

Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard Report 2026

Contents

- Welcome & Introduction
- Impact & Achievements in 2026
- Learnings in 2026
- What’s Next
- Annual Accounts
- Elections

Welcome

The Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard aim to increase the understanding, appreciation and conservation of the Kirkyard, so that it can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.



Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard Committee 2026



Mark Hatton
Chair



Liz Lockhart
Deputy Chair



Chris Cooper
Treasurer



Daria Tuhtar
Membership Secretary



Lesley Niezynski
Education Officer



Alison Park Douglas
Digital Officer



Stuart Robbins
Website Coordinator



Ann Jones
Committee Member

Would you like to be on the Committee?



Impact & Achievements in 2026

(In chronological order)

Mylne Monument Repair Assessment Feb 2026

The Mylne monument was showing signs of structural fatigue, including fractures to the columns.

An expert stone conservator prepared a Conservation Assessment Report.



In partnership with:

- Edinburgh World Heritage
- Edinburgh Bereavement Services
- Nic Boyes Ltd Stone Conservator

Installation of New Seating

March 2026

Three new benches were installed in the Kirkyard.

They represent an important accessibility improvement, giving people the opportunity to sit, rest and enjoy the Kirkyard.



In partnership with:

- Scott Warriston Sanderson & Family
- Other supporters and donors
- Edinburgh Bereavement Services



Bayne Ledger Stone Repair

April 2026

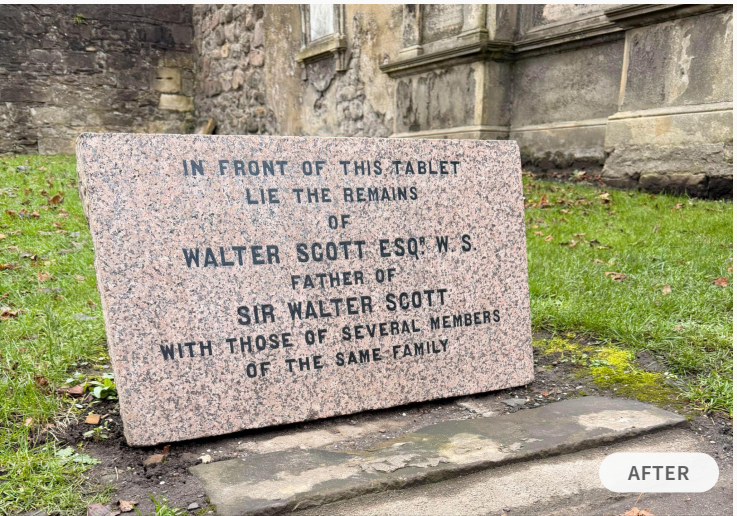
The broken ledger stone of John Bayne's tomb was removed for restoration.

We investigated whether this stone protected a hidden burial vault.

In partnership with:

- Edinburgh World Heritage
- Edinburgh Bereavement Services
- Nic Boyes Ltd Stone Conservator
- Part of the 'Legacies in Stone' project





Walter Scott Gravestone Restoration

May 2026

The memorial for Walter Scott (father of Sir Walter Scott) and other family members was restored and remounted after it had spent years in a fallen and illegible condition.

In partnership with:

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services
- Edinburgh Walter Scott Club
- Supporters and donors
- Robertson's Memorials

