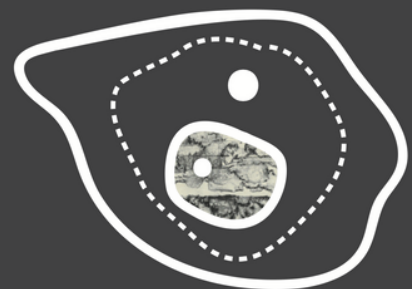




SPRING 2024

Argyll Aspires

END OF PROJECT REPORT



CHARTS.
ARGYLL & ISLES



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Introduction

PAGE 1



Argyll Aspires (2022–2024), funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, built on evidence of the need to develop opportunities in the museums and heritage sector for young people across Argyll and Bute, drawn from the evaluation of an earlier project, Heritage Horizons, developed with the Argyll and Bute Museums and Heritage Forum [2021–2022]. Argyll Aspires evolved across two-years, including paid traineeships and apprenticeships alongside school projects and outreach activities. The programme successfully offered young Argyll residents' routes to employability with recognised UK qualifications and for many others insight into how the sector is managed and the wealth of careers and topics to be explored through heritage. The project was supported by Argyll and Bute Council education and economic development services.

Creating access to heritage for young people is important to CHARTS, as a member-guided charity, supporting cultural development across Argyll and Bute. Our membership of around 700 individuals and practitioners, including those working in museums and heritage organisations, helps us understand demographic and sector needs.

Argyll and Bute is Scotland's second largest region, including twenty three islands. Population data speaks of a rapidly growing ageing population and the museum and heritage sector currently largely relies on an older volunteer workforce to support sustainability. Conversely there are also limited employment opportunities for young residents or ways to develop careers locally and the Scottish Multiple Deprivation Index cites main towns in the region as being in the top 20% of the country.

Introduction

PAGE 2



Argyll Aspires was designed as a pilot programme to help mitigate demographic challenges, to further explore paid heritage employability opportunities in the future. Our work succeeded at creating accessible skills-building opportunities through close working with partner venues, academic bodies, Museums Galleries Scotland, and other collaborators including Live Argyll and Developing Young Workforce. Continually encouraging participants to build relationships and share knowledge, Argyll Aspires simultaneously created a young peer network for ongoing professional partnership. This was further celebrated when participants undertaking heritage qualifications were offered new roles with Argyll Aspires and Live Argyll partner organisations.

Given the complexity of this pilot study; partnership, recruitment, economic and geographic landscape, we met with both success and challenges outlined within this report. However, distinct project outcomes, the overall success of the project and lessons learned, have resulted in commitment from CHARTS to carry Argyll Aspires forward as a strategic annual programme theme, funds permitting. This aims to create evermore learning opportunities and employability prospects for young people in the region and in turn enhance and strengthen the management experience base of Argyll and Bute's valued museums and heritage venues and collections.

Kathleen O'Neill
Director
Culture, Heritage and Arts Assembly, Argyll and Isles
(CHARTS)

Original Strategic Objectives

PAGE 3



"The thing I love most about Argyll Aspires is its ambition – the archive sector is extremely difficult to break into, with any paid opportunities few and far between." Donald MacDougall - Argyll Papers Archive Trainee

1. The creation of three accessible entry-level heritage positions: one Museums & Galleries Practice modern apprenticeship at Dunollie Museum Castle & Grounds, one Cultural Venue Operations modern apprenticeship at Auchindrain Historic Township, and one archival traineeship with The Argyll Papers, Inveraray Castle.
2. The co-curation of an exhibition from The Argyll Collection with pupils from Rothesay Academy - to help enable young people in an area of multiple deprivation, to develop skills and an understanding of the employment opportunities in the heritage sector.
3. Working with Developing Young Workforce to create heritage-based extended work experience placements for 'disengaged' secondary school pupils throughout the region.

Actual Outcomes

The project grew from the original objectives:

1. Two accessible professional entry-level heritage positions were created at Dunollie Museum Castle & Grounds, and Argyll Estates.
2. One additional internship created at the Argyll Papers supported by Friends of the Argyll Papers and Inverary Estates
3. Professional peer network created including the above and Campbeltown Museum, also supported by Live Argyll
4. Three young people participating in Argyll Aspires were offered jobs with host organisations
5. Co-curation of an exhibition from The Argyll Collection with pupils from Rothesay Academy – to help enable young people in an area of multiple deprivation, to develop skills and an understanding of the employment opportunities in the heritage
6. Argyll Collection collaboration development to include an Exhibition Research traineeship hosted at Dunoon Burgh Hall
7. Collaboration with Developing Young Workforce to create films for national Creative Careers Week (Autumn 2023) and developing outreach activities with Dunoon Grammar School and Campbeltown Museum
8. Developing Young Workforce support towards a complementary school project exploring local design heritage
9. National archives and museum conferences attended by participants in Belfast and Gateshead
10. Project included in two UK case studies; Scottish Archives & Records Year in Review 2022-2023 (page 16) and 32nd edition of Group for Education in Museums UK case studies (page 28)
11. Engagement total: 1042 direct beneficiaries and 100,958 indirect (visitors who would have benefited from Argyll Aspire's team input) and 2848 website engagements to time of writing.
12. The Gannochy Trust supported CHARTS to further develop accreditation opportunities, starting with Argyll Aspires



Dunollie Museum, Castle & Grounds



In numbers:

- Number of people in guided tours delivered by our apprentice: 353 people (out of 2,588 across the period of the project)
- Overall visitor numbers at Dunollie Museum, who would have benefited from our apprentice's conservation and care of the collection: 18,878
- Blog post hits for blogs written by our apprentice: 494, out of a total of 869 presented.
- No. of hits on top performing blog for whole year, also written by our apprentice 328

"This has filled a huge void on our team, bringing curatorial skills and enthusiasm. I don't know how we would have done it any other way... I'm really proud of Shannen (and it's) really exciting for Argyll"
Emma Sutcliffe, Dunollie Castle & Museum General Manager



Dunollie Museum, Castle & Grounds

What?

