



TAIGH-TASGAIDH NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020

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West Highland Museum

Message from the Chairman

This time in 2019 we were looking forward to 2020 as another bumper year with great challenges over how to handle ever greater visitor numbers and such an increase in pressure on the team and volunteers. How different did the year actually turn out to be?



In the event we handled lockdown and the challenges of COVID well. After an initial period of furlough, the team were back in business, working from home mostly, filling in grant application forms and attending Zoom events with other collections and practitioners. It has been a curious benefit of this period, that our management team have got much closer to their colleagues in museums across Scotland. Guided by Jackie Wright, John Hutchison, and Dr Chris Robinson a small team worked on a strategy for opening and the equipment and processes necessary to keep visitors, volunteers and staff safe. From early September visitors were back in the museum and our autumn activity has been judged a success. By early November the travel restrictions across the rest of the country kept the visitors away and the costs of staying open became too high and we closed the doors. Despite our making the best of a tough job, enormous challenges remain. Of our 40 volunteers, around 17 were able to help under the new circumstances. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the successful delivery of our offer. It is key that we are able to retain and attract our volunteers as we plan 2021.

The cost of COVID lockdown has been high. Our manager Colleen's assiduous attention to every grant application did attract enough to keep the engine running, but we obviously have not had either shop or donation income that we would normally expect. Our museum has a reasonable financial resource to fall back on due to the generosity of patrons over the years and we have not needed to eat into our capital to fund this year. This experience has obliged us to think carefully about how to bring more income into the museum and it is hoped that our new donation panel at which you simply wave your bank card should improve the donation per head.

One of our largest income generators has been the lease income from the PDSA for our shop at No 40 The High Street. Unfortunately, lockdown drove PDSA to rethink their commitment to Fort William and they relinquished their lease. This leaves us with empty premises at a time when there are many empty shops on the High Street. This may prove to be an opportunity: our strategic aim has been to improve facilities for the team, to expand the shop and to establish a research space where academic interest in the collection can

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Message from the Manager

This is where I normally say we have once again had a great number of visitors. As you can guess, that is not the case this year. When I started at West Highland Museum the annual number of visitors was 31,000 and this has risen every year to a grand total of 60,806 last year.



We closed the museum for the second time on Friday 6th November as the footfall of visitors was so low with all the travel restrictions. It was not financially viable to remain open and we may stay closed until early 2021. Each year I said we cannot keep increasing our visitor numbers but I certainly did not foresee having only 5,073 for the year! 2021 will be better, but I think it will be a few years before we see 60,000 visitors again.

This has been a strange year as Manager of West Highland Museum. My time has been taken up preparing for re-opening the museum, ensuring the safety of our staff, volunteers and visitors. This involved deciding the best route for our visitors to take using dirks as arrows and Lochaber axes as social distancing markers. I also had the pleasure of compiling a massive shopping list for PPE equipment and then sourcing it all. We must thank Museums Galleries Scotland who gave grant funding to pay for it all. We reopened the museum on Friday 4 September with reduced hours, as we only had a small pool of volunteers to cover the reception area and the shop. We introduced a booking system with 10-minute entry slots. We had training sessions on the new procedures for welcoming visitors, the extra cleaning that is required, and on our new EPOS till system. It was installed just as we went into lockdown in March so we had all forgotten how to use it. Luckily all the volunteers are finding it much easier to use than the old one, and there is no writing in jotters anymore for shop sales. Our volunteers and visitors seem happy with the procedures we have in place and did appreciate us being open.



Welcoming back our first visitors on 4 September 2020

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West Highland Museum

Message from Chairman continued...

be undertaken. With the likelihood of reduced visitor numbers until 2022, why not bite the bullet and knock an entrance and exit into the museum from No. 40, thus gaining access directly from the High Street, establish a compelling new shop on the High Street and freeing up space for our own academic and administration needs? This is a considerable project. We have asked the architect to scope out the options and to determine a costed plan.

Guided by the indefatigable Dr Chris Robinson, the Collections and Learning Committee determines that the museum collection must always move forward with displays and signage improved and new artefacts added to augment the experience. Keen to make a splash when we reopened, our curator has dramatically developed our Jacobite display in Room 6. Assisted by volunteers, Kenny Macintosh, Brian Ball, David MacFarlane and two art school students, the room was transformed over three days and is now a handsome red. Considered by some a fitting colour for the Lochaber blood spilt on the field of Culloden and others an excellent setting to project the excellent paintings we have of the period. Our curator, Vanessa Martin has also been on the search for a painting by Sir DY Cameron, an artist closely associated with our early museum and the perpetrator of a project to make actual notes from our Strange bank note plates. Your Chairman spotted a beautiful painting of Knoydart by DY Cameron whilst walking up a street in Edinburgh and with considerable help from the Art Fund and National Fund for Acquisitions, this is now in our collection. Recent work on lighting and on other displays have kept the collection moving forward.

Lockdown did not stop us telling stories. Our position as the home of Lochaber's tales was secured by a series of initiatives by our curator to get our stories out to the world through social media. Who could forget Dr Chris's podcast of Blarmafoldach, the Cameron Brother's exceptional piping at the Commando memorial for the anniversary of St Valery on YouTube and so many other blogs, photographs and references we have spread to the world. The museum's Facebook following has increased threefold in the course of this year. Investment in a refreshment of our website is

underway giving us another digital platform to inform the visitor, to enable research and to attract shop sales.

The museum board is evolving. Our recent Chair, John Hutchison MBE, has stood down from the board after decades of exceptional contribution. Dr Chris Robinson has stood down as an elected member but remains on the board as the representative of the History Society. We welcome new board members, Kenny Macintosh, Ronald Cameron and Neil Macleod.

Challenges lie ahead. The barn at the back remains a liability albeit final consent for demolition is likely soon. This will open up the wall at the back allowing us to landscape the whole area behind the museum, hopefully in the course of the spring. We cannot expect our visitor numbers to reach recent highs for a few years and our high spenders from the US and Europe are likely to stay away for a while. But return they will. Our task is to continue to build our museum into a world class experience. New space will enable us to have our Jacobite collection attract recognition as an 'exceptional' collection, an enhanced status which attracts particular funding. 2022 is the century of our birth and numerous initiatives are in place to commemorate this. These include our 100 objects online gallery, our archive project where Jacobite authorities from across the world have been invited to produce a piece on their specialist area and an extraordinary exhibition of Jacobite portraits which is coming over to us from a private collector in Poland. We do have the challenge of using and adapting No. 40 appropriately and we do need to engage dynamically with our membership. We are currently reviewing this relationship in order to reward the support of the members more effectively and to attract many more in the process. And finally, we must acknowledge the exceptional application of Colleen Barker and our museum team. They have worked very hard under difficult circumstances and kept the museum relevant and noticed as well as financially stable.

2021 will be a year of building – in so many respects. Thank you for your continued support and please do join us in this reconstruction in whatever capacity you can.

Ian Peter MacDonald

Message from Manager continued...