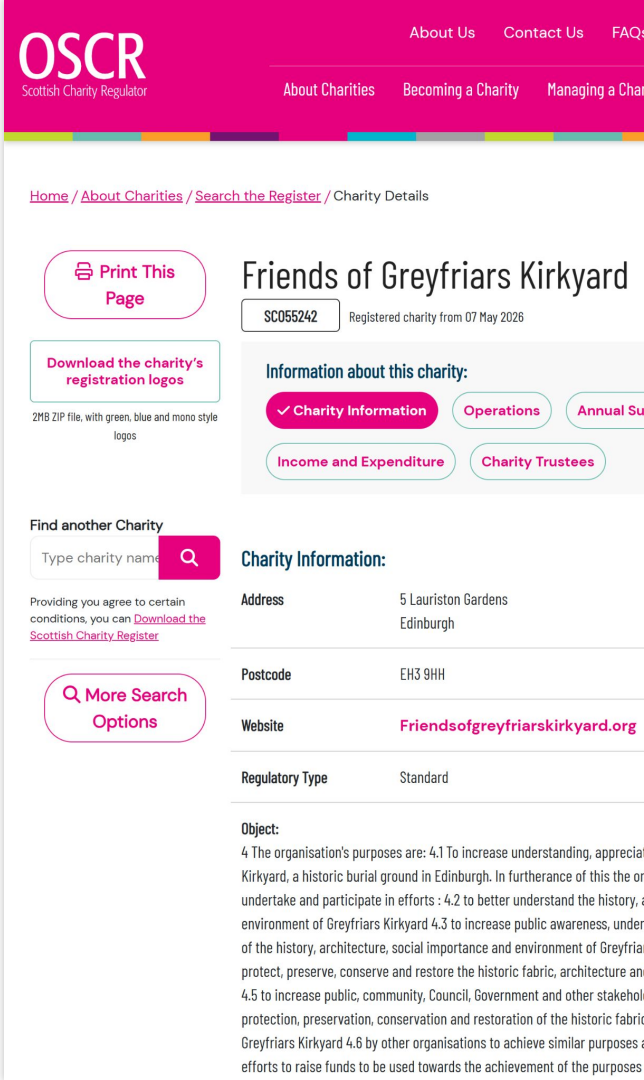
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)

May 2026

We were granted Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) status in May.

This is an important step in our progression as a credible and impactful organisation.

Registered SCIO: SC055242



Tours for National Cemeteries Week

June 2026

To mark the NFCF National Cemeteries Week (6–14 June), we offered free tours of the kirkyard, explaining its history, architecture, symbolism, and social significance.



Transformation of the Hutton Lair

June 2026

The Hutton lair was restored in time for the 300th anniversary of the birth of James Hutton (“Founder of Modern Geology”).

A drain was removed, the wall made good, weeding, and gravel replaced.



BEFORE



AFTER

In partnership with:

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services
- Edinburgh Geological Society
- Edinburgh University





Fencing Improvements

June 2026

We installed rope barriers on the path to Tom Riddle in the Western Yard and in front of the MacKenzie Mausoleum.

These protect the grass better than the previous flimsy plastic chains.

In partnership with:

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services

Improved Litter Management

June 2026

Litter in the Kirkyard has been reduced by replacing open-sided bins with larger, lidded bins.

The simple addition of bulldog clips has made changing the bin liners much easier, quicker and cleaner.



In partnership with:

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services



Bannatyne Monument Repair

July 2026

Cracks threatening the integrity of the Bannatyne Monument were repaired by an experienced stone conservator.

Conservation students observed to learn the techniques being used.

In partnership with:

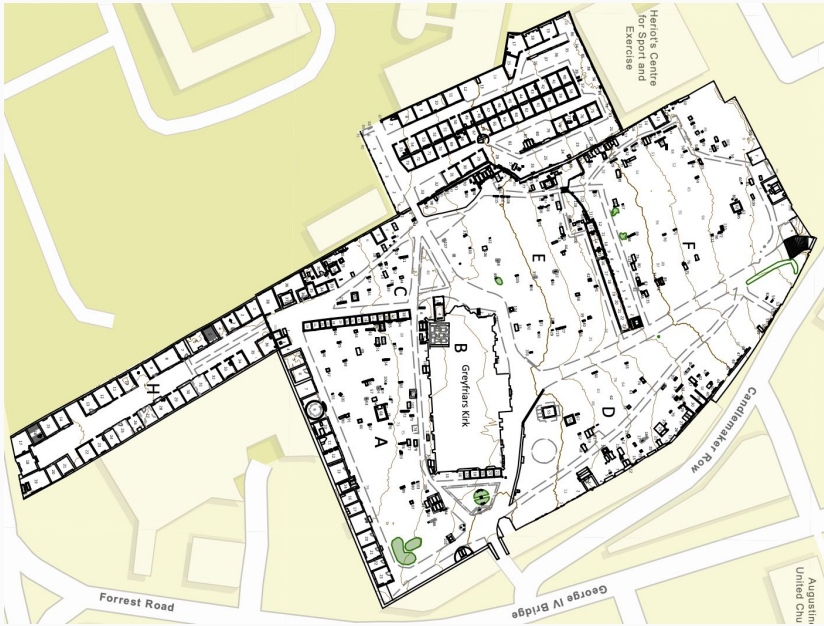
- Edinburgh World Heritage
- Edinburgh Bereavement Services
- Nic Boyes Ltd Stone Conservator
- Part of the ‘Legacies in Stone’ project

