



TAIGH-TASGAIDH NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2017

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West Highland Museum

Message from the Chairman

Communication is important in any organisation and we are indeed fortunate to have this excellent Newsletter. We are very grateful to all contributors, especially Vanessa Martin, our Editor and Sharon Donald our Production Editor.



We have had another year of steady growth and progress, and this is detailed on the following pages. Most recently, the fund-raising dinner and auction achieved around £11,000, and we are again grateful to Stewart Leitch of the Moorings Hotel, as well as the many donors. Colleen, her staff and our enthusiastic army of volunteers have certainly earned our thanks with their dedication and hard work throughout the year. It is quite humbling to realise the regard in which our Museum is held and the ready goodwill we enjoy.

We have moved forward with plans to extend the Museum and funding applications will be made during 2018, fundamentally to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Land Fund. An essential requirement will be to change our governance structure to a company, the West Highland Museum Trust. We now have confirmation that charitable status will be granted. Early in the new year we will invite those 16 years and over, registered to vote in Lochaber, to become ordinary members of the company. Those living elsewhere may be associate members; and those from 12 to 15 years old can be junior members. Operational transition to the new organisation will take place during 2018.

Again I take the opportunity to remind you of our well-established bookshop which has a voucher scheme that should be of interest for Christmas gifts. Please consider this and also tell your friends!

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

John C Hutchison
Chairman of Trustees



Message from the Manager

Last year we had the highest number of visitors to the Museum since 1981 and we have already beaten last year's figure of 48,333! We have had 53,194 visitors so far and still have seven weeks to go until the year end.



Our shop sales have been the best on record, due to increased visitor numbers, and a few new successful lines which have sold well. Our Outlander cards & gifts are proving very popular. We also have custom-made fridge magnets, notebooks and bookmarks with the Museum, the Commando Memorial and the Secret Portrait on them. So, if you are in Fort William, pop into the shop and see what we have to offer.

We organised a second Charity Auction Gala dinner which was again held at the Moorings Hotel. Imagine how delighted I was when we raised £11,000 at the dinner. You will read more about this in another article in this newsletter.

On another positive note, we have been accepted into the VAT 33A Refund scheme which was updated in last year's budget. This allows museums with free admission to recover VAT relating to running costs. What the Government has done is to widen the criteria so the refund can apply to all museums that provide at least 30 hours free public admission a week. We submitted our application which was supported by our MP Ian Blackford to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and we have final approval from HM Treasury. We can now reclaim any VAT incurred in running the Museum and looking after the collection. We can also claim back any VAT incurred for 4 years from the date we were approved into the scheme.

In October we had a volunteers' day trip to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to see the Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites temporary exhibition. One of their volunteers gave us a guided tour of the Scottish Galleries before we went in to see the new exhibition. It was an interesting and enjoyable day out, which the volunteers really enjoyed. One of our volunteers has written an article about the visit for the newsletter.

On a final note, we rely on volunteers to help run the Museum. If you are interested in finding out more about our volunteering opportunities, please do contact us.

Colleen Barker
Museum Manager



Visit to the Bonnie Prince Charlie & the Jacobites Exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland



A party of twelve from the West Highland Museum travelled to Edinburgh on Sunday 22nd October 2017 to visit the Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites Exhibition. Driven skillfully to the door by Ricky Salter of Shiel Buses, we arrived in good time to meet our volunteer guide, James, who was to show us the Museum before we visited the Exhibition. He proved to have a profound knowledge of the Museum, but concentrated on the Kingdom of Scots Gallery. There were hundreds of exhibits, but James wisely selected a few items of particular interest. Among them were a piece of Lewisian Gneiss Rock, 2,900 million years old; the strange Ballachulish Goddess; the beautiful Fettercairn Jewel, acquired in March 2017; two huge double-handed swords used by the Scots to attack the enemy horses at the Battle of Bannockburn and a vast trunk that once held all the money donated by prospective investors in the ill-fated Darien Scheme in Panama.

After lunch we were free to explore the Jacobite Exhibition. This was magnificently organised. Although the story is familiar to us in the West Highland Museum there was much to learn. Beginning with the downfall of James VII and II, there was a comprehensive recording of events



leading up to the 1745 Rising and the Battle of Culloden in the following year. Portraits, weaponry, apparel - with appropriate voice-overs - told the story of the battle and its aftermath. Compelling stuff!

