

Curator's Report 26 May 2021

Building and Grounds

Peter MacIlhenny visited the Museum in mid-May and reported that LDN would provide a solution to the vents in the absence of any progress from Irons Foulner. David Lawrie has prepared a sketch of a proposal for partially infilling the vents and baffling the inflow of air. LDN are reviewing this with Stuart Macpherson of Irons Foulner and will then forward an updated sketch to Gordon Simpson to progress the actual installation. LDN will keep us informed.

I have contacted Zen a couple of times recently about upgrading our broadband connection. Fibre to the premises is still not showing as being available to our premises so I have emailed the Openreach person who organised the installation and asked him how we can speed this up. In the meantime, the cost of packages has changed. As far as I can tell from the Zen website, we can now get the FTTP connection at a cost of £50 per month (with no activation charge on a 2 year contract) including line rental. We would also still have to pay £17 per month for the other phone line. So this would work out at £67 per month, a little cheaper than the previous quote.

We seem to be generating too much waste for our current bins and I have asked FOH to look into ordering a second blue bin.

Admin

I ordered a new computer for Front of House which Alex Gray installed and I set up. FOH staff now share two computers, both of which are set up with Microsoft Office 365 account so that files can be accessed from any computer.

I have set up a new email address for the café which is cafe@gairlochmuseum.org

Alex Gray advises that we should be UPS protecting the data rack in the plant room and I have asked for a cost estimate for this.

Collections

The album of Finlay Mackinnon watercolours has been examined by Richard Aitken, who is the Conservator at the Highland Archive Centre. He has provided a quote for refurbishing the album, to include cleaning, paper repairs and re-sewing of the album and refurbishment of the cover. The cost would be £1,4000. Digitising would cost an additional £230. The album is still at the Highland Archive Centre and Richard is awaiting an answer on whether

we wish to go ahead with this work.

I returned a loan object to Highland Folk Museum, which had inadvertently been retained since 1977.

The altar and stable have been moved to the storage container. A number of other large and heavy objects have also been moved to the container, creating more space in the artefact store. Thanks to Rachael Thomas, Willie Macrae and Robbie Taylor for helping with this.

Interpretation and Displays

Café panels have been installed and I think the overall appearance of the café is great. I am working on an explanation of the panels for our website and for the information of café visitors.

The interpretation panels for the Outdoor Museum have been delivered, but not yet installed. We are still waiting for a visit from the HC Planning Officer before moving some objects to the Outdoor Museum across the road.

We had a visit from a gentleman who has sent some advice on checking the Raspberry Pi's connection to the network and Alex Gray is going to take a look at this.

Education and Training

Since the last board meeting, I have attended the following events:

- Highland Threads specialist textile workshops on C18th dress and Pictish key patterns
- Advice and Networking session for Accreditation Mentors
- Portable Art: Scotland's Carved Stone Balls
- Digital Preservation of Facebook

Eilidh and I recorded a 'Visual Showcase' on our MOTY win for the XpoNorth conference, which will be broadcast in mid-June.

I recorded an interview with Marta C. Lourenço (Chair of UMAC, the Committee for University Museums and Collections of ICOM) for the Unesco Best in Heritage conference. This will be made public on the conference website at the end of May.

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

Events and Outreach

There are a wealth of activities taking place and in the pipeline including:

- Openweave
- Gairloch pattern knitalong
- Gaelic plant name workshops
- Serialisation of the story of the Finlay Mackinnon album
- Shiant Islands Festival
- Highland Archaeology Festival
- Digital content for the website on a number of topics (roundhouses, islands, bards, local plant names, travellers in the Gairloch area).

We are also working on the final list of equipment that will be purchased with funding from MGS and Art Fund to allow us to fit out our Activity Room for broadcasting events.

Projects

The Wester Ross Biosphere was unsuccessful in its application (of which we were part) to act as a climate beacon for COP26.

I have still to complete the virtual tour for XpoNorth's Heritage Show and Tell project. Mark has storyboarded this and I am working on getting it filmed.

Rebecca Draus is an MSc student at University of Strathclyde, who will be helping us take a user-centred approach to designing webpages about the Gaelic resources in our archive as part of her dissertation.

The Highland Pictish Trail is due to be launched soon and we will receive a plaque to inform visitors about the trail and our stone, as well as new leaflets.

Karen Buchanan (Curator)