



21 October 2023

WORK PROGRESSES ON CANNA HOUSE CONSERVATION PROJECT

Conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland has painstakingly packed and stored tens of thousands of items from Canna House in the Inner Hebrides, as its project to conserve and repair the 19th century house and its important collections makes good progress.

The house was filled with items large and small, from a Steinway piano to collections of moths and butterflies, all collected by John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Faye Shaw during their lifetime. The couple, known for their work to collect and document Gaelic song, stories, poetry and photography, gathered a huge archive that provides an incredible insight into life in the Hebrides and Nova Scotia during a period of great change.

It is this unique and precious cultural archive that the conservation project to carry out vital repairs at the home is intended particularly to protect.

During the 12-month project, the exterior and interior of Canna House is undergoing an extensive programme of repairs and conservation that will ensure the house is strong and secure against the elements, that its important collections, both of the Campbell's belongings and its Gaelic archive, are kept in the appropriate conditions and that both the house and the archive can be accessed and enjoyed by the public and researchers alike.

In preparation for this, some 50,000 items have been carefully packed according to type and removed from the house. This mammoth task commenced before the pandemic and took many months to complete. The entire collection is now in secure storage.

The project, which is part of the National Trust for Scotland's projects committed to in its 10-year strategy Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone, is being generously funded by supporters of the conservation charity, including the NTS USA Foundation who have contributed \$600,000.

Chief Executive Phil Long OBE said: "After many years of careful planning, it is a great step forward to have started work on this ambitious and complex project. Canna is a very special place that is loved by many because of its unique nature, beauty and heritage.

"The island has captured the hearts and imaginations of people from all over the world, and we are very grateful for their interest and support, particularly from the NTS USA

Foundation who are longstanding supporters of the island and our conservation work here.

“It is thanks to this support that work is now underway on several significant projects on Canna this year in partnership with the island community, which will meet shared objectives of protecting Scotland’s protected heritage, contributing to the island’s infrastructure, and sustainability, through investing in its facilities and experience for visitors, which are a vital part of its economy.”

Indigo Carnie, the National Trust for Scotland’s Collections Manager on Canna, added: “John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw were at the vanguard of the effort to record the unique oral culture of the Hebrides; they also lived through momentous world events and developments of the twentieth century, experienced from their island home; and their friendships spanned the worlds of art, literature, music, science, faith, politics and beyond. The internationally significant collections at Canna House offer a rich insight into their times and activities and we are delighted that this project is enabling new research, conservation and interpretation to take place, and that the collections will then be made available to the public for the first time in a decade.”

The project is making use of firms based across the Highlands and Moray with project management being provided by Glyn Young Associates from Inverness, lead designers LDN Architects also from Inverness and main contractors Simpson Builders from Beaulieu.

In addition to the work underway on Canna House, the National Trust for Scotland is working with the community to support some other important projects on the island, including the creation of a Canna visitor hub which will provide improved facilities for visitors and the community on the island, including a welcome space for our ranger to welcome visitors to Canna and facilities for visiting health workers.

Canna is a small island to the south-west of Skye, that supports a small and vibrant island community. The island was donated to the National Trust for Scotland in 1981 by Gaelic scholar John Lorne Campbell and his wife Margaret Fay Shaw, who together amassed and researched a huge collection of Gaelic and Celtic songs, stories, poetry and a unique collection of butterflies and moths, all contained in Canna House. The island is rich in wildlife, important for seabirds and holds a range of designations.

The island setting of Canna boasts a complex mosaic of habitats – marine, littoral and terrestrial, many of national or regional significance. Among the most important are the base-rich grassland and cliff vegetation, the machair and maritime heath. Combining this diversity of habitats with the temperate, oceanic climate, Canna is able to support a maritime flora and fauna of great interest and beauty. It is of international importance for its colonies of seabirds, particularly shags, puffins, razorbills, black guillemots and formerly manx shearwaters, together with its raptors. The islands are also rich in

archaeological interest, with current interests including coastal erosion and 3D interpretation opportunities.

Sixteen people currently live on the island year-round.

For more information on Canna or the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/10zp240T15>

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.