

JULY 2020 NEWSLETTER

MUSEUM TO REOPEN SATURDAY 18th JULY

Once again, on behalf of everyone associated with Historylinks Museum and Dornoch Heritage Society I hope that this newsletter finds you in good health and that you, your friends and your families are all still safe and well as the Covid-19 lockdown rules are being relaxed.

We are delighted to report that the Museum will reopen to visitors this Saturday, 18th July - some 16 weeks later than planned!

Reopening has been made possible by the easing of the lockdown restrictions by Scottish Government, clear guidance from Museum Galleries Scotland and Visit Scotland and a phenomenal effort from the staff and volunteers at the museum over the last few weeks.

There will be a few changes to the visitor experience forced on us by the new rules, but we hope that these will not detract from the usual fantastic time our visitors enjoy at Historylinks. The first change most people will notice is a new traffic light system at the front door to regulate entry and exit to avoid congestion at the reception desk.

On entry, ALL visitors to the museum are now required to sanitise their hands at a new station located just inside the door.



Hopefully the new screens which are in place will not act as a barrier to the normal friendly welcome to the museum, but all visitors will also be required to wear a face covering during their time inside.

Other changes include the removal of all interactive exhibits, the closing of the children's room, the removal of the headphones for two video exhibits and the closure of one toilet. However, one will remain open and has been upgraded with new taps, and paper towel & sanitiser dispensers. There are also a large number of new exhibits to view, both inside and outside the museum



NEW FOR 2020

We are honoured to have the Katherine Gray dress back on display. It appeared briefly during Fibre Fest weekend in March and is back out from storage and takes pride of place on display.



We are also extremely excited with our new exhibition of the ongoing Longhouse project. Centre piece of the display is a large scale model of the Dalnamain site created by Dave Mahoney, with fantastic detailed models of the interior of a Longhouse and a grain store - definitely not to be missed! Other new items inside the museum include an updated railway exhibition and the new digital version of our 'Links Through Dornoch' film.

A new outside display based on the theme of 'Domestic Life' has now been completed at the front of the museum. The largest item is a laundry mangle that was gifted to us just after we opened around 20 years ago and has been lying in the shed taking up space. Along with this is a wool dyepot and a set of rotary quernstones and a 'knockin stane' for grain preparation. The final item is a recently acquired milk churn stamped 'MUNRO & GRANT – SANDYCROFT – DORNOCH' If anyone can tell us more about this, we would love to hear from them.





EXTENSION PROJECT UPDATE

Amidst all the confusion surrounding the Covid-19 lockdown, the Trustees have been continuing to work on the much needed extension to the Museum.

As previously reported, we made an application to the Dornoch Common Good Fund for a grant of £27k to part-fund Phase 2 of the project – the detailed design phase.

We are delighted to report that our application, which was supported by the Dornoch Area Community Council at their April meeting, received final endorsement from the Sutherland County Committee last week. So, we will now be able to appoint an Architect to lead a design team in the very near future to move the project forward to gain planning and building warrant consent.

We will report back on the final design and progress for the planning approval in the next newsletter.

OPENING HOURS AND WEBSITE CHANGES

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic we have decided to change the opening hours for the rest of the season. The museum will now not open until 10:30 each morning but close to general visitors as usual at 4 pm. Entrance prices have been kept at the same rates - £4 for adults, £3 for concessions with accompanied children still free of charge.

However, we have also decided to offer exclusive tours of the museum from 4pm each day for the rest of the opening season. Tours must be pre-booked at least 24 hours ahead and will cost £30 for a party of up to 8 people from the same family group. We hope this will help spread the number of visitors throughout the day and will be of particular interest to people still apprehensive about social distancing.

Another new facility we have introduced as a result of the pandemic is the option to purchase tickets and tours in advance through our website (www.historylinks.org.uk/tickets). Payment can be made via PayPal or most credit/debit cards; we hope this will help reduce the time taken for people to pass through reception ('dwell time' is the latest industry buzz phrase!) and also reduce the amount of cash our staff and volunteers handle.

HERITAGE SOCIETY

The program of winter talks was curtailed in March owing to the Pandemic, as was the spring Coffee Morning fund raiser. However, it is hoped that these events will restart once the lockdown rules are eased, but meantime the Heritage Society has been busy expanding its membership, with a record 235 members now signed up. Joining has never been easier; we have forms available at the Museum reception or applications can be submitted online at www.historylinks.org.uk/join-us.

Finally, in a sign that things are getting back to normal, the Community Markets start again next Wednesday morning (22nd July) at 9.30 a.m.. We will have a stall there selling refreshments to raise funds for the Museum, so if you are in town why not pop by, say hello and grab a tea or coffee?

TRUSTEE & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Historylinks is run by a volunteer board of Trustees. At the moment we have a stable board of six members working hard to ensure we deliver our vision of '*Keeping the Dornoch Story Alive*' but we are always keen to refresh and expand the board membership.

If you are interested in local heritage, can spare a few hours each quarter to attend meetings and would be interested in joining the board at what promises to be a particularly exciting time (given the ongoing extension project) then we would be delighted to hear from you.

In the first instance please contact Jerry Bishop on 07766 528615 or email chair@historylinks.org.uk.

We are also keen to hear from people who would like to help out at the Museum in other ways. We have opportunities for volunteering on reception, behind the scenes with our cataloguing and archiving or on one of our two sub-committees (the Museum and the Heritage Society).

Please contact us via email (curator@historylinks.org.uk) or speak to Lynne or Caroline in the museum for an informal chat about how you can get involved and help out.