



National  
Museums  
Scotland

# Review 2020





Visitors enjoying *Museum Late: Jurassic Party* at the National Museum of Scotland in March © Chris Scott



# Foreword

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone. Who could have anticipated that we would begin our new roles as Chair and Director of National Museums Scotland during a global pandemic? However, as we reflect on the year past and look forward to 2021, there is much to be grateful for and an opportunity to focus on our ambitions that offer hope for the future: continuing to inspire current and new audiences and to share the rich collections within our care.

National Museums Scotland has been transformed over the past few years. The National Museum of Scotland finished its 15-year, £80 million refurbishment completely overhauling the majestic Victorian building in Edinburgh. Over 10 years, visitor numbers across all sites have more than doubled from 1,270,000 to 3,042,000 and many important acquisitions have been added to the collections, including the unique Viking-age treasure, the Galloway Hoard. This has all been achieved thanks to the creativity and hard work of many exceptional individuals.

On behalf of the Executive Team and the Board of Trustees, we would particularly like to thank Bruce Minto, who stepped down from his role as Chair in July this year. Bruce's association with National Museums Scotland began in 2007, first as Chair of the National Museums Scotland Development Board and then as Chairman of the Board of Trustees in 2011. We will endeavour to build upon this incredible legacy.

We would also like to thank our many supporters, funders and donors who have continued to offer their generous support despite this difficult time. Our work has never been more important; for our audiences online and on site, for our staff and for the sector. Your belief in us has enabled this work to continue despite our buildings having been closed. The resilience shown by our staff this year has also been remarkable. Their hard work and professionalism kept our collections safe, allowed us to reopen our doors safely in August and warmly welcome back our visitors. We look forward to working with you all over the coming months.

**IAN RUSSELL CBE, CHAIR**  
**DR CHRIS BREWARD, DIRECTOR**



Ian Russell CBE (left) and  
Dr Chris Breward (right) © Neil Hanna



# Responding to the Covid crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic closed our doors on 17 March and they remained shut for five months. During lockdown we wanted to bring people inspiration and give them opportunities to learn and engage with our collections. We brought our collections to life digitally with our online *Museum at Home*.

Through films, games, podcasts and more, we kept our digital doors open, reached new audiences and ensured everyone could continue to access and enjoy our stories. Across our social

media channels, new content formats included 'Ask me anything' sessions with curators and online tours blending Google Street View images with personalised commentary. We also engaged with national and global events, such as International Museum Day, World Oceans Day and Pride.

Contemporary collecting is always a vital strand of our work to ensure we continue to build our archive of the nation's history and help the audiences of tomorrow understand the events and attitudes of today. As the significance of the pandemic became clear, we began the task of identifying objects that could tell the story of these times to future generations.

Some objects quickly stood out as ubiquitous symbols of the pandemic – face coverings, safety signage and bottles of hand sanitiser. Others, including items from across the world, played a unique role in the unfolding events and will continue to tell their stories by being preserved as part of our collections.

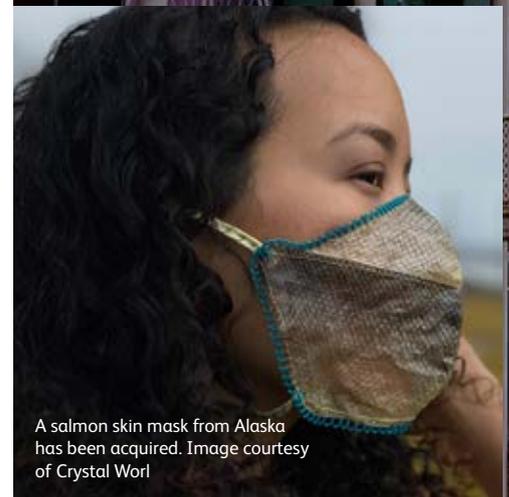
We have worked with colleagues across the museum sector to share our expertise and support other organisations throughout these

A Covid poster using motifs from the Indigenous North American Tlingit culture has been added to the collection

# 35%



increase in traffic to the Explore section of our website



A salmon skin mask from Alaska has been acquired. Image courtesy of Crystal Worl

difficult times. We created an advice line and collaborated with the UK Heads of Conservation and the Institute of Conservation to produce guidance on caring for collections in lockdown, as well as working with Museums Galleries Scotland to offer online workshops. A survey of teachers was carried out to shape digital learning resources and we were also able to offer guidance on 'waking up collections'.

Our support for the sector has never been more important and will continue as new challenges emerge. We are committed to building on the important relationships we have forged with museums across Scotland as we face the future together.

