



TAIGH-TASGAIDH NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2015

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West Highland Museum



Message from the Chairman

No matter what we might think of our own endeavours, it's how we affect others and how we appear to them that's important. "To see ourselves as others see us", is Burns' oft-quoted line. We live in the time of peer-review; and for us achieving Full Accreditation from Museum Galleries Scotland in October was certainly a ringing endorsement from our sector. Less formal, though just as important, are our regular excellent reviews on TripAdvisor.

These achievements only come through hard work and dedication. In this case from Colleen, her staff and the enthusiastic army of volunteers, to whom we give our thanks and appreciation. Thanks too are due to Vanessa Martin and Sharon Donald for this excellent Newsletter.

Thomas Wynne our nominated trustee from the Fort William Community Council has had to stand down owing to other pressures. We wish him well and look forward to meeting his replacement.

Which leads me on to asking you to remind your friends about our excellent shop which has steadily built up the best collection in town, as we enter the season of gift-buying!

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

John C Hutchison
Chairman of Trustees

Message from the Manager

You will be pleased to know we have had a good year so far at the Museum. Our visitor numbers, shop sales and donations from visitors are all up slightly on last year's figures. This was partly achieved by opening 8 Sundays during the summer. We opened from 11am to 3pm and had over 1000 visitors over the 8 weeks we opened. We plan to do the same next year.

We have had an eventful year here at West Highland Museum. The two most memorable events for me were our members and friends visit to Roshven House; and my first visit to an auction house with Sally Archibald.

In May, Angus MacDonald very kindly opened his house to our members and their friends. It was a grand day out and raised £813 for museum funds. There is more about this event in the newsletter.



The Lyon & Turnbull team pictured with Colleen and the late Charles Kennedy

Also in May, Sally Archibald and I attended the Jacobite, Stuart & Scottish Applied Arts auction at Lyon and Turnbull's auction house in Edinburgh. This was my first visit to an auction house and I found it really good fun. Sally did the bidding on behalf of the Museum (I was just concentrating on not buying anything by mistake!) We tried to buy a number of items, but there were lots of bidders with much deeper pockets than ours! We did succeed in

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Museum members and supporters visited Roshven House in May

whm
West Highland Museum

Message from the Manager - continued

purchasing a pretty silver snuff mull that belonged to Cluny MacPherson.

We have nearly 50 volunteers, which is an amazing number, but we still sometimes struggle to cover the weekend shifts. If you would be interested in helping out at the Museum, particularly on a Saturday morning, or afternoon (or on a Sunday next summer), please do contact us.

In September we received the fantastic news that we had once again achieved full accreditation. The Accreditation Scheme in Scotland is administered by Museums Galleries Scotland on behalf of Arts Council England. Being part of the Accreditation Scheme, means we have the benefit of support and guidance to develop our services in a direction that we can be confident in. Also, as an accredited museum we will have access to Museums Galleries Scotland investment programmes.

I'm pleased to report that we had a very successful bag packing session on 24th October in Morrisons, where we raised a total of £805.07. We all had a great time talking to shoppers, both locals and holidaymakers, about our wonderful museum. As well as raising valuable funds for the Museum, it was also a fantastic PR exercise for us too.

The Museum will close to visitors from Monday 21st December 2015 and will re-open on Monday 7th of March 2016. We are now starting to plan what we shall do during the winter closure period. This is when we are able to safely get in to cases to make any changes required. We will also be doing some DIY tasks and with the help of Fiona Marwick and Sally Archibald we shall start to make an inventory of the attic. That will not be a small task! This is required as part of the accreditation procedures.

If you are receiving this newsletter in paper format but you have access to email, please can I ask you to consider receiving the electronic colour version of the newsletter in future as it saves us the significant cost of printing and posting newsletters. If you would like to be added to our email list, please send your details to colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk or telephone me on 01397 702169.

Best wishes
Colleen Foggo
Museum Manager

We received some very sad news just before the newsletter went to press. One of our faithful volunteers, Isie Cameron, passed away after battling cancer for sometime. Isie told me about her illness months ago, yet until recently, played her full, enthusiastic and well-informed role as a volunteer at the Museum. Neither she, nor her family, would have had it any other way. We send our sincere condolences to the Cameron family.

**If you would like to help
as a volunteer in the
West Highland Museum,
contact Sonja McLachlan.**

Telephone: **01397 702169**

Email: sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk

West Highland Museum Developments

The WHM vision is ***"to be a welcoming museum which provides inspiration, learning and enjoyment for all"***.

