

Dear Friends,

The last year has been a year of change for the Friends organisation from the Presidency to the membership of the Trustees/Management Committee and membership of the Events committee.

At the AGM in December we said farewell to two stalwarts of the Friends organisation. Lt Gen Sir Alistair Irwin stood down having been President of the Friends since they were formed. James Watt, our guiding light on finances and constitution, also decided it was time to retire from his position on the management committee. We thank them both for the active support they have given over many years.

At the same AGM we were able to welcome two new members to the Management Committee/Trustees: Dr Nicky Small and Mr Bruce Osborne. Dr Small brings with her a wealth of experience in the academic sphere of history and Mr Osborne has stepped into the position that is traditionally the most difficult one to fill in any voluntary organisation – the Treasurer. We thank them both for agreeing to join us.

Another change at the AGM was agreement to the adoption of amendments to the constitution of the Friends charity. With the amalgamation of The Black Watch Association and The Black Watch Museum Trust it became necessary to update our own constitution to reflect that change. The core objective, however, hasn't changed, that of supporting the Museum that stands as a testament to the men and families of the Regiment for over nearly 300 years.

Our Chairwoman of many years standing (since the inception of The Friends I think), Mrs Sarah Riddell-Webster, intimated to the fact that she felt it time to retire as Chairwoman. A couple of months later, somehow, I find myself in that role. I will strive to keep up her good work. I am very glad to report, however, that Sarah has stayed on the Management Committee and retained the more arduous position of Chairwoman of

the Events Committee. Thank you Sarah and for all the support you have given me since I took on that role.

I am also glad to report that the Riddell-Webster presence has been increased in the Friends structure by Maj Gen Mike Riddell-Webster agreeing to take on the Presidency of the organisation. One couldn't wish for a more able successor to Sir Alistair.

We strive to keep the running costs of the Friends to the absolute minimum thereby releasing the maximum of funds to help with the work of the Museum. Our fund is there to help and support the Museum when need arises, we have a broad remit and so can help in a variety of different ways. Every year we make a financial contribution to the Museum to reflect the secretarial and finance support they give the Friends.

Donation £2500

In the past the Friends have donated money for the setting up of a fund to enable schools to bring pupils to the Castle and Museum. The fund is held and administered by the Museum. Over the years we have paid £3,000 into the fund and assisted schools from across Perthshire, Angus and Fife to visit. This fund has been used to open 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.

Donation £1250

I hope many of you have been able to see, either by physical visit or in the various Internet posts and television coverage, the stunning 'The Hauntings' sculpture that has been on display at the Museum this summer. This extraordinary, unusual and magnificent 1.7 ton, 6 metre high statue has had a significant impact on visitor



numbers and the response from those seeing it has been very rewarding for all involved. The Friends made a significant contribution to the costs of exhibiting and informing visitors about the sculpture and by doing so furthering the educational aspects of the Museums program.

Donation £5000

Probably the most visible aspect of the Friends committee's work has continued over the past year – that of the monthly Lecture programme.

In November Tess Monteith gave us a lecture on the Battle of El Alamein. What made this event particularly notable was that Tess included a number of speakers who either were at the battle or whose family member had been at the battle. It was a real privilege to have two El Alamein veterans present on the evening.

In December Major (Retd) Simon Carew Price gave us a first-hand account of the lead up to and then the fighting involved in the taking of Mount Tumbledown during the Falklands War.

January's lecture was given by Lt Col (Retd) Leslie Boswell on the Fall of Malaya & Singapore 1941-1942. This covered the horrors of that lost campaign and the deprivations of the men that fought in it.

In February Col (Retd) AK Miller took us through the politics and the practicalities that led to the formation of the State of Israel from 'The Hope' in 1877 through to the end result in 1948. Given the current situation in that region this was a timely subject for us to learn about.

The March lecture saw the return of Lt Col (Retd) Andy Middlemiss talking on the Malaya Emergency starting with the invasion by Chinese insurgents in 1948.

Our newly appointed President Maj Gen (Retd) Mike Riddell-Webster spoke in April on Iraq, 20 years on. This was the campaign that was to see The Black Watch, Royal Highland Regiment, awarded its final Battle Honour.

Our May lecture, given by Prof Gill Plain, had a subject that was different to our norm being on the poetry and literature of World War II. Most people are aware of the World War I poets but the World War II literature was a reminder that the written word can exist long after the spoken word has dropped from memory.

In June Prof Niall Barr talked about the part the Black Watch played in Operation Husky, the

invasion of Sicily in 1943. It was almost exactly 80 years from when the 1st, 5th and 7th battalions had taken part in the invasion.

August's Battle of Kursk lecture by Maj Gen (Retd) Mungo Melvin was a fascinating comparison of the German and Russian tactics around Kursk in 1943 and the similarities to the campaign currently being fought over the same ground by Ukraine and Russia in 2023.

The September lecture by Tony Pollard covered the archaeological investigation of the site of the Battle of Waterloo and the very real information it can give us about the battle and the way in which it was fought.

It was decided that what is often referred to as 'The Forgotten War', that was fought on the Korean Peninsula, should be honoured by a 3-lecture series during the Autumn. It is easy to forget that this very hard fought war took place only 5 years after the end of World War II.

The first in the series in October was a return visit by Col (Retd) AK Miller covering the origins of the conflict and the action of the Argyll's from 24th August 1950 to 24th April 1951 and some of the notable battles.

Later in October Lt Col (Retd) Robert Dixon covered 29 Independent Infantry Brigade operations including the notable Battle of the Imjin River. A battle in which his own regiment, The Glosters, paid a very heavy price. 530 of their men were to spend the next two years as prisoners of war.

The final lecture in the series will take place on November 21st when our past President Lt Gen Sir Alistair Irwin will cover the story of the Black Watch's experiences during the war.

Next year the lecture program will focus on the major battles and events that led to the end of WW2. Full details of each lecture and how to book can be found on the Museum website at www.theblackwatch.co.uk.

The Friends of The Black Watch Castle and Museum is nothing without its members, so it just remains for me to thank you, the members, for your support and the interest you take in the continuing story of this, our Museum.

Bill Macpherson
Chairman