We are always looking for new volunteers, but with so many of our volunteers being in the vulnerable group we are now more than ever looking for new people to join our team. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, or know of someone that might be, please do not hesitate to contact our Co-ordinator of volunteers, Sonja McLachlan. Email sonja@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk or telephone 01397 702169. As we are all working part time at the moment under the furlough scheme, you may need to leave a message and we will get back to you.

We did manage to run a "Monster Hunt" for the kids during the October school holidays. Vanessa, our Curator, made the monsters during lockdown.



Museum meander at Creag Meagaidh nature reserve. According to tradition Prince Charles Edward Stuart came through "the window" and descended Coire Arder in August 1746 while on the run after Culloden



Since lockdown, Vanessa and I have been doing some local walks to keep ourselves fit and to see new places. We shared photographs of our "Museum Meanders" on our Face Book page and on Twitter.

On a final note, I would like to thank my colleagues Sonja and Vanessa, the volunteers and the board and committee members for all their help during these difficult times.

Colleen Barker

Curator's Update

2020 has been an exceptionally odd year to say the least. As the pandemic approached on Friday 13th March, I was optimistically setting up a temporary exhibition celebrating 90 years of aluminium smelting in Lochaber. Just 24 hours later the exhibition closed and the museum shut its doors to the public for the next 5½ months. You can read more about aluminium in Lochaber in this newsletter.

We had an exciting year of exhibitions and events planned at the museum for 2020 including a temporary exhibition to commemorate the capture of the 51st Highlanders at St Valery, events with the Lochaber Archive for the anniversary of VE Day, and activities for the Highland Archaeology Festival. We had also been forging closer links with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) planning to involve history graduates in museum activities and launching a "messy museum" for toddlers with childcare students. COVID-19 has temporarily scuppered these plans. Although in the October holidays we were able to host a children's monster hunt around the museum.

With the museum building closed from March to September we looked to engage with visitors online. Colleen and I took the opportunity at the start of lockdown to meet with an XpoNorth consultant who offered invaluable advice on how to develop online audiences on a shoestring budget.

We immediately launched a blog which has been supported by a diverse range of writers blogging about Lochaber's rich history and our museum's collections. We increased our social media activity on Facebook and Twitter. Our Facebook followers have surged from 1.5k to 3.5k followers since March. Our first Facebook live event at the Commando Memorial in June attracted an impressive 10k views. We launched a YouTube channel to showcase films from our archive, an Instagram account and Pinterest account to showcase objects from our collection, and have tinkered with podcasts broadcasting Chris Robinson's popular "Tales from Beyond the Cattlegrid" series. Links to these social media channels are below. In December we are running a series of blogs to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Prince Charles Edward Stuart's birth. Please do take a look and follow us to receive up-to-date information about the museum and its collections.

Maintenance work took place at the museum after the initial lockdown period eased. From the end of July volunteers were helping us get the museum ready for reopening, including redecorating the Jacobite gallery... More on this later!

In the newly refurbished Jacobite gallery (Photograph Iain Ferguson)



On the curatorial side I have to say a big thank you to Jo Godfrey who helped with collections care in the run up to our reopening and to Jo Watson for her work on our textile collection, including a makeover for our fabulous beetle wing dress. Also, to Alex Gillespie who spent weeks photographing the collection while the museum was closed. Kenny MacIntosh and David MacFarlane helped prepare interpretation boards and catalogue new acquisitions respectively.

We were lucky to receive Museum Galleries Scotland grants this year which paid for UV filters on the windows in the Jacobite gallery, a video camera, lighting equipment and upgraded environmental monitoring equipment.

During lockdown we also received some very exciting acquisitions that are already on display in the museum. These loans, gifts, and purchases will be reviewed later in this newsletter.

All in all, it's been a very challenging year for the museum, but also a fantastic opportunity to engage with new audiences, and to develop the museum's collection and its exhibition spaces.

Vanessa Martin

Website: <https://www.westhighlandmuseum.org.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WestHighlandMuseum>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WestHighMuseum>

Blog: <https://westhighlandmuseum.wordpress.com/>

YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoI4n3u5e_67YEBjtXqPstQ?view_as=subscriber

Instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/west_highland_museum/

Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/whm1922/_created/

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

As the result of the COVID-19 pandemic the museum has been closed to visitors for a significant period in 2020. We rely on shop sales and visitor donations to cover our operational costs.

We appreciate that times are tough for everyone, but if you are able to help us in any way we would be pleased to hear from you.

How you can help:

- **Encourage friends and family to become museum members or associate members**
- **Gift a membership to someone**
- **Sponsor a display case or object from our collection**
- **Consider a one-off donation using our website**

Contact Colleen for more information: info@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk



https://www.paypal.com/donate?token=HYk_IY10gIJ6njE_TQ_UTijzXhNuqmkBuHNgIQRUra7hd7P1Dp9X9YfttSpgzclAtw6PWcLfD3A7mze

The Jacobite Gallery gets a new look

In July 2020 COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in Scotland eased, but with the museum still closed to the public until September, we decided it would be a good opportunity to redecorate the Jacobite gallery.

After much debate, a colour was selected and a fabulous team of volunteers, including two Glasgow School of Art graduates, picked up their brushes and got creative in room 6, painting it a rich shade of red. A special thanks go to David MacFarlane, Kenny MacIntosh and Brian Ball for doing such a fantastic job.

Jacobite oil paintings from the staircase and objects on display elsewhere in the museum were moved to the refurbished gallery. These included a series of portraits of the exiled Stuart royal family and a two-sided window seat said to have been used by Prince Charles Edward Stuart when he stayed at Fassfern.

In addition, we elaborated on the Jacobite narrative in the exhibition. Kenny MacIntosh wrote an informative interpretation board focusing on the first bloodshed of the 1745 Rising at High Bridge. (This has been published as an article in this newsletter.)

Two objects associated with the High Bridge skirmish of 16 August 1745 found recently at High Bridge by avid metal detectorists Ross Hunter and Paul MacDonald are now on display in the exhibition. A trigger guard from an 18th century British military issue Brown Bess musket and two impacted musket balls fired by Jacobites are on long term loan to the museum.

Another new acquisition is on permanent display alongside other textiles with a Stuart connection. A one metre length of 18th century lace said to have belonged to Prince Charles Edward Stuart was gifted to the museum. The lace had been gifted to the donor's mother after a chance meeting with the Countess of Stolberg in Geneva. The Countess wished for the lace to come to Scotland. It remained hidden away in a desk drawer in Peebles for half a century before it came into our care in July 2020. We are consulting a lace expert at the Bowes Museum in England to find out more about the lace and will need to research its provenance a little more.

The museum has recently purchased an oil on canvas by Sir D Y Cameron titled "October in Knoydart" for our fine art collection. This has been hung in the Jacobite gallery to complement the story of the aftermath of the 1745 Rising. You can read more about the painting and the artist in the article titled "Sir D Y Cameron and the West Highland Museum" in this newsletter.

