



# FRIENDS of JOHN MUIR'S BIRTHPLACE

Newsletter No. 16, April 2011

Dear Friends,

We are fast approaching the 173<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the great man's birth and events to look forward to include an exhibition in the Gibb room at the library here in Dunbar on John Muir – The Writer. The exhibition will feature the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *'My First Summer in the Sierra'*. Starting on 21<sup>st</sup> April.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dunbar's twinning with Martinez - Muir's home in California and where he and his wife are buried - is on 18<sup>th</sup> April and an exhibition consisting of photographs by Stephen Boyle and Martinez-Dunbar memorabilia courtesy of Friends, Dunbar and District History Society and the Martinez History Society will start on 16<sup>th</sup> April in the Birthplace. Fuller details of these events and others are included in this newsletter. I hope as many of you as possible will be able to support these events.

Yours Aye,  
*Jim Thompson*

## Dunbar & Martinez Celebrate 30th Anniversary

Dunbar-Martinez is East Lothian's third oldest twinning link, dating from 1981 – but the connection between the 'sister cities', to use the American terminology, goes back another hundred years. Needless to say the association is due to Dunbar's most famous son, John Muir.

After Muir's family emigrated to the USA in 1849, his mother and older sisters kept in touch by letter with relatives and friends back in Dunbar. Following his visit to Scotland in 1893, he also corresponded with a number of Dunbar folk but his death in 1914 brought an end to the last of these links. Through time Muir was virtually forgotten in Scotland, even here in Dunbar.

In the 1960s, a visit from Muir bibliographers Bill and Maymie Kimes led to a plaque being placed on the wall of his birthplace at 126 High Street. Then in the 1970s East Lothian's head of environment Frank Tindall visited California and discovered Muir for himself. On his return, he persuaded East Lothian District Council to take out a lease of the top floor of 126/8 High Street and, with the help of owner Daisy Hawryluk, a John Muir museum was created.

It was while a dialogue regarding the setting up of the museum was being conducted between East Lothian's council and the John Muir National Historic Site (JMNHS) in Martinez that a twinning link between Dunbar and Martinez was mooted. John Muir had married Louie Strentzel, daughter of a Martinez fruit farmer, in 1880 and from then until his death in 1914 the town was his home base. Fifty years later his house and part of the farm became the JMNHS. Dunbar's John Muir Museum was opened in 1981 and on 18 April of the same year Martinez mayor Eric Schaefer publicly proclaimed Martinez and Dunbar 'sister cities'.

Martinez, with a population of just over 35,000, is the county seat of Contra Costa County in northern California. It lies on the north of the San Francisco Bay Area, 30 miles from San Francisco. As befits a seat of county administration, one of the main sources of employment is local government. However, its major employer is a Royal Dutch Shell oil refinery. It is also a transport hub and retail centre. Among the leisure pursuits are sailing, golf, music and walking. The Martinez Bocce<sup>1</sup> Association, with over 1,500 registered players, is the largest in the USA.

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<sup>1</sup> Bocce is like petanque and a relation of bowls.

In the years since 1981, connections between the towns have been fairly tenuous, largely a trickle of personal visits, but recently there has been a considerable increase. In 2004 Dunbar Grammar School began its biennial visits to California, the most recent in June 2010, through which over 100 senior students and 20 adults have spent time in Martinez. In 2007 Friends and Birthplace staff member Pauline Smeed spent a month at the JMNHS in Martinez and this led to close links between a number of organisations in the two towns, particularly Friends and the John Muir Association in Martinez, and the History Societies in the two towns.

However, the Dunbar-Martinez twinning is a civic link, not simply a John Muir one. Connections are currently being made between the schools in Martinez and those in the Dunbar & East Linton area. The Rotary Clubs in the two towns are hoping to arrange an exchange in the near future and churches in Dunbar and Martinez are reaching across the 5,000 miles between the two communities, while correspondence is being exchanged between Dunbar Community Council and Martinez City Council. Partners in these and other links are aiming to exchange greetings on or around 21 April as are individuals who have made friends through the 30 year-old twinning link. Why don't you join in! For further information, etc, contact Will Collin on (01368) 863162 or [willnval@btinternet.com](mailto:willnval@btinternet.com)

