

Stromness Museum Annual General Meeting

24th November 2020 Curatorial Report

This has been a very different year for everyone. The museum closed to the public on the 20th March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and only partially reopened on the 13th August with reduced capacity. This had a serious impact on our ability to deliver the CDT planned programme of work. All events were either cancelled or moved online. The summer exhibition “Distant Shores: Orkney to Oceania” was not installed until July and will now run to 31 October 2021 to allow visitors to see it.

The Malagan project has progressed slowly with a new case now installed upstairs and the conservation work completed on the two Malagans undertaken by Will Murray of the Scottish Conservation Studio in September. The events programme which was planned for this summer to highlight the arrival of the Malagans on long term loan from The Orkney Museum has been postponed until next summer. This project is funded by The Headley Trust, The Hugh Frazer Foundation and Cooke Aquaculture. They have agreed an extension so this project can run in 2021. The outreach work will be advertised in March and undertaken on a freelance basis.

The redisplay of the German case was also put on hold and could not be completed before the end of the project. This was funded by MGS and HLF with a deadline of 30th November. Work to install the new boards and redisplay the German Fleet collection was completed at the beginning of November.

The 3 year CDT project came to an end on the 15 June. Siobhan has been kept on as Collections Manager until the end of the year but the aspiration to find funding to keep on the other CDT staff was dashed due to COVID-19 as all funding streams stopped. These will be picked up again once things start to open up. However, Janette Park has resumed her role as Honorary Curator and both Katy and Norna are volunteering with the collections, working on the Malagan project, German Fleet redisplay and contributing towards funding applications.

Inventory and audit of the collections leading towards applying to become a recognised collection:

The inventory and audit was approximately 95% complete when work was stopped due to COVID-19.

Social media and website:

We have continued to develop high-quality social media and web content.

During lockdown, and following, live events were cancelled and moved online. Responding to this, we shared videos of the keynotes and other talks from our conference *Scapa 100: The Orkney Story* on our YouTube channel and Facebook page.

We also created a Top 10 series. This series highlighted objects from the collection in 3-minute narrated videos. Objects featured included John Rae's octant, scrimshaws and Franklin's Arctic medal. The series (and Scapa 100 talks) can be viewed here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjaYnS8PIEiIA5jlnCGpSww?view_as=subscriber

We also contributed to Twitter events and hashtags including Museums Unlocked which shared collections on daily themes throughout lockdown. In June we nominated Buddo for the new Highland Objects Podcast. Ten objects were nominated from across the Highlands and Islands and a public vote to decide which objects would feature in the first few episodes followed – Buddo came third in the vote. Antonia Thomas (Trustee) and Siobhan Cooke-Miller (Collections Manager), recorded a 10-minute podcast. You can listen and download the podcast here: <https://highlandobjects.podbean.com/e/buddo-the-whalebone-figure-podcast-three/>

We were invited to nominate another object – John Rae's fiddle has been selected and voting is now open. You can cast your vote here:

<https://highlandobjects.wordpress.com/2020/11/18/john-raes-fiddle/>

The online collections catalogue was complete as per CDT Project deadline – all accessioned objects can now be viewed on our website www.stromnessmuseum.org.uk/collections Photographs of the collection taken during the CDP Project are included in the object entry record.

The Pilot's House is currently closed due to COVID-19. Work is ongoing to produce an online gallery featuring objects from these exhibits so that the collections are accessible virtually during this time.

Continual Professional Development:

Honorary Curator Janette Park gained her Fellowship of the Museums Association (FMA) on the 27th October 2020.

Exhibitions and Outreach

The summer exhibition “Distant Shores: Orkney to Oceania” was not installed until July and will now run to 31 October 2021 to allow visitors to see it.

Visitor number for 2020 to date are 730 (Feb 171, March 81, April – July 0, Aug 149, Sept 227, Oct 95, Nov 7) .

There have been no events held due to COVID-19 regulations.

While the custodians were furloughed the CDT adapted their work to move things online, in line with the national sectoral response e.g. Mar - June – Katy and Norna provided material for schools e.g. P2 Night and Day resources linking to museum; produced Museum Curriculum links for Science for Level 2 (Upper primary) and produced puzzle zone activities for all ages and YouTube crafts instructional videos

The Rope Centre window was set up as a space for the museum to let people know what was available online.

Sept – Orkney International Science Festival virtual tour of Graemsay event. Attended by 45 people live and tour has now had 3496 views.

Funding

Applications were made to the following collections funds. These were oversubscribed and very competitive. Unfortunately, all were unsuccessful, but feedback received indicated that these were high-quality applications.

- Art Fund Respond and Reimagine
- Esmée Fairbairn Sustaining Collections

In March the museum submitted an application for the Art Fund Museum of the Year. This was unsuccessful.

The CDT have successfully brought in additional funding of £14,120.00 for the Malagan project. This project is funded by The Headley Trust, The Hugh Frazer Foundation and Cooke Aquaculture. They have agreed an extension so this project can run in 2021.

There were other applications in the pipeline to keep on the CDT but these options were withdrawn by funders and replaced by emergency COVID-19 funding. The Funding Subgroup were successful in securing the following funds:

Local Authority – Orkney Islands Council – Coronavirus Business Support Fund: £11,000 awarded. This grant contributed to our immediate running costs during lockdown.

Museums Galleries Scotland Digital Resilience Grant: £1727 awarded. Facilitated the purchase of a new laptop for the Collections Manager to continue remote working on collections management and development of social media content

An application for £1554.52 was made to the Museum Galleries Scotland COVID-19 Adaption Fund for costs associated with reopening. The application covered the costs of hand sanitiser stations, screens, and floor signage.

We have recently submitted an application to the MGS Resilience and Recovery Fund. The outcome of this application should be received 18th December 2020.