



Paper 3

JMBCT AGM Thursday 14th November 2024

Annual/OSCR Report



www.jmbt.org.uk Charity SC028244

126 High St. Dunbar, EH42 1JJ

Annual/OSCR Report June 2023 – June 2024

Charity Trustees

1. Jacqueline Bell – **Dunbar Community Council** (to October 2023)

Stephen Bunyan – **Dunbar Community Council** (from October 2023 to January 2024)

Alasdair Swan – **Dunbar Community Council** (from January 2024)
2. Toby Clark – **John Muir Trust**
3. Cllr. Norman Hampshire – **East Lothian Council**
4. Liz McLean (Secretary & Co-Treasurer) – **Friends of John Muir's Birthplace**
5. Cllr. John McMillan – **East Lothian Council**
6. 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 2023-24

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. Although there are relatively few TripAdvisor reviews¹ over the course of the 2023-24 season the fact that over the past 10 years 70% of reviews rate the visit as Excellent and a further 27% 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 tenth year in a row and, as a result, the Birthplace maintains its entry in the TripAdvisor Hall of Fame.

Visitor numbers have continued to improve in 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 in the post-COVID period. 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.

Exhibitions (and craft sessions) hosted between June 2023 and June 2024 were mostly aligned with the 'Climate Call to Action' initiative promoted since late-2021³. These events included:

- Sea Flora exhibition⁴

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>

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

⁴ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/07/07/sea-flora-exhibition/>

- 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.
- Flax Futures exhibition⁵
 - The flax plant, traditionally processed into linen, has been grown for generations in Scotland. Today, flax plays a part in contemporary moves to support local resilience and tackle climate change. This exhibition focuses on future heritage, community resilience, soil health, sustainable textile production and material innovation.
- Help us celebrate our 20th birthday⁶ and 20th Anniversary Celebrations⁷
 - Can you believe it? We opened our doors for the first time on 23rd August 2003 and here we are 20 years later! ... Our birthday has coincided with some fantastic new research on our Birthplace sampler. Embroidery samplers were often made by young women to mark important events such as leaving school, or to record family births and marriages. We've managed to unravel these clues to uncover new information about who stitched our sampler and why...
- Nature writing workshop⁸
 - ...hosting a workshop with experienced writer and facilitator Elspeth Wilson. Join Elspeth for a relaxed, creative session on writing about the natural world. This will be a supportive space where all abilities and confidence levels are welcome!
- City Slickers in a Smart Countryside⁹
 - ...a photography exhibition of images taken along the John Muir Way by Sharon McMenemy Khan/4 Pegs Gallery. Celebrating 10 years of the John Muir Way. *"When you're preparing for the John Muir Way, you focus on navigating: distances, signposts, gradients. Once you start riding along the path, you begin to relax and enjoy the countryside. You disconnect from everyday life and connect with the history of the people and the place. It's a heart-warming journey that connects you to nature."*
- Where the Light Enters You¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/08/05/flax-futures-exhibition/>

⁶ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/08/23/help-us-celebrate-our-20th-birthday/>

⁷ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2023/08/24/20th-anniversary-celebrations/>

⁸ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2024/03/13/nature-writing-workshop/>

⁹ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2024/04/02/city-slickers-in-a-smart-countryside/>

¹⁰ <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2024/05/01/where-the-light-enters-you-exhibition/>

- This exhibition is a search for hope amidst the lament around our changing climate and how it is impacting us. From contemplating a changing landscape to noticing the small beauties found all around us, art and words combine to invite us to be attentive to our shared environment with a particular and very local focus.
- BBC Landward Interview
 - A BBC Landward National Park episode¹¹ featuring an interview with Duncan Smeed, Chair of the Trust, was first transmitted on Thursday 25th April, on BBC Scotland at 20:30

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 2023-24* 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 challenge. A fundraising subgroup involving a number of Trustees and Birthplace staff has met on a number of occasions

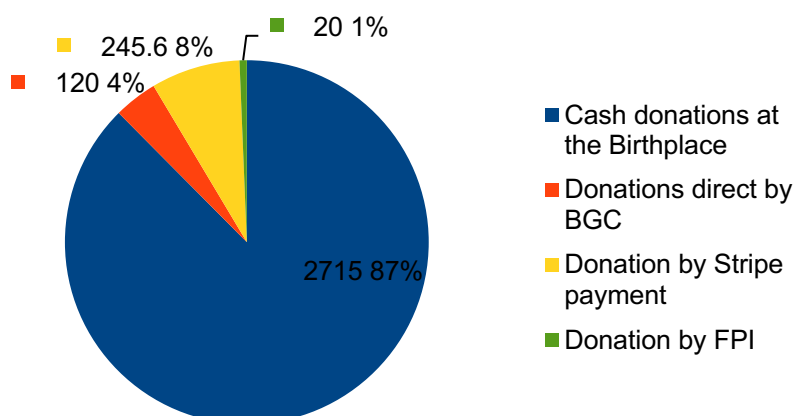
¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001ymn5/landward-2024-episode-4>

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 2024

INCOME Total income for 12 months - £3,100 broken down as follows:



1. Grants:

No grants were received for the period.

2. Donations:

A facility (**Stripe**) for supporters to make online donations was set up in May 2021. **Stripe** donations totalling £245.60 were received for the 12 month period to 12 June 2024.

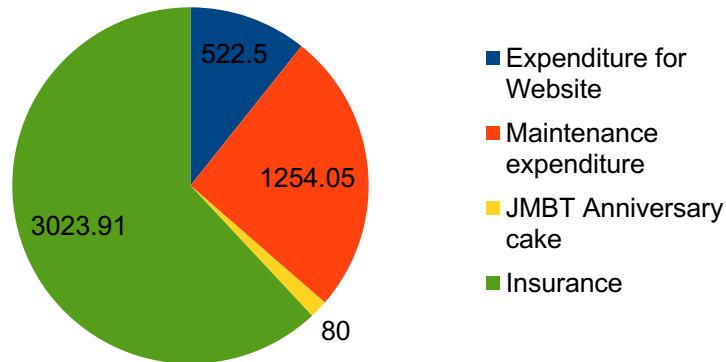
Birthplace donations are via the donation box at John Muir's Birthplace. Donations totalling £2,715.00 were received for the period.

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

3. Legacy

No legacies were received during the period.

EXPENDITURE – total expenditure for 12 months - £4,880.46 broken down as follows -



1. Insurance:

The insurance premium for JMB building and contents was £3,023.91 (previous year's premium was £2,783.05).,

2. Website:

Licence and hosting by Control X Digital costs were £522.50 for the period.

3. House maintenance:

Overall maintenance costs totalled £1,254.05 for the period, paid to East Lothian Council who undertook the statutory inspections for electrical gas installations and associated maintenance.

4. Capital works:

No capital expenditure was made during the period.

The JMBT bank cash balance at 13 June 2023 was £21,923.22

The JMBT bank cash balance at 12 June 2023 was £20,143.36

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 August 2023. Plans for the Trust in 2025 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.

Signed:

Duncan Smeed: Chairman: John Muir Birthplace Charitable Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Smeed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a trailing flourish.

Date: 14th November 2024