



TAIGH-TASGAIDH NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2018

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West Highland Museum

Message from the Chairman

At this time of the year it is appropriate to reflect but look forwards too and we are fortunate to be able to do so through this excellent Newsletter. We are very grateful to all contributors, especially Vanessa Martin, our Editor and Sharon Donald, our Production Editor.

Our growth and progress has continued, thanks to various initiatives under Colleen's excellent management and you will read of this on the following pages. The restructuring of the Museum into the new charitable company, the West Highland Museum Trust, is virtually complete and we will shortly wind up the old Trust. You will have been contacted about making changes to any standing orders you have in our favour. We are very grateful for your ongoing support. If you have not become a member of the West Highland Museum Trust, please do so.

Jackie Wright has been leading on expansion plans and, while we were initially disappointed to have been turned down by the Heritage Lottery Fund, we will have a strategic planning meeting before the end of the year to decide on our next steps. Owing to the support of the Scottish Land Fund, we now have ownership of 40 High Street, currently tenanted by the PDSA, which gives a steady income as we clarify our expansion plans.

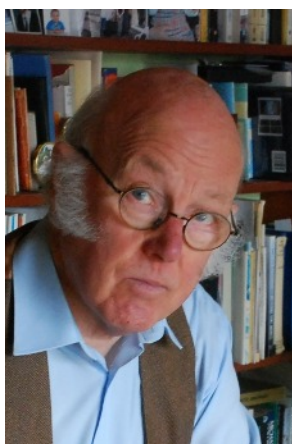
Many of our volunteers enjoyed a team visit to the newly opened V&A Dundee - Scotland's first design museum. I heard varying reports about this so, being reminded regularly by Colleen of the importance of 'Trip Advisor', I decided to check the basis of these grumbles. I noted that over 600 reviews averaged a rating of 3, with one third being in the lowest categories - reminding me of my primary 3 report card..... On the other hand, our Museum enjoys over 900 reviews with an average of 4.5, so I concluded that Schumacher was indeed correct when he opined, "Small is beautiful"!

Colleen, her staff and our enthusiastic army of volunteers earn our thanks with their dedication and hard work throughout the year. It is humbling to realise the regard in which our Museum is held.

Again, I take the opportunity to remind you of our well-established book and gift shop 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
Chair



Message from the Manager

I am not long back from a safari in the Mara North Conservancy in Kenya. While I was there, I met people from all around the world who were all very interested in hearing about our museum. My photograph was taken with one of the Maasai tribesman who worked at the camp.

Our visitor numbers to date have exceeded 55,000, which beats last year's total figure of 55,013 and is absolutely amazing! And, as so many visitors were from overseas it would be good to record the split between different nationalities. On a quiet day this would be quite easy, but on a busy August day when we may welcome 600 visitors, this would be very difficult to do.

We continue to receive some wonderful Trip Advisor reviews and we featured in the People's Friend letter section last month "We greatly enjoyed the West Highland Museum at Fort William, a trip on the Jacobite Express before taking the ferry over to Skye. The weather was perfect too!" Mrs R.C., New Zealand.

I am pleased to be able to tell you as well as our visitor numbers being up on 2017, our donation jars have also received more donations to date in comparison to 2017. The gift shop and bookshop has also continued to increase its turnover and profit which benefits the museum directly. Sonja McLachlan, with the help of myself and a couple of the volunteers kept the shop well stocked and introduced a few new lines which are selling well. So, if you are in Fort William, do pop in to have a look at our shop and perhaps do some Christmas shopping.

I organised a trip to the new V&A in Dundee as a thank you to our volunteers for helping out at the Museum. We also invited the Lochaber Local History Society and friends of our volunteers to join us, and we managed to fill a 49-seater bus. There is a report on this trip in this newsletter which I am sure you will enjoy.

We are now organising a Christmas Night out for the volunteers in a local restaurant. So, there are many reasons to offer to volunteer at the Museum ... hint hint!

We will be remaining open six days a week, all year round with the exception of a few days off over the Christmas and New Year holidays. Our low season visitors do appreciate this as most Museums in the Highlands are closed from October until April.

I have this year reduced my working hours from 5 days to 4 days which has enabled the museum to increase the hours of the new Curator from 5 hours to 15 hours. This arrangement is working well.

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

Colleen Barker
Museum Manager



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West Highland Museum

Curator's Update

I was excited to be appointed as the Museum's new curator in April 2018. I have some very big boots to fill, but with the guidance of former curators Fiona Marwick and Sally Archibald I think I am settling into the role nicely. I had previously volunteered at the Museum for 7 years, working for a year greeting visitors on reception and thereafter assisting with curatorial duties and serving on the now defunct Management Committee.