The loyalty of the Jacobites was remarkable - the display of wine glasses used to toast the King Over the Water is very fine - but the West Highland Museum can still boast an unrivalled treasure - the anamorphic portrait of the Bonnie Prince!

Jean MacLeod



Sir Robert Strange

One of the principle reasons for the failure of the ill-fated Jacobite Rising of 1745 was lack of finance. From the very outset, money problems dogged Prince Charles Edward Stewart and his army. Expected gold from France failed to arrive. The army had to fall back on its own resources.

By March 1746 the Jacobite troops had marched north to Culloden House. Money was in very short supply. The army had almost no food and was stretched widely over the countryside looking for anything to eat. Many men had deserted and returned to their homes.

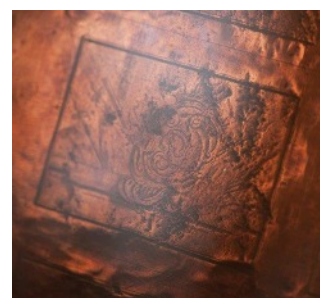
Prince Charles and his advisers hit on an unorthodox method of raising cash. They called on engraver Robert Strange for help. They would print their own money.

Robert Strange was from Orkney. He had studied engraving in Edinburgh, Rouen and Paris. He owed his presence in the Jacobite army to his love for Isabella Lumisden, whose brother was Secretary to Prince Charles.

Although he was called upon on a Sunday, Strange persuaded a printer in Inverness to build a press and a coppersmith to

prepare a plate. The plate was not of the best quality and so he decided to etch rather than engrave.

There were eight designs - each two and a half inches by one and three quarter inches. The values recorded were one penny, two pence, three pence and sixpence.



The Robert Strange Plate

Four were blank, but it was proposed to print notes up to the value of two hundred pounds. The basis of the design is a monogrammed C.P. on a cartouche with a coronet and Prince of Wales feathers over a trophy of arms and banners.

The print run was due to begin on April 13 but Cumberland's Army approached and three days later were triumphant at Drumossie Moor. The defeated Jacobite army scattered.

The plate disappeared and was later found abandoned at Loch Laggan. It was given to Ewen MacPherson of Cluny where it remained in the family for many years. In 1928 it was sold to the fledgling West Highland Museum where it is now on display as part of the Jacobite Exhibition in Room 6.

Betty Bruce

Charming and informative

West Highlands Museum assembled a high-quality collection, the kind that even a larger capital museum could be proud of. Ran by enthusiasts it is very informative and a pleasant place to be. Not to be missed!

London, England, August 2017



“The Expert Swordsman” – Re-discovered!

“I went as a gunner to Fort William...in 1726 I fought a clean young man at Edinburgh. I gave him seven wounds and broke both his arms. This I did at the request of several gentlemen. But now being 63 years of age, resolves to fight no more, but to repent for my former wickedness.....” So, wrote one Donald McBane in his book “The Expert Swordsman’s Companion” probably written in the Fort of Fort William in the 1720’s.

Much is known about McBane through his autobiographical reflections in which he describes his military and his malicious but colourful career in those 63 turbulent years.

McBane was born in Inverness, a self-confessed wild boy who joined the Royalist army in 1687. Within a year – he found himself at the Battle of Mulroy fighting Keppoch MacDonalds for Clan Mackintosh... “The MacDonalds came down the hill upon us without shoe, stocking, or bonnet on the head. They broke in on us with sword and targe and Lochaber axes..... I took to my heels and ran thirty miles before I looked behind me...”

Again, McBane was on the losing side in his next battle – that of Killcrankie in 1689, where in escaping from a Jacobite he jumped over the River Garry at “the Soldiers leap”. He was that soldier.

In 1690 his regiment were “camped at Inverlochy in Lochaber at which time we began to build Fort William”. McBane relates being bullied at the point of a sword by an older soldier who took his pay packet. This provoked him toward his life’s calling when he took lessons in swordsmanship to such a level of expertise that he ambushed his adversary, wounding him severely and in turn demanding his wages! His future was then secure by the power of his sword.

After a brief return to Fort William his military career in Europe was supplemented by teaching swordsmanship, running card schools and managing brothels – the latter a very competitive business only secured by his swordsmanship.