Baseline Recording Project

July 2026 (ongoing)

We’re working on a survey of all the monuments in the Kirkyard, and integrating them with the historical record.

The aim is to compare earlier records to what exists now.



In partnership with:

- Edinburgh World Heritage
- Part of the ‘Legacies in Stone’ project

Tours for Impact Arts

July 2026 (ongoing)



We hosted cemetery symbolism tours for groups of 12–16 year olds as part of Impact Arts' creative engagement programme to build confidence and empower young people to achieve their potential.

In partnership with:

- Impact Arts



Buddleia Management

July 2026 (ongoing)

We removed a large amount of buddleia from the walls of the Kirkyard, removing flower heads before they set seed to prevent further spread and structural damage to the stonework.

In partnership with:

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services

‘Tom Riddle’ Wayfinding Signage

Aug 2026

Installed a new wayfinding sign to the location of the ‘Tom Riddle’.

This was done to help ease wear & tear in certain areas of the Kirkyard as people try to find the correct monument.



In partnership with:

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services



Bayne Polychromatic Survey

Sept 2026

An expert in polychromy gave a talk and examined the John Bayne monument for signs of historical paintwork, after evidence was found in records that it may have originally been painted and/or gilded.

In partnership with:

- University of Glasgow
- Edinburgh World Heritage
- Part of the ‘Legacies in Stone’ project

Edinburgh Doors Open Days

Sept 2026

We had an incredibly successful Days Open Days event this year, welcoming over 3,500 people through the gates of the Covenanters Prison, many of whom were Edinburgh residents.

In partnership with:

- The Cockburn Association



Ground-Penetrating Radar Survey

Oct 2026

Ground-penetrating radar was used to explore the secrets hidden beneath the kirkyard without disturbing historical remains, and engage with the public in a novel and effective manner.



In partnership with:

- Edinburgh World Heritage
- AOC Archaeology Group
- Part of the ‘Legacies in Stone’ project

First Sunday Participation Growth

Nov 2025 – Oct 2026



Nov 2025



Jan 2026



Feb 2026



Mar 2026



Apr 2026



May 2026



June 2026



July 2026



Sept 2026



Oct 2026

Growth in Membership

Throughout 2026



Hello to the 59 new members who joined over the past year!

We aim to build on our programming and expand our numbers over the coming year and beyond.

Digital Development

Throughout 2026

2026 has seen huge growth in our website content, traffic, and search engine position.

To expand our outreach, we will explore new platforms, like video, to show the rich history of the Kirkyard.

FoGK.org



Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard

- helping to understand, appreciate & conserve Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh -

ABOUT US | ARTICLES | DONATIONS | EVENTS & TOURS | JOIN US | RESOURCES | SHOP | CONTACT US

About The Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard



The Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard is a group of people who are passionate about Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh. We believe this is a very valuable but vulnerable place that needs as many friends as possible. Our mission is to help people understand, appreciate & conserve the Kirkyard.