I also act as Editor for this newsletter and there are articles throughout this issue about some of the exciting new acquisitions we have received in 2018. These include a prayer book purportedly owned by Prince Charles Edwards Stewart and two beautiful sets of 19th century pistols. There is also an interesting article about the Ulgary Shoe that was gifted to the Museum earlier this year.

Other articles relate to new displays in the Museum, including the Model T Ford display which compliments the marvellous Bronze Model T in Cameron Square, and another new exhibit that focuses on the story of Bert Bissell and the Hiroshima Peace plaque.

I am currently working towards enhancing our Jacobite Collection. William Grant & Sons, owners of the Drumbuie Jacobite Collection have offered their collection to us on long term loan. I have selected some wonderful treasures that should be on display in the Museum by February 2019.

Vanessa Martin
Curator



Expansion Plans Update

Since 2015, the Trustees have followed a strategy of making the Museum sustainable by expansion to accommodate additional exhibitions, ensure accessibility and to provide better space for education, shop, staff and volunteers. In the past three years, we have considered options to achieve this and agreed a way forward which included us successfully acquiring the adjacent building, currently leased to the PDSA. This purchase was funded through the Scottish Land Fund.

In March this year we submitted our Stage One application to Heritage Lottery. Our project was valued at £4.5m which was a construction cost of £3m, fit-out of £1m and fees etc of £500K. Although the museum owns land at the back of our building, it is not easily accessible to build on and we estimated construction costs would therefore be quite high.

Our project competed with all other UK applications and, on the day the Heritage Lottery Board met, they had over £120m of applications for around £20m funds. Our project was considered too expensive and was therefore rejected. John Hutchison and I met with Heritage Lottery staff following the decision and they are encouraging us to consider a smaller project.

This is of course disappointing. Since the changes to lottery tickets took place three years ago, sales have fallen and therefore the amount going to lottery funds has also decreased dramatically. All lottery funders are reviewing their application processes and competition is tough.

The Board will be meeting soon to consider other options to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Museum so watch this space.

Jackie Wright
Director

'Bonnie Prince Charlie's' Prayer Book Gifted to the Museum

A Prayer book, said to have been used by Prince Charles Edward Stuart at Culloden Moor in 1746, was gifted to the Museum in July.

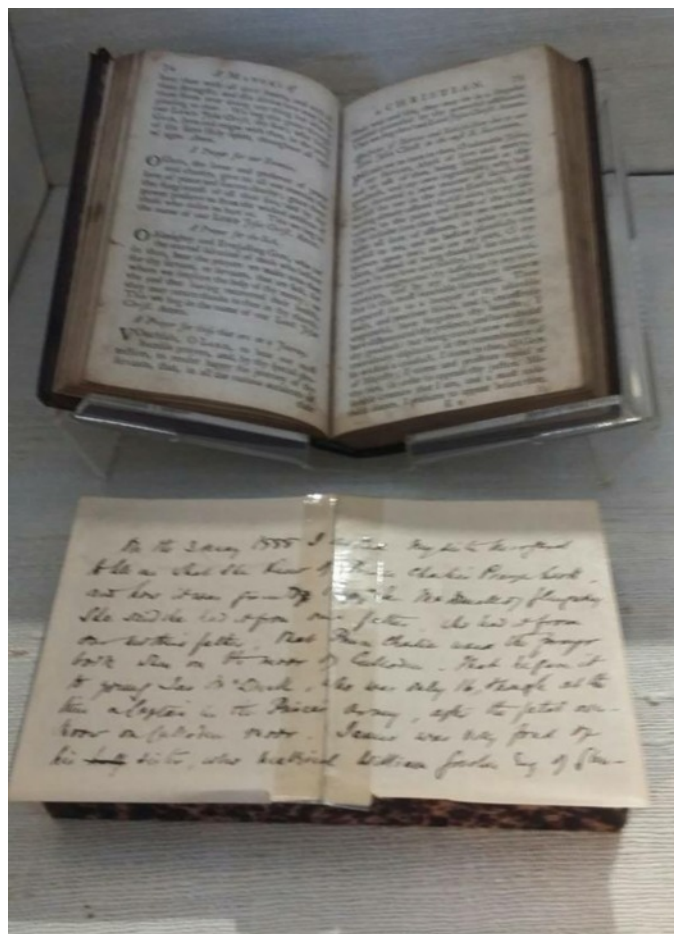
The prayer book titled "Manual of a Christian" was said to have been presented by the Prince on the battlefield to Captain James MacDonnell. It has been gifted to the Museum by the Captain's descendent who wished this rare and interesting object to be on display to the public.

