



MARY ERSKINE FORMER PUPILS GUILD

MES FP News

ISSUE 23
NOVEMBER 2021

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Communicate with Us

We love to hear from you, our members. Whether it is news and updates, requests for information or to purchase tickets to one of our events.

We are generally in the office on a Tuesday and a Friday.

The Former Pupils' Guild of
The Mary Erskine School,
Ravelston, Edinburgh, EH4 3NT

Call us on:

+44 (0) 131 347 5722

or email us at

fpguild@esms.org.uk

We are also on social media with the majority of our interaction taking place on Facebook. To join the page, please visit:



[facebook.com/mesfpguild](https://www.facebook.com/mesfpguild)

twitter.com/mesfpguild

[instagram.com/mesfpguild](https://www.instagram.com/mesfpguild)



Lockdown, Lack of Events & Our Future Guild

Welcome to our latest newsletter of the pandemic. Not something I thought I would be writing.

Since our last newsletter, we truly thought we were on our way up but unfortunately, there was still a way to go on this journey, hopefully now there is light at the end of the tunnel. The Guild are doing well at adapting and changing to fit this new life. We held our last AGM online via Microsoft Teams in November and had representation from as far as Canada. A feat we hope to continue with future AGMs.

We are formally announcing our AGM this November on Thursday 25th which will be held at The Dean which will mark our final chance to decide on the immediate future of the Guild.

In this newsletter, we will lay out the pros and cons for each option and allow you to digest these before making your final decision. We will allow for votes in two ways (a) by post using the form within this letter, or (b) by voting on our website with the conclusion of these methods by Thursday 25th November.

Please do vote, as the more votes we obtain, the more representative of our members the decision will be.

Thank you for those who have taken the time to feedback on our last Annual

Report, we hope you have enjoyed reading it and we are finalizing the latest issue.

We are hopeful of resurrecting our events towards the end of the year. As soon as we can confirm these, we will let you know. We have listed provisional dates on the last page, so please do reserve the time in your diary.

My final request is again a call out for committee members. We require members to join us as general members and we also have vacancies for an Honorary Treasurer. As Mary Erskine girls, you can imagine, we all have fun working together to help meet the aims of the Guild from Pastoral matters to liaising with the Sixth-year representatives to event management and social media and marketing. If you have any of these skills and a few hours a month to spare, please do think about joining us. In the meantime, please stay safe and well. Best wishes,

Claire Cunningham
President and Class of 1997.

Mitis et Fortis



Decisions

As a committee we have investigated the pros and cons of each scenario and presented them in this newsletter to you ahead of your vote.

The Question

We are asking whether you see the future FP Guild being, within the next three years:

- Merged with SMC FP Club and the Development Office, or
- Continuing the MES FP Guild as a separate entity from the School.

Your Vote

You will be able to place your vote in November 2021 by two methods:

- a) Completing the form on the next page and posting it back to us.
- b) Completing the form on our website.
- c) Voting at our AGM in person on 25th November 2021.

The Case for: Merging with the Development Office

History and Identity

- **Our History:** In 1999, the ESMS Diamond Structure was finalised which created a joint sixth year, meaning for over 20 years, our FPs will have associated themselves as ESMS girls as well as Mary Erskine girls and this affects over a quarter of our members. A merge with the Development Office will allow more relevance to the recent FPs.
- **Our Identity:** We would do our utmost to ensure that with merging we would retain the "Mary Erskine School FP Guild".

Constitution, Financial and Legal

- **Our Constitution:** The Constitution would require amending to fit in with the new direction of the Guild. We will have to make additional changes in order to complete the vote on the future of the Guild. (See Events on page 4)
- **Accounts:** This would be produced by the Development Office and signed off by the Guild committee.
- **Income:** 2019 marked the last year that Guild funds were included as an option in the School Fees, due to this, we will no longer have a regular income.
- **Remaining Funds:** Our remaining funds would be split between maintaining our archives and Access to Excellence. The Development Office would take over the management of the finances. We would arrange around £20k to be kept easily accessible for the Guild and its FPs.
- **New Memberships:** The Development Office would manage any finances surrounding new members.

Communication with Members

- **Administration:** Rather than a Guild Coordinator, the administration and operation would be carried out by the Development Office. However, the Guild committee would provide all copy to the Development Office to execute communications on their behalf. First point of contact would be the Development Office with all proactive and reactive communications dealt with by them.
- **Database and Communications:** This would be managed by the Development Office.

Marketing and Literature Production

- **Social Media and Website:** To be managed by the Development Office, including any future updates and upgrades. To become part of an integrated ESMS alumni communications strategy, using content supplied by, among others, the Guild Committee. The current website would be closed down and to the various social media sites.

- **FP News and Annual Report:** All of the content will be provided by the FP Guild, but printing and distribution will be the responsibility of the Development Office.