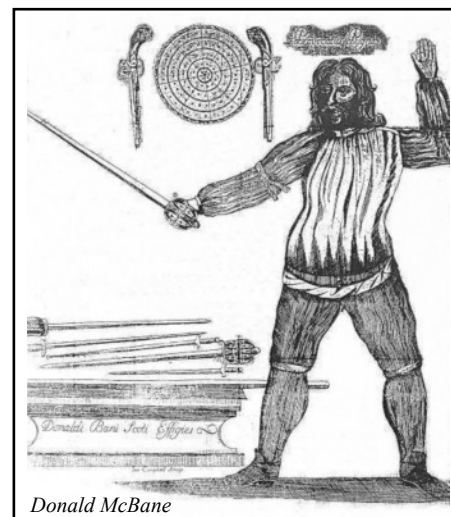
He retired aged about 48 years old and became a Chelsea pensioner in London, only to join up again at the time of the 1715 rising. He was said to have killed 21 men in duels, was a prize fighter in a London Bear garden and finally retired by choice back to Fort William, where he wrote “the Expert Swordsman’s companion” and died about 1728, the year of its publication.

He must have been buried in the Craigs. Many, including myself, have wandered about the graveyard in the hope of finding his stone but to no avail - until recently! Mary MacKellar, writing in her Fort William guidebook of 1881, reports “unfortunately it is broken and lost”. Or so she thought.....

Until Andrew Wiseman, ex Lochaber High School and now with the School of Scottish Studies, was invited to speak to the Local History Society on the Battle of Mulroy. He had stumbled across a letter written to the Inverness Courier in 1889 by one William Taylor of Fort William.

Taylor reports the existence of the grave of a very famous Swordsman in the Craigs. “But you’ll not know it’s there as the name has long since been erased – in part because it was only lightly engraved and in part because we as children used to slide down it!”. “It has a sword above a skull & crossbones and is on the east side of the Craigs low down”.

I went to see, and there it was, no simple scratched slate typical of 18th century gravestones, but a solid block of



whinstone lying flat with a lion rampant at the head and the sword and skull and crossbones at the foot between a smooth flat block as in 1889. Hence it has gone unrecorded and unrecognised. Go and have a look, it’s just a few yards from the small gate at the east end of the Craigs, beside the new Belhaven Buildings - and reflect on Donald McBane - “The Expert Swordsman”!

McBane claimed to have fought a total of thirty-seven prize fights, but he provides few details about them, mentioning the name of only one of his antagonists. Thanks to the diligent research of Ben Miller, numerous specimens of McBane’s original challenges are included in this publication. These contests pitted McBane against some of the most celebrated gladiators of the period, including James Miller, who later authored a treatise on fencing, the infamous (and nearly undefeated) James Figg, and even Figg’s fencing master, Timothy.

Donald McBane was a Scottish Highlander and one of the most accomplished duelists of the 18th century. During the span of his extraordinary career as a soldier, prize fighter, fencing master, and brothel manager, McBane took part in 16 battles, 15 skirmishes, and nearly 100 duels or personal combats. He published his book, *The Expert Sword-Man’s Companion*, in 1728.

Chris Robinson

McBane’s grave is to be found in the Craigs

Great little museum!

Because we are researching we always stop here when we come through Fort William. The staff are very friendly and extremely helpful. Well organized little museum too!

Canada, June 2017



Fascinating

Really enjoyed the visit, lots of very interesting information, especially about the Jacobite battles. Helpful staff, a really pleasant place to shelter from the rain!

Cardiff, Wales, June 2017



Education Update

This year we have had visits from schools across the region from Invergarry to Kinlochleven. As always, these visits complement the school curriculum. This year, as well as the usual subjects, from early man to the Second World War, we have added subjects such as the Picts, Celts and castles (with an emphasis on Inverlochy Castle). We even had one class asking about running a museum; great fun was had by all.

Kinlochleven Secondary School had their usual tour with a question and answer session. I'm told it went well. We were grateful for their generous donation to the Museum. The Special Needs Group from Lochaber High School had a tour concentrating on artefacts relating to their current reading. From the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), we have had classes from Social Geography on the reasons for the growth of Fort William. They are already booked for further sessions in the future.