There is so much to learn about the Kirkyard on so many different levels. It is full of history, meaning and mystery, all of which we are keen to find out more about. We

Contact Us

To contact us, please email or call Mark Hatton the Chair of The Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard:

Email : Mark@Hattonfamily.com
Telephone : 07774 499589

Further Achievements

Throughout 2026

Inspiring Tours

We delivered dozens of tours targeted for local community, employer, and special interest groups, helping increase the number of advocates for the Kirkyard.

Research Enquiries

Our growing reputation has generated many enquiries from researchers wanting to know about the Kirkyard and the people buried there.

Knowledge Sharing

We shared our knowledge of the Kirkyard with the Kirk as part of a project to develop their museum displays.

Relationship Building

We've very consciously sought to expand our network and influence by building relationships with many groups.

Exciting Developments

2026 to 2027

Edinburgh Visitor Levy (EVL)

2026 saw the award of EVL funds to help finance improvements to the maintenance, conservation and understanding of Edinburgh's historic burial grounds, principally Greyfriars Kirkyard. This followed a campaign we ran to help ensure Edinburgh Councillors and the MSP understood just how valuable and vulnerable the historic fabric of the Kirkyard is. We look forward to influencing how these funds are deployed so as to maximise the beneficial impact on the Kirkyard.

Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

2026 saw the preparation of a CMP by Kirkyard Consulting Ltd. This is a working document and a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing the Kirkyard and potential solutions. Recommendations for the future management, care and conservation of the Kirkyard have informed an Action Plan that will be reviewed and updated. We look forward to helping implement the CMP in 2027.

Tour Feedback

2026

"Informative, engaging, and overall a fantastic experience!"

"Past lives brought to life again with imagination and enthusiasm."

"[My favourite thing] was having particular graves of people I wanted to find pointed out to me. [I also appreciated] the depth of knowledge and obvious prior research."

"Inspired to do further reading/return at another point to look at the graves."

"Interesting to walk in the footsteps of those who had such an impact on the Scottish Enlightenment."

"It was great. I love being in the graveyard with its historic buildings and graves and lots of mature trees. Great for us to get into the Covenanters Prison – part of the graveyard which is not usually accessible."



Learnings in 2026

Past & Present Comparative Photos

Late 2025 – 2026



We replicated many historic photos, revealing how much, and in some ways how little, has changed in the Kirkyard.

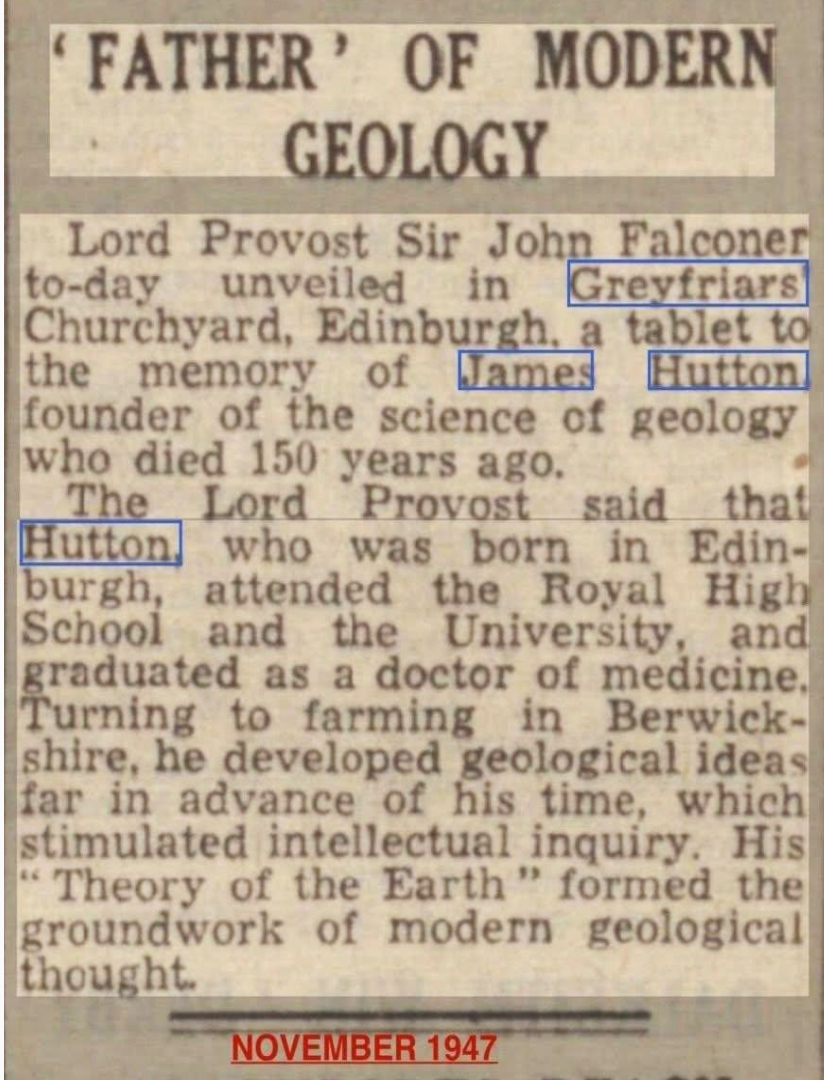
The rate of deterioration of many monuments is clearly accelerating but the Kirkyard remains basically as it was over 100 years ago (albeit with more visitors).

