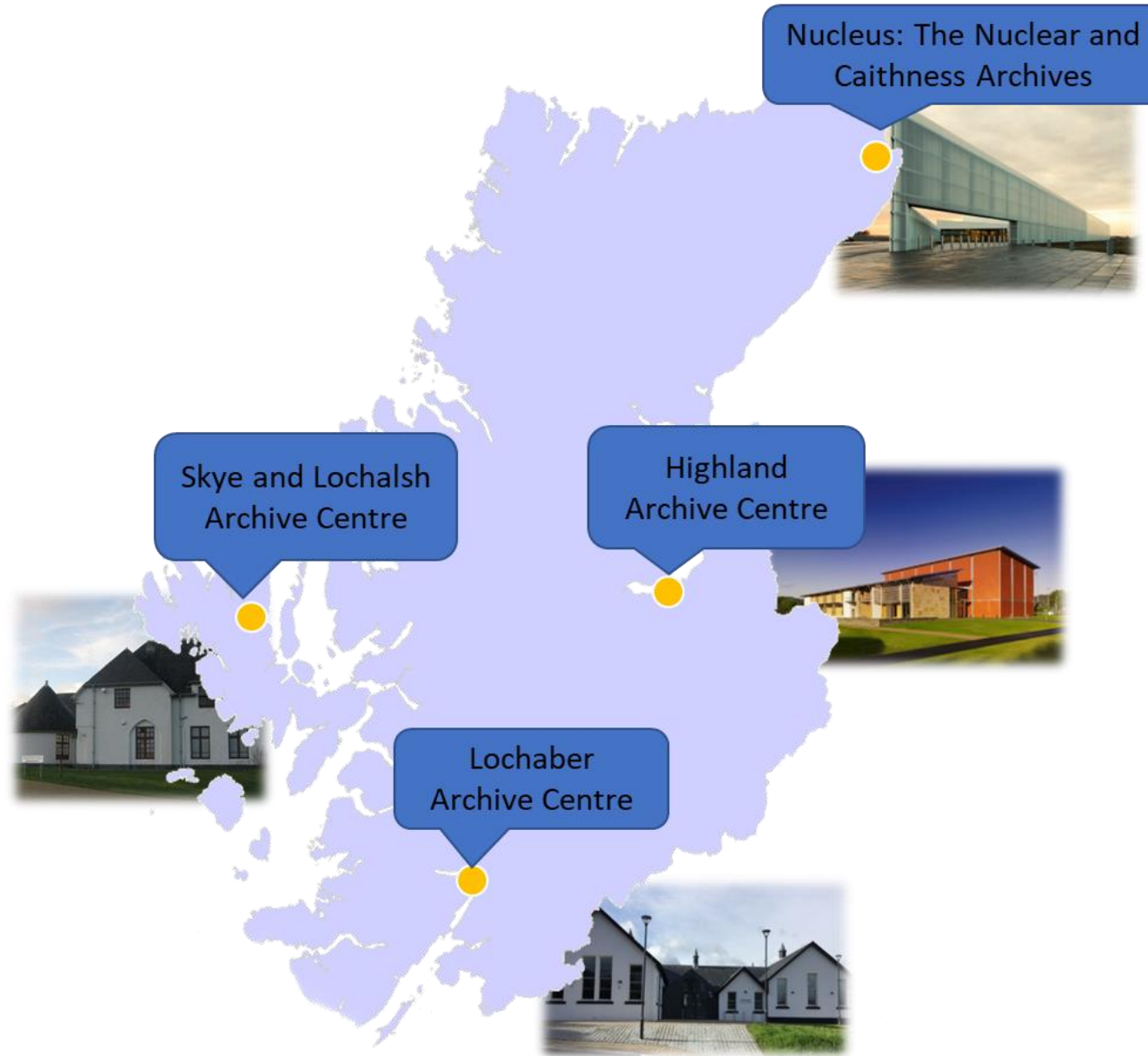


# **MAKING LIFE BETTER**



# High Life Highland Archive Service 2024/25 Annual Review



# High Life Highland Archive Service 2024/25 Annual Review

| Table of Contents   |       |
|---|-------|
| Highland Archive Service Summary                          | 4-5   |
| Archive Service Awards                                    | 6     |
| From the Archive to the Classroom                         | 7     |
| Global Conversations, Shared Connections                  | 8     |
| Archive Centre Specific Examples                          | 9-16  |
| Am Baile: Highland History and Culture Highlights 2024/25 | 17-18 |
| Records Management Service Highlights 2024/25             | 19    |
| Conservation Service Highlights 2024/25                   | 20-21 |
| What our Customers are saying                             | 22    |