The prayer book is a very generous donation and a fantastic addition to our Jacobite collection, which includes objects such as the famous secret portrait.

An inscription on the fly leaf states "This Book was presented by Prince Charles Stuart to Capt. James MacDonell of Glengarry. It was transferred by him to his Sister Lady Glenbuckett, and afterwards became the property of her Son, James Charles Gordon". The inscription was added in the early 19th century when the book was rebound by the above-named James Charles Gordon, whose own father, grandfather and great grandfather had all been at Culloden.

The Very Revd. Canon Donald Carmichael inherited the book in the 19th century. In May 1888 he wrote a memorandum based on a discussion with his sister Jessie MacDonald. According to their testimony, the Prince gifted the prayer book to James MacDonell of Glengarry, a captain in the Prince's army, who was only 16 years old at the time of Culloden.

The prayer book is now on display in the Jacobite Exhibition.



The prayer book and accompanying 1888 memorandum

The Pistols of Major James MacFarlane of Urins, Knapdale, Argyll

Four beautiful examples of 19th century pistols gifted to the Museum in 2017



The pistols were owned by Major James MacFarlane (1774 – 1849). James' father died when he was only two months old. His mother Janet was helped out by her brother, Colonel William Alston, who years later procured a commission for James in the Honourable East India Company's Service. Having spent nearly 20 years in India he returned to Britain in 1810. However, the years in India had taken its toll on his health and James needed to live within reach of the healing waters of Bath rather than return to Scotland. After serving as Adjutant at Chatham Barracks, he died in 1849 aged 75 years old. He had earlier married his first cousin Anne Alston, by whom he had four sons and a daughter. The eldest son, Rev. James Duncan MacFarlane was great grandfather to the donor of the pistols.

Dr Patrick Watt, Curator of Modern History and Military Collections at the National Museums Scotland examined the pistols in July 2018 and was able to provide the following details.



The smaller pair of pistols are percussion cap and were manufactured by Hewson a fairly big manufacturer of the era. The pistols date to the first decade of the 19th century. The pistols would have around 30 paces accuracy. This type of weapon is small and designed to be hidden on the person as a last chance weapon. (i.e. to be used after sword, dirk, pistol as a last resort, either to take a life or end your own.) In this case the pistols were probably a last defence weapon of an officer in India.

The larger pistols are a mass-produced weapon made by W. Powell and were manufactured in the 1830s, or early 1840s. These are not a pair. Belt clips show these are for use by a right-handed person. A pistol and a spare. They probably would have been sold in a presentation box together. One to be kept on your person and the other a spare.



Legendary Pipes played at MacIntyre Clan Gathering

A very special set of pipes usually on display in the Museum were loaned to Clan MacIntyre. The so-called "Faery" pipes of Moidart are said to be the oldest Highland pipes in existence and were hand-made by a MacIntyre piper more than 800 years ago. They are reputed to be the first pipes ever with two holes and are said to have been played at Bannockburn in 1314.

MacIntyres from all over the world were treated to a once-in-a-lifetime treat when they witnessed the bagpipes being played for only the fourth time in 200 years. The World Gathering of MacIntyres took place in Oban and Taynuilt in July. Around 300 MacIntyres took part in various celebrations, including a banquet in Oban on the Friday night where the special pipes were played by Andrew Macintyre from Edinburgh who studies music.

The chanter from the pipes were played again the following day, this time in Glenoe, by Ruairaidh Petre, a descendant of the MacIntyres who formerly possessed them.

Legend has it that the MacIntyre piper had made his own chanter, and then in a dream a faery came to him and said: "Heat up your poker until it's white hot and pierce the bottom of your chanter side to side and it will make the sweetest sounding pipes in Scotland."

The pipes are on long term loan to the Museum and currently on display in Room 6.



Colleen Barker pictured with the "faery" pipes

Not to be missed

A worthwhile local history museum bursting at the seams with exhibits. There are numerous rooms to visit whether you want to find out more about the green berets or how Claire may have lived with Jamie in Cross-stitch (that's Outlander to those who've been following the TV programme) to the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie. It is all free but would highly recommend a sizeable donation to keep this museum running.

Forfar, Scotland



Education Update

The Museum continues to host primary school visits and education officers Betty Bruce and Jo Godfrey work very hard to ensure that pupils enjoy their visits to the Museum. They focus on the schools' curriculum to ensure that the education they deliver is both engaging and relevant to the childrens' studies.

