



Media release from the National Trust for Scotland

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Royal Patron The Duke of Rothesay encounters Scotland's rural past at the House of Dun

The Patron of conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland, His Royal Highness The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay was greeted by over 100 guests at the House of Dun near Montrose earlier today.

The occasion was the formal opening of the Dr Sheila Bain Courtyard and new multi-sensory installations housing the Angus Folk Collection, which together tell the stories of hundreds of years of rural life in the County of Angus.

The Duke was welcomed on arrival by the Lord-Lieutenant of Angus, Mrs Patricia Sawers, the Provost of Angus Council, Ronnie Proctor MBE and the Council's Chief Executive, Mrs Margo Williamson before being escorted on a tour of the House of Dun by the National Trust for Scotland's Chairman, Sir Mark Jones FRSE and its Chief Executive, Phil Long OBE FRSE.

The William Adam-designed House of Dun was built for the Erskine family in 1743 to replace a medieval tower house and was acquired by the National Trust for Scotland in 1980 and opened to the public in 1989.

The £714,000 project to convert under-utilised space in the House of Dun's courtyard to house the Angus Folk Collection was made possible thanks to the legacy of Dr Sheila Bain, members of the National Trust for Scotland's Patrons' Club, the Angus Members' Centre, the Northwood Charitable Trust, and other generous donors.

Iain Hawkins, the National Trust for Scotland's General Manager North East and Jason Robertson, Visitor Services Manager introduced The Duke to Louisa Smillie, playing the part of the late Violet Jacob, a renowned poet born as Violet Augusta Mary Frederica Kennedy-Erskine at the House of Dun in 1863.

Louisa is one of the Trust's three costumed tour guides representing real people who lived at the House and she used the opportunity to tell The Duke about the Erskines' family background and the historic exterior and interior of the property.

Leaving the House, The Duke went into the property's garden and viewed a stone unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother on 12 May 1989 to formally open the House of Dun to the public.

The Duke continued his tour of the new courtyard installations including:

- 'The Potting Shed' – in which display items include a whale harpoon, cruise lamps, a spinning wheel and whale bone knitting needles in order to tell the stories of the Angus handloom weavers and the fishing and whaling industries;
- 'The Angus Collection' – was assembled by Jean, Lady Maitland of Burnside between the 1920s and 50s. She had a great interest in nature and folk history which led her to acquire (often from 'scrappies' and rag and bone men) the ephemera of hundreds of years of a rural lifestyle that was quickly disappearing in the face of 20th-century technology and social change. This display includes a farmhouse hair, an open pot, a cradle, a penny farthing and images from *The Dundee Courier* 1950;
- 'The Coach House' – the key exhibit here is a magnificent hearse built in 1896 by Thomas Swinton & Sons, Dundee, for the Parish Council of Glenisla. It attracted much comment, some wondering at the appropriateness of something so solemn being "fitted with all modern conveniences and improvements";
- 'The Stables' – objects on display include a horse harness, a horse collar, horseshoes, Blacksmiths tools, a carriage wheel former, an anvil and furnace bellows. The displays explain how much agriculture relied on horsepower, with as many as 140,000 horses in Scotland's fields in 1880.

On concluding his tour, The Duke unveiled an inscribed stone to mark the formal opening of the Dr Sheila Bain Courtyard and the new displays, before mingling with guests who included Executors of Dr Bain's estate and donors who had supported the project, as well as the volunteers and staff responsible for the House of Dun and its collections.

The National Trust for Scotland's Chief Executive, Phil Long said:

"His Royal Highness honoured us twice today by formally opening these wonderful new installations at the House of Dun shortly after confirming that he would remain as Patron of the National Trust for Scotland.

"Knowing our Patron's deep connections with the countryside, I could see that he was fascinated with the various display items that have been carefully selected from Angus Collection. It is a tribute to the foresight of Lady Jean Maitland that that she collected things that were becoming obsolete and being disregarded, but which now give us an insight into a lost world of Scottish and Angus rural life that shaped our ancestors' lives and the society we live in today.

“That the objects from the collection are so well and informatively displayed is testament to the care and professionalism of our Collections staff and the architects and contractors who made the buildings ready to house them, as well as the project management skills of Iain Hawkins and his team.

“This is the Trust’s 90th year and it could not exist without the support of generous donors. We were delighted and honoured that The Duke was able to meet and thank many of them in person today.”

ENDS

Notes for Editors

The House of Dun

The House of Dun, designed by William Adam for the 13th Laird, David Erskine, a judge of the Court of Session, was built in 1743 to replace the medieval tower house situated on an estate which had been home to the Erskine family since 1375. Described as Adam’s ‘finest surviving modest-sized country house’, the House of Dun is set within gardens - laid out by an illegitimate daughter of William IV, Lady Augusta Fitzclarence, the wife of the Hon. John Kennedy Erskine - and a large estate which encompasses policies and farmland, the Old Dun Kirk (which John Knox visited), Erskine Mausoleum, the Montrose Basin Nature Reserve and a two-mile stretch of the River Esk.

The property has been open to the public since 1989 after being acquired by the Trust following its spell as a country house hotel in the 1950s and 60s. None of the Erskine family have lived in the property since the 1940s.

A new visitor experience has been created by re-imagining the House of Dun through creating a new home for the Angus Folk Museum collection, which was amassed by Lady Maitland of Burnside in the first half of the 20th century (see below). Under-utilised space in the house’s courtyard has been completely transformed to host important items from the collection and uses multi-sensory installations to tell the wider stories of the Dun estate, the county of Angus and its impact on Scotland’s history and to explore the lives of rural communities and celebrate the estate’s important natural heritage.

The £714,000 project has been made possible thanks to the legacy of Dr Sheila Bain, members of the National Trust for Scotland’s Patrons’ Club, the Angus Members’ Centre and other generous donors who prefer to remain anonymous. Work was completed at the beginning of July 2021.

The Angus Folk Collection

The collection was assembled by Jean, Lady Maitland between the 1920s and 50s. She had a great interest in nature and folk history which led her to acquire the ephemera of hundreds of years of rural lifestyles that were fast disappearing.

Her collection was first displayed in the Old Manse in Rescobie in 1953, before premises on the Glamis Estate were offered two years later. The National Trust for Scotland took on the collection in 1976.

The collection encompasses a wide range of objects which represent features of long-gone country lives such as the work of an 'Angus wifie', beekeeping, schools, spinning and weaving, kitchens, eating and drinking, county fairs, beggars and the poor, the supernatural, nurseries and toys.

Lady Jean Maitland died in 1982.

The cottage buildings in Glamis in which the collection was stored were closed in 2014 following an investigation which revealed problems with their structure and condition which were uneconomic for the Trust to address. These were handed back to the owners and the collection placed in storage pending a new permanent home – which is now the House of Dun.

The National Trust for Scotland

The National Trust for Scotland was formed after a meeting in Pollok House, Glasgow in 1931. It is the independent charity that ensures that Scotland's heritage is valued by everyone and protected now and for future generations. The Trust cares for and maintains 76,000 hectares of countryside, 245 miles of mountain footpaths, eight National Nature Reserves, 10,000 archaeological sites, collections containing over 300,000 precious objects and 100 historic properties. Among the places in its care are Culzean Castle & Country Park, Glencoe, Fair Isle, the battlefields of Culloden and Bannockburn, Brodick, Bodie and Fyvie Castles and St Kilda, the UK's only dual World Heritage Site.