



## SOUTH EDINBURGH MEETING

January 2024



From Blackford Hill

### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Meetings usually **every Sunday 10.30-11.30 am**  
Held at the Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, or remotely by Zoom (hybrid, except on the 4th Sunday each month).

Notices, other options, and late changes are sent by weekly email. Join the email list by clicking the link at <https://quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh>

On the **First Thursday** of each month we meet for **30 min at 7.30 pm** by Zoom, followed by chat.

Arrangements for children: see online.

### Other local meetings

Central Edinburgh and Portobello-Musselburgh are closest. Times are listed in SESAME, but for full info and a map, see <https://quakerscotland.org>

Several South Edinburgh Friends also attend Central Edinburgh's **Midweek Meeting on Wednesdays**, 12.30 for 30 mins at Victoria Terrace meeting house. Tea and coffee are available, and you can bring a packed lunch.

### SPECIAL COLLECTION

Our collection in January is for **Compassion in World Farming**, which campaigns peacefully to end factory farming. Our Friend David Turner, who was a member of this meeting for many years, became vegetarian and introduced us to this charity, which has existed for 50 years. Deirdre Armstrong will speak to this. More about their work at [www.ciwf.org.uk](http://www.ciwf.org.uk) (Donate button at top of site).

### QUAKER EVENTS

NEW: events list at <https://bit.ly/SedQuakEvents>

**Area Meeting** will be held at Edinburgh Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, on **Mon 15 Jan**, 7-9 pm. Includes: report on future possibilities for Edinburgh Meeting House, and a report from our parliamentary engagement officer Sarah Komashko. Details in emails.

**Woodbrooke Where You Are** – AM's programme of 5 whole-day sessions at Victoria Terrace starts with *Essentials of Quakerism* on **Sat 24 Feb**, led by Ben Pink Dandelion. Reserve dates and book early; see back page.

**Other 2024 dates** are listed on page 2.

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From Rachel Frith of Edinburgh Central:

**Coffee** at Rachel's house, from 10.15 am on first and third Thursdays. Please confirm with Rachel.

**Book Group** – Fourth Sundays at 12.15 after Central MfW. January: *Bournville* by Jonathon Coe

**Singing group is laid down.**



Nacreous clouds over Morningside, 19 Dec. 'With temperatures in the stratosphere so low, water particles turn into tiny ice crystals in the sky. As the sun dips below the horizon, the light rays hit the crystals and refract, scattering the light in colourful, luminescent displays'. More: <https://bit.ly/3H2kbIE> Deirdre Armstrong

## SOUTH EDINBURGH QUAKER CALENDAR 2024

Dates may change, so we are testing a **list of events in the next 3-4 months** at <https://bit.ly/SEdQuakEvents> – please tell us if it's useful. There is a link to it at the top of our South Edinburgh Meeting webpage.

2024	Local Meeting for Business	Area Meeting	GM and other meetings
Jan		Mon 22 7-9 pm (Central Edin)	
Feb			
Mar	Sun 3 Mar	Sat 23 (Polmont) am + pm, all-age	Sat 9 GM – Edinburgh
April			
May		Tue 7 7-9 pm (Central Edin)	
June		Sat 22 (Kelso) am + pm, all-age	Sat 8 GM – West
July			Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Fri 26 – Tue 30 July, at Friends House, London
Aug			
Sep		Wed 4 7-9 pm (Central Edin)	Sat 14 GM – East
Oct			
Nov		Sat 23 (location tbc) am + pm, all-age	Sat 9 GM – North
Dec			
Jan 2025		Mon 20 7-9 pm (Central Edin)	(Next GM will be Sat 8 Mar 2025, South East)

**South Edin Local Meeting for Business:** Follows Sunday MfW five times each year. *After March tbc.*

**Meetings for Witness for peace:** In 2023 we held Meetings in Princes Street Gardens on the same days as those held at the North Gate, Faslane. 2024 plans not yet known.

### Other things around the UK

**LIST:** [www.quaker.org.uk/events](http://www.quaker.org.uk/events) has an excellent list. You can click the headings in the side menu to show just one type of event or who it's aimed at – young, old, workshops, conferences etc.

