

The Upper Tweed Community News

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THE FUTURE OF THE JOHN BUCHAN CENTRE

Broughton has many attractions for visitors and residents alike but it has a unique feature — the John Buchan Centre. The Centre was established in 1983, largely through the good offices of the late Sheila Scott, and under the wing of the Biggar Museums Trust. It has to date attracted nearly 20,000 visitors. It shows the life of John Buchan (JB), his strong local links, and his life, not only as a novelist but as a biographer and author of diverse works, an MP, a Commissioner of The Church of Scotland and eventually, as Governor-General of Canada, Lord Tweedsmuir. The J B Centre is entirely self-supporting, raising the money it needs through the efforts and enthusiasm of many in the village, including nearly thirty local volunteers, who man it daily from Easter to October, entertaining and instructing visitors from all over the world. It is housed in the former United Free Church, where the Reverend John Buchan, JB's father, first saw the beautiful seventeen-year-old Helen Masterton, who was to become JB's mother and, incidentally, my great-grandmother. The Reverend John Buchan often returned to preach, accompanied by his family; the young John Buchan would have endured many long Sunday hours there. Did a stained glass window on his left catch his eye? This window commemorates Mr. William Hannay of Parkside and many have wondered if this is where he got the name for his most memorable hero.

Now the Museum faces a period of change. Biggar Museum Trust have become unhappy with the terms of the repairing lease between themselves and the heritable proprietor and, unable to negotiate more favourable terms, they terminated the lease on the 30th November. Fortunately, the heritable proprietor has agreed to lease back the building to a new body for a period of two years, during which time the new body must decide, if practicable, either to buy the building or to relocate. Since members of the John Buchan Society, of which I am currently Chairman, have always taken a great interest in, and have an affection for,



The interior of the JB Museum. JB seated on the left, amidst interesting displays and artefacts, illustrating the amazing range of his life and work.

the Museum, and since the John Buchan Society already has Scottish charitable status, the Council of the John Buchan Society has taken the JB Centre under its wing as a self-supporting, self-governing sub-committee for this transition. This will be known as the Trustees of the John Buchan Heritage Museum.

So what does this mean for the volunteers, the village and my grandfather's legacy? Well, NOTHING will change yet. We will open at Easter next year, with our dedicated volunteers (ever thought of coming to join us? Call Mary on 01899 880258). We hope to welcome even more visitors than the thousands we had this year. But behind the scenes the new body will be beavering away to secure a permanent home for the Museum, and to raise the money to make that possible. But you, the readers of the *Upper Tweed Community News*, have a vital part to play because the Trustees want your views. Perhaps you live in a place associated with one of JB's books? Woodilee (*Witch Wood*), Tweedsmuir or Drumelzier (*Gideon Scott*), Stobo or Dawyck (*John Burnet of Barns*), or Broughton Village (*A Lost Lady of Old Years*). Perhaps you read J.B. at school? Perhaps you saw one of the three films of the *Thirty-Nine Steps*, or even the bizarre TV version last Christmas, redeemed by the gorgeous Rupert Penry-Jones. Perhaps you just feel that the number of people that the Museum, and the John Buchan Way Walk,

bring into the village is crucial to the local economy. Or perhaps you think that the Museum needs a facelift or a new home. We will keep you up to date and ask for further suggestions next year. Whatever you think, do please let us have your views.

Once it is decided where the Museum should be, there are exciting opportunities for further celebrating the life and works and influence of a most remarkable man. John Buchan's popularity is increasing, rather than decreasing, with the years. It would be marvellous if we could finally provide a permanent home, accessible to both students and fans alike, for the ever-growing archive. But also we would like to celebrate more of the history and personalities of the local community — people, art, archaeology, mythology, and agricultural practices. It is a very exciting opportunity to widen the Museum's scope to better represent the area that J.B. loved so much. Please think about what you would like the Museum to be/do/offer.

There is a long road ahead, with many decisions, some difficult, to be taken and a great deal of money to be raised. But with the help of the community and all the strands, worldwide, that make up the John Buchan heritage, we will endeavour to make a great success of the project.

Deborah Stewartby, Broughton Green

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