# 1,140%

rise in access to videos on our website



# 61%

increase in access to online object records



# 49%

rise in traffic to Search our Collections page



# 50,000

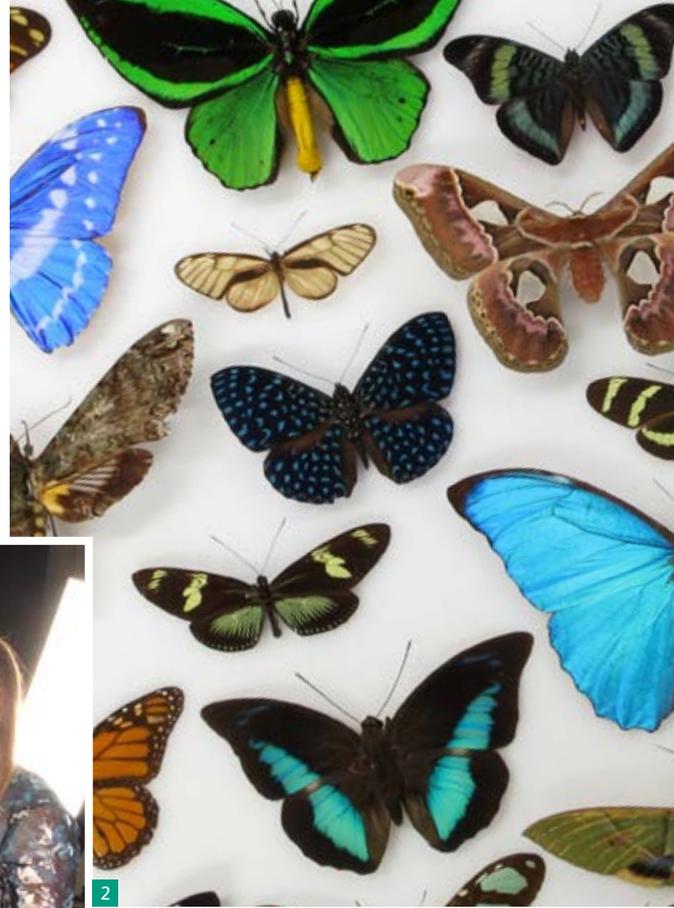
page views of Museum at Home

# 261%

increase in access to our online resources



# Working with the nation



We work across Scotland to be a truly national museum, bringing our collections, expertise and audience engagement programmes to communities in every part of the country. Inevitably, our projects were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, however, our work has continued. We also began consultation on our next National Strategy, with events in Fife, Inverness, Edinburgh, Dumfries, Perth and Aberdeen.

## LOANS

To support museums receiving loans, our Guide to Borrowing workshop in November 2019 offered practical advice on all aspects of the process. Six objects were sent to Kildonan Museum until

October 2020 for *A Prince on the Run*, the first exhibition by its Young Curators Group, which explored the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie. These included a betrothal ring said to have been given to Flora MacDonald by the prince.

Three exhibits went on long-term loan to the new Gairloch Museum, including a Bronze Age cup-ended ornament, and an agreement was made to lend fossil fragments to Elgin Museum.

## NATIONAL FUND FOR ACQUISITIONS

We continued to administer the National Fund for Acquisitions, an annual grant of £150,000 provided by the Scottish Government, and launched

a funding scheme worth £100,000 to help more museums develop their collections. Fifty-five grants totalling £158,554 supported £870,875 of acquisitions and a further eight grants worth £20,929 had been committed by March 2020. The acquisitions included:

- £15,000 to Glasgow Museums for an oil painting by John Michael Wright, *A Highland Chieftain: Portrait of Lord Mungo Murray*, 1683.
- £9,000 to the Museum of the Isles for a rare basket-hilted backsword.
- £3,450 to West Highland Museum for a snuff box with a hidden portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

## STRENGTHENING SKILLS

Our National Training Programme, generously funded by the Hugh Fraser Foundation in 2020, allows us to offer free collections training for museum



### ACCESS FOR ALL

Engaging people with our objects can be a powerful way to bring them together and tackle loneliness and isolation. Funding from People's Postcode Lottery has enabled us to develop our work in this area. We worked with Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, Glasgow Museums and West Lothian Council Museum Service at the end of 2019 to deliver local programmes for individuals with dementia, their carers and families.

A series of events at the National Museum of Scotland and other venues included *Early Doors* and *After Hours* visits for people with autism, *Museum Socials* for people living with dementia, sessions with care homes, as well as activities for people with hearing loss and children with visual impairments.

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staff in Scotland. Workshops explored subjects including collections care and audience engagement and covered topics from textiles to rocks and fossils.

### NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS ACROSS SCOTLAND

Funded by the John Ellerman Foundation, this two-year project

is reviewing natural science collections across Scotland, with a focus on fossils. Project curator Dr Sue Beardmore has visited 72 collections, from Kirkcudbright to Fetlar, one of Shetland's North Isles, examining specimens and giving advice. The review is supported by a training scheme which included workshops in August 2019 and February 2020.



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1. Collections workshop, delivered as part of the National Training Programme
2. A drawer of Lepidoptera, used as a training resource at an Introduction to the Care of Entomology Collections workshop
3. *A Highland Chieftain* © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection
4. Introduction to Dress and Textile Collections workshop, delivered as part of the National Training Programme
5. Snuff box © West Highland Museum, Fort William



- 1. *Operatic Opalescence* by Silvia Weidenbach
- 2. A diamond-set signet ring made by Hamilton and Inches from Scottish gold
- 3. Simone ten Hompel with her new work *Coordinate* © Neil Hanna
- 4. Georgina, our new Clydesdale foal, at the National Museum of Rural Life with mum Anna
- 5. The painting by AR Thomson created for LNER'S 'Take me by the Flying Scotsman' campaign



# Expanding our COLLECTIONS

## NEW ACQUISITIONS

Collecting new material keeps us relevant and enhances our collections' strength. Carefully selected objects today will help engage and inspire present and future audiences.

*Coordinate*, a major new work by renowned metalsmith Simone ten Hompel, was unveiled in March 2020. Commissioned by National Museums Scotland and The Glenmorangie Company, the striking piece explores Scotland's journey through time and the country's changing landscape. The Glenmorangie Commission is part of *Creating Scotland*, the latest phase of

the award-winning Glenmorangie Research Project, which examines archaeological evidence to tell the story of the medieval kingdom of Scotland.

A Hamilton and Inches signet ring crafted from the first batch of commercially mined Scottish gold was acquired in May 2020. It features a band of diamonds around a fleur-de-lys set in quartz from the same mine as the gold.

*Operatic Opalescence*, a futuristic 3D-printed brooch

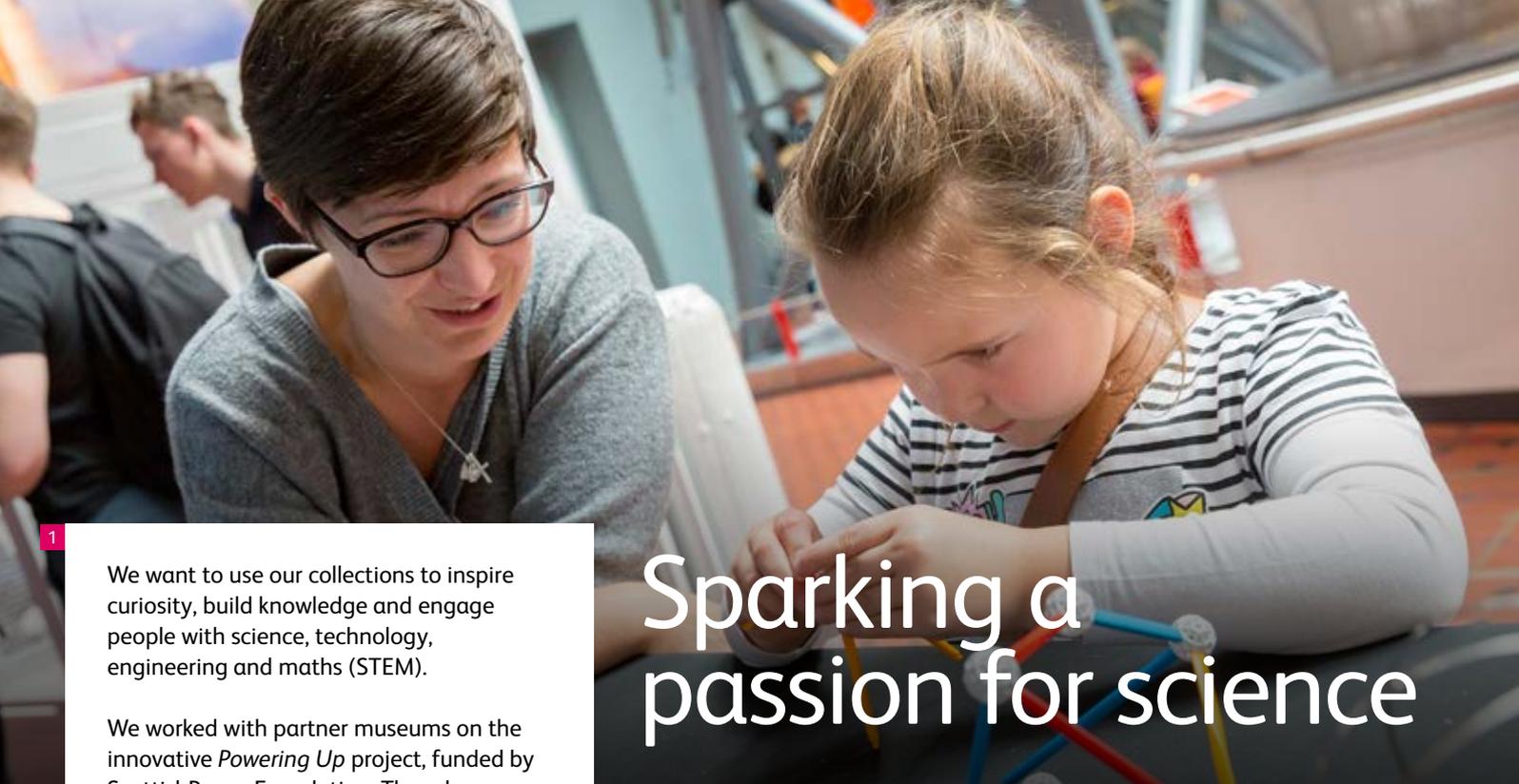
by jeweller and digital craft artist Silvia Weidenbach, was also added to our collections in December 2019.

