

# OPENING DAY AT NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND

July 29, 2011 hillss Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Museum Archaeology Architecture, Canada, Design, Edinburgh, Exempt charities, GBP, Grand Gallery, Heritage Management Consultant, Jura Consultants, Liverpool, museum, Museum Designer, National Museum of Scotland, National Museum of Scotland I, pram car park, Rotundas, Royal Museum, Royal Ontario Museum, Scotland, Tourism

I like to consider myself as a Heritage Management Consultant and sometimes even a Museum Designer. This morning for work (of course) I visited the Royal Museum which was just opened today by the National Museum of Scotland. The museum has been closed for about 3 years now and has been undergoing a £47 million renovation and reinterpretation. The important thing to say is that my firm Jura Consultants helped them with their redevelopment master-plan and supported them in their HLF bid for funding. Most projects that we're involved in take quite a bit of time to come to fruition so it's amazing to be able to see the designs you saw on paper become reality and experience the fruits of your labour.

And what a fantastic experience it is! There were thousands of people lining Chambers Street at 9am waiting for the doors to open. We had an animatronic T Rex, tribal drummers, aerial dancers abseiling from the roof, and fireworks. A great atmosphere indeed. The entrance has now been diverted from the main staircase to two street level entrances that lead into the undercroft. Here is a really spectacular and dramatic space. Once used for storage, the space has been converted into a visitor reception area that includes an information desk, cloak room, gift shop, toilets and a new Brasserie. From the dimly lit space, you then ascend into the light-filled Grand Gallery that seems almost like a birdcage with all the iron work. This is meant to be a 'cabinet of curiosities' that entices visitors with an array of different and wondrous objects. Beyond this space is an escalator that takes you up to the very top floor, allowing visitors to work their way down. This is an interesting feature and an important one as previous research found that only 5% of visitors made it beyond the ground floor. The other controversial move was to put the museum café on the first floor. But I think it's one of those things that if you build it they will come.

It was quite clear that the animal gallery was the most popular. Jammed packed with people, prams and exotic animals. The incorporation of video screens with hanging oceanic creatures is quite something to behold. Other galleries include world cultures, design, nature inspired objects, Egyptians, sculpture, and decorative objects. I think the one thing that stands out is the lighting. It certainly adds to the atmosphere and creates distinctly different experiential areas. The colour scheme works really well too, using jewel tones to delineate thematic areas.

I think though, my favourite thing about today was observing the other patrons around me. One little boy asked why fish die, referring to a display in the animal galleries relating to environmental issues such as pollution, poaching etc. His mother responded with 'because some people don't recycle'. Another woman remarked about her disappointment with the Egyptians. 'Liverpool has a mummy but there's no mummy here.' The same goes for the way people begin to use the space. We weren't in the door 5 minutes and there were already people lined up for the café. There was a pram car park that started in one corner and people were sitting on display plinths and touching

objects (hopefully this was the intention). I think what it reflects is that visitors are comfortable in the space, are able to read the space properly and that the museum has been a catalyst for conversation.

A truly great morning! I encourage everyone to make a trip themselves.



