

# OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

## THANK YOU!

Since the Museum reopened on Saturday 18th July we have welcomed almost 2,000 visitors through the door!

We believe we were the first Museum in Scotland to reopen, which is an incredible achievement given the uncertainty surrounding the Covid pandemic. However, it is also testament to the hard work of everyone involved in making sure we have a safe environment for people to discover more about the fascinating history of Dornoch.

The Katherine Gray dress took pride of place on display until it was stored away for the winter following specialist advice, but we are delighted to say that it will reappear again next season as the owner has agreed to leave it in our custody for a little while longer.



Winter Opening Hours	
Monday	10:30 - 4:00
Tuesday	On request
Wednesday	On request
Thursday	10:30 - 4:00
Friday	10:30 - 4:00
Saturday	10:30 - 4:00
Sunday	10:30 - 4:00

## WINTER PLANS

Given the success of the Museum since reopening, the Museum Committee, working in close consultation with Lynne and Caroline, has decided to keep Historylinks open 5 days a week from November 1st. This is following advice from VisitScotland that demand for 'staycation' breaks is likely to continue over the winter, as people seek 'getaways' as and when guidance allows.

Therefore, Historylinks will be open to members and the general public from **Thursday to Monday inclusive** until next April. Furthermore, on the two days we are not scheduled to open (Tuesdays and Wednesdays) visitors can still book admission tickets online and so long as they give us at least 48 hours notice we will ensure that the Museum is open for them.

## AGM - YOUR HELP REQUIRED

Although we have not been allowed to meet in person since March, the Trustees and the Museum Committee have continued to hold regular 'virtual' meetings to make sure we keep on top of everything. Our AGM is usually held in October and although this has not been possible this year, we have decided to schedule a **virtual AGM on Tuesday 24th November at 7pm**.

Given the increased number of members that we now have, the quorum for the AGM will be 25 people. Therefore, it would be very helpful if you have access to Zoom via your computer, tablet or Smartphone and you are available on that date if you could register to attend. We will be sending out email reminders nearer the time explaining how to register, but if you have any questions before then or need help with accessing Zoom then please get in touch with the Museum or email [chair@historylinks.org.uk](mailto:chair@historylinks.org.uk).

## VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

One of the main items for consideration at the AGM is the election of Trustees. We currently have a six member board, but the constitution requires a regular rotation and has a limit of 6 years continual service so we are looking to recruit one or two additional Trustees who are able to attend approximately 4 meetings per year and are willing to help with how the Charity is run on behalf of the members.

We also have opportunities for members to get involved on either of our two standing committees; the Museum and the Heritage Society. Again the minimum commitment is to attend meetings approximately once a quarter - the Museum committee is responsible for the day to day operation of Historylinks whilst the Heritage Society is responsible for membership, fund raising events and the Winter Talk program.

If you are interested in helping with any of the above then please contact Jerry Bishop on 07766 528615 for an initial chat, or speak to a member of Staff in the Museum.

# EXTENSION PROJECT - PHASE 2 UPDATE

## DETAILED DESIGN & PLANNING

### PROGRESS REPORT

On 16th July we received official confirmation that our application for £27,365 from the Dornoch Common Good Fund had been successful, which meant that we had all the funding in place to complete Phase 2 of the Extension Project.

Following a tender process we appointed Blueprint Architecture in Tain as the lead designers for this phase of the project and held an initial, socially-distanced meeting in the Museum garden with Duncan Macdonald on 13th August.

### DESIGN BRIEF

After some discussions, the Trustees and the Museum Committee members agreed a list of new 'spaces' which we thought were essential for our extension.

This list was passed on to the Architect along with a few other 'wishes' - that the extension could be built in such a way as not to interfere with the running of the existing Museum, that the extension could be used when the Museum was closed and finally, that it would not involve breaking into the existing roof if at all possible. This is for three reasons:

- The Planning Department has already agreed this design approach in principle.
- Opening the roof will require all the items in the vicinity (both on display and in store) to be moved, requiring the Museum to close, so losing revenue and adding to the cost.
- Opening the roof also means re-positioning some of the existing solar panels - again increasing the cost and reducing our income.

### FLOOR PLAN

The Architect presented his initial design ideas to us on 18th September, and with some minor 'tweaks' we are all now happy with the proposed floor plan (shown opposite) as the internal design layout for the extension.



### Impression of how the outside of the building might look.

We continue to discuss options for the outside finish of the building. One idea under consideration is to use the walls of the extension to display artwork relevant to the Museum, adding interest and hopefully attracting visitors. The examples shown above are taken from the Historylinks Tea Towel created by Sally Wild.

### ENTRANCE FROM MUSEUM

The extension links from the current Museum through the double doors adjacent to the Archive room. This removes the need to create a new opening, thus reducing costs and upheaval.