A year long, real-living-wage paid Museums and Galleries Modern Apprenticeship. Underpinned with SVQ modules in Museums & Galleries Practice and Core Skills, based at Dunollie Castle.

Where?

Dunollie is the ancestral seat of Clan MacDougall. Prior to this, it was the centre of the mediaeval Dalriadic Kingdom of Lorn. The site consists of the ruined castle and the 1745 Laird's House. The collections, which include textiles, weaponry, domestic objects, and traditional crafts, date from the 14th century and document the lives of the MacDougall chiefs and ordinary local people.

Who?

Shannen Provan-Sloan (nee Calderwood) was the CHARTS apprentice and Emma Sutcliffe, General Manager of Dunollie Castle took on the day-to-day responsibility and on-site line management of Shannen. The SVQ qualification elements were overseen by Museums & Galleries Scotland, supported by the project manager and Emma Sutcliffe.



What happened during Shannen's Apprenticeship?

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"It was all fantastic but our highlight was definitely the tour with Shannen. She was fun, enthusiastic and very knowledgeable. She made us love the place even more than we already did."

Tour participant, Summer 2023

In her time at Dunollie, Shannen completed her qualification assessed by Museums Galleries Scotland alongside gaining work experience in a wide range of roles in the castle. Alongside day-to-day work cataloguing and caring for the collections, Shannen demonstrated a real talent for delivering guided tours. Over the summer season she guided 353 people through the Museum and up to the Castle on the hill.

Shannen also made a massive contribution to Dunollie's online presence with social media posts about items in the collections and writing 6 of the 12 blog posts in 2023. Of those, her post about the new NLHF project, [Sophy & White](#) achieved more hits than nearly all others combined.

Emma Sutcliffe, Dunollie's General Manager went so far as to say it is because of Shannen's work in increasing the visibility of Dunollie online and improving connections with the local community that when, recently, part of the roof blew off, they received considerably more donations than they would have before Shannen was on the team.

As her apprenticeship drew to a close, Dunollie offered Shannen a 36 month contract on an NLHF funded project as their Collections Development Officer.

"My role here at Dunollie has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on me. It has allowed me to learn about working with collections, as well as all the other activities that go into keeping visitor attractions such as Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds running smoothly. I have learned about the vast history of both the site itself – the Clan MacDougall, Miss Hope MacDougall as a social historian – and the wider history of Argyll and the Isles. I have been encouraged to feel confident in my abilities, to learn new things and to present ideas despite being very new to the team. I have never felt part of a more supportive, kind and hardworking team and I feel really lucky to be here."

Shannen Provan-Sloan



One of Shannen's favourite items in the collection

PAGE 8



I am sharing with you this bench from the island of Kerrera, which is fascinating for the way it represents the interests of Miss Hope MacDougall – the aunt of our current Clan Chief, and a dedicated collector of Scottish social history artefacts.

Miss Hope MacDougall spent most of her life travelling the highlands and islands, amassing an incredible collection of items representing the everyday working lives of the Scottish people, especially those involved with agriculture.

This bench was given to Miss MacDougall in 1973 by a farmer from the Isle of Kerrera – it would originally have been used for smearing sheep with tar or butter, to prevent pests, until chemical dips began to take off in the late 1800s when the bench would have been used primarily to aid with sheep shearing.

Miss Hope MacDougall wrote a book on Kerrera – entitled ‘Mirror of History’ – and was also a talented photographer in addition to her success as a social historian.

A number of items from her extensive collection are on display in our museum, with her photography being the theme of our current temporary exhibition, ‘Hope Behind the Lens.’

Shannen

The Argyll Papers

The Archive of the Dukes of Argyll,
Argyll Estates, Inveraray Castle



In numbers:

- Number of school pupils who have been part of one of tours or talks undertaken by the Archive Assistant Trainee: 95
- Number of enquiries dealt with by the trainee: 112
- Number of items from the archive entered into the online catalogue: 173
- Number of visitors to Inveraray Castle who would have seen the exhibitions co-designed by the trainee: 82,080

Argyll Aspires provided me with the opportunity to host a paid traineeship for an archivist to learn 'on the job' whilst also studying for a professional qualification – a rare opportunity in the archives sector. The benefits have absolutely not been solely for the trainee: I have gained so much from having a colleague working with me in the archives, supporting visitors, cataloguing and developing exhibitions and displays amongst many other activities. I have really enjoyed supporting his learning and being able to share and discuss ideas, and I have learned a huge amount from his personal knowledge, experience and specific skills. He has also fitted perfectly into the warm and cohesive environment of archives, volunteers and Friends.

Alison Diamond, Archivist, Inveraray Castle

The Argyll Papers

The Archive of the Dukes of Argyll,
Argyll Estates, Inveraray Castle

What?

A 14 month paid traineeship in the Argyll Papers archive, based in the grounds of Inveraray Castle, alongside a Post Graduate Certificate in Archive Management, delivered by the Centre for Archive and Information Studies (CAIS), at the University of Dundee.

Where?

The Argyll Papers is comprised of the archives of the vast estates of the Dukes of Argyll, making it one of the “most important private archives in Britain” (Professor Allan Macinnes, 2014). It is a rich resource for Scottish and British history from the thirteenth to the twenty-first centuries and attracts visitors from all over the world, researching a wide range of subjects including family and local history, Gaelic studies, place names, military history, political history, economic and social history, agriculture and industry, architecture and more.

The Argyll Papers are the family and estate archive of the Duke of Argyll. Dating from the 13th century, the archive records 700 years of the family’s participation in Scottish, British and international events, their private lives and interests and the management of their extensive estates.

The Argyll estates covered most of Argyllshire, including the islands of Tiree, Iona and Mull, as well as the Lordship of Campbell in Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Fife.



Who was involved?

