



## SOUTH EDINBURGH MEETING

July 2024



Saughton Park was bought by the City Council when they thought they were about to lose Harrison Park. Opened to public in 1910, sparkling renovation 2020.

### 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 July is for the **Peace and Justice** project to build a Peace Garden with the local community around Bridgend Farmhouse and refugees and asylum seekers.. David Somervell, (who convenes their trustees) will speak to this. Donations link under 'get involved' at <https://peaceandjustice.org.uk>

### QUAKER EVENTS

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

Don't forget to vote on **Thur 4 July**.

**Garden meeting**, followed by bring and share lunch, 10.30 am on **Sun 21 July** at Helen and Neil's house.

**Britain Yearly Meeting 2024** is at Friends House in London and online, **July 26-30**. More info at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym)

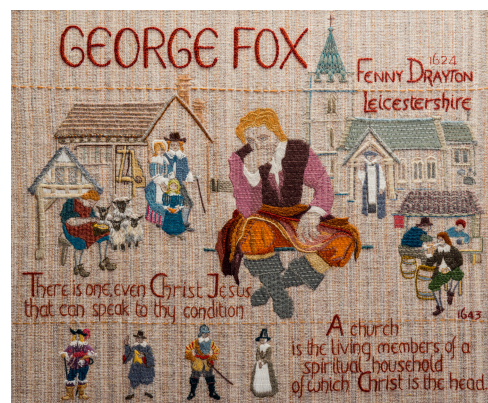
**Swarthmore lecture 2024**, Ben Jarman: *Getting What We Deserve? Imprisonment and the Challenge of Doing*. 7pm on **Sat 27 July**. Live online at [www.youtube.com/@WoodbrookeOrgUk](http://www.youtube.com/@WoodbrookeOrgUk)

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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** – changed times during summer: **Sun 14 July** at 12.30. *River East, River West* by Aube Rey Lescure. **Sun 15 Sep** *Drive the plow over the bones of the dead* by Olga Tokarczuk



George Fox is 400. See back page.



Foxgloves at Kendal Meeting House (Tapestry within).

## Get to Know: Richard Vass

Richard was born and brought up in Hounslow (near Heathrow); his father came from Essex and his mother is a Londoner. He is an only child and has no cousins, but despite this (or maybe because of it?!) he had a happy childhood. School was a good experience; he had a small group of friends and was successful academically. He is one of those rare individuals who actually enjoyed exams and did well in them. He is still in touch with some of his pals from that time.

When he left home to go to university in Birmingham, he discovered that he actually prefers not to live in London; it is too big for his liking, and also too expensive. He embarked on a course in nuclear engineering but found that this was not for him. After a year out he registered for a degree in computer games Technology, which was much better, and gave him a good ground in programming. A difficult interlude with his health slowed down his progress, but he persevered. He made some good friends in Birmingham, with whom he is still in touch.



By this time he had met Alex; although it was not quite love at first sight, both would say they had a dawning recognition that they should be together. After graduation, he moved to Preston, where Alex was studying. They had intended to stay for 1 year but the pandemic intervened. During most of this period, he worked for a call centre dealing with queries about student loans. Strangely, the staff were designated as key workers, and were told they had to report to work as usual; he and one other colleague queried this and were laid off for a couple of weeks before management saw the light and home working was made possible.

When the pandemic ended, he and Alex moved to Edinburgh, where Alex had friends. They were looking for somewhere smaller than Birmingham and larger than Preston, and Edinburgh fitted the bill perfectly as the climate works for them. They live in a quiet little nook in Gilmerton, right on the edge of the city, with a strong mining history and sense of community. Richard continued to work for the call centre for a few months, before becoming Alex's full-time carer. He does not have great health himself; this works well for both of them.

Alex led him to the Quakers, and he attended the Meeting in Preston a couple of times before lockdown. Once they were settled in Edinburgh, they were both keen to engage with the S. Edinburgh Meeting. Richard was brought up 'vaguely' (his word!) in the Church of England and was a server as a teenager, but he recognises that he is not keen on organised religion, liking the peace, inclusivity and liberal values of the Quakers. Richard and Alex had a Quaker wedding last October at Central Edinburgh Meeting House, which was a lovely and memorable event, despite the truly atrocious weather.

