



Newsletter No. 45, Summer 2019

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Our Lady of the Waves Church Hall, Dunbar, EH42 1JL



Notice of Extraordinary General Meeting
Wednesday, 14th August at 6:45pm for 7:00pm
John Muir's Birthplace, 126 High Street, Dunbar

Agenda

- (i) Welcome and Introduction
- (ii) Motion: Waiving of membership dues

Current members will vote on the motion to waive membership dues. Non-members are also welcome to attend as after the EGM business there will be an opportunity to review, and celebrate, the achievements of the charity during the 25 years since its inception on 27th July, 1994 and to chat about possibilities for the future.

Some background: as reported in the last newsletter¹ in the **Membership News: Early Notice of Extraordinary General Meeting** announcement, there has been discussion at several, recent, Friends' Council Meetings about the question of membership dues and whether or not these should be waived as the number of members has been in steady decline. The income generated by membership dues is now a relatively minor proportion of our income in comparison to funds raised from the sales of Wee Books, donations, etc., so the Council has considered various options to mitigate the amount of effort, and cost, incurred in maintaining membership accounts and the production of paper copies of the newsletter. One possible option being considered is to do away with membership fees and, instead, to concentrate on building up the numbers of supporters (Friends) and to then approach them when a specific project – such as an exhibition – needs donations to help fund it.

Given the importance of this issue and the potential departure from existing practice the Council has arranged this EGM to sound out members and to come to a decision on the way forward. On behalf of the Council I would like to encourage everyone to reflect on what our charity has achieved in the past 25 years and how best to meet future challenges.

Duncan Smeed, FoJMB Convener

¹ muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk/2019/04/spring-2019-newsletter/

25th Anniversary of DJMA/FoJMB!



27th July was the 25th anniversary of the Friends of John Muir's Birthplace. Dunbar's John Muir Association (the original name of the charity) was formally constituted on this day in 1994. Ideally, we would have had an event to mark this auspicious occasion and I'm rather remiss in not organising something. However, I hope that this day will mark the beginning of the next quarter century of action and the re-invigoration of the membership, old and new, and our contribution to the education and action needed to address the challenges that face our planet.

I have always been involved with FoJMB/DJMA but I can't emphasise enough how important all founding members were in establishing the charity. There are too many to mention here. However, Winifred Sillitto - our first convener - deserves a specific mention and thanks. We also have Winifred to thank for sharing her memories of these early times in her personal web page².

Internet searches for the origins of DJMA have reminded me of other people that have supported the charity by means of publicity and resources. For instance, Harold Wood has been a long-standing ally and his unstinting work for the Sierra Club's John Muir Exhibit³ initiative goes way back. Harold posted a news item⁴ entitled *A New Muir Association Formed In Scotland* - a reprint of an article in the University of the Pacific's John Muir Newsletter of Winter 1994. Thankfully, the Wayback Machine - archive.org - has also captured some of the very first e-communications about DJMA and its ambitions for a John Muir Centre in Dunbar. Over the years I'd forgotten some of the milestones and so was pleased to rediscover the archive⁵ of the original web presence. I also have archive.org to thank for capturing the last snapshot of my DJMA web pages⁶.

Much has been achieved since 1994. On behalf of Council I sincerely thank all members – past and present – for their support of the charity. Here's to the next 25 years and the hope that Muir's life and legacy continues to inspire us all.

Duncan Smeed

² www.sillittopages.co.uk/djmamemories.xhtml

³ vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/default.aspx

⁴ vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/john_muir_newsletter/new_muir_assn_in_scotland.aspx

