



## SOUTH EDINBURGH MEETING

May 2026



Royal Edinburgh Hospital grounds with 'Abraham' statue by Ronald Rae. Carved in situ.  
[www.ronaldrae.co.uk/abraham-2](http://www.ronaldrae.co.uk/abraham-2)

### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

We meet on **Sundays 10.30-11.30 am** at the Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, and remotely by Zoom (hybrid).

Recent notices 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.

Children are welcome anytime. For details of planned activities, 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 charity in May is the **Quaker Housing Trust**, which provides advice, support, and loans and grants to small charities to ensure that homes for those in need are available, safe, decent, and affordable. David Somervell will speak to this. [www.qht.org.uk](http://www.qht.org.uk) has more info and a Donate button.

### QUAKER EVENTS

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

**BYM** is taking place in London **1-4 May**

**Is Peace Possible?** Open meeting at Quaker Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, **Wed 6 May** 7-8.30 pm. Rachel Julian, Matthew Bittle. Details and booking at <https://bit.ly/48iZwhy>

**Book Group** on *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro, **Thur 14 May**, 2 pm, Alison Chalmers' house.

**Quakers in Scotland** meet online on the morning of **Sat 16 May**, 9.30-1.30. Details by email.

**Meeting for Peace** in Princes St Gardens **Sun 17 May**, 10.30 at the Peace Tree, between the bandstand and the Ross Fountain. To coincide with meetings at Faslane.

Information session on **Powers of Attorney** at the Open Door on **Mon 18 May**, 4 pm. See back page.

**Quakers in Scotland** meet in Glasgow and online (hybrid) on **Sat 6 June**. 10.30-4pm. Details by email.

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From Rachel Frith of Edinburgh Central:

**Coffee** at Rachel's house usually on first and third Thursdays, please confirm with Rachel. This month also:

**At home for tea** at Rachel's **Sun 3 May** 3-6.

**Central Book Group** – third Sundays after soup.  
May: *tbc*



*Tyger Tyger* by Ronald Rae [www.ronaldrae.co.uk](http://www.ronaldrae.co.uk) (see page 2). Image from <https://youtu.be/DpFWvdytybis>

## William Blake: Our Contemporary

The poet and print maker William Blake is seen as one of Britain's great artists – some think he is the greatest. He is best known for the hymn *Jerusalem*, set to music by Hubert Parry with orchestration by Elgar. The result is a stirring piece of music. It is more popular than *God Save the Queen*. It is played at both the Conservative and the Labour Party conferences. It is always played on the last night of the Proms in the Royal Albert Hall.

But we get our modern hymn *Jerusalem* by cutting off the preface, changing Blake from “wise tiger of wrath” to “tame horse of instruction” – images that come from his *The Wedding of Heaven and Hell*.

In the autumn of 1916 Britain was in the middle of World War One. It was becoming evident that the Somme offensive had failed. The poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, had been enrolled into Britain's wartime propaganda machine at Wellington House. It was a job that fitted with Bridges' conviction that prosperity had corrupted the nation. He saw the war as an opportunity for it to redeem itself. The problem, Bridges was convinced, was that the war had not yet purified the nation. The problem was to convince people to make that sacrifice. He saw that the poetry of Blake had the power to inspire people to do great things, and that many people found the lines that we now call *Jerusalem* inspiring. The problem he faced was that in the Preface immediately preceding, Blake warns the reader against the British war machine in the strongest possible words. He called on

*“young men of the new age to set their foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings, for we have Hirelings in the court, the camp, and the university who would if they could forever depress mental struggle and prolong corporal war”.*

His evocation of the rest of history being nothing more than an endless cycle of war is chilling. He then called on the reader to “believe Christ and his apostles were clear that there was a body of men whose delight is in destruction”. He located British artists as having a crucial role in the current regime. Their art portrayed the British aristocracy as military heroes. This placed the artist in a powerful position: Blake called for a movement against a militarised culture led by artists, sculptors and architects:



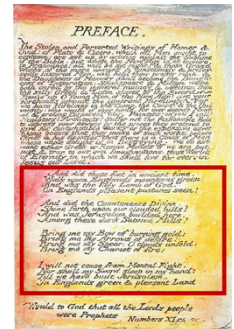
*William Blake bound and gagged and unable to protest at the last night of the Proms*

*Painters! on you I call. Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fashionable fools to depress your powers by the prizes they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertising boasts that they make of such works; believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just & true to our own imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live forever, in Jesus our Lord”.*

We have seen the attempt to turn Blake's argument around, primitive but effective, until today when its future is now in our hands. We live after artists like the German Expressionists and poets such as Wilfred Owen and ee cummings have taken the critique of militarism in new directions. It is this that opens up possibilities for Blake's work that did not previously exist.

Blake knew what he was talking about. It was a time when the centre of Britain's towns and cities were filling up with statues of the nation's military heroes – Nelson's column, statues of the Duke of Wellington – and streets named after victories.