We know from the many positive reviews and visitor feedback that we go a long way to satisfying that vision at the moment. During the last few months however, the Trustees and Management Committee have been exercising their minds on how we can be even better - increasing space for both permanent and temporary exhibitions, improving the facilities we offer visitors and attracting more local people to enjoy our museum.

It is our view that, while the Museum has turned a corner in recent years - increasing turnover and visitor numbers - there is more which could be done to reflect additional aspects of West Highland history and to be a sustainable, valued resource for the local area. We are conscious that the Museum is approaching its centenary year in 2022 which offers opportunity not only to celebrate the success of its first century but to kindle new interest and new direction for the coming years.

In August we held a workshop to explore how we would use more space and agreed that we would like to offer more on our industrial heritage, climbing and mountaineering, highland life, emigration and land management. We'd like the Museum to be fully accessible, to offer great education and research facilities, a bigger shop, perhaps a café and much better staff areas.

As you may be aware we own land behind the Museum along with MacFarlane's Barn so we have the space to achieve our aims. The next steps are to raise funds to employ a design team to help us formalise our plans and to try and come up with a preferred option and budget cost for expansion.

Ambitious projects like this take time to come to fruition and competition for funding is fierce. Our plans must be supported by thorough research and be able to demonstrate that they can survive in the long term so there is a lot of hard work to be carried out in the coming months.

If you have any thoughts or ideas on our ambitions, we'd love to hear them. Please email Colleen in the first instance. colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk

Jackie Wright
Chair, Management Committee

'Unexpectedly' - 11 October 2015

*Fort William can be proud of this very
interesting and very well arranged museum.
It is really worth visiting!*

Berlin, Germany



Not the Antiques Roadshow

On 21 February, Lyon & Turnbull, Scotland's oldest auctioneers visited the Museum for a "Not the Antiques Roadshow" Valuation Day.

Colin Fraser and other specialists from Lyon & Turnbull conducted valuations of art and antiques, including silver, jewellery, paintings, coins, medals, arms & armour. Visitors were charged £5 for two valuations, £3 per item afterwards, with the auctioneers kindly donating all proceeds to support the West Highland Museum. The event was a massive success. It was very busy at times, but everyone was very patient waiting their turn, enjoying tea and coffee in the process.

The previous evening, a fascinating lecture was delivered by Professor Hugh Cheape, Research Chair at the University of the Highlands & Islands. The lecture titled "This is the time the prophecy has been proven: Recollecting the 1715", was addressed to a packed room at the Alexandra Hotel in Fort William. The lecture was sponsored by Lyon & Turnbull and entrance fee proceeds were donated to the Museum.

Chair of Trustees, John Hutchison, introduced the lecture and thanked Lyon & Turnbull for funding both events. It was a most enjoyable and informative evening with the final note of thanks to round off the evening delivered by Dr. Chris Robinson. The weekend's events together raised just under £600.

Professor Cheape has kindly written a piece on the subject for the newsletter.



*Colleen Foggo & Colin Fraser from Lyon & Turnbull
(Photograph courtesy of The Write Image)*



John Hutchison addressing the room



*Lyon & Turnbull specialist Colin Fraser evaluating
a collection of broadswords*



The experts valuing items

DVD RESULT OF ACHNACARRY ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG



In the Spring the Museum hosted the launch of a DVD highlighting the history of the elite Commando training centre at Achnacarry. Lochaber Archaeological Society created the DVD about the dig they undertook in the grounds of Achnacarry Castle in 2014. The project unearthed an amazing array of relics dating back to the days of World War II, some of which are now on display in the Museum's Commando Exhibition.

The DVD features some of the items found at the dig, including spent cartridges, military buttons, and even a live grenade; a Royal Navy bomb disposal team helped to make it safe.

A moving part of the film includes interviews with veterans who undertook the tough training sessions which included climbing along ropes across a river at Achnacarry, ancestral home of the Clan Cameron. In the DVD, which includes contemporary black and white film taken during the training sessions, Donald Cameron of Lochiel talks about the role his historic home and grounds played during the period. Robert Cairns, chairman of the group, said that it was a moving experience to uncover so much history and meet some of the veterans.

The DVD, 'Achnacarry Commando Basic Training Centre 70 years on', costs £7.50 and is on sale in the Museum's shop.

'Talk to the volunteers & leave a nice donation' - 23 September 2015

I'm not one to go through a museum at a steady walking pace and then say "Done! What's next?" Allow yourself a good couple of hours - at least - to appreciate what this gem has to offer. It's in one of the town's oldest buildings and houses an outstanding collection of Jacobite material, but you will find much more. I am very glad I made this a priority!