Among the visits this year were Caol Primary School in February and the new St. Columba's RC School later in the year. The Jacobites are always a popular topic and one that was covered when St. Columba's RC visited us in early October. Students wrote thank you letters to Betty and Jo detailing what they enjoyed the most about their visit. The most popular activities appear to have been learning about the Jacobites and getting to hold swords and shields. They were also amazed to hear that on the night before the massacre in Glencoe, the Campbells and MacDonalds played a shinty match together.



Caol Primary School visited in February 2018



St. Columba's RC School visited in October 2018



Pupils from St. Columba's pictured with Education Officer Jo Godfrey

The Big Bang and Beyond

The West Highland Museum hosted a children's event as part of the Highland Archaeology Festival in October.

The Festival celebrates archaeology, history and heritage in the Highlands. The popular event was fully booked.

Betty Bruce organised the event and writes:

The group started with the task of illustrating a time line from the Big Bang to modern times. It started well with volcano type red and yellow beginning of the world, the primeval slime complete with tadpole type life. Then things stalled somewhat when we reached dinosaurs. There was absolute concentration and little regard for future life. We finally painted some plant life, early man, the wheel and hunter gatherers. But the dinosaurs held pride of place for the children!

The second task was the dig. We unearthed nuts, shells, charcoal and lots of broken crockery with primitive drawings on it. The broken fragments of china were painstakingly put back together. This involved intense concentration, team effort and lots of time.

After a short break the children constructed bronze age sandals which involved a sole cut from corn flakes packets and off cuts of old leather. This met with varying success but at least all managed something they could wear.

Finally, everyone designed a T shirt. They showed much artistic talent and only two boasted dinosaurs!

“Antiques Roadshow”

Edinburgh auctioneer's Lyon and Turnbull brought their Scottish Pictures and Whisky Valuation Roadshow to the Museum on 24th October. Specialists Colin Fraser and Carly Shearer offered free valuations and advice on selling at auction. They also brought along a small exhibition of Scottish paintings that could be viewed by attendees. The Museum were pleased to host this prestigious event and grateful for the £200 donation received from Lyon & Turnbull.



Lyon & Turnbull specialist Colin Fraser offering advice at the Valuation Roadshow

The Mort Safe

Death is inevitable. For the living, however, death has been treated with reverence, ritual and ceremony. But the Museum's Mort Safe tells against this reverence in a most macabre and bizarre period in Scottish social history.

Scotland has always had an excellent reputation for being in the forefront of medical training. Part of this training of necessity included anatomy. To practise anatomy, it was felt, that a supply of newly dead bodies was essential. In Edinburgh in 1505 the Burgh Council allowed that once a year the surgeons and barbers of the town might have the body of a condemned man for dissection. One single body legally come by did not mean a great deal to anatomy students.

In 1694 the Edinburgh College of Surgeons received a charter for the regular teaching of anatomy. Other universities followed suit. Now a regular supply of bodies was essential. One once a year was useless. Upon an injunction from the Edinburgh of Surgeons the council allowed a supply of bodies of foundlings and those who had died in the House of Correction to be used. Medical training in Scotland was, however, expanding very rapidly. More and more bodies were needed for students to dissect. The legal supply was not enough. So, body snatching began.

These grave robbers were sometimes called Resurrectionists because they literally raised the dead. This extremely unpleasant occupation was well paid and attracted that element of the population who were prepared to do anything for money.

Body snatchers would try to learn of forthcoming funerals and would sometimes join the mourners, then in the night rob the grave. It was essential that the grave was emptied during the first six weeks of burial because after that period the body was useless for dissection. Seizure of a body naturally caused very great distress and outrage, and different methods were deployed to prevent desecration.

The height of churchyard walls was extended to prevent robbers clambering over. Neighbourhood watches were established to patrol graveyards at night after a burial. Tough material such as heather was mixed with soil to make nocturnal digging more difficult. Heavy stones were sometimes placed on the lid of the coffin before filling in. Speed and stealth were of the essence for body snatchers, so all these methods served to deter robbery.

However, the most effective deterrent was the mort safe. Cast iron was beaten into a coffin shape and lowered onto the grave on top of the wooden coffin. Since these coffin guards weighed more than a ton it required block and tackle to raise and lower them. Thus, they defeated the body snatchers and gave the corpse first class protection.

Mort safes were expensive and beyond the means of ordinary people. They were bought by the Parish and several different sizes were ordered. Ordinary people afforded protection by joining what would now be called a co-operative society. People paid a subscription against the day when a mort safe would be required and in some parts also a small charge when the coffin guard was in use. After approximately six weeks the guard was disinterred, ready for use again.

