



FRIENDS of JOHN MUIR'S BIRTHPLACE

Newsletter No. 25, October 2013

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Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 23rd October, 7:00pm
John Muir's Birthplace Museum



Notice of Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday 23rd October 2013 at 6.45pm for 7.00pm
John Muir's Birthplace Museum, High Street, Dunbar**

Agenda

- (i) Report on year's activities
- (ii) Filling any vacancies on Council*
- (iii) Other competent business*

Non-members will be warmly welcomed

**Following the AGM there will be an illustrated talk by
John Thomas, trustee of the John Muir Trust and Chairman of
the John Muir Birthplace Trust about his**

Trip to Alaska

* Please note that nominations for Council accompanied with the nominee's agreement in writing and items for consideration under other competent business should be lodged with the Secretary, c/o John Muir's Birthplace Museum, 126 High Street, Dunbar, EH42 1JJ by Monday 21st October 2013. The existing members of Council would be very grateful if other Friends would consider serving on Council as 2014 is shaping up to be a very exciting year and the more of us there are the more we can do. Plans are also afoot for celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Friends in 2014.

Sand Sculpture Competition 2013



Our popular Friends of John Muir's Birthplace Sand Sculpture Competition took place this year on Saturday 10th August from 10:00 – 12:00 at the East Beach, Dunbar. Over 50 'sand sculptors' took part and produced more than a dozen sculptures in adult, child, and family/group categories. Here are some of the photographs of the event.





John Muir's Birthplace: The first ten years

John Muir's Birthplace in Dunbar celebrated its tenth anniversary on Friday 23 August. Following a morning meeting of the Birthplace Trust, the trustees crossed the High Street for a buffet lunch attended by around 40 invited guests. The Trust was established in 1998, when East Lothian Council, the national John Muir Trust, Dunbar Community Council agreed to work together to secure John Muir's birthplace at 126 High Street for the community and the public generally. This was achieved in 1999 and thereafter further fundraising enabled the exterior of the three-storey building to be returned to its 18th century appearance. The interior, dating only from the 1970s, was removed and a forward looking, custom-built interior installed to tell of the life and legacy of Dunbar's most famous son and arguably the most influential emigrant Scot.

After Trust chairman John Thomas welcomed those present, representatives of each of the four partner organisations were invited to say a few words. Friends of the Birthplace president Jim Thompson outlined the struggle in the early days to raise the funds to buy the building and the delays caused by some vociferous opposition to the architect's plans. He paid tribute to the sterling work of the staff led by manager Jo Moulin and made special mention of Susan Panton who tragically died, aged 49, in May 2012. Former Trust chairman and current trustee Liz McLean spoke particularly of the tremendous support provided by East Lothian Council and its Museum Service who are responsible for the day-to-day running of the Birthplace before asking ELC Cllr John McMillan for his comments. He said that the Birthplace is a great example of how different sections of the community can work together to achieve something as special as the Birthplace. The John Muir Trust was represented by their head of communication, Susan Wright, a recently appointed Birthplace trustee. She spoke of how John Muir's message on protecting the environment is the inspiration for conservationists in Scotland and elsewhere and how the JMT and the Birthplace support each other in spreading that message. Finally Community Council chairman Stephen Bunyan charted the progress within Dunbar and East Lothian from the 1970s when few had any knowledge of John Muir to the present where his importance is being increasingly recognised.

A slide presentation prepared by Duncan Smeed took the watchers through the highlights of Birthplace's ten years with visits by Prince Charles in 2009 and Prince Edward in 2008; Americans such as Sierra Club Presidents Alison Chin and Joe Fontaine; and Scottish politicians such as John Swinney, Michael Russell, Iain Gray, Patricia Ferguson and John Home Robertson.