# Highland Archive Service Summary

In 2024/2025 the Highland Archive Service welcomed **12,810 in-person visits** and recorded **2.4 million digital engagements** across our social media platforms and the Am Baile heritage website

We delivered:-

- **82 talks** (in-person/online) to 3,783 attendees
- **162 events and exhibitions** to 5,106 attendees
- **75 group visits** to our Archive Centres with 1,143 participants
- **46 archive and family history classes** (in person/online) to 282 participants
- Our Learn with Lorna series broadcast **39 episodes** with 88,395 views



# Highland Archive Service Summary

At our Archive Centres we -

- Provided access to **over 13,000** of our original archives for public consultation in our searchrooms.
- Took **256 new collections** into our care.
- **Catalogued 128 collections**, making them easier to discover and explore.
- **Hosted 20 volunteers** who generously gave 1,192 hours of their time to support our work.
- Received **128 new consignments** to our Records Management Service.
- Retrieved **1,639 records** for our colleagues across The Highland Council, supporting their work.



# Highland Archive Service Awards 2024/25

Highland Archive Service was named as the UK & Ireland 'Recordkeeping Service of the Year 2024' in the Archive and Records Association (ARA) Excellence Awards, receiving 63% of the public vote.

The service also won the first Highland Council/High Life Highland Partnership Award at the Highland Council Staff Recognition Awards. The Archive and Records Management team works very closely with the Council's Health and Social Care Records Support team responding to requests from individuals who were formerly in care and who are seeking to find out information on their past.



# Engagement 2024/25: From the Archive to the Classroom

In 2024/25, we delivered **44 tailored school sessions**, reaching **1,266** pupils, teachers, and parents/carers.

We also welcomed collegiate visits from teaching staff, helping them explore how archives can support classroom learning.

We continue to work closely with schools and home-schooling groups across the area, offering both visits to and from archive centres, and providing content via Google Classroom.

We help bring the Curriculum for Excellence to life by using local history to support learning. Archive materials spark discussion, creativity, and help build empathy and emotional awareness in pupils of all ages.

I enjoyed all of it because I learned lots of new things and it was amazing fun. BEST DAY \*♥\* EVER! ♥\*♥



# Engagement 2024/25: Global Conversations, Shared Connections

Community Engagement Officer Lorna was a keynote speaker at the national conference for school archivists, sharing examples and experiences from our education engagement work to inspire and inform the work of other archives.

In June 2024 she was part of a round table at the Shared Island Stories conference held at St. Andrews University discussing the influence of colonialism on archive and recordkeeping practices. The conference was attended by over 180 delegates from 47 nations.

In 2024, the ARA section *Archives for Learning and Education*'s focus was on public history. As part of this Lorna spoke to 46 historians and archivists about our educational work with HMP Inverness.



**"A good use of time"**  
Archives and art in prison



The Fife College Learning Centre within H.M.P. Inverness and the Highland Archive Service have worked together since 2018, using unique local archives to enrich topic learning for those in custody.

Learners use archives to study a wide range of subjects, from the Highland connection to the slave trade and the history of mental healthcare, to both World Wars and local stories of historic crime and punishment.

I enjoyed the way things were explained and liked the debates that came out of the talk.

It was a good use of my time. I felt I learnt something.



# Highland Archive Centre, Inverness: Talks, Tours and Community Connections

At Highland Archive Centre staff

- Delivered **46 talks** about the collections we care for
- Hosted **32 group visits** and behind the scenes tours
- Ran **41 classes** in family history and archives
- Supported **20 community events...**

...through these, speaking to **4381** people



## Highland Archive Centre, Inverness: Family History

Anne Fraser, our Family Historian for 14 years, reduced her working week to three days, creating an opportunity to appoint a new Family Historian for the remaining two. Alasdair MacDonald, a member of the Archives team since 2017, was appointed and began his new role in January 2025.

Throughout the year, talks were delivered to groups including Crown Church Women's Guild, the Royal Naval Association (Inverness Branch), and Nairn U3A.

328 paid enquiries and consultations (in-person and online) were completed, with 924 people visiting the Highland Archive Centre to undertake their own research in the Family History Centre as well as exploring original archives in the searchroom.



## Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: The Wick Society Collection

The Wick Society Collection is vast, comprising over 100 boxes, and continues to grow with ongoing deposits made every year.

The launch of the Wick Society catalogue in 2024 was accompanied by a series of talks, an exhibition, and an online blog all celebrating the myriad stories held within the collection which offers a rich insight into Wick's maritime heritage, including records from the herring industry, harbour operations, and from local boatbuilders.

Social history is strongly represented, with records covering community events, youth groups, and cultural traditions such as the Wick Gala and Herring Queen celebrations.



## Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: Care Home Reminiscence Sessions

As part of a reminiscence programme offered to local care home facilities, Caithness Archive staff, in collaboration with Wick Voices, have been visiting Laurandy Day Care Centre, Riverside Nursing Home, Pulteney House Care Home and Seaview House Care Home in Wick.

The sessions have focused on wide variety of topics including food, shopping and transport, with residents able to engage with reproductions of historical records, photographs and newspapers, as well as oral history recordings.



## Lochaber Archive Centre: Community Connections



In October 2024, Lochaber Archivist Rory and Am Baile Co-ordinator Jamie partnered with the Annat Gathering Group to help reconnect former residents and celebrate the village's unique heritage.

A well-attended event at Caol Community Centre brought together people with ties to Annat, where memories and photographs were shared, launching a growing digital photo collection curated by the community.

Rory continues to support the group by recording oral histories, capturing voices and stories that reflect the lived experience of Annat's past residents.

These recordings will form part of the Annat Gathering Group's expanding archive, preserved at Lochaber Archive Centre and made accessible to the public through the Am Baile website.

## Lochaber Archive Centre: One People, Two Islands Project

In September 2024 Lochaber Archivist Rory and Community Engagement Officer Lorna welcomed a group of students and lecturers from Scotland and Canada to Lochaber Archive Centre as part of the project '*One People, Two Islands: The historic entanglement of the islands of Eigg, Scotland, and Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, 1790-1830*'.

The group, who were on their way to the Isle of Eigg, spent several hours delving into our collections, looking at documents, photographs and books relating to the Small Isles.

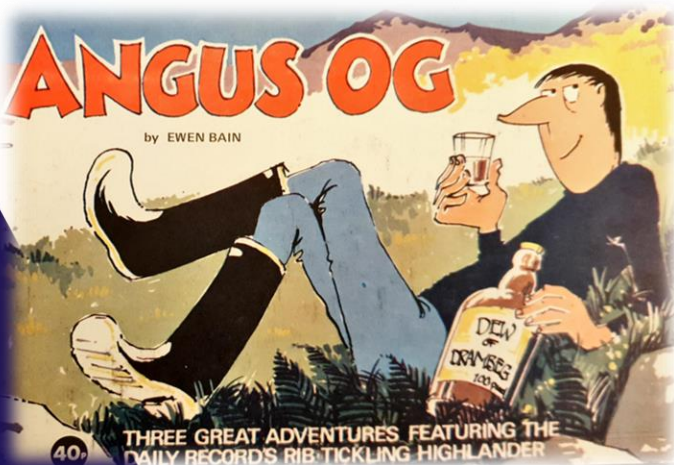


# Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre: Angus Og – A National Island Plan Funded Project

In May 2024 Project Officer Katharine and Skye and Lochalsh Archivist Catherine travelled to Glasgow for a special day-long symposium, held in partnership with the University of Glasgow, celebrating the legacy of cartoonist Ewen Bain and his Angus Og cartoons. The event featured speakers including playwright Alan Bissett, Professor Laurence Grove, and Paul Bristow of Magic Torch Comics, and was accessible both in person and online.

The project concluded in November 2024 with a mini symposium and exhibition at IMAG during the Highland & Islands Climate Festival highlighted Bain's environmental themes, showcasing how Angus Og remains a vital lens on Scotland's cultural, political, and environmental issues.

There are even more plans in the pipeline for the Angus Og in 2025/26 – watch this space!



**ANGUS OG AND THE  
CLIMATE CHANGE**



**ANGUS OG AND THE  
WILDLIFE**



**ANGUS OG AND THE  
LAND OWNERSHIP**



# Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre: North Talisker Centenary Project



This community-led initiative explores the repopulation of North Talisker after the 1919 Land Settlement Act. We've been working closely with local residents to preserve and share their stories, demonstrating the value of grassroots heritage work and the power of collaboration in making history meaningful and accessible.

We've delivered 'archive ceilidhs', sparking interest in local record-keeping, provided training in oral history gathering and image scanning, alongside pop-up exhibitions and educational talks. Blending original archives with newly recorded oral histories, the project tells a powerful story of land, resilience, and cultural survival.