Toronto, Canada



New Art App Promotes Museum



The West Highland Museum is featured in the new version of The Art Fund's popular Art Guide app. The free app, which is available to download on iPhone, iPad, Android and tablets, is a gateway to seeing and experiencing art across the United Kingdom. Kerstin Glasow, from The Art Fund said "We hope the app will help art lovers across the UK visit more museums and exhibitions and share their experiences with others - and of course, promote museums and galleries to an even wider audience."

If you download the app, don't forget to rate and recommend the West Highland Museum!



Museum 'Ghost' Goes Viral

In January, the Museum got some unusual publicity. A photograph appeared on the internet that quickly went viral, sparking an online debate as to whether or not the Museum is haunted! The supposedly spooky face of a ghost appeared on Facebook and numerous websites. It was taken by Dundee Warden, an American tourist who visited the West Highland Museum in September 2014 and who was convinced she had photographed a ghost.

One online commentator speculated that it could be the ghost of a former curator, who died in the 1960s, saying she can even be heard tapping away at a spectral typewriter in one of the upstairs rooms. However, many were quick to dismiss the ghost theory and claimed instead it was a reflection in the glass.

Whatever the truth, the story generated a huge amount of interest in the Museum online.

The image of a ghostly figure stares from the right of the photo?



Members Trip to Roshven House

When Angus MacDonald of Roshven offered to open his house to help raise funds for the Museum, he could not have envisaged the level of interest his generous offer generated.

A full coach left Fort William; and others descended from far and wide on Sunday 3rd May.

Weather was favourable in contrast to the planned visit in January, which was thwarted by freak weather and a power cut to Roshven.

We were met by Angus and Rob Fairley at Roshven House. Angus acquired the house in a derelict state and confessed that what amounted to its complete reconstruction did not come cheap. He was clearly proud of his achievement in revitalising this fine building at an iconic spot on the West Coast of Lochaber. So important was the site that the extension to the West Highland Railway was intended to terminate at Roshven until it was vehemently opposed by the Blackburn family. They had built the house in the 1850's and were reluctant to see their retreat become a fishing town. The WHR extension went to Mallaig instead.

As Angus was speaking upstairs of the house, so simultaneously Rob Fairley, biographer of Jemima Blackburn, spoke to the other half of the visiting group downstairs in the entrance hall. Rob reflected on his interest in Jemima Blackburn who recorded in watercolour many local family, social and functional gatherings at a time just before the camera took on such responsibilities. She was especially renowned as a painter of birds and Rob spoke also, as a fine artist himself, of her skill and importance as an illustrator of a number of books in the late 19th century.

Jemima's husband, Hugh Blackburn, was Professor of Mathematics at Glasgow University and personages who visited Roshven and their Glasgow property included Lord Kelvin, John Ruskin, Sir John Everett Millais, Anthony Trollope, Lord Lister, Benjamin Disraeli and Jemima's first cousin, James Clerk Maxwell.

A few copies of his book "Jemima" were on display, as were many of Jemima's paintings which adorn the walls of the house.

We have a particularly fine painting by Jemima in Room 6 in the Museum – of local women waulking cloth observed from a carriage by some visiting gentry. Note the look of total disinterest from the carriage driver!

The party was then able to examine every corner of Roshven House, its gardens and outlook which must be as fine as anywhere on the west coast. A fine spread accompanied afternoon tea for one and all.

Pictured here are the assembled company of visitors just before our departure. £813 was raised for the coffers of the Museum and there is talk of a similar visit next year to another local country house.

Thanks to Angus for his support of the Museum over several years and to Rob Fairley, husband of Fiona our curator, for sharing his knowledge of the life and times of probably the most important Scottish watercolour artist who worked in Lochaber.

Chris Robinson



Angus MacDonald bids farewell to visitors

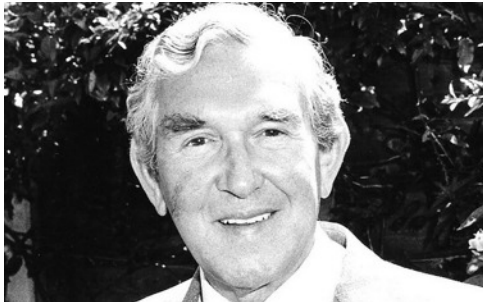


Rob Fairley discusses Jemima Blackburn



Roshven House

Major James Dunning



March 5 1920, died August 15 2015

Major Dunning supported the Museum's Commando Exhibition and donated the research material from his books to the Museum archive. As Second World War Army Commando he took part in the famous raids on the Lofoten Islands and on Dieppe.