**Woodbrooke Learning 2024** – browse and search at [www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/courses](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/courses)

### Hearing from us by email

Through **South Edinburgh Announcements** you can receive emails from South Edinburgh Quakers. 1-2 per week, for short-notice news, additional information about interesting events, and Zoom details for online meetings. To join this list, see details on our webpage <http://quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh> Enrolling includes an approval step to make sure it's people we know.

The list for our monthly **newsletter** (you're reading it now) is broader. Contact [neilturn@gmail.com](mailto:neilturn@gmail.com)



### More regular Quaker news

- **Quake** is BYM's short interesting monthly email. [www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/quake](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/quake)
- The **BYM blog** at [www.quaker.org.uk/blog](http://www.quaker.org.uk/blog) is refreshingly varied, interesting, and concise
- For a longer read, **The Friend** (weekly, subscription required), <https://thefriend.org>

## Getting to Know – Ian Robertson

I was born in Cheltenham in 1943, my parents and older sister having moved down from Teeside, as my father, a carpenter and joiner, took a job in an aircraft factory. This was war time, and in those days some aeroplanes were made largely from wood. My parents were not churchgoers but packed me off to the local Anglican Sunday School possibly to give them a bit of peace and quiet! My father, by then the manager of a small wood working company, died suddenly of a heart attack when I was 11 years old. It was quite devastating for my mother who then went out to work, had to sell the family home and downsize. I don't think she ever really recovered from this. For me however, despite this loss, with two devoted mother figures (my sister being 9 years older) it caused me to develop independence of thought and action.



I attended Cheltenham grammar school where evangelical Christian staff ran summer camps and bible study classes through which I received a good grounding particularly in the New Testament. This was at the time when the cold war was at its height, CND had just been founded and I could not understand why all the mainstream churches were not supporting the peace movement and CND. I then discovered the local Quaker Meeting. A good school friend was involved in a Congregational church with an excellent youth club, so there was a period when on Sundays I attended Quakers in the morning, bible class in the afternoon, and the Congregational church in the evening, which is where I met Rosamond.

For me Quakers seemed to have captured what I understood early Christianity was about before it was hijacked by the Roman Empire. Everyone had responsibility for the life of the community, few differentials, a straight forward theology uncluttered by ritual, and emphasis on the direct experience of the Holy Spirit/Inner Light. I was accepted into membership when I was 19.

Meanwhile my school career was a mixed bag – either excellent or desultory results despite being placed in a top stream. I had been unable to take the subjects I was interested in. My self esteem was kept afloat however due to excelling in athletics. I left school and worked as a cartographic surveyor in the Ordnance Survey. I became involved in work camps, and before long, realising the limitations of my job, I left the OS and participated in an ecumenical year-long work camp on the Island of Bali, Indonesia (then unspoilt by tourism). This was sponsored by the World Council of Churches but managed by Indonesians. Young people from different Christian traditions and ten nations lived and worked together, half of whom were Indonesian. This gave me a very international perspective.

On returning to the UK I redeemed my school failures by studying, gaining University Entrance, and clawed my way back into the Higher Education sausage machine, thus my 'Gap Year' – not a current term in the 60s – took 5 years! After a London University social studies course in Coventry I was awarded a year's training scholarship at a Settlement House in Philadelphia, concurrently attending classes at a Graduate School. I attended Friends and served on the Summer Projects Abroad Committee of the American Friends Service Committee.

I arrived back in the UK to take up a place on a professional social work course at Cardiff University, and managed to squeeze in marrying Rosamond at the Cheltenham Friends Meeting on the Saturday before commencing lectures on the Monday. Rosamond found a job to support us. During these years I attended Quaker Meetings in Coventry, Philadelphia and Cardiff.

My first professional job was as a community worker in inner city Manchester, a post initiated by the local churches and funded by Christian Aid. It was an invigorating time living and working alongside local people, including clergy, helping them resist demolition and instead attract investment through the Urban Aid programme. This provided research material for a Masters Degree in the Department of Adult Education of Manchester University, which I completed in my spare time. The community experience made me aware of the key role decision makers have, and my next post as professional adviser on community issues in the Social Work Services Group of the then Scottish Office enabled me to be a significant link between government and voluntary and community groups throughout Scotland.

