



TAIGH-TASGAIDH NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR

whm

West Highland Museum

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2014

## Message from the Chairman



In a way this Newsletter forms our interim annual report and articles elsewhere deal with the Collection, events, our operations and financial position, with some perspectives on the future.

After doing so well over the past few years it is somewhat galling for staff and volunteers to face the potential triple setback from losing rates relief, a possible 10% annual reduction in Council grant and the prospect of being expected to try our luck in a bidding process for Council financial support. Along with the eighteen other independent museums across the Highlands, we rely on Council funding to survive. I do hope that all members and those associated with the Museum heeded our earlier plea and took part in the consultation to make their views known.

I'm just back from Oban where I had the privilege of opening and being responsible for Scotland's inaugural Rural Parliament where, amongst a range of more obvious and equally pressing matters, the role of arts and culture in our lives was being examined. Not the value of culture to shore up business and the tourism product, but how art and culture affects each of us, as human beings, with regard to social and mental wellbeing. As we wrestle through these next few months we need to remember that access to arts and culture has a fundamental place in our basic human rights and present this argument along with those more obvious.

Though when I worry about cultural awareness being lost for the future I'm reassured by things like the further success in the Royal National Mòd of our own young Museum volunteer, Fergus Munro from Corpach – well done, Fergus!

**John Hutchison**  
Chairman of Trustees

## Message from the Manager



You will see from the photographs that Cameron Square has been refurbished. The work started in February this year and was completed by the end of May. This meant that we had a building site outside the Museum when we re-opened in March and this was detrimental to our visitor numbers for the first three months of being open. I am pleased to be able to report that we have beaten last year's visitor total of 44,444. This year we have had almost 46,000 visitors pass through our doors. We've had great visitor feedback and have included some examples of our recent Tripadvisor reviews in the newsletter. The newly refurbished square is proving to be very popular with tourists and the Museum is now more visible from the High Street. This has been reflected in the increased visitor numbers since the building work was completed.

*Continued on page 2*



*The newly refurbished Cameron Square*

whm  
West Highland Museum

## Message from the Manager - continued

The project has created a flexible and welcoming events space in the centre of the town. Already there is a marked increase in the number of people using it, both during the day and in the evenings. The provision of public open-space Wi-fi (hosted by the West Highland Museum), ensures people stay connected to what else is happening in the town. The consultation process had identified a strong desire to have colour in the Square and as well as the artwork and coloured lighting a quirky, blue concrete three piece suite has been installed as a 'photo-opportunity'! All materials used are designed to be durable with lighting all being low-energy LED lights (which has reduced the Council's lighting costs by more than a third). The walls of the Square are now 'washed' with fully changeable coloured light which brings welcome colour on a dreary evening. Fixings are also installed to allow event organisers to put up awnings.

The event space is well used for both formal events (including the launch event involving Fort William's first sheep race) and charitable and sports events – all increasing footfall. The Lochaber Pipe Band is delighted with the acoustics the site provides and provision of this space holds people in town for an extended period, as there is now a recognised area to rest, have an ice-cream and watch the world go by.

Our Commando Exhibition has just recently been improved with many new additions to the exhibition. Please do come and see it!

We now have 44 volunteers with an age range of 14 years to late seventies. They have a great mix of skills and interests, and without them we could not run the Museum. We are always looking for more volunteers. So, if you live locally and are interested, please do not hesitate to pop in for a chat to find out what is involved.

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

Best wishes

**Colleen Foggo**  
Museum Manager

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

Telephone: **01397 702169**

Email: [sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk](mailto:sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk)

## Youth update

The Saturday Club continues to flourish with numbers between ten and five in attendance at each session. We have made shields commemorating the 700th anniversary of Bannockburn, Viking helmets, Victorian Christmas cards and crackers. The quizzes are always popular, from straight forward questions, to questions couched in Viking runes or Morse code. It all seems to work. They keep coming and Robert has now graduated to being a summer holiday volunteer.