Unfortunately, the mort safe on display in the Museum is incomplete, so if anyone in the environs of Glen Nevis finds a cast iron coffin shaped lid, please, let the Museum know. In the meantime, shudder at the part on display and ponder on the lengths our forebears went to in order to protect their dead.

Betty Bruce



Volunteer Donald Allan tries the mort safe for size

Diamond Visitors

John and Margaret Tomlinson married on 16 August 1958 and came to the Museum during their honeymoon in Fort William. They revisited the Museum on their diamond wedding anniversary this summer and looked very chuffed as they came back to see the Hidden Portrait and see what has changed. John said of their marriage "I think we've proved that it works!!" They remember when they arrived in Fort William in 1958 that the whole town was being prepared for a visit from the Royal Yacht and was being polished to within an inch of its life. Volunteers presented the couple with a goodie bag to help celebrate their anniversary.



Wedding Anniversary

Great little museum

Stumbled on this little museum tucked away in Cameron Square. The museum contains plenty of historical items and a history of the area. The assistants are very knowledgeable and like chatting especially when they find out how far you have come. Plenty to see and enjoy for all ages.

Kuala Lumpur



The Hiroshima Plaque and the Peace Cairns

When Highland Council relocated to the Charles Kennedy Building in the summer, they gifted an array of interesting items to the Museum. Among the objects donated was the original Hiroshima Plaque that once stood in the Parade, Fort William. The plaque along with details of its fascinating history are now on display in Room 4.

The Second World War ended soon after nuclear bombs were dropped in Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Shortly afterwards Bert Bissell, MBE (1902 – 1998), a mountain climber and peace campaigner from Dudley arrived with members of his Dudley Bible Class in Fort William on V-J Day, where they climbed Ben Nevis and dedicated a Peace Cairn to universal world peace at the summit.

In addition to the memorial on Ben Nevis, Bert was instrumental in getting similar cairns placed on other world peaks. This resulted in him obtaining an MBE, the World Methodist Peace Award and acclaim from the Japanese government, which included visits to Hiroshima. Bert was also awarded the Freedom of both Dudley and Fort William. He is buried in the churchyard at Glen Nevis.

Many people were horrified at the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima on 6th August and Nagasaki on 9th August 1945, and provided monuments and plaques noting this.

The Hiroshima plaque was presented to Fort William as "A memorial from the youth of Hiroshima in the hope that the experience of 6th August 1945 will strengthen our search for a peaceful world. January 1st 1968." This was exhibited as part of a Peace Cairn on the Parade, Fort William. Sadly, it was damaged some years later, but has since been repaired.

A Peace Cairn was later presented by the people of Dudley and Fort William to Hiroshima where it remains on display in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

The peace climbs at Ben Nevis were repeated annually for many years afterwards. These have recently been resurrected and a climb took place in 2018. Bert ascended the mountain over 100 times and undertook his last climb at the age of 91 years old. He was frequently supported on his climbs by the people of Dudley, Fort William and members of the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team.



The replica Hiroshima plaque situated in The Parade, Fort William

Ulgary Shoe

On a recent walk from Kinlochmoidart to visit the deserted villages of Ulgary and Assary at the head of the long glen, which was wonderfully dry after our dry summer, a long time was spent exploring the ruins of the old crofts.

We counted around 30 habitations and other buildings between the two villages. Remains of lazy beds are visible on the hillsides around and one wonders at the effort involved in constructing these and how they managed to get seaweed for fertiliser all the way from the distant shores. Either a long trek down the glen, or a shorter steeper climb over the ridge and back above the houses.

Plenty of stone for walls, but wood for roofs and for fuel must have been hard to come by. Old records only talk of poor samples of trees around the estate house at the mouth of the glen and as far as we could see no signs of peat cutting, but perhaps they have long since grown over.

It is known that three men from Ulgary joined Clanranald along with many others from the area in the uprising of 1745 and even what arms they took with them, whether sword, or gun, or targe, or perhaps none of these!

By the early 1800s most people had moved or emigrated to North America, and the glen was devoid of people. It is said that the entire glen was evacuated in one mass exodus. A more modern type of house is to be seen at Assary and we can only assume that was for the shepherd, but it is now roofless although the walls are sound. A lonely place at the best of times and a hard existence for the original inhabitants.

On the way slowly back down the glen we stopped by the river not far below the villages and Mary spotted something in the sand by the water. It turned out to be part of the sole of a child's moccasin type shoe. This was a very evocative find as it must be perhaps 200 years old and is of a very primitive hand stitched construction. One wonders who the wee boy or girl was and how the shoe became to be in the river.