On moving to Edinburgh in 1976 we worshipped at the central Edinburgh Meeting located in Stafford Street, where I was Clerk for three years. I regarded Friends' business meetings more attractive in theory than the extraordinary long sessions, which I found quite frustrating. I was probably too young and impatient! After a while we attended the much nearer South Edinburgh Meeting, where Sylvia and other Friends kindly made creche provision for our baby, and soon other younger families came too. Once two of our by then three daughters were on the threshold of teens, we felt that Friends at that time were not able to offer an experience to hold that age group, and after some searching found an Episcopal church with a thriving youth work.

With me very keen to have a large garden we located and bought 2 acres of land on the Lammermuir with a derelict cottage and barn attached as a project for my retirement. Having rebuilt a garden shed I thought I was suitably experienced to project manage this rebuild, and on my retirement in 2003 I took seriously the advice to 'live adventurously'! It was a BIG project, no water, electricity, or drive, and 300 m from the public road across a field. Three years later we moved into the house and I began to lay out the garden. We worshipped with East Lothian Meeting, which met fortnightly, so on alternate Sundays we attended the local parish Church of Scotland as we wanted to connect with the local community. Despite our commitment we failed to feel at home there, so transferred to the liberal Episcopal Church in Haddington. Our experience of people during our fourteen years in East Lothian was remarkably positive, so it was a hard wrench for me to leave My Project, downsize, and return to Edinburgh in 2017. The combination of our isolated setting, severe winters, increasing age, child care pulls, and the demands of a huge garden led to the move. Time has confirmed its wisdom. Covid caused us to reconnect with S E Quakers initially through Zoom, and here I find myself in a warm spirit filled group just ten minutes walk from our home.

*Ian was in conversation with Deirdre Armstrong in Nov 2023*

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## Meeting of some South Edinburgh Quakers with Ian Murray, MP for Edinburgh South

On 15 December some of us went to Ian Murray's office where he was generous with his time. We felt that he listened as we expressed our concern over the arms trade to Israel, the position of refugees in the UK and the difficulty of achieving an economic policy which is working towards a more equal society.

### **Israel/Palestine and arms controls on sales to Israel**

We asked Ian to question the government on controls on arms sales, particularly to Israel, and to query whether they break the rules under which the UK arms have been sold now that we see them being used against civilians in Gaza and the West Bank.

### **Refugees and asylum seekers**

We asked Ian to query a new UK government plan for using community support to allow some Afghan asylum seekers to enter because it seems vague and unworkable.

We also asked him to press within the Labour Party for a compassionate policy towards refugees to replace the present 'hostile environment'.

Ian outlined Labour's plan to reorganise the Home Office, process claims faster and seek to allow refugees who have skills which are needed, but it is not clear yet whether it is a compassionate policy which would create safe routes for migrants.

### **Tackling inequality and the climate emergency**

Ian said that the Labour Party intends to decarbonise energy by establishing 'GB Energy' and improving buildings, renewable sources and creating district heating networks.

We asked if he could send us Labour's plans for doing this.

We were grateful that we could speak frankly to him and he sent a message later to say 'it was a good discussion and I especially appreciated the advice and ideas for questioning the government'.

*Deirdre Armstrong*



## Ancient gaelic tales via John Francis Campbell of Islay

At the National Library of Scotland on George IV Bridge you can see (till 20 April 2024) a free exhibition based on the collections of John Francis Campbell of Islay, 'saviour of Gaelic folklore', who collected Gaelic folktales when they threatened to fade into oblivion.



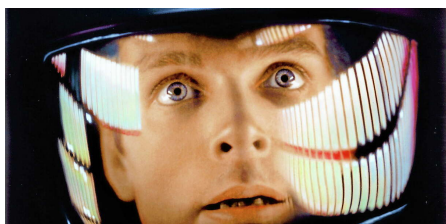
Campbell had an impressive range of talents and interests, including note-keeping and artistry (one of his journals is shown on the left). He published four volumes 1859-62 as *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. He was widely travelled, and his archive in the NLS also includes volumes from much further afield. Hundreds of volumes from his library have been made available available online. The illustration of nursery rhymes on the back page is from a beautiful 1958 book in his collection.