With help from Art Fund and the National Museums Scotland Charitable Trust, in June 2020 we acquired the original artwork for LNER's iconic 1932 advertising campaign, 'Take me by the Flying Scotsman'.

#### NEW ARRIVALS

The National Museum of Rural Life welcomed plenty of new arrivals on the farm. Clydesdale foal Georgina was born on 1 June and continues to thrive. It was a bumper lambing season with more than 170 born, calving was another success, and we saw the arrival of three Tamworth piglets in May.





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We want to use our collections to inspire curiosity, build knowledge and engage people with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

We worked with partner museums on the innovative *Powering Up* project, funded by ScottishPower Foundation. The scheme helped young people across the country discover more about renewable energy.

*Powering Up* provided free transport, activities and resources, removing barriers that could prevent primary pupils from visiting local museums, and an interactive science show filled with experiments was delivered at participating schools. Our partners were the National Mining Museum, Scottish Maritime Museum, New Lanark World Heritage Site and Historic Environment Scotland at Stanley Mills, Perth, who hosted workshops in Midlothian, West Dunbartonshire, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and Perth and Kinross.

We are also proud to have continued our role delivering Maths Week Scotland from 30 September–6 October 2019. The Scottish Government-funded campaign raises the profile of maths with events celebrating its importance in our everyday lives. This year we reached even more communities and increased the activities we offered, including topical talks, family activity days, code-breaking events and inter-generational sessions.

# Sparking a passion for science



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1. A young visitor taking part in our Spark Cart event at the Edinburgh Science Festival  
© Ruth Armstrong

2. Visitors enjoying our Maths Week encryption event  
© Ruth Armstrong

3. STEM learning session as part of our *Powering Up* project with the ScottishPower Foundation  
© Ian Jacobs

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White porcelain tea set of Wedgwood china designed, commissioned and used by the Empire Café project, a contemporary exploration of Scotland's relationship with the transatlantic slave trade

# Past, present and future

The development of our collection began in the 18th century and many of the objects reflect imperial and colonial histories, including ones associated with the transatlantic slave trade.

Their stories are complex, dynamic and many-sided but often they involved exploitation, oppression and violence, particularly against indigenous peoples. In understanding the origins of our collections, the difficult histories they expose and the complex questions they

raise, we are committed to revealing and sharing the full range of stories associated with our collections.

Like many museums, important aspects of our collections and the way that we display them have been shaped by imperial and colonial thinking and actions that were based on racial and racist understandings of the world. In response, we are reflecting on how we represent imperial and colonial pasts to our audiences. In our galleries, we have

started changing displays and labels to address historical bias. Behind the scenes, we are researching collections to ensure our interpretation of these histories and their legacies are based in rigorous and up-to-date knowledge.

We recognise that there is a lot more work to do. Audiences and communities have a vital role to play and as we move this conversation forward, we are committed to building relationships and being open, transparent and inclusive.

Main Hall, now the Grand Gallery of the National Museum of Scotland c.1880-1902



1. A close-up of the trypanosomes parasite  
© Neil Hanna
2. Pupils from Castlebrae High School, Edinburgh, enjoying the *Parasites* exhibition  
© Neil Hanna
3. Dr John C Taylor OBE admiring one of his clocks on display at the *Luxury of Time* exhibition  
© Paul Dodds

# Our stories ON SHOW

## PARASITES: BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

From December 2019 to March 2020, we welcomed visitors to *Parasites: Battle for Survival*, which examined the vital role that Scotland plays in the fight to eliminate tropical diseases. This highly interactive exhibition focused on five deadly conditions caused by tiny organisms and the world-class research being carried out here to tackle them.

