



**Minute of the Annual General Meeting of Groam House Museum,
held at Groam House Museum, High Street, Rosemarkie,
on Thursday 28th November 2019, 7.30pm**

Present:

Directors: Barbara Cohen (Chair), Jill Harden, Alastair Morton, Tim McKeggie (Treasurer), Doug Maclean (Company Secretary).

Members: Diane Cobden, Philip Cohen, Jurgen and Carol Diethe, Rita Fabling, Steve and Jean Hogben, Maureen Kitchingham, Sylvia Macdonald, Lynne Mackenzie, Magdalene Maclean, Bill and Brenda Martin, Keith Martin-Smith, Roy and Katie Nelson, Norman Newton, Anne Philips, Megan Stubbs, Stuart Tickner, Evelyn Topp,

In attendance: Carola Martin-Smith, John McLellan, Gordon Adam

Apologies: Pam Draper, Tim and Eileen Heaps, Scott Lindsay, Trish McKeggie, Roddie Macpherson, Ann Mee, Paul Pritchard, Susan Seright, Hugh Fearn, Gill Silver, Mary Smyth, Trish Tickner, Andrew and Georgina White, Su Wompra

1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair introduced the agenda, noting that item 6 had been deleted as the member concerned had withdrawn, and under item 7, Iain Brown had withdrawn his application. The agenda had been sent to members prior to the meeting.

2. Minute of previous meeting

The Chair presented the minute of the previous meeting held on 15 November 2018 and asked for any corrections or comments. There being no objections or corrections the minutes were proposed for acceptance by Rita Fabling, seconded by Jean Hogben, and accepted unanimously.

3. Reports

3.1 Treasurer's report

The Treasurer circulated copies of the members' extract of accounts for the period ending 31 March 2019 and presented his financial report for the year. He reported another successful year financially, with income exceeding expenditure, and reserves up from around £18,000 at the start of the year to around £30,000 at the

end. The board had decided to designate £15,000 to be kept in reserve for unexpected events. He reported that income had increased compared to the previous year; the shop has transferred £6,500 to the general fund, £1000 more than previous year, though fundraising was slightly down, as were donations. The Highland Council grant was again paid during the year though it was uncertain how long this would continue.

Expenditure, in comparison, was down compared the previous year as a result of the tight control exercised; all items of expenditure are authorised by two trustees and are fully documented. This year a new set of accounting codes was introduced to help with the management of the accounts. Overall the museum was now in a stable financial position. Although there was little grant-aided funding during 2018/19, the groundwork for new bids was being laid, and a substantial grant was awarded in the current year (2019/20).

The Treasurer reported that there were possible future costs to be incurred. The museum currently employs two part time staff, but could do with more. Thought would need to be given to increasing the museum's fundraising capacity to meet this additional potential expense. Consideration was also being given to taking over ownership of Groam House, in order to be eligible for grants to renovate and develop the building. This, however, would be the subject of capital grants.

Jurgen Diethe (JD) asked whether the Council grant was identified in the accounts, to which the Treasurer replied in the positive; JD requested that it be made clearer in future years.

JD also asked where the donations box income was identified in the accounts; the Treasurer advised that it was a component of the voluntary income, which included individual donations, Angels' contributions and Gift Aid. Norman Newton asked if it could be broken down in future to make it clearer.

The Treasurer reported that the accounts had been independently examined and approved by independent reviewer Tim Wickens.

The Treasurer also advised the meeting that he was now standing down after three years in the post.

The accounts as presented were noted and the meeting thanked Tim for his time as treasurer.

3.2 Directors' reports

Reporting on the activity of the museum, the Chair presented a report on behalf of the board. Her full report is presented in the Annex.

The Chair opened by saying that the decision taken at the previous AGM, to apply to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) had now been fully implemented, which meant the museum no longer had to deal with Companies House. OSCR, the Charities Regulator, had proved to be easier and more friendly to deal with. The board members were now Trustees rather than directors. (Note that

the revised constitution, agreed at the previous AGM is now available on the Museum website.)

The Chair advised that this was the third year of the board which was elected in 2016. Two of the Trustees were standing down this year – Jill Harden and Tim McKeggie. Jill would be remaining as an active volunteer. Three others would remain – the Chair (Barbara Cohen), Alastair Morton and Doug Maclean. Later in the agenda, four candidates would be offering to stand as new additional Trustees.

Focusing on the headlines of the report, the Chair reported that volunteer numbers were good, but the museum always needed more. Visitor numbers are up on the previous year, and we retain our VisitScotland 4* rating. It had been an outstanding year for the beautifully curated shop – contributing more to the general fund than in previous years. Over the 2019/20 winter, some redevelopment will be carried out to improve the appearance of the shop further. The Fundraising team led by Jean Hogben, raised over £4000. In addition to the Fundraising team, Mo Kitchingham leads the catering team which provides the baking and drinks for the events, and has now established a great reputation for its cakes and savouries.

