



Craigmillar Community Archive



A PROPOSAL



CRAIGMILLAR COMMUNITY ARCHIVE - CONCERNING CRAIGMILLAR - A PROPOSAL

At first, The Craigmillar Community Archive evolved slowly, through the interests, passions and enthusiasm of Johnni Stanton, then latterly through the interest, support and enthusiasms of those who saw the first exhibition created from its resources and who wanted to contribute, encourage and ensure the archive's continuation and development.



The **Craigmillar Community Archive** Project and its subsequent popularity rely on a number of factors:

- **Knowledge** – and the dedicated involvement of those who knew the area's history – from days long gone, but resonating through structures such as Craigmillar Castle, up to times more recent, but at risk of slipping from living memory.
- **Imagination and ambition** - combined with the drive both to curate and promote the ideas generated by the archive into inspiring, informative exhibitions.
- **Entrepreneurial ambition** - spin-offs and merchandising. (to date given investment limits - postcards and calendars and now our website.)
- **Enthusiasm** – the willingness and ability to engage with visitors, contributors and the community.
- **Vision** - a thorough and ambitious vision of the archive's long term potential and ways that it can promote the area; illustrate the changes within the area and be used to encourage cohesion and pride within the community.
- **Personnel** - without Johnni Stanton, the archive would never have come into being; with Gus Meechan committing to the project, the archive has gained a committed ambassador, able to promote the project's ambitions to politicians and local community groups; with Hilary Morrison seed monies have been secured through the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF), then project managed, more recently allowing the creation of an on-line presence (to go live end of November '10 – www.craigmillarcommunityarchive.org.uk).
- **Support** - with the support and backing of VAF funding, the archive has grown and developed - an on-line presence, further plans for social enterprise income generating initiatives and an exhibition at the end of November in partnership with several local groups: Adult Learning Link, Hunter's Hall, The Venchie. This show will be based upon local artists' responses to the archive – painting workshops (interpretations and responses to pictures), digital imaging, screen printing and reminiscence workshops with older community members).





THE FUTURE

The archive is now at a crucial juncture. To date, with VAF seed monies, we have been able to develop a little of its potential, whilst ensuring necessary administration and maintenance.

Our vision is ambitious and with the right backing has the potential to work on several levels.

1. **Re-brand** - an area that is being redeveloped. To date, EH16 and its environs have suffered from negative press, gaining a reputation which is neither wholly deserved, nor wholly justified. The archive offers a view on the area which has seldom generated press interest: happy people; enjoyment of life; sporting and academic achievement; community bonds; a community at rest and play. In short, a formidable social history that belies the negative press.
2. **Pride and interest** - in the area; the community; its history and people. In less than a year we have achieved unprecedented visitor numbers. (Several museums and galleries in the centre of the city have asked us how we achieved this in a place 'like Craigmillar' with its 'notorious' reputation.)
3. **An attraction** - we have been both surprised and delighted at how far people were prepared to travel to visit our shows and at how far flung were some sources of interest. All of which highlights the extent to which historically, the early ambitions of the area, in respect of improved social housing, had succeeded. People have used the Craigmillar of yesteryear as a stable, secure launching pad for a diaspora which has proven to be global in scale.
4. **An educational tool** - local schools have been keen and amongst the first to engage with and contribute to the archive. In return, we have responded and welcomed the input and records the schools have offered. As schools close, merge, change – they too recognise the importance and significance of maintaining this vital social-history record. The Archive has already contributed significantly to the capacities of Curriculum for Excellence in local primary schools, particularly in relation to the development of responsible citizenship.
5. **Social Capital** - a health resource - a builder of bridges and bonds. Older people are increasingly marginalised and excluded. Our archive has seen many seniors become actively involved, with some also moving onto activities offered by CCA. Furthermore, reminiscence has proven health benefits, particularly for those suffering from Alzheimer's, both in its early and latter stages. To date, we have both transcribed and scanned reminiscences of former and current residents who have given extraordinary insights into the area from totally different perspectives. As a tool to bridge age divides at a time when many feel they are widening, the archive has barely tapped, great potential.
6. **A shift in perspective** - many younger people seeing archive materials have been both surprised and delighted. But then so have most who encounter its huge range of images. A younger generation (whose health issues dominate agendas) are surprised to see young men – fit, strong, participating in sport. Older people are delighted to see records that show how chic, how elegant their style was even when money was tight. Families under pressure draw strength from seeing the endurance of those who went before them.

PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL

In respect of the archive's potential, we are seeking partners who can ensure the archive's development. In order to fulfil the hopes of many who have contacted us in relation to the archive, we very much want to see the archive established somewhere that promotes and ensures:

- **Community engagement** - a tool in respect of social capital
- **Interactive access** - using ICT and encouraging its use
- **Ease of access** - locally sited
- **Distribution of images** - as appropriate
- **User input and contributions** - use of the archive to encourage social engagement
- **Continuity** - ensuring the archive is maintained, secured and developed.

Since the first exhibition (*Craigmillar Then...*) in July 2009, we have attracted great interest from people returning to the area to re-live old memories, and see what is happening. We've had on-going interest from Canada, South Africa and Australia (and more). With a targeted marketing campaign, the archive can tap into the heritage memories of the Craigmillar Diaspora. With a permanent exhibition and physical presence, people can ensure that their holiday includes a visit to Craigmillar.

AMBITIONS

- **Website** -by year end 2010, with our VAF monies, we will have launched the Craigmillar Archive Website (a simple 'taster' website). The next phase will see the website with a searchable element, allowing visitors to access the archive from anywhere in the world.
- **A book** - initially, with more funding, we can create a **downloadable resource**, but would wish actively to seek a publisher for hard copy. Again, there is huge potential to secure input from famous former residents and the **creation of a unique piece of 'coffee table' memorabilia - we have the pictures and records** to achieve this.
- **Film** - digital production has hugely altered the potential for film production, whether by linking up with FE colleges, local film-makers, or broadcasters. There are numerous filmic angles and narratives that can be wrought from the base materials of the archive with both on-line outlets as well as more conventional broadcasting for their dissemination.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: SOCIAL GAIN - THE ARCHIVE AS A TOOL

Since committing to the archive's development and success, we are aware of changes in the economic landscape. Notwithstanding, development of Craigmillar and its environs continues apace. The archive has a place within this development. The people's lives who reside within its records deserve recognition offer their record that Craigmillar is a unique locale, with a rich history that can only benefit its future and its future residents.

As the White House, or as it is affectionately referred to locally, the White Hoose, regains its place within the new Craigmillar, it seems fitting that its walls should give home to its people's record. Whatever role the newly developed White House/Hoose now takes for itself, its links with the past might best be forged from the lives, hopes, dreams and visions of those who came before. One way or another almost every visitor to our archive has contributed to its records. The most important next step is to ensure that the record of those whom history tends only to marginalise is not lost, but instead becomes the foundation of a new vision, a new Craigmillar, for Craigmillar people in which pride has a distinct and valid place

