

# JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER

## MUSEUM OPENS WITH NEW EXHIBITION



The museum opened its doors to visitors on 1<sup>st</sup> April, and Dornoch man Chris Murray (QGM) came all the way from Stornoway to open our special exhibition.

Chris's fascinating career is the subject of this year's summer exhibition, including his time with HM Coastguard as winchman on a Sikorsky Search and Rescue helicopter when he was awarded the Queens Gallantry Medal for his part in the rescue of nine fishermen from a stricken vessel in 2001.

The medal he received from Queen Elizabeth II is on display along with many other items, such as this amazing diving helmet he used for demonstrations whilst in the Royal Navy.

## VOLUNTEERS

Many thanks to our lovely volunteers who have returned once again to see us through the season and we are delighted to welcome **Lyn Hobson** onto the front of house team for 2023.

Tragically, long-term volunteer, **Elizabeth Oakes** (right) passed away very suddenly earlier this year. Elizabeth was a Trustee, the Heritage Society minute secretary and worked twice a week on front of house in the Museum.

**We all miss her very much, she was a wonderful volunteer and a great friend.**



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We are also sad to report we will soon be losing **Tony Rundle**, as he is returning south to live closer to his family in Devon.

Tony has made an immense contribution to the Museum and Heritage Society over many years in a number of roles and will be a very, very hard act to follow, **but we wish him well in his new home.**



# YOUNG CURATORS CLUB UPDATE

The Young Curators continue to work on fun projects. In April they finished off a storytelling project with an event in Dornoch Community Woods. Led by Storyteller, Jenny Neesham, the youngsters brought to life the story of Fionn MacCumhaill and his band of warriors, the Fianna.

Their next project concerned the Peatlands in conjunction with Forestry and Land Scotland.

The group took part in activities surrounding the formation of peat, its environmental impact and the archaeology and ecology of peat bogs. They are working on a documentary to showcase the project.

Currently, the YCC have been back to Medieval Dornoch and the early church.

**Highland Seedlings** have donated to our vegetable garden again this year so that we can provide visitors and locals with fresh salad and veg during the summer

**Their plan is to hold a Medieval Christmas Market in December, so watch this space!**



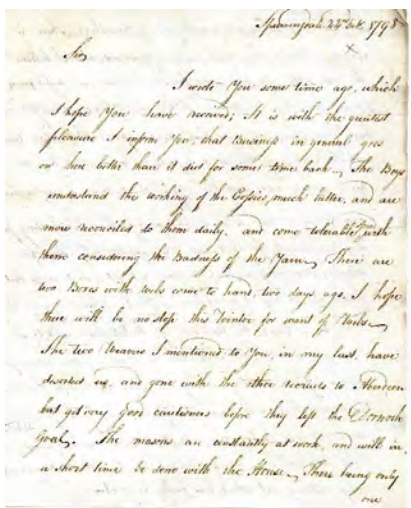
## RECENT ACQUISITIONS



We are always delighted when people donate artefacts to the museum collection. Every object, photograph and document is carefully photographed and catalogued before the details are uploaded to the online archive. Having our collection digitised means that people from all over the world can conduct research, and it is particularly useful for family history.

Our latest acquisitions include a collection from DHS members Brian and Susan Munro. They donated precious items connected to the Calder and Ross families of Dornoch, including this wonderful bible that belonged to Jane Ross, sister of golf architect Donald Ross. The flyleaf of the bible, a gift to Jane in 1914, is packed with Ross family information.

Photographs are always interesting, and a recent acquisition from Ian Grant was this image of Trentham Steading near Dornoch taken in the early to mid-1900s.



In April, three 18<sup>th</sup> century letters from the estate of Elizabeth Saudade, former maths teacher at Dornoch Academy, were gifted to the museum.

One letter from John Falconer to George MacIntosh, Glasgow, joint owner of Spinningdale Mill, is particularly interesting. It relays the good news that the business is doing well, in spite of the bad yarns and the fact that some of the weavers had deserted their posts! The letter states that they gone to 'join other recruits in Aberdeen'.

Since the letter is dated 1798, could it be possible that, like other young men in the parish, they had been recruited into the Sutherland Fencibles and were on their way to fight in Ireland?



# HERITAGE HUB EXTENSION PROJECT UPDATE

**The Historylinks Heritage Hub project has received a massive boost with the recent award of a number of major grants.**

The ball started rolling in early February with the news that we had been successful with our application to the **National Lottery Heritage Fund for £249,431!**



This grant was crucial to the project's future and we were hopeful that it would give confidence to other funders to back our project, which has proved to be the case.

On top of our own fundraising activities and investments (nearing £54k) and the awards previously announced (Garfield Weston Foundation (£50k) and the Highland Council community developer fund (£25k), we have also received pledges of **£50k** from the **Coastal Communities Fund**, **£50k** from the **Dornoch Common Good Fund**, **£10k** from the **Hugh Fraser Foundation** and most recently **£10k** from the **Baxter Foundation** (Fochabers).