Major James Dunning, served in the Second World War as an Army commando; he went on to become a school teacher and writer, publishing several books on the history of the Commandos.

In March 1941, as a member of No 4 Commando, he took part in the highly successful raid on the Lofoten Islands, in which 215 German soldiers were captured and 11 ships and a significant number of fish-oil factories and petrol dumps were destroyed. Encryption equipment and code books were captured and brought back, with no loss of life or serious injuries for the attackers. In 1942 he was involved in the raids on Boulogne and Dieppe, No 4 Commando executing the only successful part of the ill-fated operation.

In 1943 he was commissioned and appointed an instructor at the Commando Basic Training Centre at Achnacarry Castle. The training was described as tough, varied and unorthodox and Dunning was well-known for his "speed marches", in which the recruits ran to and ascended Ben Nevis carrying full kit. The training culminated in a dangerous exercise in which the recruits attacked a beach on the edge of the loch under live fire. When the Army Commandos were disbanded in 1946, Dunning transferred to the Hampshire Regiment

He was encouraged by Lord Lovat to write a book about the Commando training centre at Achnacarry Castle. The first of his three books on the Commandos, "It Had to be Tough", was published in 2000 and was highly successful. He followed this up with his history of No 4 Commando, "The Fighting Fourth" (2003) and finally "When Shall Their Glory Fade?" (2011). The last book was published when he was 90 years old.

Signed copies of Major Dunning's books are available in the Museum shop

Stan Scott remembered

Three years ago Stan Scott, Chairman of the Commando Veterans Association, stood on the stairway of the Museum wearing his blazer and Green Beret with some 250 Commandos and their families about him – upstairs and downstairs. He related how he underwent Commando training at Achnacarry "a God forsaken wet boggy place". He was one of the unlucky ones who slept in a tent for six weeks. He had vowed never to return to Achnacarry – but strangely his ashes were scattered there on 11th April this year.

This was Stan "Scotty" Scot's first visit to the Museum; and he cut the ribbon to open our first "shoestring" Commando training display on 10th November 2012. That was also to be his last visit to Lochaber in life.

Stan had left school at 14 and joined the army underage at 15 years, but was discharged when his mother wrote to the military authorities giving away his true age. He re-joined a year later, saw service in Iraq and then responded to a recruiting visit from Lt. Colonel Charles Vaughan by volunteering for Commando training in September 1943.

He recalled that at Achnacarry only 17 soldiers completed the course from an intake of 75. He first saw action as a Commando when he landed on Sword beach on D-Day on 6th June 1944 with No.3 Commando. We have his helmet that he wore that day on display in the Museum; and his full wartime experiences are related in his book "Fighting with the Commandos", which is available in the shop.

He was demobbed in 1946 after a spell in the Military Police.

In 1970 he joined the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve and trained cadets for many years. Commando reunions led him back to Achnacarry annually and the strengths of this man, whose glass was never less than half full, were recognised when he was elected Chairman of the Commando Veterans Association.

The November weekend in 2012 was to be his last visit to Lochaber. His health was failing and he died peacefully on 25th June 2014.

Stan's family are still drawn back to Lochaber. In April this year, his widow Pam, family members and friends came back especially to scatter his ashes. His son Stan, a military bandsman, in combat uniform, with his two brothers Jimmy and Robert, carried his ashes inside his father's Bergen rucksack from Spean Bridge to the Commando Memorial, to be met by a large crowd of relatives, friends and colleagues. A short service was conducted by Rev. Adrian Varwell and a piper from Campbeltown played "Flowers of the Forest" on a cold but clear day, before Stan's three sons continued their march on to Achnacarry, where his ashes were scattered by his family.

So first impressions of Lochaber may not be lasting, unlike the impression Stan Scott made with so many people who had the fortune to cross his path in life.



Pam Scott with the Campbeltown piper at the Commando Memorial, April 2015



Stan opening the Commando Display on 10 November 2012

Chris Robinson

The Personal Touch

Much of history is of great events – good or bad – often told from the point of view of the victor. But often on a journey through a museum little personal items have a story to tell.

To take a very brief short tour through the West Highland Museum start at 1588. The defeat of the Spanish Armada led to a small display in the Museum. The most important artefact is the cannon measure – very rare and therefore precious. Alongside there are some pieces of eight, not outstanding or particularly attractive looking. These were for the sailors' pay. One piece of eight (eight Spanish Reales) was a week's wage for an able seaman. Those on display were recovered from the Sound of Mull where they had sunk with the young sailors who didn't live to spend their pay.