The Chair reported that a volunteers coordination group had been established during the year, which has proved to be very effective, taking much of the routine work off the Board.

The Museum now employs two part time staff – Jo Clements (George Bain curator), and Carola Martin-Smith (administrator and volunteer coordinator).

This year, over £2500 was raised by crowdfunding to raise funding for the repairs to the exterior of the building, work which will take place in the spring.

Councillor Gordon Adam has provided significant support and advice throughout the year, for which the Chair thanked him.

The Rosemarkie public toilets, the threatened closure of which was of great concern to the Museum last year, had now been saved, through the formation of a charitable Trust which has taken over the running of both the Rosemarkie and Fortrose toilets.

For the future, the new project for which funding has been obtained in the current financial year, will digitise over 500 items from the George Bain collection, but also allow the digital images to be viewed in flexible ways, and on a platform which will enable others to contribute to the understanding of the objects. The project will start in January and continue to mid-2020.

Another project is to develop and revitalise the Pictish Trail – involving the museums and Pictish sites along the way.

The Highland Museums Forum has been in existence for several years, working as an informal grouping of the accredited museums in the Highlands to encourage sharing of knowledge and experience and opportunities for joint projects. The Forum has now developed into a more formal body – registered as a SCIO – and has been renamed as Museums and Heritage Highland. Potential membership has been

extended beyond the current core to include all museums and heritage organisations in the Highlands, as well as interested individuals.

The Castle Project, to redevelop Inverness Castle and Bridge Street is a further project which may well impact positively on the museums throughout the Highlands.

Finally, the Chair offered a heartfelt vote of thanks to her fellow Trustees, the magnificent volunteers, all of whom have helped to bring Groam House Museum back to being a good place to visit or to work in.

Reporting now on behalf of Alastair Morton, the Chair advised that the gift shop had had a very successful year, with a good range of quality items on display, and the shop volunteers encouraged to re-stock when required. The budget contribution to the general fund was £1000 more than budgeted, but the remaining surplus was used to purchase more stock for the following season.

The annual lecture series was also successful. The Chair noted that the highlight for her was the lecture by Bill Campbell on RAF Blackstand; the hall was overflowing and the insights were a revelation.

Doug continues as membership secretary, 100 Club promoter, looks after the IT, serves on the fundraising committee and is responsible for business development. For the past three years he has developed virtual tours of the upstairs exhibitions, which this year have been combined into one programme which allows past years' exhibitions to be viewed. Part of the business development strategy will be to look at options for extending the current building, or obtaining new premises, in order to provide the basic facilities of toilets, kitchen and lifts to the upstairs.

Report by Jill Harden

Jill described the two temporary exhibitions which had been installed in 2019 and which had proved very successful. The first was "Found in the Ground", developed by volunteers, displaying the wealth of pre-historic and historic items found under the ground through various techniques such as field-walking, gardening and metal detecting. The summer exhibition was created by Jo Clements, and entitled "Crafting the Celtic – the legacy of George Bain 50 years on". It brought together the work of three exciting contemporary craftspeople influenced and inspired by the work of George Bain. The recorded interviews which were included in the exhibition brought their approaches to their crafts to life. Within that display was an intricately painted wooden bowl – we successfully applied to the Association of Independent Museums for a grant, which paid for the conservation of the bowl.

During the year, too, the museum has taken on new items from local people and through the Treasure Trove process. These have included photograph albums from a local family, and a 17th century gold posy ring.

Behind the scenes, volunteers and the George Bain curator work on Monday and Thursdays to keep the collection up to date. In 2017 there was a backlog of over 3000 items in the local history and George Bain collection which had not been catalogued. By 2021 everything will have been catalogued, photographed and

entered in the database. This will then enable us to share the collection via the web and other means. This work is also a requirement of the accreditation status the museum holds.

A student from the UHI archaeology course has been working with us as part of a Highland-wide project run by ARCH, to sort out our archaeological material. Another project by volunteers has been to work through the research papers prepared by former curator, Susan Seright. There is a wealth of information contained in the papers.

We are grateful to Alison Boyle at the Museum of Childhood at Strathpeffer as our museum mentor, and Lorna Cruikshank at Highlife Highland as our independent museums adviser. They helped us to review our policies on key matters, on which our continued accreditation depends.

We are pleased to be involved in the new Pictish Trail project, which the Chair mentioned previously. We are looking to establish closer links with the Tarbat Discovery Centre at Portmahomack.

Most recently we have won a major grant from Museums Galleries Scotland and Creative Scotland. Called, "Sharing the creativity of Celtic art through the George Bain collection", it is a really exciting new venture for the museum. It is notable that a tiny museum such as ours has already generated such very positive feedback from the big organisations which fund it. An important benefit will be that we will be able to employ a project officer for three days a week for at least 15 months.

On a personal note, Jill thanked all the help and support from others on the Board and amongst the volunteers.

