

Scottish Records Association
Scottish Charities No. 008896

Annual Report of the Council for 2016-2017

Council met four times during the year, and thanks are again due to the National Records of Scotland for the use of their facilities at General Register House, Edinburgh. At the Thirty-Ninth Annual General Meeting of the Association held on 4 November 2016, Mrs Elizabeth Roads stepped down as Chairman, and Dr Alastair Durie was elected to succeed her. Mrs Fiona Musk also stood down as Membership Secretary, and Dr Kirsteen Mulhern was elected to replace her. Mr Douglas Roberts, Dr Kirsteen Mulhern and Mrs Olive Geddes completed their terms of office as Ordinary Members of Council, and Dr Jan Merchant, Mr Andrew Nicoll, Ms Pam McNicol and Dr Amy Blakeway were elected as Ordinary Members. No Ordinary Members are due to retire from Council in November 2017, but Dr Stefanie Metze has indicated her intention to step down as Web Editor.

Membership

Membership of the Association currently stands at 189 (61 institutional members, 121 individual members and 7 honorary members). This may appear to be a dramatic fall from the figure of 266 reported for 2015-2016. However, investigations by the new Membership Secretary and the Treasurer have revealed that a substantial number of individuals and institutions were formerly being counted whose memberships had lapsed, or who had resigned in previous years without this being recorded. The figure of 189 represents an accurate account of the membership. The Treasurer and Membership Secretary are continuing to devise methods of ensuring that membership records are kept up to date, and that annual subscriptions are collected promptly.

Finance

The Association ended the financial year with a modest profit of £340.95. This compares with an average loss of nearly £2000 over the preceding four years. There is presently £1966.46 in the current account and £5334.19 in the savings account.

The incoming Membership Secretary has made great efforts to update the membership list and to approach members whose subscriptions were in arrears. The amount collected in individual subscription fees for 2016-2017 (£3830.92) is therefore higher than that for 2015-2016 (£2017.00), despite the apparent decline in membership. The Association now has an accurate, up to date list of members and a more predictable income from subscriptions.

The current Treasurer has now been authorised by HMRC to reclaim Gift Aid on behalf of the Association. In order to do so, the Association requires completed Gift Aid declaration forms from members. To date, fewer than 50 percent of individual members have provided these. Based on the number of completed forms, the Treasurer expects to be able to claim around £120 retrospectively for 2015-2016, and £350 for 2016-2017.

Income from institutional subscriptions is lower than last year (£1595 for 2016-2017 compared to £2038 for 2015-2016). This is largely due to some institutions having cancelled their subscriptions and others having yet to pay.

As in previous years, the Association's biggest expenditure was on publications, although significant savings have been made in this area. *Retour* cost £525.12, compared to £960 last year. *Scottish Archives* cost £3246.93, nearly £700 less than last year, partly because printing has reverted to black and white and partly because postage costs were reduced under the revised membership figures (185 copies were posted in 2016-2017 as opposed to 245 copies in 2015-2016).

Whilst it is positive to be able to report a profit this year, this is due in large part to the receipt of one-off payments, such as subscription arrears from individual members. The fact remains that the Association's membership numbers have fallen and its account balances are only sufficient to support one year's expenditure. The Association must continue, therefore, to seek to maximise income and control expenditure in the coming year.

Conference

This year's Annual Conference took place at the AK Bell Library, Perth, on Friday 4 November 2016. The theme was 'Public Healthcare in Scotland before the NHS', and the conference proved to be one of the Association's most popular ventures of recent years, attracting a sizeable audience. The varied programme included presentations from ten speakers, with all four sessions chaired by Professor Marguerite Dupree of the Centre for the History of Medicine, University of Glasgow. Council is indebted to everyone who helped to organise the conference, particularly Kirsteen Mulhern and Robin Urquhart; to the chairman and speakers for their excellent contributions; to the National Library of Scotland for permission to show the film, 'Highland Doctor' during the lunch interval, and to the staff of the AK Bell Library for their assistance on the day.

Visits

Members of the Association were offered the opportunity to visit three fascinating repositories during the summer months. On 23 June, a small but enthusiastic group of members and their guests travelled to Inveraray, where they received a guided tour of the Castle and its Private Apartments, followed by a tour of the reading room and storerooms in the Argyll Estates Archives. The family and estate papers of the Campbells, Dukes of Argyll date back to the 1300s and the group was privileged to see some of the treasures of this vast collection. On 11 September, 14 members and guests spent the morning exploring the Library and Archive of the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, and the afternoon visiting the Scottish Life Archive's search room at the National Museum of Scotland. Council is grateful to Alison Diamond and Duncan Beaton of the Argyll Estates Archives; Elspeth Guyan, Inveraray Castle Guide; Sheila Miller of the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, and Dorothy Kidd, Mark Glancy and Georgia Rogers of the National Museum of Scotland for hosting this year's Summer Visits and for giving so generously of their time, expertise and hospitality.

Publications

During 2016-2017, the Association's website (www.scottishrecordsassociation.org) was accessed by 2,787 users, 81.7 % of whom were first-time visitors. The majority of visitors accessed the site from within the UK and the USA, while other visitors viewed the site from Russia, Australia, Canada, Italy, Germany, New Zealand and Brazil. As the content management system used for the website became out of date, it was decided to move the website onto a different, more stable platform in March 2017. This was done without any additional costs to the Association. Issues 26 and 27 of *Retour*, the Association's newsletter, appeared in autumn 2016 and spring 2017. Changes in the layout of the newsletter were implemented in issue 26. No adverse comments have been received so the new format will continue. *Scottish Archives* volume 21 was published and distributed to members in February 2017. Volume 22 is expected shortly.

Representation on and to outside bodies

The Association continues to represent the interests of its members in the care and custody of records as an Organisational Member of the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA).