



## SOUTH EDINBURGH MEETING

December 2024



Topiary in Grange Road is becoming competitive.

### 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).

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, you can eat your packed lunch.

### SPECIAL COLLECTION

Our collection in December is for Edinburgh Street Assist, which supports vulnerable people on the streets, night and day (to be confirmed at Meeting). [www.streetassist.co.uk](http://www.streetassist.co.uk) – donate button at top right.

### QUAKER EVENTS

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

**Book Group** – *For Thy Great Pain Have Mercy On My Little Pain* by Victoria MacKenzie. **Thur 5 Dec** at 2pm, hosted by Carol Jennings.

**Meeting and carols at Wiston.** This year the main house isn't available for Lanark's Christmas meeting with soup and mince pies on **Sun 15 Dec**. So in a smaller space numbers may be restricted; please contact [crosbyfamily1988@btinternet.com](mailto:crosbyfamily1988@btinternet.com) before Dec 10th.

**Christmas party** – late afternoon on **Sun 22 Dec**, *to be confirmed* – details to follow by email.

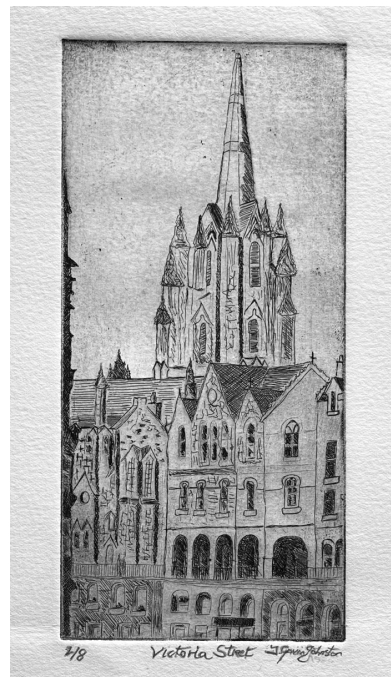
**Christmas Day Meeting** at Central Edinburgh Meeting. **Wed 25 Dec** at 11 am for half an hour, in the library at 7 Victoria Terrace. Sorry, no Zoom option at this meeting.

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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.

**Central Book Group** – third Sundays after soup: **Sun 15 Dec** Khali Shafak's *The island of missing trees*.



## Get to know – Tim Cresswell

Tim was born in Cambridge in 1965 into an air force family. His father was then based at RAF Marham in Norfolk, from where the V-bombers flew, and his mother was training to be a nurse. During his early years the family moved about a lot - to Berlin, where his brother was born, then Oxfordshire, where he started primary school, Singapore from age 7 to 9, then back to Oxfordshire for a year before starting as a boarder at Woolverstone Hall near Ipswich.

Tim described this as a strange place - a state boarding school run by the Inner London Education Authority. Most pupils were kids from London and some had proved troublesome in day school (some locals thought it was a sort of borstal). Other were from service families. It occupied a Palladian mansion with 40 acres of grounds and had a county-standard cricket pitch. There was a TV programme about the school entitled "The Poor Man's Eton" - <https://youtu.be/oBT18ooblY8>. It is now Ipswich High School for Girls.



Tim spent the whole of his secondary education here and it clearly had a huge impact on him. Some of the teachers were interesting characters - not effective in exam coaching but inspirational in other ways. He particularly remembers an English teacher who kept goats and was trying to be self-sufficient. He taught them Marxist literary theory rather than Jane Austen and told them all about communism. It was once described as a school that took people from labour backgrounds to a conservative environment, gave them a liberal education and produced anarchists. Former pupils of the school include the cricketer, Graham Barlow, the actor, Ben Onwukwe, the novelist, Ian McEwan, the actor, Charles De'Ath, the newsreader, Peter Donaldson, the comedian, Phil Jupitus and the rugby player, Martin Offiah whose brother once fractured Tim's arm while playing.

His early years in the school, which had a strong focus on cricket and rugby, were difficult - he was introverted and somewhat of a swot and got bullied, but things improved from the third year and he enjoyed being in a sixth form with only 18 pupils. There was a lot of freedom and he got really interested in thinking and writing. He always says he would never send his own children to boarding school but he is really glad that he went.

From school he went to University College London to study geography, scraping in with less than stellar grades. He really enjoyed the social life of London, having visited there often while in the sixth form at school. One of his first actions was to join the Federation of Conservative Students. His family were very much working class, Daily Mail reading, Thatcher supporters. His mother's family, the Chamberlains spent 300 years working in the iron foundries, brickworks and shipworks on the Isle of Dogs while his Dad's family had been mostly agricultural labourers in Norfolk.

However, he found he had very little in common with the other tweed-jacketed Conservative students, apart from one libertarian post-graduate student who he found interesting. Then in his second year he took a course in Humanistic Geography which ignited his interest in geography and changed him politically in its exploration of race and class and gender. It also set him on the path to academia.

