

Report of the Directors 2017

The Directors report that since their appointment in October 2016 this has been a period of intensive re-focussing, recovery and renewal.

Volunteers: Our top priority has been to share our enthusiasm for and belief in Groam House Museum and restore it to life. We have worked hard to create an inclusive atmosphere in the Museum community that is welcoming, supportive and creative. In return Volunteers have actively shared their hopes, criticisms, and suggestions for improvements. They now actively share in the running and management of all our activities: choosing merchandise and books for the Museum Shop; cataloguing and caring for our Collections; running the successful annual Lecture Programme; organising, taking part in and famously **baking** for fund-raising events. We even socialise! Former Volunteers have returned to the team and happily new people have joined us too.

With greatly improved communication, via well-illustrated Newsletters, a rejuvenated website and social media we have tried to draw more Members into active participation in all that we do. We are also frequent contributors to "Chatterbox", the excellent quarterly Black Isle magazine.

Finances: The Museum's financial matters have been brought under firm control by the meticulous Treasurer and there is no longer any risk of bankruptcy. Expenditure has been reduced as costs have been scrutinised and cut. We have no employees. Visitor numbers have increased and donations are steady. The Highland Council continues to support us with 50% of the former grant but we are prepared for this to cease in 2018-19.

We have benefitted greatly from a number of generous loans from Members and Directors. Also, the imaginative and successful fund-raising activities of a dedicated team of Volunteers have contributed greatly to funding running costs and projects of renewal.

With prudent investment, our once much admired Museum Shop, is again returned to its full glory and is generating useful contributions to running costs and to visitors' pleasure.

Rebuilding: The Board is ambitious to re-integrate the Museum into the local community as we are, after all, a **local** heritage and history museum. We are focussing on inviting our Black Isle neighbours, in particular, to join us and enjoy our sociable fund raising events – a top level cookery demonstration, a Burns lunch event, coffee mornings, craft workshops, harp playing, book sales and plant sales. Also, a community programme to discover the impact of WW1 on Rosemarkie, Fortrose and Avoch will run from November 1st - June 2018.

Winter weekend opening was introduced last year and the temporary winter exhibition of Rosehaugh memories and memorabilia was popular. We will continue to open in winter with new exhibitions of local interest, primarily for the benefit of local people and visitors.

The successful summer exhibition, *One Man's War*, displayed largely unknown aspects of George Bain's artistic talents and his humanity in the face of brutal war in the Balkans in 1917.

Also included in **recovery and renewal** is the modernisation of the way we present and interpret our Pictish sculptured stones, as you may observe. And the Rosemarkie Cross Slab has received much needed conservation thanks to funding by the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) and The Pilgrim Trust.

Finally, redevelopment of the Courtyard, courtesy of a Tesco Bags for Life donation and a Community Service team has transformed exterior first impressions.

Recognition: Museums Galleries Scotland continues to support us and our nationally recognised George Bain Collection. *VisitScotland* renewed our 4-star rating and our *Accreditation* was renewed for a further 3-year period. This is a UK-wide Quality standard for all museums. Compliance, this time, required a great deal of work by a large group of directors and volunteers over several months.

Our Visitor Surveys show very positive feedback about the Pictish displays and temporary exhibitions and visitors really appreciate the friendly helpfulness of the Volunteer Attendants.

In conclusion, the Directors must thank all Volunteers most sincerely for all their dedicated work in helping to bring the Museum back from the brink and we must thank the Members for their huge trust and support over a very challenging time.

Groam House Museum has risen like a phoenix and looks forward to a bright and enjoyable future.

Barbara Cohen.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Groam House Museum

31st October 2017.