However, there have been around 120,000 visitors over the last ten years, significantly around one third of these young people coming as school classes, part of youth groups, with parents or with friends. Of the adults, around 5,000 have made entries in the visitors book, of which there have been seven. They make fascinating reading, for 95% of the entries carry a comment. These range from a word or two – *“Inspiring”, “Challenging”, “Very informative”, “Impressive and eye-opening”, “What a man!”*, *“Words fail me.”* – to something longer – *“A truly remarkable man. What a story!”*, *“Excellent. A super tribute to a great man.”*, *“We feel as if we have travelled with him.”*

Birthday Greetings from the USA

From Harold Wood, webmaster of the Sierra Club's John Muir Exhibit

Janet and Harold Wood, a Friends life member, had been returning home from an extended holiday in the Mediterranean on 23 August. The following day he wrote, *“A great trip, but I missed the cool weather of Scotland...”* He continued, *“It is amazing to hear of the diversity of visitors to John Muir's birthplace. I think we are witnessing a major change where in the past we used to refer to John Muir as “America's greatest conservationist” and focused on how important he was to California especially, we now have to say that John Muir is “the world's most famous and influential naturalist and conservationist. Born in Scotland, he became one of California's most important historical personalities...” I just updated the ‘John Muir Fans’¹ page to use that new phrasing replacing “America” with “the world” and adding the reference to Scotland.”*

Harold also wrote, *“The Sierra Club is moving its grassroots network to a new site, so I have just started the proto-site for the John Muir Education Team at: <http://content.sierraclub.org/activistnetwork/teams/john-muir-education>*

You can now join the site there; eventually it will have interactive features like a blog, discussions, file uploads, etc.”

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/johnmuirfans/>

From Catherine Soria, former Principal of Yosemite Valley School

Catherine Soria, a former teacher at Yosemite Valley School who recently retired as its Principal, has led four groups from Yosemite on visits to Dunbar and Scotland. She wrote on 24 August, *“Happy Birthday to the Birthplace! ... I am sorry that our school could not have made it's fifth trip to Dunbar. We have been lucky enough to be in on the Muir Birthplace campaign from almost the beginning, I think. Each of our trips had its own special moments and I especially remember visiting the birthplace before it had been remodeled and then going into a neighbor's backyard to see his birds fly free and then come back to their cages. We then watched all the controversy about what the best plan would be for making the Muir house meaningful to the most people. I think we were there the first year the Birthplace opened and loved what we could find out about Muir from the exhibits and the warm feel of the place. It was obvious that the people who worked to establish the Muir Birthplace Museum loved and were dedicated to what they were doing and that feeling is communicated to all who enter the Birthplace. I wish for many more years of success in sharing Muir's legacy through the efforts of the Birthplace folks.”*

From the Wisconsin Friends of John Muir

At the end of 2012, following a suggestion by Harold Wood during his visit to Dunbar last September, Friends contacted the Wisconsin Friends of John Muir. the result has been a growing bond of friendship. Both their president Tiffany Lodholtz and vice-president Kathleen McGwin sent their best wishes. From Tiffany came, *“Please accept our heartfelt congratulations on your 10th Anniversary of the John Muir Birthplace. We have enjoyed our new relationship with you and look forward to it growing in the future.”* A fuller message from John Muir’s Wisconsin Friends arrived from Kathleen McGwin:

Our best wishes are sent to you on the 10th anniversary of the opening of John Muir’s Birthplace on August 23, 2013.

John Muir’s life, enthusiasm, and endless curiosity began in Dunbar where the landscape and the people provided fodder for his character and bright mind. His eagerness to learn and unbridled quest for invention and investigation continued in Marquette County, Wisconsin where neighbors and family supported and nurtured his unique talents and where the landscape buoyed his soul.

Dunbar, Scotland and Marquette County, Wisconsin are forever linked in the living legacy of John Muir, son of Dunbar, foster son of Marquette County, and father of a million ideas acted upon with bottomless passion and found today in each butterfly finding a home on the milkweed in an uncut prairie or in the petal of the orchid growing in the un-grazed bog.

From Marquette County, Wisconsin, we are elated to share with you in this great legacy and send congratulations on honoring him at his Birthplace in Dunbar.

The New John Muir Way

Plans to create a new long distance coast-to-coast walkway as the John Muir Way put Dunbar in the tourism spotlight. The existing John Muir Way was developed by East Lothian Council (ELC) as a walking route from Fisherrow in Musselburgh to Dunglass, on the border with Berwickshire, and has attracted many visitors to East Lothian. Following discussion with national partners including Scottish Natural Heritage, Central Scotland Green Network and the John Muir Trust and with the local John Muir Birthplace Trust, it has been agreed that ‘John Muir Way’ will become the title for a new route between Dunbar on the east coast and Helensburgh in the west.