Activities and Events

- **AGM:** this would remain an annual event and the Development Office would manage the organising of this.
- **Guild Meetings:** The Development Office would arrange the dates and booking venue for the regular meeting. The Guild would have responsibility for taking and maintaining the minutes.
- **Annual Reunion:** this would continue in its present format, assuming that there is a desire for it.
- **January Coffee Morning:** this would continue in its present format, assuming that there is a requirement for it.

The Committee:

- **Committee:** The Guild Committee would have a much-reduced scope and would only require office bearers.
- **Office Bearers:** Over the last few years it has been increasingly difficult to recruit and maintain positions of Office. Merging with the Development Office would allow the position of President to become more of a figurehead position. This would reduce the level of work involved and may improve the attractiveness of the position. It is proposed that the Guild maintain the setup with a President, Vice-President, Honorary Treasurer and an Honorary Secretary. Ideally the roles would be a 2-year term, with the V-P stepping up to become President at the end of the 2-year term. Attendance at events would be split amongst these four office-bearers rather than one person having to take them all on.

Archives:

- **Archives:** The archives which the Guild has collected over the years would be merged with that of the School and would be housed within the School as per current arrangements. Any duplication of items would be offered for sale with the proceeds going towards the preservation of future archives.

Associate Branch Clubs:

- There would be a survey completed with regard to these clubs and the best way forward to ensure that the needs of our members are being met throughout Scotland and the rest of the world.

The Case for: Continuing as a Separate Entity



History and Identity

- **Our History:** We would remain open to membership from any former pupil of The Mary Erskine School and would remain "open for business" as long as there is a request for it. This would be reviewed annually at the AGM.
- **Our Identity:** We would retain the name of the Mary Erskine FP Guild and current online identity.
- Should anything detrimental happen with the School politically or financially (e.g. St Margaret's School) the Guild would remain.

Constitution, Financial and Legal

- **Our Constitution:** The Constitution would require amending to fit in with the new direction of the Guild.
- **Accounts:** These would be maintained by the committee, signed off independently and disclosed at the AGM.
- **Income:** With the withdrawal of the FP levy on the fees of present pupils the status quo is clearly not sustainable. To return to the old hand-to-mouth existence relies on a lot of very hard work from a few volunteers. As the majority of younger FPs now are working full time this would be impractical. We would therefore reduce our offering and the cost of events would be fully met by the attendees, perhaps increasing costs by a couple of pounds per event.
- **Remaining Funds:** Our remaining funds would be split between maintaining our archives, continued running costs and The Melville College Trust. The Melville College Trust awards bursaries annually to the Erskine Stewart's Melville schools, which is over 20% of all bursary funding for the schools. The Melville College Trust also awards grants to fund extra-curricular and school related projects which would not otherwise receive funding and benefit a large number of pupils and former pupils. We would invest monies in their portfolios and agree when and why funds were to be withdrawn.
- **New Memberships:** Membership would become a free offering and be managed online via our website.
- **Independence:** Remaining independent would ensure no conflict of interest between the Development Office aims and the Guild. We also do not have to answer to the charities commission, Education Scotland, or the Scottish Government.

Communication with Members

- **Administration:** Administration would remain within the Guild Committee and Office Bearers. There would be no allocated administration role.
- **Office Hours:** We would negate the need for office hours by moving to an online only method of contact – no longer requiring space within the School.
- **Database:** We are registered as an organisation with the ICO. We would require to set up our own database and would request input from members to

repopulate it.

Marketing and Literature Production

- **Social Media and Website:** The website and social media would continue as is being run by the committee.
- **FP News and Annual Report:** FP News would be updated up to four times per year and sent out electronically with the Annual Report also moving online and being produced annually.

Activities and Events

- **AGM:** This would revert to online.
- **Guild Meetings:** Would continue with six meetings per annum online or at a mutually convenient location. Members would be informed of these dates so as to add to any agenda. Agenda and minutes would be published online.
- **Annual Reunion:** Although not running an annual reunion ourselves, we would fully support any annual event run by the School and encourage our members to attend. We may offer an annual event within Edinburgh for our members at an independent location assuming demand was high.
- **January Coffee Morning:** We would maintain the links with the Merchants' Hall and hope to continue this tradition annually, again assuming interest in the event.
- **Additional Events:** Would occur as and when the membership require it. There would be additional costs involved for any of these events.

The Committee:

- **Committee:** We would have a reduced scope within the School, offering formal representation only if required.
- **Office Bearers:** The Committee would consist of seven roles: President, Vice-President, Honorary Treasurer, Secretary, Marketing Officer, Events Officer and up to three Ordinary Members. The committee members would be elected at the AGM and hold post for a duration of two years.

Archives:

- **Archives:** We would work to move the majority of our archives into a digital format and securely store these off-site from the School. Access to these items would be via our website and after a log-in page.
- **Archive Sale:** We would give our Former Pupils the opportunity to purchase any duplicate archives, such as spare copies of Merchant Maidens, the resulting funds being reinvested in archive storage. Some items - such as uniforms, badges etc would be gifted to the School for their archives.

