

Object from George IV's visit to the capital discovered at museum

While sorting through files and boxes in the Museum of Edinburgh, Curator Helen Edwards found two small wooden boxes with glass lids. One box was empty, but the other contained a delicate silk rosette with a silver saltire and thistle and the text "Welcome to Scotland".

Helen saw the link with the 1822 royal visit, but some museum detective work was needed to find out more about these items, involving a trawl through decades of documents, inventories, lists, and letters.

Both boxes contained small paper labels from the Corporation Museum. This was the City Council's first public museum long before the existing Museum of Edinburgh opened. It was housed at the City Chambers, where items were accompanied by these handwritten labels.



The label in the empty box told staff that the missing rosette was a gift from an L. J. Butti, so curators were able to search the collections database and match this label with a well-documented rosette held in store at the Museum Collections Centre. The second rosette was a mystery.

The team knew from the style of the labels that the rosette must have been in the museum collections by the early 1900s, but no-one could find mention of it anywhere. Curators searched for the name of the donor of the rosette, but still found nothing. When the Museum first started collecting in the 1870s, items were listed in the Register, and curators concluded that this second rosette escaped being recorded anywhere. With no record anywhere, it effectively became lost and unknown.

Now that it has been tracked down, it has been documented, photographed and put away safely in the store. Since 2019, the [Auld Reekie Retold](#) project has found thousands of items from the museum's earliest days with little or no listed information. These objects are now all well documented, many with their unique stories, and hundreds photographed, so they can now be enjoyed for years to come.

Cllr Val Walker, Culture and Communities Convener, said: "The Auld Reekie Retold project is all about providing the best care we can for our collections.

"This includes improving our records so we can access objects and information easily. This in turn enables us to connect the stories of our objects with our audiences so we can have conversations about Edinburgh's past. The rediscovery of the George IV rosette not only helps us solve a mystery in our records, but also provides a chance to talk about the visit of George IV in 1822 and what that meant to Edinburgh."



Nico Tyack, Auld Reekie Retold project manager said: "These days, our digital collections management systems mean that we can track and care for all our objects easily. However, pre-digital systems weren't so reliable, with objects becoming separated from their paper records, if any such records were even kept. They weren't 'lost' exactly – in the language we use today, they were 'location unverified' – hiding somewhere

in storage, awaiting rediscovery. The Auld Reekie Retold team has been working tirelessly to uncover these objects and match them back up with their records. Adding the records to our database means these objects won't be able to hide again! Meanwhile, we're researching these rediscovered objects to improve our records and start conversations about how they fit into Edinburgh's history."

Vicky Garrington, Curator of History said: "It was such an exciting moment to hear about the rediscovery of a George IV Royal Visit rosette. I've been researching the way the public dressed for the visit as part of our marking of its bicentenary. These rosettes or cockades were worn by hundreds of gentlemen attending pageants or audiences with the King, but their fragility means that few have survived. They sit alongside items like our commemorative plaque, silver badges and lamps for illuminating houses to show the huge effort that was made to welcome the first reigning monarch to visit Edinburgh in nearly 200 years."

Helen Edwards, Curator of Applied Art said: "The Auld Reekie Retold team love to get hands-on with objects in storage. I knew as soon as I opened the box containing the rosette and old display cases that they related to the Royal Visit. It's very satisfying to clear up mysteries about objects and their locations, as it helps piece stories about important events together, and lets us communicate them to our visitors."