The new John Muir Way is scheduled to open in Dunbar on 21 April 2014 and will incorporate a large part of the original John Muir Way. The section of the current John Muir Way between Dunbar and Dunglass will require to be re-named and ELC is currently discussing options for this section with a view to increasing the profile of Dunbar as a hub for long distance walkers.

Cllr Norman Hampshire, EL Cabinet member for Environment, commented: “The link between Dunbar and John Muir is an extremely important one for the local community and the John Muir Festival scheduled to take place [in April] as part of Homecoming Scotland 2014 provides a great opportunity for the international spotlight to fall on Dunbar as the town of Muir’s birth. Having the new west-east route named as the John Muir Way will strengthen the position of Dunbar as a visitor destination and provides a great opportunity for local businesses to provide services to visitors as they are welcomed to the town. The project will also build further on the community work of the Council’s Museums Service and the John Muir Birthplace Trust which offers information and activities at John Muir’s Birthplace in Dunbar High Street throughout the year.”

Walking the New John Muir Way



The new John Muir Way opens up great opportunities for Dunbar to capitalize on its position at the start (or the end) of the journey.

When walking long-distance trails like this, it makes sense to use public transport on at least one end of your journey, and so Sustaining Dunbar is working with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Friends of John

Muir's Birthplace to create an exciting display at Dunbar Railway Station to welcome all our new visitors.

This will take the form of a large information board on the platform, mostly readable from the train and advertising Dunbar as the place to stop to experience the great outdoors that originally inspired John Muir. We want to highlight all the great walks and cycle routes around here, as well as more local attractions such as the Birthplace, Town House Museum, parks, beaches, watersports, golf...

Dear experts, we're asking for your help in two ways. Firstly, of course we need a John Muir quote to set it all of. Can you think of an appropriate one that captures Muir's love of the outdoors and the benefits of experiencing it first hand? And secondly, please help us to ensure we don't miss out any of the great assets of Dunbar. Email morag@sustainingdunbar.org with your ideas on either point.

New John Muir Festival announced for April 2014

A new ten-day long festival, one of the highlights of the Homecoming Scotland 2014 celebrations, has recently been announced today to celebrate John Muir, Scots conservationist and founding father of national parks.

The John Muir Festival will take place between April 17 and 26, 2014, and includes the official opening of the new John Muir Way, a new route stretching between Dunbar – Muir's birthplace – and Helensburgh on Scotland's west coast.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), in partnership with CreativeScotland and Homecoming Scotland, are supporting the festival. SNH has appointed UZ Arts - specialists in staging daring and thought-provoking outdoor art work that captures the public imagination - to programme the week. Planning has already begun to ensure the festival has international appeal, community engagement and lasting benefit.

UZ Arts will be commissioning national and internationally renowned artists for an innovative programme designed not only to generate local community interest along the length of the trail, but to raise awareness of the new John Muir Way outside Scotland.

Fergus Ewing, Tourism Minister said:

“Given it is the centennial year of his death, it is a fitting tribute that the John Muir Festival and opening of the John Muir Way will take place in 2014. The festival is a signature event within the Homecoming 2014 programme and will celebrate not only the life, legacy and outstanding contribution that Scottish born John Muir made to the conservation movement across the world but will also provide the platform for celebrating the natural beauty that is Scotland.”

Ian Jardine, SNH’s Chief Executive, said:

“John Muir dedicated his life to exploring and protecting wild places and was the founding father of national parks. Following on from the Year of Natural Scotland, it is a good time to celebrate his achievements in the country of his birth. We hope it will inspire people to explore and enjoy nature and landscape right across the country, taking in one of our own national parks – Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.”