Over the year, complementing the primary schools curriculum, we have had visits from most local schools and from as far afield as Arisaig and Invergarry. Subjects include early man, crofting, old Fort William, Vikings, Jacobites, Victorians and WWII. Invergarry also looked at the weathermen of Ben Nevis and invited me to their referendum debate.

Somewhat surprisingly we have had visits from nursery groups and years one and two. To prove that museums are fun we have made butter, beaten carpets, used a foot plough and washed with carbolic soap and a washboard. Washing machines and lavender soap were voted much superior. Among the very young, the birching table proved the favourite artefact during the tour.

We have also had a session on "Weapons through the Ages" with Kinlochleven Secondary School and a class from University of Highlands and Islands had a tour and talk on Old Fort William.

All in all it has been a fairly busy and productive year on the youth side.

**Betty Bruce**

*'Somehow bizarre & cute at the same time'*

20 October 2014

*It's never too late to learn, and you will learn a lot in the West Highland Museum. I've rarely seen such a small museum which gives you that many impressions. It's perfectly maintained, well organized and exciting because you can't imagine what you see in the next room. Definitely a must see and support!*

Switzerland



# A Night at the Museum

The Trustees of the West Highland Museum hosted a lively social event on Friday 10th January at the Museum. Guests travelled from all over Lochaber to enjoy canapés, wine and entertainment. There was good local support with members, local supporters and museum volunteers invited to the event. Lorna Linfield from Fort William delighted guests with her tunes on the clàrsach throughout the evening. The delicious canapés were provided by Farmstead Fayre and the beautiful cake was made by Swell Cakes.

As part of the event one of the Museum's life members, Alasdair McMorrine, from Loch Lagganside, kindly offered to put on a temporary display of some of his paintings which he produced as artist in residence with Scottish Natural Heritage at Creag Meagaidh in 2013.

John Hutchison, Chairman of the Trustees, addressed guests and thanked Angus MacDonald of the Moidart Trust, the events benefactor for their generosity. John said in the invitation, "We are extremely grateful for the encouragement and support of the Moidart Trust that will set the scene for our early evening event to which we have invited supporters of the Museum, old and new. You will understand that we are very proud of the Museum and what has been achieved as we approach our first century of operation. As one of the West Highland's oldest charities we are keen to share our vision for the future."

As a result of the event some supporters, old and new, have stepped forward to generously donate valuable funds to the Museum. The event was such a great success, that another is planned for next year with a visit to Roshven House.



Colleen Foggo (Museum Manager), Angus MacDonald (Moidart Trust) and John Hutchison (Chairman of the Trustees) cut the cake.



Lorna Linfield playing the clàrsach



Local artist Alasdair McMorrine pictured with his paintings



Guests enjoying the evening

# Visit Roshven House



There will be a West Highland Museum trip to Roshven House on the 11<sup>th</sup> January. Roshven was built by the famous painter Jemima Blackburn and her husband Hugh in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has been restored recently.

Positioned on a beach overlooking Eigg and Rum, the house has a world class view and has a good collection of Jemima's paintings and a collection of Scottish contemporary art too. Look out for Jemima's sundial and her cornicing in the drawing room. A lot of work has been done in the garden recently and although young and not a good time of the year to appreciate it, hopefully you will see the potential.

Attendees will be given a talk by Rob Fairley, who wrote 'Jemima' the definitive book on the artist, her work and life. In addition Angus and Michie MacDonald will talk about the refurbishment that was completed in 2011.

The cost of the trip will be £5 for museum members and £10 for non-members, with funds raised for the benefit of the Museum. A bus will be booked and the cost shared by those taking it, an estimated price of £8 per person. Attendees will be welcomed from 2.30pm until 5pm, tea and cakes will be provided.

Please email [colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk](mailto:colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk) or telephone 01397 702169 to book your place

Bring coats and boots to walk around the grounds. Children and dogs are welcome too.