Chris Robinson and I were in attendance for a visit from a group from John Hopkins University. As it happened, we were really fascinated spectators. They were really organised, rehearsed and totally absorbing in their approach. We also had a group of international school teachers – Polish, Turkish, Norwegian, American and English. They only required a run down on our education programme and were happy with a self-guided tour. The Polish lady was very happy to know that "Prince Bonnie" had a Polish mother. The local friendship club came for an evening tour, as a follow up to a talk I had given them last year on the Museum. Many locals had not visited since childhood and were very impressed. Hopefully they will return bringing grandchildren or visiting family.

For Archaeology week we had a morning of children's activities, turning Room 1 into an Iron Age settlement. It was fully booked and amid much fun we entertained thirteen young people and three adults.

Since the beginning of this academic year I have been assisted by Jo Godfrey. Jo will now take over the education programme while I shall be a ghostly shadow, ready to help as and when required. I shall, of course be pleased to continue the volunteers' tours should anyone wish it.

Finally, my favourite moment for this year. At the secret portrait, I ask each child to look in the silver cylinder to see the head and shoulders of Bonnie Prince Charlie. A six-year-old looks, turns happily saying he had seen his head. Earnestly looks at me and then asks, if his head and shoulders are in the cylinder where do we keep his body?

One of the many, many reasons why I have so enjoyed running the education programme. I'm not really going away! I'll always be happy to help out when required.

Betty Bruce

Most information in small spaces!

One of the best museums ever. Extremely informative and well laid out including a very moving film of the Green Berets. This museum has a broad mix of local and national archives and is delightfully laid out in an old converted building that has retained its former glory. Loved it.

St. Ives, England, September 2017



Geocaching at the West Highland Museum



The Highland Archaeology Festival (HAF) created a new geocache trail for the 2017 festival. Geocaching is an adventure sport, open to anyone and everyone, that gets you out and about in the pursuit of hidden treasure or 'caches' using a GPS receiver. Think of it as 'Geeky Treasure Hunting'.

A number of geocaches were hidden at various sites in the Highlands relating to Highland heritage. The Museum was asked to host a geocache and act as an ongoing warden for this permanent trail. HAF were pleased with the popularity of the trail and their spokeswoman said "I'm delighted that they show some people making a point of visiting a site/museum they might not have known about. From our point of view, it has been a good way to reach some people to visit heritage places/events who might not otherwise have seen them."

The West Highland Museum was the most visited geocache on the trail with 76 visits logged. Many visitors were from abroad. Feedback from the Geocache logs were very favourable. One reviewer said "What a great place to visit. I enjoyed the Museum! [West Highland Museum]"

For more information about geocaching with the HAF visit: <http://www.highlandarchaeologyfestival.org/index.asp?pageid=675666>

Introducing our new Education Officer

Joanna (Jo) Godfrey, is daughter of the late Dr Joan Godfrey and sister to Johnny Godfrey. Jo will be taking over the duties of Education Officer from Betty Bruce who after many years of outstanding service to the Museum has decided to retire.

Our family moved to Lochaber in 1973; and wherever I have been in the world, this has always been home. I retired from nursing in 2009, then studied History via the Open University, graduating with a BA (Hons) in 2013. I have always loved history, and working in the West Highland Museum gives me a chance to share this enthusiasm with others, while at the same time learning a great deal about local and Scottish history.

I asked to assist Betty with the teaching as I believe that everybody should know their local history; and that if it is made interesting and fun, then hopefully children will want to explore more about their history, as well as gaining deeper understanding of how people lived in the past.

Jo Godfrey



Past and Present Education Officers - Betty Bruce and Jo Godfrey

Last summer, old friends who had not visited Fort William for some years came to stay; apart from noting that the weather hadn't changed much, their comments on the town interested me.

Their perception was that the High Street, subject to so much justifiable adverse comment in the past, has improved markedly since the last time they saw it; they thought that some of the shops were more discerning in the range of goods for sale, that improvements such as hanging flower baskets, tables and chairs in the street outside restaurants and the work of The Town Team all contributed to a more vibrant atmosphere. The new bookshop, the delicatessen and Highland Soap Shop all run counter to the pattern of yet another shop which focusses mainly on the low budget visitor or outdoor clothing.

They were probably unaware of structural issues such as the provision of pontoons, plans for a local marina, or the renovation of the former Senior Secondary School, but the number of visitors, the developing strength of the underlying economy, with several multi-million-pound home grown businesses, and the welcome arrival of Liberty BA with its ambitious plans are all part of this encouraging story.