Mike Cantlay, Chairman of VisitScotland, said:

“The John Muir Festival is a fitting legacy to a great Scot - the father of the national parks, which are beautiful spaces that millions of people across the globe visit, enjoy and protect. John Muir’s enthusiasm for the natural world is still very much alive and it is only right we should honour this great man in 2014, on the 100th anniversary of his death. I hope the John Muir Festival will encourage even more people to connect with Scotland’s great outdoors following this, the Year of Natural Scotland, and that thousands will be inspired to discover the John Muir Way, exploring the breathtaking natural landscape we have right on our doorstep.”

John Muir Birthplace revealed to the world

The birthplace of the Scottish nature conservationist, John Muir, is to be opened up to people across the world, thanks to a ground-breaking new digital scanning project.



Last week, an expert team digitally scanned Muir's childhood home in Dunbar, where he was born and lived his early years, before establishing himself as a visionary champion of nature.

The project is being led jointly by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland, in conjunction with the John Muir Birthplace Trust. It forms part of a transatlantic project featuring Muir's home in California and links to the 2013 Year of Natural Scotland, the 2014 Year of Homecoming and the centenary of John Muir's death.

The scanning will help create detailed digital models, with photographs and a virtual 3D fly-through tour of Muir's homes in Scotland and the US. This information will be used to develop mobile and PC apps that will connect the Scottish and American stories of John Muir, as well as other long-term projects.

SNH will also use the digital archive to strengthen links with John Muir organisations in the US, add to the interpretation of his birthplace and explore new ways of reaching wider audiences.



Will Collin, a member of the John Muir Birthplace Trust, is very enthusiastic about the project's potential impact. He said, *"John Muir's love of nature was awakened here in Dunbar and, until the end of his life, he remained 'a Scot to the backbone'. This exciting project will make his boyhood home accessible across the whole world. We believe it will let folk see what first inspired the lad from Dunbar and helped make the adult Muir nature's foremost, and most eloquent, advocate."*

Cllr Tim Day, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing for East Lothian Council, said, *"I am thrilled that the birthplace of John Muir, the father of conservation and boy from Dunbar, has been scanned as part of this project. I am looking forward to seeing the results in the John Muir Birthplace Museum next year."*

Richard Davison, SNH's People & Landscapes programme manager, said, *"John Muir was always experiencing and exploring nature. He's renowned in both the US and Scotland, and indeed in many other parts of the world. Through this international project using the most sophisticated digital technology, we would like people to be inspired by John Muir to connect with nature and landscapes by experiencing it, exploring it and helping to look after it."*

Dr Lyn Wilson, Digital Survey Manager at Historic Scotland, said, *"Using the very latest in modern technology, we can bring our heritage to life. We are able to create an exceptionally accurate digital model of the site to conserve it for the benefit of future generations to come."*

The cutting edge laser technology surveys sites in 3D and provides a lasting, digital record. The work is being carried out by heritage survey specialists from Historic Scotland and experts in 3D visualisation from CyArk, the international non-profit organisation.

They will use the same techniques that have already created a digital archive for World Heritage sites such as Skara Brae on Orkney and the Antonine Wall and world famous landmarks such as Mt Rushmore and the Sydney Opera House.

3D Scanning Conducted at John Muir's Home in Martinez, California



John Muir, Scottish-born American naturalist famously known as the Father of the US National Park movement, might have been surprised to see CyArk's production team descending on his Victorian home in Martinez, CA to digitally document it inside and out.

Though 3D laser scanning technology was still many years off from being invented during Muir's lifetime, the goal of digital documentation mirrors much of Muir's life work as the aim is to make these special heritage sites accessible for people to explore and learn about, and to help preserve them for the appreciation and study of future generations.

The expert team from CyArk scanned the interior and exterior of Muir's Victorian mansion, which was built in 1883 and is located nearly 30 miles north of San Francisco in Martinez, California. The John Muir National Historic Site is open to the public and is maintained by the US National Park Service. Visitors can tour the grounds and artifacts from the Muir family's daily life are on display, conserved in excellent condition. Originally situated on 2,300 acres of land, the site today encompasses just 9 acres, but the original house still stands, as do many of the peach trees from the extensive orchards Muir and his family planted. CyArk's 3D laser scanning of the site took place through a collaboration between the US National Park Service, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the John Muir Birthplace Trust.

