

Good evening and welcome to our Annual General Meeting 2019. The Directors are happy to report that Groam House Museum, with your approval last year, has made a successful conversion to a SCIO with a modern up-dated constitution and is enjoying that new status. Directors have now become "Trustees".

2019 marks the end of the third year of the Board elected in 2016. The Trustees are pleased to report many achievements, this year, although many challenges remain. Also, there is a note of sadness as two Trustees are standing down at the end of their 3-year term. Both Tim McKeeggie and Jill Harden will present their own reports this evening, along with Doug Maclean and Alastair Morton. Jill plans to remain an active volunteer.

We are delighted to report that again the Museum has had a good year in all departments - financially, volunteering, front of house, care of our collections and in the way we continue to build strong links and partnerships in our local community.

There is so much to celebrate that once again I must give you mainly headlines:

- Volunteer numbers are good but we need many more;
- Membership and 100 Club also remain successful;
- Visitor numbers continue to increase;
- We maintain our VisitScotland 4-star rating;
- It has been another outstanding year for our beautifully curated gift shop where greater investment has led to best ever sales and some re-development is planned;
- Imaginative and successful fund-raising events, led by Jean Hogben and team have raised more than £4000 this year in community-based activities;
- The Volunteers Co-ordination group, which looks after event catering, internal communication, advises and assists in museum activities, projects, advertising and PR has developed well;
- This museum community always rises to the occasion – over £2,500 was raised by crowd-funding for refurbishment of the exterior but more is still needed;
- Four individuals have agreed to have their names put forward to become new Trustees;
- The part-time George Bain Curator and Museum Administrator have proved to be an absolute godsend;
- Cllr Gordon Adam has provided invaluable help and advice this year;
- The Rosemarkie public toilets were saved and the Fortrose facilities re-opened to local acclaim.

Funding

Our funding comes from a variety of sources: the gift shop; donations; fund-raising events; grants; visiting groups; the summer lecture series.

The gift shop is now our main source of income thanks to the tireless efforts of the retail team, as Alastair will tell you. They go from strength to strength and are to be greatly admired.

Donations, payments by visiting groups and the lecture series are all valuable and steady sources of additional income and public engagement.

Once we could rely on a big enough running costs grant from Highland Council to fund a Curator/Manager. Now, that grant is reduced to a fraction and could cease next year leaving a £6,000 hole to fill.

Project funding grants are also more difficult to win in these austere times.

Successful fund raising events such as the regular Book Sales, Plant Sales and Craft events, always accompanied by delicious tea, coffee and home-baking, provide essential funding of running costs and there is a hidden invaluable bonus in that invisible but strong links and relationships are built between the museum and the community.

Many congratulations are due to Jean Hogben and her team and to Mo Kitchingham and the catering team.

Our mission, next year, and for the future must be business development and larger-scale fund raising events and campaigns.

Future Developments

- The project to digitise some 500 items in the Nationally Recognised George Bain Collection begins in January 2020. The new website will bring the world to Rosemarkie!
- Firm plans are in place to refurbish the exterior of the Museum in the spring.
- Active participation in the redevelopment of *The Pictish Trail*.
- The *Highland Museums Forum* has developed into an organisation to represent, serve and support all museums and heritage bodies in the Highlands. It is now a SCIO called *Museums and Heritage Highlands*.
- Continuing participation in the long-term *Castle Project* which plans to redevelop Inverness Castle into a major tourism hub at the centre of a Highlands-wide heritage-based tourism initiative.

And finally, I wish to extend a huge and heartfelt Vote of Thanks to my fellow Trustees and to all the magnificent Volunteers who have worked so hard to bring Groam House Museum to such an encouraging level of success; they make it once more a good place to visit, support or come to work in, in whatever capacity.

Thank You, One and All!

***Barbara Cohen,
Chairman.
November 2019.***