Our Museum celebrates its centenary in 2022 and the trustees and management committee are working on a spectacular plan to develop our adjoining properties, and integrate them with the existing listed building. The extent to which culture is represented in Lochaber is no better than adequate. Fort William has just hosted The Mod, but that only happens every 10 years or so; on a continuing basis, the vibrant musical heritage flourishes, particularly amongst the younger generation, there are many societies following their own special interests and local enthusiasm for the arts has given us Lochaber Showstoppers.

The concept of an 'Outdoor Capital' is well established, with excellent facilities for a wide range of activities. The provision of hospitality and accommodation has improved immeasurably, but we are still

woefully short in the provision of indoor entertainment.

Geographically, the West Highland Museum is at the hub of the town and it has the potential to be the cultural hub as well. Thankfully, we are beyond the mindset which is wary of innovation on the basis that it takes custom away from existing businesses, and now understand that excellence in one area encourages similar standards in others, for the benefit of all.

With well over 50,000 visitors each year, the Museum contributes significantly to the improving perception of the town and I would encourage local business to support our plans for the redevelopment of the Museum for three reasons: -

1. It has the potential to make a unique and lasting contribution to the reputation of Fort William as a town to visit rather than to pass through; as one which has an ambition for excellence in the provision of opportunities for indoor and outdoor activities.
2. It will provide a focal point for cultural interests. These will bear faith with our founding principles, but additional modern space will have the potential to accommodate a wide range of temporary activities – exhibitions, items of topical interest and the arts generally.
3. It will build on the success which has seen our visitor numbers grow from 9,000 in 2010 to 50,000 this year. At the same time, our finances have moved from an uncertain future to one of strength, despite a reduction of 40% in our public funding. We are moving forward with increasing momentum; I hope local businesses will wish to be part of the success story, to contribute to it and to share in the resulting benefits.

Richard Sidgwick

VAL Awards

Museum Chair, John Hutchison was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at this year's VOSCARS in recognition of his dedicated voluntary work with the Museum; environmental and land issues; the Nevis Partnership; and the College over the past 20 years. Voluntary Action Lochaber (VAL) host the awards annually as part of National Volunteer Week. The awards celebrate the valuable contribution volunteers make in the community and the recipients are nominated by the public.

The West Highland Museum were pleased to win the Best Supporting Organisation Award in recognition of the support they give to their volunteers.



John Hutchison is presented with his Lifetime Achievement Award by Lochaber Community Partnership



John Hutchison receives Best Supporting Organisation Award on behalf of the Museum

Excellent

Easily missed, this museum is a bit of a tardis as there's more than the relatively small frontage would suggest. Friendly helpful staff are on hand to provide any assistance and explanation wanted. A delightful free museum that's a credit to the town

Stroud, England, May 2017



The 2017 West Highland Museum Gala Dinner

Saturday 11th November 2017

'It was such a huge success last year, and made such a difference to the Museum and I am happy to host you for another gala dinner in 2017'. Thus, the committee was faced with no choice but to get right behind Stewart Leitch's enormously generous initiative for another West Highland Museum gala dinner at the Moorings Hotel.



Hugh Dan MacLennan entertains the crowd

On the 11th November, the Lochaber great and good, dressed prettily and handsomely gathered with great expectation. No sooner through the door than the raffle purveyors pounced. Our photographer snapped chatting groups, because no less than the Scottish Field had heard that this was the West of Scotland's leading social event and needed to cover it. John Hutchison, Chair of the Trustees of the Museum, introduced the top table of selected Trustees and our guest of honour, Hugh Dan MacLennan and his wife, with effusive compliment and occasional knowing tease. Our Fear an Tighe, Councillor Allan (With two 'L's quipped our Chair) Henderson set out the evening and launched into our Heads and Tails competition to win £100 on questions on Fort William. Little surprise it was won by the Chair of Trustees wife, the cleverest in the room!

The money was beginning to flow and Colleen was beginning to relax. Time to eat our delicious chicken and finally to talk to our table companions. The entertainment commenced after our main course with the wonderful Lochaber High School Ceilidh Band; two fiddles, a mandolin, one box and a guitar played beautifully entertained us with several jigs and airs.

