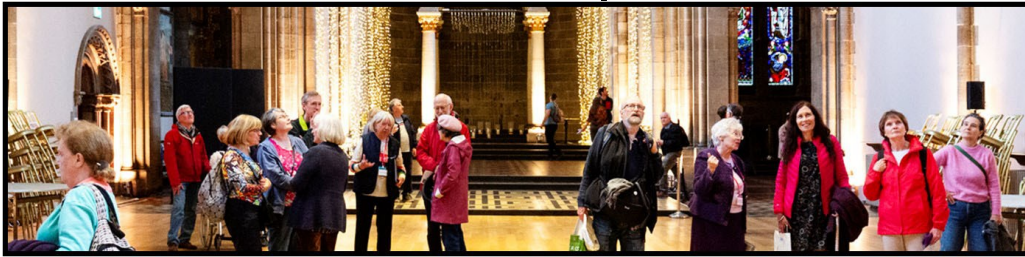


# Mansfield Traquair News

No 84



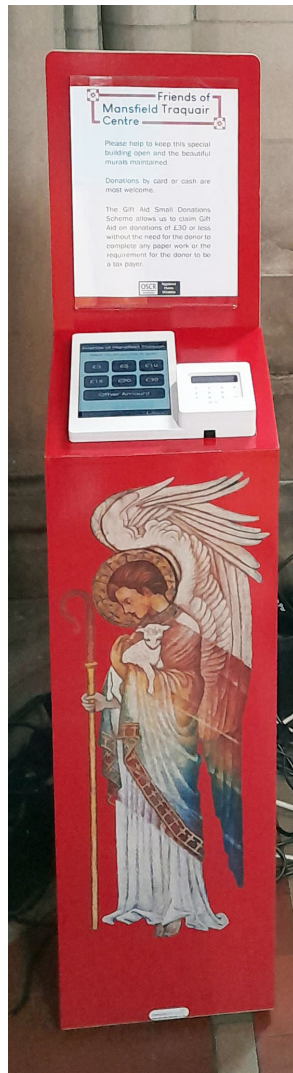
2024

## Welcome to our latest newsletter!

If you have been into the building recently you will have noticed that a few changes have taken place. The PayPal card reader - which confused many of us - has been replaced by a "PayPal-Zettle" card reader - an essential tool nowadays as we are told that many people no longer carry cash. Instead of adding up the sales and inputting the total we can now select the items from the reader. This is thankfully proving to be much easier to deal with and provides detailed analysis of sales.

We have also invested in a "Dona" box which, as it says, makes it much easier for visitors to donate money for the preservation of the murals. One of our newer committee members, Maggie Hughes, has spent many hours organising this and getting it set up, with an image of one of the great cherubim on its front. The colour was chosen to be eye-catching but also to match the large front doors. We went live at our May Open Day and have already received payments.

We still intend to retain our old cash only donation box as we collect a fair amount of money, including euros and other currencies.



We are told that an update of the furniture in the narthex is planned, which we hope will make the reception area look rather smarter both for ourselves and for Heritage Portfolio.

In June we had a Training Day for new guides (of whom we are delighted to say there are quite a few) and it also served as a refresher course for "old" guides. We are hopeful that the addition of extra guides may help to reduce the pressure on the existing guides during the coming Festival. Dates for our opening days in August are available on our new website, which seems to be working well [visitmansfieldtraquair.uk](http://visitmansfieldtraquair.uk)

There is one sad item of news to report. Isla Duncan, a Trustee for many years, died in March. An appreciation of her work for the Trust is published elsewhere in the newsletter. Several members of the Friends and the Trust attended her funeral and a reception was held afterwards in the Centre.

I wish you all well for what remains of our so-called summer.

**Morag Austin**  
(Convener FMTC)

## Date for your diary

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Mansfield Traquair Centre Thursday 24th October 2024 at 7pm. Our speaker will be Clara de la Peña McTigue and her talk will be about her work on Phoebe's illuminated manuscripts.

The usual papers will be sent out in advance of the meeting.

## Help Wanted

Karen Sinclair, our Auditor of many years has decided to retire. Is there anyone out there with audit/accounting knowledge who would be prepared to take on this task? Not onerous or time consuming. Our financial year is 1st September to 31st August and we have nine months to upload audited accounts to OSCAR so a nice winter task. Please contact [treasurer@visitmansfieldtraquair.uk](mailto:treasurer@visitmansfieldtraquair.uk) if you would like to volunteer.

Our grateful thanks to Karen for her help over the years.

## Art sale at our Sunday Open day in February



In February we were pleased to welcome the Botanigals, a group of artists who specialise in botanical artwork and were looking for somewhere to display their work. They made a few sales but felt that these were mostly to their own supporters although many visitors expressed interest in the idea of supporting such groups. An idea for the future perhaps when it might possibly become a regular feature of open days.

### DVDs and CDs

The Story of the Phoebe Anna Traquair Murals had sold out and had to be copied and the inserts redesigned to include our name and website. The music CD and the Historic Scotland DVD were redesigned to match.



### Membership renewal

The new financial year starts on 1st September so we are saving on postage by enclosing your renewal form with this newsletter. It would be appreciated if payment could be made timeously to save having to send reminders later in the year. Your membership and donations are a huge part of our fund raising and are much appreciated. Those paying by standing order need only check that their information shown is correct.

Outing to **THE SONG SCHOOL**,  
St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral,  
Palmerston Place,  
Edinburgh EH12 5AW



The choristers of St Mary's Cathedral have used the adjacent Song School for rehearsing since 1885, shortly after the Cathedral was opened for worship in 1879. The murals by Phoebe Anna Traquair were painted between 1888 and 1892 and appropriately illustrate a hymn of praise by all creation (Benedicite omnia opera). They include religious images, portraits of leading figures of the day and of the choir and clergy of the time, together with images of the natural world.