His hobbies revolve around video games which he plays with his friends online, including role playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. He also dabbles in making confectionery for special occasions. Cooking for special meals is another joy; he observes that he is not exactly passionate about the culinary arts, but he does like making a real effort from time to time, stepping outside the box of the everyday cuisine; he is head cook at home.

Richard was worried we would not find enough to fill a page, but that was not an issue. He is a quiet, unassuming person, who does not seek the limelight. The world needs more people like him: genuine, placid, kind and peace loving.

*Richard spoke to Alison Chalmers*

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## Discovering Quakers

**Discovering Quakers** is a high-quality outreach initiative that was apparently originally funded by BYM, but does not appear to have an ongoing direct link. Its new-to-Quakers information seems more lively and active than the 'Discover Quakers' links on BYM's home page. It is run as a new charity by a group of Friends who seem to be mostly from the North of England. [www.discoveringquakers.org.uk](http://www.discoveringquakers.org.uk)

We have added a link on our South Edinburgh webpage, plus the option to '**Get Quaker inspiration in your inbox**' by signing up to their newsletter at <https://bit.ly/4eb0xJV> - "keep informed with Quaker insights, news and event information".

## Get to Know: Jo Swanson

Jo is pretty much a 'birth right Quaker', courtesy of her maternal grandfather who was an active Quaker and conscientious objector during the second world war. At the start of the war Jo's grandparents were sent by Friends House to work with 'unbilletable' child evacuees fleeing the Liverpool blitz; originally running a hostel near Clitheroe, this developed into a Quaker boarding school run on therapeutic and progressive lines for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, where her grandfather was headmaster. (This was Chaigeley School, Warrington – it was the first residential school for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties to be approved under the Education Act of 1944, and continues to be run on Quaker principles). Her mother was brought up in this environment when she was very young and Jo's grandparents were very important figures in her childhood. Her mother, aged 85, is an active member of the St Andrews Meeting. Jo was involved in several Meetings as she grew up and her family moved around: Dundee, Glasgow and St Andrews. She really valued the grounding and support they gave her. These were the years of apartheid and the political struggle in S. Africa; she was interested in and motivated by the many speakers she met through the Quakers. She was co-clerk of JYM in the year she went to university.



When she moved to Edinburgh to study English Language and Literature, she attended the Meeting at Central Edinburgh, and continued to go intermittently in her young adult years as she began work. The move to Edinburgh was the start of her love affair with the city, and she has never left. She loves hill-walking, which she does with her husband, James; they met through friends shortly after she had graduated. After several years together as a couple, they had a Quaker wedding in St Andrews in 2001; James is not interested in religion but has always been very supportive of her involvement with the Quakers. Their children are also grounded in Quakerism; Veronica (recently graduated from St Andrews) has been linked in with the Meeting there and feels reassured to have Quakers in her background. Many will know Teddy, who during his primary school years attended South Edinburgh. He is now very committed to Scouts and is in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Boroughmuir.

Having moved 9 years ago to Greenbank, Jo feels very at home in the South Edinburgh meeting which is similar in size to the meetings in St Andrew's and Dundee. She loves being an Elder but always feels she would love to do more, if only she could; one day she will have more time!

For now, family at home and beyond need her and she would not have it any other way. Work-wise, she is fully committed to an interesting and demanding job, currently a civil servant and a member of the divisional management team focussing on quality and improvement in the NHS. This is a return to an area she worked in before, during a varied and fulfilling career. She started off hoping to work in museums/galleries, but this was in the early 1990s when such jobs were in very short supply; she moved from a job at the National Library of Scotland into a small publishing firm for 3 years, then into housing and eventually the civil service, with her experience in communications coming into play. She had a spell in Emergency Planning, which she found fascinating; she researched the Ready Scotland website <https://ready.scot> which emphasizes the need to be prepared for emergencies which can and will happen; it is not helpful to be in denial, or adopt a fatalistic attitude. Involvement in this meant working with the emergency services and army, which was interesting and enjoyable. From this she moved into person-centred care and how to reconfigure the health service to focus on people. Covid hit just as progress was being made, and she was moved to the Health Protection Division, focussed on preventative work (not Covid), which was intense and exhausting. All of the population screening programs paused for three months, and after the lock downs they had to work out how to restart them....