James Hutton Burial Research

Jan 2026

In time for the 300th anniversary of his birth, our research confirmed the resting place of James Hutton, “Founder of Modern Geology”.

After years of uncertainty, due to the lack of an original memorial and misleading burial records, we finally confirmed that James is, indeed, buried in the Covenanters Prison.



‘FATHER’ OF MODERN GEOLOGY

Lord Provost Sir John Falconer to-day unveiled in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, a tablet to the memory of James Hutton, founder of the science of geology who died 150 years ago.

The Lord Provost said that Hutton, who was born in Edinburgh, attended the Royal High School and the University, and graduated as a doctor of medicine. Turning to farming in Berwickshire, he developed geological ideas far in advance of his time, which stimulated intellectual inquiry. His “Theory of the Earth” formed the groundwork of modern geological thought.

NOVEMBER 1947

The Women of Greyfriars

Mar 2026

A collection of amazing, varied and revealing tales of how women memorialised in Greyfriars Kirkyard lived and died.

One example is Mary Erskine, an incredibly successful businesswoman and philanthropist who used her wealth to found two schools for girls.



ARTICLES, HISTORY, PEOPLE

Women of Greyfriars: Mary Erskine



ARTICLES, HISTORY, PEOPLE

Women of Greyfriars: Janet Bannatyne



ARTICLES, HISTORY, PEOPLE

Women of Greyfriars: Janet MacMath



Enlightenment Figures in the Kirkyard

Apr 2026

We’re constantly learning more about Edinburgh's various 18th and 19th century scientists, publishers, and polymaths buried here, such as:

- **Colin MacLaurin:** mathematical genius.
- **Sir James Hall:** geological peer of James Hutton.
- **Alexanders Monro (primus & secundus):** pioneering Professors of Anatomy at Edinburgh University.
- **Lord Monboddo:** pioneer of naturism who took “air baths” each morning.

