

Dear Friends,

I would like to start this newsletter by thanking all of you for your continuing support during this very testing year. As a result of your commitment, we are in a strong position to assist the Museum team as they once again welcome visitors to the Castle and Museum.

The Friends have had to take a back seat this year in terms of organising events because of COVID restrictions. I therefore thought I would tell you a bit about what the museum team have been doing over the year. Anne Kinnes, the CEO, ensured that the business kept going in whatever way it could during the early part of the year. From January to Easter this took the form of a 'Take away' service. It started slowly on one of the snowiest weekends of January, but staff and customers were not deterred, and the business grew as increasing numbers of people taking their daily exercise on the North Inch came by for a warming cup of soup or coffee.

The Picnic @ the Castle on 10th July was the first major event the Museum Team laid on and was a chance for the local community to remember and reflect on the past 14 months. Local care homes and primary schools made bunting to decorate the courtyard on the day, sharing in pictures their experience of the pandemic. After family picnics had been eaten and games played the day ended with the burying of a time capsule in the grounds of the castle. Items were chosen which reflected the pandemic and included objects which have become part of daily life such as a hand sanitiser bottle and face mask. Finally, a small container of ashes provided by The Black Watch Association was added. These ashes are the remains of nearly 9000 crosses laid as part of the First World War Memorial Wall project, which marked the 100th anniversary of every Black Watch soldier killed in the conflict. The remaining ashes were scattered on the Tay at Aberfeldy. In 100 years, when the future museum team dig the time capsule up, they will gain an understanding of how we saw living through the pandemic, not just the

hardship but the hope and togetherness that The Black Watch Castle and Museum has sought to try and foster.

Our first donation of the year was to assist with the cost of a member of staff to run children's activities around the special exhibition 'Soldiers of Sacrifice' which opened in July and then the 'Brick Live' exhibition in October. **Donation £2506**

The Soldiers of Sacrifice sculpture is a tribute to the Allied servicemen who lost their lives on 6th June 1944. The statue aims to inspire and educate future generations whilst recognising the bravery and sacrifice of the 4,414 soldiers who lost their lives in the first twenty-four hours of the Normandy landings. Designed by British sculptor Alfie Bradley it is a representation of Lt Herbert Denham Brotheridge, believed to be the first Allied serviceman killed in battle on D-Day. The figure kneels on a sea of 4,413 bullets, marking the lives of each of his fellow fallen comrades.

Inspired by the D Day Soldiers of Sacrifice statue the Museum team have produced a new Sons of The Black Watch display called 'Road to Victory'. It follows The Black Watch as they



fought their way from the beaches of Normandy into the heart of Nazi Germany. The concept behind the exhibition was to use the voices and stories of the men such as

Tom Renouf and Ed Meekison who were there, some seeing action for the first time. This exhibition is still on display in Gallery 10.

In contrast 'Brick live: Scotland in Bricks' is a collection of colourful brick models that takes visitors on an exciting journey through Scotland's history, iconic landmarks and inspirational innovations. With over 15 models ranging from a life-sized 19th Century Black Watch soldier to Scotland's national animal, the unicorn, displayed throughout



the Castle and Museum there was plenty to entertain the children over the half term break. The Black Watch soldier was made of 24,117 bricks and took 4 people 101 hours to build. The Black Watch Castle and Museum is the first place in Scotland to have hosted these extraordinary and unusual contrasting artworks.

Since 2018 the Museum and Archive team have been working as part of a national project to catalogue, digitise and make publicly available material from the WW1 collection. The project has been led by The Army Museums Ogilby Trust. The Black Watch Museum is one of over 100 Regimental museums taking part in this project. In total, The Black Watch Museum archivists have completely catalogued over 2,100 items from the collections of over 80 Black Watch soldiers including Lt Col Adrian Grant Duff, Lt Col John Stewart and the Rev Coll MacDonald. This work is important as it will not only raise awareness of the collection and increase access but also the improved records management will help preserve the documents for future generations.

The Museum Trustees are keen to produce an archive that can be shared on line and which will allow anyone who wants to do research to do so from wherever they are. To enable that, every single piece of paper held in the museum collection must be scanned and held digitally in an organised way, enabling the researcher to see, in outline, what is available and to then call that image up as required. The backbone of this system is the structure of the archive and it is critically dependent on the production of the catalogue or, more accurately, a series of catalogues where each catalogue covers an individual collection. Adhering to the principle that the museum's collection is retained as a



group of personal collections held collectively under the name of the original donor is an important start. This means that, for instance, all

accounts held by the museum of the Battle of the Somme are not grouped under "The Battle of the Somme"; rather, every account of the Battle of the Somme is held under the collection of the person who wrote it, and it is how this grouping and organisation is managed that makes the catalogue so important. In order to make the archive searchable, the catalogue needs to contain sufficient detail that a

computer search will bring up all the references to that search term. So, to continue the previous example, should a researcher wish to see what the museum holds about the Battle of the Somme, a search containing those words would return every mention of the Battle of the Somme in all the catalogues, allowing the researcher to see the extent and context of all that the archive holds. Not only does the description of each item held by the museum need to be comprehensive but each item needs to be numbered in a highly precise and taxonomic way, allowing items to be found with the minimum of effort and ensuring that all items remain stored in a known location. Only when this cataloguing of any individual collection is complete can the scanned images be linked to the catalogue, enabling the search engine to find the image the researcher is looking for.

As noted, the team have, to date, catalogued some 2,100 items and there remains a long way to go, but this is an exciting start to a piece of work that will enable one of the key charitable objectives of the Museum Trust, which is to ensure that the public can use the archive as an important national resource.

Not everything needs to be completed before we can start to see some of the benefits. Those items that were scanned as part of the Ogilby Muster project will be able to be found once the website, which is called The Ogilby Muster, goes live later this year. The catalogues that have been completed are already linked to the National Archives "Discovery" search engine, allowing researchers to discover the existence of material, even if it cannot yet be accessed on line. If, by prior arrangement, they can travel to the museum they can continue their research, knowing that they are unlikely to have had a wasted journey. It is early days yet, but the aspiration is that the museum will possess a fully searchable and digitised version of its entire archive.

The other update is that the new area in the Museum shop has an extensive display of Black Watch branded clothes and gifts available to buy in person or on line.



I hope that as we move into 2022 life will get increasingly back to normal and lectures and other events will be able to resume.

Sarah Riddell-Webster  
Chairwoman