The 'Clanranald Anvil' - *story opposite*



# The 'Clanranald Anvil'

*Within the Museum stands a mysterious block of iron known as the 'Clanranald anvil'.  
Amid a haze of folklore, we can discern something intriguing, something Gaelic, and something  
most certainly worth studying closely and carefully.*

The story begins in the 1920s when the 'Clanranald anvil' was found by a man named John MacDonald among the remains of a deserted settlement at Upper or High Mingarry on the rugged and remote Moidart peninsula in the western Highlands. It was then given to the parish priest, one Father Campbell, who kept it on the outside windowsill of his house for many years. In the early 1980s it was displayed in a thatched building known as Cnoc Breac, which had become a museum. Then, in 1987, Canon Joseph Terry passed the 'Clanranald anvil' as a long-term loan to the West Highland Museum, the loan documentation describing the anvil (if that is what it is) as 'the property of the People of Moidart'.

Moidart was long a homeland of the MacDonalds of Clanranald, a formidable family group named after Ranald, a son of John, the 1st Lord of the Isles, who in the early 1370s was granted by his father the Lordship of Garmoran, which included Moidart. The High Mingarry settlement formed part of the Clanranald estates, and thus this hefty block of iron has come to bear the evocative nickname of the 'Clanranald anvil'.

On the strength of pictorial evidence, and from its condition, the 'Clanranald anvil' would seem to be at the very least pre-nineteenth century and perhaps as old as the fourteen or fifteen hundreds. The 'Clanranald anvil' is, as anvils go, fairly small. Standing almost 20cms high, it has a top working surface of about 30cm by 17cm. The 'Clanranald anvil' must be made of iron, the usual material for an anvil. Though small, the anvil is immensely heavy, weighing 43.7 kilograms, demonstrating the dense strength of the piece. Likewise when struck, the anvil is said to project a good clear ring, a traditional mark of an anvil's quality.

So there are a number of reasons for thinking this object is an anvil. Yet one big problem remains: could one actually use it as a tool? The 'Clanranald anvil' has no flat or straight edges - its entire surface is irregular and uneven. In short, it would not really work as an anvil. It is the lack of regular shape, and the presence of the scalloping which cover its surface, which suggests another identity for the object. Richard Furrer, an experienced blacksmith, suggests to me, very tentatively at this stage, that this is no anvil but possibly a piece of iron meteorite. Only scientific analysis of its metallurgy can fully answer this question, but staff at the Natural History Museum, on being shown

photographs of the 'Clanranald anvil', admit the possibility that it may well be a meteorite.

This extraordinary hypothesis should not be regarded as a disappointment. Indeed, it throws open a whole new range of ideas and questions to consider, such as - how did it find its way to Moidart? Did it fall from the skies there, and was it kept as an exotic souvenir? Was it believed to have magical powers since it had, so to speak, fallen from the heavens? Or was it kept because it was a good piece of iron, having been forged in the earth's atmosphere? Meteorites and blacksmithing are by no means totally unconnected things, there being many accounts of swords, daggers, knives and other items being made from meteor iron.

Perhaps, then, the 'Clanranald anvil' was actually a piece of iron meteorite which someone in Moidart was intending to re-forged. A piece of pre-forged iron of this size would have been quite a find in the Highlands since Scotland's indigenous deposits of iron are, by and large not good enough to make an item requiring much resilience. More likely is that it is either part of an iron meteorite or a damaged or unfinished bit of ironwork from a local Highland smithy. There certainly were iron processing sites in the medieval and early modern Highlands, and a piece of iron slag, and what may be part of an iron bloomery kiln base, have been found in Mingarry: so clearly someone was working metal there, and perhaps the 'Clanranald anvil' was associated with them.

Whether or not it is an anvil, and whatever it is eventually revealed to be, the 'Clanranald anvil' is an important physical record of a lost society which was based around folklore, superstitions, feats of arms, warrior codes of honour, and belief in magical blacksmiths. Quite what role the 'Clanranald anvil' played in that society - whether as a tool, magical charm, exotic souvenir or something entirely different - is unclear, but it surely still has much to teach us.