Move on to 1745. Never mind 1888 or 1715 most attention is centred on the " Bonnie Prince ". There he is in The Secret Portrait , gallant and handsome. Perhaps he was but artists learned to lie with a brush long before the camera did. Go round the case and there is the death mask of a disappointed and dissolute man. Next read a letter from a single mother, knowing her relationship is over, but pleading for maintenance for her daughter. This is not a letter to Iain Duncan Smith or David Cameron. To prove there is nothing new under the sun, it is from Clementina Walkinshaw to Prince Charles Edward Stewart asking for some little help in raising their daughter.

Look at Flora MacDonald's sewing kit and book of devotions – such little things. Did they go with her to the Tower of London to North Carolina, or were they acquired long after the Jacobite cause was no more.

Fast forward to 1815 and the Battle of Quatre Bras. On the 200th anniversary of the battle some of our members rushed around taking photographs of the Waterloo Medals. What they ignored seems much more poignant .The battledore and shuttlecock which belonged to John Cameron of Fassfern brings a small boy to life again and the hussif complete with protective herbs sent to him from a young lady from Kinlocheil gives a personal touch to a gallant soldier.

As you leave Room 7 look at the wooden collection paddles on the wall above the door. These , not the sparkling brass collection plates, are part of the personal possessions of the old crofting community. The little things, the personal things, are part of history too.

Betty Bruce



Top: The Secret Portrait

Above: The Waterloo Medals

Right: Bonnie Prince Charlie's Death Mask

Below: Wooden collection paddles



Education Update

Since the last news letter, we have seen a rise in the number of primary schools visiting the Museum. It is particularly pleasing to have more visits from outlying schools such as Strontian and Invergarry. Transport is expensive, so it is encouraging that they think the Museum is worth a visit. It was amazing to entertain the whole of Upper Achintore School; fortunately the sessions were two classes per day over one week.

We continue to have a good relationship with Kinlochleven High School and have developed a series of work sheets to use with them. Lochaber High School Special Needs Unit also visits regularly. We endeavour to tailor their visits to their current reading be it crofting, or pirates (thank you the Spanish Armada and our Pieces of Eight).

Recently we have become involved with a class at the University of the Highlands and Islands, working on the history of Fort William from 1600. We have had one successful visit to the college and museum visits are planned for the future.

The education programme has been greatly helped with the acquisition of enlarged, improved handling boxes. Thanks are due to Colleen for sourcing and arranging finance. Quizzes are proving popular with young visitors during the summer; and the copier is kept busy churning them out.

The Outlander tours finished in October. Chris, Ian and I could probably pass an exam on Jamie and Claire without ever seeing the T.V. programme. Hopefully they will return next year. There was one delightful visit from a group from Taiwan who requested a museum tour without too much history. We must have complied with their need because they left a substantial donation.

The Saturday Club goes from strength to strength and is coming up for its twentieth year. Although we miss the dedicated Education room, we still manage to have fun. We enjoyed a story telling session with a group from Brora, had an hilarious time working out how many rolls of baco foil, coke cans or im bru cans can be made from the aluminium ingot. If you want to know the answer come to our table at the Rotary Christmas Fayre!

All in all, the education programme at the Museum is very healthy... Long may it flourish.

Betty Bruce

'Great Museum' - 26 September 2015

It was a great start to be welcomed with a friendly smile from great staff. I found the museum fascinating, especially The Commando's room which I found very moving with some great personal letters, photo's and artefacts. The museum is very well laid out and there is a great gift and book shop with a great choice of books to compliment the museum if you want to know more about the local history. Definitely worth while visiting the museum when in the area and a massive well done to the team who look after it.

Highlands, Scotland



Can you help us?



The West Highland Museum's unique collections tell the story of the region and its history. The Museum is free to enter and has a very small income. Our future as a Museum depends on financial support from visitors, donors, members and sponsors. This support is vital in enabling the Museum to fulfil its mission.

There are a number of ways that you can help support the Museum:

ADOPT A SHOWCASE: For £30.00 a year you can sponsor the upkeep of your very own adopted display. This will provide a much needed contribution towards the Museum's running costs in a most practical and, we think, invitingly novel way for less than 60p a week. A custom display card with your name, or company information, will be displayed in the case you adopt.

LEGACIES: If you would like future generations to enjoy the West Highland Museum as you have, please consider making a bequest in your will. Leaving a bequest to the Museum could help to reduce the tax burden on your estate. If the gross value of your estate on death is over the Inheritance Tax threshold, your estate will be liable for Inheritance Tax. A gift in your will to the Museum may reduce that excess and thereby reduce or eliminate the tax bill.

