



# MARY ERSKINE FORMER PUPILS GUILD

# MES FP News

**ISSUE 22**  
JULY 2020

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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://facebook.com/mesfpguild)

[twitter.com/mesfpguild](https://twitter.com/mesfpguild)

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



## News, Surveys and a Heartfelt Thank You

**Welcome to the slightly delayed, COVID-19 affected MES FP News.**

Since our last newsletter in October, the world is indeed a different place, and so is the outlook of the Guild. In July, I should be thanking those who attended our Spring and Summer events, updating you as to how I welcomed our new, younger members to the Guild at the Strawberries and Champagne event, and sharing more facts learnt about Mary Erskine from our Remembrance Ceremony, however, unfortunately, all of our events were postponed or cancelled.

Thanks to the wonder of technology, I was able to create a short video for the girls which was streamed to them by way of an online Leavers Ceremony and we could welcome them in a fresh way – reflective of our times.

Since I took on the role of President, I was acutely aware that the value proposition we had was no longer relevant today. I wanted to ensure the longevity of our Guild and maintain our membership long past my tenure.

The School had also noticed changes and with their Development Office fully staffed and changes afoot at the SMC FP Club, it was suggested that we all merge together, reflecting the fact that both Schools are now more linked than ever.

Our Committee reflects our members and because of that we believed that the only option available was to put out the future of the Guild to a vote.

Thank you to all who participated in the survey, have added additional information and taken time to pass on their thoughts.

Regardless of the direction chosen, there is a lot of work to do. Therefore, we set up a preliminary vote to guide us as to the direction our members wanted which we will then work towards with an official vote taking place at the AGM at 7.30pm on Thursday 12 November 2020 at The Dean.

The results and findings are available within this newsletter.

We are also working on our other events for next year as we look to adapt and change to ensure maximum enjoyment whilst maintaining health and safety advice. We have carried over ticket sales to next year and once we are able to, I look forward to meeting you all again and hearing your stories of your school days at our events in the coming months.

**Claire Cunningham**  
President and Class of 1997.

*Mitis et Fortis*

## 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:

Ms. Claire Cunningham (1997)  
- *President.*

VACANCY (*Vice-President*)

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

Mrs. Claire Thompson nee. Maxwell (1987) - *Honorary Treasurer.*

### Committee Members:

Mrs. Susan Murray nee. Anderson (1983)

Ms. Dorothy Webster (1971)

Ms. Fiona Lawrence (1980)

### Guild Coordinator:

Ms. Sam Roger

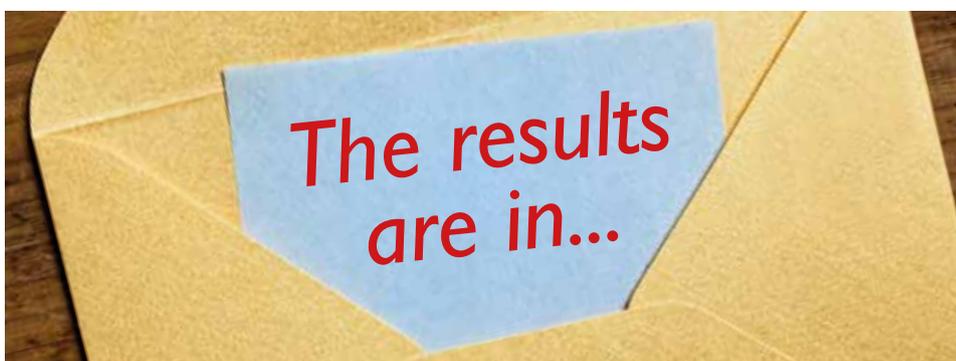
### Additional Thanks:

Thank you to Mrs. Christine Collingwood and Mrs. Dorothy Sharp for their work 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.*



# Your Survey Results

**Thank you for responding to our request for your opinion on the future of the Guild. We had 251 responses and many of you took the time to give reasoning behind your vote.**

### The Question Posed:

We asked your opinion on whether you saw the future FP Guild being, within the next three years:

a) Merged with SMC FP Club and Development Office or

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

### The Responses:

We received responses from a wide range of ladies from two of the class of 1948 to one from 2020.

