

Heritage Service Newsletter – Autumn Issue – September 2021

Toilet Twinning

As bizarre as it sounds, the toilets in Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean have been twinned. Our Ladies Toilet has been twinned with a toilet in the Democratic Republic of Congo and our Gents with one in Honduras. We are fortunate to have good sanitation and clean drinking water in the Outer Hebrides, yet one in four people worldwide don't have somewhere safe, private or hygienic to go to the toilet. A child dies every two minutes from sanitation-related illness.

When you visit, look out for the framed photographs of our twinned toilets, and if you spend a penny, please consider leaving a donation (special twinning donation box at reception). Even the smallest of contributions won't be poo-pooed. Our twinned toilets are helping to flush away poverty! Click [here](#) for more information.

Giant Chess and Mini Castles

Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean has been full of fun and games over the summer months thanks to funding from Museums Galleries Scotland as part of the Scottish Government's [Get into Summer](#) programme. Local and visiting children and young people were able to come together and reconnect with others following such a long period of lockdown. Families visiting the museum have been offered a variety of [free fun packed family led activities](#), including build a Giant Mini Castle, outdoor Giant Chess and Draughts, Croquet & Giant Dominoes, We have also been giving away free Arts & Crafts packs to visiting children.

Summer of Fun

This summer we also teamed up with Comunn na Gàidhlig who organised trips for the children of [Lewis, Harris](#) and [Uist](#) to local places of historic interest. This was also part of the [Get into Summer](#) programme and provided a fun sense of belonging and historical context of the islands and their communities. A [treasure hunt](#) for history detectives in the grounds of Lews Castle was also a huge success. Our Digital Engagement Officer, funded by the [Art Fund](#), was also involved running Digital Museum sessions, where children learnt how to make Tiktok [videos](#) using the exhibitions as inspiration.

Archive Collections

Since [Tasglann nan Eilean](#) reopened in early July there has been a steady stream of interesting archive collections being offered to the archive which will be of value for future researchers. These include:

- Photographs of Barra, Mingulay, Harris and Lewis by Robert Moyes Adam c.1938
- Photographs of various island locations by Gus Wylie
- Photographs of Nicolson Institute pupils, teachers, sports, drama, artwork and events c.1969-1975
- Baillie Family photograph albums of Benbecula and Uist 1974-1976
- Slides of Còmhlán Oigridh na Hearadh (Harris Youth Club) trips to various locations, including Taransay, 1977-1981

The new collections are currently being catalogued and digitised and we hope to make them available online in the very near future.

Stornoway Walking tour

For those of you who would like to explore Stornoway harbour and its history, a new walking tour and leaflet has been developed called '[The Herring Girl Walking Tour](#)' and is available for £2 at the museum reception. This was funded as part of the Dualchas na Mara Project through Museums Galleries Scotland and Bord na Gaidhlig. Our Digital Engagement Officer is investigating the possibility of also creating an app.

Covid Lockdown Projects

As previously reported, while we were closed, our museum Visitor Assistants worked on a variety of useful projects to open up our collections, including the [Gibson Collection](#). As well as transcribing hundreds of fascinating letters, which have been regularly posted on our blog, staff also worked on transcribing essays written by pupils of the Nicolson Institute in the period 1900-1910. These include topics such as 'A Lewis Country Wedding', 'The Life of the Lewis Crofter's Wife' and 'A Holiday Incident – A Visit to a Shieling'. We are currently exploring how our rich collections can best be made available on a digital platform. For anyone who wants a preview, a brief extract from one of the essays is included in our [Between Islands exhibition](#)

Heritage Education Packs Available

New bilingual education packs have been uploaded to the museum website by our Digital Engagement Officer covering subjects such as Lighthouses, Seals and Vikings, are available bilingually and can be downloaded from our [website](#).

A Peek Behind the Scenes in Archaeology

The [Sònraichte Project](#) has now completed 6 of the 9 selected assemblages. These contain the finds of more than 10 archaeological sites across the Outer Hebrides. This has improved the documentation standards as data had been organised differently from assemblage to assemblage before it entered the museum. This will help us to make the assemblages and the information more accessible in future. The project has also identified potential topics for further research and has tracked down finds from incomplete assemblages as part of due diligence with other research organisations. Three Open Days were held at the end of August and more are planned later - see below in the upcoming events.

Do you have a Covid story to tell?

We have started curating our Covid Collection and have recorded some oral histories. We are currently looking for volunteers who would be willing to be interviewed about their experience of the pandemic. Please contact shona.maclellan@cne-siar.gov.uk for more information.

Keeping it Legal & Non-Offensive – and User-friendly

A really important aspect of [Hebridean Connections](#) is its facility for researchers to submit feedback and questions. Up until now, the feedback interface has posed challenges as the software currently employed is provided by a third party – and its limited functionality has posed technical challenges. We have to be very careful that feedback is legal and non-offensive, as well as useful! For example, comments should not contravene data protection regulations. So the Hebridean Connections administrator has been busy researching legal and technical considerations, liaising with IT and legal experts, to develop an inhouse interface which in the future will deliver a feedback channel which is much more user-friendly – for both researchers and administrators.

Upcoming Events at Museum nan Eilean, Lews Castle

Sat 4 Sept	11am – 3pm	Celebrating Scottish Archaeology Month & Doors Open Month
Sat 18th Sept	2 - 4pm	Accordionist Stephen Drummond playing traditional music
Wed 29th Sept	11am – 3pm	Celebrating Scottish Archaeology Month & Doors Open Month
Sat 16 October	11am – 3pm	Celebrating International Archaeology Day
Sat 30th October	1:30-3:30pm	Halloween Party

On 4 & 28 Sept and 16 Oct the Sonraichte Archaeology Project will have Open Days if you would like to see behind the scenes at what has been discovered, or to learn more about the process, come along. Everyone can play an active role in the preservation of archaeological heritage.

‘The Chessmen Thief’

Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean was invited to work in partnership with [Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar](#) and [e-sgoil](#) on a book launch event for schools across the country. Our contribution included a film of author Barbara Henderson in the museum in conversation with the Archivist about why she found the Chessmen inspiring, and the historical context for her children’s book ‘The Chessmen Thief’ which is set in the late 12th century. The film can be viewed [here](#).

Collections Revealed

We are pleased to announce that we have been successful in receiving funding from [Bòrd na Gàidhlig](#) for a new project that will make our collection of Gaelic recordings more accessible. We are currently advertising a post that will undertake transcription of taped oral recordings including creating a bilingual summary and allocating search tags. They will also work to promote and raise awareness of the Gaelic collections on our website and through social media.

