



www.jmbt.org.uk Charity SC028244

126 High St. Dunbar, EH42 1JJ

Annual/OSCR Report June 2022 – June 2023

Charity Trustees

1. Jacqueline Bell – **Dunbar Community Council**
2. Toby Clark – **John Muir Trust**
3. Cllr. Norman Hampshire – **East Lothian Council**
4. Emily Henderson – **John Muir Trust**
5. Liz McLean (Secretary & Co-Treasurer) – **Friends of John Muir's Birthplace**
6. Cllr. John McMillan – **East Lothian Council**
7. Duncan Smeed (Chair & Co-Treasurer) – **Co-option**

Objectives and activities

The Trust was established to advance the education of the public concerning the life and works of John Muir and particularly concerning the ideals of environmental conservation propounded by him. The Trust seeks to pursue the stated objects by any appropriate means including:

- i. The conservation and interpretation of his birthplace at 126 High St. Dunbar and other places or objects associated with him
- ii. The promotion of the ideals of holistic conservation through the use of his birthplace and related places and objects.
- iii. The encouragement of public participation in environmental conservation projects.

- iv. The promotion of research into, and the interpretation of the life and work of John Muir and environmental conservation, generally.
- v. The participation in projects for promoting the causes and ideals of environmental conservation.

The Year's Activities, Events, Projects and Visits 2022-23

During the course of the year the trustees continued the programme of improvements and refurbishment of the Birthplace. The refurbishments undertaken included repairs and enhancements to the permanent exhibition; maintenance of the décor, fabric and internal facilities.

Maintaining the high quality of the physical fabric of the building and its contents, along with the regular updates to the appearance and content of the Birthplace website, along with the very helpful and friendly staff, have undoubtedly helped to maintain the very positive comments from visitors. Due to ongoing COVID-19 considerations, however, a physical book was not made available to visitors until 3rd May 2023 and so the comments by visitors are restricted to comments submitted online. Although there are relatively few TripAdvisor reviews¹ over the course of the 2022-23 season the fact that over the past 9 years 69% of reviews rate the visit as Excellent and a further 28% of reviews as Very Good, is indicative of the very high regard visitors have for the quality of the Birthplace interpretative exhibitions and content and the warm and informative welcome that staff and volunteers provide to visitors.

These online reviews and the visitor ratings of the Birthplace on TripAdvisor have maintained its Certificate of Excellence status for the ninth year in a row and, as a result, the Birthplace maintains its entry in the TripAdvisor Hall of Fame.

Visitor numbers have been improving during the post-COVID period and have recovered to c. 85% of the pre-pandemic numbers with a trajectory that suggests we will achieve, or even exceed, typical visitor numbers per annum from now on.

In-person activities and events have also recovered post-COVID the past year. Staff have continued to enhance the online content of the Birthplace website and new and updated resources continue to be made available. Announcements of such initiatives and resources are provided in regular updates to the News² page as are the announcements about activities and temporary exhibitions hosted in the Birthplace.

¹ https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g190923-d3396934-Reviews-John_Muir_s_Birthplace-Dunbar_East_Lothian_Scotland.html

² <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/news>

Exhibitions (and craft sessions) hosted between June 2022 and June 2023 were mostly aligned with the 'Climate Call to Action' initiative promoted in late-2021³. These events included:

- Slowly Growing Exhibition⁴
 - An exhibition by Emily Tough that, through her art, encourages people to learn more about guerrilla gardening and natural farming whilst making your own edible plant seed bombs.
- What's so special about bogs⁵
 - An exhibition by the John Muir Trust that provides a fun guide to peatlands and how this slow-growing, water-packed eco-system is fast becoming recognised as an amazing collector of carbon and rich archaeological sites, and home to unique species of wildlife.
- Leaves of Auchencraw exhibition⁶
 - An exhibition by Sarah Wakefield where Nature, Creativity, Alchemy & Design meet to create beautifully printed fabrics from nature's natural beauty.
- Free November drop-in crafts⁷
 - Leaf pressing
 - Make and take you own worm
 - Helicopter seeds
- Wherever a Scotsman goes... John Muir and Robert Burns⁸
 - An exhibition on how these two Scots writers had much in common.
- Free Muir and Burns drop-in crafts⁹
 - Make a robin bookmark and learn about what robins meant to Muir
 - Write your own Scots poem using 'To A Mouse' as inspiration

³ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2021/11/30/exhibit-with-us/>

⁴ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2022/06/24/slowly-growing-exhibition/>

⁵ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2022/08/04/whats-so-special-about-bogs/>

⁶ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2022/11/01/leaves-of-auchencraw/>

⁷ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2022/11/17/free-november-drop-in-crafts/>

⁸ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2022/12/13/festive-opening-hours/>

⁹ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/01/25/free-muir-and-burns-drop-in-crafts/>

- New schools resource up and running¹⁰
 - A series of films outlining different aspects of Muir's life. Funded by a grant from Museums Galleries Scotland.
- Sea Flora exhibition¹¹
 - An exhibition by Sara Dodd opened in June 2023 with prints that celebrate the intrinsic beauty, colour and light of Scottish seaweed using original organic pressings of this type of flora.

Structure, governance and management

Type of Governing Document.

Memorandum of Association in accordance with The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended) and The Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations Regulations.

Trustee Recruitment and Appointment.

Trustees are appointed by the four organisations identified in the Memorandum of Association which are East Lothian Council (2 trustees), the John Muir Trust (2 trustees), the Friends of John Muir's Birthplace (1 trustee) and Dunbar Community Council (1 trustee). In addition, trustees are occasionally co-opted when suitable candidates are identified, and they have the enthusiasm, skills and knowledge to support the aims and objectives of the Trust.

Achievement and performance

Some of the main achievements have been summarised in *The Year's Activities, Events, Projects and Visits 2022-23* section above. Many of these achievements have been focused on the enhancement of the visitor experience and the feedback from visitors to the Birthplace is overwhelmingly positive. See, for example, the Tripadvisor reviews cited in that section.

Additional achievements are mainly focused on tackling the challenges of promoting, sustaining and resourcing the Birthplace. The Trustees have been resolute and determined in tackling such challenges with the intention of securing the long-term future of the Birthplace. Achievements during the financial period include the planning of the refurbishment and enhancement of the Birthplace's legacy exhibition on the top floor of the building. The additional content will focus on the Climate Challenge that affects us all and what needs to be done to address this specific

¹⁰ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/02/07/new-schools-resource-up-and-running/>

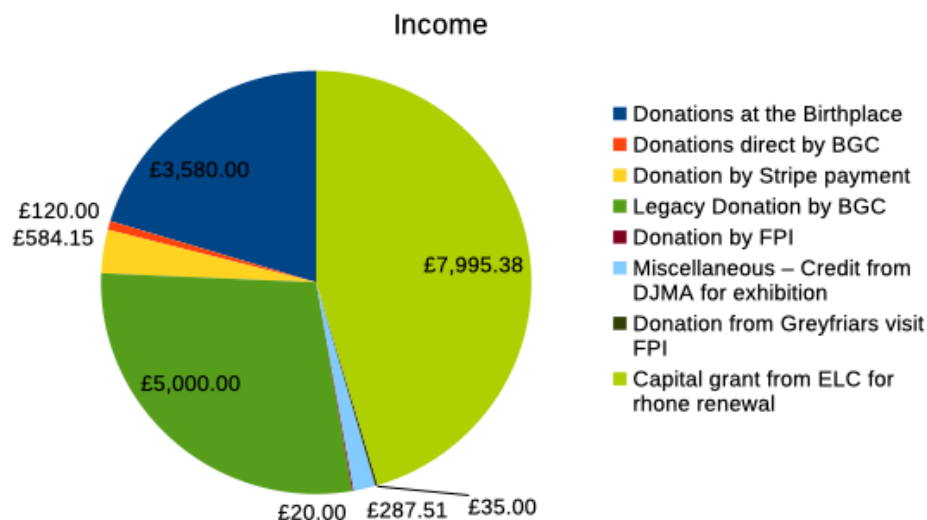
¹¹ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/07/07/sea-flora-exhibition/>

challenge. A fundraising subgroup involving a number of Trustees and Birthplace staff has met on a number of occasions during the financial period. A primary focus of this subgroup has been to identify the key elements of specific fund-raising requirements and potential sponsors to secure the long-term relevance and viability of the Birthplace.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