Pudding over, our key speaker, Hugh Dan MacLennan pulled down a projector screen and launched through pictures and stories of sporting life from Lochaber – 'Tales of a Caol Dude'. Immensely passionate and proud of his community, Hugh Dan took us from his doorstep in Caol, via his Island parents, through a stimulating education at Lochaber High School, to his success today. He had dug out photographs of the great Lochaber sporting teams of an exceptional generation and related something of their subsequent careers. Exclamations of recognition greeted each picture as those present saw themselves in early haircuts as well as many friends and teachers from long past. Hugh Dan's delightful manner and extraordinary knowledge entertained us

thoroughly and he was applauded vibrantly by his delighted audience.

The reason for the event was the raising of money for the Museum, at a time of enormous visitor growth and creaking finances. The auction had been supported by incredibly generous donors – London's Caledonian Club had offered a free weekend in their base near Hyde Park Corner, with Serco kindly providing the sleeper tickets to get there; one member had provided fantastic wines to auction; and another had offered a weekend fishing on the Thurso. Local chef, Liz MacMaster had offered an Indian meal for ten in your own house and Donald Cameron MSP's lot of a trip around the Scottish Parliament was matched by Kate Forbes MSP. These and many more generous gifts allowed the auctioneer, Ian Peter MacDonald, to coax thousands more for this great cause. An embarrassment of raffle prizes rewarded the raffle investors with every table overflowing with hampers and whisky by the end of the night. Although, 84-year-old Rory MacDonald's pleasure at winning the 3ft teddy amused all.

Dr Chris Robinson wound up the evening with a heartfelt thanks to Colleen, and to the organising committee. A folded sheet was carefully revealed – a massive £10,500 had been raised on the night! A further £500 collected after the evening raised the final total to £11,000. The same committee held their collective breaths; does that mean the Gala dinner has become so crucial to the Museum's finances that it must become an annual event? The audience felt less anxious. The night had been so entertaining, the community such fun and the host so generous, that this event is now clearly "a must go" on Lochaber's annual social calendar. By midnight the show was over and the merry throng headed out into the night, content that a good night was had and that a great cause had been supported.

Ian Peter MacDonald



The Rotary Club of Lochaber enjoying their evening



The Lochaber High School Ceilidh band – Johnny Soe-Paing, Jennifer MacKenna, Ayla Barr Moir, Mairi Bell, Freddy Fulford. They were accompanied by staff member, Jen MacNeil and offered a wonderful selection of traditional music



Delicious dinner and dessert was served courtesy of Stewart Leitch of the Moorings Hotel whose generosity made the evening possible



Ilona Linfield cuddles the 3ft teddy won by Rory MacDonald

Christmas Celebrations

Staff and volunteers celebrated Christmas in style at the West End Hotel in Fort William on Friday 9th December 2016. A good time was had by all, with fantastic food served to the 33 volunteers who attended.



Jean MacLeod and Jackie Wright



Stella Colburn, Nigel Colburn and Mary Stitt



Chris Herbert, Brian Ball & Ron Cameron



Donald MacLeod, Sally Archibald & Sylvia Richardson

Tea for Two!

Museum Manager, Colleen Barker and Management Committee Member, Vanessa Martin attended the Queen's Garden Party at the Palace of Holyrood on 4th July on behalf of the Museum. The invitation from the Queen was a pleasant surprise, which came to them on the recommendation of the Museum President, Donald Angus Cameron of Lochiel. The two were delighted to travel to Edinburgh to take tea in the Palace gardens. Both



Vanessa Martin and Colleen Barker pictured with one of the Royal Company of Archers.

caught glimpses of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh (who was making one of his final public appearances before his retirement), as they strolled along the lanes meeting their guests among the crowds.

Stranger Things Afoot in the Outdoor Capital of the UK!

The Museum was pleased to assist the Outdoor Capital of the UK with their Halloween film, *A Loch Morar Halloween Tale*, featuring four intrepid travellers searching for Morag the Monster. Johnny Bell, from Twin Deer Law, filmed his narration scenes in the Governor's Room. The Museum is credited in the film which was seen by more than 140,000 people on Facebook.



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

Worth the time, fascinating exhibits

This small local history museum is a hidden gem. Many local objects are on display, from fossils to stuffed animals, to artefacts of many ages. There are good exhibits about the Commando training centre in WW II, Queen Victoria, the Jacobites, Ben Nevis, and fascinating historical odds and ends such as a "secret" painting of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Staffed by volunteers, the museum is free but welcomes donations. I was pleasantly surprised and enjoyed my time here immensely.