**Fergus Cannan**

*This is an edited extract from 'The Clanranald Anvil' by Fergus Cannan. (The Journal of the Antique Metalware Society, Vol. 21, 2013.) The complete article is available to read in the Museum's library.*

# The Loch Arkaig Treasure

*In 2005 a fascinating letter found in 2003 in Winchester, England, was passed to the West Highland Museum. The letter dated 1746 details the deathbed confession of Neill Iain Ruairi, who claimed to have passed the loch as the legendary Loch Arkaig treasure was being buried.*

The Loch Arkaig treasure was sent to Scotland to finance the Jacobite rising in 1745 and legend has it that the treasure was never found and is still hidden at a secret location somewhere along Loch Arkaig.

On 30 April 1746 two ships, the Mars and Bellona, dropped anchor in Loch nan Uamh, Arisaig and unloaded seven casks of gold coins intended to fund the Jacobite cause and Bonnie Prince Charlie's last attempt to regain the British throne for the Stuart dynasty. However, the gold arrived two weeks after the Jacobite surrender at Culloden and shortly afterwards disappeared.



*The French ship Bellona*

One cask was immediately stolen, but the remaining six were brought to Loch Arkaig where they were buried. The secret location of the treasure was first entrusted to the chief of the Clan Cameron, Donald Cameron of Lochiel and eventually ended up in the care of Macpherson of Cluny. After 1746 there is no clear record of what happened to the gold. Bonnie Prince Charlie had by this time escaped to Europe and was anxious to be reunited with his treasure. In 1753, Lochiel's brother, Dr. Archibald Cameron was sent to Scotland to locate the treasure. However, Cameron was betrayed by the infamous Hanoverian spy 'Pickle' and arrested. In June 1753 he was sentenced to death in London for his role in the 1745 Jacobite rising and became the last Jacobite to be executed.

Clan Cameron archives record that before Dr. Cameron was arrested he "hid the Prince's gold at the Callich burn while Hanoverian troops were hot on his heels coming from Murlaggan private burial-ground where they hid it for a time among loose soil from a newly opened grave."

Stuart records show that The Prince's treasure produced charges of disloyalty, theft, and forgery among the exiled

Jacobites. A letter written by a contemporary to the Prince's secretary at Rome on 2 May 1753 states "I wish with all my heart the Government had got it at the beginning, for it has given the greatest stroke to the cause that can be imagined; it has divided the different clans more than ever; and even those of the same clan and family." Bonnie Prince Charlie even accused Cluny of embezzling the treasure, because in 1750 he could not account for all the gold.

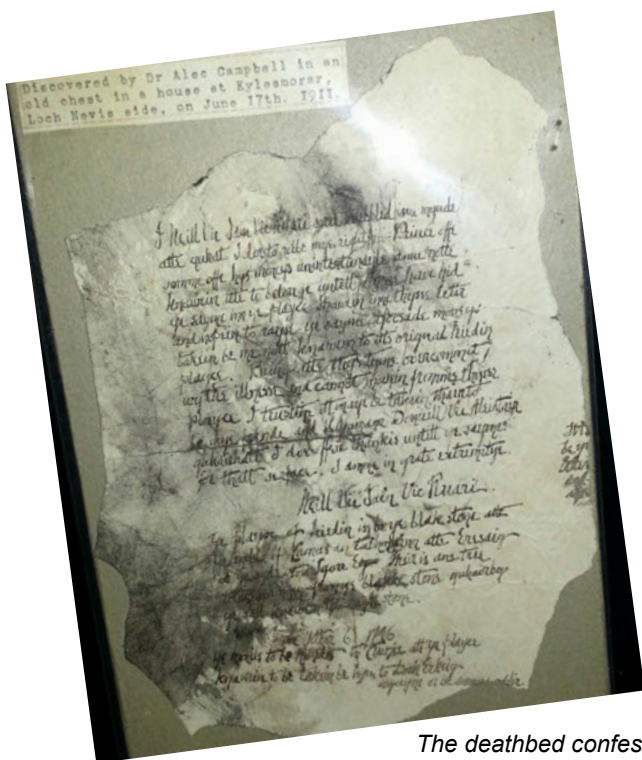
After the 1750s the treasure disappears from history until the 1850s when Clan Cameron records mention some French gold coins found buried in woods near Loch Arkaig.

