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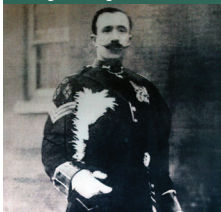
Friends'
Chairman
John Allan



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BYDAND

FRIENDS OF THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

NOT ENTRENCHED BUT ON THE WAY



A trench was a haven, a place of safety and succour for combatants in the past two world wars and so it has also proved for The Gordon Highlanders Museum over the past six months.

The Moffat Trench project has been a tremendous asset for the museum, having been largely considered responsible for a 49.7% increase in visitor numbers over the summer and likely to be a top draw, not only for the museum but as an intriguing visitor attraction for Aberdeen and the North East.

"The reactions have all been positive," according to chief executive Bryan Snelling. "We anticipated an increase of around 20% for the first year and would have been happy with that. But for the trench to have produced a rise edging on 50% was very satisfying."

With the opening of the trench by Mr Graeme Dey, MSP, Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans and Dr Margaret Moffat, daughter of Gordon Highlander Colonel Frank Moffat, and a revival of activity in the oil and gas sector, the museum is approaching equilibrium once again.

Interest has redoubled in what the organisation has to offer, from its well-established exhibitions and displays - including the trench! - to the recently introduced and now highly popular afternoon teas. Conference and formal dinners are also on the way up

Bryan views this season's success as a consequence of a great deal of hard work and planning by many people at the museum, including staff and volunteers, and is confident the future has a rosier glow.

"We recently launched our new website and it is already having an effect and as it develops it can only bring even bigger benefits. The appointment of Ian Pithie as business manager has proved another positive step forward".

The message from the chief executive's office is certainly positive and surely that can only hatch further accolades from the tourist industry.

ORIGINAL ART

A remarkable bequest for the museum has come from the estate of the late Dr Tom Smith, former lecturer in Natural Philosophy at Aberdeen University and the man who created the gardens at the museum.



At the invitation of the progenitor of the modern Gordon Highlanders Museum, Lt General Sir Peter Graham, Dr Smith began the Herculean task of converting what essentially was a builder's yard at the St Luke's estate in Viewfield Road into something acceptable. He more than succeeded.



Dr Smith laid out the arboretum and borders to Sir Peter's broad plan and even donated many of the plants himself. He helped collect specimens from abroad, from areas of the world where the Gordons had served and where many died, thus providing for them, a natural memorial.

Since those days of 1996-97, the museum gardens have provided a suitable and colourful background for many events attended by thousands of visitors.

Dr Smith did not forget the museum in his will. He has gifted an original painting by Sir George Reid, the renowned Aberdeen artist who owned St Luke's.

The painting, a still-life of flowers in a bowl, is the first Reid original to be wholly owned by the museum and is currently being researched. The most appropriate work of art will be displayed in public in the near future.

FAMOUS GORDON

The craggy face of that fine actor Jeremy Kemp was perfectly suited for the many roles he played as a British and German officer in many films and on TV. Remember Jeremy as PC Steel in TV's 'Z Cars' and think of box-office hits like 'The Blue Max' when he played an aristocratic German flying ace; and of 'Colditz', 'The Winds of War', 'War and Remembrance' and 'A Bridge Too Far'.

A uniform certainly did suit him - as it did when he served as an officer in The Gordon Highlanders! Yes, Jeremy was a 2nd Lieutenant and subsequently Lieutenant during his three years in the regiment before resuming his acting career which he did for the next four decades.

Sadly, Jeremy died this summer aged 84.



RETIRAL

One of the original founders of the Friends of The Gordon Highlanders Museum Robert Allan MBE, has retired. He bid farewell to the council at the Friends annual general meeting in July and was presented with a parting gift in recognition of his 20 years sterling service which included spells as deputy chairman.

Bob, as he is widely known, was a leading figure in the fishing industry, serving as respected secretary of the Aberdeen Trawlermen's Association and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation for many years.

Chairman John Allan told the agm Bob had invested a tremendous amount of work on behalf of the Friends during his membership of the council and he would be sorely missed.



Robert Allan with Chairman John Allan.

In the financial statement prepared by the Friends' new treasurer, David Tait, members learned that charitable payments totalling £16,798 had been contributed to the museum, including £3000 to the Learning Department's school transport fund, £11,400 towards the cost of the Moffat Trench and £2,398 for the museum's fabric improvements.

The AGM also heard that Councillor John Cooke of Aberdeen City Council had been co-opted to serve on the Friends Council. Since then two other appointments have been made to strengthen the council team, Royan Yule, a retired legal manager with Aberdeenshire Council and Stephen Coutts, a retired headmaster.