We plan to visit the Song School on Saturday 5th October 2024. Entry is by donation so we would ask for £3pp which will be collected on the day. We will meet in the Cathedral at 10am for the tour.

It was difficult to find somewhere local which could accommodate our number, especially on a busy Saturday morning so we will leave you to your own devices for coffee or lunch. There are a number of coffee shops in the vicinity, including the 6th floor cafe at Johnnie Walker at the West End which has wonderful views.

Numbers are limited to 30. To reserve a place either:  
Email: [treasurer@visitmansfieldtraquair.uk](mailto:treasurer@visitmansfieldtraquair.uk).  
Or  
Telephone: Treasurer on 0131 332 3047.

This tour is open to Friends and their friends and family.

## Training Day for Volunteers

As several new guides have recently joined us, we held a Training Day on 16<sup>th</sup> June in Mansfield Traquair Centre, taking advantage of SCVO's ITC facilities. This was to give information to these new guides and also as a "refresher" for more experienced guides, as instructions about lighting and access to the building had recently been updated.

We started with a talk by Rosemary Mann (previous secretary to the Trust) who spoke of the origins of the Catholic Apostolic Church, the creation of the current building, the struggles of the Trust to acquire it before it deteriorated irrevocably, and the subsequent conservation work which was carried out. We then went up to the nave where the contents of the various cupboards and the instructions for putting on all the lights were explained.



Finally we returned to the meeting room where Elizabeth Cumming gave us further insights into Phoebe Traquair's life and works and spent some time answering questions.



Refreshments were served and comments afterwards included "Thanks for organising a really interesting afternoon" and "Really enjoyed the Training Day and found it very enjoyable".

**More guides are always welcome!**

## Isla Duncan: Trustee

We were saddened to hear of the sudden death of Isla on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024.



Isla was a highly valued trustee for the best part of two decades. Her contribution to the maintenance of the Centre was immense. As a staff member of the Property Services Agency she had been much involved in the refurbishment of the Portrait Gallery (another Rowand Anderson building) in the 1980s and 90s, particularly on the restoration of the exterior stonework. Later, she joined the buildings staff of the Edinburgh College of Art, followed by a spell working for the University. She was an accomplished artist and in retirement from these jobs produced many brilliant watercolours, especially of botanical subjects. The Trust misses her greatly.

## Progress of the Soul Embroideries

One of our members is preparing a series of creative development workshops inspired by Phoebe Traquair's embroidery panels Progress of a Soul. Elspeth Murray is a writer and artist who helps people to connect with their creative yearnings, integrate the miraculous with the mundane and experience life as a work of art.



Elspeth lives in Colinton where Traquair spent her latter years and is buried. Walking past the Traquair railings on Bridge Road one day she began to wonder about the symbolism there - squirrels, blackbird, thistles, lilies - and how they related to the creative challenges she was facing. This was the spark that led her to connect with Friends of Mansfield Traquair and to look more deeply at the visual metaphors in Traquair's work. You can find out more about Progress of a Soul: Embracing Change with Creativity and Resilience at

<https://elspethmurray.com/course-outline/>

**New merchandise—** 12 new bookmarks showing various figures from the murals– selling at 2 for £1.



### **Drone project—New images and video**

The Friends, the Trust, and Heritage Portfolio have joined forces to commission an experienced drone imaging pilot to capture stunning visuals of the Mansfield Traquair Centre. This project signifies a remarkable blend of heritage preservation and modern technology, ensuring that the beauty and historical significance of the site are showcased to a broader audience.

The drone pilot, Mario Cruzado, currently contributes his expertise to the Digital Media team at National Museums Scotland. He brings a wealth of experience in flying drones around heritage properties, ensuring that every captured image preserves the integrity and grandeur of these sites.



Throughout July and August, Mario will be undertaking a comprehensive aerial and interior imaging project at the Centre. His brief includes capturing flyover videos and still images of the exterior of the Centre, including its picturesque gardens. The interior of the Nave, especially when set up for a wedding, will also be a focus. Utilizing advanced drone technology, Mario will operate inside the Nave to take precise and distortion-free images of the mural paintings. If time allows, he will also capture the intricate designs of the unique floors and the vibrant stained-glass windows within the Nave.

Traditional photography often struggles with angles and heights, leading to distortion or incomplete images. Drones, however, can capture murals and architectural details straight on, providing clear and accurate representations. This method ensures that the artistry of Phoebe’s murals is preserved in digital format with minimal distortion, highlighting the detail and vibrancy that makes them so special.

The resulting images and videos will serve multiple purposes. The Friends and the Trust will use them to promote the historical and artistic value of Phoebe’s murals and the building itself. These visuals will help raise awareness and appreciation for the site’s heritage. Additionally, Heritage Portfolio plans to utilize these stunning visual assets to market the Mansfield Traquair Centre as an elite venue for hosting extraordinary celebrations, from weddings to corporate events.

Moreover, the Friends will edit the drone-captured images of the murals to create new merchandise which will offer a fresh way for people to engage with and support the preservation of this historic site.

The collaboration among The Friends, the Mansfield Traquair Trust, and Heritage Portfolio, facilitated by Mario’s drone imaging expertise, represents a forward-thinking approach to heritage conservation. By embracing modern technology, we are ensuring that the Mansfield Traquair Centre, with its rich history and artistic heritage, continues to be appreciated and celebrated by future generations.

**Chante St Clair, Trustee.**