

A Message from the MNH Director

Dear Friend,

It's been a fascinating year here at MNH and there has been a wide range of very positive developments. At the heart of the organisation has been the establishment of a new Trust – with only 12 members compared to the previous 24. The new team have been learning the ropes, visiting our sites and landscapes, and getting to grips with the complexity of what they do. We now have a number of committees looking in depth at issues ranging from biodiversity to how we manage our collections. The Trust is also beginning to look at the forward programme of investment – whether that is in our buildings, lands or activities.

There's been a lot happening across our sites and I do hope that you have had the opportunity to enjoy some of the many activities taking place. During the year, I particularly enjoyed 'The Forgotten Kingdom Exhibition' at the Manx Museum, which featured the Lewis Chessmen on loan from the British Museum and the Chronicles of Mann from the British Library. This was followed with a great exhibition on John Miller Nicholson which was equally warmly received.

The iMuseum went on line worldwide; we "unlocked" Castle Rushen with our new Theatre group; we welcomed the Isle of Man Model Boats Club to Peel; the Peggy received a new support in preparation for forthcoming conservation works; and we let St Thomas's school "takeover" the museum! We are now planning ahead for next year – commemorating the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WW1 and celebrating the life and work of Archibald Knox.

The context for MNH and the new Trust is the most difficult trading environment we have had for years. The world-wide recession has meant that people have had less money to spend and they have been careful in their choice of holiday and day to day expenditure. We seem to be holding our own in terms of overall visitors and income but it is very challenging and some sites have been hard hit. You will have noticed more events and activities – particularly those aimed at families. Part of the reason for being more entrepreneurial is that the funding we receive from the Isle of Man Government has been further reduced. In total nearly 20% of that budget has gone in the last four years.

I continue to be amazed and impressed by the support we receive from the local community and from you, our Friends. The 'Unlocked' event at Castle Rushen in July for example engaged 80 volunteers. Most of our larger-scale events can only happen because of the work of FMNH members alongside our own staff team.

We also very gratefully received significant financial support from FMNH during the year. We agreed with the FMNH Committee that we would start to focus on support that really "makes a difference". So you funded most of the restoration of Quirk's Croft at Cregneash which will provide much needed educational facilities (and new toilets!). You paid for work at the House of Manannan which has provided new education facilities and which enabled us to establish a much requested café there. This is very much the model for the future as we will increasingly look to the Friends to support new initiatives.

In many people's eyes being a member of FMNH is being part of MNH. Our Trustees welcome the close relationship between the Friends and Manx National Heritage and continue to recognise your contribution to our work with exclusive events and discounts where we can afford them. But maybe my biggest recognition is the simplest one: saying "Thank you" for your help and support.

With my very best wishes,



Edmund Southworth
Director