

KILMARTIN HOUSE TRUST NEWS

2002 saw the fifth anniversary of the opening of the museum. This was celebrated with activities on the lawn including pottery, jewellery-making and basket weaving. Free entry and an evening party combined to make it a memorable day. Visitors will notice a drystone beehive hut constructed by Cyril Mordenti in the grounds. This is a replica of a 1st Millennium monastic cell. The final tranche of Heritage Lottery Fund money was spent and the house now looks wonderful! A revamped website was launched in January 2003 (www.kilmartin.org) and new features include faster loading, easier navigation around the site and a fully stocked online shop.

February saw a special temporary exhibition of the Benderloch cremation urn researched and staged by Deborah Long. This was the first public showing of the urn since its discovery in September 1996. Sadly, it had to be returned to its owners, Argyll & Bute Museums and Libraries Service, in April, but there are plans for a longer-term loan.

A major success during the year was the successful persuasion of the Treasure Trove Panel to change its mind over its recommendation as to where the fragment of the Kilbride cross should be housed. This was due in large measure to the public support received on this matter. We now await the decision of the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer and hope that the fragment will be lodged at Kilmartin.

Anne Wilson joined the Trust on a part-time contract to run the EU funded Culture 2000 *First Millennium Project*. With partners in Co. Mayo, and Norway, this project presents the similarities and diversities of ancient and cultural landscapes of three highly significant yet peripheral locations (Croagh Patrick, Lofotr and Kilmartin). These sites have an abundance of archaeological monuments and were major centres of power and influence over several centuries. The project will relate the histories of these three nations through the use of interactive and wide-reaching media including travelling bilingual exhibitions in each country, thematic workshops, a guide book to accompany the exhibition, a website and CD-ROM/DVD virtual landscape journeys. The local communities of each partner area will be the principal beneficiaries of the project and will be directly involved in its development.

In a continued and determined effort to reduce reliance on increasing visitor numbers, the Trust and Trading Company have been developing the Kilmartin House product portfolio. A second edition of *The Horsieman* by veteran storyteller Duncan Williamson has been published in association with Birlinn. Thirty years of the travelling way of life in Scotland are recounted with wit and affection. The ADAPT Trust and Garfield Weston Foundation generously sponsored the production of a museum audio guide. The project was designed to provide access technology for the visually impaired and enhance the sensory experience for other groups on and off site, and includes extracts from

Kilmartin Sessions ancient music collection. CDs and personal players are available on loan. Publications planned for 2003 include a pocket guide to walks in the area, a Kilmartin House Café Recipe Book and another joint publication with Birlinn, *Lost Argyll* – a look at changing landscapes and lifestyles. The Trust now has an agent in the USA to identify and exploit emerging markets for our merchandise, and expects sales in North America to increase considerably in 2003.

Free public internet access was introduced to Kilmartin House in December 2002. The Scottish Executive, in fulfilment of its Open Scotland campaign to have public internet resources throughout the country, supplied four high specification workstations with free connection. Soon it is hoped to provide user guides suggesting links to websites developed for archaeology, history, Celtic studies, environmental science and genealogy.

An appeal has been launched to develop a new audio-visual show to replace the ageing *Valley of Ghosts*, maintenance of which is becoming expensive. This project is estimated to cost around £100,000 and the Trust hopes to engage members of the original production team in it.

Artist in Residence, Renny Nisbet, unveiled a new feature in the grounds – an interactive solar sculpture, drawing on research into archaeo-astronomy and the relationship of nearby sites to astronomical activity. New work, including a further sculpture is planned for the Glebe field.

The world-famous *Wildfood Café* received three accolades from Scotland's food grading scheme. Light refreshments and meals were served to over 25,000 people in 2002, many of them regular visitors - including your Editor and his work colleagues, whenever the opportunity arose during field excursions!

Education and access are important functions of Kilmartin House and the return of Georgia Crook from maternity leave in October 2002 has given these activities renewed impetus. During the summer of 2003, the prestigious *Plantweave* exhibition from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh will visit. Georgia is keen to hear from anyone who would like to get involved with the Education Programme e.g. offering to help with guided walks or perhaps giving talks. The Trust is keen to offer its premises as a venue for meetings and the Marion Campbell Library is a resource for all. Contact Georgia on 01546 510278 or e-mail: georgia@kilmartin.org. Contact David Adams McGilp if you think you can help with marketing or community development.

The bookshop now has an excellent selection of publications, music, exclusive jewellery, stone carvings, specially commissioned ceramics, fine art prints and traditional musical instruments. The centre is a great attraction all year round, and those cakes and coffee....hmmmm!