

Landscapes of War: Reflections of a Digital Intern

Rosie Shackleton

'**Landscapes of War**' is a project about how the Second World War impacted the landscape of Scotland and its people. It is part of the wider Second World War and Holocaust Partnership Programme funded by the Imperial War Museum and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. As part of this, we opened two exhibitions on this theme: one at the Scottish Fisheries Museum and the other at the Devil's Porridge Museum. These two 'sister' exhibitions helped us tell a national history of WW2 in Scotland and its ubiquitous effect on the landscape, but also allowed us to celebrate the local stories related to this theme at each museum. Where at the Devil's Porridge we used a Gretna cinema ticket to tell the story of Helen Graham who was killed during the Gretna bombing of April 1941, at the Fisheries Museum we focussed on how the seas were changed by the War using oral testimony of fishermen who were commandeered to Minesweeping vessels and photographs of local bomb damage to show the village experience of wartime air raids. Ostensibly, these stories appear unrelated, but our theme of landscape allowed us not only to link these stories to a wider national narrative but also find links between two very different museums.



Piece of shrapnel dated July 19th, 1940, on display in the Scottish Fisheries Museum as part of the exhibition.

Lots of unexpected things have come out of this project as well, especially when we've been able to unite personal stories with objects on display. At the Fisheries Museum, we put the letters of James Gillies on display. He was a local man from Lower Largo, Fife and served in both World Wars. Next to it, we planned on displaying a Christmas card from Women's Auxiliary Air Force. The card was sent by a woman called 'Minnie' but there was no more information on her in the archives. By chance, we found a letter from a Minnie to James in the archive, and the handwriting and her signature matched the Christmas card! After further hunting, we then found a letter written by James to his mother that references a 'Minnie' several times. Although somewhat circumstantial, it seems we had uncovered a friendship that had been hidden in the archive and were able to unite them by displaying them together.

In the other version of Landscapes of War at the Devil's Porridge, we displayed the cinema ticket from Gretna that I had mentioned before. At the bottom of the ticket are instructions on what to do in an air raid alongside the film listings. While researching the Gretna bombing, we found a statement that said Helen Graham, the youngest victim of the raid, was at the cinema when she heard the sirens. She left the building to check on her family but was tragically killed by a bomb. In both cases, we were able to enhance a story through objects not previously on display at both museums.

As my internship comes to an end, it's been great to reflect on the process of researching and installing the Landscapes of War exhibition. Thanks to the teams at both museums and at Industrial Museums Scotland, I was able to play an active role in each part of the process. I was able to research at both museum's archive, select objects for the exhibitions, and curate the spaces. One cabinet at the Fisheries Museum allowed me to tell our narrative of the Second World War, not only through objects but also scale. At one end was a full-scale replica of a German SC-250 bomb. At the other a piece of shrapnel that fits in the hand. The juxtaposition of these two objects shows the violent nature of war. How can such a large object produce such a small piece of shrapnel? How dangerous would these pieces of flying metal be to local communities? What damage was done to leave behind only this trace of war? These are some of the questions we hope to prompt from the visitors when they visit the exhibition.



Display case housing objects in the exhibition, including the shrapnel and replica bomb.

Landscapes of War will continue online on the Go Industrial website and will be an amalgamation of both exhibitions. In-person and practical exhibition making means I now have useful tools when we begin uploading content and curating that online space. We're really excited to show this exhibition on a new platform!

The process of making 'Landscapes of War' has been really valuable in finding those previously hidden stories and giving a fresh perspective on how the Second World War affected Scotland. Working across two museums has been extremely rewarding, not only for me personally, but also for Go Industrial as a partnership. We strengthened the relationship between the Devil's Porridge and Scottish Fisheries Museums and created a coherent project celebrating regional nuances while representing a national story. I'm really proud of what we achieved as a team!

Landscapes of War is still open at the Scottish Fisheries Museum until December 12th.