Vanessa Martin



Volunteers decorating the Jacobite gallery



The newly redecorated Jacobite exhibition
(Photograph: Alex Gillespie)



Brown Bess trigger guard



Jacobite musket balls



18th century lace said to have been owned by Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Photograph: Alex Gillespie)

The Syd Shadbolt Collection

In October 2020 the museum was gifted an extensive collection of commando memorabilia owned by the late Syd Shadbolt. Syd had trained at Achnacarry during the Second World War and went on to serve with No.5 Commando in the Far East.

Twenty-five objects associated with Syd's military service have been gifted to us by his widow, Joan Shadbolt. The acquisition was presented to the museum by Syd's close friend Steve Nicoll.

The collection includes a fascinating variety of commando associated artefacts including two iconic green berets and a FS fighting knife. One of the most poignant objects in the collection is a handmade Japanese flag which has been beautifully embroidered with information charting the journey the commandos made from the United Kingdom to arrive in Japan. Another is a battered blue knitted rabbit toy which Syd carried with him throughout his service. This beloved object had once belonged to Syd's younger brother who had died as a toddler.

We are currently planning a temporary exhibition for 2021 focusing on this fantastic collection. Eventually some of the objects will go on permanent display in the Commando exhibition.

Read more about the collection in this Oban Times article: <https://www.obantimes.co.uk/2020/10/08/fort-museum-receives-largest-ever-single-donation-of-commando-artefacts/>



Steve Nicoll with Vanessa Martin and the Japanese flag from the collection (Photograph: Iain Ferguson)



Syd Shadbolt serving with No.5 Commando in World War II

The First Bloodshed of the '45

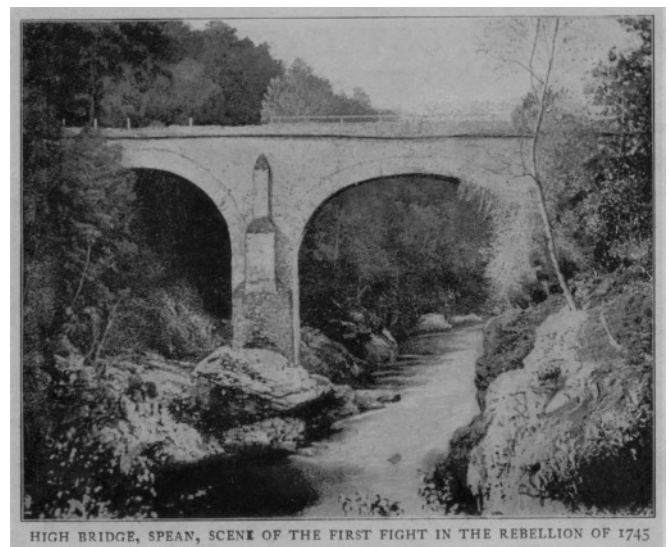
This took place during a skirmish on the 16th August 1745 at High Bridge or Dròchaid Bhàn as it was known to the Highlanders. This bridge, 8 miles from the town of Fort William, carried the Military Road between the Government forts of Fort William and Fort Augustus. The honour of striking the first blow of the Rising fell to a small group of MacDonell of Keppoch's clansmen under the command of Major Donald MacDonell of Tirnadris. Two companies totalling 85 men of the Royal Scots regiment of the British army commanded by Captain John Scott and Captain James Thomson were on route from Fort Augustus to re-inforce the garrison at Fort William. When word of their movement reached the local Jacobites, a small force consisting of eleven men and a piper rushed to the bridge and by occupying the inn at High Bridge and the nearby woods were able to intercept them. They managed to create the illusion of a much larger force by running about the woods discharging their weapons, shouting, and making a huge clamour.

The Royal Scots, with two men dead, retreated and soon MacDonell of Keppoch himself arrived with reinforcements to join the pursuit. The British troops were finally surrounded at Laggan at the head of Loch Lochy as men of Lochiel's Camerons and Glengarry's MacDonells joined the action. Captain Scott, himself wounded, and having lost six men with another dozen or more wounded decided he had no option but to surrender. The prisoners were treated with great chivalry, receiving medical attention, and were marched to Glenfinnan, presented to Prince Charles, and watched the raising of the standard on the 19th August after which they were released to make their own way home. Captain Scott's particularly fine horse had been confiscated and gifted to the Prince by the clansmen.

Major MacDonell of Tirnadris was executed in 1746 at Carlisle for his part in the Rising and his head displayed on the town's gates. MacDonell of Keppoch was to die on Culloden Moor at the head of his men and his clansfolk were to suffer dreadfully in the brutal Government reprisals following the collapse of the rising.

The ruins of the bridge can be seen to this day and a cairn at the spot commemorates the skirmish.

Kenny MacIntosh



A postcard of High Bridge near Spean Bridge, gifted to the museum's collection in 2020

In Memory of Jenny Anne Spencer-Smith

Death on 30th March 2020 of Jennifer Anne Spencer-Smith also known as Jenny Smith
younger grand-daughter of Victor Hodgson, founder of the West Highland Museum

Jenny was born in Barry, Wales to Anne Spencer-Smith, only child of Victor and Sybil Hodgson and to Herbert Spencer-Smith of Knockholt, Kent on 13th February 1951.

Jenny was a lively and adventurous woman who led an interesting and dynamic life despite personal and in later years health challenges. When still a young pre-school child the family moved to London and she attended a number of schools which had very different teaching styles that probably contributed to her varied interests and talents in life including music, playing the Scottish fiddle, art, writing, organizing and running her own businesses.

After leaving school she attended a London art college and got involved in the London "Squatting" Movement, a politically motivated movement of living in the many, somewhat derelict, empty houses in many parts of London that the local government were refusing to renovate when there was still a severe shortage of housing following the second world war.

In 1975 she was one of the founding members of the Lenthall Road Workshop, Hackney, London, a community screen printing and photography workshop teaching local, often low income people how to use these art forms and how to use them for political issues in their neighbourhoods and the larger London Community.

In 1977 Jenny bought a traditional, two bedroom stone farmhouse called Delachuper. in Corgaff, a hamlet just below the Lecht Ski area of the Grampian Mountains, Scotland, situated on a single track dirt road, originally a military road built in the 1700s by the conquering English Red Coat soldiers.

Water for the house still came by putting a bucket under a tiny spring just across the track from the front door. There was no electricity and lighting came from Tilly lamps. Jenny eventually put in a somewhat better water supply collecting rainwater off the hills, a bathroom for which she did her own plumbing and organized for grid electricity to come across the river Don to the property.

During some of these early years, to reduce her social isolation, Jenny also spent time living on the outskirts of Edinburgh where she was involved with a number of different community groups and issues. When more settled at Delachuper Jenny opened a business making striped Shetland wool sweaters on a hand knitting machine. She had a talent for choosing the colour tones of the stripes of the sweaters based on the colours she saw in the heather and forest clad hills around her.

In 1982 Jenny re-opened the small private hostel that had been set up by the previous owner in the small barn below the house. She ran "Jenny's Bothy" until 2011 providing not only hikers and skiers with bunk beds but also hosting small groups for a variety of self-development workshops including singing with known traditional music Scottish singers. Jenny became involved in the spiritual practices of the Sunray Meditation Center, Lincoln, Vermont, USA. She visited the center a few times and used the practices for many years. In the Fall of 1992 she hosted a Canadian Indigenous healer, Red Thunder Cloud, on a herbal teaching tour of Eastern Scotland.