Donald MacDougall was the CHARTS Trainee and Alison Diamond, Archivist at the Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle took on the day to day responsibility and onsite line management of Donald. The post-graduate certificate in Archive and Records Management was overseen by the University of Dundee.



"I want to say a special thank you to Donald. He did such a great job as our tour guide. Two things stood out for me - he's extremely knowledgeable and he had a passion for this field of archival papers... he's a keeper!"

Tour participant, summer 2023.



What happened during Donald's Traineeship?

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The traineeship intended to increase physical public access and accelerate the digitisation of the collections, increasing online access. At the beginning of Donald's traineeship, he explained his role in a [video](#) for Creative Careers Week.

Donald delivered a number of talks and tours to local high schools and also to adult groups, including a group of ladies from Dunoon Inner Wheel and people attending Doors Open Day.

During his traineeship he increased access to the archive through delivery of an astonishing number of enquiries. Each enquiry takes a minimum of half an hour, often considerably longer and Donald completed 112 during his traineeship. He also photographed 173 items, growing the digital archive.

One big project during the traineeship was the preparation of two exhibitions which went into Inveraray Castle for the 2023 summer season which Donald worked on alongside Alison. The majority of 82,080 visitors to the castle across this period attended.

Donald also designed and delivered several presentations to a range of audiences, including an intergenerational talk for the Friends of Argyll Papers AGM alongside Murdo MacDonald, a retired Archivist from Lochgilphead, about the differences in archivist training then and now entitled Crabbit Age and Youth. It even included a musical interlude with Donald playing the pipes. Donald also took part in CHART presentation training and delivered an excellent talk in the online sharing of all the apprenticeships/traineeships.



What happened during Donald's Traineeship?

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"I've been a sheltered person - I haven't really gone anywhere"
"The ARA conference was great. Chatting with others galvanised me to make a difference"

Donald McDougall

The life of an archivist is often solitary and they are [geographically] very spread out, so CHARTS and Alison ensured that Donald was able to get out and about as much as possible, visiting Fleurs Castle and various other properties as part of the Scottish Association of Country House Archivists. He also travelled to Belfast to the Archives and Records Association conference, as well as becoming a full member of the ARA during his traineeship.

Supported by the project manager delivering networked peer support throughout the project, Donald also met up with Shannen at Dunollie and Khara at Campbeltown Museum on several occasions, networking, sharing best practices and offering tours of their own venues.

In November 2023, the Scottish Archives & Records Year in Review 2022-2023, selected Donald and his traineeship as one of their case studies (see link, page 16).

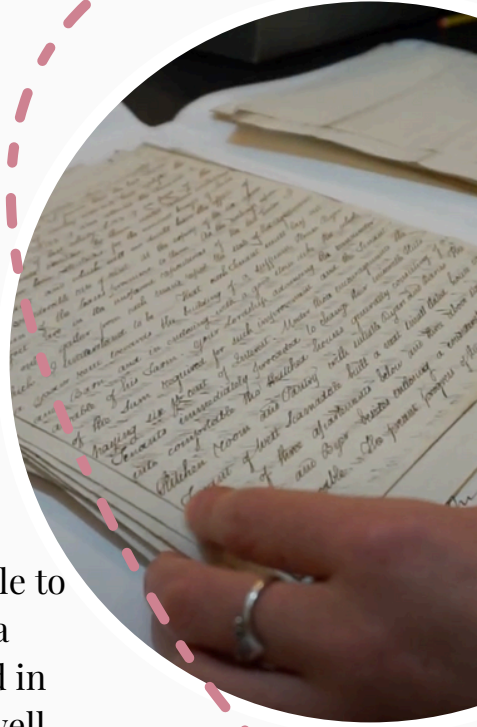
CHARTS is delighted that Donald has also been kept on at the Archive and is now working 3 days a week with the papers plus one day on land management of the Inverary Estate. This contract also includes the offer of accommodation (which is incredibly important in Inveraray where accommodation is scarce).

"We had a wonderful time on Wednesday and it was really worth it. I felt the group engaged well and personally I found the wee session they did looking at the role of an archivist and her explanation of how they prioritise different records really interesting – this will benefit my teaching. It was just the right length of time too. Feedback from the kids was positive – one boy said it was "captivating!"

History Teacher from Tarbert Academy

Additional Placement at the Argyll Papers

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As well as Donald's 14-month traineeship, the Papers were also able to host an additional trainee placement specially created for Rosanna Barraclough as a result of the recruitment process, who was based in Inveraray for one month. Archival research included to deliver a well-attended online webinar about Roseneath House. You can listen to Rosanna's talk [here](#) and she is [talking about her emerging career](#) here as part of Scotland's Creative Careers Week.