Texas, United States, September 2017



The Bronze Bulletin

The Bronze Ford, a full-sized replica of Henry Alexander's Model T Ford that ascended Ben Nevis in 1911, is born and growing by the week.

Over four years £89,000 has been raised by the local project group, with much local support and major contributions from Model T enthusiasts up and down the country.

The fund was finally realised with the help of the Highland Council who fronted a LEADER application. The Powderhall Bronze foundry in Edinburgh has the contract and as I write the back of the car, the seats and the wheels have all been cast.

A party of 40 students from Lochaber High School recently visited the foundry and we expect more will follow. "The Bronze Ford" will be unveiled outside the Museum close to the High Street on 19th May 2018!

Chris Robinson



The Model T Ford being cast by Powderhall Bronze Ltd in Edinburgh



Fabulous collection of artefacts

This museum has a wonderful collection which covers not just the Fort William area, but the whole of the West Highlands. There is a particularly rich collection of Jacobite artefacts. There are also some wonderful textiles, and some very unusual items, such as the cottars' models, which I had not seen before. Initially based on the collection of a wealthy local philanthropist, and housed in an old bank, the museum is definitely worth a visit.

Geelong, Australia, October 2017



Royal National Mod Lochaber 2017

The Royal National Mod took place in Fort William between 13th and 21st October. Organisers of the Mod, An Comunn Gaidhealach, aim to support and develop all aspects of the Gaelic language, culture, history and heritage at local, national and international levels.

The town was buzzing with excitement for the duration of the festival. Edinburgh Gaelic Choir, Coisir Dhun Eideann, hired out the Museum's Commando Room on 20th October. Conductor Paul Chilver set to work with his 19-strong choir to practice their repertoire before the competition and their melodious voices could be heard throughout the building!



The Dè a-nis? team from BBC Alba popped in to the Museum to film during this year's Royal National Mod in Lochaber. During the programme, aired on 20th October, they met some of the competitors taking part in this year's Royal National Mod in Lochaber, and visited the Museum as part of their trip around Fort William to find out more about the town.



What to do when it's raining

We were welcomed by really friendly staff, though we came half an hour before closing time. They told us the best things to see and I must admit that it would be worth to spend there much more than half an hour – even the museum is quite small, it has lots to offer – a bit from everything – history, nature, military... and it's completely free, run just by donations – so I found it a good idea to buy something from a little shop on ground floor (a Scottish cookery book, excellent!) to support them. Generally, a good choice when you can't spend a day outside.

Czech Republic, October 2017



Volunteers' Visit to Culloden



21 volunteers and partners attended the Museum trip to the National Trust Centre at Culloden, Inverness on 29th November 2016. We departed from the Nevis Centre at 8am in a Shiel Bus driven by Brian.

On arrival at the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) Culloden we were treated as VIPs. After complimentary coffee and shortbread, we were entertained by a presentation undertaken by National Trust volunteers dressed in Jacobean dress.

We were given a history lesson with artefacts of the time, on 1745 armaments and differing battle plans of the Jacobite and English Army.

The English took many prisoners after the battle in 1746 and we were entertained, with Fort William volunteers, on how they were treated, depending on their status. Even then there were many levels to Highland society!

After lunch we were given free time to enjoy the excellent interpretation at the Culloden Centre.

Our thanks to Colleen and Sonja for organising an excellent away day.

Alan Kirk



Musket Balls from the Jacobite Rising found at Highbridge

Musket balls from one of the first shots fired in the Jacobite Rising of 1745 were found at the site of an ambush at Highbridge.

Paul Macdonald, who runs Macdonald Armouries in Edinburgh and has close links with the West Highland Museum, unearthed the projectiles at the ruins of Highbridge near Spean Bridge. He made the finds in December 2016 and Spring 2017 while investigating the site with a metal detector.

Macdonald clansmen ambushed two companies of Royal Scots at Highbridge, killing at least two of them. The Battle of Highbridge on 16th August 1745 was the first skirmish of Bonnie Prince Charlie's campaign. In July 1745, the Prince had landed on the West Coast of Scotland seeking to reclaim the British crown for the Stuarts. The Hanoverian authorities responded by sending two newly raised companies of The Royal Scots, around 80 men, from Fort Augustus to strengthen the garrison at Fort William.

