



**Minute of the Annual General Meeting of Groam House Museum,
held by Zoom,
on Thursday 3rd December 2020, 7.30pm**

Present:

Trustees: Doug Maclean (Chair), Paul Pritchard (Treasurer), Barbara Cohen, Lynne Mackenzie, Sylvia Macdonald

Members: Christopher Birt, Ruth Black, Diane Cobden, Pam Draper, Rita Fabling, Sheila Hainey, Jill Harden, Richard Hotchkis, Steve and Jean Hogben, Maureen Kitchingham, Scott Lindsay, Alaine Macdonald, Magdalene Maclean, Carola Martin-Smith, Bruce Ritchie, Ro Scott, Gill Silver, Eleanore Simpson, Mary Smyth, Roland Spencer-Jones, Megan Stubbs, Stuart and Trish Tickner, Alex Woolf

In attendance: Helen Avenall, Jan Donald

Apologies: Gordon Adam, Auchy Christie, Stephen and Nigel Murby-Wright, Roy and Katie Nelson, Sally Purdy, Andrew and Georgina White, Robin and Janet Witheridge.

1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed those attending and introduced the agenda. The agenda had been sent to members prior to the meeting, and both the draft accounts and Trustees' report had been made available on-line through the Groam House website. Apologies were given as noted above.

2. Minute of previous meeting

The Chair presented the minute of the previous meeting held on 28 November 2019 and asked for any corrections or comments. There being no objections or corrections the minutes were proposed for acceptance by Mo Kitchingham, seconded by Carola Martin-Smith and accepted unanimously.

3. Reports

3.1 Treasurer's report

The Treasurer had provided the accounts for the period ending 31 March 2020 through the website, and presented his financial report for the year.

KEY POINTS ON ACCOUNTS TO 31ST MARCH 2020

Change to SCIO in June 2019 means accounts are now prepared on a Receipts & Payments basis. The main impact from this change is the exclusion of Shop stock and any movement in value of this during the year.

The Independent Examiner has completed his review of the Accounts and has advised today they are signed off without matters being raised.

Reserves

- Unrestricted Reserves at £26,409 (2019: £25,062)
 - Of which £15,000 held in a Designated General Reserve
- Restricted Reserves at £9,163 (2019: £390)

Surplus/Deficit for year

- Unrestricted Funds £1,347 (2019: £13,044)
 - Analysed between:
 - General activities £-5970 (2019: £5,073)
 - Shop activities £7,318 (2019: £7,971)
- Restricted Grants for specified projects £8,773 (2019: £-1,280)

Income

- General activities £21,492 (2019: £24,247) - a reduction of 11%
- Shop activities £23,613 (2019: £18,593) - an increase of 27%
- Restricted Grants for specified projects £31,382 (2019: £2,246)

Expenses

- General activities £27,462 (2019: £19,174) – an increase of 43%
- Main increases in expenses:
 - Employees £7,253
 - Museum Display Costs £2,367
- Shop Activities £16,295 (2019: £10,622) – an increase of 53%
- Restricted Grants on specified projects £22,609 (2019: £3,226)

For the current year, which has been much affected by Covid-19, the Treasurer advised that he anticipated ending the year with a net deficit in the unrestricted funds of around £1,000

The accounts as presented were noted.

3.2 Directors' reports

Reporting on the activity of the museum, the Chair presented a report on behalf of the board. The report had been made available on the website in text form, but a presentation using PowerPoint was presented.

The short summary was that 2019/20 had been a successful year for the museum. As always, the highlights for the museum are its exhibitions. It had offered two in the year, "Found in the Ground", curated by Jill Harden for the Spring months, and "Crafting the Celtic – commemorating 50 years from the death of George Bain",

curated by Jo Clements, in the summer. The fundraising team, headed by Jean Hogben and supported by Mo Kitchingham with her team of home bakers, had provided a range of fund-raising and social events during the year, raising over £3,500 in funds for the museum.

A major success had been the award of over £70,000 by Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland for a project involving animation, dance, music, digitisation of part of the George Bain collection, and the development of a new interactive website to encourage world-wide engagement with the work of George Bain and Celtic art. The project bid had been put together by Wendy Sanders, Jill Harden, Jean Hogben, Jo Clements, Barbara Cohen and others, and is still on-going.