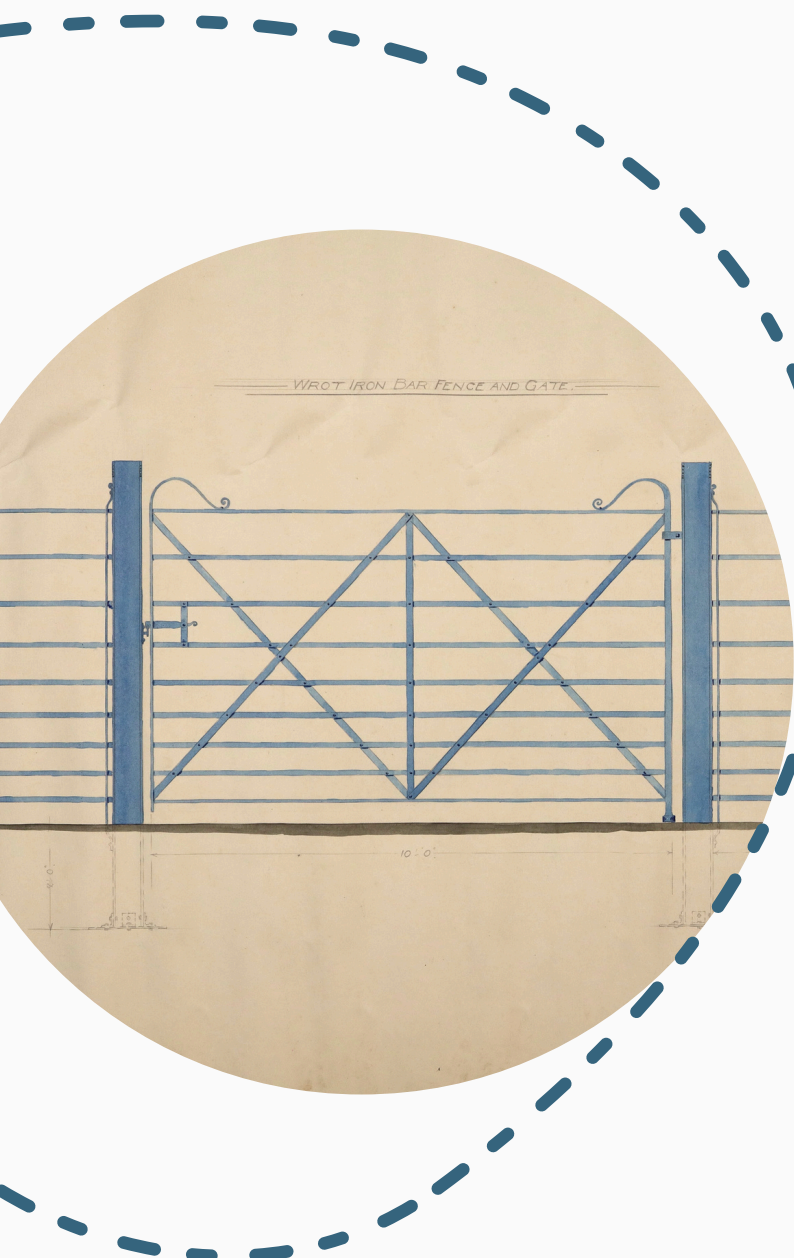
As well as the more obvious highlights, there are huge benefits from this partnership still surfacing and continuing to illustrate the strong legacy of Argyll Aspires. For example, this project gave the Argyll Papers their first experience working in schools, something which, now they have doubled their workforce with Donald on board, they now have the capacity to significantly develop.

There have been other developments too, with one of the school tour participants signing up to become a regular volunteer and, most recently, two work experience placements being agreed for young people from Lochgilphead.

"It's been a really amazing opportunity to further the aims of Argyll Aspires, learn more myself and to spread my knowledge and research..."
Rosanna Barraclough

One of Donald's favourite items in the collection

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ARG/12/01/289. Drawing of a wrought iron bar fence and gate. Pencil and blue ink wash. Stamped A. & J. Main & Co. Limited, Clydesdale Iron Works, Glasgow.

“This drawing of a wrought iron bar fence and gate is part of the magnificent flat plans series of the Argyll Papers. These records are among the most valuable and eye-catching in the archive and, so far, 399 maps and plans have been catalogued, packaged in protective polyester sleeves and housed safely in two metal plan chests. The variety is fascinating: original drawings for the construction of Inveraray Castle survive alongside more utilitarian sketches of piers, quarries and farm steadings across Argyll.

There is something particularly pleasing about this pencil and blue ink wash drawing from office of A.J. Main & Co. Ltd. which, judging from the measurements given, shows a gate intended for a 6-foot-high deer fence. A.J. Main & Co. moved to the Clydesdale Iron Works in Possilpark, Glasgow, in 1874 and the drawing likely dates from around this time. I really enjoy the process of cataloguing these unique plans.

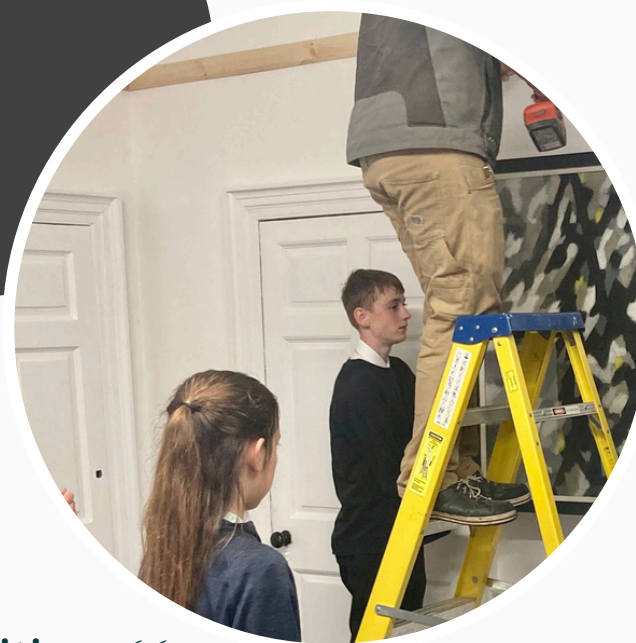
Not only are they nice to look at, but they provide useful information about the management of the Argyll Estate over time.”

Donald

The Argyll Collection

PAGE 16

Schools project with Mount Stuart, Rothesay Academy and other schools



In numbers:

- Visitors to From Dawn to Dusk exhibition: 66
- Number of young people involved in curating exhibition: 25
- Number of participants at Argyll Collection workshops and talks: 132

"Working with Rothesay Academy pupils on this exhibition has been a fantastic way to animate and champion the Argyll Collection. We hope what we have all learned can suggest ways to continue working with and supporting the Collection."

Morven Gregor, Curator of Contemporary and Learning, Mount Stuart Trust

"It was really interesting to look at the Collection and decide which paintings works with what and where it all should all go. It was also cool to make the scale model of the exhibition space."

Gemma Wallace S2 Rothesay Academy.

The Argyll Collection

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Schools project with Mount Stuart, Rothesay Academy and other schools

What?