News of the troop movement reached Jacobite loyalists at Spean Bridge. As the Government troops approached High Bridge they were ambushed by just 11 men and a piper from MacDonnell of Keppoch's clan, commanded by MacDonnell of Tirnadris. Jumping and moving about amongst the trees and rocks on the opposite side of the river fooled the soldiers into thinking they were a much larger force. The redcoats retreated and finally surrendered to the clansmen at Loch Lochy where they were confronted by reinforcements.

Paul Macdonald believes the last time the musket balls were touched were as they were being loaded into a firearm. He is certain that the musket balls he found were discharged from a Jacobite weapon, as all of them were concentrated in an area where the Jacobites were firing from and aiming at on the High Bridge. They also correspond with the known calibres used by Jacobites at the time.



Paul MacDonald and his daughter with the musket ball he found in December 2016

Superb little place - and its free!

If you have an hour or two to spare in F. W., come here.

Delightful museum. Starts with very comprehensive and fascinating museum about the Commandos who trained here before helping to win WWII, and then is full of the 'real' artefacts of West Highland history, from prehistoric times through Bonnie Prince Charlie and all that. Lots of little rooms full of fascinating 'stuff'. It doesn't try and tell you the story - it is the story. Absolutely first class. Ideal for a rainy day or if you have an hour or two waiting for a train

Vienna, Austria, July 2017



In 1965 Princess Margaret visited Fort William. Photographer Mr Paton, inventor of the first camera to take panoramic photographs, was on hand to record the royal visit.

The photographs were donated to the West Highland Museum in July 2017 by Iain Ferguson and have been digitally reconstructed for us by Alex Gillespie. The original images were found in the attic of a house where Mr Paton used to reside. The camera used to take these pioneering photographs is sadly believed to have been destroyed!

**We would be very interested to hear from Members who remember the royal visit,
or who recognise themselves, or anyone else in the crowd.**



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 and 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.

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

Coffee Morning

A Coffee Morning was held on 1st June to thank volunteers for their valuable contribution to running the Museum. It was a good opportunity for everyone to get together, socialise and enjoy some delicious home-baking courtesy of our volunteers.



Bag Pack

A happy band of volunteers took to the tills at Morrisons supermarket on 26th October to pack customers' bags and raise funds for the Museum. A grand total of £655 was collected. This was a great boost to Museum funds and £45 more than was raised last year.

Museum Manager Colleen Barker said "I took great delight in counting the multitude of coins! I would like to thank everyone that helped us on the day, either with the bag packing, or looking after the Museum in my absence."

Fort William's Christmas Festival

The Museum attended the Rotary Christmas Festival that took place at the Nevis Centre on Saturday 25th November. The day was an enormous success. The venue was crowded with locals seeking festive treats. It was a great opportunity to raise the profile of the Museum with the local community.

On the day £216.40 was made in book sales and £88.94 in gift sales. A grand total of £305.34 was raised. The 'Guess the weight of the cannon ball' competition raised a further £85, which was another great result. Well done to May MacLean who guessed the correct weight as 1729g / 3.811lb and won a £15 gift voucher.

Staff would like to thank all of those who helped out on the day for their hard work and support.



Anne MacKenzie, Sonja McLachlan and Jean MacLeod at the 2016 Christmas Festival (Photograph courtesy of Iain Ferguson)

Dates for your diary

- **Friday 8th December 2017** - Volunteer's Christmas night out. Lochy Bar, Caol
- **Spring 2018** - Members Visit to Achnacarry to tour the castle and grounds. Details to be confirmed.
- **Saturday 19th May 2018** - Unveiling of the Bronze Model T Ford in Cameron Square
- **Thursday 24th May 2018** - AGM, 5pm, Venue to be confirmed

Green Fingers!

The Town Team asked the Museum to help look after the raised flower beds in Cameron Square this year. Green Fingers volunteer Gill Oram has been busy at work over the summer months planting and maintaining the beds on behalf of the Museum. She has been doing a jolly good job at making the Square a pleasant space for locals and tourists to enjoy.



Gill Oram at work in Cameron Square

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Taigh-tasgaidh na Gaidhealtachd an Iar

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