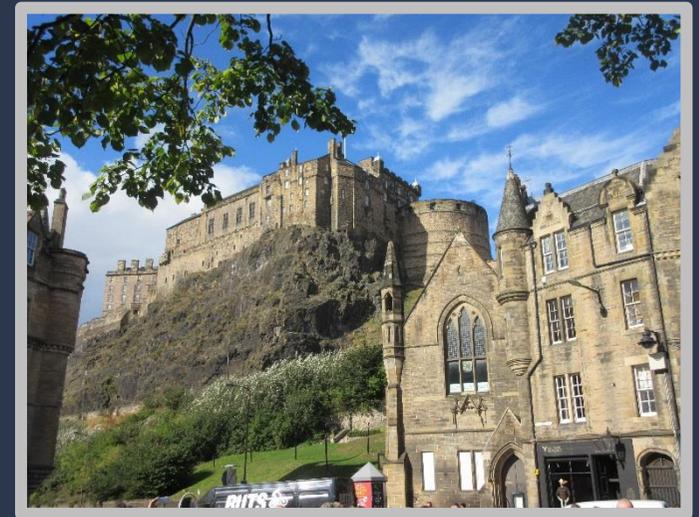




International Association of Transport and Communications Museums

## Report of the 41<sup>st</sup> Conference in Edinburgh and Glasgow in September 2016

The 41st IATM Conference was hosted in Edinburgh by National Museums Scotland (NMS) from 25th to 28th September 2016. The theme was **THE ROLE OF THE ARTEFACT IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY** and this was a particularly appropriate theme with NMS having just opened 10 new galleries; 6 covering Science and Technology and 4 Art and Design. The new galleries celebrated 150 years since the present museum building was opened.



The conference started on the Sunday night with a drinks reception in the tower of the adjoining building opened in 1999 to tell the story of Scotland to the world. Museums from as far away as India and Canada were represented along with many European countries.

## 26th September

The business of the conference got going on the Monday morning after a welcome speech by the Director, DR GORDON RINTOUL CBE. First session was a panel of NMS staff (SAM ALBERTI, IAN BROWN, THILO BÜRCEL, LOUISE INNES, ALISON TAUBMAN) talking about the challenges of telling difficult stories in museum displays, re-displaying the aircraft at National Museum of Flight and the issues surrounding the collecting of very large artefacts.



Following a break for lunch and tours of the new galleries by the curators responsible for them, session two **CONSERVATION PERSPECTIVE - DO WE OR DON'T WE RUN THEM?** got underway. In this, three presentations looked at the controversial subject of whether to operate artefacts or not. All three looked at this from the perspective of military collections, including aircraft and tanks

CHRIS KNAPP (Imperial War Museum), DAVE MORRIS (Fleet Air Arm Museum), CHRIS VAN SCHAADEBURG (The Tank Museum)

## 27th September

Day two saw the conference moving to Glasgow for a visit to the RIVERSIDE MUSEUM where the Glasgow City collections of transport and social history are displayed. The first session of the day looked at new ways of **MAKING COLLECTIONS ACCESSIBLE** to a 21st century audience that is increasingly expecting digital access and lively galleries:

AIJA BAUERE (Riga Motor Museum), BIANCA GENDREAU (Canadian Museum of History), ERIN GREGORY (CANADIAN AVIATION AND SPACE MUSEUM)



The next session returned to the challenging issue of whether collections should be operated or not. This time the presentations were from the perspective of museums with railway collections and covered locomotives and rolling stock. This inevitably started a lively discussion from the conference delegates:

SAM MULLINS (London Transport Museum), STEPHEN QUICK (Canadian War Museum), JOACHIM BREUNINGER (Verkehrsmuseum Dresden), WALTER HOFSTETTER (SBB Historic), DR. RAINER MERTENS (DB Museum)



A return to Edinburgh was made to enjoy an excellent meal in the main hall of the newer part of the museum surrounded by the Scottish displays. Speeches were made and delegates then set out after the dinner to sample the traditional Scottish pubs the Edinburgh is famous for.

## 28<sup>th</sup> September

On the final day the conference moved to the National Museum of Flight located on a historic airfield east of Edinburgh. Here the museum's collection of 70 aircraft are displayed in 1940s hangars. The final session of the conference saw three different railway themed presentations covering the challenges of complex restoration to the visitor experience and the ethics of preserving railway collections.

PAUL KIRKMANN (National Railway Museum York), PETER OVENSTONE (Heritage Railway Association), RENÉ SCHRÖDER CHRISTENSEN (Danish Railway Museum)

The final business of the conference was to hold the General Assembly which was conducted in a short time as there were no elections to conduct and the business was brief. Delegates were then taken to one of Scotland's Lowland distilleries at Glenkinchie, a historic site deep in the farming countryside outside Edinburgh. After tours that included some artefact displays everyone was given the chance to compare the local whisky with that of whiskies from the Highlands of Scotland.



After final thanks to the hosts from National Museums Scotland the delegates set off for their hotels or to travel home having made new contacts and learned of how other museums deal with the challenges of displaying artefacts in the 21st Century

Report written by Louise Innes