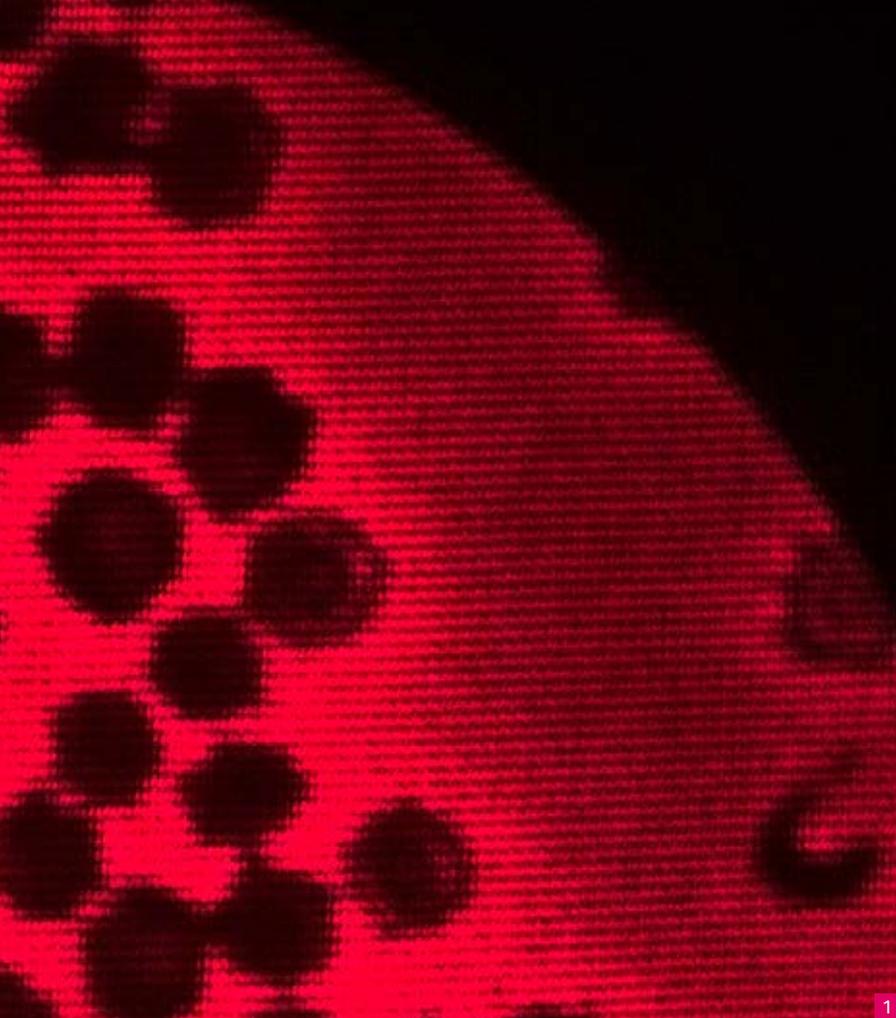
Objects from laboratories and the field revealed the new treatments and tactics being employed to stop the spread of infections and protect communities.

The exhibition's creators also worked with secondary school pupils to trial designs, games and text to help young

audiences engage with STEM subjects. After learning about diseases, visitors could then test their new knowledge by trying to diagnose and treat conditions. An impact report found the exhibition made one in three people change their mind about parasites and more than half strongly agreed it made them see the relevance of science to their lives.

*Parasites* was presented in partnership with the Wellcome Centre for Anti-Infectives Research at the University of Dundee, Edinburgh Infectious Diseases at the University of Edinburgh and the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Parasitology at the University of Glasgow.





## THE LUXURY OF TIME: CLOCKS FROM 1550-1750

A special four-month display which opened in October 2019 celebrated the golden age of British clockmaking with a range of rare and beautiful timepieces in *The Luxury of Time: Clocks from 1550-1750*.

The 25 objects came from the private collection of engineer and entrepreneur Dr John C Taylor OBE. They demonstrated the delicate workmanship and incredible skill involved in crafting what were once seen as the ultimate status symbol.

The display charted the evolution of the industry and the development of pioneering timepieces which were both luxurious and highly technical objects.



## TYRANNOSAURS

Our *Tyrannosaurs* exhibition brought visitors face-to-face with the most feared of all the dinosaurs in an interactive trip through time.

The centrepiece was Scotty, a towering cast of one of the largest and most complete T.rex skeletons ever discovered.

Engaging displays helped introduce visitors to the Tyrannosaur family tree,

ranging from ancient feathered dinosaurs from China to the humble domestic chicken.

