



FRIENDS of JOHN MUIR'S BIRTHPLACE

Newsletter No. 28, June 2014

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Upcoming: Annual Sand Sculpture Competition, 19th July

Forthcoming Events

- 19 July 2014: Annual Sand Sculpture Competition
- 27 July 2014: 20th Anniversary of the foundation of DJMA
- 29 September 2014: 20th Anniversary of the public launch of DJMA
- 10 October 2014 to 7 January 2015: Friends' Exhibition
- 24 December 2014: 100th Anniversary of Muir's death

As mentioned in the last newsletter FoJMB will also celebrate its 20th anniversary this year and it has been a highly eventful two decades and much has been achieved. These achievements will be celebrated in an exhibition that will have an extended run from Friday 10th October until early January 2015.

Annual Sand Sculpture Competition Saturday, 19th July, 10:00 to 12:00, East Beach



Following on from very successful competitions in the past, we plan to do the same again! Get out your buckets and spades and put your thinking caps on! The Sand Sculpture Competition will take place this year on Saturday 19th July from 10am – 12noon at the East Beach, Dunbar. Come along and make a sea creature ... a mermaid ... a boat ... historic landmark etc. Let your imagination run wild!

'Community' judging and award of prizes will take place at noon. There will be adult, child and family/group categories and prizes will be awarded for the best sculpture in each category. Entry will be £2 per adult, £1 per child and £5 per family. We trust that summer will truly have arrived by July, but if the weather is poor on the day, please phone John Muir's Birthplace - 01368 865899 – at or just after 10am to find out if the event has been postponed

John Muir Festival - Update



Many thousands attended the key John Muir Festival events at Falkirk, Dunbar and Loch Lomond and the many smaller programmed events at the ten hotspots along the John Muir Way.

With more than 70 other events taking place in association with the Festival there was something for everyone and many articles appeared in the local, national and international press and, of course, online. The official John Muir Festival website¹ has captured the highlights of many of these events and so readers are encouraged visit that resource as space in this newsletter is limited and couldn't possibly do justice to the many wonderful words and images that have been produced in response to the Festival.

Official Opening of the John Muir Way - Update



The new John Muir Way links Dunbar and Helensburgh on the Firth of Clyde “*sparkling awareness of the local landscapes and wild places along the route*”. The route was developed by Scottish Natural Heritage² with support from a range of partners in the Central Scotland Green Network, including East Lothian Council.

Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond, visited Dunbar on April 21st – Muir's birth date – to officially open the John Muir Way. Again, space in this newsletter is limited and couldn't possibly do justice to the many articles and images that have been produced to mark the opening of the John Muir Way.

¹ <http://johnmuirfestival.com/#whats-on>

² www.snh.gov.uk/johnmuir

However, here are some of the images captured by members of Friends and that record some of the highlights of the day.

The First Minister visited the John Muir Birthplace Museum³ after the ‘unveiling’ of the John Muir Way signpost [others present at this ceremony were the Provost of East Lothian, Ludovic Broun-Lindsay and Muir performers Mischief La-Bas⁴].



Shopkeepers, and others, on Dunbar’s High Street entered into the spirit of the occasion by dressing up in Victorian custom. The photograph (above, left) shows Friends Will Collin and Ross Combe suitably attired.

A special section of the Friends of John Muir’s Birthplace website⁵ will be established over the summer and more articles and more photographs from the opening of the John Muir Way will be published there. Details will be given in the next newsletter.

³ <http://www.jmbt.org.uk>

⁴ <http://www.mischiefabas.co.uk>

⁵ <http://muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk>

John Muir at Makars' Court

On Tuesday 29th April 2014 John Muir, became the thirty-eighth Scot to be commemorated at Makars' Court with the unveiling of an inscribed flagstone.



The flagstone, which has been sponsored by the John Muir Birthplace Trust, bears the inscription:

John Muir (1838 –1914)

*I care to live only to entice people to
look at Nature's loveliness.*

This newest addition to the growing literary monument was unveiled at this special ceremony in the capital by the Provost of East Lothian, Ludovic Broun-Lindsay, at the invitation of Councillor Richard Lewis, the city's Culture & Sport Convener and three pupils from Dunbar Primary School – Cara Maxwell, P4B, Olivia Campbell, P5B, and Emily Hotchkiss, P6.

[Reports from the Cara, Olivia and Emily appear later in the newsletter [p12]. A member of Friends, Lesley-May Miller, has also provided the following report on the event. Ed.]

The Makars' Court is outside the Writers' Museum between the Lawnmarket and the Mound.