Will Collin

## **Centenary of the publication of 'My First Summer in the Sierra'**

As preparations get underway to commemorate the centenary of the death of John Muir in 2014, this year brings another, happier occasion. It is 100 years since the publication of perhaps the most poetic of all Muir's books. *'My First Summer in the Sierra'* tells of his visit to the area around Yosemite Valley in charge of a flock of 1,500 sheep, and their shepherds, in 1869. Based on the journal he kept at the time but edited by Muir in 1910, it was first serialised in Boston's *'The Atlantic Monthly'* in early 1911 before being published later the same year by Houghton Mifflin Company. It has never been out of print since and this year sees yet another edition, lavishly illustrated with photographs by Scott Miller and Muir's drawings for the 1911 edition. [This is not available until April. We will try to obtain copies, so if you would like to order one please contact the Birthplace.]

In reality, Muir was sent into the Sierra to manage the shepherds and when all was going well he had ample time to explore the area. His text is a wonderful blend of accounts of the scenery, flora and fauna; Muir humour; and lyrical descriptions of the effects total immersion in the Sierra had on him. It is also the source of many of the most famous Muir quotes. Here is just part of the entry for 27 July: *“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. One fancies a heart like our own must be beating in every crystal and cell, and we feel like stopping to speak to the plants and animals as friendly fellow-mountaineers. Nature as a poet, an enthusiastic workingman, becomes more and more visible the farther and higher we go; for the mountains are fountains – beginning places, however related to sources beyond mortal ken.”*

An exhibition entitled ‘*John Muir – the Writer*’ will run in the Gibb Room at Dunbar library from 21 April to 11 May. Part of the focus will be on ‘*My First Summer ...*’.

N.B. At 7.30 pm on Wednesday 27 April, also in the Gibb Room, Friends’ secretary Susan Panton will lead a readers’ group who will look at ‘*My First Summer in the Sierra*’. It is aimed at both those who have read the book and those who are looking for an introduction. All are welcome, Friends or not. [To book a place contact the Birthplace.] The book can be bought at John Muir’s Birthplace at £6.99 (less 10% Friends discount), borrowed from Dunbar library or read online at [www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/) or [www.yosemite.ca.us/john\\_muir\\_writings/my\\_first\\_summer\\_in\\_the\\_sierra/](http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/my_first_summer_in_the_sierra/)

Will Collin

## Night Sky

As I walked by the Glebe the other night, on my way to a Friends meeting, I slowed down to look across the Forth to the lights on the sea, lining streets or from the May or the Bass. Then I looked up. It was a perishing cold night, the kind of cold you feel in every sinew of your being, including some you never knew existed, and the sky was clear, not a cloud there, but a scattering of stars right across the sky. I don’t know the Great Dipper from a Chicken Dipper but still I looked, just as I did when I was younger, and it was incredible. We are blessed here with wide skies but not for a long time had I appreciated it quite so wonderfully.

Kevin Addies

## John Muir's Birthplace Museum - News

Despite the winter weather staff at the Birthplace have been kept busy welcoming visitors, school groups and preparing the year's programme of events. Drop in activities continued throughout the February school holiday and are also planned for the Bank Holiday on May 21st to 25th.

### Summer Opening Hours

The Birthplace changes to summer opening hours from the 1st April, namely:

Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sunday 1pm to 5pm.

If you have children visiting over the Easter break, don't forget that there are always free drop-in activities available at the Birthplace at weekends and when the schools are on holiday.

### Friday Afternoon Children's Workshops

One of the highlights of our regular Friday afternoon childrens' workshops was a visit in January by Robert Burns (our own Will Collin suitably dressed for the occasion!) who gave a slide show and told his own children's version of the story of Tam O' Shanter. The children also enjoyed making the sound effects!



Workshop children take a trip to the harbour to see the kittiwakes...

The kittiwakes are back in Dunbar and so a visit to the castle and harbour has also been a popular item on our workshop programme.



...then back to the museum to 'make their own kittiwake'!

## Coast & Country

Miniature Paintings by Dunbar Art Club Members  
Saturday 12th March - Friday 15th April

Photo courtesy of Gordon Jenkinson



Our exhibition programme for the New Year is underway and many have already enjoyed Dunbar Art Club's lovely display of miniature paintings.

JMB Manager Jo Moulin and Dunbar Art Club's John Daeschler survey the exhibits after installation.