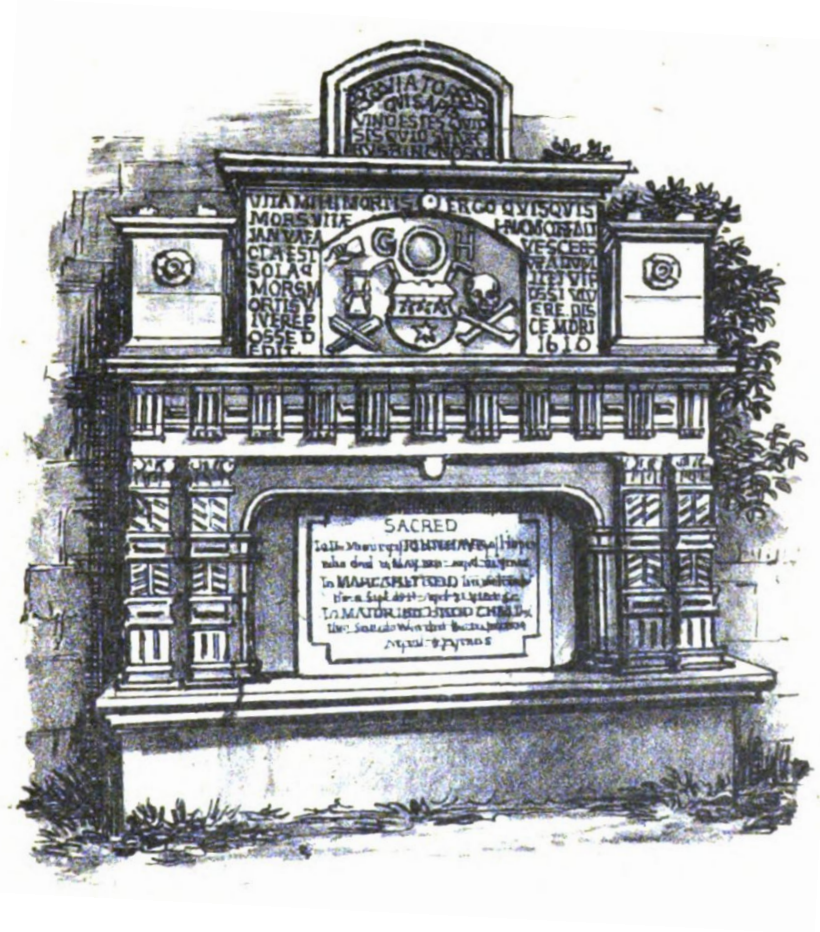
“The Quiet Heroine of the Southside”

May 2026

The inscription on a thick ledger stone in the northwest corner of the Kirkyard tells of Miss Ann Reid, who dedicated herself to improving the lives of impoverished girls through ‘unostentatious charity.’

“Reader, mark… how much good may be done with small means, by the exertions of a mind devoted to virtue, guided by a benevolent heart!”





George Heriot & Funereal Fashion

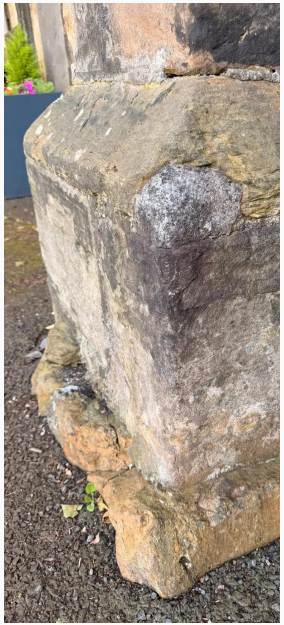
June 2026

George Heriot's tomb on the east wall is one of the oldest in the Kirkyard. We've been pulling together evidence that supports the claim that the tomb was designed by George Heriot Junior ("Jingling Geordie") and, in so doing, he started a new style and fashion for funereal architecture in Scotland.

Location of the Original Friary

June 2026

An enduring mystery of the Kirkyard is where the original friary was located. Many historians think that the buildings were in the north end of the yard. But we point to evidence suggesting the Kirk may have been built on the footprint of the old Friary, incorporating the stonework of the earlier buildings.







Ghost Marks

July 2026



The summer drought revealed where the walls around several burial lairs used to be.

As the grass dehydrated and the ground shrunk back, areas of shallow soil above the long-buried walls browned off earlier than the rest of the grass, revealing the ghosts of the old walls.



