



## John Muir's Birthplace Fact Sheet

### Number 5.02 – John Muir Country Park: Sport

John Muir Country Park stretches from Victoria Harbour and the historic Dunbar Castle on the east to Ravensheugh Sands and the Peffer Burn on the west. For many years the natural expanse of sandy beach, its woodland paths, sand dunes and well tended greens and bunkers have provided an ideal setting for sports enthusiasts of all ages.



Courtesy of Bobby Anderson

Horse riding is popular with owners travelling from as far afield as Central Scotland and the Borders to exercise their horses on the sands. A permit system is operated with over 700 permits being issued in 2005. Locally, race horses from Tilton Stables train regularly from a family business that dates back to the early 1900s.



Courtesy of Tom Craig. © Jack Crombie

Winterfield Golf Course, which lies within the park area, was opened in 1935 and is enjoyed by its many local members and visitors to the town. An earlier course was laid out at Hedderwick Hill in 1924, by local landowner St Clair Cunningham.

Sport in the Park area took on a faster pace in the 1960s. Sand yachting took off and a club was formed. In the early 1970s the Scottish Championships were held at Belhaven and a special bridge was built across the Biel Burn for the event. Stock Car Racing also became popular with local teams racing on the sands and enjoying social events.

Courtesy of Duncan Smeed



Courtesy of Victor Young



Since the early years, pupils from schools in the East Lothian area have also enjoyed water sports at Seafield Pond, by West Barns. Here, lessons in canoeing and sailing have been provided by the council's outdoor education department. Orienteering events at Hedderwick Hill, organised by the East Lothian Orienteers, angling and wildfowling are also popular.

Also at Belhaven Bay, surfing has become increasingly popular. A local club was formed and by the end of 2005 Dunbar had its first surf shop and a surf school offering both lessons and a summer activities programme.

East coast winds also proved ideal for local kites who took to the sands in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. 'East Lothian Windchasers', as they became known, took part in the first Scottish Championships at St Andrews in 2006.

Today, local groups recognise the increasing pressure placed on Belhaven Bay by the many sporting activities that take place there. The Belhaven Bay Users Group meets regularly to communicate and coordinate activities so that everyone can enjoy this area of John Muir Country Park.



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Courtesy of Andre Coner

## Further reading

- Muir, John. The Story of My Boyhood and Youth. Wisconsin; The University of Wisconsin Press.
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- Anderson, David. Old Dunbar. Ochiltree: Stenlake Publishing, 2000.
- Pugh, Roy. Swords Loaves and Fishes. Mid Lothian, Balerno; Harlaw Heritage, 2002.
- East Lothian 1945-2000, Fourth Statistical Account Volume One: The County, 2003.

## Websites

- John Muir's Birthplace [www.jmbt.org.uk](http://www.jmbt.org.uk)
- The Sierra Club [www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit)
- Dunbar [www.dunbar.org.uk](http://www.dunbar.org.uk)
- Dunbar's John Muir Association [www.djma.org.uk](http://www.djma.org.uk)
- East Lothian Council Museums Service [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/museums](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/museums)
- Resources for Learning in Scotland (RLS) [www.rls.org.uk](http://www.rls.org.uk)
- SCRAN – Access to cultural resources [www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)
- East Lothian Council Countryside Ranger Service [www.eastlothian.gov.uk](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk)