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Portsoy Sail Loft Project Reaches Historic Milestone



Marcus Humphrey, Chairman of the North East Scotland Preservation Trust (NESPT) hands over the key to the Sail Loft to Roger Goodyear, Co-Chairman of Portsoy Community Enterprise (PCE), watched by Paul Higson, Project Manager with the NESPT, and Keith Newton, Co-Chairman of PCE.

Eleven years on from acquiring the category B listed buildings from the Seafield Estate, January 2017 marked an historic milestone for North East Scotland Preservation Trust (NESPT) in ensuring a viable future for the Sail Loft project at Back Green, Portsoy.

On 18th January, the keys for the Sail Loft were handed over to Portsoy Community Enterprise, who will run the new bunkhouse accommodation for visitors to the town. The bunkhouse will provide self-catering accommodation for up to 25 visitors and includes a fully accessible bedroom and bathroom, with communal kitchen and lounge areas.

The 18th century buildings - which now make up the renovated Sail Loft - comprise a former Sail Making Loft, a finely detailed Georgian House and two associated

cottages. Marcus Humphrey, chairman of NESPT, said: “We acquired these wonderful, iconic buildings in 2006 and have been working tirelessly ever since to find a way of preserving them for future generations.

“Our partnership with Portsoy Community Enterprise has enabled us to redevelop the buildings as bunkhouse accommodation for visitors and I am most grateful for their unerring help and support over the years and for the fact that they are taking on the buildings as operators of the Sail Loft.”

Extensive works have been carried out to preserve the history and heritage of these important buildings, and to ensure a sustainable future, with bookings now being taken for the VisitScotland Quality Assured 4-star graded bunkhouse accommodation.

Project Progression

The works started in August 2015 and were completed in early 2017. Various stages in the progress of the project can be seen in the timeline below

Aug 2015



25 August 2015 - Repairs to the Georgian House.



15 October 2015 - Roof to Cottages & House.

Oct 2015



25 September 2015 - Roof structure on Cottages.

Sept 2015



1 September 2015 - Inside the Sail Loft.

Dec 2015



10 December 2015 - Inside the Cottages.

Nov 2015



11 November 2015 - Sail Loft roof.



11 November 2015 - Welsh Slate on Cottages.



15 March 2016 - Lead work on chimney.

Mar 2016



27 February 2016 - Sail Loft roof.

Feb 2016



8 April 2016 - Dormer window on Cottages.

19 April 2016 - Harling complete on Cottages.



Apr 2016



19 April 2016 - The site in spring.

May 2016



17 May 2016 - Pantiles and Scotch Slate on Sail Loft roof.

June 2016



21 June 2016 - Kitchen installation underway.

June 2016



16 June 2016 - Staircase in Georgian House.

21 June 2016 - The site in early summer.



8 April 2016 - Inside the Sail Loft.



17 May 2016 - Scaffolding down.



21 June 2016 - External works nearing completion.



September 2016 - Flood defences.

Sept 2016

November 2016 - External store.



Oct 2016

Nov 2016



November 2016 - Application of Lime Wash.



October 2016 - Brown sign.



October 2016 - Car Park

Jan 2017



January 2017 - Completed.



Wooden fire surround, Georgian house.



Sash profile, The Sail Loft.



Original case, The Sail Loft.



Arched fireplace (infilled), The East Cottage.



Lassie tombstone.



Cornice, Georgian House.



Prongs.



Pot holder.

The work to the buildings included the following: necessary repairs to the fabric, maintaining the original appearance and character where reasonably practicable; conservation of the industrial heritage of the site; removal of the inappropriate elements such as the single storey blockwork extensions to the north, south and west of the cottages; keeping interventions to a minimum and contemporary in concept; ensuring any alterations made can be reversed in future.

The full history of the buildings remains unknown, however, some discoveries during the renovation works helped to piece together additional details of the building's varied history. Highlights of the discoveries include:

Discovery of sash and case windows in The Sail Loft

- During clearing of the surrounding vegetation, sections of the original sash windows were uncovered within the undergrowth. The fenestration of these windows was previously unknown. A section of timber louvres was also discovered - it was identified that a case had been adapted to take timber louvres.

Remains of a dressed sandstone fireplace

- These were discovered at ground floor within the Sail Loft - this was served by an old wall head chimney to the south which had collapsed.

Timber fire surround, architraves and cornice found in the Georgian House

- During removal of the collapsed first floor, remains of timber architraves were discovered around one of the ground floor south-facing windows. Remains of old linings and a moulded plaster cornice were found in the ground floor room to the west.
- Dressed sandstone fireplaces were also revealed in the Georgian House - two matching surrounds at first floor and

another one at ground floor to the east in what would have likely been the kitchen - there is evidence of sections of an old range.

Alteration of the fireplace in East Cottage

- Prior to the works commencing it had been identified that the fireplaces in the Cottages had had a number of alterations carried out and some stacks were not tied into the walls. On removal of the remains of internal plasterwork the original arched fireplace opening was discovered in the East Cottage. This had been infilled to reduce it to a smaller rectangular opening to improve its performance.

Old Prongs

- A pair of old prongs were found on the ramp leading up to the east end of the Sail Loft. The history of the ramp is unclear as such a feature is uncommon in other sail lofts. The assumption is that this allowed horse and cart access for the transport of goods. Latterly, there is speculation that this may have aided smuggling of goods from the nearby harbours!

Old Pot Holder

- This was discovered within the fireplace of the West Cottage

Lassie Tombstone

- Discovered in the ground to the west of the cottages - the identification of Lassie is unknown!

Artefacts have been salvaged and will be featured inside the completed building to retain and showcase its varied and intriguing history for the many visitors who come to stay at the Sail Loft

Visit The Sail Loft

Visit the Sail Loft website, where bookings can also be made to stay at the VisitScotland Quality Assured 4-star graded bunkhouse accommodation - <http://portsoysailloft.org/>



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PROJECT DETAILS:

Architect: LDN Architects
Quantity Surveyor: Torrance Partnership
Structural Engineer: Arch Henderson
Main Contractor: A D Walker Ltd

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