This takes the total raised to just over **£500k** at the end of May. Therefore, although building costs continue to rise, the Trustees have instructed our Architects (Blueprint, Tain) and Quantity Surveyors (Torrance Partnership) to start preparing the tender documents with the aim of advertising the project via Public Contracts Scotland in August this year. Fortunately, the cost of this stage of the work is fully funded by a previous grant from the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

If all goes well, **and we can close the current funding gap**, we hope to start building as soon as the Museum closes in October this year and thus have all of the disruptive external work completed by the time the Museum reopens in April 2024.

**When the tenders are received we will know exactly how much the project will cost, will be organising additional fund raising events and getting in touch with everyone we can think of to help us get the project 'over the line'. Meantime, thanks to the following for their support.**



## TRUSTEE CHANGES

Following the AGM in November 2022 there have been a number of enforced changes to the Board.

As reported elsewhere, we suffered the tragic and untimely loss of **Elizabeth Oakes** from the board in February this year. Shortly afterwards, **Brian Munro** moved to Inverness to be nearer Raigmore hospital where his wife Susan needs to attend on a regular basis. And finally, in April **Tony Rundle** decided he would be returning to Devon to live closer to his family and so will be leaving the Highlands at the end of July. The loss of three hard-working, experienced and much-valued Trustees in such a short time has been difficult to bear; however, we are pleased to report that we have co-opted two new members in their place (so far).

**Fiona McKinlay** moved to Dornoch in August 2022 and started volunteering on reception last year. She was formerly an NHS medical practice manager in Glasgow and has now taken over the Museum Treasurer's role from Tony. **Richard Hickson** lives in Littleferry and has vast experience of Museums, having served as a Trustee of the Sutherland Highlanders Museum and is also the Treasurer of the Leadhills mining museum.

Finally, **Jerry Bishop** has recently stepped down as Chair of the Trustees to be replaced by **Alison Davies** and **Andrew Senior**, who will share the role. This move will allow Jerry to concentrate on the Heritage Hub construction project and also assume the role of Treasurer of the Charity.



# RECENT SCHOOL VISITS

In March we were visited by S2 Dornoch Academy pupils, who came to the museum to find out about Vikings in East Sutherland. After a presentation by Curator Lynne Mahoney, the children got some hands on experience weighing out Viking silver coins and dressing up as Norse invaders!

The museum welcomed Dornoch Primary School P7 class in May, who had been researching the buildings in Dornoch. The 29 children were split into 3 rotating groups; Museum Assistant Caroline Seymour took one group for a museum based activity while volunteer Anne Coombs and Lynne took a group each to walk around the town learning about the buildings. A huge thanks goes to The Castle Hotel for allowing us into the Castle vault and to The Jail Dornoch for the fantastic tour around the first and second floors of the jail.

It was great to have three work experience students from Dornoch Academy in the museum this Spring. They were working towards a 'Skills for Work: Travel and Tourism' module and were keen to help with some much needed outside maintenance. June saw more work experience students, this time from St Duthus Special School in Tain. We were joined by one front of house member who received training from Caroline and three students who worked on a variety of tasks in the garden alongside volunteer Lorna Dalton.

We were also visited by a class of seven pupils from St. Duthus School who came to the museum as part of their project 'Technology through Time'!



## DHS EVENTS CALENDAR 2023/24

*All talks are free admission. There will be a raffle & all of the Club bar facilities will be available.*

<b>Thursday October 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Talk</b>	<b>Royal Dornoch Golf Club</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>
<b>'Tall Towers, Grass Roots' by Ken McElroy and Iain Maclean</b>			
A talk from two members of the <b>Caithness Broch</b> project.			

<b>Saturday November 4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Coffee Morning</b>	<b>West Church Hall</b>	<b>10.30 am</b>
Baking, preserves and all the usual sales tables plus Christmas Gifts on sale.			
<b>FREE entry but donations appreciated</b> - all proceeds to the <i>Museum Heritage Hub Fund</i> .			

<b>Thursday November 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Talk</b>	<b>Royal Dornoch Golf Club</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>
<b>'Roman Health Care' by Dr. Andrew Newton</b>			
A delve into the world of Roman doctors and medics delivered in costume by Dr. Andrew Newton, a Costumed Interpreter and a member of the Roman and Military Research Society. <b>Not to be missed!</b>			

<b>Friday December 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Festive Heritage Film Night</b>	<b>Dornoch Social Club</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>
A selection of heritage films with a chance to reminisce. Mince Pies and refreshments available!			
<b>Entry £5 on the door</b> - all proceeds to the <i>Museum Extension Fund</i> .			

<b>Friday January 26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>A Taste of Burns</b>	<b>Dornoch Social Club</b>	<b>7.00 pm</b>
Note the new start time for our traditional entertainment and dinner.			
<b>Tickets will go on sale in December</b> - but they're limited so book early!			

*We are also looking forward to **Todd Warnock** returning to talk more about John Sutherland, Old Tom Morris and the history of Golf in Dornoch. Dates will be advised once confirmed.*