More info: <https://bit.ly/3TDm465> (NLS page about Campbell), and [https://www.youtube.com/live/X7M\\_wshyNDA](https://www.youtube.com/live/X7M_wshyNDA) (1 hour talk, commences after 9 mins silence), and his 4-star Wikipedia page.

DA and NT

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## Chat GPT in the movies



*I'm sorry Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that.*

Following our unsettling discovery of the ability of artificial intelligence to write Quaker minutes, some insights from the world of film. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and *Galaxy Quest* (1999). Should you need any gift ideas for 2024, both of these masterpieces have become newly appropriate.



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## Department of clarification and error

Amir Peter O'Loughlin was the author of the poem 'What I did in the War' in our December issue, but not of the recommended book. *Creating True Peace*. It was written by Thich Nhat Nanh, and Amir O'Loughlin recommends him as did Meg Beresford.

Alison Burnley comments on our front page reproduction of the blanket she made for Alex and Richard. While the photo showed the very photogenic dedication and stars (and Alex and Richard), most of the work went into the other side!

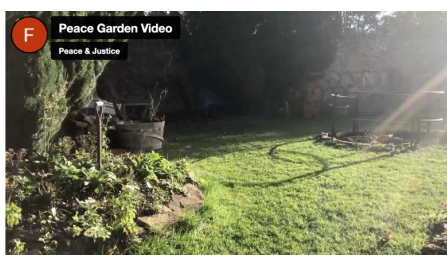


## News and future events

### Sue Freshwater

Our Friend Sue Freshwater died on 6th Dec, during a slow convalescence after breaking her hip. She is singing a sea shanty with gusto in this photo from Wiston in September.

Sue requested a direct cremation with no ceremony. It is planned to hold a funeral meeting in her memory early in 2024.



**Build a Peace Garden** Three charities working with Peace and Justice Scotland are raising funding for a Peace Garden at Bridgend Farm, Dalkeith Rd. Aviva plc are matching donations: see <https://bit.ly/3Tkagp9> David Somervell

**Woodbrooke Where You Are** – A free series of interactive sessions suitable for new, young, experienced, or established Quakers. Likely 10 am – 4 pm, including lunch.

**Sat 24 Feb** – Ben Pink Dandelion: *Essentials of Quakerism*

**Sat 11 May** – Simonne Wood: *What happens in Meeting for Worship*

**Sat 29 Jun** – Rhiannon Grant: *Telling our Spiritual Stories*

*Two further sessions to be confirmed.*

We want to encourage as many people as possible to benefit. Funding is thanks to the Sylvia Marshall Bequest and Area Meeting funds. **Please put these dates in your diaries and book! (details later but via Woodbrooke website)** Marilyn Higgins, on behalf of Elders.

**Quakers on Peace** Martin Mansell expressed Quaker views on peace at times of violence in the *Time for Reflection* slot at the Scottish Parliament on 28th Nov. Play it again at [www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/time-for-reflection-november-28-2023](http://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/time-for-reflection-november-28-2023)

Would you like to offer to be the next Quaker in that slot? Contact anyone in the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY



To the **Astley Ainslie Hospital**, now over 100. A small, free, photo-rich exhibition details its impressive history. In the Blackford Pavilion by the gate into the site from Canaan Lane. Walk round to the door on the South side.

The exhibition is in the canteen, which is open to all, so you can also enjoy coffee or lunch and a warm seat at bargain prices. 8.30am – 2pm weekdays.

*Our newsletter is published near the last Sunday of each month. February Valentines to [neilturn@gmail.com](mailto:neilturn@gmail.com)*

*Find this edition, plus archives of previous, at [www.quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh](http://www.quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh)*

## Crooked stories



From *Old Nurse's Collection of Jingles and Ditties*, by CH Bennett, 1858, in the archive of JF Campbell in the National Library of Scotland (CC licence; see p5) <https://bit.ly/48glaku>. Expect more on crooked sixpences in the Valentine section of our next issue.