

# Ross of Mull Historical Centre Trustee's Annual Report Autumn 2021

(to be presented at the AGM in late January)



This year we opened to the public, ran one public evening event and have had a steady flow of people into our grounds thanks to the community garden. Despite the continuing impact of the Covid pandemic the Historical Centre has managed to continue its mission of promoting the history and culture of the Ross.

This year, like last, our online presence has been most important in achieving our mission – however, we did cautiously open our doors to the public in July 2021. It was a very different experience than we were all used to with a screen at the till, hand sanitizer and masks for all, only one family group permitted at a time in the museum and no offer of refreshments. Also, with a high proportion of our volunteers still needing to self-isolate, we had to reduce our opening times to just 4 mornings a week. However, we could still be welcoming, and it was with great pleasure that we were able to meet face to face with the steady trickle of visitors that came through our door over the next few months. (Over the three months we were opened we had 110 visitors, which reflected the reduced number of visitors to the Ross during this time.)

Our website and e-Newsletter continued to be managed with great skill and efficiency by our administrator Kirsty Lord. She has done an excellent job of keeping both of these vibrant and interesting and the numbers of people visiting the website has increased significantly from last year, from an average of 212 per month last year to 387 per month this year with peaks of 662 in February 2021 and 814 in July 2021! Our e-Newsletter has been published three times over the last year and is emailed out to over 200 subscribers.

We continued to sell our publications through the website with online sales totaling £1,107.50 for the year and £350 sold through the Centre. We also expanded our list with the addition of the Kilvickeon Burial Ground Booklet. This contains information, transcriptions, burial ground plans and a surname index of the grave sites at the Kilvickeon chapel on the shores of Loch Assapol. We have also produced a 2022 calendar showcasing old photos from our archive. Both these and all our other publications are available through our website: <https://romhc.org.uk/our-publications/>

Volunteers have kept up our genealogy service using our extensive archive and this year were able to assist 19 online inquiries and we received at least £226 in donations for these services.

One highlight of the year was our one public event 'On the Map' which we held on September 4<sup>th</sup> in Creich Hall. This was a public sharing of the gift we had received of an original Joan Blaeu printed map taken from one of his atlases and framed.

With maps being the theme of the evening, we also had two very interesting presentations from Eleanor MacDougall PhD on 'Gaelic place names on the Ross' and from Rutger Emmelkamp of Knockvologan Studies on different ways of mapping the world and our immediate environment.



*Jan Sutch Pickard with the donated Joan Blaeu map*



*Community garden November 2021*

The other notable event which has livened up the surroundings of the centre has been the progress of the community garden. By the spring of this year the group of local gardening volunteers had successfully transformed the patch of sprawling rhododendrons, willow and bramble that filled the area between the stream and the road below the centre into a beautiful garden with raised beds, fruit bushes and trees, sheds, compost areas, paths and seating areas. This has become a vibrant growing and meeting space.

Local residents have eagerly taken over the 8 available 'allotment' raised beds and filled them with flowers and vegetables. The playgroup meets in the garden every week, the Ranger uses it as a base for her after-school nature club and one of the classes in the primary school planted up another of the allotment beds. There have been art and pottery sessions, plant and harvest sharing events and tea parties. There are now two local mums who are sharing the role of paid part time gardener and provide a regular presence in the garden. Overall, the garden has been a very successful addition to the Historical Centre property and is a most inviting and intriguing draw for visitors.

We are always looking for new members for the board of trustees and also volunteers to help with the Centre work. **Please consider joining us.**