



SOUTH EDINBURGH MEETING

May 2024



Haw (hawthorn, May tree) blossom indicates that it may soon be OK to cast a clout. But this is blackthorn, next to flowering gorse (kissing season).

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 **Midweek Meeting on Wednesdays**, 12.30 for 30 mins at Victoria Terrace meeting house. Tea and coffee available, and eat your packed lunch.

SPECIAL COLLECTION

Our collection in May is for **Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)**, which was formed in 1937 to bring Quakers together across theological and cultural diversity. Kate Arnot will speak to this. <https://fwcc.world>

QUAKER EVENTS

Latest updates at <https://bit.ly/SEdQuakEvents>

Area Meeting will be held at Edinburgh Meeting House, 7-9 pm on **Tue 7 May**.

Book Group, *Sea of Tranquillity* by Emily St John Mandel. 2-4 pm on **Thur 9 May**. Contact Catriona Courtier or Carol Jennings.

Christian Aid Week is **12-18 May**. Information at www.christianaid.org.uk

Woodbrooke Where You Are – AM's programme of 5 whole-day sessions at Victoria Terrace continues on **Sat 11 May** with *What happens in meeting for worship*. Book by 3 May; see <https://bit.ly/SEdQuakEvents>

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 – Usually on third Sundays after soup at Central MfW, but this month **26 May**: *French Braids* by Anne Tyler.



Holy Corner, 1906. A cable tram has stopped at Chamberlain Road. A woman cycles past, hanging on to her hat. (Hand-tinted postcard)

Get to know: Neil Turner



Where were you brought up and how did you meet Quakerism?

I was born in Alnwick, Northumberland, then more poor-rural than Harry Potter-tourist. Two younger sisters followed, close in age. My father was a local GP, so my parents were part of a small professional group in the town. I went to the local CofE primary school, but then I went to Bootham, a Quaker boarding school in York. Small, single-sex, and in retrospect, struggling. Adapting took a long while, with strange Quaker ways and ethos, but some admirable teachers, and I came to like and value it.

I wondered why a Quaker school, as my parents were not religious. Much later I learned that my grandfather had been a Quaker, until he married a Methodist. In him I could suddenly see a calm, thoughtful, indeed weighty Quaker.

University and work

Although boarding school is supposed to prepare you for university, it was a real fish-out-of-water experience, in Cambridge encountering many extraordinarily confident, arrogant youths from posh schools. But I was studying medicine, which was broader, and the second three years, when we started clinical learning in the wider world, felt distinctly more comfortable. That was in Oxford, trying to avoid London, to where the family had moved. After qualifying I sought jobs mostly in district hospitals rather than teaching centres, and learned a huge amount about every aspect of medicine and life. That included Croydon, Liverpool, Northampton (where I met Helen), Norwich, York, and Oxford. We were married in Newton Stewart in 1984 and went to live in York.

The return to Oxford was to find out more about kidney disease, as that was one of the things that puzzled and scared me most. There I found a very over-pressed consultant caring for 200 dialysis patients. He knew them all, took immense care over their management, and had developed systems to cope with the numbers, which included giving other staff unusual levels of responsibility. I discovered that nephrology was not just about emergencies, but included life-long care for patients with kidney disease who were kept alive by dialysis and transplantation. Knowing families and life histories, sharing joys and tragedies.

So I found a post to train as a kidney (renal, nephrology) specialist at Hammersmith in London, where we stayed for 9 years, including a long spell in research. During that time our three sons were born. We attended Ealing meeting, became members in about 1986, and a local Quaker became a dream 'Mary Poppins' childminder for us.

To Scotland

In 1994 we moved to Aberdeen, where I continued to combine research and clinical work, and a little teaching, before we came to Edinburgh in 1998. Here, as professor, it was exciting to build up a unit that had a prior academic reputation, but had become weighed down by workload. I was involved with some NHS and university politics and the full range of kidney medicine. Someone was needed to take responsibility for young people moving into adult services, hand in hand with paediatricians. Watching the young people grow up, and helping them to gradually take responsibility for themselves, is sobering, sometimes anxiety-provoking, but also really rewarding.



This coincided with new work to generate online information for patients and staff, initially creating websites as a teaching experiment. In 1983 I became involved, with a colleague from Glasgow, in setting up a system to allow renal patients to see live blood test results online, with linked information about what they mean, and about their diagnosis. Later it led to developing online education, and becoming more involved in organising teaching, including online courses, but less in lab research.

After a gap I had begun to attend Quaker meetings again at university, and Helen started coming too. We became more involved in York, but especially in Ealing, and then in Aberdeen. When we came to Edinburgh we first attended Victoria Terrace. But after going to Shindig, our children insisted on coming to South Edinburgh to keep up with their new friends. Surely Quaker input has helped shape them into delightful, responsible 30-somethings, in Cumbria, London, California.

Present day

Covid provided an unexpected and difficult last phase of clinical work. I carried on a bit longer part-time till stopping paid work at the end of 2022. That gave some time for spinning up retirement activities. Which still include research on rare diseases, and particularly on Alport Syndrome. Convening SESAM trustees is a significant commitment, especially with the addition of work on the Quakers in Scotland project. I am involved in postgraduate education with the Royal College of Physicians, and edit a substantial textbook that looks likely

to start a new edition in 2024. Less formally, I'm helping to write the UK history of our specialty, and producing information about Medical Humanities, and each has a website to look after.

