



draft

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

Saturday 21st November 2015, Augustine United Church, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The President, Arne Kruse, welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Tom Turpie, Sarah Thomas and Kirsty Keillor.

### 2. Minutes of the 2014 AGM

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

**Proposed:** John Baldwin **Seconded:** Ian Fisher

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

The Secretary, Linda Riddell, referring to item 4, reported that the Committee had investigated the option of changing the constitution of the Society to a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation). They had yet to finalise their discussions but it looked likely that they would recommend not to make this change as there did not seem to be any value for the Society or Committee. The main benefit would be to protect committee members from liability but, since the Society had no employees or premises, liabilities were unlikely to be substantial.

### 4. President's Report

The President reported on the Society's activities during the year, which had been a full and productive one.

Three successful conferences had been held:

- The 2014 annual day conference had been held in St. Augustine Centre. Brian Smith had delivered the Hermann Pálsson Memorial Lecture and there had been contributions from Malcolm Bangor Jones, Lisa Collinson, John Barber and James Irvine under the heading of 'Defending and Shaping the Land: Brochs and estates in the north of Scotland'.
- In order to prevent a clash with a future St. Magnus Conference, a small residential conference was held in Coll and Tiree in April. The weather was good and around forty attendees were warmly welcomed on the islands. Lectures were held at the 'An Cridhe Community Centre, Nicholas and Lavinia Maclean-Bristol kindly hosted a reception at Breachacha Castle and a day trip to Tiree was organised by John Holliday. Thanks were due to all of them and to Alan Macniven who had been the main organiser.
- In May a conference aimed at post-graduate students was held on the theme of the Vikings' encounters with the local population of Scotland. This was free to attendees and students were given the opportunity of presenting their research and to network. Again thanks were due to Alan Macniven and to Chris Coojimans for organising the event.

There will not be a residential conference in 2016 but for 2017 one suggestion was to go to Lismore and David Caldwell spoke in support of this. Accommodation in the Oban area might have to be used. Other suggestions were invited. The Committee were considering whether the annual day conference would commemorate the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Perth.

A new monograph was being planned with contributions from the last three residential conferences in Islay, Northern Ireland and Coll and Tiree. Additional funding was being sought for this publication and Chris Coojimans was in charge of this.

One concern for the Committee was the drop in membership. They had actively tried to recruit students in various ways and printed new flyers for the Society but they would welcome ideas from members of the Society on other ways to attract new members.

The cost of printing and distributing *Northern Studies* was now well above the subscription income and the Committee did not see a likely change in this situation. They had decided one step, to increase charges to institutions from £28 to £48 for UK-based institutions and for those abroad, from £38 to £58. This was still relatively cheap for a peer-reviewed publication. Options included decreasing the cost of the journal by making it available solely on line or increase the rate for subscriptions to £25 or £30. Another possibility was to continue the current situation and consider the journal as a reflection not just of subscriptions but also as a way of furthering the overall aims and activities of the Society, integrated with publishing the Pálsson Lectures, the Magnus Magnusson Memorial Prize-winning essays and papers given at conferences. Part-funding from conferences would not be out of place. The Committee were committed to publishing in paper format but would like to hear the views of members.

Arne had completed his term of office and would be standing down as President. He had enjoyed working with the Committee who were committed to the success of the Society, to organising activities, maintaining them within budgets and to high standards, and to engaging members and others.

Debate followed on the points which Arne had raised. Comments and suggestions included:

- a return to the north-east mainland of Scotland for a residential conference, possibly in conjunction with the University of the Highlands and Islands
- more publicity among other societies, including less academically focused
- writing to appropriate university departments and local history societies
- consider what we offer if people are not interested in the journal
- use the millennium of the Battle of Carham next year as a platform for attracting new members
- look for grant aid for the journal as well as for monographs
- keep option to go digital under review as it might be necessary in a few years
- offer advertising in the journal
- print on demand for libraries
- encourage donations as gift aid
- establish a separate designated fund for student support which people could donate to

- appeal to a general audience through a newsletter or more informal communications.

## 5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Colin Forsyth, presented the provisional annual accounts with explanatory notes. The main points were:

- The Society's revenues for the year showed a loss of over £2300.
- Costs for printing and posting *Northern Studies* had risen by nearly £400.
- The 2014 annual day conference produced a surplus but the residential conference in Coll a loss of £400.
- Student support for conferences had totalled over £800 and £250 had been granted to the Nordic Research Network Conference in Edinburgh.
- The main concern was that subscription income, which had fallen by £100, did not cover the costs of running the Society and producing *Northern Studies*.

John Baldwin noted that there had been no Gift Aid income. Claims for several years were in the pipeline and some may be urgent as only so many years could be claimed.

The provisional accounts were accepted.

**Proposed:** Bob Diamond **Seconded:** Barbara Crawford

## 6 Editor's Reports and Publications

A report had been received from Sarah Thomas, the editor of *Northern Studies*. As she had been on maternity leave, Kathrin Zickermann had kindly edited volume 47 to the first proof stage and Sarah had taken over from then. Alexia Grosjean had copy-edited. Volume 47 was expected to be ready for distribution early in the New Year. It contained Brian Smith's Hermann Pállson Memorial Lecture from 2014, Chris Coojimans' essay which won the Magnus Magnusson Memorial Prize and a variety of other articles. A call for papers had been sent out for volume 48.

The President recorded the Society's thanks to the editors involved.

## 7. Election of Committee

Since the President's term of office had come to an end, it was necessary to elect a new president. Dr. Colleen Batey was willing to stand. A long-standing member of the Society, she was Senior Lecturer in the Archaeology Department of the University of Glasgow and had worked on material culture in North Atlantic areas in the Norse periods.

**Proposed:** John Baldwin **Seconded:** Margaret Mackay

Since the last AGM, the Committee had co-opted Chris Coojimans and his election was confirmed. In accordance with the constitution, Sarah Thomas and Molly Rorke stood down from the Committee and were re-elected.

**Proposed:** Bob Diamond **Seconded:** Barbara Crawford

Linda Riddell gave notice that she would be standing down in 2016 after ten years as secretary, although she would be willing to continue as a committee member, and so a new secretary would be needed. Volunteers were sought for the position.

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

Covered under President's report

## **9. AOCB**

Margaret Mackay proposed a vote of thanks to the President and Committee.

After completion of the agenda, tributes were paid to two members of the Society who had passed away. Linda Riddell remembered Jim Coull who had been a member for many years. He was Senior Lecturer in Geography at Aberdeen university. From a fishing family, he wrote *The Sea Fisheries of Scotland* and many articles on the history of the fishing industry in the North East of Scotland and in Shetland which he was a frequent visitor. Margaret Mackay spoke in commemoration of Doreen Waugh, another long-standing member, former President and Treasurer. Born and brought up in Shetland, she had made her career in teaching in Edinburgh. A place-name scholar, she wrote her PhD thesis on place-names of Caithness at the interface between Norse, Gaelic and Scots. In Shetland she was active in the place-name project and also in the dialect organisation ForWirds. Linda read a poem which had been read at Doreen's funeral.