FROM MUSEUM

### SECONDARY ENTRANCE

This will act as a Fire Exit when the Museum is open and an independent entrance to the extension when the Museum is closed.

### PERMANENT EXHIBITION AREA

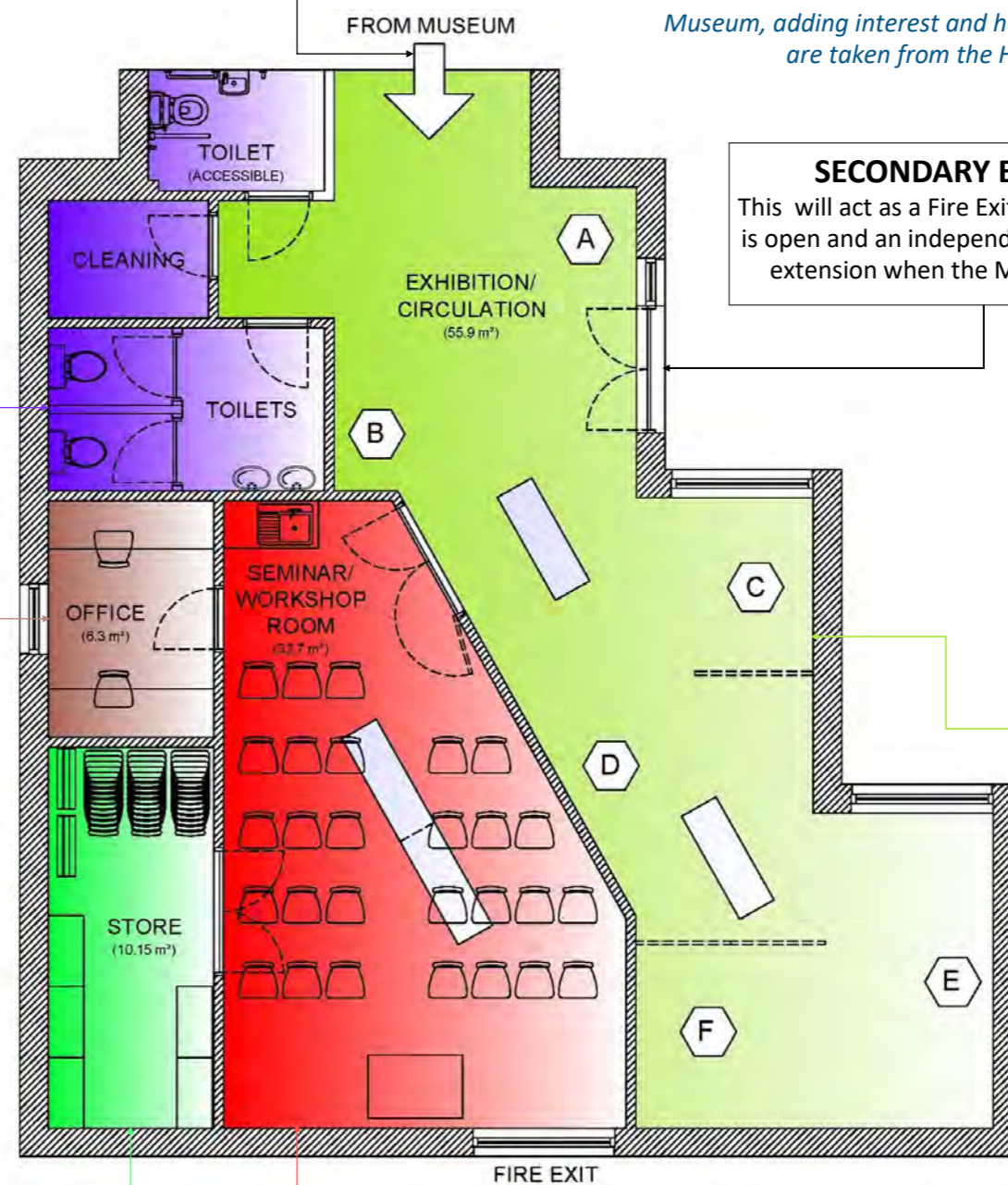
The new exhibition area (56 sqm) is the largest space in the extension.

Its shape will allow us to create 'hidden' spaces for exhibits, to mimic the 'nooks and crannies' of the current museum.

The high ceiling slopes from east to west to provide a spacious feel, with light provided by two full-height north facing windows, a glazed entrance door with side panel and two roof lights fitted with motorized blinds to control the amount of light coming into the exhibition area.

The exact layout of the extra permanent exhibition space is still to be decided and **your input and feedback would be welcomed.**

Current ideas include a new Railway Experience (E) allowing a new shop area to be created next to the reception desk, additional videos displays (F), expanded temporary exhibition space (D) and maybe even a small 'crypt' built into the floor for future exhibits (watch this space!).