Jenny closed the Bothy in 2011 due to poor health and ageing problems and relocated to the Morayshire coast with its sunnier

and milder weather, and wide sandy beaches. Here Jenny was active with her local town, Forres, in their Transitional Town movement. She then started a small community garden on the High Street in Forres giving away vegetables and herbs to passers-by modelled on the Todmorden, Yorkshire Incredible Edible programme, now a world wide movement. She was also an active local leader with Nourish Scotland, a

programme supporting nutritious, sustainably grown foods over all of Scotland, and with other programmes concerning soil health and changes to climate that effect Scotland and the rest of the world.

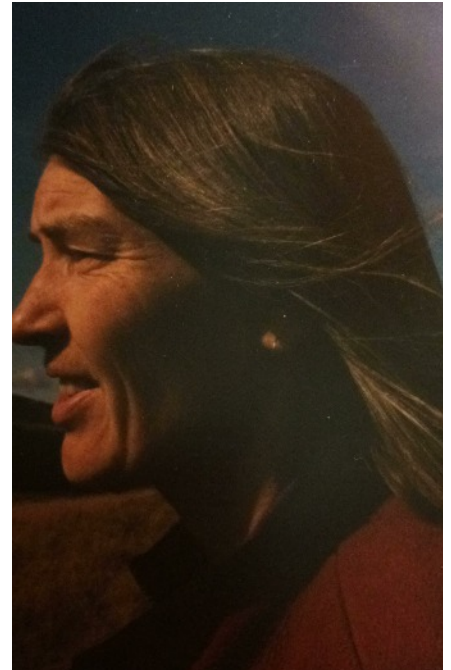
Jenny has been a member of the West Highland Museum for many years though not actively involved in its functioning.

Jenny, as a single person without children, has had the time and energy to have a huge impact on many people over her 69 years of life. She had a great sense of humour and a huge loving heart. Many children have had the opportunity to spend fun, creative time with her and many adults have been positively impacted by her drive to make the world a better place. She became a very good listener and has supported many adults in healing themselves from their life traumas.

The last few weeks of her life was a very special time for Jenny and myself, Margie. Our relationship had not always been easy due to the difficult dynamics in our family of origin and the relatively early deaths of our parents. During these past few weeks we experienced great healing in our family story, sibling relationship, gaining deeper understanding and respect for each other and were able to freely express our love for each other.

Jenny was buried on April 11th 2020 in Innis na Birlinn Cemetery, Onich, by Fort William, Scotland, next to our grandfather Victor Hodgson who died in 1929 so never knew that he had two grand-daughters who he would surely have loved as he had loved our mother until his death when she was seven years old.

Margie, Jenny's older and only sibling, due to the Covid-19 virus, is for now remaining in Scotland living in Jenny's home in Findhorn Village with good support from our family, Jenny's friends in Scotland and friends in this country and back home in Maine.



Sir D Y Cameron and the West Highland Museum

Sir David Young Cameron (1865–1945) was one of Scotland's most prolific and influential artists and printers.

He was born in Glasgow and in the early 1880s studied at Glasgow School of Art. By 1885 he had gained a place at Edinburgh School of Art, where he was encouraged to take up etching.

Cameron developed his skills as a printmaker, and from the 1890s until the late 1920s there was an extraordinary interest in printmaking, and Scottish etchers like Cameron were encouraged by art dealers in Scotland to develop their skills.

Cameron had close links to Lochaber, he painted its landscapes and was an early member of the West Highland Museum. He has a unique connection to the museum in that he created prints in our collection from one of our unique Jacobite objects.

This object is the Strange Plate, an etched copper printing plate created by engraver Sir Robert Strange in 1746. The plate was commissioned by Prince Charles Edward Stuart on the eve of the Battle of Culloden to create bank notes for the Jacobite cause. However, with the battle lost, the printing plate was never used and was found abandoned shortly afterwards at the west end of Loch Laggan.

Founded in 1922, the West Highland Museum immediately focused on collecting objects associated with the Jacobite risings, particularly the 1745 Rising which began here in Lochaber. In 1928, our fledgling museum purchased the Strange Plate at auction and it has remained one of the most important objects in our collection ever since.

In 1928 Cameron, the most famous printer of his day, printed from the plate to raise funds for the museum. He signed 57 proofs and these were sold for 10/6. We have one of Cameron's prints on display in our Jacobite gallery alongside Strange's printing plate. Two of these prints recently sold at auction for £875 (2019) and £1,625 (2020)¹. To celebrate our centenary in 2022 we are looking into the possibility of printing from the plate again to raise

funds for the museum, although it is doubtful we will be able to attract a printer of Cameron's calibre to carry out this task for us.

Although Sir D Y Cameron was a noted artist of his day with direct connections to Lochaber and the museum, we did not have an example of his work in our fine art collection.

Since 2018 we have been searching for a painting to display at the museum. In 2020, our Chairman, Ian Peter MacDonald, spotted "October in Knoydart" on display at the Fine Art Society in Edinburgh. Depicting a local scene, it was the perfect choice for our art collection and was described by an independent valuer from Christie's as "Cameron at his best". With the assistance of grants from the Art Fund, National Fund for Acquisitions and a donation from the family of the late John Gooch, we were able to purchase this fine oil painting in September 2020.

"October in Knoydart" arrived at the museum in October 2020 and now hangs in our Jacobite gallery in tribute to John Gooch. The painting is displayed adjacent to Cameron's 1928 bank notes and a narrative illustrating the aftermath of the 1745 Rising. Cameron's painting vividly depicts the wild Highland landscape in which the Prince hid whilst on the run from the British Army in the summer of 1746.

Vanessa Martin



Sir D Y Cameron, oil on canvas, by Alfred Kingsley Lawrence (National Galleries Scotland collection)

¹ <https://www.lyonandturnbull.com/auction/lot/58-robert-strange---jacobite-banknotes/?lot=223766&so=0&st=cameron&sto=0&au=9129&ef=&et=&ic=False&sd=2&pp=24&pn=1&g=1>



"October in Knoydart" by Sir D Y Cameron

Aluminium in Lochaber 1929 – 2019

In 2020 the museum hosted a display in our temporary exhibition space celebrating 90 years of aluminium smelting in Fort William. The Lochaber Smelter is the last remaining aluminium smelter in the U.K. Here we learn a little of the history of the smelter.

All objects are on loan for this exhibition by kind permission of:



The Lochaber Power Company was established by Act of Parliament in 1921 to produce aluminium.

The amount of electricity required to produce aluminium means that it is more economical to smelt in areas where power can be produced cheaply, rather than in proximity to the source of aluminium ore.

The Lochaber Power Company and the British Aluminium Company were formed, and by 1924 work had begun on constructing a smelter at Fort William.

The company was authorised to develop an area of 303 square miles around Ben Nevis where there is an average rainfall of 406 cm per year. This was ideal for the hydro-electric scheme that was needed to manufacture the aluminium.