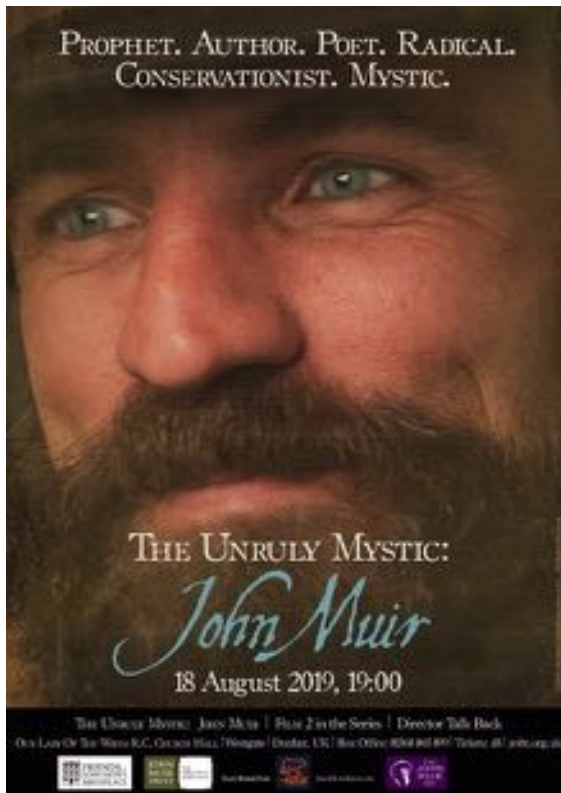
⁵ web.archive.org/web/20020824180250/http://www.cs.strath.ac.uk/contrib/JMC/Background/index.html

⁶ web.archive.org/web/20120630025835/http://www.djma.org.uk/

Screening of *The Unruly Mystic: John Muir*

7pm, Sunday, August 18th

Our Lady of the Waves R.C. Church Hall, Westgate, Dunbar
Tickets*, £8



Friends of John Muir's Birthplace is proud to host the Dunbar premiere⁷ of a new feature documentary on John Muir. Independent filmmaker Michael M. Conti will attend the screening of his film for an audience Q&A about the man often hailed as the founder of the world's first national park system.

This beautifully photographed film explores the remarkable life and influential works of a patron saint of environmental activism. Against a backdrop of some of North America's most exquisite scenery, the documentary considers the connection between nature and spirituality, using the life and wisdom of John Muir – ecological preservationist and founder of Yosemite

National Park – to explore how being outside in nature affects the lives of everyday people right now.

John Muir played many roles in his life: mystic, prophet, author, poet, conservationist, radical, all of which helped him succeed in his role as an advocate for Nature. Muir's writings have profoundly shaped the ways in which we understand our relationship with the natural world, and his legacy is commemorated in the John Muir Way – a long-distance walking trail that stretches 134 miles across Scotland's heartland, running between Helensburgh in the west to Dunbar on the east coast and Muir's birthplace.

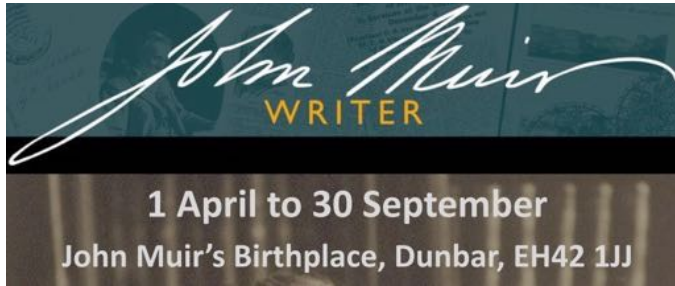
Michael is sauntering along the JMW in the week leading up to the screening in Dunbar and he will be documenting this experience via social media⁸.

* Tickets are available at John Muir's Birthplace during its normal hours of opening or Our Lady of The Waves R.C. Church hall just prior to the screening.

⁷ www.facebook.com/events/340915590189871/

⁸ www.facebook.com/johnmuirmovie/

Current Birthplace Exhibition: *John Muir, Writer*



The flagstone that commemorates Muir in Writers' Court in Edinburgh carries the words: *"I care to live only to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness."* Muir was convinced that only then would folk protect the environment.