Welcome

Settling in fine and loving it! The reaction from the new Business Development Manager at the museum Ian Pithie is most encouraging from the staff's point of view - but typical of new recruits.

Aberdonian Ian brings to the newly created post considerable experience of the hospitality industry, having worked on the management side of the hotel and the oil and gas industries for several years.

"When I saw this job advertised, something just clicked," said Ian. "With my interest in history passed on by my father and grandfather and the prospect of working with volunteers who bring such enthusiasm to their work, I was hooked."

"Hopefully my experience will bring some positive benefits for the museum. I have identified one or two areas where I believe development will bring added advantage"

Ian Pithie - Business Development Manager.



The award of the Victoria cross denotes an act of death defying bravery. The Gordon Highlanders received 19 of these coveted medals, evidence of the regiment's proud performance in many theatres of war.

A booklet available at the museum details the career and achievements of those who earned such a high accolade, from Private Thomas Beach in the Crimean conflict in 1854 to the most recent, Private George Allan Mitchell in the Italian campaign in 1944.

Private Beach of the 55th Regiment, was stationed with the 92nd Highlanders in Gibraltar when he volunteered to fight in the Crimea. On November 5 in 1854, he was on sentry duty at the Battle of Inkerman when he went to the aid of Lt Col Carpenter of the 41st Regiment, who had been wounded and was being plundered by several Russian soldiers. He killed two and protected Lt Col Carpenter until help arrived. For saving the life of the officer, showing conspicuous gallantry, Private Beach was awarded the VC.



John Rogers

The gallant Gordon wasn't finished! A third machine gun opened fire close by while the company was reorganising and Private Mitchell didn't hesitate. Although out of ammunition, he led the charge once again and succeeded in forcing the enemy to surrender.

It was a complete tour de force by the Gordon but alas, one of the captured Germans seized a rifle and shot Private Mitchell through the head.

A Gey Gordon indeed.

The Victoria Cross Heroes of The Gordon Highlanders is on sale at the museum, price £1.

The remarkable story of one Gordon who did not receive a VC but according to his contemporaries certainly earned it, is told in a compact exhibition in the museum upper corridor.

Irishman John Rogers joined The Gordon Highlanders in 1899 and served with the regiment in India before being sent to South Africa with the 2nd Battalion to fight in the Boer campaign.

The corporal did eventually receive the Distinguished Conduct Medal but Captain Gordon never forgot his part in the action. In 1901 he wrote to Rogers, saying, "Today is the anniversary of the 11th of July of last year when you won your VC twenty times over but have not yet received it, while I who do not deserve it and in fact never wanted it, have already been honoured".

Captain Gordon regarded the failure as a great injustice and sent Rogers £10 as a "token of my warmest admiration in every way".



Thomas Beach

DEATH DEFYING BRAVERY

Sadly, Private George Allan Mitchell did not survive to bear his VC on his tunic. In January, 1944, he was a member of a company from the 1st Battalion The London Scottish which was attempting to regain an area of the Damiano Ridge above the River Garigliano, in the Italian campaign.

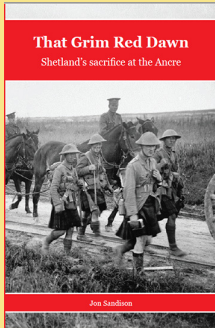
Machine gun posts were checking the British advance and with both officers in the company killed, Private Mitchell silenced the first with a solo charge uphill. Soon after, he effected a similar assault with his comrades behind him on a second bigger post, killing six Germans and capturing 12.

In the second Boer war, Corporal Rogers was in a small party led by Captains Younger and Gordon which recovered an artillery wagon and gun in the face of heavy fire. Captain Gordon was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions but he believed the award should have gone to Corporal Rogers.

Rogers, later promoted to Company Sergeant Major, landed in France at the outbreak of WW1 and was captured by the Germans. He was repatriated in 1916 as a result of ill health. He was commissioned the following year as Lieutenant Quartermaster at the Regimental Depot at Castlehill Barracks at Aberdeen where he died in 1918.

The Shetland Gordons

The historic home of The Gordon Highlanders is normally held to be Aberdeen and the North East. But a new book reminds that Gordons also came from others areas.



Highland Division, many never to return. On November 13, 1916, the Shetlanders faced the enemy at the Ancre in the final phase of the Somme offensive and it proved a costly encounter. Twenty-two died, 19 of them Gordons serving with the 4th and 7th Battalions. Most had been Territorials working in the Lerwick and Scalloway districts.