The Lochaber aluminium works opened in 1929 and the first cast of aluminium was produced on the 29th December 1929.

The civil engineering project to power the Lochaber Smelter required three stages and took more than two decades to complete.

First stage: In 1926 work began to construct a 15-mile tunnel through the solid rock of the Ben Nevis mountain range from Loch Treig to Fort William. At the height of the project 3,000 navvies and tradesmen were employed on building the works, pipelines and hydro-electric station. They excavated the tunnel and constructed a 21-mile network of railways.



The construction of Laggan Dam



Construction workers in the 1920s

Second stage: In 1934 Laggan Dam was completed. It was built to increase the water storage capacity for the smelter. Water from the dam travels to Loch Treig through a 2 ³/₄ mile long tunnel.

Third stage: Completed in 1943 by the 1st Tunnelling Company of the Canadian Army. This project channelled the headwaters of the Spey, via Loch Crunachan and a 2-mile man-made tunnel into Loch Laggan extending the water catchment area still further.

By the time the project was completed it had cost the company over £5 million, that is equivalent to £280 million today.

Today, the Lochaber smelter annually produces on average 48,000 tonnes of aluminium. In real terms this is enough aluminium to produce 3 billion aluminium cans.

Vanessa Martin



The Puggy Line railway constructed for the smelter

Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of St. Valery

On 12 June 1940, approximately 10,000 men from the 51st Highland Division were captured at the French seaside town of St. Valery en-Caux, along with French soldiers. The fighting at St. Valery came a week after thousands of British troops had been evacuated at Dunkirk.



Pipers Finlay and Sandy Cameron at the Commando Memorial, Spean Bridge

The captured soldiers were force marched to PoW camps in eastern Europe, where most remained in captivity until the closing stages of the war. As the Soviet army swept west through Europe, the Nazis forced PoW's on gruelling "death" marches to evade the advancing allied forces.

On 12 June 2020 the fate of the 51st Highland Division was commemorated around Scotland while the country was still in lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic. With people unable to meet, Poppy Scotland organised a doorstep tribute to the heroes of St. Valery. Pipers and other musicians across Scotland played the Heroes of St. Valery at 10am on their doorsteps.

We were privileged that brothers Finlay and Sandy Cameron paid tribute on our behalf to these brave men at the iconic Commando Memorial in Spean Bridge. We broadcast the event live on Facebook and Iain Ferguson recorded a short film where Chris Robinson explained the story of the 51st Division, and our Chair, Ian Peter MacDonald, provided commentary.

The film is available to view on our YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KlXaGGdCw&t=8s>

To find out more about St. Valery, read our blog published for the commemorations in June 2020. "No Longer Forgotten after 80 years - The 51st Highland Division" by Kenny Grant.

<https://www.westhighlandmuseum.org.uk/blog/item.jsp?id=3>

A Lochaber Lass remembers VE Day 1945

To commemorate VE Day in May 2020, museum member **Betty Bruce** recalled her memories of VE Day.

On 8 May 1945 the country celebrated VE Day. Betty Bruce lived with her parents in Inverlochry village on the outskirts of Fort William where she attended the local primary school. Here she shares her memories of VE Day in Lochaber.

"It will be tomorrow. It will be the next day. It will be soon, soon, soon. All the excited chatter in the school playground was about one thing. When would peace in Europe be declared? The children in the playground had never known a world without war. The names Churchill and Hitler were as familiar as Santa Claus. But Hitler was dead. The Allies were in Berlin. We were all ready to celebrate. Preparations were being made all round the Village.

All the houses in the Village were to be decorated. Some lucky people had Union Jacks to be flown. These must have been saved from the 1937 Coronation. Even if flags were available to purchase, no one would use valuable coupons to get one. No matter how patriotic, coupons were too precious to use extravagantly.

We had no flag, but my mother sacrificed part of a well-worn sheet to my pleading. No expert in arts and crafts, I cut out a number of triangular pennants and hemmed them to take a long rope. These I dyed red and blue. I already had the white. When the great day arrived my long suffering father draped them high along the front of our house. I was so proud. I had done my bit to add to the celebrations.

Finally, we knew the day! The headmaster had toured the Village the night before to tell us that there would be no school the next day. We all listened to Churchill's victory speech on the wireless. Television was a myth to us. Television was something that would come in post war Britain. The highlight of the day was the bonfire. It had been patiently assembled, waiting at the gully on the edge of the British Aluminium Company's farm land. We were allowed to stay up late because it would not be lit until dusk. Dusk came fairly late in early May. It was glorious. Bright, bright

light after years of black out! I was not so happy about the squibs someone set off. We had had enough of loud bangs during the last five years.

Then we were back to school. The festivities continued. There was a children's fancy dress parade. The adults had an open-air dance which we all watched with glee and admiration. The king sent each child an illuminated thanks for our war efforts. These were handed out to all school children.

After the great day, not much really changed. We no longer carried gas masks to school. Black out was no longer required. The street lights came on to be gazed at with wonder for a brief minute then completely accepted. Rationing continued. Serving personnel still did not come home. War continued on the other side of the world in the Far East until the atom bomb and victory in August 1945.

But we had had a celebration. I remember my pennants with pride. Enjoyment was the two sweets handed out at school. And, I still have my missive from the King."



Fort William High Street, c.1940

The Beetle Wing Dress

Our volunteer, Jo Watson, a UHI History postgraduate, has given our beetle wing dress a much-needed makeover this year constructing new petticoats and providing a new mannequin. She is now researching the history of the dress for her dissertation and shares with us what she has learnt so far.

There is a dress on display at the West Highland Museum which has fascinated me for several years, as it seems somewhat out of place, especially considering that the museum's collection doesn't include many objects which were made outside of the Highlands, or Scotland for that matter.

During lockdown, many folks have found themselves with plenty of extra time on their hands so I decided that I would like to try and find out more about the lady who owned this dress. First, let me describe the dress to you and why it is such an important item in the WHM collection.

This dress is made from a lightweight but firm cotton fabric and is beautifully embellished with silk embroidery and beetle wings. The elytra of the jewel beetle to be precise. These wings have been used for centuries in the highly elaborate embroideries of the far east and are still collected today (the beetles shed them naturally and are not harmed in any way in their collection).

There was a real fashion amongst the wives of British military officers stationed in India during the latter half of the 19th century and into the early 20th century of commissioning dresses in Western styles but made from the thinner fabrics (such as muslin) which would be more comfortable to wear in the heat of Indian summers. Thanks to the existence of fashion plates, books and photography, dress historians today are able to fairly accurately date dresses to within a year or so from this period, so after some research I was able to conclude that this dress was probably made around 1868-9 due to the style of the bodice and the skirt, and very similar surviving dresses which are held in other British museums (at the V&A and Cheltenham, to be precise).

Vanessa, our curator, was able to share with me that this dress once belonged to a lady called Barbara Morrison who had been born in Inverness in about 1828, had married an (unnamed) British officer and went to India aboard the Himalaya. They had met in Jersey. Not huge amounts to go on, but certainly more information than is held about some of the other items in the collection.