ACCOUNT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR TO 12 JUNE 2023

INCOME Total income for 12 months - £17,622.04 broken down as follows



1. Grants:

A capital grant of £7,995.38 was received from East Lothian Council towards the emergency renewal of cast iron rhones and downpipes. The total value of the works was £11,506.46

2. Donations:

A facility (**Stripe**) for supporters to make online donations was set up in May 2021. **Stripe** donations totalling £584.15 were received for the 12 month period to 12 June 2023.

Birthplace donations are via the donation box at John Muir's Birthplace. Donations totalling £3,580.00 were received for the period.

Donations paid direct by **BCG** totalling £120 were received and a single payment of £20 was received by **FPI**.

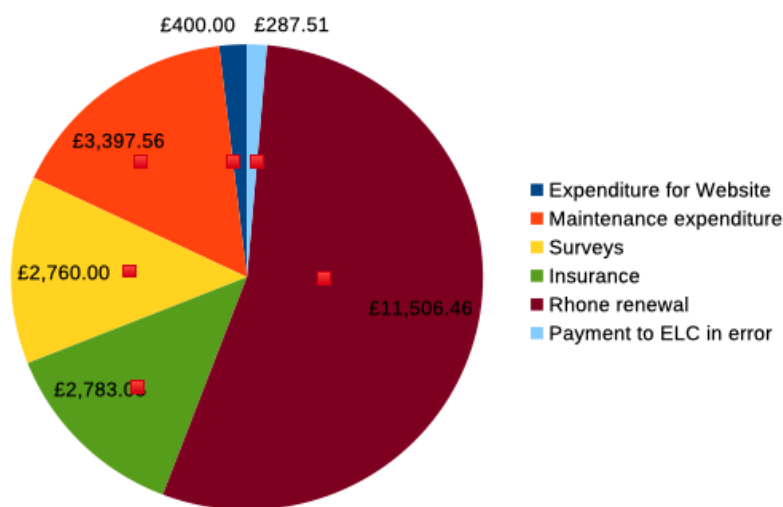
3. Legacy

A legacy of £5,000 was received from the estate of Miss Ella Graham McGregor, a former supporter of the Dunbar John Muir's Association.

4. Miscellaneous

A sum of £287.51 was credited to the JMBT account from the Friends of John Muir's Birthplace (formerly Dunbar John Muir's Association). This amount was erroneously paid from the JMBT account for the printing of an additional set of panels for the Friends' John Muir, Earth, Planet, Universe exhibition.

EXPENDITURE – total expenditure for 12 months - £21,134.58 broken down as follows -



1. Insurance:

The insurance premium for JMB building and contents was £2,783.05, lower than the premium of £3,072.28 for 2021/22, following a review of the valuation of the house and its contents.

2. Website:

Licence and hosting by Control X Digital costs were £400 for the period.

3. House maintenance:

Overall maintenance costs totalled £3,397.56 for the period. A sum of £2,948.76 was paid to East Lothian Council for statutory inspections and maintenance. £448.80 was paid directly by the Trust to A.G. Thomson for drain clearing.

4. Capital works:

£11,506.46 was paid to Musselburgh Roofing (in the name of George G. Grigg) for the renewal of rhones and gutters and associated works. This was partly offset by a grant of £7,995.38 from ELC towards these emergency works.

The JMBT bank cash balance at 13 June 2022 was £25,437.76

The JMBT bank cash balance at 12 June 2023 was £23,932.22

FUTURE PLANS

The Trust was established in 1998 and the Birthplace opened 5 years later in 2003. The 20th anniversary of the Birthplace was celebrated in 2023. Plans for the Trust in 2024 will be continue to focus on (a) securing the long-term future of the Birthplace with the help of sponsorship; (b) finalising the plans for the refurbishment of the top-floor Legacy exhibits and the introduction of the Climate Challenge material; (c) identifying potential grants/funds for the repair and upgrading of the building to become more energy efficient, etc.