Muir sought to persuade them through his writings - letters, journals, articles for newspapers and magazines, and twelve books. The quill pen became his sword in the battle for conservation. The exhibition, *John Muir, Writer*, tells the story of how it came about. Two-thirds of the way through its run, the exhibition has been viewed by thousands of visitors and some have taken the time to write their reactions in a notebook in the room. Here is a small selection of their comments:

- *Thank you so much for our visit in a safe, nurturing and educational environment – such a pleasure to be here ☺*
- *What a great job you have all done in creating a place to teach future generations the importance of conservation and passing Muir's legacy on to young minds.*
- *The word search was very hard but it was fun. We never give up. I done it! ☺*
- *Inspirational – very important concept of nature to reveal to our children – for life!*
- *Lovely resource! Very informative exhibition and a great intro from the volunteer.*

John Muir First Editions On Permanent Display

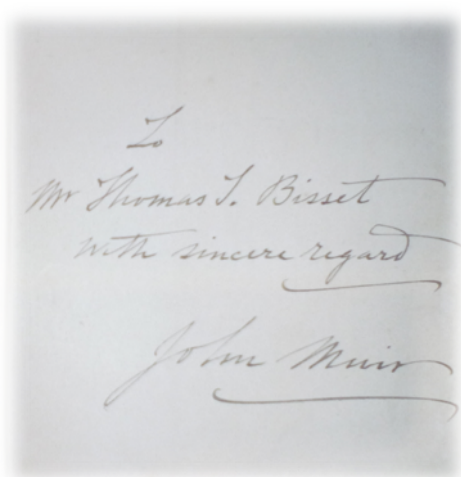
[This article is an update on the announcement in the last newsletter about the permanent installation of three John Muir first edition books. Ed.]

As part of their #JohnMuirDay celebrations on 21st April, Friends of John Muir's Birthplace (FoJMB) were honoured to have Mr Ronnie Skea (right) unveil the new permanent display of three 'first edition' books, including one inscribed by John Muir himself. These had been donated to Friends of John Muir's Birthplace by Mr Skea in celebration of his mother Janet's 100th birthday on 8 April 2014.



Throughout 2018 these books were on display in the case in the temporary exhibition space on the ground floor of the Birthplace. To do justice to this donation a grant application was made by ELC Museums Service to Museums Galleries Scotland for partial (75%) funding of the 'John Muir, Writer' project.

The remaining 25% was the contribution of the exhibition by FoJMB. Some of the grant went towards the purchase and installation of a case for the permanent display of these three first edition books by John Muir, including one with his signature. The photo shows Mr Skea alongside the new case now installed on the top floor of the Birthplace. The caption for the exhibit includes this dedication by Mr Skea: "*For 8 months Janet breathed the same air as John Muir.*"



One of the first editions, '*The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*', is especially interesting as Muir's inscription on it reads "To Mr Thomas T Bisset, with sincere regard, John Muir, Martinez, California, January 1914". Bisset was a Dunbar photographer who had sent Muir a parcel of his photographs and a copy of his letter to the author explains the circumstances. Muir and Bisset kept up a sporadic exchange of letters until the end of August 1914.

John Muir Way Concordat Signing in Dunbar



[This article is an update on the announcement in the last newsletter about the, then upcoming, John Muir Birthplace Charitable Trust signing of a Concordat to pledge its support for the John Muir Way. It is largely based on the text of the Press Release that CSGNT sent out after the event. Ed.]

The signing of the Concordat in Dunbar recognises the role that the John Muir Birthplace Charitable Trust (JMBCT) has in terms of promoting the life and legacy of the man that the route commemorates. The support the Trust provides to the John Muir Way - through the physical presence of the Birthplace - is to engage with the walkers and cyclists that complete the route at the Dunbar endpoint. The Birthplace website also has a section about the route⁹ and those that complete the route can claim certificates there.

The majority of signatories to the Concordat have been local authorities that provide the physical infrastructure and funding for the John Muir Way¹⁰ itself. However, the JMBCT support is promotional rather than financial as the limited funds that the Trust has are focused on maintaining the Birthplace itself. The Trust provides the expertise and knowledge about John Muir to the partners in the John Muir Way Partnership Group and by promoting and emphasising his life and legacy it tells the story that inspires those that wish to know more about the man behind the name of the route.

The 134-mile long distance walking and cycling route stretches coast to coast between Helensburgh and Dunbar, with John Muir's Birthplace marking the east point of the Way.

