

Nairn Museum Annual Report, **November, 2013**

The new season opened on Saturday 30th March with an exhibition relating to the years when McDermott's Scotland operated from Whiteness, by Ardersier. This was opened by former McDermott's public relations officer Russell Foley and was attended by 63 former employees of McDermott's and Friends of the Museum. It was a particularly successful exhibition, attracting donations of artefacts, many of which the Museum has now in its care. In total, 1600 visitors were admitted over the duration of this exhibition.

On the final Saturday we also hosted Nairn's contribution to the Great Tapestry of Scotland before it went to the Scottish Parliament.

Our next exhibition was a series of 17 maps showing the development of Nairn since the 1500s. The 1911 census had been transcribed by John Rose-Miller and volunteers over the winter and was also available to view. This attracted fewer visitors but those who did come were particularly interested in tracing family history or seeing when their homes were built. The excambion map is of historical importance to the town and has been given on long-term loan to the Museum by the Rose-Miller family.

During the summer school holidays we showed clothing, games and toys from Victorian times to the present. This was augmented by a number of games and toys which children were encouraged to play with. Being a particularly hot summer, numbers tended to be low. However, parents were grateful for the opportunity to come in and have the entertainment here when the days were not so good. We also exhibited drawings and stories from the four primary schools related to the, then, imminent Royal birth.

Our final exhibition was in conjunction with the Nairn Book and Arts Festival and consisted of 22 of our oil paintings, many of which had never been on public view. The first week was free entry and attracted 220 visitors who were viewing the art as part of a series of exhibitions throughout the town.

In the last two weeks of the season we showed the DVD, put together by the Camera Club, of the celebrations in Nairn during 2012.

We hosted several musical events. These included James Ross and Robert Wallace on clarinet and button accordion, Fiona Kyle on clarsach, Dave Godden and Irene Ross with a programme of war related songs and instrumentals and a private recital given by Ros Hill and friends. All of these events attracted funds for the Museum. We also let the Isobel Rae room to CKD Galbraith for their pre-festival launch party and to a group of rally enthusiasts who had tea provided by Liz Bligh. All of these events attracted glowing testimonials for the Museum.

In August we hosted a Victorian picnic in Viewfield with a Punch and Judy puppet show, croquet, quoits, a coconut shy and retro sweets tombola. We were up against events at Fort George and Brodie Castle, but still managed to attract some 380 visitors. Music was provided by The Accidentals, the Nairn Ceilidh Group and Champin' at the Bit and Kim and Alan Brown, who provided the sound system, also gave us their gazebo for future events.

We continued to have many visits from schools. Four classes from Millbank and Rosebank came to hear Ewan McVicar speak about David Livingstone and see magic lantern slides of him and James Augustus Grant, explorer. A party of children from a secondary school in Windsor came with their geography teacher, Freddy Campbell, as part of a tour of the area. Two classes from Applegrove Primary in Forres made their customary summer visit in June.

We opened one evening for 20 differently abled adults from the Health and Happyness group. We had intended to host Alan Tritton's launch of his new book during the Festival but audience numbers became too large for us and it was diverted to the Community Centre. However, the income, less the hire of the room, was donated to us.

We received funding from Nairn Rotary Club for the purchase of a second-hand photocopier/scanner/printer which is a great improvement on the various methods of printing which were in place and also should prove much less expensive to run. It enabled us to produce our own calendar for 2014. The photographs, of various volunteers in poses around the Museum, were taken by Ian Macrae and are consequently of a high quality. We have sold 107 of these calendars.

Work began on 23rd October to replace the rotten beams in the attic. There has also been a full survey for any asbestos which might be in the building, though an initial one of the roof suggested there is none. Two window sills are also to be replaced. We have requested that some temporary flooring and insulation be installed in the five upper rooms.

We continue to support local schools and care homes with loans boxes. Enquiries are ably fielded by Museum volunteers, particularly John Rose-Miller, Bill Logan, Alan Barron and the Manager. In total 119 enquiries were responded to either in person or by e-mail. Alan Barron's Fishertown and High Street walks attracted 69 in total. Talks have been given to Nairn Rotary, Lethen WI, the Supper Club, Cawdor Heritage Group and the 91 club, who all made donations to the Museum.

Following the debate during the Festival, a bottle of Westminster whisky signed by Danny Alexander, David Cameron, Nick Clegg and George Osborne, and known as a "Quad", was donated for Museum funds. At the same event we received a bottle of Scottish Parliament malt signed by Fergus Ewing. Both were sold for funds at Nairn Rotary Club's auction in December. During November we hosted a series of classes run by ARCH on ancient crafts.

During the winter season work continued on preserving and re-ordering the books in the library and finding ways to make the atmosphere more conducive to keeping them in good condition.

Our volunteers have been very loyal over the year, from helping with cleaning over the winter months to desk duty to reading old copies of the local paper for items to be used in future. We were very saddened by the death of Jean Laurenson who had been a stalwart here for many years.

This season we have had a total of 5620 visitors/volunteers to mid March, have spoken to more than 1000 people offsite in outreach undertakings and entertained 882 at special events within the Museum, such as the Victorian picnic, group visits including schools, a book launch and musical events.

Financial conditions remain tight but with fund raising and generous donations from the Davidson Trust, Rotary Club of Nairn and Nairn Literary Institute, the Museum breaks even on the year. The turnover was £3200 and expenditure on secondary glazing was £1722.

The coming year sees a reduction in the Highland Council Grant (3%) and, with further increases in utility bills, our priority is to grow all revenue streams.

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