

## Curator's Report 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021

### ***Building and Grounds***

The alterations to the vents seem to be working. Despite strong winds, the temperature in the rooms affected seems to be stable.

I have not yet had time to investigate a full fibre internet service and costings. I will try to provide this for the next board meeting.

Alison and John Higham are willing to get involved with the landscaping of the outdoor museum and I have put Roy in touch with her to talk about what is required.

Nicky Ellakirk is still waiting to hear back from the MOD about the parking request.

### ***Collections***

Our sound collection has returned from National Library of Scotland. They will also post up a removable hard drive for us to keep, which contains all of the digital files, the metadata and any rights information.

We have had a number of donations including joiners tools, archival and library material and some lovely photographs of Gairloch in 1950.

I have submitted a paper for discussion and to feed into the rewrite of our Collections Development Policy.

An application was submitted for the cost of conserving the Finlay Mackinnon album.

During the dig on roundhouse 10, and with the help of volunteers, I have cleaned and catalogued the finds. These will be accessioned as an assemblage, as will last year's finds, which have been returned to us. Lithics expert, Dr Steph Piper, has examined these finds as well as those from the We Digs project and identified which are worked. As a result, some objects have been moved from the handling and display collection to the artefact collection, and others have been disposed of.

A rationalisation exercise was carried out on a box of rusted iron objects that had not yet been unpacked since the decant. As a result of this, a number of objects were disposed of with Chair's action. A list will be provided to Pauline for the minutes.

We continue to receive a lot of archive enquiries and Dorothy's help has been sorely missed with these. Once she can drive again, she will return to help.

### ***Interpretation and Displays***

David Fingland (Service Graphics) is now proposing to take away the top of the fishing panel from the outdoor museum and have it recovered. He will do this over the winter.

A visit was made to the Chapel of Sand of Udrigle with Tom Gardner of Historic Scotland. The outcomes of this meeting can be found at the end of this report. Thanks to Jean and Anne for attending and writing up notes.

We have received a donation of £25,000 towards funding a series of temporary exhibitions in partnership with some other Highland Museums over the next five years.

### ***Education and Training***

I attended the following training and professional development events since the last board meeting:

Round the World in Knitted Textiles (Fleece to Fashion Project Glasgow University), 15/10/21

An Stòras Dualchas – Heritage, tourism and building the wealth of our Highland communities and exploring community generated perspectives on landscape, heritage and the impact of tourism along the NC500, 06/10/21

Launch of Highland Regional ScARF, 29/09/21

Searching for the ice age pioneers: Excavations at Rubha Port an t-Seilich, Isle of Islay, Scotland by Professor Steve Mithen (The Society of Antiquaries of London), 06/10/21

Pioneering Spirit – still digging and Whisky - friend or foe in Gaelic tradition?, 07/10/21

I continue to attend the Museums Heritage Highland organised Heritage Cafes on behalf of the Museum.

### ***Events and Outreach***

Mark Macleod will report on the events and activities programme. A full list of events is on our website.

## *Projects*

Following correspondence with ward manager Dot Ferguson, I met with Doug Miles of Highland Council to discuss the William Ross memorial panel. We propose to place an interpretation panel on the grass verge outside the burial ground wall to the left of the gate. HC have already given permission for this, and it is outside the listed area. On this panel, we would propose to have information about William Ross and his connections to Skye and Gairloch. Within the burial ground, we propose to put a plaque next to the William Ross memorial - on the west side where there is currently no inscription. On this would be inscribed the alternative Gaelic text that the Gaelic Society of Inverness had initially proposed to engrave on the stone. This should be a self supporting structure such as the one in this image, which is a marble plaque, resting on a concrete angled plinth. In this way we can avoid having to disturb the soil (which would require an expensive archaeological watching brief) and leaning against the current memorial, which is not advisable. Doug Miles is happy with both these arrangements and has offer to assist me in submitting the application to HC for consent. I have informed Murdo Beaton about this and asked him to get back to me with agreement, and a design for the stone plaque in the graveyard. He is going to take it up with the Urras trustees and Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis.

*Karen Buchanan (Curator)*

### Site Meeting at Chapel of Sand , Udrigle 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 5.30p.m.

**Aim of meeting:** to discuss the processes required in erecting a replacement information board re the history of the chapel.

**Present:** Tom Gardner - HES, Katie Walker - Archaeologist, Dr Karen Buchanan – Curator Gairloch Museum, Anne MacLennan, Jean Ross – Gairloch Museum Board members.

### **Items discussed:**

1. **Siting of board** – present board is within area requiring SMC so there are two options.  
A. to replace board on current site will require SMC. B. If new board is sited outside designated area SMC not required.
2. **Content on board** – new board will have script very similar to previous board. We agreed to include input from HES stating that the chapel is a historic monument and warning that any acts of vandalism against it would be in breach of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, which could incur legal action. Also

agreed to include information that it is supported by Gairloch Museum and directions to the museum for further information on local history. Discussed possibility of adding an aerial photograph of the site onto the board. Tom to liaise with Karen re possible supply of an image and permissions for such. Start with CANMORE. When we have an idea of what image(s) we would like Tom can put us in touch with the HES Archives team to discuss. There may be a cost for the use of certain images.

### **Design of Plinth and HES requirements re construction of such.**

#### **Three options to consider:**

- i. Replace like for like with wooden posts - as this would incur excavation deep into the ground, an archaeologist would need to be present.
- ii. Cut off wooden posts on present sign at ground level and construct a concrete plinth to sit on the ground. This would require the ground to be de-turfed but no deep excavation so likely no need for an archaeologist to be present.
- iii. Discussed possibility of building the plinth with local stone to make it more aesthetically pleasing and to make it fit well with its surroundings. Karen offered to contact Doug Miles to see if Brian Wilson may be able to do this job while he is repairing the cemetery wall.

The recommendation is for a free-standing plinth built from local stone (maybe in gabion basket?) with current posts cut at ground level. If this could be built without deturfing that would be even better, but the engineer may require a solid and secure base, so we could discuss deturfing. All of the above would require Scheduled Monument Consent.

**Any other concerns:** there is a tree growing out of the top of the gable of the chapel. Tom advised cutting the tree at its base as it is still quite small and this will suffice to stop its growth. Karen offered to speak to Doug Miles to ask if this task could be completed by the Council's ground