

Alford Heritage Museum

Preserving the rich heritage of Alford and Donside for future generations.



A letter to our supporters

Alford and Donside Heritage Association - October 2022

This season has been a pivotal time for the museum to rebuild in many ways following two consecutive years which were severely impacted by Covid-19. This year we have had the pleasure of welcoming events back into the heritage museum. We have been able to welcome new volunteers of all ages without the barrier of masks to prohibit new friendships. Most importantly, we have been able to return having had the time to reflect on what Alford Heritage Museum's role in the community can and should be moving forward and we hope you will see that reflected in this year's offerings as well as within the glimpses contained in this newsletter below. During what is still an uneasy time for many, we thank you for your continued support in keeping our local heritage accessible for future generations

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2022 Open Season Hours
Thursday - Sunday 12-4 PM
April 7th - October 31st

2022 Event Highlights



Alford Heritage Museum



Market Days

Thanks to the incredible support our Community Expo received last year, it was decided we would hold seasonal markets at the museum throughout 2022. This year we had a Spring Fair to celebrate our opening weekend in April, a Summer Fair to celebrate the beginning of the Aberdeenshire summer holidays and we will soon be hosting a Harvest Festival on October 15th from 12-4 pm.



Our only wish could have been for better weather as we saw snow in April and rain in July, but these events have been great fun and we have been able to host over 65 businesses and community groups while welcoming over 650 visitors to the heritage museum during these two open days.



The Harvest Festival will have both indoor and outdoor attractions. Mary Bourne and Lynne Strachan from The Art of Farming will be in the auction ring and Jackie Ross of Doric Books will be storytelling in the schoolroom from 12-2 pm. The outdoor market area will have crafters, artists, food producers, and community groups as well as a model steam engine, threshing machine, and Clydesdale horses visiting for the day.

Night at the Museum



What a night this turned out to be! The Night at the Museum was a new event style for our current trustees and we couldn't have been more pleased with the turnout, ending up with a sell out attendance for the evening. The nights entertainment featured both ballads in the auction ring from Alford's own Allan Taylor and a live auction hosted by Alan Hutchen from Aberdeen and Northern Marts. Attendees also had a chance to explore the museum and experience a school day re-enactment in our schoolroom led by Doug Ross prior to dinner.

Hamewith Concerts



On September 29th and 30th we were delighted to see our Hamewith Concerts return to the museum for the first time since 2019. The Hamewith Concerts are a well loved community institution which brings in young performers from the local primary schools. This year we were treated to a variety of poems, dances, jokes, and musical performances over the two evenings. It was lovely to see the stands full of families out supporting the schools.



AHM Out and About

Over the spring and summer months our volunteers have had the pleasure of attending various events throughout the Northeast to present the museum to the wider community. Our first day out of the year was in May at the Lumsden Mary Fair, which was a lovely chance to meet more of our Donside neighbours.



In June, volunteers took a large display to the 50th Castle Fraser Steam and Vintage Fair for the two day event, our biggest off-site event for the year.

We were very pleased to be asked by NFU Mutual to provide a loan of museum objects for their stand at the Keith Show at the beginning of August. AHM trustees attended a portion of the event but the event displays were wonderfully staged by staff from NFU Mutual.



Museum Display at NFU Mutual Tent Aug. 2022

Most recently we attended The Bus Collection Open Day in Alford. It was a great chance to support our friends at The Bus Collection, get a behind the scenes glimpse at the projects of other local heritage groups, and take a break time bus ride around Alford!



Alford Heritage Museum Volunteers in Schoolroom
Photo Credit: Kath Flannery/DCT Media

In July our trustees spoke with Denny Andonova, a Live News reporter from the Press and Journal to describe ambitious fundraising plans for a large scale renovation project to preserve the original Mart building while allowing for the potential of heated spaces which could be used by the community year-round.

'The building was awarded an A-listed status for its cultural significance last November. But keeping the timber construction safe and sustainable has been a constant battle over the decades – with the museum always being in need of a lot of repairs.

The actual market, when it was in operation, was the heart of the local community. And even now, we get a lot of support from locals. But I think our challenge is to engage the younger families that maybe don't know the history of the building or its importance to the town. It's all about passing on the heritage of the area and understanding the way rural life used to be, and maybe in some way, people can relate the past to present-day life.'