A project working with pupils from Rothesay Academy, working with the project team to co-curate an exhibition of pieces from the Argyll Collection, which was exhibited at the prestigious Mount Stuart in June 2023.

Where?

The project took place within schools and at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute. Mount Stuart is a country house and the ancestral home of the Marquesses of Bute, known for its outstanding architecture and design. The project focused on the Argyll Collection which is a unique grouping of 179 artworks established as a learning resource in the 1960s for young people. It includes work by notable Scottish 20th century artists, as well as containing a significant African art collection, rated by the University of St Andrews to be amongst the best in Europe. Typically located within the region's schools and libraries across the mainland and islands of Argyll, this continues to enable young people living rurally with limited access to galleries to experience fine art.



"Working with CHArts and Mount Stuart on the student led Argyll Collection exhibition project has allowed me to see first hand the importance of providing young learners with real life learning experiences that combine community and culture.

Students have had the opportunity to plan and design an exhibition event that reflects their perspectives and has, at the same time, taught them about the different roles and skills that are required to build a successful event. They have been supported through this process by professionals in areas such as art curation, graphic design, project management, and this experience is giving our students a real world perspective and genuine ownership of an important art event. I, for one, can't wait to see how it all comes together "

Allan Arneil, Teacher of Art and Design at Rothesay Academy.

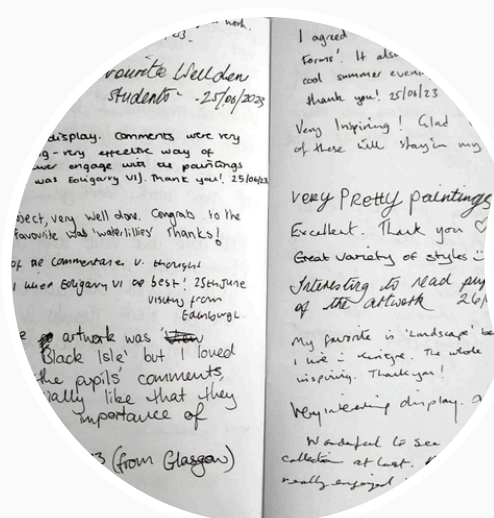
Who was involved?

This element of Argyll Aspires was project managed and facilitated by project manager Lucy McAra Neish. Working closely with Argyll and Bute Council, who own the collection, partnership working was an essential element, importantly including the Learning Curator at Mount Stuart, Morven Gregor playing a pivotal role and Rothesay Academy incorporating Dunoon Grammar School pupils being the key school partners.

A series of school visits involving Dunoon, Tarbert and Lochgilphead secondary schools also took place to offer insights about local heritage venues and career potential in the heritage sector. This was supported by Developing young Workforce.



“Making the model was my favourite, because I got to learn how to plan and add in detail. It has helped me decide my future”
Pupil, Rothesay Academy



What happened in the Argyll Collection Project?

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A team of arts professionals led a series of workshops on curation, conservation and exhibition design with a mixed year group of pupils at Rothesay Academy. The project also included pupils from Dunoon Grammar School and culminated in an exhibition at Mount Stuart, providing the opportunity for most of the students to interact with the Argyll Collection for the first time.

The Exhibition at Mount Stuart was well received and this element of Argyll Aspires has proven to be a catalyst for other CHARTS development to date, reviewing and supporting the Argyll Collection funded by the Art Fund. As well as providing new, young perspectives, new audiences and academics engaged with the Argyll Collection – something which due to lack of external resources has been reduced in the Argyll cultural heritage landscape for many years.

In addition to what CHARTS set out to deliver, they also led several workshops on the African art in the Argyll Collection at Dunoon Burgh Hall for schools and for DBH's open day. Earlier researched by Dr Kate Cowcher at the University of St Andrews, the African pieces in the collection are believed to be amongst the best in Europe.

"What an interesting exhibition, a lovely collection of paintings, carefully chosen. I loved reading why the students chose each piece"

"Great collection of pictures, well chosen and fab to see a model of the space! I had no idea the collection existed. I'd love to find the rest!"

"Such an amazing project. It is amazing to see the creative collaboration with the pupils... I thoroughly enjoyed this!"

Auchindrain Township & Dunoon Burgh Hall

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Background:

In the original application, the plan was to host a year-long apprenticeship at Auchindrain Township near Inveraray. Recruitment for this post proved very difficult, and a few attempts were made through extending and readvertising the opportunity available. The post was eventually offered on the second round, but the young person was then unable to take the opportunity up. With an expanded age range, an apprentice with an already established career in another sector was found in the third recruitment round, significantly delaying the timescale. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances this apprenticeship ended after a few months.

It was later agreed with the NLHF to redeploy funds to host a 4-month Exhibition Research traineeship working with the Argyll Collection at the Dunoon Burgh Hall, supported by Rewards Training Scotland.



Awaken: The Argyll Collection

At Dunoon Burgh Hall

In numbers:

- Visitors to Awaken exhibition: 204
- Attendees to the invited preview: 78
- Participants at the schools' workshops led by the Exhibition Research Trainee: 31
- Participants at the open workshops in Dunoon Burgh Hall: 12



"I feel I have matured a lot during my traineeship, as it has pushed me out of my comfort zone and do things that I would usually find nerve wracking"

Lily Vaughan, Argyll Collections

"Learning about the Argyll Collections goal of taking art all around Argyll for people to experience, especially in rural areas, was very inspiring"

"Having chunks of jade to touch was cool as normally you aren't allowed to touch art on display... so it was cool to know what the statue material felt like"

"Lily's descriptions were very interesting and helpful. Made you look at the exhibits in a whole different way"

Awaken: The Argyll Collection

At Dunoon Burgh Hall

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What?

A 4-month research traineeship, based at Dunoon Burgh Hall (DBH) managed by the Argyll Collection Reconnected Research Manager, supported the Reconnected project manager funded by the Art Fund.