During this crazy time, when it felt as if she was working 24/7, she came to appreciate the haven that was online Meeting for Worship; in addition to that hour of stillness, the 30 minutes of chat afterwards was precious; she relished contact with folk who had a totally different experience and out look on what was happening. She feels that this time did a lot to strengthen relationships and our community in South Edinburgh Meeting.

Now she is back in quality and improvement, working on policy to do with person-centred care and managing long-term conditions. It is less fraught than it was during the pandemic but still demanding; she and James have both lost a parent over recent months, Veronica is finding her feet as an independent adult, and Teddy is in his teens. Good that James recently bought an inflatable canoe which they took to Loch Awe a few weeks ago and had a wonderful time.

She is looking forward to at least partial retirement in around 5 years' time!

*Jo spoke to Esther Shreeve*

## News and future events

**Open Gardens, Comiston** Esther and Chris are amongst four sets of neighbours offering Open Gardens on **Sun 7 July**, 2-5 pm. Start at 7 Pentland Gardens EH10 6NP: £7 adults, children free, for Marie Curie and Scotland's Gardens Scheme.

**Where the olive trees weep** – a documentary following a 2022 journey to the West Bank, and a window into the struggles of Palestinians under occupation. Organised by Peace and Justice with Edinburgh Action for Palestine. **Mon 15 July**, Augustine United Church (George IV Bridge). Refreshments 6 pm, followed by the film. Book at <https://bit.ly/4cLkSDQ>

**Wiston weekend 2024** is **Fri 13 – Sun 15 Sep**. Further details <https://bit.ly/wiston24>

**Turning the tide on fossil fuels** – Janet Saunders from Edinburgh Central describes how she got involved in the campaign to stop the East African oil pipeline. <https://bit.ly/4ayi23C> (from 'Quake').

**Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House during the Festival** will be taken over by C-Arts as a venue throughout August. It will remain available for Meeting on Wednesdays and Sundays.

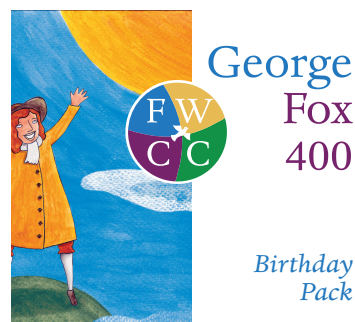
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## Notes from Meeting for Business on Sunday 2 June 2024

Minutes have been circulated by email. We

- Agreed to hold hybrid meetings (Zoom and in person) every Sunday.
- Deferred a decision on whether to meet more frequently with shorter agendas.
- Recorded the deaths of Ron and Mary Halliday.
- Agreed to join Discovering Quakers (p 2).
- Considered the physical capacity of the Open Door.
- Held the first of two discussions on the 'Community Questionnaire' from the Quakers in Scotland project.

## Happy Birthday George Fox



George Fox was born in July 1624. There is more about his life and various celebrations at [www.quaker.org.uk/george-fox-400](http://www.quaker.org.uk/george-fox-400) and an impressive list of international and UK events from FWCC at <https://fwcc.world/event/fox>

## Internets

**Secretly missing formal church music?** You are not alone. For a high quality fix try BBC Radio 3's Sunday Choral Evensong. June 30 featured a particularly beautiful performance from St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00209tn> (available only till 24 July).

**Obscure interest of the month** and good news for those with their eyes on the ground:



There are subreddits on **Manhole Covers**. With particularly spectacular examples from Japan. [www.reddit.com/r/manholecovers](http://www.reddit.com/r/manholecovers)  
The Wikipedia page on manhole covers averages 140 visits per day.

*Our newsletter is published near the last Sunday of each month. August August via [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)*