

MUSEUM * MATTERS

Edition 4 June 2010

You would be forgiven for thinking that the last three months have been a succession of meetings, meals and talks at The Highlanders Museum. Certainly it has been a very sociable time but with a much directed purpose – creating a Museum of the Future.

Alix Powers-Jones (*Museum Director*)



Priorities in the last three months

1. Accessibility and Participation
 - o **Evening reception & lecture**

The highlight of the last quarter was the evening reception and lecture given by **Brigadier Charles Grant**, a former Chairman of Museum Trustees on Wednesday 26th May. After a light reception in the Museum, an appreciative audience listened to an expertise treatise on the events in the aftermath of St. Valery. Brigadier Charles gave an overview of the courageous 51st Highland Division and their actions in WW2. He told the story of the reconstituted 51st Division and their part in many of the outstanding engagements of the war, culminating in their final advance to victory in Germany.

- o **Flying the flag**

We have been taking the opportunity to publicise the Museum at various recent outreach events. Two after dinner talks: the Cameron Association Annual Dinner on Friday 23rd April and the Inverness Culloden branch of Rotary on 27th April presented the opportunity to tell the assembled diners about *The Museum of the Future*. The talks highlighted the unique nature of the Museum collections and why it is so fundamental to their preservation that the Museum is upgraded.

Likewise, the Museum was represented at the launch, on Wednesday 12th May, of the first of the Ardersier *Older 4 Older* DVDs. This is work to collect recollections of local people collected by local people. The Museum fully supports local history endeavours as this echoes the Museum's own commitment to the collection of personal histories.

- o **The Forces Family Exhibition**

Following on with the theme of personal narrative, a Forces Family exhibition has opened at the Museum. Timed to coincide with **National Family Week** 31st May-5th June, the exhibition is of personal memories of life in the Forces. Visitors are encouraged to read the (often amusing) short, personal accounts of life in the Forces; and to add their own memories to our memory wall.

- o **Staff**

The Museum is pleased to introduce our new apprentice **Cailean Morrison**. Cailean came to us under the one year Creative Apprenticeships scheme run by central Government and is studying for an SVQ in Museum Studies. Following a research visit by **Dr. Stewart Fraser** of the History Centre, Perth with 4 of his degree students, the Museum has two new volunteers: **Mrs Gillian Simpson** and **Mrs Nicola Mackenzie**. Volunteers have clocked up a splendid total of 636 hours of work this quarter working on a variety of Museum tasks including enquiries, collection care, library inventory, paintings, and staffing the front desk

2. Accreditation

A new, colourful Museum leaflet has been produced as part of our Accreditation duties and is a tempting advertisement for the Museum and its collections. The leaflet is being distributed to local sites and venues. If you know of a local venue or establishment that would like to stock this new leaflet please us know.

The revised Acquisition and Disposal Policy (ADP), has been approved and we await the decision of the next Museums Galleries Scotland Panel to see if our long process of Accreditation is now complete.

- o **Application for National Status**

The Scottish Regimental Museums are applying for joint recognition as having collections of National Importance. Last month saw assessment visits by Stuart Allen and George Dalgleish of National Museums of Scotland and Helen Smailes of National Gallery of Scotland to judge if we did indeed hold collections worthy of National Status. The assessors appeared delighted with the quality and breadth

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The Heritage of Heroes

of our collections and we await their formal assessments with interest.

3. Education & Learning

o **Conference at the Fort**

The programme for the Scottish Military History Conference to be held at Fort George on June 28th-29th 2010 has been sent out. The conference, *From Fontenoy to Helmand*, is being organised jointly by UHI Millennium Institute's Centre for History and The Highlanders' Museum.

o **Memory Myth and Silence**

The Museum has applied for a place on a prestigious national programme to study the process of record creation. The *Memory, Myth and Silence* network, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, will study issues surrounding the collection of personal narratives (stories) in historical interpretation. The Network will be at the forefront of the development of national policy and guidance.

4. Income

There was a consistent source of income from research in Feb to end April of almost £1200 thanks to the diligent offices of staff and volunteers. In this period some 212 enquiries were answered, 36 of them requiring significant work by our researchers, the balance being short enquiries or enquiries researched by visitors themselves. The income earned from visitors to the museum itself was poor as visitor numbers are only now starting to pick up after the long winter. The retail sales for April were more than twice the levels of the previous 2 months together, with a total income for the quarter of £1800. In these circumstances it is doubly important that the Endowment Fund and Appeal continues to be well supported. If you are not a regular contributor to the Fund and Appeal please consider becoming one now and protecting the future of this great collection. Details from the Development Office at the Museum.

5. Collection Care

The oil paintings are being catalogued for inclusion in a publication produced by the Public Catalogue Foundation.

o **Recent acquisitions**

A charming family event, covered by the Press, took place at the Museum in May with the donation of Lovat Scout memorabilia including medals, photographs and an embroidery from WW1. Family and friends from Canada and

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Inverness packed the library to hear the story of the objects **from James Boswell** and to witness the donation. Other notable acquisitions this quarter include paintings from **Haskett-Smith** family; and specimens of the Afghanistan Operational Service medal, the Iraq medal and the exquisite Elizabeth Cross. These are on show downstairs.

o **Upgrade Forward Planning**

Useful discussions with Historic Scotland (HS) have identified storage areas for the collection during the period of upgrade building work. HS have offered the use of the current exhibition space at Fort George, which is dry and heated, for storing the items during the upgrade.

Visitor Numbers

Visitor figures are slowly improving after a poor start.

	2010	2009	2008	% change '08 to '10
Feb	755	827	888	-15%
Mar	1275	1335	2092	-39%
Apr	3603	4653	4075	-12%

Priorities in the next 3 months

1. Forward Planning

The continued development of the detailed plan for moving the collections prior to the Upgrade work. This includes continued assessment of the reserve collections not currently on display.

2. Education and Learning

Learning development in partnership with Culloden and with the new Historic Scottish education officer at Fort George when the appointment is approved.

3. Income Development

A consultation on our current charges for research and reprographics; development of retailing and support for our application for National Status (potential access to additional government funding).

4. Visitor Survey

The annual survey of visitor opinions.

Summary

A sociable quarter with talks and meetings which are good advertising for the Museum. Plus, some positive progress with partners.

And finally...

Some dates for your diary.

3rd June 2pm Museum Development Committee Meeting.

28th-29th June – Scottish Military History Conference at Fort George.