Keith Geddes, Chair of the Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) and Duncan Smeed, Chair of the John Muir Birthplace Charitable Trust signed the agreement on John Muir Day, Sunday 21 April, which would have been Muir's 181st birthday and also marks the fifth anniversary of the opening of the John Muir Way. Now recognised as one of Scotland's Great Trails, the John Muir Way was launched to commemorate the man who was known as the 'Father of the National Parks' in America.

⁹ www.jmbt.org.uk/about/john-muir-way/

¹⁰ johnmuirway.org

Keith Geddes said: “Five years on from its opening the John Muir Way is going from strength to strength. The John Muir Birthplace Charitable Trust tell me that they have now had visitors from all of the 50 US states. And looking at the visitors’ book just this Sunday there were also visitors from Argentina and Italy.”



“While many walkers come from abroad an increasing number of Scots are completing the route. Pictured here are James and Suzanne Bull from Stirling who had just completed the walk. Through the John Muir Way we are selling Muir, Dunbar and Scotland to the world as well as using the life of John Muir to highlight the need to combat climate change. And John Muir’s Birthplace is doing a great job in introducing young Scots to Muir’s inspirational story.”

Duncan Smeed, said: “On behalf of the Trust I am delighted to welcome Keith to John Muir’s Birthplace and

to join him in the celebration of Muir’s birthday and the 5th anniversary of the opening of the John Muir Way by signing this Concordat. The Trust has secured the future of John Muir’s Birthplace in Dunbar and has developed it as an interpretative centre that highlights Muir’s life and legacy.”

“The Birthplace consistently achieves 5* Visitor Attraction status with VisitScotland and is a long-standing Gold Green Tourism Venue. This year we expect to welcome our 200,000th visitor. It has become a destination of choice for international visitors, as well as, annually, welcoming over 1500 schoolchildren from across East Lothian and beyond to support their learning about citizenship as part of the Curriculum for Excellence.”

“As the eastern endpoint of the John Muir Way, Birthplace staff have presented thousands of completion certificates to visitors that have walked or cycled the whole route. It is particularly pleasing that James and Suzanne completed the route today and the presentation of their certificates could form part of our celebrations.”

A First for Friends in the USA

Back in 2016, Friends Val and Will Collin attended a BBQ in Martinez hosted by the Board of the John Muir Association (JMA). Will presented copies of Friends 'wee books' and invited JMA to choose one to print and sell for JMA funds. Later he heard that the favourite was *'John Muir: A Very Colourful Life'* (perhaps because there was a number of teachers present!) and that JMA would be applying locally for funding. Since then there had been no news.

On 8 July, Will was surprised to hear from JMA co-president Bruce Campbell that JMA were *"just about ready to go to press on this"* and asking for the go-ahead. As this already had the blessing of Friends' Council, Will was delighted to be able to tell JMA to proceed. The following paragraph will be added to the inner front page: *"The John Muir Association wishes to thank and acknowledge Dunbar Primary School, Will Collin, Rob McDougall and the Friends of John Muir's Birthplace for the permission to reprint this charming book – we know it will be enjoyed by many and serves as a wonderful way to honor John Muir and educate young readers about his legacy and influence."*



'John Muir: a Colourful Life'

by the Pupils of
Dunbar Primary School, 2014

For those of you who don't know the book in question, Dunbar Primary School's marvellous square-metre collages telling the story of John Muir's life were the pupils' tribute for the centenary of Muir's death in 2014. Eden Blair, then a member of the school's Parent Council, devised the idea of identifying 34 key moments in John's life, one for each of the school's primary and nursery classes. Eden's brief notes were issued at random to the classes along with a square metre of canvas and a collection of 'bits' – fabric, wool, buttons and the like. The result was a feast of artistic innovation,

controlled by the class teacher but led by the pupils themselves. Each panel is different in style but the whole is a wonderfully vibrant telling of a remarkably colourful life. They became a 72-page book published by Friends in 2015 with images of the 35 collages by photographer Rob McDougall and accompanying text by Will. Sponsorship by Dunbar Community Council and Dunbar Rotary Club helped Friends to supply a class set of copies to all East Lothian primary schools. *'John Muir: A Very Colourful Life'* is on sale at the Birthplace, price £5.