The aim of the project was to curate a new exhibition drawn from the available 179 artworks located across Argyll and Bute and explore responses to the collection with the local community and exhibition visitors.

The exhibition, titled Awaken, opened mid-April 2024, with 74 people coming to the opening. The exhibition then ran for 2.5 weeks, attracting over 200 visitors.

Trainee, Lily Vaughan, also ran two workshops at Dunoon High School in connection with the project, with the aim of engaging more young people to visit visual art exhibitions, and also offered two free open workshops to the community during the exhibition run.

Lily's traineeship was also included in 32nd edition of Group for Education in Museums UK case studies (page 28) which gives an excellent account of how this traineeship fits within the context of the Argyll Collection, Reconnected project, reviewing the cultural significance of this incredible art collection, funded by the Art Fund.



Argyll Aspires Outcomes

PAGE 23

A wider range of people will be involved

- Significant increase in school visits, including first visits ever for Argyll Papers
- First paid jobs in the heritage sector for all apprentices/trainees
- Offering 5 paid opportunities - those young people would not have engaged otherwise
- Increased awareness of the Argyll Collection for Rothesay Academy and Dunoon Grammar school students
- Raised awareness in the Argyll Collection from Mount Stuart (Isle of Bute) and Dunoon Burgh Hall audiences
- Increased contact with the Argyll Collection leading to the generation of new ideas for future development in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council, to impact other school learners and leavers
- Increased young people volunteering in heritage through taking part in the project directly, through attending a guided tour and also as visitors at the exhibitions
- The Mount Stuart, Argyll Collection exhibition developed improved partnership working with schools in local areas
- A Service Agreement was developed between CHARTS and the local authority's education services, in support of the Argyll Collection, 2024
- Campbeltown Museum and Live Argyll supported the project and the apprentice at Campbeltown benefited from peer support and skills building sessions
- Campbeltown Museum acted as a host venue for peer-network workshops and activities



There were unexpected and positive outcomes from the high school visits. From our two hosted visits, we gained a pupil volunteer who came regularly one day a week for four months, delivering useful work and earning himself a Silver Heritage Heroes Award. We have also since been approached by two schools for work experience placements, both of which we will be able to offer.

Alison Diamond, Archivist, Argyll Papers

Argyll Aspires Outcomes

People will have developed skills

PAGE 24

- Huge increase in confidence and skills developed by apprentices including collection care, curation, delivery of a public event
- Development of tour guiding/presentation skills
- Unexpected benefit is the development of people management skills and the interpersonal skill set – through working closely with volunteers
- First of its kind archive traineeship for Argyll
- Increased creative skills of the participants in Lily's workshops
- Conservation and curatorial skills in school project with Argyll Collection
- Alison Diamond, Archivist at Argyll Papers, reported developing new skills in mentoring, supporting and learning from Donald
- CHARTS delivered presentation skills training workshops for Donald and Shannen for Argyll Aspires joined by peer, Khara McPhail from Campbeltown Museum
- CHARTS supported the Argyll Papers to diversify their income streams and take a more entrepreneurial approach with the archive through linked support from the project manager
- Legacy of volunteer and work experience placements developing from apprenticeship / traineeship delivery
- Further evidence of confidence and skill development can be seen [here](#) in this series of blogs around the visits to the Archives & Records Association (August 2023) and Museum Association (November 2023) conferences.



"I have learned how to research artwork online and through use of books, how to make an exhibition interactive and engaging for a wide range of ages, how to write interpretation panels in an effective way that is easy to understand, I have also gained far better communication skills, I am much more able to share my knowledge of the collection to the public and discussing the artwork/ artists."

Lily Vaughan

Argyll Aspires Outcomes

PAGE 25

People will have learned about heritage

- Argyll Papers exhibitions were held in Inveraray castle – including talks to the castle guides and some visitors
- Guided tours and visits were designed and delivered at Dunollie Museum and for the Argyll Papers
- Complementary heritage design workshops took place at Dunoon Grammar School
- There a diverse range of visitors to the Dawn to Dusk Argyll Collection exhibition, some of whom had connections to the collection including an ex-teacher who was familiar with it when it was first being put together and an art historian from Kenya who is focusing on the collection in their work. The importance of public sharing of this work largely only on show within school settings to date, is an important part of the review of the collection; gathering audience response.
- Donald McDougall, archive assistant trainee extended his knowledge and heritage network through visiting several properties including Fleurs Castle through the Scot Association and of Country House Archivists as well as attending the Archive & Records Association conference in Belfast
- Introducing a broad range of new visitors to 2 exhibitions highlighting the Argyll Collection, many for the first time.



“I feel confident to talk about my work and knowledge of the Argyll Collection and be able to explain my vision to others”

Lily Vaughan

Argyll Aspires Outcomes

A better place to live, work or visit

PAGE 26



- Introducing Rothesay pupils to Mount Stuart – a key local employer of young people
- The trainees/apprentices developed a series of exhibitions and visitor experiences through their placements
- Opening up of digital offerings for visitors further afield at the Argyll Papers – development of a course and a zoom paleography group
- The Argyll Papers and Dunollie Castle supporting local businesses, genealogists and academics with information about their ancestry or their home/place of work
- Creating heritage opportunities never seen in Argyll before, means local young people don't have to move away from their region to further interest and qualifications towards heritage careers
- Providing greater public access to the Argyll Collection which previously was only on display in schools and libraries

"I'm living the dream!"
Shannen
Provan-Sloan

"Opportunities are limited working in a place like this"
Donald McDougall

"There was a blossoming of the young people who came to the exhibition opening"
Morven Gregor

Argyll Aspires Outcomes


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People will have greater wellbeing