In 1897 the historian Andrew Lang published his book 'Pickle the Spy' which told "the sordid tale, and the involvement of both the Prince and his father in trying to locate the monies". Lang for the first time revealed the identity of 'Pickle' the spy. He noticed that 'Pickle' and Alasdair Ruadh MacDonnell of Glengarry had the same handwriting.

Justin Pollard in his 2009 book "Secret Britain" concludes that the notorious Hanoverian spy Agent Pickle, a.k.a. Glengarry had stolen the treasure. Pollard argues that Glengarry, a once loyal Jacobite, had been captured by the



*Bonnie Prince Charlie*



*The deathbed confession of Neill Iain Ruairi. Donated to the West Highland Museum in 2005.*

English and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Destitute and in poverty, Glengarry was recruited as a spy. Pollard believes that Glengarry stole the gold. "Perhaps those involved with Glengarry wondered how a man who was penniless in 1749 had become wealthy just a few months later. In fact Pickle had forged the signature of the Old Pretender (father of Bonnie Prince Charlie), and the last custodian of the secret hiding place had handed over to him the gold."

In 2005 a fascinating letter found in 2003 in Winchester, England was passed to the West Highland Museum in Fort William. The letter dated 1746 details the deathbed confession of Neill Iain Ruairi, who claimed to have passed the loch as the treasure was being buried. The letter, written in English, had originally been discovered by Dr Alex Campbell in a house in Kylesmorum, Loch Nevis on 17 June 1911. The confession claims that the dying man had been hiding in the trees, he waited and watched, and when the clansmen finally retreated he helped himself to a bag of gold coins. In his last breaths he whispered: "A bag of gold coins is buried near Arisaig, under a black stone, with a tree root springing from it." Unfortunately upon testing, the letter could not be authenticated and a search of the area described in the letter failed to locate the gold.

The legend of the treasure persists to this day. In June 2012 an amateur search team sponsored by the Scottish Sun newspaper embarked on another unsuccessful treasure hunt to Loch Arkaig armed with metal detectors.

There are many conflicting theories as to what happened to Bonnie Prince Charlie's gold. Was it stolen in the eighteenth century, by Glengarry, Cluny or another Jacobite? Or, is the treasure still out there buried and waiting to be found?

**Vanessa Martin**

*Article courtesy of The Braes community newspaper 2013*

## Adopt A Showcase

Forget Cyber Cats and Digital Dogs – the Museum can offer a rewarding way of keeping an inanimate object alive!

Most of the display cases are fitted with fibre-optic lighting, a specialised system to show off the exhibits to best advantage without damage, by fading or heat.

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.

To participate and to find out which cases are presently looking for adoption, please contact the Museum Manager by phone or email: 01397 702169 / [colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk](mailto:colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk)

## Fundraising

Staff and volunteers have been busy raising funds for the Museum throughout the year.

- In May a 'Race Night' was held at the Volunteer Arms in Fort William raising £1,054 for the organisation.
- In October volunteers assisted with a bag pack at Morrisons and helped raise £1,002.85 for the Museum.
- More recently the Museum had a stall at the annual Rotary Christmas Festival at the Nevis Centre, on 29th November, selling books and gifts. There were £652 worth of sales, an increase on last year.
- The guess the weight of the cannonball competition raised a further £103 ... The cannonball weighed 1031g!

**'Worth a Visit'** - 15 October 2014

*What a fascinating place and it's free (but please leave a donation in the box as the museum is run by volunteers). The staff are very helpful answering all sorts of questions for me. It also has a very reasonable gift shop. It is well worth a visit for old and young alike.*

Glasgow



# What's in a Name?

*The recent discovery of a picture which spent many years in the Grand Hotel has strengthened links with Fort William's wartime past. The picture is currently on loan to the West Highland Museum from Alexandra Macleod and her father. It depicts St Christopher carrying the Christ child across a river. So why St. Christopher? ... and why the Grand Hotel?*



Left: The picture of St. Christopher currently on loan to the Museum

Above: An unofficial badge of St. Christopher

Right: St. Christopher badge



Well, part of the story can be seen on a small yellowing label stuck on the back of the picture which reads "During the 1939-1945 War the Grand Hotel and Highland Hotel were taken over by the Navy as a school for training young officers and men for Coastal Forces. The establishment was known as the H.M.S. St. Christopher and this Badge, which hung over the Reception Desk at the Grand, was given to me when it closed down – F.E.L."