In 2024/25 we delivered:

- 2 public talks
- 2 external exhibitions
- 1 major in-house exhibition engaging with **1,303** attendees

Further talks and displays are planned in 2025/26.

## Am Baile: Highland History and Culture Website 2024/25 Highlights

- **2,961 new pieces of content** were added to the Am Baile database, contributed by individuals, local historians, and community heritage groups, each representing the region's rich and diverse cultural memory.
- **1,473 new pieces of content** published on the website, broadening the range of historical material available on life in the Highlands and Islands.
- **214,277 pages of historical images** were viewed (website) showing the continued public interest in visual heritage and the Gaelic language.
- **1,538,243 social media engagements**, with our popular *Mystery Photo* series sparking lively discussion and drawing on local knowledge to enhance the descriptions of the collections.



## Am Baile: Highland History and Culture: Football Memories Project



The Football Memories Project, in association with the Inverness Caledonian Thistle Community Trust, enjoyed a third successful year with record attendances at the monthly reminiscence sessions at the ICT Stadium.

In September 2024, a Football Memories exhibition was held at the Highland Archive Centre as part of Highland Archive Centre's annual Doors Open Day and featured displays of trophies, shirts, photos, and other memorabilia, which was gathered by the project and donated by local clubs.

The project continues with more archive events planned for the coming months.

## Records Management: Highlights from 2024/25

The Records Management team assisted Highland Council colleagues during the 2024 UK General Election and several local by-elections, ensuring secure and efficient handling of election-related records.

Feedback from the November 2024 RM customer survey highlighted the team's professionalism and responsiveness:

*"The RM Service is excellent. Very efficient and quick to provide Records after a retrieval request, and staff are always friendly, helpful and very knowledgeable."*

*"They are a pleasure to interact with, communication is always friendly and helpful, the actual service is consistently efficient."*

The team supported the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and promoting environmentally responsible practices by taking part in an e-bike pilot which is being used to transport files to colleagues throughout Inverness.



## Conservation Service: Supporting Community Heritage

As part of our ongoing commitment to support community heritage, the Conservation Service shares expertise through hands-on training and advice. In May 2024, Senior Conservator Richard delivered a collections care training day at Garioch Heritage Centre, Inverurie. The event was hosted by the North-East Scotland Heritage Network.

Participants learned about environmental monitoring, pest control and packaging of documents and photographs.

The day also featured a practical cleaning session, followed by assessments of items brought in by attendees, ranging from photographs albums and recipe books to architectural plans and even a framed poster adhered to Perspex glazing.

It was a fantastic, hands-on day of learning and collaboration, highlighting the importance of accessible, expert-led conservation support, empowering heritage groups to care for their collections with confidence and skill and we look forward to delivering more sessions like it!



# Conservation Service: The Herbarium of Nairn Museum

In a further example of our ongoing commitment to supporting independent museums, the conservation service undertook work for Nairn Museum on their herbarium collection.

The collection arrived in the suitcases it had been housed in since the early 1900s, with items separated by botanical classification and folded in acidic brown paper folios.

The Museum, knowing that the collection was important for the local area, sourced funding to have the collection re-housed, cleaned, re-mounted (where necessary), and digitised, to safeguard the items for the future.

This project demonstrates the vital role of a dedicated conservation studio in the Highlands, enabling the specialist care and long-term preservation of culturally significant collections close to their communities.



# What our customers are saying

Overall, this was a wonderful and splendidly informative session. Every single participant evaluated the event as 'Exceptionally helpful'.

University Student Group Feedback

Its community programming presents contemporary aspects of the challenges and opportunities linked to island life, and the deep knowledge and hospitality allow for intimate engagement with archives and stories from Skye.

University Researcher feedback

Delighted to receive the information requested. Staff have been most helpful.

Customer Enquiry Feedback

Very touched by the exhibition, especially the walking sticks, felt recognised/seen for what I've done with my life and time - thank you.

Exhibition feedback

Just to thank you for an amazing and inspiring presentation, I've had some really good feedback about it. It really brought home to us that you are part of a line of custodians and that connection with history.

Feedback from local community group

I thought a talk would be boring, but it was very interesting and interactive.

Feedback from learner in HMP Inverness

Enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff, made the day exceptional!

Doors Open Day Feedback

Honestly cannot thank you enough for yesterday - the children totally loved the session. Thanks so much!

Schools Out feedback



**MAKING  
LIFE  
BETTER**

# Thank you Mòran taining

[www.highlifehighland.com](http://www.highlifehighland.com)



@HLHsocial