

Curator's Report 24th February 2021

Building and Grounds

Simpson Builders have not yet been in touch to arrange installation of the equipment for the exterior alterations to the ventilation system in the library and activity room. I have reminded them.

A fibre internet connection is to be installed to the museum building. This is part of a wider government initiative to deliver the "Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme (RGCP)". The project in particular focuses specifically on Capita's SWAN members (e.g. UHI). The aim is to deliver fibre to selected SWAN customer sites using Openreach "Full Fibre Infrastructure Build (FFIB)". Installation is for the benefit of UHI but we will be able to place an order for Fibre to the Premises, should we wish to. This would give us ultrafast broadband of at least 100mbps. I am exploring the monthly cost of upgrading our connection and will be speaking to Alex Gray about the opportunities for savings on phone lines and calls.

Collections

Since the last board meeting, I have been concentrating collections work on accessioning the backlog of images, many of which are born digital.

Rachael Thomas has picked up a task which had previously been started prior to lockdown and is making great progress with it. She is checking the paper records for our image collection against those on Adlib and other locations, making sure that we have all of the information in the one place. Once this is done, the paper records can be scanned, backed up and disposed of to save space.

Interpretation and Displays

Concept and content have been submitted to David Campbell for the café and for two of the outdoor panels. Work continues on the remaining panels.

I will need assistance to move a heavy wooden roller to the upper floor of the museum into the display area.

Thought is being given as to which of the objects located at the outside rear of the building might be moved to the outdoor museum across the road.

The task of linking up our Raspberry Shake seismometer to a computer or display in the museum is proving very difficult but we are persevering.

Education and Training

I have attended virtual training events in the following topics:

- Grand Tour of West Highland Museum's Top 100 Objects
- Collecting the Troubles and Beyond

I attended a networking meeting of Scotland's Sounds project, where some of our sound recordings were played.

I was a speaker at an event run by University of Glasgow for students wanting to work in the creative and cultural industries.

I have been attending regular Heritage Cafes run by Museums Heritage Highland

Events

Mark Macleod has been doing a super job as Events and Outreach Coordinator (freelance). There are a good number of events in the calendar and new opportunities are arising all the time. Mark has organised our events and outreach activities into a spreadsheet so that Eilidh and I have access to the status of each activity. Eilidh is doing a great job keeping the marketing and social media activity current.

We have two talks lined up for March.

Marketing and Promotion

I would like to stress the importance of ensuring that our opening hours are up to date on the various platforms where they are advertised (Google, Tripadvisor, Facebook etc.). I trust the new Front of House team will take this on board. It is time consuming when our hours are changing so often - but important.

Projects

I have lodged an expression of interest to the Collections Trust for a project called Make it FAIR which would provide us with assistance and funding to create digital content around our collections.

Along with the Cultural Heritage Group of the Wester Ross Biosphere, I have lodged an expression of interest for the Climate Beacons for COP26 initiative. As part of this project, we would work together with the Biosphere, acting as a venue for activities and providing public engagement expertise while the climate partner (Biosphere) provides technical expertise and knowledge networks. There will be six beacons across Scotland and funding available for this activity.

A series of meetings with Diane Pennington, Course Director, MSc/PgDip Information & Library Studies at University of Strathclyde, has led to three different student projects to take place this summer. One group will build an online, interactive route around our parish through which cultural heritage stories and resources from our collection can be accessed. Two individual students will work on our website, reorganising the 'Research' tab and showcasing selected content from our archives to provide the facility and incentive for users to dig deeper.

We have been asked to create a virtual tour for XpoNorth's Heritage Show and Tell project. Mark has storyboarded this and I am working on getting it filmed.

There is quite a lot of work to be done creating digital content for the Highland Threads online Exhibition, which launches on 1st April. We plan to create a podcast, writing a knitting pattern, host a knitting workshop and perhaps a knit-along. There will also be content on our website.

Sadie Paige and Mark have obtained funding for and are organising an Open Weave event. We are one of three projects to receive sponsorship from Weaver's Bazaar for this event. Drawing inspiration from the North West Highlands of Scotland's tradition of wool production and domestic weaving, Open Weave will engage the wider community to actively participate in Tapestry Weaving and aims to open up Tapestry Weaving to a new group of people of all ages. Referencing the design of woven items in the Museum's collection, members of the community will be invited to weave a small tapestry (8 cm x 8 cm) at home (using a kit of materials sent to them), the Tapestry will be returned to the Museum. The target is 100 mini tapestries for a curated (possibly virtual) display on Gairloch Museum's web site and other social media sites, and then, when the Museum opens again, the display will be free to visitors. Weaversbazaar has contributed materials and a small grant.

We are working on an article with LDN for The Modernist Magazine, a limited edition journal which offers unique perspectives on 20th-century architecture and design. The theme of the issue is Killer and the article will showcase our building as the conversion of a bunker and abandoned space into a thriving award-winning visitor attraction.

Karen Buchanan (Curator)