Carved in the paving are quotations from celebrated Scottish Writers. This ongoing project was started in 1997 when the first stone, dedicated to the fourteenth century poet John Barbour, was unveiled. In 1998 the next eleven stones, representing Scotland's main literary languages, were unveiled by the poet Iain Crichton Smith.

A John Muir quotation is now carved on one of the flagstones in recognition of his reputation as a writer as well as his other qualities.

A group of 'Friends' were delighted to attend the unveiling of the John Muir stone at the invitation of Councillor Richard Lewis, convener of the Culture and Sport committee. He welcomed everyone gathered outside the Writers'

Museum and said how pleased he was to have the words of John Muir carved in the paving.

John Thomas, the chairman of the Birthplace Trust, read Theodore Roosevelt's appreciation of John Muir given a few weeks after his death.

Will Collin read us some of Muir's words from several sources including a letter to Mrs Jeanne Carr sent from Yosemite in 1874 in which he wrote the words chosen to be carved on the stone.

He then read a few well-chosen lines from 'The American Forests', the final chapter of 'Our National Parks' published in 1901. Finally, a piece from Muir's 'Mountain Thoughts', written in his 1870s journals, and headed 'The Sierra'. All these are full of inspiring words about the sounds and sights Muir loved: *"the trees wave and the flowers bloom in our bodies, as well as our souls, and every bird song, wind song, and tremendous storm song of the rocks in the heart of the mountains is our song..."*

The important moment of the unveiling was carried out by the Provost of East Lothian, Ludovic Broun-Lindsay, with the able assistance of three Dunbar Primary School girls. There was a barrage of press cameras. The girls were asked many times to re-enact the unveiling which did not worry them at all. They were very patient and I am sure the resulting photos were great.

We were then invited to walk a little way down the Royal Mile to the City Chambers where we were given refreshments in the Mandela Room and entertained to a John Muir reading by Stuart Mitchell.

Stuart is an actor who is expert in creating different accents and dialects and developed a voice for John Muir when I was fortunate to meet him through mutual friends. I was looking for a suitable voice to portray John Muir in my soundscape "Called to Wander". This, as you all know, has been playing in the Birthplace gallery.

At the finish of the event we made our way back to Dunbar in the 'Friends' hired bus, having been well entertained in a day full of interest and pleasure.

Nature's Beloved Son

“In the yard of the Muir family’s home on High Street in Dunbar, Scotland, stood three elm trees and a long, narrow, high-walled garden banked with flowers and boxwood hedges. According to their son John, Daniel and Ann Gilrye Muir made the garden “as much like Eden as possible”. Daniel delighted in flowers as a joyful measure of God’s work, and the garden was a source of family pride. For John it was a place that was sacred and priceless, and it was in the family garden that he first discovered botany...” So begins the narrative of Bonnie J Gisel’s 2008 book **‘Nature’s Beloved Son’**.

Subtitled **‘Rediscovering John Muir’s Botanical Legacy’**, it was a labour of love which took five years research as Gisel, the curator of the Sierra Club’s LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite Valley, tracked down Muir’s plant specimens scattered in herbaria across the USA. *“As I searched, I would find these amazing artifacts, like little envelopes with John Muir’s handwriting,”* Gisel reported. *“One of the most thrilling was a little leather wallet that Muir’s mother had brought to America, from Scotland. There were these tiny seedlings inside, which had probably not been seen in well over a hundred years. It was an amazing moment, realizing that his mother brought those seeds because she valued the place she was coming from and felt hopeful about the place she was going to.”*

Many of the plants Gisel uncovered were in a poor state, broken, crumbling and faded but photographer Stephen Joseph from Pleasant Hill, California, a little over six miles from the Muir home in Martinez, used high tech digital scanners and editing to capture the images and return them to the colours that Muir would have experienced 150 years ago.

Such was the success of Gisel and Joseph’s book that it spawned a touring exhibition which first opened in January 2011 in Walnut Creek, California, itself only 11 miles from Martinez, has been touring the US from Oregon in the northeast to Georgia in the southwest. To our knowledge, its visit to Dunbar will be its first time outside North America, brought over by a cooperative venture involving East Lothian Museum Service and Edinburgh’s Royal Botanic Garden.



It will offer a unique opportunity to see John Muir's American botanical collection displayed for the first time in Dunbar; the town that inspired his love of nature. It brings together prints of Muir's plant specimens, drawings and journal notes with herbarium specimens from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh including one collected by John Muir himself. The exhibition will include activities for families, project work from local schools and living plant displays.