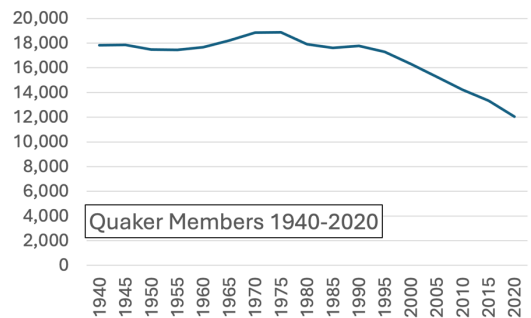
We are still looking forward to reconnecting better with hill walking and the countryside, but are definitely seeing more art, music, films. Some other eccentric fascinations you might see hints of in the South Edinburgh newsletter.

Neil was in conversation with Alison Chalmers in March 2024

Our numbers

General Meeting for Scotland publishes our tabular statement every March, a statistical account of our members and attenders. Numbers across Britain are similarly collated by BYM. In Scotland we had 670 adult members and 553 attenders on 31 Dec 2023, plus 99 children.

Quaker members in Britain began to fall in 1995, as shown in the graph, and have fallen slowly since. In the last 40 years numbers of members fell by 33%, from 17,891 to 12,032. Including attenders reduces the fall to 30%. In Scotland in the last 40 years our numbers fell by a very similar proportion.



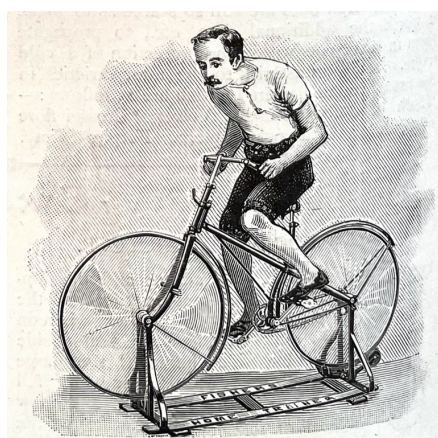
Churchgoing in Scotland At the same time some traditional churches are declining at breakneck speed. <https://bit.ly/4d95gLt>

In 1982 the Church of Scotland had nearly 920,000 members; last year, that stood at 270,300, a decline of 70%. The average age of its congregants was 62, and only 60,000 worship in person.

In 1982, the Catholic church in Scotland conducted 4,870 marriages and had 273 men training to be priests. In 2021, there were just 812 Catholic marriages, and 12 seminarians in training. It attracted only two new recruits to its ministry in 2023, and no longer trains priests in Scotland.

Our fall is just half of the Church of Scotland drop, but still substantial, and it shows no sign of slowing. Thoughts and ideas welcome.

Bicycles 1880-1910: all the new ideas



Bicycle ideas filled the pages of magazines. Left, the Nottingham Sociable; right, an affordable home trainer (1889; attributed overleaf). A woman cycling at Holy Corner, Morningside, in 1906 (from the postcard on p1). Rabbits on bicycles (Beatrix Potter, 1895).

News and future events

George Fox at 400 has lots to look at:

Events listed by FWCC <https://fwcc.world/fox> includes short video from Quaker tapestry panels as well as links to events.

Woodbrooke offers short online perspectives from different points of view, including feminist, universalist, non-theist, ecological, global, indigenous, conservative (but we missed that one). www.woodbrooke.org.uk/fox-at-400

Shindig – 11-16 years old on 30 June? **27 July – 3 Aug**, at Millport Field Studies Centre, Isle of Cumbrae (West of Largs). Info and booking link: <https://bit.ly/3VoMedy> and <https://bit.ly/3wuHloR>

Wiston weekend 2024 The dates are **Fri 6 – Sun 8 Sep**. If you could help, please Contact iandouglassedwards@gmail.com



Wobbly science-art In the basement gallery of Summerhall there is a wonderful exhibition of visual tricks, part of the Science Festival. Geometry Wed-Sun 11-5, till Sun 26 May. Coffee shop above.

After that you'll need:



Tranquillity, from a drawing by Laura Haynes.

This and the engravings on page 3 are from *Illustrations, a Pictorial Review of Knowledge* by FG Heath, 1889; 'amusement, art, biography, economy, invention, literature, science, and everything that concerns the business and pleasure of life'. Monthly issues, each 3d.

Never minister on daffodils



An aphorism recalled in recent discussions in *The Friend*. **Daffodil ministry:** *Every spring a Friend notices how lovely the daffodils look as they come to meeting for worship, and they minister about how lovely the world is. Sometimes a pejorative term to describe uncritical and predictable ministry.*

From Ealing's useful Quaker Jargon Buster at www.ealingquakers.org.uk/about/jargon-buster

Bluebells might be fine though?



Daffodils, Braidburn Valley Park
Bluebells, Wanstead Park.

Our newsletter is published near the last Sunday of each month. Flaming June journals to neilturn@gmail.com Find this edition, plus archives of previous, at www.quakerscotland.org/south-edinburgh