

Curator's Report 11th November 2020

Building and Grounds

I have had no update on the ventilation and heating issues but have emailed LDN to enquire about progress.

The foghorn seems to have now been painted with another undercoat and at least one top coat. I was not here when the painter came and am trying to find out exactly what work was done.

I believe the utilities issues have now been resolved. The meter is connected to the internet and sending an automatic reading. We are in credit to SSE. EDF Energy have cancelled the debt they claimed we owed them.

We have a new sign on the opposite of the road, which was installed by Willie Macrae and helpers. It was funded by Art Fund. The Art Fund MOTY plaque was kindly installed on the exterior of the building by a volunteer who is new to the community.

A container has been placed in the rear corner of the premises. It is for the use of large objects and should be treated as a museum store. It is kept locked and keys are with me.

Collections

Two large objects require to be moved into the aforementioned container when we can organise it and the weather is dry.

We have had a number of interesting accessions, including the Mellon Udrigle school log book and register. An accession backlog has built up in the period since furlough ended due to pressure of other activities. This is now a priority. There is still an enormous amount of work to be done in the library and archive. This must take priority as far as collections work goes over the next couple of years.

Archive enquiries increased in number due to our raised profile as MOTY. Dorothy has been doing a great job fielding these.

Interpretation and Displays

The Interpretation Team will need to meet to discuss the forthcoming interpretation projects for the café and the outdoor museum. [Action]

Towards the end of the month, some of our Gairloch pattern objects will be mounted and photographed as part of an online exhibition of Highland Costume named 'Highland Threads'.

It has been necessary to remount some aspects of the Munros exhibition, which is providing popular. Additional wires and hooks have been procured for the hanging system in the downstairs exhibition space.

Education and Training

I have attended virtual training events in the following topics:

- Supporting remote and virtual learning
- Creative confidence
- I am also participating in the MHH Heritage Cafes every fortnight to keep in touch with the other Highland Museums.
- Communicating Heritage with Digital Audio Participation
- Introduction to Google for Nonprofits
- Using Technology to Aid Visitor Experience in the age of Covid

I attended some sessions of the Museums Association annual conference (World Turned Upside Down) and presented a virtual tour of Gairloch Museum as the first event of the conference. It was attended by around 50 museum professionals who were very kind with their feedback.

Funding

Our application to the MGS Recovery and Resilience Fund was successful. We will shortly produce a press release to announce this and the Art Fund R&R award.

Events

We held a very successful week of online events after the announcement of the MOTY award. This included a live archaeological dig, run by Tom Gardner with volunteers from the local community. Thanks to Jeremy who was on site for the museum every day during the dig.

Jeremy also gave a talk during the week on his book 'Escaping Isolation' which was attended by more than 70 people. An online talk by Andy Drummond on his new book 'A Quite Impossible Proposal' was attended by 45 people. Our next online event will be on 1st December and we already have around 20 people signed up.

We now have the funds to appoint an Events and Outreach Coordinator (freelance)

and will advertise this as soon as possible.

Marketing and Promotion

Our social media platforms have been heavily subscribed in the wake of the MOTY announcement. We need to be responsive to this activity and Eilidh Smith has continued to support our social media activity since the MOTY announcement. The board should discuss how long this can be funded. There is an argument that this has become an essential role, particularly as we go into deeper lockdown and winter hours when our face to face contact with our audiences diminishes. [Action]

We have set up a YouTube channel which we are gradually populating with film content. The media attention from MOTY was outstanding and I have circulated to board members a summary of this. As well as the award, the Gille Dubh received attention in the Scottish press. There have been some follow up magazine publications for example in the arts section of The Tablet and Homes & Antiques magazine.

I have requested that the Front of House staff ensure that our opening hours are up to date on the various platforms where they are advertised (Google, Tripadvisor, Facebook etc.). The more often we change these, the more of a task it becomes.

We have had a good presence in the G&DT recently. Jeanette Whitaker continues to assist with setting out the page and forwarding it to Kevin McGinty.

Miscellaneous

I have emailed all our members and funders about the MOTY award and thanked them for their involvement.

We have been approached by FilmG to work with them on a Gaelic language film for their next competition.

I have been dealing with the complex copyright issues surrounding the Gille Dubh animation and stills as we have had requests from inter alia BBC Alba to use the Gaelic language version in their schedule.

I have written a blog at the request of AIM for their next newsletter on what our MOTY win means to us.

I have been in discussion with Nevis about how to make the work he is doing on

digitising Roy Wentworth's place names research. This might form the basis of an *aic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd* application.

With assistance from Jim, Nevis and Pauline I have been working to update the website. Nevis has written a piece on Roy Wentworth's research and Pauline on the history of the AAOR. We also now have selected clips from John English's film visible on our website. Sound files from the listening posts will follow.

Karen Buchanan (Curator)