I started my research on the fantastic Scotland's People website. This is the best resource to go to initially when trying to find information about an individual in Scotland. The website is run by the National Records of Scotland (our national archives) and you are able to download copies of original certificates (for a fee). Alas, I did not find any information for Barbara Morrison – neither a birth nor marriage.

So, I then decided to have a look at the fantastic British Newspaper Archive to see what I could find out about the SS Himalaya. Sure enough, it had indeed transported officers and their wives to India in the late 1860s, so I knew I was heading in the right direction.

Then to Find My Past which confirmed that a Barbara Morrison, who had been born in Inverness, had married a William FitzHenry, in December 1856 and in Jersey. I was able to see on their marriage record that he was a Colour Sergeant with the 60th Regiment of Foot at the time of their marriage so I then went to check if the 60th Regiment had served in India during the 1860s. I did this by looking at the fantastic newspapers from the time (there is one newspaper in particular, the Homeward Mail from India, China and the East which I have found particularly fascinating and useful) on the British Newspaper Archive and then backing this up with the Official Army register (on archive.org).

Sure enough, the second battalion of the 60th regiment of foot had served in India, in a place called Bellary (today called Ballari)



The 19th century beetle wing dress made in Madras
(Photographs:
Alex Gillespie &
Fin Macrae)



between 1867 and 1872. And I found a newspaper article which states that William FitzHenry sailed from Chatham Docks on 6th November 1867 on board the SS Himalaya for India, joining several months after the battalion had been sent. I also learned from this article that he was the Quartermaster of the regiment. Only officers and ranks above were allowed to take their wives to India with them, which explains how Barbara had this dress.



Part two of Jo's research will feature on our blog shortly.

Highland Threads

The museum is excited to be participating in an exhibition coordinated by Museums and Heritage Highland (MHH) in 2021. The museum is a member of this organisation which aims to forge partnerships between Highland heritage organisations.

Highland Threads will be a partnership digital and physical exhibition using creative collaborations to develop innovative ways of engaging audiences by bringing together museums from across the Highland region to showcase the stories of Highland fashion through history.

Fourteen museums are contributing to the project, all of whom will have the opportunity to bring to life their best costumes either physically and/or virtually. Each object will be photographed with the creation of 3D images to produce an online virtual exhibition of all the works alongside a digital map showing the locations of museums and their object. Each object will have a dedicated interpretation storyboard and for the open museums with costume on display, there will be a trigger point (QR code) taking visitors to the full digital exhibition.

The West Highland Museum will be including our 19th century beetle wing dress in the project (see page 10), but also contributing other images to the online gallery. We were delighted when conservator Rachael Thomas visited us recently and offered to apply for a conservation grant for us to restore the dress to its original condition. It appears that the dress was modified in the 20th century and perhaps used as a fancy-dress prop. In the meantime, the dress will be displayed in glorious 3D for the online Highland Threads project.

Follow our social media channels for more information as the project progresses.



West Highland Museum inaugural winners of the Highland Objects competition

During lockdown efforts were made by heritage organisations to keep visitors who were no longer able to visit museums engaged online in “museums without walls”.

XpoNorth and Museums and Heritage Highlands (MHH) launched the Highlands Objects initiative to encourage Highland museums to nominate favourite objects from their collections and get the public to vote on which object they would like to have made into a podcast.

We entered our iconic anamorphic Secret Portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart into the inaugural competition. The portrait is displayed as a smear of oil paint on a black tray, but when a reflective cylinder is positioned on the board, the previously hidden portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart is revealed.



The Secret Portrait, the inaugural winner of the Highland Objects competition.

Thanks to massive local support, (mainly as the result of our very competitive museum manager persuading people to vote for us!) we beat the competition by a very healthy margin and won the first competition.

You can listen to Chris Robinson's fascinating podcast here:

<https://highlandobjects.wordpress.com/2020/05/13/may-2020-object-7/>



mid-18th century ladies dress from Glencoe Folk Museum



mid-19th century silk dress from the Highland Folk Museum

Iain Lom or John MacDonald. Gaelic bard

In 1625, as the civil war raged in Scotland, two Parliamentary armies tried to bottle up and destroy the Marquis of Montrose and his loyalist force in the Great Glen. Montrose suddenly appeared and utterly annihilated one of these under the Campbell Earl of Argyll.

His army had been guided there over the high snow-covered hills by a lad of 20 something called Iain Lom. John Buchan called this the greatest flanking march in British military history. The hardship was so great to the lightly clad warriors that Montrose's own son later died of the effects.

Iain is the most outstanding of the remarkable Keppoch bards, the poets of the MacDonalds of Keppoch, near Roy Bridge. Lom is the Gaelic word for bald; his nickname rather than a surname. My favourite exhibit in the West Highland Museum is a knobbly black stick believed to have belonged to the bard; as far as I know his only surviving possession, our only tangible link to an astonishing character and his part in Lochaber's Gaelic heritage.



Iain Lom's memorial stone in Cille Choiril (Photograph: Kevin Cameron)

Although unarmed Iain declined the offer of a sword at Inverlochry saying *Cathaichibh sibhse, innse mise*; "You fight, I'll tell it like it was." Having accidentally killed his own brother in a clan fight, Iain had eschewed sharp pointy objects. Instead he climbed a tree, observed the battle and began to compose his classic account *La Inbhir Lochaidh*, The Day of Inverlochry. Iain hated Clan Campbell with a Balkan intensity which pours forth from this poem. *La Inbhir Lochaidh* isn't just a hymn of hate; it is a valuable historical source on one of the most devastating battles of the civil war.

Iain was a Stuart loyalist all his life. Charles II made him his poet laureate. When his young clan chief was murdered, he endured great danger and hardship to bring the guilty to justice, cutting off the heads of the murderers and taunting another MacDonald, who had failed to act, with his trophies. Today there is a monument beside the Inverness Road at Tobar nan Ceann, The Well of the Heads, where Iain washed his grizzly trophies before presenting them to MacDonnell of Invergarry. He recorded the event in *Murt na Ceapaich* (The Keppoch Murders) and gives us insights into the mind and thought processes of a 17th century Highlander.

Before Iain Lom Gaelic bards generally wrote poems of praise for their clan chiefs in the classical Gaelic of old Ireland. Iain Lom marks a transition to the vernacular or everyday Gaelic of his time. His verse is still largely intelligible to anyone with a reasonable grasp of modern Gaelic. He had a long and eventful life; he was believed to have been present at the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689 when he would have been in his mid-60s. Loyal to James VII, he was one of the first Jacobites. His hostility to William of Orange comes over strongly in *Murt Ghlinne Comhan*, his lines on the Massacre of Glen Coe while *Oran an Aghaidh and Aonaidh* (A Song Against the Union) places him firmly against the union with England.

Dying sometime around 1710 he is believed to have been buried at Cille Choiril, the ancient Catholic burial ground east of Roy Bridge where a monument was erected to him by Charles Fraser-MacKintosh, M.P., in the late 19th century. More people should know about him.