The exhibition, which was supported by the players of People's Postcode Lottery, came to us from The Australian Museum. It opened in January 2020 and was on course to be our most popular exhibition ever, attracting 51,127 visitors before the coronavirus

lockdown forced us to close our doors.

A full programme of events inspired by *Tyrannosaurs* was developed, including school visits, family activities, film screenings and curatorial talks.

We also hosted *Jurassic Party: Museum Late* so guests could enjoy dinosaurs after dark with a silent disco, comedy show, live music and karaoke.



From left to right, *Teratophoneus curriei*;  
*Albertosaurus sarcophagus*; *Appalachiosaurus*  
*montgomeriensis*; *Tarbosaurus bataar* and  
*Daspletosaurus torosus*  
© Ruth Armstrong



## A YEAR IN NUMBERS

114



114 museums supported through loans, acquisitions, touring and community engagement projects.

2,836

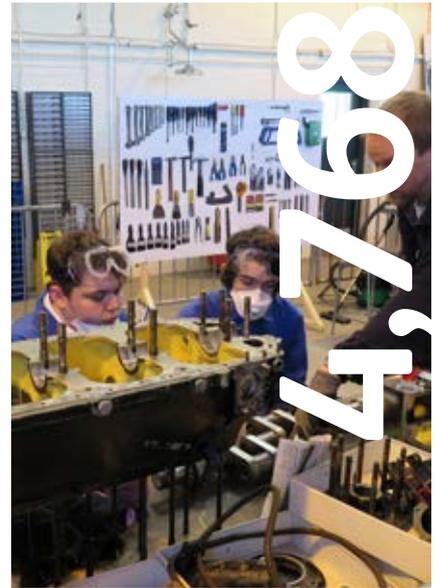


2,836 objects loaned to 54 organisations in 21 local authorities across Scotland.



3,041,975

3,041,975 visitors to our museums in 2019/20, including 2,097,428 at the National Museum of Scotland, 106,786 at the National Museum of Rural Life, 765,127 at the National War Museum and 72,634 at the National Museum of Flight.



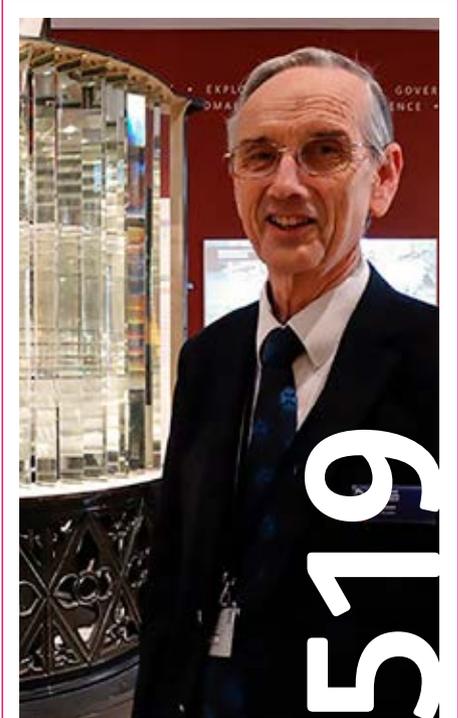
4,768

4,768 people engaged through community outreach programmes beyond our sites.



74,604

Completion of our Ancient Egypt and East Asia National Programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund which reached 74,604 participants through exhibitions, learning and events across Scotland 2018-2020.



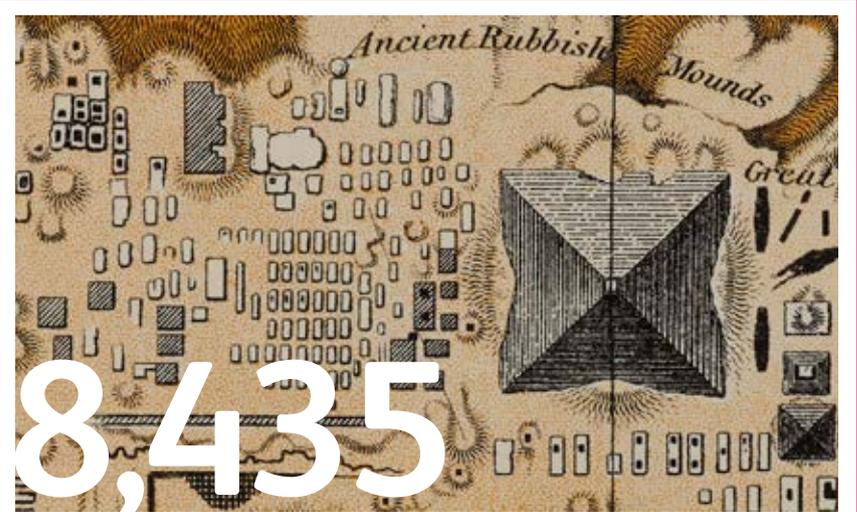
519

Last year we benefited from the support of 519 volunteers.