53% (132 votes) of respondents selected merging with SMC FP Club and the Development Office whilst 46% (116 votes) opted to remain as a separate entity. 1% (3 votes) were undecided and chose both options.

### Common Themes:

One of the most common points made was that it was deemed very important to retain the Mary Erskine name – regardless of your age, it is important that we all remain Mary Erskine girls. Respondents also felt

it was a heart versus head moment with heart leading on maintaining our separation but the head opting for an amalgamation.

### Breakdown by Age:

We have removed the undecided votes here for clarity and regardless, they did not change any of the results by decade:

Decade	Continue	Merge
40s	20%	80%
50s	57%	40%
60s	43%	55%
70s	34%	66%
80s	45%	53%
90s	49%	51%
00s	44%	56%
10s	57%	43%
20s	0%	100%
Not listed	33%	67%

### What we expected:

We expected for there to be a clear mandate from our members and did not imagine that it would be so close. A 6% difference is not a clear enough indication for us to dismiss either of the options.

### The Next Steps:

As a committee we are looking into the pros and cons of both scenarios, however we are planning on leaning more towards the way in which the vote fell. Since it is so close, we will examine both of

these options and will present these to you all in October, ahead of the AGM for the final vote.

It is also worth noting that none of these changes will take place overnight and we expect a transition to occur over the next 12 to 18 months with us being fully integrated in the new model by the start of 2023.

### SMC FP Club Update:

By way of transparency, we also wanted to let you know the latest updates from the SMC FP Club.

Subject to agreement at an EMG this month, they will be transferring the Clubhouse to the School and transferring around 90% of their funds to the School to assist with hardship caused by the Covid-19 epidemic.

### Assist us during the transition:

We had not planned to bring a conversation of such magnitude to the table and our committee is now looking for assistance to help ensure that we have the relevant information available and fed back to our members to ensure a decision is made to the best of our abilities.

If you can help, even in the short term, please do contact us for an informal discussion, by email in the first instance – [fpguild@esms.org.uk](mailto:fpguild@esms.org.uk).

# News and Updates



## Winter Coffee Morning Report

Once again, we held our winter coffee morning on 25th January 2020. We were delighted with over 80 ladies in attendance, an increase over the last few years.

Our home baking was devoured as we took the opportunity to chat to each other – friends both old and new and spoke to the girls about their lives and Kirsty Nicholson, Head of The Mary Erskine School said a few words and gave an interesting and insightful vision of school life in 2020.

## Annual Report – Summer Special

Although there has been a delay, our annual report is now at the graphic designers and you will receive your bumper edition by the end of the summer with a slightly different look than the previous editions. This edition will contain a few years' worth of financial details but we are now up to date and will continue to publish these on an annual basis.

## OBITUARIES

### Mr Patrick Tobin

On 29 April 2020, former Principal, Mr Patrick Tobin passed away. Mr Tobin was Principal from 1989 to 2000 and was an Honorary President of the Guild. Our thoughts are with his wife, Margery, four children and grandchildren.

### Miss Eileen R McCamley

We were saddened by the news of the passing of Miss Eileen McCamley, who died on the 1st June 2020. Eileen worked at the School from 1973 until her retirement in 1992. We have a PDF of the Order of Service from the Celebration of her life. Please contact us to receive a copy.

## From the Archives... by Mrs Christine Collingwood

### Q: At Prizegiving, how many Prizes are awarded from the FP Guild?

**A:** There are many prizes offered from Former Pupils. We offer nine prizes on an annual basis, directly from the Guild rewarding the girls from a prize fund of over £500:

- The Former Pupils' Guild Prize for Service to S1 in Sixth Form.
- The Former Pupils' Guild Prize for All-round Proficiency in Form I.
- The Muriel Jennings Prize for Academic Excellence in Form I (6 individual prizes).

- The Former Pupils' Guild Prize for Service in Middle School.
- The Muriel Jennings Prize for Academic Excellence in Form II (6 individual prizes).
- The Former Pupils' Guild Prize for Home Economics in Form IV.
- The Former Pupils' Guild Jubilee Prize in Form V (2 individual prizes).
- The Former Pupils' Guild Prize for Music.
- The Former Pupils' Guild Prize for Dance.

