

Curator's report April 2024

New acquisitions

I have collected the Treasure Trove assemblage of Bronze Age finds from Shieldaig. The assemblage contains cremated Bronze Age human remains and two whetstones. I will repack the finds bags containing the cremated remains to ensure we comply with the ethical standards and guidance around storage of human remains.

A watercolour of the Old Inn, Gairloch, was left at the museum for identification and potential donation. I have made enquiries into the age and make of the frame (Dublin-based company). We are also establishing whether the sketch could be attributed to Finlay Mackinnon.

Transfer of the items relating to Reverend David Macdonald from Perth is still pending. The objects are:

- fishing reel
- commonplace book
- note book
- fly book
- archival document

An album of photographs related to Gairloch and diary was added to our collections.

Allan and I will meet with a donor to receive a donation of World War One memorabilia.

John Mackenzie has offered me access to his personal archive following his visit to GM as part of Collection Connections, which I will take up as soon as time allows.

Loans

Loan renewal will be sought from the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum for the naval officer's uniform.

Care and Conservation

I have re-charged the NMS environmental loggers on video call with their team. Our new loggers are working well. The environmental conditions are within the set parameters, with the exception of the library RH, which is slightly high. I recommend keeping the wall heater on permanently for the moment to lower the RH.

IPM – no concerns.

The Spring Clean was completed by Fran, Jean, Anne, Sofie and myself.

Sofie is currently completing a condition check of the collections store to ensure we keep on top of our programmes of collections care.

I delivered a Salvage Training session to our group of Salvage volunteers including a walk-round of the galleries and stores to locate our Priority objects. This training will be repeated on an annual basis and is part of our Accreditation requirements.

Projects

We have 5 remote Marketing Volunteers that we work with. The volunteers are feeding into social media engagement, promotion of our temporary exhibitions (including an interview with Celia Garbutt, which was very well received by the artist) and creation of a gallery-tour on Smartify.

Inverness Castle Exhibition – I attended a meeting to talk through the 3D scanning of 3 objects from our collections which will feature in the new Inverness Castle Experience display. The display is intended as a gateway to other Highland museums and their collections, and will be an opportunity for us to promote our collection and gain more visits.

Business Plan – Gordon, Pete and I met twice to start reviewing the 2016 business plan.

Smartify – I arranged training for the Smartify app for our Front of House team. A Smartify banner is set up behind the Welcome Desk, and the main GM Smartify page can be accessed by visitors via the QR code displayed on the banner. Smartify content is intended to add to the visitor experience, offering further ways to engage with the collections, and providing added value for money.

Gaelic course convener: The deadline for applications for the Gaelic conversation group convener was extended to 29/04, but to date, no applications were received. Our next step of action will be to re-advertise a remote post. Anna will submit suggestions for potential candidates.

Funding

We were awarded £4k from the Hugh Fraser Foundation for the Whatever the Weather group. We are still looking for an additional £2k of match funding. A [press release](#) was issued announcing our funding success and continuation of the group.

Celtman – David has visited the museum to take measurements for the new sign. The sign and vinyl for the front desk will be produced and arrive in the next couple of weeks with instructions for mounting.

BnG funding for GDO scheme- see Anna's report.

MGS funding application – see E&O minutes.

Council funding - We completed the SPI report for 2023 – quarterly submission of figures is a requirement for Council funding. We engaged with 2,187 people as part of our events, groups and outreach (Apr 23 – Apr 24) and dealt with 57 public enquires related to our collections. Note: details are needed from Audit Scotland to put these figures into context.

I explored participation in an ArtFund funded project that supports Early Years Learning. My current focus is the MGS application. However, if time allows I will look further into this. I have been in touch with the Programmes Manager to discuss participation and noted potential interest.

Events

The 'Collection Connections' programme has finished with 10 sessions run in total and average of 10 attendees per session. The sessions were extremely beneficial for myself, in terms of getting to know the collections, the research available, as well as archive material. It was also good to spend more time with our volunteers. Comments from attendees were positive, appreciating the opportunity to see the stores and look through our archive. Thank you to all who attended sessions and contributed!

Enquiries

Genealogy enquiries have picked up with 9 separate enquiries related to family history in the past month. We have drafted a standard line to send to enquirers to suggest making a donation to support our genealogy work. I would suggest including this wording on the website as well.

I am facilitating two research sessions for our archives: one with an author interested in our textile collection and Gairloch Pattern, supporting her research into Highland knitting. Another one with Jessica Potter who is looking at our Gaelic collections (oral history and place names), to create artwork and a project engaging with the High School next summer.

Networking

I met with Jess Carnegie, community engagement officer for NTS, to talk through our community engagement and possible partnerships. Jess agreed to share any relevant research and toolkits from the evaluations and engagement that NTS will perform in 2024 with myself.

I continue to attend the virtual MHH networking café meets.

I met with Louise Pearson from Wester Ross Biosphere to discuss their evaluation of the Dark Skies Festival to aid with our MGS application.

Climate Change

Working with Isabel and Anne, we have finalised a Climate Change action plan for the Museum – Board sign off requested. The Climate pilot project has now come to an end and relevant toolkits will be shared with museums in the coming month.

Events

We advertised three Easter Workshops, one of which at a higher price-point (an artist-led session) had to be cancelled due to lack of bookings; a family workshop during the first week of the Easter break which was oversubscribed, with 14 children attending and a second family workshop during the second week which was attended by only 2 children.