John Muir, Poet?

Will Collin writes:- When researching for Friends' current exhibition '*John Muir, Writer*', I realised that one aspect of John Muir's writing, not included, was his poetry. Anyone who has read *Muir* knows that his style is very poetic, indeed too much so for some. But that's a long way from poetry, isn't it?

Muir's love of poetry is easy to demonstrate. On his '*Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*' he carried with him copies of Burns' poetry and Milton's '*Paradise Lost*'. Among the 900 or so books from his personal library in the Muir papers at the University of the Pacific are the works of nearly 50 poets ranging from Chaucer through Shakespeare, Cowper, the English Romantics and Americans like Whitman, Hawthorn and Longfellow to Muir's contemporaries, and personal friends Ina Coolbrith and Robert Underwood Johnson. And of course there was Burns. Muir quoted freely from poetry in his letters, journals, magazine articles and books, and chief among his sources was Scotland's bard.

One of the earliest examples of Muir's poetry that I have come across is in a letter to Miss Emily Pelton of Prairie du Chien dated March 1864 when he and two university friends were on a botanical ramble. It is headed '*Adventures of Three Naturalists in Search of a Breakfast*' and runs to 70 rhyming couplets. Here is a sample:

*... The sun in strength and glory now
Glows fiery on the mountains brow.
Dark shadows on the prairies fall
With hazy radiance over all,
But sheltered from the blazing sky
Their grateful task they joyful ply...*

A second example comes from 1893. En route to New York, Muir spent a few days in Chicago with A H Sellers and family. From the sweltering heat of New York in June he wrote a long letter of thanks. Towards the end of its five pages he broke into rhyme or, as he described it, "*good dog day doggerel*." Here are the first few lines:

*O for a lodge in some vast frigoration
Some boundless contiguity of frost
Some boreal prairie
Icy
Airy
Where sultry heat from old Manhattan's shore
Might never reach me more...*

There are precious few other such examples. But what is poetry? William Wordsworth wrote :

... all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings ... by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply ...

Muir was such a man and his prose, by Wordsworth's definition, makes "good poetry". Muir himself realised this. The following words of his were first written as prose in his journal on 12 December 1872. On a scrap of paper, he later rewrote them as follows:

*The Valley is tranquil and sunful
And Winter delayeth his coming.
The river sleeps currentless in deep mirror pools,
The falls scarce whisper.
The brown meadows bask,
The domes bathe dreamily in deep azure sky,
And all the day is Light.*

So was John Muir a poet? Read, or re-read his books and find out for yourself. Find a passage you enjoy and, like Muir, rewrite it in poetic form. Here are two of my favourites from 'John of the Mountains', ed. Linnie Marsh Wolfe, 1938:

(i) On a voyage to Alaska, June 1890:

*All the wide world is beautiful,
And it matters but little where we go,
To highlands or lowlands,
Woods or plains,
On the sea or land
Or down among the crystals of waves
Or high in a balloon in the sky;
Through all the climates,
Hot or cold,
Storms and calms,
Everywhere and always,
We are in God's eternal beauty and love.
So universally true is this,
The spot where we chance to be
Always seems the best ...*

(‘JOTM’, page 299)

(ii) In Martinez, 24 March 1895:

*Nature is always lovely,
Invincible,
Glad,
Whatever is done
And suffered by her
creatures.
All scars she heals,
Whether in rocks
Or water
Or sky -
Or hearts.*

(‘JOTM’, page 337)

John Muir Misquoted

"It is not enough for people to be in sympathy with the plight of the natural world, they must become 'active conservationists', as campaigners, as practical project workers, as scientists, as artists, as writers." *John Muir*



In the John Muir Day Celebrations article in the last newsletter a logo (see left) with a quote from Muir was used. Muir scholar and Friend Harold Wood got in touch and he queried the origins of the quotation used: *"It is not enough for people to be in sympathy with the plight of the natural world, they must become 'active conservationists', as campaigners, as practical project workers, as scientists, as artists, as writers."*

There is no record of Muir having written or said this and, in hindsight, it doesn't sound like Muir even though he would have most probably agreed with the sentiment of the message. In fact, it would seem that documentation related to the John Muir Trust's John Muir Award¹¹ scheme is the primary source of this quotation. Further investigation is needed!

