

Dear Friends,

At last, we have had an almost normal year; what a joy! Visitors through the door, lecture programme restarted and a lovely summer cocktail party. I very much hope that many of you have taken the opportunity to come back to The Black Watch Castle and Museum to enjoy all that is on offer.

Our first donation of the year was to help with employing a Museum and Collections Assistant. This role is instrumental in ensuring the continuing development and delivery of educational activities, events and outreach visits to the Museum, which are so important to us as we aim to keep in the minds of the young the huge contribution the men of The Black Watch made over more than 300 years of service to the Crown. However, the role of Collections Assistant does not stop there. It also involves being a tour guide, management and care of the collections along with database maintenance, acquisition of new donations, research, development and installation of exhibitions, and then dull things like housekeeping throughout the Museum and collection stores (it can't all be fun). Each of these elements are fundamental in supporting the conservation and preservation of the Museum collections and ensuring that the history and heritage of The Black Watch reaches a broad and diverse audience. This has been particularly important this year as we have once again welcomed school parties back to the Museum. The Collection Assistant's role met so many of our Charitable Objects that it was not a difficult decision to give support. **Donation £6916**

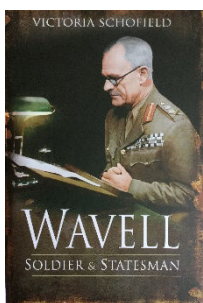
The second donation of the year was to support the conservation of a very unusual painting or, maybe I should say, a painting with a very unusual back story. So unusual is the story and painting that I asked Fiona Connah, the Museum Curator, to arrange to display the painting and say a few words about it at the summer cocktail party that we held in late June. I thought this would be a great opportunity for members of

the Friends to not only see the painting before the conservation work was done but also to have a better understanding of the sort of work that is required and therefore why it is so important that we make donations to support conservation work. The painting is called 'Portrait of George McCulloch' by the artist Dawyck Haig. You may not recognise the artist's name, but the significance of this artist is that he was the 2nd Earl Haig, son of Field Marshall The Earl Haig and he painted the portrait while imprisoned in Colditz during the Second World War. The sitter was a Black Watch soldier. In telling us this story, Fiona then used a term that I had not come across before in connection with prisoners of war. She described Haig as a 'hostage' prisoner. This was a term that was used to describe prominent prisoners who were seen to have a potential value to the Nazis. This probably also explains why Haig was held in Colditz. Given the circumstances under which the picture was painted, it is in remarkably good condition. It is painted on artist's board and there are a few areas of delamination and bulging that need to be stabilised. The painting, although framed, has never had glass or been backed and as a result there is a considerable build-up of dirt on both front and back. There are also small areas of mould generally caused by the dirt. The painting is with the conservation team now and will be returned to the Museum, cleaned and restored. **Donation £2189**

Some years ago, the Friends donated money to enable the setting up of a Travel Bursary fund, held by the Museum, to enable schools to bring pupils to the Castle and Museum. Over the years we have paid £2,000 into the fund and assisted schools from out with the boundaries of Perth to visit. For many schools a £100 payment to help with the cost of travel has opened the door to a whole new opportunity of learning for their pupils. It is so nice to see children exploring and learning from the displays throughout the museum. Our final donation of the year has been to put another £1,000 into this fund which will facilitate 10 more school visits from across Perthshire, Angus and Fife. **Donation £1000**

On 20th April we were able to restart the lecture programme following the endless Covid closures. Almost exactly two years after he was originally meant to, Dr Mike Taylor was finally able to give his lecture on 'The Paris Peace Conference and the Making of a New World Order' and so round off our First World War lecture series. It was worth the wait as Mike delivered a fascinating lecture explaining the incredibly complicated process of delivering the New World Order, a process that took longer than the war itself.

In May it was lovely to welcome Victoria Schofield back to Balhousie to speak about 'Wavell: Soldier and Statesman'. The period of Wavell's career that Victoria chose to speak on was his time as Viceroy of India, which was of particular interest as it is not a period of his life that is well known to a Balhousie audience. If you have not seen it, there is a considerable Wavell collection on display in Gallery 8 of the museum. Victoria is a master of her subject and delivered a wonderful lecture that was enjoyed and appreciated by all that heard her.



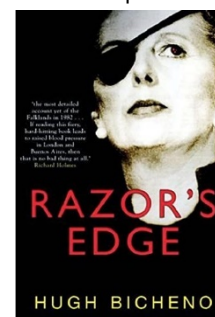
In June, Lt Col (Retd) Andy Middlemiss took us on a whistle stop tour of the Burma Campaign and particularly the aims and achievements of General Bill Slim as he rebuilt and retrained the Burma Cops and developed the Fourteenth Army, which ultimately achieved victory against the advancing Japanese army. It is an incredibly complex field of conflict which Andy masterfully navigated his way through to give us an overview in just one hour.

In July, to mark the 40th anniversary of the invasion of the Falkland Islands, we had a very different lecture from Maj Gen (Retd) Adrian Freer. Adrian talked enthusiastically about his first-hand experience as a company second in command with 3 Para as they embarked on the Canberra heading for the South Atlantic and conflict with the invading Argentinian force. We have had so many lectures where historians have talked at length about the experiences of others in times of war. For a change it was riveting to hear of the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of being a young officer on the front line. Adrian's



description of field training on the decks of a cruise liner, machine gun drills on a quarter deck and the 'not fit for purpose' kit with which the army were issued in the 1980's had the audience spell bound. It may have been 40 years since the deployment, but the intervening years had clearly not dulled Adrian's memory as he talked with such clarity you felt it could have happened yesterday. This was the first talk in a series to remember the Falklands conflict.

There is always a side to conflict that rarely makes the news or appears in diaries and letters and that is the 'Intelligence Story'. In August we were very lucky to have Hugh Bicheno come and speak to us about just that hidden aspect of the Falklands War. Hugh was a Secret Intelligence Service Officer based in the British Embassy in Buenos Aires in the late 1970's. He talked of the two weak British Governments of the period who were obsessed with making defence savings and the diplomatic and civil service establishment largely ignoring the potential consequences of the "dirty war" and the turbulent political situation taking place within Argentina. I did find myself at the end of the hour truly depressed about the political aspects of the conflict. We had had the lid lifted on an area of the war rarely heard about.



Brig (Retd) Charles Grant came to speak to us in September and took us right back in time to tell of some of the Forgotten Highland Regiments that over the years have been merged or disbanded as the armed forces have developed across the centuries. Charles looked at details of uniforms, amongst other things, to show how some of those forgotten regiments were reflected in the regiments we recognise today. This subject brought in many new visitors, as is often the way when we vary our subjects.

I started this Newsletter by saying we have had a more normal year and I am glad to say that that has been reflected in an increase in new members. Almost two years of covid restrictions were not kind to us so not only do I welcome our new members and the return to normality but also continue to be immensely grateful to all our members for your ongoing support and encouragement.

Sarah Riddell-Webster
Chairwoman