4. Directors standing down, not seeking re-election

It was noted that Jill Harden and Tim McKeeggie were standing down after three years as Directors. The Chair thanked them for their contribution in turning the museum round – Tim on the financial side, and Jill on the museum side.

5 Directors standing down under the three-year rule

There were none, in view of the fact that two directors had decided to stand down.

6. Appointment of New Trustees

The Chair introduced the four candidates who were standing for election as Trustees, being recommended for acceptance by the Board. Doug Maclean offered the meeting the option to vote for the new Trustees "en masse" or individually. He introduced John McLellan as an experienced HR manager, Sylvia Macdonald as a long-standing supporter of the museum who is well known to the museum community, Lynne Mackenzie who joined recently as a volunteer and has considerable experience in the creative arts, and Paul Pritchard who has considerable experience in financial management. The meeting agreed the appointment of all four candidates unanimously.

7. Re-appointment of Tim Wickens, FCA, MSc, Chartered Accountant as Independent Examiner of the Museum's Accounts

The Chair once again paid tribute to the valuable assistance of Mr Wickens and recommended his re-appointment. The meeting agreed unanimously to the re-appointment of Tim Wickens.

8. AOCB

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.22pm.

Good evening and welcome to our Annual General Meeting 2019. The Directors are happy to report that Groam House Museum, with your approval last year, has made a successful conversion to a SCIO with a modern up-dated constitution and is enjoying that new status. Directors have now become "Trustees".

2019 marks the end of the third year of the Board elected in 2016. The Trustees are pleased to report many achievements, this year, although many challenges remain. Also, there is a note of sadness as two Trustees are standing down at the end of their 3-year term. Both Tim McKeggie and Jill Harden will present their own reports this evening, along with Doug Maclean and Alastair Morton. Jill plans to remain an active volunteer.

We are delighted to report that again the Museum has had a good year in all departments - financially, volunteering, front of house, care of our collections and in the way we continue to build strong links and partnerships in our local community.

There is so much to celebrate that once again I must give you mainly headlines:

- Volunteer numbers are good but we need many more;
- Membership and 100 Club also remain successful;
- Visitor numbers continue to increase;
- We maintain our VisitScotland 4-star rating;
- It has been another outstanding year for our beautifully curated gift shop where greater investment has led to best ever sales and some re-development is planned;
- Imaginative and successful fund-raising events, led by Jean Hogben and team have raised more than £4000 this year in community-based activities;
- The Volunteers Co-ordination group, which looks after event catering, internal communication, advises and assists in museum activities, projects, advertising and PR has developed well;
- This museum community always rises to the occasion – over £2,500 was raised by crowd-funding for refurbishment of the exterior but more is still needed;
- Four individuals have agreed to have their names put forward to become new Trustees;
- The part-time Museum Administrator has proved to be an absolute godsend;
- Cllr Gordon Adam has provided invaluable help and advice this year;
- The Rosemarkie public toilets were saved and the Fortrose facilities re-opened to local acclaim.

Funding

Our funding comes from a variety of sources: the gift shop; donations; fund-raising events; grants; visiting groups; the summer lecture series.

The gift shop is now our main source of income thanks to the tireless efforts of the retail team, as Alastair will tell you. They go from strength to strength and are to be greatly admired.

Donations, payments by visiting groups and the lecture series are all valuable and steady sources of additional income and public engagement.

Once we could rely on a big enough running costs grant from Highland Council to fund a Curator/Manager. Now, that grant is reduced to a fraction and could cease next year leaving a £6,000 hole to fill.

Project funding grants are also more difficult to win in these austere times.

Successful fund raising events such as the regular Book Sales, Plant Sales and Craft events, always accompanied by delicious tea, coffee and home-baking, provide essential funding of running costs and there is a hidden invaluable bonus in that invisible but strong links and relationships are built between the museum and the community.

Many congratulations are due to Jean Hogben and her team and to Mo Kitchingham and the catering team.

Our mission, next year, and for the future must be business development and larger-scale fund raising events and campaigns.

Future Developments

- The project to digitise some 500 items in the nationally recognised George Bain Collection begins in January 2020. The new website will bring the world to Rosemarkie!
- Firm plans are in place to refurbish the exterior of the Museum in the spring.
- Active participation in the redevelopment of *The Pictish Trail*.
- The *Highland Museums Forum* has developed into an organisation to represent, serve and support all museums and heritage bodies in the Highlands. It is now a SCIO called *Museums and Heritage Highlands*.
- Continuing participation in the long-term *Castle Project* which plans to redevelop Inverness Castle into a major tourism hub at the centre of a Highlands-wide heritage-based tourism initiative.

And finally, I wish to extend a huge and heartfelt Vote of Thanks to my fellow Trustees and to all the magnificent Volunteers who have worked so hard to bring Groam House Museum to such an encouraging level of success; they make it once more a good place to visit, support or come to work in, in whatever capacity.

Thank You, One and All!

***Barbara Cohen,
Chairman.
November 2019.***