## John Muir Connections Celebrating Our Sister City 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Saturday 16th April – 29th May

'Coast & Country' will be followed by an exhibition marking the 30th anniversary of our twinning with Martinez, California. Local resident Steven Boyle, who was one of the first Rotary Club 'ambassadors' to visit Martinez in 1997, will display some of his own nature photographs, alongside a selection of historical photographs of both towns, produced by Dunbar and District History Society and Martinez Historical Society, commemorative objects, and messages from our sister city.



Commemorative objects include this throw presented by Martinez Historical Society and plaque presented by the Mayor and City Council of Martinez.

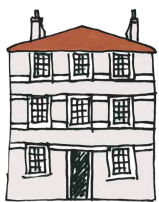


The historic photographs will include the Dunbar Town House (left) and, it is hoped, a photograph of the Martinez Historical Society Museum (above) as it would have looked at in the same era.

Other planned events include an Easter Egg trail in the Birthplace on Easter weekend and an afternoon's breakdancing workshop, as part of East Lothian Museums 'Going to the Dancing' event on 13th-15th May. Providing the Birthplace staff survive unscathed there will be more on this in the next newsletter!

Pauline Smeed

## News



**FRIENDS** of  
**JOHN MUIR'S**  
**BIRTHPLACE**

Friends' calendar and this year is no exception. Details of the forthcoming events that Friends are organising and/or supporting over the next month or so are given below.

## **Dunbar Conversations - *John Muir's Way of Thinking***

A longstanding member of Friends, Steve Tossell, is organising a series of events under the heading of *Dunbar Conversations*. The first of these 'conversations' will be titled *John Muir's Way of Thinking* and the panel and audience will discuss Muir's words and deeds with a view to gaining a deeper insight into the man. This event will take place on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 19:30 in the Gibb Room, Dunbar Library. Tickets (free) from Dunbar Library.

## **John Muir Birthday Dinner**

To celebrate the 173<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Muir's birth, Friends' Council have organised a Birthday Dinner in the Rocks restaurant for the evening of Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> April. Places are limited so if there are Friends that would like to join us then please contact the Birthplace to book your place.

## **Readers Group – *My First Summer in the Sierra***

As mentioned earlier in the newsletter, Friends' secretary Susan Panton will lead a readers' group who will look at '*My First Summer in the Sierra*' at 19.30 on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April in the Gibb Room, Dunbar Library.

## **Membership Renewal**

April is the month that most membership renewals fall due. Renewal forms are included with this newsletter for Friends who have taken out their membership on an annual basis and whose renewals are not automatically paid by standing order. Friends' Council hopes that the initiatives, events and publications that are produced to help promote Muir's life and work and that support John Muir's Birthplace have been of interest to the membership and that, as a result, members will renew their subscription.

## **Friends of John Muir's Birthplace on Facebook**

Facebook has become an important medium for community groups and charities like Friends to disseminate news and to organise and promote their events. Recently a Facebook page has been created to help raise the profile of Friends and to help promote Muir's life and work. A (shortened) link to the Facebook page is <http://www.tinyurl.com/fbfojmb>

This Facebook page is in its infancy and will be fleshed out over the course of the next few days and weeks and will be kept updated with news, events and links to other Muir-related web resources. Friends (of the Birthplace sort!) are encouraged to 'like' the page as a certain number of fans are required before a more memorable 'username' – e.g. <http://www.facebook.com/fojmb> - is enabled.



## **Muir News From Around the World (Wide Web)**

Now that Friends of John Muir's Birthplace have established a Facebook presence there are many other pages and groups dedicated to Muir that Friends can now link to and share news with. For instance, the following pages and groups and associated items of recent news may be of interest to Friends

### **John Muir Fans**

**<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6008104983>**

Description: This is a group for fans of John Muir (1838-1914), America's most famous and influential naturalist and conservationist. He is one of California's most important historical personalities. He has been called "The Father of our National Parks," "Wilderness Prophet," and "Citizen of the Universe." There are over 2,500 'members' of this group.

### **John Muir Association**

**<http://www.facebook.com/pages/John-Muir-Association/124570547602721>**

This is the Facebook page of the Martinez equivalent of Friends. Recent updates there include photographs of their 2010 JMA Conservation Award Night. This page also contains a link to the official JMA website at <http://www.johnmuirassociation.org/>

### **John Muir in the New World**

**<http://www.facebook.com/pages/John-Muir-in-the-New-World/197770020235708>**

This is the Facebook Page of an upcoming documentary on John Muir that will be broadcast on PBS on April 18. Over 7,500 people like this page.

