

**Scottish Records Association**  
Scottish Charities No. 008896

## **Annual Report of the Council for 2014-2015**

Council met three times during the year, and is indebted to the National Records of Scotland for the use of the Lord Clerk Register's Room in General Register House, Edinburgh. At the Thirty-Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Association held on 6 November 2014, members voted in favour of switching from paper to electronic distribution of the Association's newsletter, *Retour*. It was recognised that distributing the newsletter as a PDF file would be more efficient and economical than sending out paper copies, although any members who do not supply an email address or who specifically request a paper copy may still receive one by post. Mr Keith Adam and Dr Kirsteen Croll retired as Ordinary Members of Council, while Dr Annie Tindley was elected as an Ordinary Member. Mrs Ingrid Thomson and Lady Hopetoun were co-opted as Ordinary Members of Council during the course of the year. Dr Jan Merchant, Dr Alastair Durie, Dr Maria Castrillo and Lady Coulsfield will step down from Council on completing their terms of office in November 2015, and Council extends its sincere thanks to them.

### *Membership*

Membership levels have remained relatively steady during 2014-2015, with fewer losses sustained through deaths and cancellations than in 2013-2014. The total membership currently stands at 271 (191 individual members, 9 student members and 71 institutional members). Of these, 21 members are based overseas. The Honorary Membership Secretary relocated for work purposes during the course of the year, which has delayed the distribution of subscription renewal forms; there may consequently be some fluctuation in the membership numbers when the renewal notices are sent out in autumn 2015. The use of email to maintain contact with members continues to be effective, and it is hoped that those members who have not yet provided email addresses will do so.

### *Finance*

The Association ended the financial year with a balance of £3,306.84 in the current account and £5,329.16 in the savings account. *Scottish Archives* volume 19, for which there was a budget of approximately £4,500, cost only £3,598. The 2014 Annual Conference proved more financially successful than that of 2013, costing £1100 and making a profit of £391. This year the Association invested a significant sum in the design and production of new publicity leaflets, with the aim of boosting membership and generating more subscription income. While the Association has never been a for-profit organisation, subscription income has fallen or stagnated over the past few years, which cannot be sustained indefinitely without impacting upon the Association and its activities. The shift from paper to digital distribution of *Retour* has, however, saved £300 on printing and postage, and very little outlay has been needed to maintain the Association's website.

### *Conference*

This year's Annual Conference took place at Linlithgow Burgh Halls on 6 November 2014. Entitled 'To be observit and kept to the commoun good,' the conference considered how the common good or 'commonty' – a form of property where every common proprietor has a proportionate share – developed in different parts of Scotland over time, what happened to common good following local government reorganisation, and how it remains relevant today. As well as nine engaging presentations, the 70 delegates enjoyed a showing of film footage from the Scottish Screen Archive during the lunch break and a slide show of records held by the National Records of Scotland during the afternoon refreshment break. Council is grateful to everyone who helped to organise the conference, particularly Kirsteen Mulhern, Robin Urquhart and Stefanie Metze; to Professor Roderick Paisley and Andy Wightman for chairing the morning and afternoon sessions; to all nine speakers for their excellent contributions, and to the staff of Linlithgow Burgh Halls for their assistance on the day.

### *Visits*

The Association offered members the opportunity to visit four outstanding repositories during the summer months. On 8 June, 12 members and guests enjoyed a 'double visit' to two historic law libraries, the Advocates Library and the Signet Library in Edinburgh, receiving extensive tours of both buildings. On 4 September, eight members and guests spent the morning in the Special Collections Department of Glasgow University Library, where they enjoyed a display of materials from the Scottish Theatre Archive and a tour of the store and reading room, followed by a fascinating visit to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Archives in the afternoon. Council is indebted to Andrea Longson and Jane Condie of the Advocates Library; James Hamilton and Robert Bruce of the Signet Library; Niki Russell and Claire McKendrick of Glasgow University Library Special Collections, and Stuart Harris-Logan of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Archives for hosting this year's Summer Visits and for giving so generously of their time and expertise.

### *Publications*

During 2014-2015, the Association's website ([www.scottishrecordsassociation.org](http://www.scottishrecordsassociation.org)) was accessed by 9,244 users (10,333 individual sessions); 89% of these were first-time visitors, while 11% were returning visitors. More than half of all visitors (52.6%) accessed the site from the UK, with 15.1% doing so from the USA. The remaining visitors came from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Japan and Italy. Popular areas of the website include the publications section, especially the pages for *Scottish Archives*, and the section for latest news and events. The website has also generated particular interest in the Annual Conference. Issues 22 and 23 of *Retour*, the Association's combined newsletter and archival summaries, appeared in autumn 2014 and spring 2015, the latter being the first edition to be distributed by email. The Newsletter Editor is grateful to Council colleagues who ensured the final preparation and distribution of the spring 2015 issue in her absence. *Scottish Archives* volume 19 was published and distributed to members in February 2015 and volume 20 is expected shortly. For the first time, it is intended that the illustrations for volume 20 will be in colour.

### *Representation on and to outside bodies*

Council continues to represent the interests of members in the care and custody of records on the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA). The SCA was reconstituted as a membership-based Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation in December 2013. Following an extensive review of its remit and governance structure, the SCA invited organisations and individuals within the archives and records management sector to register for free membership in February 2015. The Association is accordingly registered as an Organisational Member of the SCA.