

Curator's Report 27th July 2022

Building and Grounds

Thanks to Willie Macrae for continuing to keep the grass under control in the outdoor museum. Alison Higham has been in touch with Roy about landscaping plans, which will be best undertaken later in the year.

A repair was required to the cistern of one of the female public toilets on the first floor and Rob Mackay was asked to undertake this.

Collections

The audit of book locations in the library is ongoing.

The process of appraising, cataloguing and boxing the backlog of archival materials continues.

Sofie Banister has been recruited as a Volunteer Collections Assistant and will help out one day a week (Wednesdays). Sofie has an archaeology qualification so has some experience of handling and conserving objects. I am currently training Sofie to catalogue and use Adlib. This is a good opportunity to revisit Spectrum procedures and ensure we are following good practice in the run up to accreditation.

I attended a demonstration of Modes documentation system as part of the process of rating systems as a potential replacement to Adlib/Axiell Collections. It may make sense to hold off reviewing our Documentation Policy, Plan and Procedures until a new system has been selected.

Museums Galleries Scotland has published its new schedule for accreditation.

<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/accreditation-recognition/accreditation-returns-schedule/> We will be invited in August 2023 to submit our return by February 2024.

Interpretation and Displays

The ship model (herring ring netter) donated by Graeme Forbes has been added to our fishing display in the case kindly funded by Graeme and with a label. A new label has been produced for the prehistory display case which amends text based on the findings of research by Dr Alison Sheridan during her work on the SCARF framework (Neolithic). This label cannot be placed in the case until a representative from National Museums Scotland attends. Fortunately, they are planning to visit in early August to insert wifi dataloggers in the three display cases where their loans are housed.

Pauline has produced a condensed version of the visitor guide, which I have edited and sent to volunteers for translation.

With help from Rachael, I am working on the design of the 'taigh-ceilidh' or 'Room for Stories' for the forthcoming exhibition in September. We have a small amount of funding for this from VisitScotland and have managed to borrow a lot of the props we require.

I have arranged to borrow some materials from the Highlander Museum at Fort George for research and display during the Finlay Mackinnon exhibition next year. This exhibition is coming along well thanks to Pauline's work on the content. We are working on a design that reduces the amount of resources we require as much as possible.

Professional Development and Training

My application to join the board of Museums Galleries Scotland was unsuccessful in the face of an exceptionally high response to their recruitment campaign – both in terms of quality and number.

I attended a board meeting for Dornoch Historylinks, as their museum mentor.

I attended a talk by Dr Michael S. Newton of St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia on the Scottish Gaelic Storytelling Tradition in the Highlands and the Nova Scotian Diaspora.

Projects

We had a disappointing response in our search for a new Gaelic Development Officer. Only one candidate applied. Although the application was strong and the candidate interviewed well, it was the unanimous opinion of the panel that the candidate was not the right person for the job. Bòrd na Gàidhlig, who are the main funder and were represented on the interview panel, have encouraged us to tweak the application and readvertise. In the meantime, we have lodged an application with the MGS small projects fund (via Highland Museum of Childhood) to cover the travel and accommodation costs of this post which, if successful, would reduce the Museum's financial contribution to the project.

The Scottish Herring Hunt website (created by Napier University) will be launched in the museum on 4th August and be linked to the museum website (Explore). I am working on an area dedicated to the West Coast/Gairloch herring fishing for the Museum from Home section of our website within which to locate this link.

Work has commenced on the 'Museum of the Highlands' - the new name for the Museums Heritage Highland Digital Hub. I am compiling a list of thirty objects from our collection which will be digitised for virtual display within a range of preselected themes. If anyone is interested in getting involved with this and making suggestions, let me know and I will circulate the themes.

I attended a workshop for the Art Fund Exhibitions Network. This project aims to create networks of museums collaborating on the creation and sharing of temporary exhibitions in an environmentally sustainable way. Art Fund are applying to the Lottery for funding. If successful, there will be opportunities for us to be involved.

Miscellaneous

I have applied for a place at the Museums Showcase run by the Scottish Museums Federation at the Museums Association annual conference in Edinburgh in November. If successful, myself and Jen would need to attend on that date. Funding has been requested.

Karen Buchanan (Curator)