The full article is on the Press and Journal website
<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/4556950/alford-heritage-museum-fundraising-renovation-project/>

Volunteer Activity



Alford Heritage Museum



The volunteer community at Alford Heritage Museum is the lifeblood of the museum and without their dedication to supporting the museum none of the activities and events we are able to provide for the community would be possible whether they be ideas grown in the museum or national efforts such as Doors Open Days. After 2 years of virtual events, we were delighted to take part in the Aberdeenshire Doors Open Days in September. This annual event sees many different types of buildings throughout the country opening their doors free of charge. Over the two days of the weekend we welcomed over 160 visitors, many of whom had not visited the museum before.



This year we were lucky to be the successful recipients of a grant from the Scottish Museums Federation Professional Development Fund which gave us the opportunity to offer something back to some of our core volunteer team. The aim of this fund is to provide opportunities for volunteers to engage with other heritage venues within Scotland and it allowed us to send groups of volunteers on trips to three other heritage attractions with relevant aspects to our own Heritage Museum.

The first of these trips was on July 8th and four volunteers visited Knockando Woolmill in Speyside as well as Granttown-On-Spey museum. Trustee Sue Taylor has provided recollections from this trip.

"We chose two very different places to visit for different reasons. Knockando Woolmill in Speyside was first listed in parish records from 1784, with local farmers bringing their fleeces to be converted into fabric or knitting yarn. Over the years it has undergone a huge restoration project encompassing both the buildings and the mill machinery which is still in working order. We wanted to visit it as we are at the start of a renovation project of our own building and thought it would be interesting to see what had been achieved. We were fortunate in being given a guided tour by Tom Duff, one of the Knockando trustees, who shared some of the achievements and difficulties of running such a site. Pictured below - wool mill at Knockando



We then travelled to Granttown-on-Spey Museum which is a more 'traditional' museum setting. There we were given a tour of the museum and stores by the curator, Dan Cottam, who showed us their mini museum boxes (details on their website) and how the volunteers have been tackling a collections management backlog and working on it during lockdown."

Pictured below - jigsaws at Granttown



Alford Heritage Museum Autumn Events Schedule

- OCTOBER

Alford Heritage Museum Harvest Festival - October 15th 12-4 PM

Community Bale Decorating Competition - October 15th - October 31st
*Voting can be done in person at the museum or online through Facebook

Steam Engine Club Exhibition - October 30th - 12-4 PM

Final public open day of 2022 - October 31st 12-4 PM

Talk on Scottish Horse Ploomen 1750-1950 by Bob Powell, retired curator of the Highland Folk Museum
Nov 17th 7:30 pm - **At Tullynessle Hall** Tickets can be purchased online or at the museum front desk

Our 2022 Events Calendar will continue to be updated with additional opportunities throughout the year. For the most up to date information please check the events calendar on the Alford Heritage Museum website.

What to Expect in the "Off Season" November 2022 - March 2023

At the end of October, our doors will once again close to the public for the colder months of the year. During this quieter period our volunteers will continue to work behind the scenes updating and maintaining the collection, providing care to the building itself, and work on ways that we can continue to engage with the community during the time of year where the museum itself is too cold for pleasant days out.

This winter we hope to find more opportunities for off-site community engagement than we have in the past, attending other community events such as Alford Primary Christmas Fayre on November 26th with our Museum Minis activities, and facilitating heritage related events in other locations within the community such as the talk on Scottish Horse Ploomen 1750-1950 by Bob Powell, who is an accomplished author and retired curator of the Highland Folk Museum that will be held on November 17th at Tullynessle Hall.

We will continue to lend our Reminiscence Loan Boxes to any interested groups, schools etc. who might benefit from and enjoy a hands on experience with items from the museum's collection. We will also use this time to work on building our programming for children and young families as well as our educational ties with local schools and learning facilities. Enquiries are best made to info@alfordheritagemuseum.com which, unlike our phone lines, will continue to be monitored daily during the closed season.

If you have considered volunteering at the Heritage Museum but didn't find sufficient time during the "Open" months, don't let the closed door put you off! We're still here to welcome anyone who might like to join our team and new volunteer visits can be arranged by contacting volunteers@alfordheritagemuseum.com. We hope to continue to grow our offerings for the 2023 open season and having a thriving team of volunteers is essential to that goal.
