

Visitor numbers buoyant

Since our last newsletter there have been a few changes at the Museum.

After a long number of years of staunch service, Alison Palmer resigned from the board in 2016. Fergus Gillanders, one of Oban's Harbourmasters, has joined the board with a specific task to assist in promotion and marketing.



Unfortunately, we have lost several loyal, experienced watchkeepers (Danny MacDougall, Kenny Leitch, Alasdair MacLeod) but we have managed to bring in some 'new blood'. We have struggled to fill the watches especially during the summer months of late opening, so any new watchkeepers for 2018 would be most welcome.

*Volunteers
wanted*

Visitor numbers remain at a fairly consistent level compared to previous years and we are striving to find new ways to attract both tourists and locals to the museum.

We have had visits from pupils from Oban High School as well as Connel and Dunbeg Primary Schools which seemed successful. Other schools have expressed interest in visiting. In September 2016 we celebrated the 600,000th visitor to the museum, presenting him with an engraved quaiich. This attracted very good publicity.

Museum finances are in a reasonable position, with a small amount of cash reserves. Annual income continues to cover normal running expenses, but only just! Annual income from Friends of the museum together with the Gift Aid Tax Repayment continues to be vital but is diminishing so, again, there is a plan to try and increase the number of Friends. Any ideas as to how to do this would be most helpful.

New additions to our displays

John MacPherson and Bill Leech continue to look after the museum exhibits, carrying out an annual review and cleaning during the winter when the museum is closed.

Each year they manage to make subtle changes to what is on view. Among the recent



additions to the artefacts are a small display of American Medals and Badges (above) a Parachute Nightdress, some new items in the Convoy Display, a Gas Attack Rattle (right) and a couple of items previously in the RAF Display in the Regent Hotel.



Pictured with the Award are (left to right) Mary Field, Sandra Munro, Bill Leech and Iain Munro

Volunteering Rewarded

In September 2017, the Museum won the Argyll and Bute Council 'Volunteer Organisation of the Year' Award consisting of an engraved trophy, to be held for a year, a certificate and a cheque for £500.

Fergus put the application together and Bill, with the help of some of our Watchkeepers, made the successful presentation.

Thanks go to them and all the watchkeepers and other volunteers for the effort and time they put in to running the Museum, resulting in this well merited award.

Museum celebrates 600,000th visitor



On 16th September 2016 the museum welcomed its 600,000th visitor. The lucky person was Tony Munn from Larkfield, Kent who was presented with an engraved quiaich by museum Chairman, Charles Struthers (left).

Tony was in the area with his wife whose family come from Iona. The couple had travelled from Kent to Iona by public transport and, coming from a relatively flat part of England, they were impressed with the mountains and the beauty of Argyll.

Photo: Oban Times

Looking to the future . . .

With the recent visits by local schools, it is hoped more will follow thus encouraging the next generation to learn about their heritage. The museum is also collaborating with the Rockfield Centre to build up an archive of oral recordings of the stories from some of the older generation of Oban residents.

John and Fergus are working hard at keeping both the website and Facebook site up-to-date and relevant and the museum is participating in a Dig It You Tube TV project which will show footage online of museums in Argyll to promote the heritage offer in the region. Argyll & Bute Museums & Heritage Forum obtained funding for the project from Museums Galleries Scotland.

2018 Diary dates

The 2018 AGM of the museum will be held on Thursday 22nd February at the Columba Hotel at 12.30 for 1pm.

The museum re-opens to the public on Saturday 24th February



The 'Jason Memorial' in St John's Cathedral was refurbished by Curator, Bill Leech, to mark the 100th anniversary of the sinking of HMS Jason. The ship went down off the Isle of Coll on 7th April 1917 with the loss of 25 lives, some of whom are buried at Oban's Pennyfuir Cemetery.

What our visitors say . . .

- "Congratulations on amount and quality you have got" - John, Gloucs
- "Assembled with care, very interesting. Thanks" - Meldyn, Kent
- "Really insightful museum." - Whyte, USA
- "Wonderful, lots of memories here" - Anne & Allan, Newcastle
- "Could have spent all day!! Fab" - DP & W Sedden, Lincolnshire
- "Marvellous display, incredible wealth of artefacts and detail. Thank you" - Sophia & Robert. Toronto, Canada
- "Warm welcome, well kept, informative and beautiful video" - Sheila & Ron, Suffolk
- "Great little museum and well documented" - George, W Yorkshire

This very large targe was made for decorative purposes and was originally on the wall of the Sergeants' Mess in Stirling Castle. It is about 3ft in diameter and was received from the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders Museum in 2017.

A traditional Scottish targe is a hand-held shield about 19 inches across and made of two skins of wood with cowhide fixed to the front. Usually they had a brass centre boss with a hole for a spike.

