

Dear Friends,

I thought it would interest you to know how we have been spending the money that we raise through membership fees and lecture ticket sales. Our expenditure over the past twelve months since the AGM in November 2016, has been diverse, has supported many aspects of the Castle and Museum and has been greatly appreciated by the Balhousie team.

### Special Exhibitions

The Special Exhibitions are a great opportunity to display some of the wonderful archive material that there is not room to have on permanent display and also a great way to tell individual stories.

'The Discovery' was an exhibition about how the remains of a soldier were identified by the spoon that was found lying beside him in the French field where he was found in 2014. The man was Lance Corporal John Morrison of The Black Watch and his army number was on the spoon. Lance Corporal Morrison's family kindly lent the spoon to be displayed along with items from the Museum's archive. 'Behind the Wire' was an exhibition using both letters and artefacts to tell the stories of POW's from the Boer War through to WW2 and the 'Next of Kin' exhibition displayed family keepsakes and letters to highlight the stories of Scottish families.

**Donation £1023**

This year we have sponsored the first outdoor special exhibitions.



The arrival of the Kelpies in June led to a series of events to tell the story of

Horses in War. The Poetry Path and Poppy Weaving both brought new visitors to the museum. **Donation £1455**

### Education

I think probably the donations that mean the most to those of us that run the Friends are those that enable us to support the Museum team to engage with youngsters. In June, we bought art materials and T shirts for the young members of 'The Black Watch Explorers Club'.



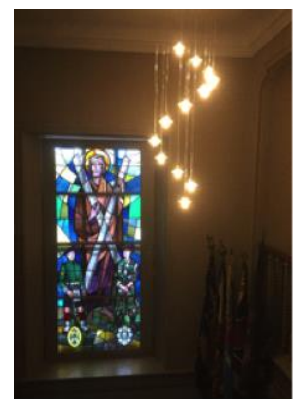
On Saturday mornings in the school holidays, Charlie, learning and education officer at the museum, is to be found surrounded

by enthusiastic young explorers as they learn history through 'engagement'. **Donation £1024**

To enable school parties to visit the Museum we have set up a Travel Bursary Fund for when school budgets don't stretch. **Donation £1000**

### Boring but essential

Every now and again there are things that need doing in the museum which are not covered by normal budgets. One such item was replacing the faulty hall chandeliers. Not normally a difficult job, until you have to put scaffolding up on two spiral staircases. This meant that a comparatively simple job became more expensive.



**Donation £3125**

The other area in which we have given support has been in purchasing storage materials for the Archive. The Museum has a very varied and extensive archive and it is extremely important that all the artefacts are stored in the correct manner to ensure they are not allowed to deteriorate or be damaged. **Donation £1000**

## Lectures

This year the Friends lecture series has covered many subjects. We began the year in about 1640 listening to Murdo Fraser MSP giving an excellent talk on the rivalry between Montrose and Argyll during the turbulent times of the Covenanters.



As the country continues to mark the centenary of the First World War, we have followed the significant events and developments that occurred during 1917. We started with the French difficulties, both at home and on the battlefield, with Professor Peter Jackson giving a lecturing on '*Nivelle and the French Mutinies*'. This set the scene for Hugh Rose to tell us of the fortunes of the British at the '*Battle of Arras*', a battle which involved many Scottish divisions and was greatly affected by the difficulties the French had been having. Professor Gary Sheffield, having given an excellent lecture for us last year about the Battle of the Somme, returned to take us through the Battle of Passchendaele. As always with Professor Sheffield's lectures, tickets were sold out weeks in advance and those that were lucky enough to attend were not disappointed. Like so many of our speakers he is a master of his subject, telling us of the events on the ground and then assessing what might have happened had Field Marshall Haig taken a different course of action. The conclusion was 'inevitably' that there was no ideal option. Professor Sheffield will return next March to give a lecture on the '*German's Spring offensive of 1918*'.

The other area of WW1 that we have looked at through our lecture series is the technologies that advanced in warfare. In May, Dr Daniel Paton came from the Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre to tell us of the early days of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). He was followed in June by Lt Col (Retd) Geoffrey Vesey Holt who told us about 'Mother', the first tank and the developments of this new style of weaponry. In both instances, these new machines sounded quite terrifying with brave



young soldiers and officers becoming pioneers. For the aircrews, this included taking to the skies in flimsy, barely armed, flying machines made by cabinetmakers. For the tank crews trundling across the battle field immune to the small arms fire around them and traversing the wire and trenches with ease but coping with extreme heat inside, an appalling miles to gallon ratio and the very real danger that they could sink without trace into the deep mud of the battlefield. However, these were the technologies that were to change warfare for the future. We will revisit both these subjects next year, as there is still much to hear.



We have also remembered the soldiers of The Great War. The 21<sup>st</sup> April 1917 was the day that Private Charles Melvin of The Black Watch was awarded the VC. His citation said '*For most conspicuous bravery, coolness and resource in action*'. To mark this centenary, Steve Nicoll came and gave a lunchtime lecture on the history of the Victoria Cross. Private Melvin's VC can be seen in the Black Watch Museum's First World War room.



Victoria Schofield has spent 10 years writing a history of The Black Watch. In September she gave us an inspiring lecture on how she had undertaken this mammoth task, condensed 287 years of history into two volumes, listened to the tales of the veterans she had interviewed and of the remarkable accounts she had read in diaries and letters held with in the Museums archive. We also had a lecture that confirmed there was time for fun as well as war. Colin Innes told us of Lieutenant Freddie Tait who managed to combine being a famous amateur golfer and a Black Watch officer in the late 1800's.

I hope you have enjoyed this brief resume of the Friends year. To catch up with news from the team at the Castle and Museum follow:  
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<https://blackwatchmuseum.wordpress.com/>

Sarah Riddell-Webster  
Chairwoman