

Dear Friends,

We have reached a major milestone as The Friends of The Black Watch Castle and Museum turned 10 years old last month. Given this significant anniversary I thought I would reflect on what we have achieved in those ten years. The Friends were formed to support the work of the Museum to sustain the Home of The Black Watch and that, I hope, is reflected in the wide variety of Museum projects, events and other aspects of the business that we have donated to in that time. They are as follows:

Special Exhibitions	£4,031
First World War Commemoration	£4,244
Translation Guides and Accessibility	£1,905
Education and Outreach	£20,895
Equipment to Support Activities	£1,937
Museum Display Equipment	£6,394
Archive Materials	£3,618
Conservation of Artifacts	£2,624
Enhancement of Visitor Experience	£15,349
<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>£60,997</b>

In addition to all that is outlined above is the indirect financial support that we have given to The Castle and Museum business. This is made up of £6,150 paid for hiring rooms for events and £20,591 for administration support. (The vast majority of the work involved in running the Friends is done by a small number of volunteers).

**Total indirect Support** **£26,741**

The sums we have donated and different activities that we have supported over the years have fluctuated and changed as the Museum has developed. In that time, we have raised a little over £80,000 from membership subscriptions and the balance from events such as lectures. Of course none of the figures above cover the hidden support that our membership has given in the last ten years. We are immensely grateful for every cup of coffee in the café and gift from the shop you buy and every visitor you bring to the Castle and Museum, it is unmeasured; but not unnoticed so thank you.

We are also particularly grateful to so many of

you for coming back so quickly once The Castle and Museum reopened following the COVID 19 lockdown and for foregoing your café discount to help the business get back on its feet. There will be ongoing offers and opportunities for Friends members henceforth, so keep an eye out for the details on the website and in emails.

In the last year we supported two Special Exhibitions. The first was in the 'Sons of the Black Watch' display case. In May 2019, the Museum was donated objects relating to Captain Smith Cameron. Of particular interest amongst the gifted items was his helmet and lucky coin. Smith Cameron had enlisted as a Private in the 4th Battalion at the start of WW1 and rose through the ranks. He was injured on the first day of the Third Battle of Ypres when hit by a bullet on the top of his head. His life was saved from the impact by the lucky halfpenny taped to the inside of his helmet. This exhibition can still be seen in Gallery 10 of the Museum. **Donation £104**

The second Special Exhibition was called 'Spoils and Souvenirs'. This exhibition explored the stories of souvenirs brought back from overseas, from embroideries created as mementoes to a Japanese samurai sword. It explored the reasons why Black Watch soldiers kept such items and the differences between a simple souvenir and a spoil of war. **Donation £204**

The final donation was to continue the support we gave before towards the cost of maintaining a Learning and Education Officer on the Museum team. Education and outreach are such an important part of sustaining the legacy of our Regimental forebears that it is great to be able to support this post. **Donation £4,500**

I am extremely sad that we have had to pause the lecture series for the time being. Presenting them electronically would just not be the same so I sincerely hope that we can start again next year if COVID 19 is under control. Many of the lecturers who were due to come this year have already pencilled in a date to come next year instead, so once we can restart we should have an interesting and varied programme in place

quickly. However, not all of the year was lost and from when I wrote the last Newsletter in Autumn 2019 until the doors closed in March 2020 we had 7 lectures. In October we welcomed the unforgettable Chris Moon to tell us of the trials and tribulations of his time clearing landmines for HALO. The tribulations were not insignificant as he had been kidnapped in Cambodia and later lost both an arm and leg being blown up by a landmine in Africa. Such was the passion that Chris told of these adventures that two of the younger members of the audience approached HALO CEO Maj Gen (Retd) James Cowan to enquire about the recruiting process.

In December we looked at a very different side of war when Prof Gill Plain came from St Andrews University to talk to us about some of the literature of WW1 and to convey the scale of the War's impact on literary production by focusing on horror, glory, grief and ghosts: four contrasting ways in which the 'story' of WW1 has been represented and remembered. It was a captivating lecture that brought our WW1 commemorations to a fitting close.

Our last lecturer of 2019 was Professor Evan Mawdsley who laid the groundwork for the WW2 lecture series.

Was 1 September 1939, the invasion date, actually the start of a 'World War'? Professor Mawdsley made us question this. June 1940 and June and December 1941 were equally important mileposts, as was June 1937, when full scale war broke out between China and Japan. Seeing the war in these global terms, should Nazi Germany have been held uniquely responsible? The Japanese went to war in China and against the USA for reasons that had little to do with Hitler. I was left thinking we had much to learn and fit into the next five years.



Sometimes you come across a story about your local area that intrigues you and leads you to research. Our first lecture of 2020 was by Diana Maxwell who bought a cottage in Fife and discovered that it was on the site of what had been HMS Tarlair, the Admiralty's main WW1 hydrophone research and training base. The station had been set up to combat the ever increasing threat from German U Boats. The hydrophone was so successful that, despite

modern technology, it is a piece of equipment the Navy still use occasionally today. There is no trace of the station now, despite it having been large enough for thousands of personnel to pass



through. We were delighted to welcome quite a few new visitors to this lecture as they were local to the Aberdour area in Fife and were intrigued to know what had gone on there.

In February we changed continent to listen to Sarah Sherlock tell us of 'Ethiopia 1941: The First Victory of the Second World War'. This was a subject of particular interest to Sarah as her father, John Howard, was Intelligence Officer to the 5th Bn King's African Rifles and she had inherited his considerable collection of papers about this time. There were many new visitors in the audience who had a personal connection to this campaign.

Our next lecturer also had a strong family link to his subject matter. John Harding-Edgar is the four-times great nephew of Sir George Murray, the Scottish Soldier and Statesman who was Wellington's Quartermaster General. John had researched and written a biography of his ancestor and gave us a wonderful picture of his life. Growing up outside Crieff, his close working relationship with Wellington, his less than happy brush with politics and his scandalous love life.

In March we welcomed back Maj Gen (Retd) Mungo Melvin who, as always, gave us a superb lecture. This time his theme was the early days of the German offensive of WW2. Gen Melvin touched on the 'The Cannae Paradox: Why Winning Decisive Battles May Not Win Wars' in what was a far reaching and fascinating lecture into the hidden depths of the strategic and tactical thinking behind warfare. Gen Melvin suggested that possibly the emphasis on tactics over strategy had been the undoing of the German offensive.

Ten years ago, when the Friends were formed, I could not have imagined the journey we have been on. Thank you for supporting us and enabling us to achieve all that we have. We could not have done it without you. Stick with us and hopefully we will achieve more in the next ten years.

Sarah Riddell-Webster  
Chairwoman