The data generated from the scans at Martinez will form a part of the transatlantic partnership between CyArk, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland to document Muir's birthplace in Dunbar, Scotland and his home in Martinez, California. The scanning data will be shared with conservators at Muir's childhood home in Dunbar and his home in Martinez to assist with improved site management and interpretation. Additionally, mobile apps and information kiosks will be produced for both sites.

This project and John Muir's wide-reaching legacy is a key part of Scottish Natural Heritage's 2013 Year of Natural Scotland celebration. In 2014, Scotland "Welcomes the World" through its Year of Homecoming program. A key element of this is a John Muir Festival that will take place in late April 2014. Apart from highlighting this digital project, the Festival will also include the opening of a new walking, cycling and riding route across central Scotland between Dunbar and Helensburgh designed to help more people to explore the outdoors and experience nature at first hand. Richard Davison, Scottish Natural Heritage, welcomed the start of the work saying that, *"It's great to see this transatlantic project taking shape. We're all looking forward to making visitors' experiences in both the UK and the US even better, as well as strengthening the ties between Scotland and the USA on the life and legacy of John Muir."* John Muir National Historic Site Superintendent said, "We are excited about the opportunity to make connections with Scotland, the country of John Muir's birth, in an effort to have more people learn about his long lasting legacy. The work by CyArk will allow us to document these historically significant sites and share them with everyone in a meaningful way, even if they can't visit us in person." Project data and information about Muir's life and conservation work will be made freely available to the public through the CyArk online archive (www.cyark.org).

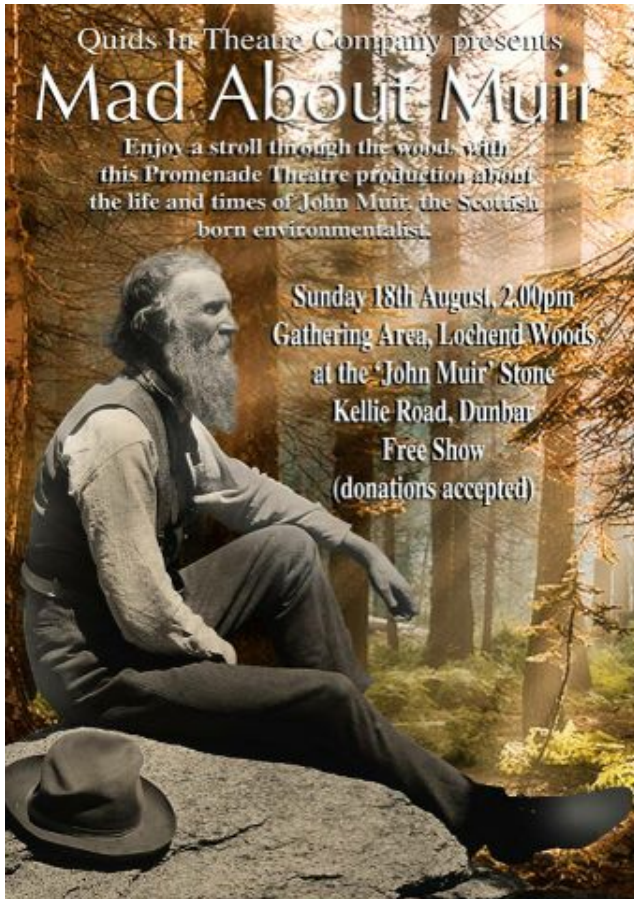
Source: <http://www.amerisurv.com/content/view/11704/>

A John Muir Graphic Book Project

Following last year's lobbying of Education Scotland for John Muir to be a nominated figure in Scottish Studies, Creative Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage is funding the publication of a graphic book telling of the life of Dunbar's most famous son. Koren Calder, Young Adult Project Coordinator for The Scottish Book Trust together with the books writer Julie Bertagna and its artist William Goldsmith visited John Muir's Birthplace on the afternoon of 22 July and went on to explore various parts of 'old Dunbar' associated with Muir's boyhood.

