Meeting, Monday, 1 May 2008 at 7 Victoria Terrace

What is your vision for the Quaker presence and witness in Central Edinburgh for the next 20 years?

The meeting in worship-sharing mode followed the same structure as on the first occasion. There were a total of 23 Friends present of whom six were members of the Working Group. Henry Thompson opened and closed the meeting and Laurie Naumann took these notes.

1. Hopes that in 20 years' time the meeting house will still be in the ownership of the Area Meeting. The property is a wonderful asset and would be a great shame to lose due to the economics although not aware about how much money involved.
2. Disliking 'missionary activity' joined SoF in 1950 and feels that our witness is needed now as much as ever. The VT facilities are good, central and excellent for outreach work; had originally thought the building was not the best.
3. It is essential to have a building accessible and welcoming to all the generations irrespective of mobility requirements. Feels that there is potential space for a crèche, teens and young people activities including residential use. Vision that the charges levied should cover costs—this might be helped with greater use of it by community groups.

4. Even when not in use the meeting room has the 'silence of meeting for worship' which is greatly appreciated by a staff member when taking a break. A fondness for the building was described which was like a vessel or container—a focus, a real hub for all who use it. New creativity and life needs to be brought to the vessel.
5. 'The world is hungry for Friends'—that was said in 1988 when moving to 7VT and is still true today, perhaps even more now. Someone had described 7VT as 'an odd building for odd people', but it does not need *only* to be that. Greater use should be made of the building including for outreach work; all options should be considered.
6. There was an important degree of faith involved in purchasing and moving to 7VT. We should not have similar faith about continuing in the premises.
7. Perhaps with a growth in members in Edinburgh there is a need to have further resources—new meetings could be started. And there's a definite need for the continuing use of 7VT—it is a wonderful resource for local, area, Scotland and GB wide events. At the start 'the building worked for us' perhaps is it not time that 'we have to work for the building'. It would be great to have larger premises with a garden, but we should persevere with 7VT and exploit the meeting house even more—it's big enough, a pleasant space and open to all.
8. Harvey Gillman described outreach as 'spiritual hospitality' and it is that that the meeting

house provides and is ideal at doing it. The vision should be that 7VT continues to provide spiritual hospitality to all who care to use the premises. The lack of iconography makes the building, as with other meeting houses, open and appreciated as a place of spiritual hospitality by strangers.

9. It is somewhat arresting and intriguing to think about the next 20 years and the possibilities for Quakers. The world is likely to be a profoundly different place. It is important that the central base remains irrespective of the building; it's a vital resource for anyone who might be drawn to Edinburgh.
10. Reinforced the positive expressions about the 7VT building and would be interested to know whether outside users have also felt it to be a special place. Not sure about the contribution to the next 20 years, but convinced about our positive contribution to the arts in the city. In spiritual terms 20 years is a short period. Excellent to be bang in the centre of Edinburgh.
11. There is a potential conflict between being the kind of place which can bring in people from the 'byways and hedgerows' and maintaining the clarity of the original witness—this is both an opportunity and a challenge. [this contribution only partly captured]
12. There's a difficulty in getting to know everyone in large meeting. More needs to be done to help Friends keep in touch. 7VT should be maintained, but consideration might also be given to taking the hospitality to people's own homes.

13. My first attendance at MfW took place after a non-Quaker event in 7VT, a good property for outside organisations. Having had that initial experience felt more confident about attending MfW. Central Edinburgh meeting is special because of the variety of people that it brings in and newcomers soon realise that there is a lot going on. The variety of publicity material that is readily available is an asset in a larger meeting. Perhaps members and attenders could do more to fundraise for the lively meeting. It would be a great pity to lose the city centre location.
14. 'Looking at the future is fraught with difficulty'. Very thankful that 20 years' ago Friends took the decision to purchase 7VT. People like the building—it gives us presence.
15. Too much time is spent going up and down stairs. This is particularly frustrating for lone working staff who are not permitted to use the lift. The stairs can be daunting and intimidating especially for newcomers. Surely there must be other suitable properties in central Edinburgh that would save, not only having to walk to the top of a hill, but also having to climb to the top of the building to be closer to God.
16. We're in a 'chicken and egg' position regarding selling the building, as it would be necessary to sell before purchasing again and at present it is not the time to consider selling.
17. It is difficult to imagine not being in the building for a number of years in the future. Quaker witness could be improved and will be costly—the growth in maintenance problems,

improvements to the toilets are all necessary—perhaps insufficient was spent in the first ten years of ownership and consequently more needed now. [this contribution imperfectly heard so may be inaccurately reported]

18. We need to think about the Quaker presence in the world including the distinctive inclusiveness of silent worship. The multi-faith world needs to be able to come together; the vision is a place where people from all different backgrounds/faiths can meet together. There is a role for building up communications and offering the local community a space where things can be explored openly—a unique opportunity.
19. How is the Quaker community perceived in Edinburgh and beyond? How can we extend the bringing together of faiths?
20. The organiser of the recent Middle East Festival would like to have booked 7VT for the whole of its duration. It was considered to be the right place for that kind of event.
21. There's a possible tension between the needs of Central Edinburgh Friends, wider outreach and letting out rooms. In thinking ahead, account will have to be taken of the sometimes conflicting demands for a funeral or wedding and advance cash earning bookings from outside non-Quaker organisations.
22. It is not just the adults who are concerned about the future of the property. When one of the Friend's children heard about the possibility a move from 7VT there was an expression of 'disbelief and sadness'.

6.4. Appendix D: Friends' use of 7 Victoria Terrace in 2008

January 2008

AM £224.50

LM £91.50

GM £30.00

February 2008

AM £156.50

LM £211.50

GM £18.00

March 2008

AM £155.00

LM £30.00

GM £27.00

April 2008

AM £184.50

LM £116.00

GM £96.00

May 2008

AM £272.00

LM £45.50

GM £26.00

June 2008

AM £97.00

LM £82.50

GM £18.00

July 2008

AM £367.50

FF £700 (festival preparation nominal)
GM £9.00

August 2008

AM £30.00
FF £5148 (£286 a day x 18 days)
FF £700 (festival clear up nominal)

September 2008

AM £110.50
LM £36.00

October 2008

AM £262.00
LM £39.50

November 2008

AM £220.00
LM £199.50
GM £196.00

December 2008

AM £44.00
LM £299.50

Subtotals for the year:

Area Meeting festival £6548.00
Area Meeting other £2123.50
Local Meeting Meeting for Worship 52 x
£100 = £5200.00
Local Meeting other £1151.00
General Meeting £420.00
Mid-week Meeting 52 x £27.50 = £1430.00

Grand total for the year:£16,873

6.5. Other sources

The following documents, while not part of this report, have been lodged with Area Meeting as they provided input to our work:

- Summary budget figures from John Phillips
- Report to Trustees by Kath Russell of Woodbrooke
- Results of questionnaire (both tabulation and comments) to Central Edinburgh members and attenders