

# Mansfield Traquair News

Newsletter Number 20 February 1998

## SUCCESS AT LAST!!

### THE FUTURE OF MANSFIELD PLACE CHURCH IS SECURE

**The future of the Mansfield Place Church in Edinburgh with its murals by Phoebe Traquair has been secured.**

The Mansfield Traquair Trust have purchased Mansfield Place Church for £301,000. The purchase was made possible by generous grants and a loan from a charitable trust.

The purchase price was way above the "official" value of the church, estimated at £80,000. This would have been the figure paid by the City Council if the compulsory purchase order (CPO) had gone through and it would have been the price the Trust would have paid the Council. The Trust would also have been able to get grants for the purchase price at this "official" value.

So why did the Trust not wait for the CPO? For several reasons. The CPO was being challenged, and the legal arguments would have taken two or three years during which time the building and murals would have continued to deteriorate. The cost of the repair, restoration and conversion would have increased, and the Trust is working to a tight budget. Also, there was a remote chance that the CPO might have failed, leaving the situation worse than before. The Trust had expected to pay £250,000 for the church, so £301,000 was not so much after all. So, all-in-all, it was felt preferable to conclude a deal now and avoid these problems.

We are indebted to the City Council for their courageous stand on the church through the CPO and the threatened emergency repair notice. This must have put pressure on the owners and encouraged them to sell. We are also most grateful to the many Friends who took the trouble to turn up at the hearings at the Sheriff Court (especially as hearing what was being discussed was very difficult!). Such a turn out at the Sheriff Court is unusual and our presence was certainly noted.

#### WHAT NOW?

A press conference was held in the church in 26 February to broadcast the good news to the citizens of Edinburgh, the whole of Scotland and all the world. It was front page news.

There will be an Open Day on Saturday 7 March 1998. The church will be open for everybody, free of charge, from 10am to 5pm. Come along, and bring your friends.

We also have great plans for a three-day festival in the church at the end of September, to coincide with Doors Open Day on Saturday 26th. Details will be released in a later edition of this Newsletter.

The Trust will also undertake emergency repairs as soon as possible to stop further deterioration in the condition of the building and murals.

## PROJECT MANAGER

The Mansfield Traquair Trust will appoint a Project Manager to manage the finances and monitor the progress of the £4m repair and conversion of the Church. If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested, further details are available from: The Mansfield Traquair Trust, 33 Barony Street, Edinburgh EH3 6NX. The appointment will be made soon so that detailed design work can begin.

## NEXT STEPS

Purchase of the church is not the end of the project, it is only the end of Act I. Act II will be a quiet time while design work and applications to funding bodies such as Historic Scotland are made. We expect that work will start in the spring of 1999 and finish during 2000.

Mansfield Place Church will be converted for use by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations who will move their headquarters into the lower ground floor and vestry house which will be fitted out as high-quality offices. The nave and chancel, the most important architectural spaces in the building and which contain the Phoebe Traquair murals, will be restored to their full glory and will be used as a multi-functional conference, exhibition and performance venue. The project will be largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund who have offered a grant of £2.8m. Public access to see the murals will be guaranteed.

Café Graffiti as a tenant will continue in the church until we start work. The café provides security for the building.

## FRIENDS AGM

A well-attended AGM on 27 November 1997 received reports from the Convener of the Friends, Ian Dunn, and the Chairman of Mansfield Traquair Trust, Duncan Thomson. The Secretary, Virginia Holt, reported that the membership was 165 with a 120 others still receiving the Newsletter. A further 50 or so were mailed the Newsletter to keep the world informed.

Funds stood at just over £1,000 (this was before the printing of the cards) There would be no increase in membership rates for 1998.

Kate Love, Lyn Matheson and Helen French were re-elected to serve another year. The constitution of the Friends would be amended in response to recent changes in charity law. A Special General Meeting would be convened in the Summer of 1998.

## PATRICK GEDDES

9-week Scottish Studies study course on Patrick Geddes begins on 22 April 1998. Highly relevant to the murals in the church, information is available from Centre for Continuing Education, 11 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh.

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 1998 are now due. £6.00 full-rate, £3.50 retired/unwaged. Your membership renewal form is enclosed, if you have not already paid. Please make cheques payable to **FMPC**.

## POSTCARDS & GREETING CARDS



Special Friends rates:

Postcards 10 for £1 Greeting cards 10 for £2  
Available in packs of ten from the Glasite Meeting House, 33 Barony Street, Edinburgh EH3 6NX. Please make cheques payable to **FMPC**.

Saturday 7 March: Open Day in the church,  
10 am to 5 pm.

End-September: 3- or 4-day mini-festival  
centred on Doors Open Day on Saturday 26