### TOILETS

Three additional toilets (one accessible) will help us retain our VisitScotland 5\* rating and allow the extension to be used even when the Museum is closed (e.g. for meetings, etc.).  
The cleaning cupboard will also be used for the hot water tank.

### OFFICE

This is designed to create 2 back to back 'hot desks' with shelving above (similar to the refurbished main office).  
Nominally for Archiving and Finance functions, the desks can be used at other times for general administration & research work.  
This new office will allow us to release the current 'back office' for desperately needed additional archive storage space within the more secure footprint of the main museum.

### STORE

Adjacent to the Seminar room, the store is big enough for 30 stacking chairs, 6 trestle tables and rack shelving for YCC equipment and shop stock items (e.g. books currently in the loft and not readily accessible).

### SEMINAR / WORKSHOP / MEETING ROOM - a multi-function space designed to be used for:

**Seminars & Talks** - we see a potential new revenue stream from hosting small organised groups of visitors such as Cruise Liner passengers (assuming they return to Invergordon) with the room set up in 'theatre style' as shown.

**Additional exhibition space** - the double doors can be swung open to create a walk-through from the permanent exhibition area for larger temporary exhibitions, travelling exhibitions, demonstrations, story-telling, etc..

**Meetings** - used for committee meetings, planning sessions, Young Curator's Club (YCC), school parties, etc..

**Workshops** - used for small sessions such as those delivered as part of the recent Longhouse Project.

**Film Studio** - a space to record sound and pictures for our films.

**Your ideas for other uses for this room would be most welcome.**



## YCC NEWS

Although the Young Curators Club has been unable to meet weekly due to Covid-19 restrictions, the group has still been active in other ways.

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August the group visited Skelbo where the members heard about the history of the Castle and the local area.

We walked from the Castle to the site of Skelbo station and on down to the beach for a picnic and games. Finally, we visited the southern shore of Little Ferry and then retraced our steps back to the waiting cars.

In September, the group met Dave Mahoney outside the Museum a number of times to film a short piece about the making of the model of Dalnamain for the Sutherland Longhouse Project (which is the centrepiece of the display in the Museum).

We had great fun, especially with the dressing up and the filming, and are looking forward to our next trip - destination yet to be disclosed!

## LONGHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE

Covid-19 meant we were unable to hold our final workshop. Undaunted, Jenny Neesham donned her costume, and Peter Wild filmed as she demonstrated cooking over an open hearth using recipes, ingredients, pots, pans and utensils as used in pre-clearance times.



In place of the planned Conference, we will summarise the project by releasing a series of videos on consecutive days at 7pm on our Facebook page, as follows.

**17 Oct - A Drone's Eye view of Dalnamain** by Ashley Rose followed by the YCC film of the making of the site model

**18 Oct - The Archaeology of Dalnamain** by Anne Coombs

**19 Oct - John Matheson, Diarist** a documentary by Lynne Mahoney

**20 Oct - The Project Workshops** - A video record of each of the workshops by Peter Wild.

All four videos will then be available to view on the Historylinks website at [www.historylinks.org.uk](http://www.historylinks.org.uk).

Seasonal gift items available from the Museum reception or online at [www.historylinks.org.uk/shop](http://www.historylinks.org.uk/shop)

## 2021 CALENDAR

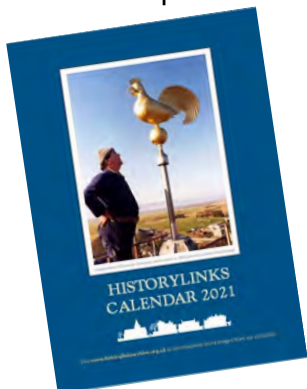
The new Historylinks Calendar will be available to purchase from **Friday 23rd October** at just **£6** each.

Professionally printed on A4 card - it contains 13 pages of images from our extensive collection. A perfect gift for anyone who knows and loves Dornoch, and an ideal Christmas or New Year present which will last all year!

Calendars are supplied with card envelopes and can be posted anywhere in the world when buying via our online shop.

**Please note that stocks will be limited so please order early!**

**£6**



Also available Historylinks Pens (£1), Fridge Magnets (£2), a large selection of local history books and traditional children's toys.

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

We have limited stocks of **Historylinks Christmas Cards** available for just **£3** per pack of 5 (inc envelopes).

Purchase from the Museum during opening hours.



**£6**



## TEA TOWELS

Historylinks Tea Towels are back in stock and available to purchase in the Museum or online at **£6** each.

From stunning artwork by Sally Wild, these towels feature many local places and items of interest.

They make an ideal present and a useful last reminder for anyone with

All proceeds from the sale of the above items go to Historylinks - your support is greatly appreciated