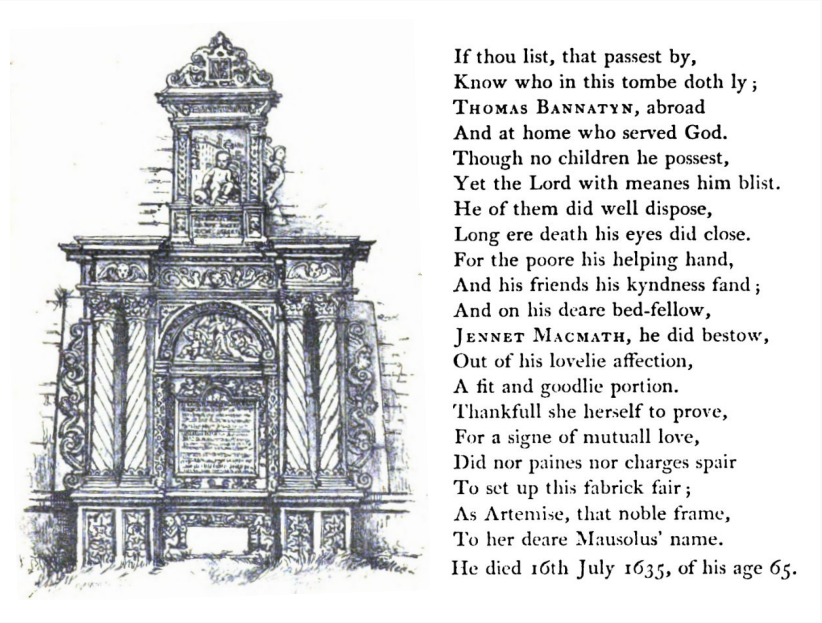
“The Child Who Accused Witches”

Sep 2026

This photo shows where we believe Christian Shaw was buried in the Kirkyard in 1737. As an adult, Shaw was a successful businesswoman. However, she is more famous today for having accused over 20 people of witchcraft when she was just 11 years old, in 1697. Seven of those she accused were hanged and burned.

Janet McMath & Thomas Bannatyne

Throughout 2026



If thou list, that passest by,
Know who in this tombe doth ly;
Thomas Bannatyn, abroad
And at home who served God.
Though no children he possest,
Yet the Lord with meanes him blist.
He of them did well dispose,
Long ere death his eyes did close.
For the poore his helping hand,
And his friends his kyndness fand;
And on his deare bed-fellow,
Jennet Macmath, he did bestow,
Out of his lovelie affection,
A fit and goodlie portion.
Thankfull she herself to prove,
For a signe of mutuall love,
Did nor paines nor charges spair
To set up this fabrick fair;
As Artemise, that noble frame,
To her deare Mausolus' name.
He died 16th July 1635, of his age 65.

When Thomas Bannatyne died, Janet McMath made the monument inscription very clear, describing her as his “bedfellow”, rather than his “widow”, despite being childless and the very large difference in their ages.

It is thought that this was to ensure everyone understood that they had entered into a full and legal marriage, so no one would challenge the will.

Battles with Buddleia

Throughout 2026

This year we learned more about what a determined and destructive plant Buddleia is. Our attempts at taming it achieved little.

The recent collapse of the McGrugar mural monument, pushed off its wall mount by the Buddleia growing behind it, serves to re-energise and prioritise this battle with Buddleia.





What's Next

Our Goals For 2027

What's Next

1

Build on Our Work and the Relationships We've Nurtured

Our partnership with Edinburgh Bereavement Services, Edinburgh World Heritage and the other stakeholders in the Kirkyard remains critical to our ability to deliver change and enhanced care for the Kirkyard.

2

Continue to be Strong Advocates for the Kirkyard and Ensure it is Appropriately Valued

Our work to spread understanding of and appreciation for the value and vulnerability of the Kirkyard continues, through guided tours, speaking events, fundraising efforts, and lobbying opportunities.

Our Goals For 2027

3

Continue to be a Full and Committed Partner in the 'Legacies in Stone' Project

The 'Legacies in Stone' project, in Partnership with Edinburgh World Heritage, has enabled us to do groundbreaking new research in the Kirkyard.