The Grand Hotel was the Officers' quarters of the wartime naval base, HMS St. Christopher. But why bother putting up a framed picture of St. Christopher? Despite having hundreds of staff and training tens of thousands of men, the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich has said that HMS St. Christopher was never thought important enough to have an official ships 'badge'. As far as we are aware, it's not known why the unit which was to be called St Christopher got its name. While some ships bear the name of famous forbears e.g. Ark Royal, at a time when lots of new ships and bases needed to be named very quickly, many were christened on nothing more than a whim! My personal theory, supported with no evidence whatsoever, is that someone saw that the last HMS St. Christopher was a ship based at the island of Nevis in the Caribbean and that the new base was to be at the foot of a mountain which bears the same name!

One of the most important parts of any ship is its badge. They follow carefully prescribed heraldic rules and provide the unit with its identity. It is used at every opportunity and the ships' company is fiercely proud of it. So when St. Christopher

wasn't granted a badge, it seems likely that other images would have been adopted and officers would have been pleased to see the large picture behind the reception desk of their accommodation. Another example of an image which dates from the same time is a small round carved wooden plaque which can be seen in St. Andrews Church, which was the ship's official place of worship. With modern computer art techniques, it is possible to guess what an official badge would have looked like, if HMS St. Christopher been granted one and we have shown it here.

After the war, the local sea cadet unit took its name from the former naval base and similarly lacked a badge. Local art teacher Margaret Jamieson came to the rescue and working in conjunction with The British Aluminium Company presented the unit with a cast aluminium badge which can be seen in the present cadet centre. This badge too has an interesting piece of history. It was nearly lost when the old sea cadet unit closed, but thanks to Liz and Hamish Loudon, it was kept safe until the new unit started up in 2001.

If anyone has any other examples of the badges which were used, or has any information about Margaret Jamieson's version we'd be delighted to hear from you. We'd also be keen to find out who the 'F.E.L.' who wrote the label on the back of the Grand Hotel picture was?

Other naval bases in the area which were not given badges include HMS Dorlin and HMS Lochailort, but more of them later, perhaps?

**Derrick Warner**



# Archaeology of Wartime Achnacarry

Lochaber Archaeological Society received funding in 2014 from the "Armed Forces Community Covenant" and from the Highland Council to start an archaeological survey of Achnacarry.

A considerable number of artefacts were found, some of which are now on display in the Commando Exhibition at the West Highland Museum.

With the support of the Commando Veterans Association, the project was recognised at the Commando Memorial on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014. Representatives from all the British Armed Services were present and also the Lochaber Army Cadets, Lochaber Sea Cadets and Lochaber Air Training Corps.

A Royal Navy rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet hovered over the memorial while flying the white ensign after a two minute silence to remember the sacrifice of Achnacarry trained Commandos.

Items found at Achnacarry were displayed to the public at Caol Community Centre following the ceremony at the Commando Memorial.

The project included the construction of a "Commando Trail" starting at Spean Bridge Station where volunteers wishing to train as Commandos arrived. A series of interpretation boards lead to Achnacarry via the Commando Memorial.

**Chris Robinson**



Archaeological finds found at Achnacarry now on display in the Museum



Items found by the Lochaber Archaeological Society on display at Caol Community Centre on 30th August

# The Commando Exhibition

This autumn, thanks to the hard work of Chris Robinson, the Commando Exhibition was revamped in time for Remembrance weekend. In addition to the items now on loan from the Lochaber Archaeological Society, new interpretation panels and new artefacts have been added to the Exhibition, including a number of items that have been kindly loaned to the Museum by the family of Tom McDonald of No.1 Commando.