Julie has written a number of real life and science fiction novels for both children and young adults and 'Soundtrack', her second novel, won a Scottish Arts Council Award. Bill is a freelance illustrator and graphic novelist. Both are Scots based in Glasgow. Koren explained that the book is aimed at students in the first three years of secondary schools and is likely to appear in the spring of 2014.

‘Mad About Muir’



Walkers taking a saunter through Dunbar Community Woodland on the afternoon of Sunday 18 August could have been forgiven for thinking that they had stepped back in time. Surely that was Teddy Roosevelt over there; in a clearing two American politicians, Congressman John Raker and Gifford Pinchot were discussing a bill to dam Hetch Hetchy Valley; and could that be a prospector panning for gold in the burn.

In fact they had happened upon actors from the Quids In Theatre Company awaiting the audience and the main character in the Quids In Theatre Company's promenade theatre production of 'Mad About Muir'. The

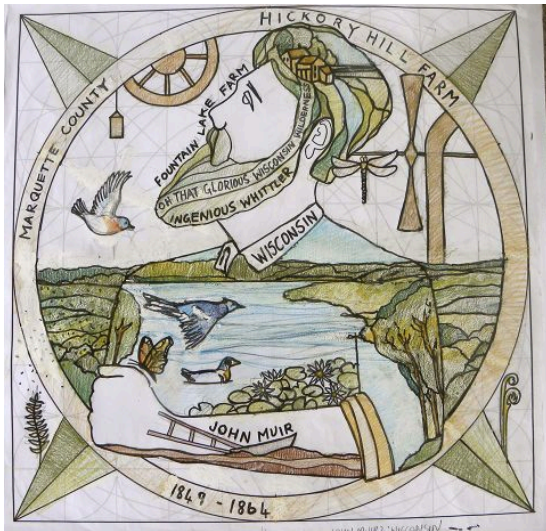
northeast-based company has been performing their highly entertaining play based on the life and times of John Muir in various wood from Buchan to Dumfries to celebrate this Year of Natural Scotland. What then could be more natural than for a group of Muir enthusiasts to meet at the Muir stone on Kellie Road and follow John Muir aka Chris Begg, Quids In director, as he led them through the trees and the many key point in his life. The woodland setting was perfect and Begg aka Muir displayed consummate skill in condensing Muir's 76 years into 90 minutes.

Too soon it was over and we returned to 2013 Dunbar. But we had been in California and seen Muir meeting with Roosevelt and heard him berating the politicians who would destroy his beloved Hetch Hetchy, hadn't we?

Will Collin

John Muir and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

Scots have migrated all over the world and have often had a profound impact on the areas where they settled. This Scottish Diaspora Tapestry project will see 25 such communities documenting their Scottish connections on a series of embroidered panels. Their combined stories will pay homage to the incredible determination and courage of Scots over the centuries. All the panels of the tapestry will be brought together in Scotland as part of Homecoming 2014.



Marquette County Wisconsin Friends of John Muir were invited to participate and now are inviting local embroiderers to put their own stitches into the panel depicting John Muir's boyhood in Marquette County. Kathleen McGwin has helped coordinate this effort and over recent weeks has organised a schedule of events to keep the volunteer embroiderers 'entertained'. For instance, on Saturday, September 21, the volunteers listened to the songs of Robert Burns while stitching.

On Thursday, September 26, they were inspired by the words of John Muir from *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* read by a Wisconsin Friend of John Muir.

On Sunday, September 29, stitchers were encouraged to bring their own Scottish Heritage stories to tell or add to a guest book that will be sent to Scotland with the Marquette County John Muir tapestry block. Also on hand was scanner at Teapot Quilt Cottage to scan family photos to add to the book.



On each of these days the stitchers were invited to enjoy tea and scones at Vaughn Hall while viewing the *From Dunbar to Scotland* exhibit.

Membership News

Membership Renewal Reminders

October is one of the two months – the other is April - when membership renewals often fall due. Renewal forms were included in recent, past, newsletters for Friends who had 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. If our records show that your membership is due for renewal then a subscription form will be included in this newsletter mailing.

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 version² 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

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Friends Email: info@muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk

Friends Website: www.muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk

² <http://muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk/newsletters/current/>