

27<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## Environment

*"There is pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is rapture on the lonely shore,  
There is society, where none intrudes,  
By the deep sea, and music in its roar;  
I love not man the less, but nature more."  
Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

The *John Muir Way* is one of Scotland's greatest trails. 134 miles long, it crosses the country from Helensburgh in the west to Dunbar in the east – the birthplace of John Muir, after whom it is named. And a section of it runs along the shores of the Forth on the north side of our village.

"The father of national parks" in America, John Muir was one of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's greatest environmentalists. Born in Dunbar in 1838, he died in Los Angeles on Christmas Eve of 1914, his hospital bed covered with pages of a book he was preparing. It's said he understood his mission to be "saving the American soul from total surrender to materialism". John Muir – conservationist, political spokesperson, prophet, mountaineer, geologist, inventor and glaciologist, whose writings became an environmental guide for many – said of himself:

*"I could have become a millionaire  
but chose instead to become a tramp".*

As a walk my dog or go for a run today along the Way that bears John Muir's name, I ponder his words. If he saw himself as a tramp, I'll take that any day, if people like him can see that environmental credentials mean more than money, and that tramping the good earth you care for so passionately is better by far than worldly wealth.

We need people who can save *our* souls from total surrender to materialism – never mind America's! John Muir, I salute you!

### **A prayer for today**

*Creator God, thank you for the wonderful world I live in.  
Please make me a wonderful carer of my little part of it,  
to work with other little carers to do wonderful things for our world. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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