

## **Progress Report on work to establish items in Hawick Museum collection/ Hawick Town Hall that could be termed 'Common Good'.**

### **1. Introduction**

The four curatorial staff based at Hawick Museum have all been involved in work to establish Common Good ownership of various collections. In addition to staff based at Hawick Museum the Visual Arts Officer has focussed on the fine art collection and one museum volunteer has also contributed time to researching parts of the local art collection. We have made some progress and have identified a few we think are Common Good or may qualify as Common Good but there is still further work required. In total this work has taken approximately 21 staff days and at a time where the focus of their work was naturally round the creation of the new Park Gallery in Hawick Museum ensuring that all sites were ready for the new year and preparing the 2015-16 Visual Art programme. The assistance from Robert Payne has been invaluable. We will continue this work but without additional resources will make very limited progress before the winter. However during January to March 2016 the Museum Service is planning to undertake a major cataloguing exercise of the art collection and ownership be a key of the review. We would hope to complete the Common Good review by March 2016 and come forward with formal recommendations that have been checked with legal services.

### **2. Assumptions**

We have been using the attached flow chart (Appendix 1) to inform decisions and have been making the following assumptions.

- When an item/ painting is listed as donated to the museum prior to 1906 (Minute of Agreement between Hawick Archaeological Society and Hawick Town Council) AND listed in the HAS Transactions, we are assuming the donation is to the HAS collection.
- If works listed as belonged to the town council or once hung/were stored in the town hall we are not classing as Common Good unless mention is made specifically 'for the benefit of the town, the people etc'.

### **3. Summary of work and findings to date**

We have been considering the likelihood of Common Good ownership in the following main areas:

#### **3.1 Hawick Town Hall (2 days)**

Inventory completed of paintings, photographs and objects in the Council Chambers and Provost Room at Hawick Town Hall. See Appendix 2

NB the items in the Town hall are largely civic and do not really fall within the remit or responsibility of the Museum Service. Legal opinion on the status of most of these items is required .

#### **3.2 Museum Collections**

##### **Steve Hislop 'Hizzy' collection completed (1 day).**

Established that one set of leathers were purchased by Common Good (on Town Hall list along with Provost Chain etc.) The majority of items are loans with a small number of objects donated to or purchased by the museum service.

##### **Banners and Flags (3 days)**

All the flags and banners in the Hawick Museum collection have been assessed; there are 29. They are mainly political banners carried at Franchise Demonstrations in Hawick, and Hawick Common Riding flags, plus a few others, eg Friendly Society banners. No definite Common Good material has been established but there are a few “maybes” and more work could be done searching through the accession registers. Some work has been started with this however it may be that no definite donor information will be established, i.e. we have located entry records for some banners but there is no donor information recorded. None of the Common Riding flags have accession numbers and at this point it is not clear whether this is because they were not deemed to be part of Hawick Museum’s collection or because they have been stored in areas of the Museum where not all the items have been catalogued. In “The Hawick Tradition of 1514” by Craig and Laing and published in 1898, the authors describe and illustrate a number of the Common Riding flags which are in Hawick Museum’s collection. On page 40 of that book they write, “We have examined as many flags as we have knowledge of, both in the possession of the Town Council and in that of the Archaeological Society...” As Hawick Archaeological Society’s collection was handed over to the Hawick Town Council in 1906 and the Town Council is a predecessor of SBC this suggests that these flags are not Common Good. The Letzlingen flag, made by the ladies in Pringles and used in Germany in 1945, is an exception in having a HAK number - it was donated to the museum by the Hawick Common Riding Committee in 1946. The Hexham Common Riding flag has a slightly complicated history, having been given by the Provost and town of Hawick to Hexham in 1911, then given back to Cornet Philip Murray when he brought a new one to Hexham in 1972 as a gift from Roxburgh District Council. It was returned to Hawick Museum last year, having apparently gone missing at some point between a typed list of flags and banners in Hawick Museum being drawn up in 1981 and that point. Although Philip Murray signed the entry form as the depositor, he has not ticked the owner box – could there be some doubt as to who the actual owner is? The Common Riding Committee perhaps? Further research is required.

### **3.3 Fine Art Collection (15 days)**

Framed works collection – An inventory of all framed works in Hawick Museum has been started. This lists title of work, artist and with regards Common Good YES/ NO/ MAYBE. A notes field justifies the decision made. This has 410 works listed and its completion is in progress. The Councils Visual Arts Officer has concentrated her research on files retained at Hawick Town Hall from the period preceding the construction of the Scott Gallery in 1974/75 - approximately 1,500 – 2,000 individual letters, memos etc dating from the mid 1960s until 1984. Hawick Town Council disposed of at least 77 works from the fine art collection in the period 1969-71. (The VAO joined Roxburgh District Museums Service in 1985).

The VAO has found a number of conflicting lists from conservators engaged by the Town Clerk and Roxburgh District Council at that time. So far she has not uncovered a definitive list of works which are Common Good. The Hawick Art Club formed in 1928 also does not have any lists on file – limited Hawick Art Club records held by the Heritage Hub were also researched but didn’t shed any light on any matters pertaining to the ‘Art Club collection’. The VAO was reliably informed by a past president of the art club in the 1980s - when she was attempting to research the club’s history - that early minute books were lost with the death of a former art club committee member.

The Art Collection Inventory is being updated as a matter of course during this period of research – approximately 13 have been identified that could be Common Good but require more research.

The following works are almost certainly Common Good

- Tom Scott – Deuchar Hill, Yarrow 1906 purchase in 1982.
- Andrew Richardson - Hawick from Crumhaughhill
- John McNairn - Hawick from Wester Braid Road
- Andrew Kennedy - Hawick Common Riding

The spreadsheet needs completed, this will take the Curator up to a further 35 - 55 hrs. From here the Maybes can be allocated to individual staff for further research. This will happen over the summer and into winter months. During Jan – March 2016 it is planned to finalise all entry information (where available) for the framed works collection.

#### **4. Sources consulted**

1. Museum Inventories
  2. Roxburgh District Council Museum and Art Gallery Paintings, Prints etc Relating to Hawick (document undated circa late 1970s or early 1980s)
  3. Scottish Arts Council Gifting Scheme
  4. VAO's own files
- Hawick Town Council and Roxburgh District Council Minutes  
Local Newspapers

18 May 2015