DONATIONS: Give a one-off gift or make a regular donation to support the work of the West Highland Museum. Choose to gift-aid your donation and the Museum will benefit even more. By supporting the West Highland Museum you ensure the display, care and preservation of the collection for future generations.

MEMBERSHIP: If you are not already a member and have a special interest in the history and culture of the West Highlands, join us and help support the Museum's efforts to preserve and promote this unique heritage. Membership of the Museum costs only £15 per year for an individual, and £25 for a whole family, and comes with a range of benefits. Businesses and organisations can apply for corporate membership for only £100 per annum.

For more information, please contact the Museum Manager on 01397 702169, or email, colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk

'Absolute Gem' - 5 October 2015

Went for a look round this museum and it was an absolute gem of a find, thoroughly enjoyed it and the volunteer staff were very friendly, excellent.

Elgin, Scotland



Lyon & Turnbull

Jacobite Sale

On 13th May 2015 Lyon and Turnbull held a Jacobite Sale in Edinburgh. They gathered together some well-provenanced and desirable material among which lurked some no less desirable objects whose Jacobite credentials were marvellously creative.

The Museum applied for a grant from the Art Fund to bid for a mid 18th century hidden portrait snuff mull. It was a quite lovely piece that inevitably went for well over its estimate, far beyond a price the Museum could afford even with assistance.

The Museum had been interested in various items but, as with all Jacobite themed sales, the prices were generally far higher than the estimates. A mid 18th century silver baluster snuff mull belonging to Cluny MacPherson of the '45 was purchased for the collection. The lid is engraved with the armourial bearings of Cluny MacPherson within a cartouche formed from foliate scroll work. The engraving is well worn. The snuff mull has no silver marks, but is a good example of the period and the Scottish silversmiths' craft. It is a fine addition to the Museum's collection and enhances the holdings already here concerning Cluny MacPherson.

Fiona Marwick
Curator



SEASHORE PROJECT



This summer the Museum participated in the Highland Seashore Project which worked with the Sea to Summit Project to provide Seashore Exhibitions and activities across Fort William.

There was a big family fun day in Cameron Square on 4th July, with exhibitions, arts and crafts activities, games and lots of Seashore posters and pictures. The Sea to Summit map was on display in the West Highland Museum throughout July and August and was seen by over 10,000 visitors to the Museum.

The Sea to Summit Project was an arts project involving Lochaber schools and highlights the connections between the mountains and the seashores that characterise Lochaber. The main focus of the project was the creation of the 3D map by pupils from Caol, Banavie and Inverlochry primary schools – in Glen Nevis, and Acharacle by the seaside. It was completed at the Second Glenuig Seashore Festival, now part of the Wild Lochaber Festival.



This is the time the prophecy has been proven: *recollecting the 1715.*

The Jacobite Rising of 1715 is invariably seen in retrospect – if it is seen at all – and is the ‘poor relation’ of Jacobite history. It might be described in terms of one episode in the failure of the Stewarts to regain the throne of the United Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland and might draw comment on the incompetence and indecision of its leaders.

The ‘1715’ is eclipsed in our popular view by the Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the persona of ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’. Three hundred years ago, the Jacobite Rising of 1715 was an event really of greater historical importance than the ‘45 and had in so many ways a greater chance of succeeding.

The title adopted here draws on the introductory words to a song composed in 1715, *Òran nam Fineachan Gàidhealach*, or ‘The Song of the Highland Clans’. This is a voice precisely contemporary with the events in question and holds a mirror to those events. It is a powerful propaganda song of 152 lines in nineteen verses whose rhetoric is very typically part of the poetic tradition of Gaelic Scotland. The song lists and thereby appeals to the clans and kindreds – twenty-seven in all – who were expected to support the Stewarts. It is a roll-call of the allies and asserts that they will all rise in the imminent event of a Jacobite-inspired civil war. The author and composer was *Iain Dubh Mac Iain Mhic Ailein*, one of the MacDonalds of Morar:

*Is i seo an aimsir 'n do dhearbhadh
An tairgneachd dhuinn,*

.....

‘This is the time in which
The prophecy has been proven to us,
The Men of Scotland are keen and spirited
Under their arms at the forefront.
When every brave hero will rise up
Resplendent in his new uniform,
In a spirit of anger and fierceness
For the service of the Crown.’