Ron Cameron

Iain Lom's walking stick is in the West Highland Museum's collection and on display in the Montrose Corridor



The Well of the Seven Heads memorial beside Loch Oich

Museum on Film

In September the television presenter Paul Murton visited the museum and interviewed our curator about Jacobite material culture and we had the opportunity to showcase some of the secret Jacobite objects in our collection. Filming took place in our newly decorated Jacobite gallery and Paul was particularly interested in finding out about our Secret Portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. The "Grand Tours of Scotland" series is scheduled to air on the BBC in Spring 2021.

In November BBC Alba filmed footage for their documentary about the West Highland Railway in the museum focusing on a ceremonial spade in our collection from which the first turf for the railway was dug. Presenter Ingrid Henderson interviewed local historian Tearlach MacFarlane. The film will be broadcast on BBC Alba on 31 December at 9pm.

Vanessa Martin with BBC presenter Paul Murton

Julie Ruddock from Exploring Scotland's History, a history blogger and YouTube presenter also filmed at the museum in November and was very impressed to be able to tour the museum in isolation while we were closed. Here is the link to her the short film she made.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WF0lxtDcdl&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2l-PW-d527pUODT-oLQLUk249TAfb6g5r4qennfAreX_V35Sb2M02aS9g



Tartan: Iconic Cloth of the Highlands

The word tartan is derived from the French “tiretains” or the Spanish “tiritana” used to describe a half wool half linen cloth. In some obscure way, though we can no longer trace how, the word came to describe the designed fabric now known as tartan. The Gaelic word is “breacan” which originally meant a checked blanket.

Before the sixteenth century there is little evidence of the Scots wearing tartan. They are described as being dressed in a similar fashion to the Irish – wearing a full saffron shirt with a woollen garment similar to a cassock over it. However, by the sixteenth century the “feileadh mor” or belted plaid became the accepted dress.

The repeated chequered designs known as setts date from this time. The first tartans were coloured by vegetable dyes from the plants most commonly found in any area. They were distinct patterns. So, it is possible that the patterns varied from district to district according to the plants available. Most plants used for dyeing are fairly evenly distributed throughout the Highlands so this would account for only slight variations in design. It is probable that the personal preferences of weavers and the current colours in fashion also played a part. The tartans were of a district. No one tartan was associated with a particular clan. Plant badges were the distinguishing feature of each clan.

There is no real evidence of the existence of clan tartans before the eighteenth century. In 1725 Field Marshall George Wade formed six independent companies of Highlanders to control the Highlands and squash any suspected Jacobite activity. These companies wore the belted plaid and in 1739 they were formed into a regiment of ten companies and supplied with a uniform tartan of “government pattern” in a green, blue and black check. This tartan became the Black Watch after the name of the regiment. Later regiments adopted this tartan with modifications and slight alterations. The Gordon Highlanders chose an overcheck of yellow, the Seaforths an overcheck of white.

From 1747 until 1782 tartan and the wearing of Highland dress was forbidden. The lifting of proscription did not



The 19th century Sobieski kilt
(Photograph: Carsten Flieger)

Tartan dress handmade in the
Islands from the Carmichael
Collection (Photograph:
Alex Gillespie)

immediately see a return of wearing tartan. The Highlanders were too poverty stricken to afford a change of dress. However, with the Highland Societies, it was realised that almost two generations had lost part of their cultural heritage. The Highland Society of London began a collection of certified tartans to prevent old patterns from being lost forever and to encourage pride in family and clan. The collection of certified tartans continues to this day.

The feileadh gave way to the feileadh beag (the little kilt). In 1822 Sir Walter Scott persuaded George IV to visit Scotland and to wear a kilt. Unfortunately, the look was not improved by his wearing pink tights! But tartan was on its way to popularity.

At present the feileadh is not on display in Room 5 but differences in style of the feileadh beag can be seen by comparing the hippy kilts of the Sobieski brothers in Room 5 with the regimental kilt of World War 1 in Room 8.

The equipping of so many Highland regiments led to the professional weaving of tartan. The Industrial Revolution brought chemical dyes. With royalty approving and using tartan extensively in dress and furnishings, tartan became fashionable and remains so today.



Child's Highland dress c.1860 worn by Donald McNaughton (1854 – 1937) when he was 5 years old on Skye (Photograph: Alex Gillespie)

Betty Bruce

Fort William's friendship with the Objibway

In July this year we had an enquiry about one of the more unusual objects in our collection. Tucked away in our attic store is a deer skin scroll inscribed with a message of friendship from the Objibway people. It was presented to the Provost of Fort William in 1937.

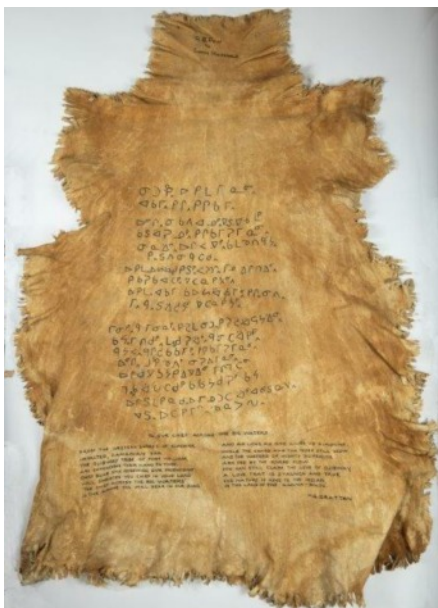
The scroll was gifted to the museum by Provost Simon MacDonald's great grandson. We had little information at the museum about the scroll, so it was fascinating to hear from his family about Simon MacDonald's life and how as a representative of Fort William he had forged bonds of friendship with the Objibway.

Simon MacDonald was elected to Fort William Town Council in 1910. He served as Provost for the Burgh from 1932 - 1941 and also as Justice of the Peace. During his time in office he was instrumental in forming closer links with Fort William, Ontario (now Thunder Bay).

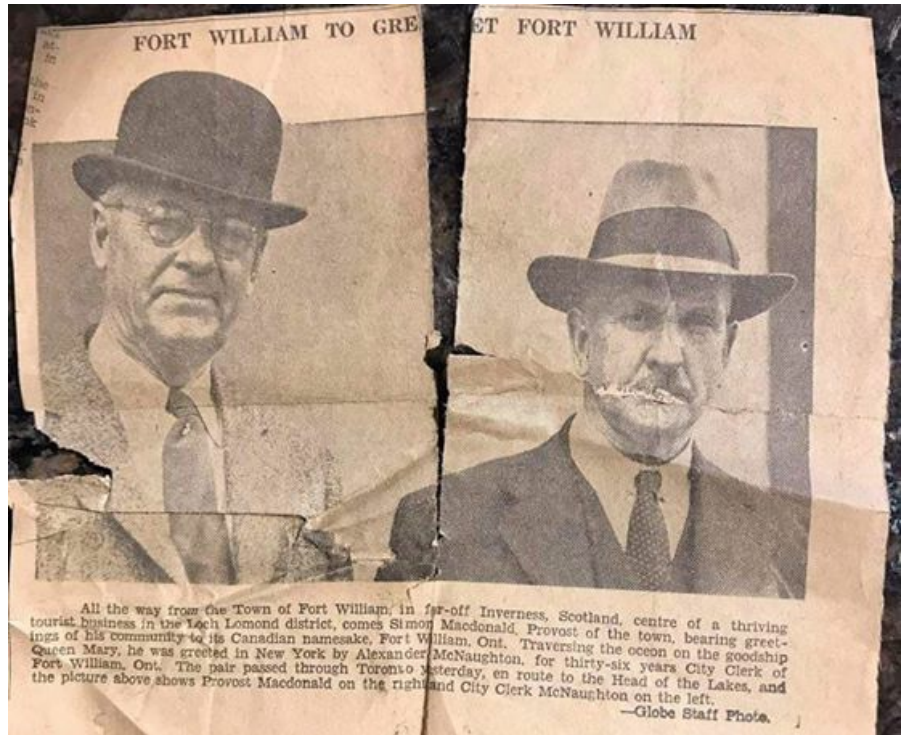
In 1936 Simon travelled on the Queen Mary's maiden voyage to New York and then on to Canada to convey messages of greetings from Fort William to the mayor of Fort William in Ontario. Simon travelled around Canada often catching up with Lochaber emigrants who had settled there. However, according to his grand-daughter, Margaret Weir (nee MacDonald) writing in 1999:

