



FRIENDS OF SEAFIELD HOUSE

MEDIA RELEASE

8 February 2023

Spanning the Centuries: Sir William Arrol's Legacy in Steel, Stone & Culture: Rozelle House Museum & Galleries, Ayr: Daily until 16 April 2023

Friends of Seafield House (FoSH) is delighted that the exhibition co-curated with South Ayrshire Museum & Galleries is now open and can be viewed at Rozelle House in Ayr until 16 April 2023.

On the afternoon of 4 February, Councillor Alec Clark, Portfolio Holder for Culture & Tourism, opened the exhibition on behalf of South Ayrshire Council (SAC) after which FoSH Patron, Andrew Arrol, recounted his family links with Sir William Arrol to a large gathering of invited guests that included John Dalrymple Hamilton, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Ayrshire & Arran, Allan Dorans MP; Siobhian Brown MSP; Sharon Dowey MSP; SAC Leader, Cllr Martin Dowey; SAC Cllr George Weir; and SAC Depute Director, Mike Newall.

Patrick Lorimer FRIAS, FoSH Chair gave special thanks to Robin Ghosh, Director of Econstruct Estates Seafield Ltd who attended with his family. Robin's company purchased Sir William Arrol's former home in Ayr from NHS Ayrshire & Arran in a neglected state and, with real tenacity in the face of many obstacles, made a careful restoration and conversion of Seafield House into 10 fine apartments set in landscaped grounds.

FoSH wishes to thank South Ayrshire Council for enabling the exhibition to be shown in its galleries at Rozelle. The exhibition was co-curated by FoSH Committee Member, Kirsty Menzies and Fraser MacDonald, SAC Project Development & Engagement Officer. With support from FoSH Committee Members & SAC Museum & Galleries dedicated team, Fraser & Kirsty planned the exhibition over four distinct gallery spaces including artefacts salvaged from Sir William's landmark constructions Forth Bridge & Tower Bridge and his home at Seafield House; large-scale Meccano models of cranes; photographs commissioned by Sir William from Bedford Lemere & Co. output for the exhibition with permission from Historic Environment Scotland; archive film footage; and ephemera that FoSH has collected over the years.

Kirsty Menzies's inspiration was not only to bring together Sir William's multiple legacies but to bring to life Seafield House. One gallery makes immersive the entrance hallway of Sir

William's home in Ayr, with songs by one of Sir William's favourite singers, Nellie Melba, as if playing on the gramophone in the room. On 6 February, Kirsty gave a talk in the Maclaurin Gallery to Kyle & Carrick Civic Society (KCCS) on 'Seafield Craftsmanship: Then and Now'. The talk was attended by over 40 KCCS members and friends who first enjoyed a tour of the exhibition.

At the opening, FoSH was able to thank some of those who loaned exhibits or supported the exhibition in other ways, including Professor David McGuigan and Professor Roland Paxton of ICE Scotland Museum at Heriot Watt University who kindly loaned several exhibits; and Ben Cooper of Kinetics bike shop in Glasgow who shared his collection of Arrol memorabilia.

FoSH will hold its 10th and final AGM in May. Our campaigning was inspired by the early petitioning of Rosemary Paterson to stop the demolition of Seafield House and has been supported by SAVE Britain's Heritage from the first steering group meeting in October 2012 onwards. FoSH Friends have been important to our campaign. Present at the opening was Dr Nina Baker, Dean of the Hammermen of Glasgow, and newly made OBE for her services to the history of women in engineering. FoSH was able to thank Nina for becoming an early Founding Friend and FoSH Friend Andy McAvoy for his support over the years and the beautiful drawing he contributed to the exhibition.

Sir William Arrol is known for his contribution to engineering and construction. Lesser known is his life as a politician and as someone who was passionate about Ayr, the town he made his home. Over the 10 weeks of the exhibition, FoSH hopes that Sir William's legacy will inspire all those who visit and, with support from South Ayrshire Council, to create a dedicated Arrol Room in Ayr so that Sir William's legacy continues to inspire future generations.

END OF RELEASE

For further information, please contact Lianne Hackett, FoSH Secretary.
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Attached:

Exhibition image: 3D scan section of a span of the Forth Bridge ©Historic Environment Scotland, Transport Scotland and Network Rail, 2023

Exhibition opening photographs 1, 4 & 5. Photo credit ©Nigel Hackett Photography, 2023.

Captions:

1. Cllr Alec Clark, Portfolio Holder Culture & Tourism, South Ayrshire Council opening Spanning the Centuries: Sir William Arrol's Legacy in Steel Stone & Culture 4 February 2023 together with guest speaker Dr Miles Oglethorpe Historic Environment Scotland.
4. Spanning the Centuries: Sir William Arrol's Legacy in Steel Stone & Culture exhibition opening 4 February 2023. Dr Miles Oglethorpe in conversation with Professor David McGuigan, ICE Scotland Museum & Dr Nina Baker OBE, Dean, Hammermen of Glasgow

5. Spanning the Centuries: Sir William Arrol's Legacy in Steel Stone & Culture exhibition opening 4 February 2023. Siobhian Brown MSP in conversation with Cllr George Weir, South Ayrshire Council & Margaret Weir

Photograph of Kirsty Menzies talk to KCCS 6 February. Photo credit ©South Ayrshire Council, 2023