In his e-mail querying the origin of the above quotation Harold wrote: "I have a web page¹² on the John Muir Exhibit website devoted entirely to "John Muir Misquotes". It's amazing to me how many of these clearly *wrong* quotes attributed to Muir keep popping up. The "tugs" one is especially annoying. For a year or so I tried to contact the authors who mis-used that quote in their online articles, but I finally gave up because there were too many of them! I've had to add a few additional misquotes to the page since I first started it."

The "tugs" misquote Harold refers to above is an abomination of one of Muir's most famous phrases. The correct version of which is:

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

Another misquote often used is:

"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt."

¹¹ www.johnmuirtrust.org/john-muir-award

¹² vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/misquotes.aspx

John Muir's Birthplace – News Online Presence

John Muir's Birthplace staff often use social media and other online opportunities to promote exhibitions and events. The website¹³ for the John Muir Birthplace Trust is the cornerstone of the online presence of John Muir's Birthplace. If you would also like to keep in touch through social media please follow John Muir's Birthplace on Facebook¹⁴ or @JM_Birthplace on Twitter¹⁵ using #JohnMuirDunbar #EastLothian hashtags. Feedback via social media is always appreciated.

JMB in the TripAdvisor Hall of Fame

TripAdvisor reviewers of John Muir's Birthplace have submitted overwhelmingly positive comment about their visit to the Birthplace and this has maintained the long-standing average score of over 4.5 out of 5. This means that a Certificate of Excellence has been achieved for the 5th year in a row and as a result JMB has been entered into the TripAdvisor Hall of Fame! Well done to all concerned!



FREE Activities with EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL MUSEUMS

All our museums have FREE ADMISSION and lots of drop-in crafts and activities. For details please see www.eastlothian.gov.uk/museums and/or follow us on Facebook at East Lothian Council Museums Service¹⁶.

Looking for ideas for the Summer Holidays? The programme for the 3 hour long workshops for primary school age children can be found on <https://eastlothian.bookinglive.com/home/summer-activities-2019/museums/>

Exhibition for the Summer Season

John Muir, Writer¹⁷: Monday, April 1, 2019 - Monday, September 30, 2019.
Children's activities are available as part of the exhibition.

¹³ www.jmbt.org.uk

¹⁴ www.facebook.com/JMBirthplace

¹⁵ twitter.com/JM_Birthplace

¹⁶ www.facebook.com/EastLothianCouncilMuseumsService/

¹⁷ www.jmbt.org.uk/event/john-muir-writer/

Visitors to the Birthplace

Muir Family Members visit the Birthplace

Friends learned about a planned visit to Dunbar by Californians Susan Flynn and her daughter Allison Latus through Mike Wurst, curator of the John Muir Papers at California's University of the Pacific. Then Jim Thompson made contact with Sue through social media. So we knew a bit about the two ladies before they arrived in Scotland. Sue is the daughter of Wanda and Thomas Hanna's eldest son Strentzel Hanna. He was John's eldest grandson. So Sue is Muir's great granddaughter, Alison his great great granddaughter.



Duncan, Alison, Will, Susan & Jim at JMB

For both it was to be their first visit to the birthplace of their illustrious ancestor. They had booked accommodation in Edinburgh and on Friday 17 May they took the 9.07 am train from Waverley to Dunbar. Will Collin met them at Dunbar station, where the large information board about Dunbar's most famous son impressed. They next visited Dunbar Parish Church, where Jim Thompson was waiting. John's grandfather David Gilrye had been ordained as an elder there in 1822. Next was a walk to the Gilrye headstones in the parish cemetery, with Jim explaining Sue's and Alison's links to the names listed.