From University College, Tim went to do a PhD in Wisconsin and spent seven years there from 1986 to 1993 working with one of the leading specialists in humanistic geography, Yi-Fu Tuan. It was here that he met Carol, who was doing a masters degree in geography and their first child, Owen, was born just before they left. They have two other children, both born in Wales - Alice, who is transgender, and Maddy. In Wales, Tim was teaching at the University of Wales in Lampeter and Carol was working as a midwife. In 1999 he moved to Aberystwyth, also part of the University of Wales, when the geography department at Lampeter was threatened with closure.

Tim's introduction to Quakerism came through Carol. Her uncle and aunt lived in the Celo community in the western mountains of North Carolina, which is predominantly Quaker in membership, and it was one of his favourite places to visit while they lived in the States. He also had some academic contacts who were Quakers and he started to think about it a bit at that point, although in general he has quite a negative feel about organised religion and struggles with God language.

He did not actually begin attending a Quaker meeting until they had left Wales and he was working in London when Carol encouraged him to attend Ealing Meeting around 2006. Despite his religious scepticism, he found he got on well with Quakers and appreciated their values and activism. There was a good sense of belonging, particularly for their kids, with an active youth group which for a time he ran. He was sometimes disconcerted by the extent to which his children imbibed Quaker values - for example they would never lie!

Despite his initial reluctance, he describes Ealing Meeting as wonderful, and he and Carol would attend Yearly Meeting most years while they lived in London from 2006 to 2013. During covid, he undertook some genealogical research and found that Carol had Quaker ancestors in North Carolina going back to the time

George Fox visited there and that one branch of his dad's family came from the Ironbridge area and belonged to the same circle as the Quaker industrialist, Abraham Derby.

While working in London at Royal Holloway, Tim took a course called "Becoming a Poet" as writing poems had always been an interest. This led to him doing a second PhD in creative writing. He has had three collections of poems published and is interim Chair of the Board of Trustees of StAnza, the Scottish international poetry festival. He also loves cooking and food and enjoys travel - their honeymoon was three months travelling round India and hasn't really stopped. He tries to lead a good life and a rich life and is glad Quakers got over their aversion to music and aesthetics. While living in Wales he played cricket and has a continuing interest in fishing as well as occasional hikes.

In 2013 they returned to the States where he became a professor at Northeastern University in Boston and three years later became Dean and Vice-President at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. Here he quickly discovered a personal aversion to the academic conflict inherent in that role. He describes the move as 'a terrible error' and was pleased when in 2019 there was an opening as Ogilvie Professor of Human Geography at Edinburgh University which allowed him to return to academic work.

He and Carol continued to attend Quaker meeting during this second period in the States. On coming to Edinburgh they initially attended Central Edinburgh Meeting, but found the smaller meeting in South Edinburgh more to their taste. Tim stressed how lovely and welcoming and sympatico he has found all four Quaker meetings he has attended and how he values the space provided by the hour of worship, especially as so much of his life is involved with words, whether teaching or in his poetry.

*Tim spoke to Martin Burnell in June 2024*

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## Christmas present ideas: The Three Bs of Edinburgh

Dundee is Jute, Jam, and Journalism. Edinburgh's equivalents are

**Books** – Edinburgh has an exceptional publishing history from the granting of a licence in 1507, but it blossomed massively in the 1800s, and became one of the major industries of the city. Much more about this at [www.scottishprintarchive.org](http://www.scottishprintarchive.org)

**Biscuits** – Edinburgh's biscuit tradition has featured prominently in this newsletter previously. Like its fellows in this trio, it is a pale shadow of its former position, but remains a fascinating, and elsewhere a Quaker tale.

**Beer** – brewing moved from around Canongate to places with a bit more space, such as the canalside site of the Scottish and Newcastle Brewery. '19 photos transporting you back' (Evening News) at <https://bit.ly/3ZwEhoA> As they are photos, they can only go back a certain distance.

Any one or all of these could make a Christmas present with a local claim.



## News and future events

**Carol service** on the theme of peace, organised by Christian Aid. New town Church, East end of George St, 6.30 pm on **Wed 11 Dec**, in person with mince pies, or online without. Register at <https://bit.ly/3YEqyKr>

*Our newsletter is published near the last Sunday of each month. Anything you might like to see here in 2025? Have a happy Christmas, and send 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)*

## Happy Birthday

To Edinburgh City Bypass, which celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> birthday on 21<sup>st</sup> December.

On December 24<sup>th</sup> 1650, Edinburgh Castle surrendered to Oliver Cromwell, who then refused to celebrate Christmas.



Braemar



Morningside (10 Oct) and Bruntisfield (Nov)