**Were you awarded any of these Prizes when you were at School? Do you remember the book you chose as a prize? Let us know!**



## Development Office News

Due to the shutdown of the schools and the cancellation of many of their upcoming events, the Development Office have focused on keeping the community entertained and connected with each other and with the Schools.

A daily blog was launched which is the hub for most of our activity and you can see this at [esmscommunity.wordpress.com](https://esmscommunity.wordpress.com).

There were also regular virtual coffee mornings which featured guests from their community and they talk about a variety of topics both personal and professional.

Other activities included a weekly Community Quiz, an online singalong with Mr Skuse, Head of Junior School Music and a photography competition with a new topic each week and two categories: adult and child.

They also created a Pen Pals initiative for children to write to alumni and vice versa – we've now linked over 150 children with elderly, isolated alumni to brighten their days with letters and drawings. Links have been made as far away as Australia and as nearby as Murrayfield Road. If you are interested in joining that initiative, please do contact the Development Office.



## 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

These dates are  
**PROVISIONAL**



## Our 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 12 November 2020 - 7.30pm

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 complete the business of the day, hear in a little more detail what we have been doing; enjoy some light refreshments and most importantly vote on the future of the Guild.

### Winter Lunch - Saturday 5 December 2020 - 11.45am

Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society is the location for our next Winter Lunch. This event is a firm fixture on our calendar. Free parking and the lovely surroundings of the Golf Club add to the ease and informal setting of this three-course lunch with a festive feel.

### Winter Coffee Morning - Saturday 30 January 2021 - 10am to 12noon

One of our most popular events held at The Merchants' Hall in Edinburgh. A morning spent with coffee, home baking and laughter to brighten up your January!

### Act of Remembrance - Friday 4 June 2021 - 2pm

Joint event to be held at Inverleith Clubhouse. Details to be provided as soon as possible. Please contact us by email to be alerted once details are confirmed.

### Summer Reunion - Saturday 5 June 2021 - 10am

We would like 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.

## MES FP 2020 Quiz - [www.formerpupilsguild.com](http://www.formerpupilsguild.com)

We have recently launched a quiz on our website with a closing date of 31 August 2020. Compete in your clans to get the most correct answers. Please email your answers to [fpguild@esms.org.uk](mailto:fpguild@esms.org.uk) with your name and clan to enter.

1. Where was Mary Erskine born?
2. Do you know her parents' Christian names?
3. How many children is it believed Mary Erskine gave birth to when married to Robert Kennedie?
4. Which Head was a member of the 'Pen and Pencil Club'?
5. The Former Pupils' Guild first met in 1884. Name the subjects of the first two Guild Clubs started in 1886?
6. The Guild has provided the school with prizes over the years. In 1895 what was the first prize for?
7. Which magazine was produced in 1908 to further communication between former pupils and the school?
8. Which Head/Principal arrived at school and found all members of staff were older than her?
9. MES established a strong link with which Red Cross Hospital during WWI, where 3 beds were named after Mary Erskine?
10. Who traced Mary Erskine's grave?
11. In 1944, at the time of the school's 250th anniversary, the school changed its name – what did it become?
12. The 350th anniversary of the birth of Mary Erskine was marked by the Former Pupils' Guild with the presentation to the school of an engraved goblet. Who engraved this?
13. The School's Charities Committee encouraged fundraising and in 1984 £700 was raised - for what purpose?
14. In 1993, which country did girls (refugees) arrive from to spend four months at the School?
15. Which book about the school, published in 1994, has the following as its final paragraph?  
"What would the ladies of 1884 think of their successors today? Surely they would be gratified that they had indeed become a Guild of Friendship which still held to the aims which had inspired their Albany Street meeting."
16. What is displayed in school and has been described as its greatest treasure?
17. When the kilt became school uniform, who designed it?
18. What is the name of the former pupil who received a gold medal in the 2002 winter Olympic Games, and for which sport?
19. Currently, the school describes having a large number of extracurricular activities, over '?'. What is the missing number?
20. On the evening of 7th May this year, during the Covid-19 Lockdown, how was Ravelston House lit up?