Alex Gillespie



**SOLE OF A CHILDS HAND SEWN SHOE
FOUND BY THE RIVER BANK BELOW
THE OLD VILLAGE OF ULGARY IN
GLENMOIDART 02/06/2012 MARY GILLESPIE**

Highly recommend anyone visiting Fort William

Lovely welcome from the man on the door. Highly recommend anyone visiting Fort William go here for a few hours to appreciate the rich history of the Highlands. Will return one day to finish off!

Ahmedabad, India



Art at the Museum

On 12th October art students from the UHI Fort William visited the Museum and immersed themselves in the collection for the day. Their lecturer, Ali Berardelli, said the group thoroughly enjoyed the visit and had skilfully sketched objects from our displays to fit in with the themes of their course work.



International Internship success

The Museum welcomed French postgraduate student Camille Cardona to the Museum for two weeks in August. Camille visited the Museum in 2017 and was so impressed that she asked to volunteer with us. She is studying for her Masters degree in Heritage at the University of Toulouse. She was a great asset during a busy summer period. She helped volunteers greet visitors, revised our French language guide and assisted with curatorial projects. To thank her for her contribution, staff took her out for lunch on her final day and presented her with a £50 gift voucher to spend in the Museum shop.



Museum Manager Colleen Barker, Curator Vanessa Martin and Intern Camille Cardona

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 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

A Two-Hour visit

This is an excellent museum and especially fitting on a cold and rainy day. The museum is very well done despite its size - 2 floors of loads of historical artefacts and a short film about the training program for the British Commandos during the war and how they were deployed.

Franklin, Tennessee



The Ben Bronze Model T

In 1911 an outlandish dream would become a reality when one Henry Alexander, a Ford dealer from Edinburgh drove a standard Model T Ford from Cameron Square up to the summit of Ben Nevis.

This feat of man and motor car took 5 days to ascend and only a couple of hours to descend. This achievement was acclaimed by Henry Ford for many years – though press reports at the time were not all overwhelmingly positive. Journalists were provided with ponies to carry them to the top of the Ben to report on the event after the car summited. “The Times” newspaper correspondent’s pony did not take a great liking to him - and threw him off into a bog breaking his nose. He sent a rather abbreviated report.

One hundred years later in May 2011, some 76 Model T Fords from all over Great Britain descended on Fort William for a week and drove amongst the hills and glens. One car attempted an ascent of Ben Nevis by Coire Leis. However, it took a team of 77 stalwarts led by enthusiastic members of the Model T Register of Great Britain to carry a 1911 Model T in parts to the summit of the Ben. It was assembled in a blizzard, photographed and then carried back to the town. Here when reassembled it took pride of place in the famous West Highland Museum in Cameron Square from where the car left and returned in 1911.



Three generations. Henry Alexander, his grandson Mike Munro and his great, great, great grandson Leighton.

Later in 2011, the architect commissioned to redesign the Cameron Square and suggested a Model T might be placed in the Square to commemorate the 1911 event and in no time this idea found local and national support and fund raising began to make this vision a reality.

After the idea to establish a Model T sculpture in Cameron Square was suggested, a group of seven local individuals came together to form the Ben Bronze team. Over the following six years the team would attend all manner of local events to help raise the funds required to make a full size bronze Model T in Cameron Square.



In early 2017 the majority of the eighty five thousand pounds had been raised. The team then applied for European funding to secure the final amount required. Fortunately the bid was successful and the next stage of manufacturing it began.

In 2017 the tendering process was set up for Scottish foundries to bid for the contract to manufacture the Ben Bronze Model T. Powderhall Bronze foundry in Edinburgh were successful in winning the contract.

After many months of hard work at the foundry the Ben Bronze Model T sculpture was completed at the end of April 2018. Weighing in at just over three tonnes it was hoisted onto a specialist transporter and driven from Edinburgh up to Fort William.

As the sculpture is located in a public space where people are encouraged to engage with it by taking a seat in the car, safety was of the utmost importance. The Model T has a reinforced steel frame within its structure, as well as four posts fixing it securely to the ground in Cameron Square. The Ben Bronze had been installed in Cameron Square a couple of days prior to its unveiling and was covered up with a length of Ford Model T tartan.

On a sunny Saturday morning just before eleven o'clock the Lochaber Schools Pipe band and community wind band played a number of tunes to the large crowds in Cameron Square.

Councillor Alan Henderson addressed the audience and gave a potted history of the project and thanked a good number of people involved in making the idea behind the Ben Bronze into a reality.