The presentation included photographs of the skills training sessions in animation techniques, applied to Celtic designs, and of the evening of light and music in the grounds of Fortrose Cathedral.

Also during the year, a fundraising exercise was mounted to tackle the increasingly dilapidated state of the external decoration of the museum. This raised almost half of the £6,000 needed for the work, which was undertaken and completed shortly after the end of the financial year.

The museum had been well-served by its Directors/Trustees – starting the year with a board comprising Barbara Cohen, Tim McKeggie, Jill Harden, Doug Maclean, Alastair Morton and Gordon Adam, supported by Curator Mentor Alison Boyle (Highland Museum of Childhood). At the end of the year, as a result of changes at the 2019 AGM, the board comprised Barbara Cohen, Paul Pritchard, Lynne Mackenzie, Sylvia Macdonald, Doug Maclean, Alastair Morton, supported by Helen Avenall.

The Chair referred to the amazing work of the museum's volunteers, emphasising that the volunteers were the lifeblood of the museum, and indeed WERE the museum. Without them, there would be no museum as we know it; no-one to greet visitors, organise events, catalogue the collections, organise the shop, or carry out all the many tasks needed to keep the museum organised and functional. Similarly the museum is blessed with excellent paid staff – Jo Clements as George Bain curator, who sadly is currently unwell, and Carola Martin-Smith, as our museum administrator. Other staff are also brought in as needed to work on individual projects.

The chair went on to refer to the other areas of work of the museum:

- Our support to local schools (organised by Megan Stubbs)
- The lecture programme (Alastair Morton)
- Development of the beginnings of a business development plan, to plan a sustainable future for the museum (Doug Maclean_
- Collections – back-room work to document and catalogue the thousands of items in our collections – a range of volunteers under the guidance of Jill Harden and Jo Clements
- Visitors – numbers remaining strong, generating about £10,000 in donations from all sources, £7,000 in net shop profit, and maintaining a 4-star rating with VisitScotland and over 4-stars with TripAdvisor and Google

Since the end of March, of course Covid-19 has forced the museum to remain closed, which was a great disappointment in view of the preparations for our wonderful new exhibitions planned for 2020 – a new twist to the Pictish display and a fresh look at the Book of Kells through the eyes of George Bain and local artist Thomas Keyes. But financial support has been provided from various sources:

- £10,000 from The Highland Council as a Business Support Grant
- £2,000 from MGS to cover the costs of re-opening under Covid-19 restrictions
- £8,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for emergency work
- And £9,000 from MGS to cover recovery and resilience development.

The museum continued to support Museums and Heritage Highland, the successor to the Highland Museums Forum, which has grown from strength to strength. And this year, work has finally started on developing an improved Pictish Trail to encourage visitors to see more of the Pictish stones and history around the Highlands.

Also since the end of the 2019/20 financial year, the museum has launched its own new website – thanks to the work of Trustee Lynne Mackenzie. And importantly our status as a collection recognised as of National Significance has been renewed for our George Bain collection.

The Chair referred to the loss since the year end of three of our volunteers – Su Wompra, and Jean and Steve Hogben, all of whom had moved out of the area for family reasons. A great send-off had been given to all three.

Finally the Chair thanked all those who made the museum possible:

- Everyone present tonight, as well as our other members and supported, for continuing to support us
- Our volunteers for making us what we are
- Our paid workers for supporting us so wholeheartedly
- Our Trustees for achieving so much in difficult times
- Our Members, Angels, 100 Club Members, visitors and everyone who supports us financially
- The organisations who support us with grant funding
- Everyone who makes Groam House great.

Carola Martin-Smith proposed a vote of thanks to Doug for making the report.

4 Trustees standing down under the three-year rule

Doug Maclean and Barbara Cohen were standing down this year, but were immediately re-elected.

5. Appointment of New Trustees

No nominations had been received.

6. 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.

7. AOCB

Barbara Cohen thanked the Chair for taking over from her in March 2019 and for the work he has done since.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20.22.