### **John Muir**

**<http://www.facebook.com/pages/John-Muir/107777889245795>**

This is a page dedicated to John Muir. Over 4750 people 'like' this page.

### **Restore Hetch Hetchy**

**<http://www.facebook.com/RestoreHetchHetchy>**

The mission of Restore Hetch Hetchy (RHH) is to return the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park to its natural splendor — while continuing to meet the water and power needs of all communities that depend on the Tuolumne River. A link on this page worthy of mention is the The Third Annual Muir's March, an affair intended to raise support for draining the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, is scheduled for July. [<http://tinyurl.com/muirmarch>]

## In Memoriam

Friends were greatly saddened to hear the news of the passing of Daisy Hawryluk and Millie Stanley.

### **Florence Daisy Hawryluk, née Waller (22 January 1925 - 31 January 2011)**

Daisy Waller, born in Greenside, Edinburgh, first learned of John Muir from one of the teachers at her primary school. She later recalled, *“I was privileged to learn about Muir at London Street Primary School in 1935, where Miss Hannah Johnston, herself a native of Dunbar, told us about this great Scot who changed the world.”*

During the Second World War Daisy drove ambulances in and from Edinburgh and afterwards trained as a nurse at Herdmanflat Hospital in Haddington. She met Wasyl Hawryluk in 1948 and their marriage was blessed with four daughters – Hilda, Jacqueline, Stefany and Hannah. The family moved to Dunbar in 1970 and the Hawryluks ran a dry-cleaning business in the lower two storeys of 126/8 High Street until 1978 when they also acquired the top floor.

They had planned to turn the building into a fish restaurant but were persuaded by East Lothian planner Frank Tindall to change their minds. Instead, a photography shop was opened by Stefany on the ground floor, the middle floor became a lettable flat and the top floor housed the John Muir Birthplace Museum

Again Daisy tells the story. *“We stocked the house with Victorian furniture, utensils and crockery of Muir's time ... we even dragged a quarter-ton, iron cooking range up four flights of stairs with our bare hands! From 1981 to 1999 my daughter and I served as unpaid, unofficial guides, alongside East Lothian's seasonal staff, showing thousands of Americans, school parties and tourists around the birthplace museum, giving as much of the Muir story as we could.”*

In 1999 Stefany sold the building to the John Muir Birthplace Trust and the present John Muir's Birthplace was opened in August 2003. Daisy let it be known that she was violently opposed to the building being *“gutted like a haddock...It will never again be a house, a home, or John Muir's birthplace.”*

When Daisy retired from the Community Council in 2004, she was presented with its Community Service Award not only for her 19 years as a councillor but for the contribution she had made to the life of Dunbar. She continued to take a deep interest in local issues and was a good friend to many. Despite periods of ill health in recent years, Daisy remained a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Our deepest sympathy goes to all the family.

### **Mildred Irene 'Millie' Stanley, Wisconsin**

Muir scholar Millie Stanley died in Mortello, WI, on 14 February, aged 90. Millie was born June 16, 1920, in Chicago, Ill. She attended Stephens College in Columbia, Mo., and graduated from the University of Iowa. Millie moved to Wisconsin in 1962, and became active at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum as a tour guide. In the Portage area, she was president of the Columbia County Historical Society and was instrumental in establishing the Myrtle Lintner Spear Museum in Pardeeville. Millie lived in the Pardeeville area for 40 years, approximately one mile from the boyhood home of John Muir. She studied John Muir's life and early years in Pardeeville extensively and became an expert on his early life and her book *'The Heart of John Muir's World'*, first published in 1995, is a fascinating account of his youth, his family and friends and life among the early settlers in rural Wisconsin. The book had a second printing in 1996, and a special edition printing by a local John Muir historical preservation group in 2010.

### **FRIENDS CONTACTS**

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

**Friends Website: [www.muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk](http://www.muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk)**

**Birthplace Email: [info@jmbt.org.uk](mailto:info@jmbt.org.uk) Website: [www.jmbt.org.uk](http://www.jmbt.org.uk)**

Convener: Jim Thompson, Secretary: Susan Panton, Membership Sec: Duncan Smeed, Treasurer: Will Collin. All can be contacted through the Birthplace.