Each print celebrates the fascinating structures, patterns, and anatomies of the plant world through the eyes and words of John Muir and is accompanied by a quote that expresses Muir's spiritual love and wonderment for the natural world. On encountering a rare orchid he writes *"I never before saw a plant so full of life, so perfectly spiritual, it seemed pure enough for the throne of its Creator. I felt as if I were in the presence of superior beings who loved me and beckoned me to come. I sat down beside them and wept for joy. Could angels in their better land show us a more beautiful plant? How good is our Heavenly Father in granting us such friends as are these plant creatures, filling us wherever we go with pleasure so deep, so pure, so endless."*



East Lothian schools that undertook the John Muir Award will showcase their project work and explore the relevance of Muir's legacy today. Muir wrote *"When I was a boy in Scotland I was fond of everything that was wild ... I loved to wander in the fields to hear the birds sing, and along the shore to gaze and wonder at the shells and the seaweeds, eels and crabs in the pools when the tide was low; and best of all to watch the waves in awful storms thundering on the black headlands and craggy ruins of old Dunbar Castle."*

Nature's Beloved Son: Rediscovering John Muir's Botanical Legacy will run jointly in

Dunbar's Town House and John Muir's Birthplace from Saturday 28 June to Tuesday 30 September before moving to Edinburgh.

Dunbar Primary School 'Tapestry/Collage'

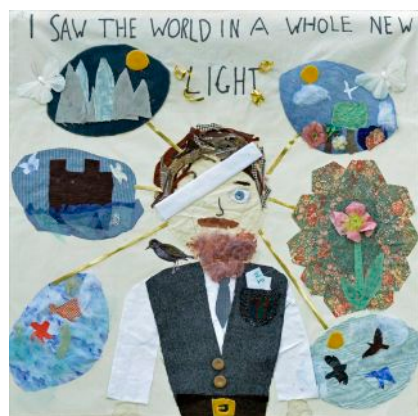
As reported in our last newsletter, in March all 34 classes in Dunbar Primary School and Nursery School were given a page of John Muir's life to tell. All duly delivered their 1 metre square collages before the end of last school term. The collection was on display in Our Lady of the Waves church hall on 21st April, the first time anyone had seen the panels laid out in chronological order.

Hundreds paid a visit and all left impressed by the standard of work, the imagination and range of approaches used and the sheer exuberance of colour and ideas. Word of mouth advertising meant that the steady trickle of visitors when the exhibition opened at 10 am had reached a constant flow by midday. So it continued until the doors closed some time after the scheduled 3 pm. Such was the effect made by the primary pupils work on those staffing the nearby John Muir Trust stall that they arranged for seven of the panels to be on display in Dunbar Parish Church while the Trust's AGM was held there on 2-3 May. Since then the collection has been exhibited during the School Fair on 31 May and during Civic Week.



The 'pages' have been photographed by Rob McDougall⁶ - four of which appear here - and plans are now underway to produce a book of the 35 panels (34 class panels plus the title one) if funding can

be put together. Friends' council agreed at its last meeting to pledge £500 towards the cost and further sponsors will be sought. Credit is due to all involved but particularly to primary parent Eden Blair and her small team who



had the vision to see the potential, and the drive, enthusiasm and persuasive skills necessary to turn a great idea into a wonderful reality.

⁶ www.RobMcDougall.com

STOP PRESS: All 34 DPS panels will be on display in Dunbar Parish Church over the school holidays. However, the availability to the public will depend on volunteers being prepared to be there at set times which would be advertised locally - the more volunteers, the more openings. Folk are needed to simply be there, probably between 2 and 4 pm. Have you a couple of hours to spare once, occasionally or weekly from beginning of July to late August to supervise? Please contact Will Collin on (01368) 863162 if so.

John Muir and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry project will create an enduring tribute to the Scottish Diaspora and will continue to be displayed long after 2014 Year of Homecoming, both at home and abroad. As it is designed in sections, it will also be flexible, and can be separated for display in different locations simultaneously. Eventually the aim is for Diaspora Tapestry to join the Battle of Prestonpans Tapestry at a purpose-built venue in Prestonpans. Until then it will tour the UK and the countries that helped in its creation. It will continue to educate audiences and promote Scottish heritage for many years to come.



The legacy of John Muir is such that he is the subject of no fewer than FOUR panels on the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry. The panels show the major phases in Muir's life: the panel showing his boyhood in East Lothian was stitched in Dunbar itself; that showing his time in Wisconsin was stitched in Marquette County where he stayed on moving to the US; and the panels of his time in the Sierra Nevada and California were stitched in

Palm Springs and Santa Rosa. [See **John Muir returns to Dunbar**⁷ Ed.]