As the introductory couplet shows, the song contains an appeal on another level, that the restoration of the Stewarts would be the first blow towards the revival of a Gaelic society embracing all of Scotland. This is expressed in terms of the fabled Fingalians and the prophesies of the thirteenth-century Thomas the Rhymer. Gaelic song offers vital evidence for the period and tells us that this was not a closed society but one with a strong oral



Professor Hugh Cheape
Research Chair at the University
of the Highlands & Islands

tradition and receptive to and assimilating outside influences. At this time too, Gaelic society was responding to seventeenth-century politics at a national level and to issues far beyond the Highlands and Islands. Other voices are preserved for us from 1715 such as the remarkable composer and ardent Jacobite, *Sileas na Ceapaich*, the daughter of Gilleasbuig MacDonald of Keppoch, who has left us at least three compelling songs on the events of the day.

Recollecting the 1715 and gaining an understanding of it is well served by searching out origins or causes of the conflict. Much can be said to explain this by going as far back as the reigns of James VI and Charles I and this might be summarised in terms of the political struggles of the Stewart kings, a dynasty whose conception of government was autocratic. Add to this the religious and ecclesiastical policies of the Crown and the religious inclinations and choices of the kings themselves. These issues led to the Civil War – the ‘War of the Three Kingdoms’ as the Gaelic chroniclers termed it – and fed into the later Jacobite movement. The ‘Restoration’ of Charles

II in 1660 gave no cause to expect what was to follow although the Act of Supremacy passed in the Scottish Parliament in 1669 unequivocally re-asserted that Stewart autocratic rule: ‘... his Majestie hath the Supream Authority and Supremacie over all persons and in all causes ecclesiastical within this Kingdom.’

Tacit acceptance of the Stewarts’ divinely ordained power, or self-professed rule by ‘Divine Right’, was then shaken with the accession to the thrones of Scotland and England in 1685 of Charles’ younger brother as James VII and II, openly a Roman Catholic. At first, most people and moderate opinion supported James, probably because they knew the Stewarts as an ancient and, in European terms, successful dynasty, but his promotion of Catholicism in a Protestant country produced the fear that Scotland and England would become a prosecuting state like France under Louis XIV. The birth of a son to King James and his Queen Consort, Mary of Modena, in June 1688 precipitated the ‘Revolution’ and the subsequent departure of the king; as a contemporary wrote: ‘... one of the strangest catastrophes that is in any history’.

The chain of events leading to the acceptance of William of Orange and Queen Mary is captured in the word of the ballad: ‘Tae the Lords of Convention ‘twas Claverhouse spoke ...’ where the meeting of a provisional government or Convention gave support to James’ replacement and forced out a minority who maintained support for the Stewarts. These were the ‘Jacobites’ who were led by James Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee. Any advantage from their victory over a government force at Killiecrankie was lost by Dundee’s death in battle. The identification of the Highland clans with Jacobitism, and a perceived lawlessness – or independence – was a matter of royal concern leading to government policies in more or less equal measure of cajolery (and bribery) and brute force. The virtually genocidal Massacre of Glencoe in February 1692 contributed to the Highlands’ support for the Stewarts in 1715. Growing tensions between Scotland and

England were exacerbated by protectionist trading policies and the collapse of the Darien Scheme, and then the vigorous stance of the Scottish Parliament against this aggression. This included the Act of Security (1703), reserving to the Parliament of Scotland the nomination of a successor to the throne from the Royal line of Scotland and of the Protestant faith. This was a response to the antagonistic Act of Settlement and Alien Act passed by the Westminster Parliament.

The Act of Union of 1707 followed but not without opposition, one consequence of which was the expectation that the exiled Stewarts would return following the death of Queen Anne in 1714. A coup d'état was expected but the arrival of the English candidate under the Act of Settlement, George of Hanover, threw Stewart support into disarray. Simultaneous risings planned in north and south dwindled, leaving John Erskine, Earl of Mar, to lead a rising in September 1715 for James VII's son, Prince James Stewart, the 27 year-old whose birth had sparked the Revolution. The government was in a weak state militarily and Mar had the initiative and was able to assemble a large army (of more than 10,000). He occupied Perth and tried to outflank the Duke of Argyll in command of a government force at Stirling, but Brigadier Macintosh of Borlum's crossing of the Forth and attempt on Edinburgh moved south to eventual surrender at Preston on 14 November. The day before, Mar's and Argyll's armies met on Sheriffmuir, seemingly a tactical victory for the Jacobites but strategic victory for Argyll because of Mar's failure to move forward with his forces. Mar retreated to Perth, delayed fatally and continued a retreat northward. Prince James, having landed at Peterhead too late on 22 December, joined the army but sailed for France with Mar and other Jacobite leaders during the night of 4-5 February 1716. The Rising collapsed.