This will continue throughout 2027.

4

Vigorously Pursue Solutions to the Challenges the Kirkyard Faces

We remain committed to finding, funding and delivering new ways of conserving and protecting the Kirkyard from the challenges it faces.

Buddleia, climate change, wear and tear, vandalism, and limited funding are the biggest challenges the Kirkyard faces.



Annual Accounts

Annual Accounts

Financial Statement for the Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard

Receipts	£ Year Ending 31/08/2026	£ Year Ending 31/08/2025
Donation: via Bereavement Services	1,017	1,220
Donation: Kirkyard Seating Project	3,251	–
Grant: Sir Walter Scott Club	250	–
Grant: EWH, Mylne Monument	1,960	–
Receipts: Doors Open Days	391	451
Receipts: Talks & Tours	340	358
Receipts: Guidebook Sales	1,749	1,035
Receipts: Membership Fees	519	550
Receipts: Misc.	125	10
Total Receipts	**9,602**	**3,625**

Payments	£ Year Ending 31/08/2026	£ Year Ending 31/08/2025
EWH, Legacies in Stone Project	250	–
Walter Scott Snr Monument	892	–
EWH/FoGK Mylne Monument	2,460	–
Bayne Mausoleum Repairs	–	500
Guidebook Printing Cost (2nd Ed)	–	1,872
Bank Charges	55	25
Tour Guide Licence	165	126
Doors Open Days	68	–
Web Domain	–	79
Insurance	240	216
Misc.	3	14
Total Payments	**4,133**	**2,834**

Surplus	£ Year Ending 31/08/2026	£ Year Ending 31/08/2025
Total Receipts	9,602	3,625
Total Payments	4,133	2,834
Surplus for the Year	**5,469**	**791**

Balance Sheet	£ Year Ending 31/08/2026	£ Year Ending 31/08/2025
B/F Bank Balance	6,412	5,621
Surplus for the Year	5,469	791
Bank Balance	**11,881**	**6,412**

Annual Accounts

Notes to the Accounts for the Year Ended 31 August 2026

Notes

- This Financial Statement has been prepared showing receipts and payments for the period 01/09/2025 – 31/08/2026.
- Many thanks to Edinburgh World Heritage and City of Edinburgh Council for their continued support and also for the banking services provided by the Bank of Scotland.

Receipts

- A generous £1,017 donation received from Orthometals recycling scheme subsequently distributed by Edinburgh Bereavement Services to qualifying local organisations.
- Guidebook sales continue to provide regular income. Our thanks to Greyfriars Kirk, National Library of Scotland and Transreal Bookshop for stocking our book.
- Talks given to local groups and the popular Doors Open Days event raised £731.
- Membership fees also continue to provide an important source of income.

Payments

- The £892 cost of the repairs to the Scott monument included the generous £250 donation from the Sir Walter Scott Club.
- The £2,460 payment for the Mylne Monument Conservation Assessment Report is composed of a grant of £1,960 from Edinburgh World Heritage and a £500 contribution from FoGK.

Balance Sheet

- Kirkyard Seats Project. The seats have been installed, the donation has been banked, but the invoice for this work has still not been received. This outstanding invoice flatters the year end bank balance figure of £11,881.



Elections

Election of Trustees

Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard



Mark Hatton



Liz Lockhart



Chris Cooper



Daria Tuhtar



Lesley Niezynski



Alison Park Douglas



Stuart Robbins



Ann Jones

Would you like
to be a Trustee?

Thank You!

- Edinburgh Bereavement Services, & Paul Cunningham & Jane Matheson
- Edinburgh World Heritage, & Dr Susan Buckham
- National Lottery Heritage Fund for funding the Legacies in Stone Project
- City Archeological Officer John Lawson
- Greyfriars Kirk and other stakeholders
- All the Members of Friends of Greyfriars Kirkyard

Report designed by Alison Park-Douglas and Paul Wilson. Photo credits: Alison Park-Douglas and Mark Hatton