Colleen Foggo with one of the new exhibits



Some of the items on loan from the family of Tom McDonald



Part of the revamped exhibition

# The Hepburn Bequest

*One question most often asked by our junior members, both past and present, and also by some visitors is how we acquire our exhibits.*

Some of our exhibits are gifted by individual donors, or by families clearing out attics or outhouses. Or, by serendipity – like the secret portrait our jewel in the crown – found by accident. We are also fortunate because we have received several collections. These are the world famous Carmichael Collection, gifted by Alexander Carmichael's grandson Michael Carmichael, the Goldman Collection of Scottish Coins and the Hepburn Bequest. The Carmichael Collection has recently been comprehensively written up. The Goldman Collection is self explanatory. The Hepburn Bequest may need a little explanation.

Dr. Charles A. Hepburn, in partnership with Herbert Ross, founded the whisky blending business of Hepburn and Ross. The success of this business allowed Dr. Hepburn to indulge his passion for collecting and become a patron of the arts. After his death in 1971 his collection was distributed to various institutions according to his final wishes.

Glasgow University Special Book Collection received over 300 volumes. Glasgow Cathedral was gifted tapestries and the West Highland Museum received some of our treasured exhibits.

These artefacts included a selection of Jacobite memorabilia ranging from candlesticks belonging to James VII and II to various beautiful miniatures of the exiled Stuart family. The Jacobite collection also includes Prince Charles



A blue bonnet belonging to Prince Charles Edward and supposedly left by him at Moy Hall



Lord Lovat's spectacles and case

Edward Stuart's bonnet from Moy Hall. More bizarrely there is a fragment of a dress worn by Flora MacDonald and the spectacles and case belonging to Lord Lovat of the '45. According to the picture of the good gentleman he was a large, not very handsome gentleman, so the spectacles must have perched very precariously on his bulbous nose.

In the aftermath of the Jacobite risings there is a sheriff's arrest warrant for Alan Breck. Obviously this was never served and the murder of Colin Campbell in Appin remains a mystery. Moving on we have the Breadalbane Gold Dirk complete with knife and fork, made for the visit to Edinburgh by George IV, when Sir Walter Scott hoped to popularise all things Scottish. The pity was that King George



decided to wear pink tights with his kilt. This was not a sight of beauty but the Breadalbane Dirk certainly is.

From one monarch to another we come to Queen Victoria. The Hepburn bequest contains John Brown's Highland outfit consisting basket hilt sword, dirk, two belts, sporran, plaid brooch, powder flask and skian dhu. These are engraved "from VR to JB". This was indeed a real royal gift. There is another Victorian artefact which provides the Museum's unsolved mystery. Years ago Queen Victoria's riding whip disappeared, only to reappear some weeks later posted through the front door letter box. Where had it been and why? Nobody knows.

If you have not previously viewed the Hepburn Collection do come and see. If you do know the collection why not come and refresh your memories.

**Betty Bruce**



A framed picture of Queen Victoria and Queen Victoria's riding whip.

# HALLOWE'EN

**Spooky Tales:** As part of My Heart's in the Highlands project, a Homecoming 2014 museums and heritage programme, the Museum invited local schools to participate in a Hallowe'en story writing competition. The winners were selected by local children's author Barry Hutchison who said "The stories were really great, and the kids have done an amazing job. Some of them were very atmospheric and creepy, and I reckon I'll have some serious competition on my hands in a few years."

The winners have all received gift vouchers for the Museum shop. The winners were Evie Ann Coull from Inverloch Primary School, and Kirsty Martin, Brogan Dempster and Keira Boyce from Lady Lovat Primary School, Morar.

## Cow Hill Walk

Last autumn the Forestry Commission Scotland organised a series of walks around the vicinity of Cow Hill. The West Highland Museum participated in the event in partnership with Friends of Nevis. On 3rd November 2013 Chris Robinson led a walk up Cow Hill looking at points of historical and geographical interest on the hill and the panorama below. The guided tour included visits to the original curling ponds and to where cannon fired into the Fort during the siege of Fort William in 1746.