The promotion of hard masculine warrior bodies which glorified the force of arms and the battlefield had been at the heart of European art at least since the renaissance. Michaelangelo made his name with his larger-than-life statue of the young David preparing to kill Goliath with his sling shot. As John Berger has shown in *Ways of Seeing*, the other side of the portrayal of super-masculine men was the portrayal of ultra-sensuous women. Typically, in European oil paintings such women are depicted naked on their backs. The spectator of the painting is ambiguously the monarch and/or the viewer.



Charles the First had seen how European monarchs were using art to promote themselves and their courts. After the defeat of Cromwell, British monarchs again bought art showing the heroic acts of themselves and their subjects on the battlefield, while their wives or mistresses reclined on sofas or beds. A use of art that the British aristocracy, and in Blake's time the newly arrived middle class, both challenged and supported. It is a game that Blake rejected – emphasising sexual equality as the proper thing in a democratic age.

British elites of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often promoted warrior identities. Their models were the warriors of ancient Greece and Rome. It was only with the first World War that this began to be publicly questioned. I say began, because in the interwar years such critics were at the margins of the elite debate.

The dominant public voice emphasised the necessity of the nation's sons being ready to sacrifice their lives in battle, and the redemptive value of their sacrifice. It sought to deal with the vast slaughter by constructing vast memorials and grandiose compositions such as Spring Rice/ Gustav Holst's *I Vow To Thee My Country*. It would only be later that the poetry of Sassoon, Graves, and Owen would indite poets like Bridges and composers like Parry for aiding the burial of the reality of mindless slaughter through their emphasis on self-sacrifice for the nation.

*Dominick Jenkins*



Craigmillar Castle and its park

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## Possible forthcoming items

A series based on Experiences that changed/influenced me. By you. Anonymous or named, you choose. The more peculiar the better. Please send!

Other requests include

- More fashion (3 votes protesting neglect of fashion in Quaker publications)
- Iron Kirks in the Royal Edinburgh grounds and elsewhere (2 votes)
- Return topics, 1 vote each: lamp posts and bollards, water supply and sewage, the Golden Boy on Old College, the Milestone Society, the Letterbox Study Group.

You know what to do\*.

\* (send comments, send content, write in protest)

## Other news and future events

**Powers of attorney** – a free information session from senior law specialists (Allingham and Co) on why and how you should do this, and how they operate. At the Open Door on **Mon 18 May**, 4 pm.

*The following events were in April's issue but require planning ahead:*

**Camping at Comrie Croft** Informal Friends gathering **22-25 May**. If interested please contact Anne Hitchen ([anne.scatwell@gmail.com](mailto:anne.scatwell@gmail.com)) of Inverness LM or Anna Densham of Glasgow LM ([so\\_wilde@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:so_wilde@yahoo.co.uk)).

**Family Gathering at Pitlochry** at the Youth Hostel **19-21 June**. A calling letter to all LMs will follow.

**Shindig** – the annual break for 11-17 year old Friends will again be at the FSC, Millport, Isle of Cumbrae. Week from **25 July**. More info at <https://summershindig.wordpress.com> (includes lovely photos of location)

**Pluscarden Weekend**, an annual event established by North of Scotland Friends, will be held **28-30 Aug**. Piers Voisey welcomes expressions of interest to join from Friends across Scotland. More details to follow.

**Wiston** weekend will be **18-20 Sep**. (Clashes with QiS in Inverness). More info and booking at <https://bit.ly/wiston26>



**Quakers in Scotland meetings** are listed at <https://quakerscotland.org/qis/meeting-dates-and-papers>

*Our newsletter is published near the last Sunday each month. June jumble 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)*

**One more fashion note** A refreshing article appeared in Oregon-based George Fox University's April newspaper. Quakerism lies at the heart of their university, they need to restore proper Quaker ways. First names only. Wide-brimmed hats or bonnets. Thee/thou. So good to hear. <https://bit.ly/Return2Q>



## Happy Birthday

A number of notable historic Quakers have May birthdays, including **Elizabeth Fry** (246) and **Joseph Rowntree** (190), but also very worthy are Edinburgh's **May Drummond** (330y), 'neglected Quaker celebrity' featured in our Nov 2025 issue.

**Edward Pease**, railway pioneer (259y), major sponsor of the Stockton and Darlington railway.

## Art trips

Not Edinburgh, nor traditionally Quakerish, and you wonder at the resources expended, but do consider **Catwalk: the Art of the Fashion Show** at the V&A Dundee till 17th Jan 2027. Beautifully presented, imaginative, humorous, not just for followers of fashion. Videos give minimal hints:



*Humorous: Who are you, Polly Magoo?* (6 mins) [https://youtu.be/dS\\_aJN7c8ps](https://youtu.be/dS_aJN7c8ps)



*Dreamy alternative to a weekend retreat: The Dior Myth* (10 mins) (warning, includes scenes of outdoor swimming). <https://youtu.be/SkO1JF3-c9Y>

## Further dreamy retreats

The advertising pages at the back of *The Friend* now show three different centres in France where you can go to meditate.

A more local dreamy retreat is to Little Sparta ([www.littlesparta.org.uk](http://www.littlesparta.org.uk)), but that is only open June-September.

Closer and now, there's the under-appreciated Saughton Park, maybe as part of a stroll along the Water of Leith, and the Botanic.