



Alford Heritage Museum



Preserving the rich heritage of Alford and Donside for future generations

Museum Newsletter February 2024

A MESSAGE FROM ONE OF THE TRUSTEES



My name is John Christelow. Last Spring I was asked if I would like to become a Trustee of the Museum. My wife was already a volunteer and gradually I became more and more interested in what went on that big green building on the way up to the Co-op in the centre of Alford.

Apart from taking our grandchildren inside four or five years ago neither of us had ventured inside before. They had very much enjoyed it and had pretended to be cattle in the ring waiting to be auctioned! We did not have much time to look around carefully then as we were being swept around by their enthusiasm. Later in the year and without them, we had another look and became hooked. With so much to see and so much detail to take in we felt compelled to offer to help keep such a marvellous place running. We continue to do so now in our various ways.

There is always so much to do behind the scenes, dealing with the exhibits, keeping the routine administration on track and planning for a secure future for the museum building and the contents. Exciting plans are already on paper but to turn those into reality is a long and complex task for the Trustees to manage and may take three or four years - with the acquisition of the building from Aberdeenshire Council and the search for funding being the most important parts.

We shall update you all as things progress, but we are especially in need of the help of those who have skills that would help us move forward to secure the future of our marvellous building. We need new Trustees to add to our number as well as those who are willing to take on some of the routine (but vital) paperwork and secretarial functions that inevitably arise. If you feel you, or anyone you know, who lives in the Alford Academy catchment area, might be interested becoming a Trustee we would be delighted to hear from you. Please get in touch with us at info@alfordheritagemuseum.com.

Whilst there have been several new volunteers over the past 12 months, we have also lost a few whose busy lives elsewhere meant any time commitment became too much. We always have plenty of jobs of all types, whether behind the scenes working to maintain the various collections or on the front desk during opening hours. If you would like to see what we do, and then decide if it is something which would interest you, we should be very glad to offer a chat and a wander round with one of our regulars.

As we have all seen the winter has been a very wet one. The Mart has suffered from the inevitable leaks with buckets dotted around to catch the drips. We had a major guttering problem with water

Alford and Donside Heritage Association (SCIO) SC050799

coming down an internal wall because of an overflow. The amount of rain was just too much for the building and we have lost a few items and had to re-think displays, but the volunteers have steadfastly refused to allow such set-backs to put off the weekly work of cataloguing items, re-arranging rooms and setting out a newly donated set of items as a major display - one that we feel will enhance the museum and provide a fascinating experience for visitors of all ages.

This is what Historic Environment Scotland has to say about our museum building:

“Alford Heritage Museum has been awarded Category “A” listed status by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in recognition of its special historic interest as a rare surviving example of an early 20th century livestock auction mart, and an important piece of Aberdeenshire's rural and agricultural heritage.”

The unfortunate fact is that the building was constructed in 1905 but never built for a life of nearly 125 years. We are fortunate that it has survived for so long, but it now requires large amounts of care and attention - and no small amounts of money to be spent on it! Our main concern is to secure the building and its contents for the future, but plans take time to develop when dealing with a fragile and “A” listed building.

On a lighter note - we are a heritage museum, and we thus focus on the past, but two quotes came to mind as I was writing this. The first was from a novel by LP Hartley: *“The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there”*. The second was from a slightly less serious source, The Vicar of Dibley, and a scene when a character says, *“There’s no time like the present”* and the retort from the choirmaster is *“Except the past. I rather liked that!”*

We can relate to both comments as we are the keepers of a vast array of items and information about this land called the past. And both comments are true, with many of our items and displays being foreign to the younger visitor but evoking some very strong memories from the past of the older visitor. Indeed, the word “memories” is the most used word in our comments book.

You can be assured that we are working hard on plans to secure the museum as a continuing asset to Alford and Donside and we are committed to do the best we can to involve the community in those plans. We are very grateful to our volunteers who give a great deal of their time and effort to work behind the scenes when the museum is closed as well as on the front desk when we are open. We would not exist without their hard work. Last, but by no means least, we are especially grateful to all the Members, Friends and Donors who support us from year to year and whose commitment we appreciate greatly. Your support is invaluable.

WHAT’S COMING IN 2024 ?

We will once again be organising a programme of events. These will all be promoted on our web site and social media so be sure to sign up for updates. Ticket bookings can be made via our website – www.alfordheritagemuseum.com. They will include:

Saturday 6 April Car Boot Sale 10-12 Entry free. Seller spaces £10.

Friday 17 May Friends’ evening and AGM 7-9

Due to circumstances beyond our control the Model Exhibition scheduled for Sun 14th April will not take place

Sunday 9 June Tractor Run

Sunday 23 June Summer Fair 12-4

Thursday 25 July Concert – Allan Taylor and Friends 7.30

Sunday 1 September Autumn Fair 12-4

ALFORD HERITAGE MUSEUM 2023 SPONSORSHIP



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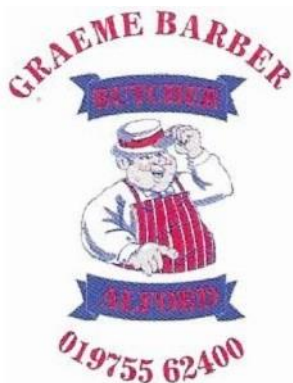
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 **Alford Landscaping**



JOHN P. DUNCAN

*Carpenter, Joiner,
Roof Tiler & Funeral Director*



Thank you