Jacobitism as a political force was sustained for a further thirty years until Prince Charlie's tragic expedition, and fed off a culture of political intrigue and residual loyalty to the Stewarts in exile. The indicators of such a culture are the thousands of medals and scores of portraits which mark the Jacobite century of 1688-1788 (closing with the death in Rome of Prince Charlie), a precious representation of which is in the collections of the West Highland Museum. Just as sincere – and perhaps more so in their appeal to *An Dàn* or 'fate' – are the contemporary voices still to hand in the Gaelic tradition: in the heartfelt lament by Niall MacMhuirich for *Mo cheisd ceannard Chlann Raghnaill* ('My darling Chief of Clan Ranald') and in the Mull lament, *Gaoir nam Ban Muileach*:

'It is not Allen or Hector or the firing of the English that I mourn,
But the grandson of Sir Lachlan of the golden cups and the brilliant drinking horns.
Woe betide the kingdom from which both Sir Iain and the Captain of Clanranald have departed.

(... *Is mairg rìoghachd den deachxaidh Sir Iain is Caipitein Chlann Raghnaill*)

Lost film of Ford Model T on Ben Nevis found

Incredible film footage from more than 100 years ago of a Ford Model T car making a descent of Ben Nevis was found this year.

The British Film Institute has made the 5 minute film, shot in May 1911, available on its website.

Henry Alexander Jr, the son of Scotland's first Ford dealer, drove the Model T up and then down the mountain. The publicity stunt was to show that the mass produced American car was superior to hand-crafted British ones.



The Museum and "The Bronze Ford"

The revamping of Cameron Square has met with universal approval even if the blue sofas still divide!. But it's not quite complete.

The architect who drew up the plans for the new square visited the Museum where

she saw the Model T Ford on display – that which was carried up Ben Nevis by 70 stalwarts in 2011. The result was a vision of a full size Bronze Replica of that car to be cast and sited in the square close to the spot from where it left in 1911.

Neil Tuckett who masterminded the 2011 ascent found a foundry in Peebles – the Beltane studios – and an artist Mark Stoddart of Troon to cast and construct "The Bronze Ford". Henry Alexander will be sat at the wheel and there will be seats for visitors beside and behind him.

The local Ben Nevis Model T Ford project group now have some £40,000 banked and pledged en route to the £85,000 required to make the idea a reality.

"The Bronze Ford" aims to become the main focus of Fort William's High Street. We must ensure it becomes the Museum's siren on the street, with invitations (and tyre marks) to draw inquisitive folk up the square and into the Museum – where we should show the recently discovered film from 1911 – viewable on the BFI website by googling "Motoring over Ben Nevis", and answer the questions of those who haven't heard the "T" town's tale of early motor mountaineering!

Chris Robinson



Winter Closure

The Museum will be closed from 19th December until 7th March 2016. During this period we will be taking the opportunity to give the Museum a thorough spring clean. There are also repairs and maintenance jobs to be undertaken throughout the building and stocktaking to be completed. We plan to carry out a few curatorial changes to the exhibitions and start the inventory of the attic. If you have time to spare to help, please call Colleen or Sonja.



Caroline Gooch & Gay Anderson helping give the shop a makeover during the last winter closure.

'Great visit' - 3 September 2015

A really warm welcome, and a fascinating museum with a number of rooms all full of interesting stuff! We went on a wet day (to get out of the rain) but were so glad that we did.

West Runton, UK



Dates for your diary

- **19th December 2015:**

Museum closes for winter, 4pm

- **7th March 2016:**

Museum reopens after winter closure, 10am

- **26th May 2016:**

AGM, St. Andrew's Church Hall, Fort William. 5pm

LOOKING FOR SOME ORIGINAL CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS?

Why not visit our shop and support your local museum!

We have a fantastic selection of books, jewellery, glassware and children's gifts for sale.

And, if you're really stuck for ideas why not

purchase a West Highland
Museum gift voucher!



Volunteering at the

We're looking for new volunteers to support our work. Entry to the Museum is free to the public and we therefore depend on visitor donations, shop sales and the support of our team of enthusiastic volunteers.

The Museum covers a wide range of topics such as; Commando training; the Old Fort; wildlife; archaeology; Victorian costume; the Jacobites; Highland life in the 18th and 19th centuries. If you are interested in any of these areas, or just generally helping your local museum, we would like to hear from you. We are currently looking for volunteers to provide a warm welcome to visitors at reception/gift shop, or to work with our Curator cataloguing the Museum's collection.

If you would like to help us please contact Sonja for an informal chat on 01397 702169 or by email sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk

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Charity No: SC014287