Three members of the Munro family then slowly removed the Model T tartan to reveal the shining Ben Bronze Model T sculpture. This was met with great cheers and applause from the assembled crowds in the Square. Mike Munro, Henry Alexander's grandson then sat in the passengers seat next to the sculpture of his late grandfather and gave a speech which touched on his grandfathers ascent of the Ben back in 1911 and his pride in seeing the finished sculpture.



The Ben Nevis distillery had commissioned a commemorative whisky bottle for the event. This was used along with the fresh snow that had been gathered from the summit of Ben Nevis earlier in the morning and poured into a quaich and passed around the members of the Munro family and the Ben Bronze team. (I should note that none which were driving a car that day!)

Shortly afterwards around fifty Model T's were led out of Cameron Square by the Lochaber Schools Pipe Band.

A Bronze Trail was inaugurated that day - encouraging people to visit the other bronze sculptures at the West end of Fort William, Inverlochy and Spean Bridge.

The day concluded with a dinner in the Alexandra Hotel where members of the Model T Register of Great Britain gathered along with the Ben Bronze team and the Munro family.

Since the Ben Bronze Model T was installed back in May, it has proved to be a popular attraction with locals and visitors alike, with many people stopping to have their photographs taken in the car.

An explanatory bronze plaque will shortly be added to the adjacent wall in Cameron Square, along with inlaid bronze tyre tracks from the rear of the car up towards the West Highland Museum.

Bill Cameron



*Spent a great hour here,
lovely wee place*

We stopped in as part of a treasure hunt walking tour and had a lovely hour being educated. Only a small place but full of interest for all ages. Had we not had children with us we may have stayed longer though.

Aberdeen, Scotland



Treasure Trove Purchase

This early modern shoulder belt plate was found by keen metal detectorists Allan Kinnear and Ross Hunter at Lochailort in 2015.

The Museum purchased this rare and exciting object from Treasure Trove in July 2018 for the sum of £225.

The shoulder belt plate was worn by the British Army from the 1780s onwards to carry the sword and bayonet. The plate insignia would have been positioned in the chest area. This is a very rare find as there is little documentary evidence left to show that the Moidart Volunteers ever existed.

Thanks to the help of the National Museum of Scotland we now know that the Moidart Volunteers were a company of volunteers formed as a home defence force during the Napoleonic wars. All that is known about the Volunteers is that their commanding officer was noted in 1797 as one Captain Alexander MacDonald and it appears that the Moidart Volunteers were incorporated into a battalion of Inverness-shire Volunteers.



Shoulder belt plate

Clanship to Capitalism. A History of the Estates in Lochaber from 1745

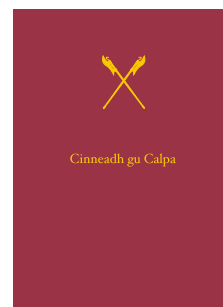
Every good story has a beginning, a middle and an end. The story of Richard Sidgwick's recently published book with the title '*Clanship to Capitalism. A History of the Estates in Lochaber from 1745*' began with an invitation from Chris Robinson, Chairman of the Lochaber Local History Society to contribute to their 2011 winter programme of talks.

The first of the talks entitled '*Landownership in Lochaber from 1745 to the present day*' was devoted to the current system of landownership and the story of the two of the largest estates in Lochaber; it generated sufficient interest for the invitation to be repeated for the next five years during which ownership of the remainder of the area was discussed. Charles Kennedy was a regular attendee at the first three of these and it was after the third, the last he attended, that he repeated his encouragement to commit the whole series to paper. That was the middle of the story.

The end of the story spanned a two-year period from May 2016 to July of this year during which the talks were written up, 220 illustrations were collated, interviews with owners, their descendants and families were carried out, proofs were edited and formatted and the printing of a de-lux limited edition of 250 numbered copies were completed.

The first print run of 250 copies is heavily subscribed and it is likely that a further run of less expensive un-numbered copies will be produced. If so, they will be available from the author who may be contacted at rts@milestonehill.com or on 01397 712208.

The book was launched locally at a private event on 29th November. There will be an evening reception at the West Highland Museum at 6pm on 5th December for members, the Local History Society and other interested parties.



Wee Acquisitions

Two wee, but fascinating objects have been recently gifted to the Museum.

The first is a Charles I copper coin from 1629 which Alex Gillespie found many years ago whilst hiking in the Mamore Mountains.

The second is a shot found on the shoreline of Loch Shiel near Glenfinnan. The shot was handed into the Museum for identification and referred to Treasure Trove. It has been identified as a shot from a mid-18th century French or Spanish hunting rifle. The location of the find is exciting as it is close to where Prince Charles Edward Stuart raised his standard in 1745.