"The highlight of grandfather's time in Canada came with a visit to the tribe of Objibway Indians. The Objibways, once a powerful tribe, with vast territories around the Great Lakes and further to the west, were trying desperately to preserve their heritage and culture.

They were so impressed by their visitor - who arrived in full Highland dress and told them so much about Fort William and the



The deer skin scroll, gifted by the Objibway people



The Canadian press record Provost MacDonald's 1936 visit to Ontario

Highland way of life - that they decided to name him as an honorary chief of their tribe ensuring a "Brotherhood" between the Objibways and the two Fort Williams."

Simon was given the title Big Chief across the Great Waters

In 1937, Mayor Pow, the mayor of Fort William, Ontario arrived in Lochaber on a reciprocal visit. With him he brought an Indian headdress, a pipe of peace and a message of friendship written on a deer skin scroll from the Objibway. Mayor Pow had participated in a Objibway ceremony and been initiated into the tribe in order to be able to present the gifts to Provost MacDonald.

According to Margaret Weir the presentation took place in the third week of April 1937 at the Playhouse in the High Street. As a child she remembered the occasion well with the stage decorated in a Canadian scene complete with tall poplar trees, Indian teepees and burning



Simon MacDonald, Provost of Fort William (1932 - 1941)

campfires. She remembers little about the long speeches given by the dignitaries which she said bored her as a child, so she went to play!

The deer skin scroll came into the care of the museum in 1997 when it was gifted to us by Simon MacDonald's great grandson. The fragile traditional headdress pictured sadly did not survive our climate, and the whereabouts of the pipe of peace is not known.

Vanessa Martin

Cameron Square Improvements

2020 has seen significant changes in Cameron Square. In September our new neighbours, The Highland Cinema, opened their doors and the museum team attended the cinema preview evening in mid-September. The museum had been helping out with this exciting new venture.



The museum team at the cinema preview evening

Our curator chose the images used to decorate the themed toilets, feisty Highland women for the Ladies and illicit whisky for the Mens. Some of the images were selected from our own photographic archive which have previously been unseen by the public.

Our curator also selected the old films playing in the cinema's café and bar which depict Highland life from the last century. Film from our own George Scott film archive has been included which depicts life in 1950s Lochaber. These films are available on our YouTube channel.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCol4n3u5e_67YEBjtXqPstQ

The Model-T Ford had a mini makeover in September with the installation of some attractive tyre tracks in the square that lead to the museum's door. The tracks are inscribed with the names of donors who supported the fundraising effort to create this marvellous bronze statue that has become a popular feature in the square.

A retractable canopy has also been installed in the square by Fort William Marina and Shoreline Community Interest Company (FWMSCIC) and Fort William Town so that wet weather events can be staged in the square. Sadly, due to COVID-19, it has been used infrequently since it was erected in June.



The Highland Cinema



The illicit whisky themed men's toilets at Highland Cinema



The Bronze Model-T's new tracks



A Night with Dr Hugh Dan MacLennan: "The Caman & The Calluinn"

On 8th January 2020 a talk was held at the Moorings Hotel in Fort William to raise funds for the West Highland Museum and the Lochaber Shinty Memories Group.

Dr Hugh Dan MacLennan presented a fascinating lecture titled "The Caman and The Calluinn: Shinty's place in the games and diversions of New Year and thoughts on the history of the Shinty stick."

In an illuminating talk, Hugh Dan recalled many of the fascinating incidents related to shinty matches at New Year in Lochaber and beyond. The talk focused on the historical background to these gatherings and recounted details of some of the spectacular events which have ensured that New Year shinty matches are one of the most enduring traditions associated with the game. There was a good turn-out despite



the appalling winter weather and it was a very entertaining evening.

On the night the museum was presented with a rare shinty medal that is now on display in the museum.

Hughie MacMaster presented a silver hallmarked runners-up medal to the museum from the 1897 Camanachd Cup Final. The front of the medal is embossed with an image of a shinty player and the reverse engraved April 1897. The match was played by Brae Lochaber and Beaully. Brae Lochaber lost 5-0. The medal had been found by the donor's mother in the handbag of a family member who had passed away. It will be a treasured part of our sports collection.



An 1897 Camanachd Cup Final runners up medal

Vanessa Martin



A New Year shinty match

Volunteer with us!

In these difficult times, the West Highland Museum is actively looking for new volunteers to support us. If you are interested in helping your local museum, we would like to hear from you.

We are currently looking for volunteers to provide a warm welcome to visitors at reception /gift shop, or to work with our Curator cataloguing the Museum's collection. 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.

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

Volunteering at West Highland Museum has its social benefits, offering free museum membership to volunteers, shop discount, opportunities to go on volunteer trips, attend coffee mornings, and our festive celebrations. This year we have been unable to socialise due to the pandemic, but here are some images of happier times.



Volunteers & members trip to Achnacarry, 2019



Volunteers trip to National Museums Scotland, 2017

Volunteers trip to Perth Museum & Art Gallery

Volunteers trip to the V&A Dundee, 2018

Betty Bruce hosts a volunteer's tour of the museum

Christmas night out at the Tavern, Fort William, 2019



**Merry Christmas
from everyone
at the West
Highland Museum
& Happy
New Year
for 2021**



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Taigh-tasgaidh na Gaidhealtachd an Iar

Charity No: SC014287



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

December 2020

"Jacobites". A series of blogs in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. Online at: <https://www.westhighlandmuseum.org.uk/blog.jsp>

Late February 2021

'Museum on film' The Paul Merton programme is provisionally scheduled to air late February.

Spring 2021

"Museum Threads" with Museums and Heritage Highland. In the museum and online.

Spring/Summer 2021

Temporary exhibition showcasing the "Syd Shadbolt Commando Collection". In the museum.

Thursday 19 May 2021

AGM, 5pm, at the West Highland Museum & on Zoom