The author sets the scene for the battle on the Ancre and details the men who lost their lives - their families and school and work backgrounds. The whole paints a vivid picture of the tragedy and what it meant to Shetland.

'That Grim Red Dawn' by Jon Sandison is available at the museum shop.

'That Grim Red Dawn' by Jon Sandison records the part played by Gordons from Shetland and especially the price they paid at WW1's Battle of the Somme and the worst concentrated loss on the River Ancre.

More than 1600 men with Shetland connections served in the war with the 51st

New Website

A new website, more accessible and easier to handle, has been set up for the museum, still using the former address - www.gordonhighlanders.com.

According to chief executive Bryan Snelling, it offers significant improvements on the old site, including making it more easily navigable and the on-line museum shop more accessible. There are also pages for the Friends, the Regimental Association and for Volunteering.

Also making a first appearance is a section on the Regiment itself, conspicuously absent on the old site.

Due to be introduced in the near future is a booking system for school visits, allowing teachers to choose vacant dates and make

arrangements to call while a similar system will be launched for booking conferences and dinners.

"The website will be a huge part of our marketing strategy moving forward", said Bryan. I would appeal to our museum customers and clients to look in".

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With a little help from our Friends

Veteran Gordon Highlander Alasdair McDonald walked the Kiltwalk in Aberdeen this year and raised more than £200 for museum funds. A wonderful endeavour by Ally and typical of the efforts some people will go to help the museum.



Alasdair McDonald, Kiltwalker.

Take the eight city teachers who participated in a 'I'm a Teacher Get Me Out of Here!' competition at the museum. They all had a great time and the money they raised, almost £2500, was split between Me Too! and the museum.



Pionna McInnes and April Schelbert presenting a cheque to Lewis Gibbon

Pionna McInnes, Me Too! chief executive and trustee April Schelbert presented a cheque for almost £1000 to museum Learning Officer Lewis Gibbon. Thanks ladies!

Our appreciation also goes to the American organisation House of Gordon. Robert Gordon and his wife Cathy crossed the Atlantic to present a cheque for 2000 dollars to museum chief executive Bryan Snelling,

The gift was part of the distribution of money raised by the House of Gordon's recent fundraising activities. Robert and Cathy were pleased to learn something of the background of his grandfather's service with the Gordon Highlanders and were impressed by their tour of the museum's exhibitions.

These are only a few of the efforts made by museum wellwishers, volunteers and staff to ensure the history of the famous regiment is preserved for the future in a tangible way.

Chief executive Bryan is highly appreciative of the continuing efforts by so many on the museum's behalf.



Bryan Snelling and Robert Gordon from the House of Gordon, USA.

Goodbye Aileen



The museum's first volunteering co-ordinator Aileen MacDonald has bid a reluctant farewell to staff and volunteers. She has decided to take a step towards retirement.

Aileen joined the staff almost 4 years ago and brought in excellent new initiatives and procedures to support the volunteering function at the Museum. She also actively recruited for new volunteers - very successfully, according to chief executive Bryan Snelling. "Her previous experience working with volunteers was second to none and this has really helped the Museum move along with leaps and bounds when it comes to our volunteering programme", he said.

"Aileen will, of course, be missed at the Museum but I am sure you will all join me in wishing her all the very best for her semi-retirement which will, I know, allow her more time to lower her golf handicap even further!".

Friends Evening

As ever, the Friends Evening proved a most enjoyable outing with the sweetest of music filling the air by the Bel Canto Singers. More - the evening even produced a small profit for the Friends' funds for the first time in the event's history. But, says secretary Mrs Dorothy Fraser, if it hadn't been for one or two small donations and the income from the raffle, the evening would have made the usual loss.

Friends chairman John Allan poses the relevant question - "Can we continue this date in the calendar without more wholehearted support from the membership?"

Last May, 35 Friends and friends, enjoyed the evening and the council much appreciated their support. "We need more than 35 to justify continuing," says John.

What about it Friends?

Since fees for membership of the Friends were increased in line with rising costs last year, a significant number of our members have not yet brought their contributions up to date. These mainly include those who pay by standing order and have not yet completed the simple formality of updating their order.

Fees

The Friends council would be happy to have this situation remedied to ensure income keeps pace with increasing expenditure to meet our core requirement to be fully prepared to meet the financial needs of the museum.

During the past financial year, the Friends contributed £16,798 towards the museum's worthy causes.

The current Friends' membership fees are :Individual £18, Couple £28, Family £35, Life £180.



2001
Visitor Attraction of the Year