



Scottish Records Association Annual Report of the Council for 2019-2020

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic from March 2020 onwards made this a uniquely challenging year for the Scottish Records Association, as for many charitable organisations. The Council met twice, in October 2019 and February 2020 but lockdown restrictions imposed by the UK Government forced the cancellation of our third meeting, planned for May 2020. Whilst we could not meet in person, Council members continued to manage the work of the Association via email. The restrictions similarly affected our programme of summer visits for members and guests, with planned tours of four archive repositories in Edinburgh and Stirling having to be cancelled. Circumstances permitting, these events will be rescheduled for summer 2021.

This year also saw several changes on Council. At the Forty-Second Annual General Meeting of the Association held on 16 November 2019, the Treasurer, Ms Jo Dixon, stood down after four years in office, and Ms Liz Course was elected as her successor. Dr Amy Blakeway, Ms Pam McNichol and Dr Jan Merchant retired from Council on completing their terms of office as Ordinary Members and Dr Douglas Lockhart, Ms Catherine Maxwell Stuart, Dr Ronnie Scott and Mrs Ingrid Thomson were elected to replace them. On 12 May 2020, Ms Jo Dixon was co-opted back onto Council as an Ordinary Member. No Council members are due to retire at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in November 2020, which will be held online owing to the continuing Coronavirus restrictions.

Membership

Membership of the Association currently stands at 169. This comprises 105 full individual members; 7 honorary individual members; 8 student/unwaged individual members; 7 reduced (no journal) members; and 42 full institutional members. This represents an increase on the total membership figure for 2018-2019 (149), largely due to several non-payers from last year bringing their subscriptions up to date. There are 5 individual members from 2018-2019 and 7 institutional members from the same year who are still unpaid for 2019-2020. Those who did not renew their subscriptions for either 2016-2017 or 2017-2018 have been removed from the membership list after receiving final reminders. Institutional members comprise a complicated group with subscription payments being made for several through agents who do not seem able to identify the individual institutions for whom they are paying. Approaches have been made to these organisations seeking clarification. It is also evident that organisations are confused by the subscription being for a period other than a calendar year (i.e. August 2019 – July 2020) and it would be more efficient to move to a standardised system. This would not involve people changing the date of their payment, but the payment would be attributed to a specific year (i.e. 2020 rather than 2019-2020).

Finance

At the Forty-Second Annual General Meeting of the Association held on 16 November 2019, attention was drawn to an apparent discrepancy on page 3 of the 2018-2019 Annual Accounts. It was pointed out that the three items of expenditure for 2019 (Journal, *Retour* and Palaeography

pack) listed under Note 3: Publications added up to £4,028.78, and not £4,528.76 as indicated in the Accounts. The sum of £500 therefore seemed to be unaccounted for. The meeting voted to approve the Accounts, subject to this discrepancy being rectified. It was subsequently confirmed that the £500 had been spent on design work for a new logo and publicity leaflet, and that a fourth item to this effect should appear under Publications expenditure. The Accounts were returned to the Independent Examiner and a corrected version prepared, clearly showing this item of expenditure under Note 3. The corrected Accounts and Independent Examiner's Report were then distributed to members and submitted with the Association's Annual Return to the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) in April 2020.

The Association ended the 2019-2020 financial year with £5,768.58 in the current account and £5,342.17 in the savings account and made a profit of £2,649.57, which is a notable increase on last year's profit of £514.04. This is partly due to an outstanding invoice for accommodation and catering costs associated with the 2019 Annual Conference, which has yet to be received and paid by the Association. It is estimated that the outstanding invoice will total around £890 and that the 2019 Annual Conference should break even once this is accounted for. Travel expenditure for 2019-2020 (£126.25) was significantly lower than for 2018-2019 (£308.10) due to the pandemic.

Owing to a delay, the Association's Gift Aid repayment from HMRC for 2019-2020 was not received in this financial year. It was received in September 2020 and will therefore be noted in next year's accounts along with the repayment for 2020-2021.

As in previous years, the Association's biggest expenditure was on publications. *Scottish Archives* cost £3,215.22 to produce and distribute. *Retour* cost £306.22 (this includes the cost of printing the corrected 2018-2019 Annual Accounts for distribution with issue 33). Postage costs for issue 33 of *Retour* have yet to be accounted for as the Coronavirus restrictions delayed distribution to institutional members. Sales of back copies of the journal raised £164.81 this year.

Conference

This year's Annual Conference on the theme of 'Hidden Histories' was organised in conjunction with the Centre for Scottish Culture at the University of Dundee and took place in the Dalhousie Building, University of Dundee on 16 November 2019. An enthusiastic audience enjoyed seven fascinating presentations, two of which will appear as articles in the forthcoming volume of *Scottish Archives*. We are grateful to everyone who helped to organise the conference, particularly Robin Urquhart, Amy Blakeway and Graeme Morton; to the speakers and chairmen for their excellent contributions, and to the staff of the University of Dundee for their assistance on the day.

Publications

During 2019-2020, the Association's website (www.scottishrecordsassociation.org) was viewed 5,868 times, which is an increase on the 2018-2019 figure of 5,126 visits. Most visitors accessed the site from within the UK, the USA and Canada, but there was also some interest from New Zealand and Australia. The website has run smoothly throughout the year and experienced only a few minor issues which were rapidly addressed by the technical support team. During the year, the Association's new logo was incorporated into the website and both the 'Publications' and 'Events' sections were substantially revised.

Issues 32 and 33 of *Retour*, the Association's newsletter, appeared in autumn 2019 and spring 2020. *Scottish Archives* volume 24 was published and distributed to members in February 2020. A combined volume 25/26 is expected early in 2021.

Tunnock Prize

In February 2020, the Association launched an annual essay competition for postgraduate students and early career researchers, kindly sponsored by Thomas Tunnock Ltd. Entries must focus on the use and interpretation of Scottish archives, either within Scotland or further afield. Each year the winning essay will receive a prize of £250 and, subject to peer review, will be considered for publication in *Scottish Archives*. The closing date for this year's competition was 30 September and the winner will be announced at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in November.

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).