

The Friends of
Manx National Heritage



**Members' Events List &
Volunteer Programme
2014/15**

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Chairman's Letter October 2014

Dear Member

This year has been another busy year for FMNH.

As I mentioned last year, our focus for acquisitions is on those things of importance rather than the merely desirable. We have continued this strategy this year. For example, the Friends have agreed to support the Peggy conservation facility with £50,000 (more details in the MNH Director's letter); we have agreed to support the landscape project at Castle Rushen (again more will be reported on this as the year goes on); and we have given £15,000 towards the restoration work on the Porch at the Grove.

I'm pleased to report that we have continued to expand the reciprocal benefits for members, which you have told us make being a member of FMNH really worthwhile. OPW (Office of Public Works) in the Republic of Ireland is the latest reciprocal that Nicola has signed up. In total, OPW looks after 780 sites in the Republic. Remember to take your membership card when visiting!

This year's events for members have seen a variety of interesting and fun functions. FMNH was once again involved with the Royal Marines Band concert at CRHS. It was another hugely successful and enjoyable evening, with the culmination being a workshop for children the next day. FMNH also recently hosted an evening with Eric Knowles (of the BBC's Antiques Roadshow fame) at the Manx Museum. A full house was given a fascinating talk by Eric on Archibald Knox, and afterwards members were able to have free valuations and opinions from Eric on artefacts they had brought along.

Thank you to all of you who filled in the survey earlier in the year. Although the results were not far from what we expected, we don't want to become complacent and we greatly value your input. In particular, we have listened to your feedback about more events for families and as a starter will be putting on "Breakfast with Santa" at the House of Manannan in December, giving children and the young at heart a chance to have fun, meet Santa and do a craft activity. All welcome!

Our volunteer programme continues to be unbelievably busy and the MNH Director has commented in his letter how much this work means to MNH. I can only wholeheartedly echo his comments.

I thank the FMNH Board of Directors for their continued efforts and support, and I thank our dedicated Officers for all that they do to make FMNH the success that it undoubtedly is. I also thank all of you – our members – for your contributions and support, however given.

Lastly I would like to pay tribute to Martin Moore who is standing down as a Director after 22 years on the Committee and Board. We are hugely indebted to him and words of thanks here are rather inadequate for all that he has done. We will miss his incredible depth of knowledge and wise counsel – but we are reassured that as life members he and Elaine will still be taking an active interest in all that we do.

Wishing you and your families an early Happy Christmas!

Yours sincerely,



Michael Fayle, Chairman

A Message from the MNH Director

Dear Friend

Making a Difference

I've been reflecting recently on this wonderful job of mine. I've been in post now for just over five years and even though I didn't actually celebrate the date with a cake, the anniversary caused me to look back at what we have achieved since I arrived. The question one asks – "Have I made a difference?" is always difficult to answer because so much of what we do on a day to day basis is done by others: by the specialist teams, the front of house staff and our volunteers. The fact that my arrival coincided with a substantial reduction in the resources available to MNH meant that some of the early changes were more about survival than taking the organisation forward quickly. I hope I've got the balance right though and played my part in making things better.

There are several areas I should highlight where there have been significant developments in the last year: our focus on understanding our audiences and their needs; a lively and dynamic public programme; and renewed emphasis on caring for the physical assets we are responsible for.

2014 was the first year that we had two major exhibitions running simultaneously at the House of Manannan and the Manx Museum. In their different ways "Celtic Style" and "This Terrible Ordeal" showed the significant contribution the Island has made to world affairs. Both exhibits have been well-received and have brought new audiences to our sites. One of the additional challenges we identified several years ago was the increasing desire of audiences to interact with us online. In response to that, both these exhibitions have been accompanied by significant investments in digital resources which have been done in partnership with UK and European agencies so that we can reach way beyond the shores of the Island.

One of the projects which had a high profile during the year is the Peggy, the oldest armed yacht in the world and one of the most notable items in our collections. As well as being one of our most special objects she is also one of the most difficult to look after. Over the past year we have installed her in a new cradle and excavated the dock she sits in to allow us to slide her out of the boathouse at the end of this season; and we are acquiring a building to put her in so she can be dried out, repaired and conserved over the next few years. The Friends have supported us every step of the way so far – not just financially but even helping clean the mud off the many finds discovered in the excavations of the boatyard.

The work on the Peggy was accompanied by the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan on the buildings that make up the Nautical Museum site. This plan will inform the way we maintain the structures but also help us think about how the Peggy will be housed when she returns to the site in due course. This is the second plan we have done (the first being Castle Rushen) and they are part of a new emphasis on improving the physical conditions of the heritage assets we hold on behalf of the community.

In many ways this last aspect is our biggest challenge because it takes time to plan and it absorbs significant amounts of money. You'll soon see scaffolding going up round the Laxey Wheel and at the Grove. It's a decade since the Laxey Wheel was last painted and

in an ideal world we would not leave it so long. But the money we get from Government is less than we really need and we have to spend it wisely and where it makes the most difference. The environment at the Grove has troubled us for many years and so we are focussing on getting the roof watertight first and we'll sort out the interior once it dries out. MNH owns a great deal of property and it's an uphill struggle to keep it all in a good state of repair. I'm pleased that the work we did last year on the roof of the West Tower at Castle Rushen has worked well and the walls are beginning to dry out. We used traditional materials and techniques and this is a good lesson for the future. Quirks Croft at Cregneash is far more visible. The new mortar and thatch is weathering nicely and I hope the Friends are rightly proud of their contribution to the village.

In the year ahead we will continue to talk to you, our Friends, to provide more opportunities for you to support the work of MNH. We hugely appreciate the support of volunteers and the financial support you already provide, but I will be needing to ask for even more as we continue to work to look after the many and significant items, buildings and lands in our care in the years ahead. Your support now is more important than it has ever been. Many thanks for all your hard work and support. MNH is an award-winning organisation at the heart of the Manx community and we simply couldn't do it without you. With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Edmund Southworth', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Edmund Southworth
Director