- An important element of the project was building an informal young heritage professional network, leading to several visits and relationship building across the different strands of Argyll Aspires
- Cross generational friendships blossomed across the project, notably the friendship between Donald and Murdo (retired Archivist from Lochgilphead) and between the young people themselves
- All trainees/apprentices reported a rise in confidence and self-worth through working with Argyll Aspires
- Piloting of a peer-led network of young heritage professionals in the region

|The local economy will have been boosted

- Through Shannen Provan-Sloan's work at Dunollie with the blog and social media, greater level of donations were received in an emergency fundraiser when part of the roof blew off.
- Greater offer for visitors, including enhanced understanding and experience leading to more return visits
- Two apprenticeships and three traineeships created
- Increased footfall to all venues involved



"I'm interested in it and also love to work with people. [I also love] breathing new life into museums and castles"
Shannen Provan-Sloan

Recruitment of all roles in numbers

Project Manager

- 6 people applied (Scotland wide) and 3 rather than 1 were recruited:
- 1 project manager communities and venues engagement – Argyll Aspires overview
- 1 project manager, schools
- 1 external evaluator

Argyll Papers Assistant Archive Trainee

- 15 people applied (UK wide)
- 1 Trainee recruited – Argyll-based resident
- 1 Internship created for England-based resident, supported by Friends of Argyll Papers and Argyll Estates
- 1 digital support pilot project outwith Argyll Aspires created for 1 candidate
- 1 candidate successful at obtaining work later with Argyll Estates

Auchindrain Township, Cultural Venues Apprenticeship

- 5 people applied (Scotland wide)
- 1 apprentice recruited at change of career level

Dunollie Museum Castle and Grounds

- 2 people applied (Argyll wide)
- 1 apprenticeship created

Argyll Collection - Exhibition research, hosted by Dunoon Burgh Hall

- 2 people applied (Argyll and Glasgow based)
- 1 exhibition research post created



Key Challenges

Reflecting on learning to improve future projects

Overview

Argyll Aspires offered significant new opportunities in the heritage sector across the vast rural geography of Argyll and Bute. The scale and rural geography of the region cannot be overlooked in the design and delivery of CHARTS partnership work. This carries a number of issues in relation to participant access and not least of all through time required to reach venues and challenging transport links: poor roads, limited ferry and train services.

From the outset of Argyll Aspires a range of interest was forthcoming, from within the region itself and other parts of the UK due to the range of partnerships and qualifications offered for employment entry and insight into the heritage sector. Many older people also enquired about apprenticeship and trainee roles; however the aim was to encourage younger people to take part in the project.



*“Heritage in
Argyll has not
invested in its
own talent pool
[until now]”
Donald McDougall*

Key Challenges

Reflecting on learning to improve future projects

Recruitment Process

CHARTS capitalised on relationships established with its member heritage organisations since the setting up of the charity in 2019. The design approach to Argyll Aspires grew partnership working, engaging interested host venues from the outset of the application for support to NLHF. The multifaceted nature of the project also enabled a wide range of stakeholder support with a clear set of aims and objectives. However, the complexity of each project strand, delays in recruitment and changes with staff led to an extended timeline, from an agreed 18-month programme to 2 years.

Additionally, the geographical nature and scale of the region remained at the forefront of development considerations throughout. This included that with a known shortage of affordable accommodation in the region, anyone participating from outside the area, or beyond commutable distance (common even within Argyll and Bute) were challenged to find accommodation and this required additional in-kind support from venue-partners and in some cases brought about new collaboration with local bodies e.g., the Friends of the Argyll Papers supported accommodation needs of trainees based at Inveraray.



Key Challenges

Reflecting on learning to improve future projects

Specific Recruitment Challenges

As with all heritage projects across Argyll and the Isles, the remote and rural location of venues is always an issue. This led to repeat advertising in the first instance for several of the opportunities, excluding the trainee assistant archivist which had multiple outstanding applicants and demanded a lengthened decision-making time for the selection panel. For Donald, working with the Argyll Papers meant a 1.5-hour commute from his family croft on the Isle of Seil, was the biggest challenge for him. “The commute was wearying”.

For other applicants’ resident in Argyll the availability of personal transport was critical and for those from outside the area the understanding of the realities of living and working in rural Scotland, especially in winter, were underestimated and in some cases felt by the selection panel to be slightly romanticised.

Project partners at every location actively sought to support interest and create a positive recruitment experience. This included the Argyll Estates seeking support from Friends of the Argyll Papers to secure Rosanne Barraclough’s short resident internship with accommodation provided on site and CHARTS developing a pilot role in digital marketing for one other candidate. Of the latter, the appointment Peter Forbes stated:

“It has been really valuable to be able to gain some copywriting and digital marketing experience, and it has been a pleasure working with everyone at the organisation. In a couple of weeks, I will be starting a new job! ... The experience gained at CHARTS helped me a lot in securing this job. Hopefully, I will eventually return to the heritage sector with a wide array of skills gained from working in a tech position.”

Key Challenges

Reflecting on learning to improve future projects

Project Management

The project manager role advertised gained a very high level of professional interest and ultimately the selection panel decided to recruit 3 people instead of 1 for part-time roles.

The majority of interest was from outwith the region and 2 people living within Argyll were offered work, specifically linked to qualification, approach to cultural and environmental heritage and experience. This included to recruit a teacher with former cultural coordinator experience in the region who had already worked with the Argyll Collection, to link the collection to school groups and to invite external evaluation from an extensively experienced cultural professional. The project overview position was given to someone with extensive experience in the museums and heritage field and specifically with track record of supporting access and participation including a range of complex stakeholders.

Part way through the project the project overview manager was offered a permanent contract as an employee within a central belt museum and submitted her resignation. As a key area of her work had been to support the establishment of a peer network amongst trainees this had a knock-on effect to delay skills and relationship building for the group and resulted in slower provision of on-site support to trainees and their hosts as originally anticipated.

The external evaluator was then offered to take up the management overview role, to bring the project to a close and build on identified need, This advantaged the project through existing knowledge of trainee, apprenticeship and host progress as well as the internal workings of the organisation by that stage, for best possible transition.