When John arrived in Dunbar on 5 July 1893 he walked into the town as there were no carriages at the station. Will took Sue and Alison along the same route, pausing at the site of grandfather Gilrye's butcher shop and taking in the grand building that became John's "Dunbar home" before entering the Birthplace. There Duncan Smeed warmly welcomed them and Sue and Alison set off to explore the exhibition. A couple of other visitors from the US couldn't believe their luck when they were introduced to two of the famous man's descendants "in his birthplace!"



Alison & Susan at a John Muir, Writer exhibit



Susan signs the JMB Visitors' Book

After a chat over a cup of coffee and signatures in the visitors' book, there was a leisurely stroll westwards for lunch provided by Val Collin when Jo Moulin joined the group. Then Jim drove Sue, Alison and Will for a brief visit to the John Muir Country Park, a short stroll along Dunbar's promenade, opened during Muir's visit in July 1893, and a walk past Dunbar Castle, where young John honed his climbing skills, down to Dunbar's Victoria and thence to Dunbar Town House. The Council Chamber was of particular interest with both David Gilrye and Daniel Muir serving periods on Dunbar Burgh Council. Dunbar's weather continued to be kind, if a trifle breezy, and the last leg of the 'John

Muir's Dunbar' saunter followed John's route to "Dunbar Grammar School" before a meal at the Royal Macintosh Hotel. Then there were farewells and the short walk to Dunbar Station for the ladies' return journey to Edinburgh.

BGS/IAT Group Visit the Birthplace

On 27th May the following enquiry was made via the contact web form on jmbt.org.uk: *Apologies for the last minute notice ... a group of eight from the USA & Canada [are] coming to the museum tomorrow morning (28th) at around 11:15am. [The] President of the Appalachian Trail Museum in Pennsylvania will be among the party.*

Alerted to this, Duncan Smeed 'gate-crashed' the visit and personally welcomed the group to the Birthplace. The visitors were supporters of the International Appalachian Trail (IAT)¹⁸ and were celebrating the 10th anniversary¹⁹ of the initial contact that led to the IAT officially welcoming Scotland and the West Highland Way as the first European Chapter of the IAT; a year after the British Geological Survey (BGS) invited an IAT delegation from Maine and Newfoundland to visit Scotland.



¹⁸ www.iat-sia.org

¹⁹ www.bgs.ac.uk/research/highlights/2010/scotlandInIAT.html

Visitor Comments



Tripadvisor reviews²⁰ from visitors to the Birthplace continue to be submitted and the museum is one of the top 3 things to do in Dunbar! Here is a selection from the past three months from people inspired by their visit:

5/5 John Muir – What A Man: *Have lived in East Lothian for a number of years and am very familiar with the John Muir Way but I knew very little about the man himself so, what better way to learn about him than a visit to his birthplace on the Dunbar High Street. Having an hour to kill I decided to pay a visit a couple of weeks ago. Obviously as John left Dunbar many many years ago there are few artifacts but what the exhibition does have in bucket loads is information especially about his early life. Too much to go into here. One can only imagine what he would have done with media and the technology of today; the mind boggles. The fact that a humble lad from Dunbar rubbed shoulders with president of the United States is mind blowing. Also the fact that he walked from Wisconsin to Florida is quite amazing especially when I struggle to get my grand kids to walk a mile to school. I would urge anyone reading this, and would like a taster of what the man was about, to pay his birthplace a visit if you get to visit Dunbar. And please put a few pennies in the donation box to help keep the place going, you won't be disappointed.*

5/5 John Muir's birthplace should not be missed: *If you have even a passing interest in landscape scale conservation, public parks, or the preservation of wild places, you must see this delightful little museum that captures and interprets the life of one of the world's greatest conservationists — and the founder of the Sierra Club. John Muir's love of nature began on walks with his grandfather when he was just a young boy living in Dunbar.*

5/5 Educational and fun: *I knew a lot already about John Muir, but the friendly staff and great exhibition really broadened my knowledge. Must visit if you are in Dunbar and want to know more about this great naturalist.*

