



## Scottish Society for Northern Studies Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Saturday 22 November 2014, St. Augustine Centre, Edinburgh

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The President, Arne Kruse, welcomed members to the AGM. Apologies for absence had been received from Maggie Mackay, David Sellar, Barbara Crawford, Kerstin Keillar, Sarah Thomas and Tom Turpie. Arne noted the death of member Jean Comrie and John Baldwin spoke in memory of Anne-Berit Borchgrevink, the Norwegian ethnologist.

### 2. Minutes of the 2012 AGM

It was pointed out that the amount which the society has invested in the Scottish Widows Bond was £30000 not £40000. Otherwise the minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

**Proposed:** J. Baldwin

**Seconded:** B. Balmain

### 3. Matters arising not already on the agenda

There were no items arising.

### 4. President's Report

The President summarised the Society's recent activities in what had been a very active and a very successful year. He thanked the members who supported the Society by attending events and in other ways, and the members of the Committee who dedicated a great deal of their time to keep the Society economically afloat, to secure that the content of activities and publications are at a high standard and that are thematically interesting enough to engage people in taking part.

At the November Day Conference in 2013, Barbara Crawford had given the Hermann Pálsson Memorial Lecture on the Norse Earldom of Orkney, based on her recently published book. The conference title had been 'Sea Roads around Northern and Western Scotland,' and other scholars who contributed under this banner were John Raven, David Caldwell, Colin Martin and John Goodlad. Liv Helene Willumsen presented the story of John Cunningham from Fife, who ended up as District Governor in Northern Norway where he became a dedicated witch hunter. The conference had been very well attended.

In April, the Society had arranged a residential conference in Northern Ireland under the title 'Hinterlands of the North Irish Sea', in conjunction with the University of Ulster and based at their Coleraine Campus. Everything went exceedingly well as a result of detailed planning by Committee member Alan Macniven with Colin Breen, Tom McErlean and Wes Forsythe from the Centre for Maritime Archaeology in Ulster, who also served as highly skilled tour leaders. Several members of the Society had expressed how happy they were with the conference, some specially mentioning the reception at the Bushmill Community Centre hosted by the local history group. This conference maintained the Society's tradition of integrating both interested local historians and specialised academics within a wide range of fields. A publication is being considered of material from this conference – possibly a joint one with the Islay 2012 conference.

An important issue which had been discussed by the Committee was what to do with the stock of books and journals that the Society has published over the years. For a number of years storage with Booksource has entailed a fairly large expense and what was sold is minimal. It therefore has been agreed that the contract will be terminated, and the stock of books limited to an amount that could be stored privately.

The scanning of the back catalogue of publications was nearing completion. All but the most recent ones issues of *Northern Studies* and the out-of-print monographs were on the Society's website and members were encouraged to make use of it and publicise it. One of the things that were still outstanding was a searchable index of *Northern Studies*.

Other matters which the Committee were discussing were further development of the website, changing the constitution to a SCIO and developing outreach activities and contacts to local communities and to similar organisations, as well as to the academic community. The focus was still to share, develop and promote the interest in all things northern.

Members were invited to comment on the proposal to discontinue the Booksource contract. John Baldwin urged the Committee to consider holding copies of the monographs in the storage at St. Andrews if space were available. Martin Axford said that books were still selling and should not be given away. John suggested that local museums and similar organisations might be interested in free stock. Arne confirmed that the Committee would continue to seek means of disposal other than destroying the books.

## **5. Treasurer's Report and draft Summary of Accounts, 2012 –13 (tabled)**

Alan Calder presented the accounts and a sheet with further details. The main points were:

- Overall, the Society's revenues for the year had shown a surplus of almost £1000. Funds stood a nearly £43000.
- Subscription income had risen; this was partly due to the increase in the overseas subscription rate.
- SWETS which was the organisation used by several universities for subscriptions had gone into receivership; it was not clear what effect this might have for the future.
- The 2013 day conference had shown a surplus. There was still one expense claim for the Northern Ireland conference to be settled but it too would show a surplus.
- Volume 45 of *Northern Studies* had cost nearly £3000.
- The £30000 investment in the one year bond with Scottish Widows had been continued for a further year.

James Irvine congratulated Alan on the accounts and the helpful explanatory notes. John Baldwin asked whether Gift Aid was still outstanding for previous years and Alan said that there were three years yet to be paid.

The draft accounts were accepted.  
Fraser

**Proposed:** James Irvine **Seconded:** Ian

## **6. Editor's report**

Sarah Thomas had reported that volume 46 of *Northern Studies* was in press and would be distributed either in December or, more likely, early in 2015. It is an interesting issue with last year's Magnusson Prize essay, three full length original research papers on topics ranging from the Meigle stones, St. Bridget of Sweden in Scottish historical literature and political thought to the Danes in mediaeval English memory and identity, and four book reviews. Volume 47 would be produced in 2015. Kathrin Zickerman would edit it as Sarah would be on maternity leave. The style guide for contributors was being revised and clarified and would be available on the SSNS website. The President thanked Sarah and her team for the work they did for the Society and Mr. And Mrs. Axford who handled the book sales. John Baldwin suggested that consideration could be given to different ways of publishing conference volumes such as on-line or print on demand, though, if grant aid were available, a small print run could still be the best option. Wendy Axford asked whether there was much interest in the Society's publications from overseas; Alan Calder thought probably not a lot but it was difficult to know.

## **7. Election of Committee**

Under the new constitution three members would resign each year but could be eligible for re-election. Alan Calder was standing down as treasurer. Colin Forsyth was elected. Alan was re-elected as an ordinary member; Alan Macniven and Tom Turpie stood down and were re-elected. There was still opportunity for more volunteers to be co-opted to the Committee.

## **8. Future Conferences/Activities**

A flyer had been distributed for the conference planned in Coll in April 2015.

## **9. AOCB**

John Baldwin proposed a vote of thanks to Arne and the Committee for their hard work for the Society.