

GRANTOWN MUSEUM AND HERITAGE TRUST

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017-18

As is usual at this time, I am reporting on the year which ended in March 2018. The eagle-eyed among you will have noted that last year's Chairman's Report was not attached to the minutes – it seems unnecessarily confusing to have two on the go at the same time.

We began the season working hard in preparation for the exhibition of paintings by Richard Waitt, due to open in June. Building work, including a new wall in Gallery 5 and boards on the windows, was required to provide the necessary security for the exhibition and at the same time the security cameras were upgraded. The wall separates the kitchen and toilets from the gallery and the boards on the windows increase the display space. These works have enhanced our ability to borrow objects from National Museums and other organisations for future exhibitions and we look forward to benefitting from this for exhibitions already planned in 2019 and 2020.

Early season Art exhibitions included displays by two Advanced Higher Art pupils from the Grammar School, Spey Art Group, three local artists and Jan Holm. There was also a very successful Schools Week, organised and run by Dan.

The Waitt exhibition opened in July and ran till the end of the season in October, with a change to the charging system which meant that entry to the exhibition was the same as entry to the Museum and this will now be the model for future large exhibitions to increase the revenue stream. A catalogue for the exhibition was produced by Malcolm Jones and sold well along with a range of items relating to the paintings. Special events included a very successful evening reception for the official opening of the exhibition by Guy Macpherson Grant, a family fun day with characters from the paintings brought to life, corporate events for the sponsors Johnston Carmichael, a Bonham's valuation day and an academic conference. The season ended on a high note with a very special concert by Marie-Louise Napier and friends of music written by Marie-Louise for each of the paintings while invigilating the exhibition.

Over the winter, major works were undertaken to get rid of the dry rot – it was quite an upheaval, as galleries 2 and 3 had to be completely cleared while galleries 1 and 4 were used for storage. It was also traumatic coming in and seeing daylight where there should have been floors and walls. In spite of this gallery 5 remained in use and we had another successful series of talks organised by Claire Thom on a varied range of topics. In addition, we were able to hire gallery 5 out for concerts by Findlay Napier and Charlie McKerron,

courses run by Cairngorms Learning Partnership and Art Classes run by Rosie Fisher.

Our volunteers excelled themselves again with outstanding service to the community and to visitors throughout the season. The high standard of service we provide is very much appreciated by the Board and visitors are always complimentary about the quality of information they receive. The new layout of the shop and the signage have continued to attract visitors into the building. Sadly, Gladys Lewis had to give up volunteering in the Museum and managing the volunteer rota after a long period of filling these roles and we have missed her cheeriness and efficiency greatly.

Fundraising continues to be one of our major activities, and monies were raised by holding a Fundraising Walk, Stall at the 'Where to Today' Car Boot Sale, End of Season Coffee Morning and Sale, Burns Supper, and Spring Coffee Morning. A new fundraising venture was reviving Abernethy Open Gardens as Strathspey Open Gardens, into which the Strawberry Tea was incorporated. Lunches were served in Nethy Bridge Community Centre and the food and beautiful gardens were much enjoyed by all. The funds raised were shared with 'Where to Today?' This will be repeated in 2019.

The 100 club continues to be a source of income, but still needs more participants, or we will need to consider downsizing the name and the prize money. Thanks are due to Marje Smith for the effort she puts into this.

Thanks are also due to The Highland Council for continued financial and other support, and especially to Councillor Bill Lobban, who provides sage advice at our Board Meetings, Lorna Cruickshank of Highlife Highland who looks after independent museums.

To Dan Cottam, who has done an absolutely amazing job in very difficult circumstances since Christmas and who, with Helen Avenell, should be very proud of their continued contribution and commitment to improving the Museum on a year by year basis. The Waitt Exhibition was a personal triumph for them both and the Directors are truly grateful for their dedication. To my fellow Directors Gordon Bulloch, Duncan Grant, whom we have welcomed back into the fold, Jane Hope whose attention to financial details is legendary, Angus Miller, Claire Thom, and Lewis Thomson, who all make use of their individual talents and give of their time for the benefit of the Museum. We are very lucky to have such a great team working to keep the Museum going in difficult times.

Seonaid McLaren

September 2018