Staff changes however were also particularly compounded for the apprenticeship at Dunollie, where the assessor at Museums Galleries Scotland also went on maternity leave, bringing about additional change for her role.

Key Challenges

Reflecting on learning to improve future projects

Partnerships

The project had identified venue hosts from the outset and CHARTS moved swiftly and effectively to redeploy funds when the Auchindrain apprenticeship didn't work out. This led to a fulfilling and inspiring 4-month traineeship for Lily Vaughan at Dunoon Burgh Hall and extended Argyll Aspires support to the Argyll Collection, based on the earlier success of the Mount Stuart, pupil-curated exhibition. Due to the last-minute and short nature of the opportunity however this resulted just being able to offer SVQ modules in Exhibition Research rather than a full qualification for Lily.

Contracted qualification providers, Rewards Training Scotland, were also affected by changes to the programme and responded generously to the idea of replacing their support at Auchindrain Township with support to Dunoon Burgh Hall. Generous agreement with CHARTS enabled vital qualification assessment and support for the Exhibition Research traineeship to go ahead within the original project budget allocated for their work.

In terms of processes fostered by distinct venues in their hosting arrangements, with the project managed overall by CHARTS managerial staff, whilst all the young people felt supported, an occasional lack of clarity was noted by them at various stages as to who they should check in with and speak to when certain issues arose.

Equally the clash of the Rothesay Academy school show with the opening night of the Mount Stuart exhibition, highlighted the need for closer working with senior education officials to ensure calendar clashes can be avoided in the future for events, such as those including the profile of Mount Stuart and to which many pupils were highly invested. Further discussion with stakeholders regarding this also highlighted that at various times there were too many different adults involved in the sessions with pupils. It is therefore also acknowledged that an extended timeline and a smaller, consistent professional team may be better considered in the future to aid pupil learning.

Legacy & Lessons Learned

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Job Creation

Undoubtedly, the biggest highlight is Donald and Shannen securing jobs within their host organisations at the Argyll Papers and Dunollie Museum respectively. Argyll Aspires set out to develop better and stronger pathways for young people into employment in the heritage sector, and there could be no greater testament than the creation of two new heritage jobs in Argyll. CHARTS will build on this in future projects, formalising within partner agreements the key aim for trainee hosts to have support in place at the end of the apprenticeship/traineeship



Partner Responsibilities

The learning around clarity of the responsibilities of each project partner in relation to learners and where responsibilities lie has been taken on by CHARTS and a more formalised induction and check in process will be implemented for future projects. This will include learner and host start-up induction and programmed support sessions. CHARTS has also now implemented a risk assessment process against all project management reports.

Responsibilities from the outset also included host venues meeting recruitment timescales to match the availability of qualification assessors' timetables. This meant that the Argyll Papers archive assistant trainee opportunity linking with the University of Dundee started much earlier than the other positions. This left the recruit feeling isolated from other young professionals at the outset of his traineeship.

Legacy & Lessons Learned

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Project Structure

In the future CHARTS would aim to design longer lead in times to enable all new recruits to begin the project together, building from the outset the advantages of peer-support networks and not least of all for confidence building.

In the early months of the project, the discrepancy in appointment and start dates for the various apprentices and trainees meant that there was a delay in getting them [trainees] together and really making the most of the benefits they could bring to each other as a group – once this got going, it was really beneficial.

Alison Diamond, Archivist, Argyll Estates

Building Skill Sets

CHARTS also recognises, through the learning from this project, that there is a wealth of expertise that with greater budget may have more broadly supported project partners through the CHARTS team working more directly with venue hosts from the outset, including the further commissioning of key professionals to assist around bespoke topics. For example, interview training – how to shortlist and interview candidates might be a very useful step, framed as part of an apprenticeship programme but could be applied by the partners across all their work, recognising that often smaller heritage and cultural organisations have had scant opportunity to train and develop in this area.



Legacy & Lessons Learned

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Building Skill Sets

Also, as demonstrated through the broader support Argyll Aspires gave to the Argyll Papers, there is a huge gap in support for heritage organisations to diversify and develop their income streams and entrepreneurial opportunities, which is key to their survival. CHARTS is now implementing environment and equalities, diversity and inclusion action plans for their work across Argyll and future project partners will benefit from embedded learning and knowledge share around these topics, helping to sustain the rich arts and heritage organisations across the region.

“Towards the end of the project, we benefitted hugely from additional support provided by Sarah Longfield [project manager], chatting initially about evaluation which led to support in considering marketing for the archives. It might have been useful if this input had started earlier in the project – whilst I think the internal management of the traineeship at Argyll Estates worked absolutely fine, I feel that more direct mentoring from CHARTS might have been beneficial for the trainee and would have been essential if it had all gone horribly wrong at our end and also would have offered reassurance that what I was delivering was as required as a supervisor and mentor for the trainee. It would also have underlined the intimate and ongoing connection between the role and the wider project, which grew as the project progressed.”

Alison Diamond, Archivist, Argyll Estates



Argyll Aspires 2025- 2028

Building on the culture of collaboration and outcomes evidenced within Argyll Aspires, CHARTS has implemented strategic themes for year-on-year delivery in its new Business Plan (2025-2028). This includes to continue with the strategic development theme of Argyll Aspires, to further encourage shared learning which addresses heritage education, sustainability and demographic need, as identified across Argyll and Bute through this work to date.

CHARTS will also continue to work closely with the local authority through education and economic development services to develop this work with partners; Live Argyll, Developing Young Workforce and the Argyll and Bute Museums and Heritage Forum.



“Argyll Aspires has delivered some incredible opportunities for young people, developing interest, access and skills in the heritage sector. CHARTS has overcome extensive access barriers to shape an inclusive programme of work which is innovative, previously unheard of and utterly invaluable: breathing youthful life and energy into Argyll’s unique and precious heritage”

Sarah Longfield, Argyll Aspires Project Manager



For more information about CHARTS and to see what they're currently up to, [click here](#).

