

# BALANCING ACT: COLLECTIONS CARE IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS AND SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Friday 15 November 2019

10am – 4.30pm

The Engine Shed

The other item in the collection

*Emma Halford-Forbes (Consultant)*

## Abstract

Emma has spent over a decade working in community and museum development and has had the joy of caring for collections in a great many historic buildings. She was Museum Manager at The Black Watch Castle and Museum and oversaw the major museum redevelopment in 2013-14. Emma currently works with Industrial Museum Scotland, a federation of industrial museums within a stunning array of industrial buildings. She is on the Board of Glencoe Folk Museum, housed in a heather-thatched cottage.

## Speaker Biography

It seems utter madness to keep the nation's heritage collections in historic buildings: leaky external apertures; spiral staircases; attic or basement stores with impossible conditions; and no lift. And yet we continue to do it. This presentation will look at one curator's journey to learn to love the other item in the collection: the historic building that houses it.

Context or conservation? A museum in an imperfect building

*Matthew Moran (Scottish Maritime Museum)*

## Abstract

Matthew is currently Curator at the Scottish Maritime Museum where he has worked since 2016. Previously he was the David Nicholls Bursary recipient for the 2015-16 seasons, which enabled him to be Curator of the South Georgia Museum in the South Atlantic. In both roles Matthew has had to interpret 19th and 20th century industrial archaeology and history to the general public, a challenging but satisfying role for someone with a degree in Ancient History.

## Speaker Biography

After a brief history of the A Listed buildings which house the Scottish Maritime Museum's collections, the presentation will explore the considerable difficulties associated with keeping a museum inside a glass-

roofed Victorian engine shed, alongside the equally considerable advantages of having an appropriate context and setting for your collection.

## Edinburgh Castle: Historic building or 21st century visitor attraction?

*Rachael Dickson and Lynsey Haworth (Historic Environment Scotland)*

### Abstract

Edinburgh Castle is one of the top tourist destinations in the UK, and visitors numbers continue to rise. But its historic rooms were not designed with millions of tourists in mind, leading to a string of modern-day challenges. This presentation will focus on collections care in the site's medieval royal palace, home to the Honours of Scotland.

### Speaker Biography

Rachael has dual nationality and previously worked at the Chicago History Museum before returning to the UK. She initially worked in the Major Projects Team at Historic Environment Scotland and helped establish the SPARCive before moving into the Collections Unit. Rachael is responsible for the care of collections in Edinburgh and takes a lead on social media for the team.

Lynsey is the Collections Access Manager at Historic Environment Scotland, where she has worked since 2012. Prior to this she worked at the National Mining Museum Scotland and the World Rugby Museum at Twickenham Stadium.

## Champagne, canapes and construction: Managing collections within working royal residences

*Jade Adams and Jason Clancy (Royal Household)*

### Abstract

The Royal Household is a unique organisation, and our collection is forever on the move, being used the way its masters and makers intended, and as well as the interiors, is still creating history.

The increase in royal events and the start of the Reservicing Programme at Buckingham Palace, has highlighted key challenges in the way we care for the Royal Collection and the historic interiors. This presentation will talk about the tasks faced caring for the Royal Collection within a working Palace and Castle, how the teams collaborate to deliver high class events and enable property works, supporting the duty of the Monarchy, and taking the upmost care in preserving the Collection and interiors for future generations.

### Speaker Biography

With a degree in History of Art, Jade Adams started her role within the Royal Household over six years ago. For the last two years, Jade has worked in Collection Care and is responsible for the preventative care of the Royal Collection amongst the busy operations of the Royal Residencies.

Jason Clancy has a degree in Furniture Conservation and Restoration and started as a Furniture Conservator at the Royal Household over 11 years ago. For the last three years Jason has taken on the role of Historic Interiors Conservator, which sees him not only care for the furniture collection, but also some of the interior schemes such as the historical doors and curtains. Jason splits his role into workshop projects/ on site event set up and training.

The partnership between Collection Care and Historic Interiors is key to ensure a balance of conservation is maintained within these busy environments, working on the ground, mitigating risk, and alongside the teams that work with and amid the collection on a daily basis.

Newhailes: Train the trainer, a moth case history

*Mel Houston (National Trust for Scotland)*

## Abstract

The National Trust for Scotland's (NTS) Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme relies on the NTS conservators training property staff to carry out IPM duties: pest trapping, identification, record keeping and limited treatments. Competing priorities and changes to the role of NTS conservators mean there is less time to train individual staff members. At the same time emphasis is placed on all staff and volunteers delivering high standards of collection care, including IPM to give visitors a day they'll remember.

In order to provide training of a high conservation standard and focused on ensuring a high quality visitor experience the NTS is trialling a *train the trainer* approach to staff training; subject-matter experts (conservators) share expertise with a group of 'trained' trainers and this group uses the information to instruct another small group. A pilot to test this approach was identified during a pest management project at a Trust property in 2018. A small group of trainers, with NTS conservators present, were trained using an external consultancy to deliver specific areas of collections care training for a group of non-specialist volunteers; emphasis was on training trainers to become skilled in effective speaking, targeting key collections care information in accessible forms for a wide learning audience and designing modular workshops that could be repeated by any of the trainers. Critically the conservators were trained in evaluating the effectiveness of the training and incorporating constructive criticism into the training process.

The pilot also focused on how to use IPM as part of the storytelling brief; to identify the IPM stories conservators wish to bring out but have had no time to develop. The story of conservation is one of the most under-utilised narratives and is currently done piecemeal. The training methodology was targeted to identify good collections care stories to tell and the appropriate method of delivery; including developing relationships with the Communications Department to issue clear accurate information for press releases.

This paper looks at the steps involved in implementing the pilot *train the trainer* approach to IPM in the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), identifying issues highlighted in the trial, assessing the efficacy of the programme for future collections care training and evaluating whether the investment to engage an external training company is worthwhile and does it deliver benefits which would not otherwise be achieved

### **Speaker Biography**

Mel Houston has worked as a preventive conservator for the National Trust for Scotland for the past 10 years. She is currently the National Preventive Conservator and oversees the environmental and IPM programmes as part of her role in the organisation. Mel is an Icon accredited conservator and is an Icon mentor. She is also a Trustee on the Icon Board.