5/5 An Interesting Find: *Where we had heard of John Muir before visiting Dunbar, we could not say much about him but this visit was a complete learning curve for us. It was the place of his birth and childhood and explained the influences of his childhood and his voyage through life to become an environmental challenger of his time. This place is well worth visiting if visiting Dunbar. It is a free entry but donations are encouraged for its upkeep.*

²⁰ <http://tinyurl.com/yc28xfv3>

Visitors have also given feedback in the Visitor Books. Here is a small sample of comments written over the past three months:

- *An unbelievable experience. Wonderful!*
- *Very inspiring! Lovely, so humbling.*
- *What conviction and perseverance – we need another John Muir.*
- *Amazing experience and beautiful building.*
- *Really enjoyed this museum. Excellent. Thank you.*
- *Most fascinating & interesting.*
- *Superb. Saw the wilderness before we knew much about the man – what a star!*
- *Wonderful! Inspiring!*
- *Wonderful to visit the birthplace of a great man!*
- *Beautifully told. An amazing legacy!*
- *Wonderful insight. Absolutely marvellous.*
- *Great exhibition, very helpful and informative staff.*
- *Super exhibition and very educational*
- *Fantastic Museum, an incredible man.*

As there are far too many comments to include in the above list, here is a word cloud generated from the text of more than 200 comments written since mid-April 2019. It is obvious from this that visitors are inspired by their experience.



Stop Press: Launch of the John Muir Way Passport Initiative will benefit walkers, cyclists and local businesses



Explorers on the John Muir Way can now record their 134-mile adventure across central Scotland with a new official passport²¹.

Launched to coincide with the coast to coast route's fifth anniversary year, the John Muir Way passport will provide a lasting memento for walkers and cyclists undertaking

the 134-mile route, while providing a welcome incentive to visit local attractions and businesses along the way.

The passport splits the John Muir Way into ten sections, with 'Stamping Stations' dotted across the country, ready to stamp passports as participants complete each part. Whether tackling the whole trail in one go, or over multiple day trips, it provides a fun way to explore the different attractions and venues along the route while marking your progress.



In addition, a wide range of local businesses are displaying the 'Passports Welcome' logo, which signifies they have an offer or discount available specially for John Muir Way passport holders. Those who collect all ten stamps can also claim a free personalised completion certificate.

Keith Geddes, chair of Central Scotland Green Network Trust, commented: "The John Muir Way is bringing both international and local visitors to central Scotland to discover its diverse landscapes and rich heritage. The John Muir Way passport is an exciting new development for the route which is a flagship project of the Central Scotland Green Network. The new official passport will not only enhance the experience for walkers and cyclists on the route, but benefit the many businesses and attractions it is encouraging people to visit."

The John Muir Way passport is available to buy now from retailers across the route – including John Muir's Birthplace²² - and retails for £5.

²¹ www.johnmuirway.org/passport

²² www.jmbt.org.uk/2019/07/29/new-john-muir-way-passports/



Membership News

Online Delivery of Newsletters

A significant number of Friends have opted out of receiving paper copies of the Newsletter and now read the online version²³ instead. This is a significant saving as it reduces the cost of production and delivery of the paper version of the Newsletter. If you still receive physical copies of the newsletter and would like to opt out of receiving these in the future then please do let us know.

Online News

Due to the fact that the newsletter is only produced four times a year some announcements and news items are past their 'use-by date' by the time of production. Many of these news items are published/announced on the Friends' website and/or the Friends' Facebook page²⁴ and, for local events, on the Dunbar Events Facebook page²⁵. The revamped John Muir's Birthplace website also makes it much easier to post news items and is now an excellent resource for being kept up to date with developments there. There are, of course, many other online outlets for Muir-related news and Friends' also use these for promoting events, etc.

Membership Renewal Reminders

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 (e-)mailing.~~

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Friends Email: info@muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk

Friends Website: www.muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk

²³ muirbirthplacefriends.org.uk/newsletters/current/

²⁴ www.facebook.com/groups/fojmb/

²⁵ www.facebook.com/groups/497808383660101/