Chris Robinson with the group he led up Cow Hill

## Visits and Tours

A number private tours took place at the Museum in 2014. These included a private visit by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis Montrose Society on 28th September. The Society is dedicated to the memory of James Graham 1st Marquis of Montrose and aims to promote his name and raise public awareness of the impact he had on Scotland during the civil war period. Betty Bruce and Chris Robinson led the tour explaining different collections to the group.



Betty Bruce, Colleen Foggo and Chris Robinson pictured with members of the 1st Marquis of Montrose Society.

The Museum had four visits over the year from Celtic Journeys, an American tour company. Some guests were particularly interested in the work of the author of the Outlander series, Diana Gabaldon. As a direct result of one visit, the Ladies of Lallybroch, who raise funds each year to gift to Diana Gabaldon, used these funds to sponsor four of our showcases. In addition, they paid to have one of the books in our collection, "Lochaber in War and Peace", rebound. They also purchased "Culloden" by Tony Pollard and donated this to the Museum's library.

### 'Eclectic Mix' 4 November 2014

The museum is fairly small but packs a lot in. The section displays and information regarding WW2 were, to me, particularly interesting and I gleaned some interesting facts. Well worth a visit.

Nottingham

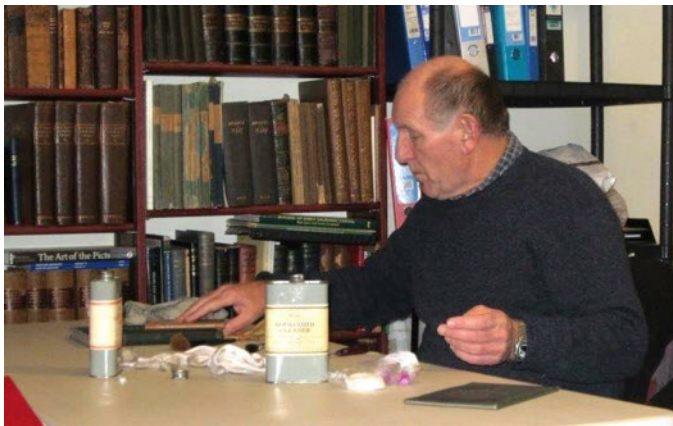


## Winter at the West Highland Museum

On Saturday 20th December at 4pm the West Highland Museum will close its doors to the public for the final time of 2014, marking the end of another year. Although the Museum does not reopen until 2nd March 2015, volunteers return on Monday 5th January 2015 to begin the task of tackling all the jobs that there is no time to do when the Museum is open.

This winter the closure programme includes a wide variety of tasks such as, general repairs and maintenance around the building, painting projects, spring cleaning, stocktaking in the shop, preparing inventories and helping with accessions and checking exhibitions.

*If you have time to spare and would like to help get the Museum ready for 2015, please contact Sonja for more information (Telephone: 01397 702169 / Email: [sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk](mailto:sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk))*



Brian Ball cleaning books in the library during the 2014 winter closure

### 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!



## Great Railway Journeys of Europe

In May a television production crew visited the West Highland Museum to film a programme titled Great Railway Journeys of Europe. The programme was scheduled to be aired in the United States on 28th November.

West Highland Museum member and former trustee, Tearlach MacFarlane, was interviewed for the programme about our Jacobite Collection and in particular The Secret Portrait. He also played the bagpipes for them at Old Inverlochy Castle.



### 'Wonderful Little Gem' 21 October 2014

We had a terrific visit to the West Highland Museum in Fort William. Although compact, it holds a wonderful assortment of varied historical items that are so worth seeing! It was very organized and flowed as you walked through it... I thought the exhibits of WWII and Glencoe were done perfectly and even the small display of Victorian clothing was really done well. Well worth a visit!

Oregon, USA



## Dates for your diary

- **11th January 2015:**

Members visit to Roshven House

- **2nd March 2015:**

Museum reopens after winter closure

- **28th May 2015:**

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

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Taigh-tasgaidh na Gaidhealtachd an Iar

Charity No: SC014287