⁷ [<http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/announcements/john-muir-returns-to-dunbar>

These four panels were on display in the Birthplace museum from 11th April-14th May to coincide with lead up the John Muir Festival. Saturday, 31st May saw the curtain raised⁸ on all embroidered panels at the official launch of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry exhibition. There will also be a series of major exhibitions featuring the whole Tapestry, details of which will be featured on the <http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/exhibitions> web page.

New promotional film for John Muir Award

When the John Muir Trust's Rob Bushby (right), the John Muir Award manager decided that the time was right for a short film which looks at John Muir's legacy and what his values mean to young people today, he turned to East Lothian photographer and film maker Rob McDougall (left). After all, Rob McDougall had attended John Muir's school, become a teacher, spent time in Yosemite Valley and even climbed Half Dome. And who better to tell the story than young folk themselves – from schools such as Dalry, Currie and of course Dunbar Grammar.



Again 10-year-old Matthew Pearson stood in as the young John Muir and the end result is the '**John Muir – Back to the Future**' film now available online⁹. [Matthew's mother tells us that he'll only eat dry bread and drink tea without milk when he's in John Muir mode but snaps out of it when he smells pizza.]

⁸ <http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/announcements/curtains-up>

⁹ <http://vimeo.com/95260067>

Dunbar Primary School's 'A Most Unusual Boy'

Further to the report in the last newsletter about Fraser Stewart's short film on the trip back in time by primary pupils Nancy Bird and Kit Savage, the film is now on YouTube¹⁰ for those of you with internet access and you will not be disappointed with two John Muirs for the price of one. The elder is played by Friends honorary member and former President Dan Cairney. The boyhood Muir is again Matthew Pearson who also appeared in our April newsletter's report on a Scottish Seabird Centre photo shoot.

John Muir at Makars' Court: Dunbar Primary School Pupils' Report

Cara Maxwell, DPS primary 4B

The day out in Edinburgh when unveiling the John Muir flagstone made me feel honoured to have a kind of connection to John Muir through writing and I hope to do something like it again. By going on the day out I feel inspired by John Muir and his writing. I hope I can learn how to write about nature the way he did.

Olivia Campbell, DPS primary 5B

When I was at Makars' Court and the Mandela Room I enjoyed first of all the photo shoot. I enjoyed first of all the photo shoot because it was an experience to remember and I got to have my five seconds of fame. Second of all I enjoyed going to the Writers' Museum. It had lots of information and artifacts that I thought were very interesting. Last of all I enjoyed going to the Mandela Room for some light refreshments. I liked this because I enjoyed chatting with Emily Hotchkiss and we both had a ball!

Emily Hotchkiss, DPS p6

I really enjoyed seeing the John Muir Stone unveiled in Edinburgh. It's good to see something to remember John Muir by. When we went to Edinburgh City Chambers I enjoyed meeting the provost of East Lothian and it was nice to talk to him. The food was very tasty, I loved the tea and the sandwiches were delicious.

¹⁰ www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqFfvZhbqzw&feature=youtu.be

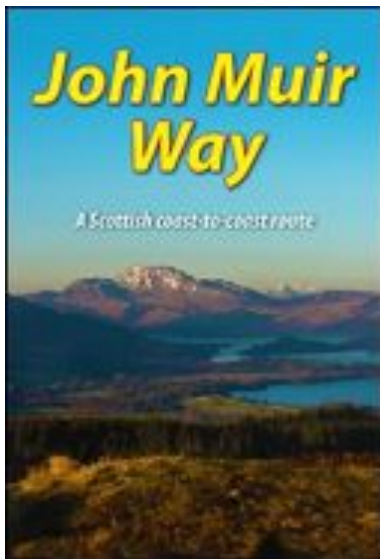
John Muir Way article for San Francisco paper

Travel writer John Finn came to Dunbar on 9 May on a special assignment for the San Francisco Chronicle, an article on Dunbar and the new John Muir Way. Accompanied by Keith Geddes, chairman of the Central Scotland Green Network Trust and the driving force behind the new Way, Finn was met at Dunbar station by Friends John Thomas and Will Collin. There followed a walk round John Muir's Dunbar and a lengthy visit to the Birthplace before John led the visitors along the first part of the Way to East Linton.