1629 Charles I coin



Mid-18th century shot

Amazing breadth and depth for a small museum

Fascinating museum. Extremely well curated. I learned so many things in a short period of time: The Green Berets originated as an elite Scottish fighting force. The sea eagle is the world's largest eagle and found off the west coast of Scotland. Jacobites really got carried away with secrecy and intrigue. All the original objects were just wonderful. This is a must for anyone visiting Fort William.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



V & A Museum Trip to Dundee Sunday 21 October 2018

It was a wet dark Sunday morning when the bus left Fort William on the West Highland Museum's annual outing for volunteers. This year it was to the recently opened V & A Museum in Dundee. The museum was well represented and the surplus bus seats had been eagerly taken up by members of the Local History Society and friends. Everyone was in a happy frame of mind, anticipating the day ahead, as they travelled through the countryside ablaze with autumn colours.

In the late morning, as the bus approached the city along the riverside, the shape of the iconic building, two truncated boats bows, one facing the water and the other the land could be fully appreciated. On arriving at the museum everyone was awestruck by the size of the futuristic building towering above them, completely dwarfing the sailing ship, Discovery, close by. In contrast, the interior, clad in light wood, is bright and open. The information desk, café and shop are on the ground floor. Hugging the exterior wall, an elegant staircase leads up to the exhibition galleries. On the way there are strategically placed seats (there is a lift) and oblong "portholes" giving panoramic views over the Tay to the Fife coast.

The permanent exhibition, a collection of some 300 items from the V & A Museum in London and loans from other collections, illustrates the little known story of Scottish designs, past and present, and their worldwide influence. With so much to see and to appreciate the full story more visits would be required. Entry to the museum and the permanent exhibition is free. There was a temporary exhibition on Ocean Liners for which there was a charge. Those who visited it said it was worthwhile. A good number of the group went to the



Discovery Exhibition next door while others made the best of the sunshine and walked along the waterfront or into the city.

The bus was much quieter on the way home as everyone was tired but pleased with the day's adventures. Many thanks are due to Colleen and Sonja for arranging such a very successful trip.

Martine Young



Enjoying the RRS Discovery's café

All aboard the coach and homeward bound



Christmas Celebrations 2017

Staff and volunteers celebrated Christmas in style with delicious food and good company at the Lochy in Caol on Friday 8th December.



Jackie Wright, Geoff Wright, Ron Cameron, Mary Stitt and Martine Young



Sophina Raja, Sonja McLachlan, Ruairidh McLachlan, Robert Galloway, Joyce Raja, Emily Gregory



Christine Hutchison and Chris Robinson



John Hutchison and Brian Ball

Rotary Christmas Festival 2017

Once again, the Rotary Christmas Festival held at the Nevis Centre was a success for the Museum. It was busy and a great opportunity to raise our profile with the local community. On the day we raised £305.34, which is down on last year but still a good total. The 'Guess the Weight of the Cannon Ball' raised £85.00, which is another good result. Well done to May MacLean who guessed the correct weight as 1729g/3.81lb and won a £15.00 WHM gift voucher.

We concur with the positives review from previous comments

*It is certainly a gem hidden away.
No doubt it is as good as museums get.
It has a lot on display that relates to the
average person of the day.
It is really a must.
It has very friendly volunteer staff.
The displays are quite brilliant many
things of interest not show in
mainstream museums.*

Adelaide, Australia



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!



Bag Pack

A big thank you to staff and
volunteers who came along to
help at the annual Morrison's bag
pack on 4th October. A fantastic
£704.67 was raised for the
Museum.



There's something for everyone and it's FREE.

*This museum oozes history from continental drift
and volcanoes, to twentieth century warfare.*

*Learn about the beginnings of commandoes, see
their equipment, watch them training. this was
an excellent display. Local history, Scotland's
natural history, archaeology and
mountaineering, Victorian and traditional
costumes of the past (before kilts).*

*Jacobites/Stuart's, art from the 17 century,
Highland life/the tools that were used in the past
and finally - how to get a car up Ben Nevis.*

Derbyshire, England



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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 5th December 2018

Book launch for members of Richard Sidgwick's
"Clanship to Capitalism", 6pm

Friday 14th December 2018

Volunteer's Christmas night out.
Garrison West, Fort William 5pm

January/February 2019

Drambuie Collection launch in our Jacobite
exhibition

March & April 2019

Temporary Exhibition. "Coming Home"
Highland experiences of the First World War

Spring 2019

Members Visit to Achnacarry to tour the castle
and grounds

Thursday 30th May 2019

AGM, 5pm, Venue to be confirmed

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Taigh-tasgaidh na Gaidhealtachd an Iar

Charity No: SC014287



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