217

277 learning experiences delivered to 217 staff and volunteers from 66 museums in 28 local authority areas.



8,435

8,435 visits to the first 3 venues on our touring exhibition *Discovering Ancient Egypt* with an uplift of more than 40% in visitor figures from 2015/16 achieved at two venues.

1



National  
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### Egypt, Past and Present in Dialog

Discuss the legacies of British archaeological practices in Egypt at the first panel discussion of the 'Egypt's Dispersed Heritage' project chaired by journalist, writer and broadcaster Samira Ahmed

Follow Egypt's Dispersed Heritage project on Twitter @excavatedegypt

Supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council

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and Heritage  
2020



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# Reaching out to the world

The national collections are not just of great significance to Scotland, but are also an invaluable historical, cultural and intellectual resource for researchers and audiences across the world.

In 2019-20, we sent 264 objects to five museums in four countries. This included *Body Beautiful: Diversity on the Catwalk*, which became our first international fashion touring exhibition.

Following its highly successful display at the National Museum of Scotland, the 26 garments travelled to the Textilmuseet in Borås, Sweden. Before

making the journey, the exhibits were prepared by our Textile and Paper Conservation team, who updated the condition reports and carefully packed the objects for transport. Around half of the items travelled mounted on their display mannequins, with the others packed into conservation-grade boxes.

In February, two of our textile conservators, along with the touring manager and a collections care technician, went to Sweden to install the exhibition ahead of its opening. We were unable to return to pack up the objects once the exhibition closed

in August, but instead helped the local team remotely via video link.

Our other international loans this year included more than 100 natural science specimens from our popular *Monkey Business* exhibition, which opened at the Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona under the title *Micos. Una Història de primats*.

We also partnered with the AHRC-funded project *Egypt's Dispersed Heritage: Views from Egypt*, which explored the legacies of British archaeology in Egypt and created opportunities for dialogue with modern Egyptian communities.

As part of the project, journalist Samira Ahmed chaired our 'Egypt, Past and Present in Dialogue' event, which is now available as a podcast. We also worked with comic artist Mohammed Nasser and project researcher Heba Abd el Gawad, who created web comics for Egyptian audiences inspired by objects in our collections.



3



@ExcavatedEgypt @GawadHeba @NasserJunior

4

- 1 & 2. *Body Beautiful: Diversity on the Catwalk*, at the Textilmuseet in Borås, Sweden
3. The 'Egypt, Past and Present in Dialogue' event held at the National Museum of Scotland. Event speakers, from left to right: Alice Stevenson, Heba Abd el Gawad, Margaret Maitland, and Samira Ahmed
4. Comic-strip, 'The Chief of Luxor's Police and Wife in Isolation' © Nasser Junior



1



3



2



4

# New knowledge

1. The skull of a True's beaked whale
2. Dr Andrew Kitchener's research involved a study into the difference skull shapes of urban and rural red fox populations © Sean Page
3. Dr Elsa Panciroli on the island of Eigg
4. The stegosaur bone still embedded in rock

This year we have continued to develop our research through projects to help expand our knowledge of the collection and to further our understanding of the past.

Dr Elsa Panciroli, Research Affiliate at National Museums Scotland, discovered a dinosaur bone on the island of Eigg. The limb from a stegosaurian animal dates back 166 million years to the

Middle Jurassic period and is a hugely significant find. Fossils from that period are incredibly rare and it is the first such discovery to be made in Scotland outside Skye. The bone is now in our collections.

Our research this year also highlighted contemporary wildlife, following the first recorded discovery of one of the world's rarest species of whale in Britain. The

female True's beaked whale was found stranded in Sutherland in January and taken into our collections. Principal Curator of Vertebrates Dr Andrew Kitchener helped document the elusive animal's stranding and also took part in a study exploring fresh ideas about the changing skull shape of urban and rural red foxes. The research shed new light on how animals may adapt to living in different environments.



# Preserving our planet

Our continuing commitment to sustainability has led us to add a new priority to our strategic plan, emphasising our ambition to reduce our environmental and climate change impact while also creating inspiring and informative programmes linked to these issues.

Since its launch in 2013, our carbon reduction programme has helped to more than halve our emissions and our estimated carbon from energy for 2019/20 is 4,143 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> – a reduction of 10% from 4,600 tonnes the previous year. Our Sustainable Development Group is preparing a new strategy which includes charting our approach to reaching net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045.

The national collections also play an essential role in helping researchers monitor changes in the natural world as well as raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity and conservation. The nation's rich variety of species was celebrated

in our *Scotland's Precious Seas* exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland, which marked VisitScotland's Year of Coasts and Waters initiative and highlighted the beauty of Scotland's marine life.

From colourful flame shells to bamboo coral, the specimens on display revealed the fragility of life in our waters and drew attention to the threats faced by the delicate ecosystems under the waves.

We explored future foods with edible insects and foraging at the National Museum of Rural Life in October 2019. We also marked World Wetlands Day in February 2020 by hosting a weekend of activities at the National Museum of Scotland.

We continue to collaborate with partners from across environmental organisations such as the National Biodiversity Network and the Biological Records Centre, to help preserve and protect the wonders of our natural world.



# Caring for collections

The National Museums Collection Centre is at the heart of our conservation work and enables us to preserve our objects for future generations. It plays a vital role in providing space to store our collections as well as housing laboratories and facilities for engineering and work on large objects. This year, 827 objects were treated by our conservation team.

Thanks to the Collection Centre's facilities, our work to conserve, restore and reassemble the huge lantern from the Tod Head Lighthouse was

completed in December. For many years, the parts had sat in storage in separate crates before the 21-month project to rebuild it. After being part-assembled on a bespoke frame in the workshops, the two-tonne structure was moved by forklift to its final display space.

One of the earliest cars ever made in Scotland, the Albion dog cart, also underwent conservation work. Following extensive cleaning, corrosion removal and new upholstery, the 120-year-old vehicle went on long-term loan to

Biggar Museum Trust – the town where its first recorded owner lived.

During January and February, the *Thin Red Line* from the National War Museum was at the Collection Centre to be glazed. This iconic painting by Robert Gibb was also condition checked and conservation work was carried out before the glass was fitted.

This year the towering Millennium Clock in the National Museum of Scotland underwent its first full cleaning and maintenance programme since 2015.



1. The *Thin Red Line* being fitted with new glass ahead of display at the National War Museum  
© Phil Wilkinson

2. The Albion dog cart being cleaned by Gemma Frew, Assistant Engineering Conservator, at the National Museums Collection Centre  
© Phil Wilkinson

3. Alex Walton, Engineering Conservator, working on the Tod Head Lighthouse

The intricate mechanism comprises 19 different sequences which operate the wheels, chains and figures to create a seamless display.

Each of the moving parts was checked and lubricated and the repair work included replacing three electric motors, reattaching the hands of the Einstein figurine, reconnecting a saw and hammer in the crypt and rewiring the main clock. A number of the components were transferred to the Collection Centre for work before being returned to display.



# Spreading our wings

The National Museum of Flight is home to the UK's most significant collection of Jet Age material and historic aircraft. Our *Reach for the Skies* events held at the museum this year helped imaginations soar with a host of half-term activities aimed at families.

The first programme, which ran on 14-18 October 2019, was developed around the theme of birds and featured daily craft sessions, storytelling and science demonstrations. For the first time, our popular bird of prey displays ran every

day, which helped us record a significant rise in the number of visits and participants during the week.

The event returned on 8-10 and 14-16 February 2020 with a focus on airlines. Despite severe weather warnings on all but one of the days, *Reach for the Skies* continued to be a success.

Visitors enjoyed object handling sessions, learned how to carry out a flight safety briefing and had the chance to put their questions to an airline pilot.



Young visitors enjoying the National Museum of Flight

# WITH THANKS

We are enormously grateful to every person and organisation who has supported our museums this year.

They have made it possible for us to continue to bring inspiration to people through times of unprecedented challenge, to protect our collections, discover their fascinating stories and share them with the world.

Thanks to our supporters, the remarkable objects in our care can continue to delight people of all ages now and in the future.

## KEY FUNDERS

National Lottery Heritage Fund Scotland  
Scottish Government

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## TRUSTS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Art Fund  
Arts and Humanities Research Council  
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The Hugh Fraser Foundation  
The Japan Foundation  
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John Ellerman Foundation  
The Murdoch Forrest Trust  
National Heritage Memorial Fund  
National Museums Scotland Charitable Trust  
Players of People's Postcode Lottery  
The Pilgrim Trust  
The Ross Girls Charitable Trust  
ScottishPower Foundation  
William Grant Foundation

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The Estate of Robert Beacroft Barker  
Richard and Catherine Burns  
James Ferguson

Sir Angus and Lady Grossart  
E & I Jamieson  
Donald and Louise MacDonald  
The Estate of George McNeil  
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Visitors enjoying a day out at the National Museum of Rural Life



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0300 123 6789  
info@nms.ac.uk  
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Cover image: Sculptural bowl of  
unglazed porcelain entitled *A Large  
Pine Tree Pool* by Hitomi Hosono.  
Acquired by National Museums  
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