

MAN OF MANY TALENTS HONOURED ON CANVAS

Jim Foster is a very important member of the Prestoungrange Arts Festival team who provides advice on everything from horticulture to history and knows just about everyone in the town.

Today he is being honoured by the Festival which has commissioned a portrait of Jim, painted by Kate Hunter, which will hang permanently in the staircase gallery in the Gothenburg.

Jim is a well known and highly respected character in Prestonpans. People might know him primarily for his interest in gardening and history, but possibly don't know that he was also an extremely talented athlete and sportsman in his youth.

Born in Glasgow, Jim came to the Cuthill at the age of 12 where he lived with the Touppin family and attended Cuthill School. He started to play football for the YMCA and displayed the awesome athletic ability that would blossom later.

A Life-time of gardening

His first job was with Lowe's Market Garden where his green fingers became evident and started his long career in gardening. He moved on to work for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, then for Midlothian County Council, Seaton Castle and later to Edenhall Hospital, where he was head gardener. For the last 23 years Jim has taught gardening at St Joseph's School. He is naturally in charge of all things horticultural at the Prestongrange Arts Festival.

An All Round Sportsman

Also after leaving school Jim soon started to enjoy considerable success in athletics and a number of other sports.

He is probably best known for his running ability and won many races (and associated prize money) – including the famous Powderhall and Jedburgh Gold Medals. The strict professional v amateur status demarcation of those days was probably the only thing that stopped him being selected to represent his country. Later he coached a number of successful runners.

At the age of 22 he was asked to play professionally for Portsmouth Football Club, but preferred to stay with professional athletics. Also a talented boxer, Jim regularly trained with the professionals at Riley's Gym in Edinburgh.

Golf is still a passion for Jim who has been a member of the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club for 54 years. He is now an Honorary Member and a member of the RMGC committee.

Youth Clubs

Jim also has a long association with local youth clubs. He ran the St Gabriel's Youth Club for many years, initiated youth club activities at St Joseph's School and worked with disabled children at Prestonlodge. Boys at Loretto School also helped Jim with this work as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Awards.

Author and Historian

Jim is an accomplished writer and is the author of, among other things, *The Tom Tait Story*, a book about a local sprinter of the 1930's.

Always passionate about local history, Jim became involved at the start of the Prestonpans History Society when it started in 1985. He has been chairman since 1987 and membership has flourished.

His writing skills and interest in history and sport have resulted in a string of articles in magazines and newspapers over the years.

Family

Last, but not least, Jim and his wife Bridget celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary earlier this year. They have three sons.