Associate Branch Clubs:

- We would look to create an online community and allow the chance for members to meet up locally should they consent to sharing their information with other members.

Your Vote

Please send your completed form to:

The Former Pupils' Guild of
The Mary Erskine School,
Ravelston, Edinburgh, EH4 3NT

**By 24th November 2021.
We cannot accept votes
after this date.**

Please select one option
below:

OPTION A

**Merged with SMC
FP Club and the
Development Office**

or

OPTION B

**Continuing the MES
FP Guild as a separate
entity from the School.**

NAME: _____
CLASS OF: _____
CONTACT EMAIL or PHONENUMBER: _____

From the Archives: 2020 FP Guild Quiz Answers

In our last newsletter, we launched a quiz on our website. Here are the answers:

1. Garlet House, Clackmannanshire
2. Robert and Beatrix
3. 5
4. David Pryde
5. Music and Reading
6. Latin
7. The Merchant Maiden
8. Mary G Clarke
9. Rouen
10. Members of the Former Pupils' Guild
11. The Mary Erskine School
12. Alison Geissler
13. A kidney dialysis machine
14. Bosnia
15. A Family Unbroken, by Lydia Skinner
16. The table carpet (made for the Governors of the Merchant Maiden Hospital)
17. Kinloch Anderson
18. Janice Rankin, curling
19. 70
20. Colours of the rainbow

Focus on You

Please let us know what you are doing with your lives, are you dominating your chosen career path? Have you started your own business? Are you helping others achieve greatness?

Let us know as we focus on sharing how our FPs have made a difference.



Upcoming Events

Please note that any tickets purchased will be fully refundable or transferred to the next year if an event is cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We will, also require you to follow any specific Government advice when attending any of our events. We will of course, update you on any of these requirements and prices when known.

Annual General Meeting - Thursday 25th November 2021 - 7.00pm

It is your chance to view the latest edition to the ESMS estate -The Dean - and attend our Annual General Meeting. You are welcome to join us to complete the business of the day, hear in a little more detail what we have been doing and enjoy some light refreshments.

Winter Lunch - Saturday 4 December 2021 - 11.45am - £25

We are welcoming you back for one of our popular events, the Winter Lunch. Held at Bruntsfield Golf Club, this event is a great start to the festive season. For £25 per person, you will receive a three-course lunch with tea and coffee and a chance to catch up with your fellow FPs.

Winter Coffee Morning - Saturday 29 January 2022 - 10am to 12 noon

The Winter Coffee Morning remains a firm fixture in our calendar and will take place at The Merchants' Hall, Edinburgh. Enjoy the beautiful surroundings with some home-baking and a chance to catch up with your friends.

Elsie Inglis Coffee Morning - Saturday 5th March 2022 - TBC

We are delighted to support this campaign which will keep Elsie Inglis' memory and legacy alive, the ultimate goal is to fund a statue in honour of a most remarkable woman who not only was one of Scotland's first women doctors and surgeons – but was also a leading suffragist. Elsie's intrepid story of preparing and equipping a medical unit of women doctors, nurses and ambulance drivers anxious to treat injured British soldiers on the front line in the First World War is one of courage and leadership. The War Office told her, "Dear lady, go home and sit still" – but she did not.

Elsie took her medical units out to France and Serbia and despite all sorts of obstacles, dangers and disease proved that women could go anywhere and do anything. More information will follow.

Summer Reunion - Saturday 4 June 2022 - 10am - TBC

We hope to invite you back to school to catch up with your classmates, have a tour around Ravelston and enjoy some lunch. The day begins at 10am with tea or coffee, followed by tours and a year group photo. Enjoy a glass of fizz ahead of a short performance from the school choir and a chance to sing the School Song. Several year groups go on to celebrate at night. If you require some assistance in organising an evening event for your year group, please contact us directly.

Your Committee:

The beating heart of the Guild is definitely the Committee and the outlying members who join in to assist at events throughout the year. Their humour, hardwork, professionalism and dedication, and not to mention home-baking, makes being a part of the committee enjoyable.

Claire Cunningham (1997) - President.

Caroline Crawford (1993) - Vice President.

Mrs. Rachel Sneddon nee. Brown (1996)
- Immediate Past President.

VACANCY - Honorary Treasurer

Committee Members: Claire Thompson, Susan Murray, Fiona Lawrence and Christine Collingwood

Guild Coordinator: Sam Roger

Additional Thanks: Thank you to Dorothy Sharp for all her support with the archives.



Join Us

Would you like to join our committee, assist with our pastoral items, marketing or events or even help out at the various events?

Perhaps you are looking for something different to do, an additional item for your CV or can offer assistance as we embark on a period of change within the Guild, we need volunteers to join us, now more than ever. Please message us for more details.