

Applecross Heritage Centre's latest donation is..... the massive rib of a whale! The history of this incredible donation from Paul and Marie Packer, and their son Jago, is truly fascinating. According to tradition, the whale was washed up on the shore at Fearnamore (Na Feàrna Mòra) in the early 1900s and the rib came into the possession of Marion MacBeath, the step-grandmother of Dr Paul Packer. He remembers seeing it there when visiting shortly after World War II.



It leant against the front wall of Marion's home until she moved away in later decades, before it came to Jane MacBeath. After her death, the rib 'disappeared' in an overgrown garden, but was discovered half-buried and gifted to Marie Packer by Alasdair '*Ford*' MacDonald's step-grandson Donnie.

Gordon Cameron of Applecross Heritage Centre and Jago Packer.

There is also a smaller and quite lovely heart-shaped vertebra end plate which '*Ford*' used as a breadboard, before he gifted it to Marie. When you tilt this bone in the light, you can see years of tiny knife cuts highlighted.



Now that the bones were back together, they went to stay with Paul and Marie in Brigsley, Lincolnshire, before returning to Applecross. Even in the short time since they've come into our collection, they've raised a lot of interest, and are among the many wonderful items in the Society now has in it's care.

The species of whale from which the bone comes was apparently described as an "Atlantic whale"; and there is a North Atlantic Right Whale, one of the most endangered speices in the world which is normally between 13-16 metres long and weighing anything between 44 and 77 tons.

Gordon Cameron and Marie Packer



A right whale's body weight is 40% blubber, which is of relatively low density. This means that, unlike many other species of whale, dead right whales float ... so it could well be that it was a North Atlantic right whale that washed ashore in Na Feàrna Mòra all those years ago.