John Muir Way by Rucksack Readers

Rucksack Readers are the publishers of a recently launched John Muir Way guidebook¹¹. The guidebook contains:

- background on John Muir's life, the canal heritage and wildlife
- summary of each section showing distance, terrain and food/drink stops
- details of visitor attractions and side-trips
- planning information for travel by car, train, bus or plane
- drop-down map of the John Muir Way in six panels (1:115,000)
- in full colour, with over 90 photographs
- further route options and unofficial improvements



Copies of the guidebook are available in the Birthplace Museum and, as usual, Friends can claim a 10% discount on their purchases from the shop. Anyone that is unable to visit the shop in person might like to know that Rucksack Readers are offering a 10% discount on the guidebook when ordered online from them. To claim the discount use the discount code RR2014 at step 2 of the order form. It is expected that the discount will remain on offer until at least the end of July 2014. Please note that discount is off the guidebook only (normally £11.99) as the bundle of book+ a large map is already discounted by £2.

The guidebook is attracting some good reviews already and these are online at <http://www.rucsacs.com/reviews/John-Muir-Way/>

¹¹ <http://www.rucsacs.com/books/John-Muir-Way/>

Ross Erwin Hanna [1922 – 2014]

Grandson of John Muir remembered for kindness, generosity



Ross Erwin Hanna (“Pops”) passed peacefully on Tuesday, June 10, 2014 after 91 years of life well lived. He was surrounded by his wife, all of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He will be remembered as a loving husband, family man, band leader and friend to all. Ross was born in San Francisco, CA, on October 20, 1922 as the youngest of six children to Tom and Wanda Hanna. He grew up in the Alhambra Valley with his four brothers and sister.

He spent his childhood roaming the hills around his home and enjoyed spending summers in the Sierras. His love of the outdoors was a legacy from his grandfather, naturalist John Muir.

Throughout his life, Mr. Hanna kept in touch with family and helped sustain the legacy of his grandfather by joining the John Muir Association board of directors during the 1990s. In 2005 he and a brother were among several of Muir's descendants from California and Nevada honored at a celebration of a newly minted quarter in Muir's honor at the University of Pacific in Stockton. He said at the time that his grandfather would have enjoyed knowing the quarter design is likely to "help continue (Muir's) message about the environment and make people think."

During his 1999 trip to Yosemite, Mr. Hanna said he never flaunted his famous roots but understood and appreciated his grandfather's work that remains an inspiration to millions. "I grew up knowing who he was and knowing kind of what his ideals were, but growing up with it, I didn't think that much of it," he told the Reporter. "The fact he was gone a lot, the whole family understood why; they realized that he had important things to do despite that a lot of people around Martinez didn't really understand what he was doing. ... Indirectly, there were a lot of his ideas and his ethics which came through my mother and my father who knew him quite well and admired him."

[The above is an extract from a full obituary that appeared in The Reporter¹². Friends of John Muir's Birthplace send their deepest sympathy to the Hanna family. Ed.]

¹² http://www.thereporter.com/news/ci_25954800/dixon-mourns-loss-beloved-resident-ross-erwin-hanna

John Muir DVD for American schools

Retired surgeon Dr Bruce C Paton of Denver, Colorado, visited the Birthplace on 4 April to tour the exhibition and film background material on John Muir's boyhood for a DVD being produced by Fulcrum Publishing for use in American schools. Dr Paton is a graduate of Edinburgh University but has spent the last 50 of his 88 years in the US. A retired head of Cardiac Surgery at the University of Colorado, Dr Paton has hiked and climbed in the American West, Europe and Nepal and, during his time as a doctor in Kenya, twice climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. He is a fellow of the International League of Conservation Writers and has written two books about the history of North American exploration, '*Lewis and Clark: Doctors in the Wilderness*' and '*Adventuring with Boldness*'.

Membership News

Online Delivery of Newsletters

Following last year's e-mailed 'mailshot' to all members that had supplied their e-mail address, a significant number of Friends have opted out of receiving paper copies of the Newsletter and now read the online version¹³ instead. This is a significant saving since the production and delivery cost of the Newsletter is now a substantial proportion of the membership subscription – especially as the cost of Royal Mail delivery was increased recently. If you still receive paper copies of the newsletter and would like to opt out of receiving paper copies in the future then please do let us know.

FRIENDS CONTACTS

Official address: Friends of John Muir's Birthplace, John Muir's Birthplace, 126 High Street, Dunbar EH42 1JJ: tel: 01368 865899

Friends Email: info@muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk

Friends Website: www.muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk

¹³ <http://muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk/newsletters/current/>