



**Minute of the Annual General Meeting of Groam House Museum,
held by Zoom,
on Thursday 9th December 2022, 7.30pm**

Present:

Trustees: Doug Maclean (Chair), Paul Pritchard (Treasurer), Barbara Cohen (Vice Chair), Richard Hotchkis

Members: Christopher Birt, Tracy Chudley, Diane Cobden, Rita Fabling, Jean Hogben, Magdalene Maclean, Alastair Morton, Norman Newton, Elaine Ogilvy, Barbara Pritchard, Gill Silver, Robin and Janet Witheridge,

Apologies: Andrew and Georgina White, Jurgen Diethel, Katie Nelson, Anthony and Jane Bryant, Keith and Carola Martin-Smith, Scott and Barbara Lindsay, Jenny Brogden.

Proxy: Mary Smyth, Janet Robertson

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. The Chair acknowledged that it was now 40 years since the museum was first established, and perhaps now was a time to celebrate this.

2. Minute of previous meeting

The Chair presented the minute of the previous meeting held on 9th December 2021 and asked for any corrections or comments. There being no objections or corrections the minutes were proposed for acceptance by Richard Hotchkiss, seconded by Barbara Cohen and accepted unanimously.

3. Reports

3.1 Trustees' report

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 the Chair used a PowerPoint presentation to deliver the key points.

The short summary was that for 2021-22 the museum had been open again, albeit on a restricted basis, after the long closure due to the Covid pandemic. Despite being

open, we had to introduce measures to restrict the numbers of visitors entering the museum, and to clean and disinfect the museum after each visitor group. We introduced time slots, which visitors had to book if they wished to visit the museum, and we used the Art Fund's Arttickets system to handle the bookings. People turning up without booking could still book a place using a notice board we placed outside the museum, on which existing bookings had been marked.

Despite the restrictions, we did manage to offer two exhibitions – the upstairs one being a repeat of the previous year's exhibition by Thomas Keyes (which hadn't really seen the light of day) showing what a monastic scriptorium could have looked like, and showing Thomas's painstaking work to create his own vellum, inks and drawing tools, in order to reproduce sections from the Book of Kells.

Downstairs we had 'Pictish sculpture – some mysteries revealed', where a video by Thomas demonstrated the geometry behind some of the stones – including the Rosemarkie stone, which he recreates using ruler and compasses only.

Sadly, our normal fund-raising activity was considerably curtailed by the Covid restrictions, with just one fundraising event in the entire year being held in March. This was our ever-popular book sale. We managed to keep our on-line activities on the go, by means of Zoom, which had the effect of extending our audience much more widely than usual. People from all over the world were joining our workshops and lectures, and this helped to increase the income we raised from these events – not only from the increased numbers, but also because we recorded the events and made the recordings available on-line. We also used online tools in the form of social media to keep our volunteers in touch with each other.

As far as grants were concerned, we reported previously on the large grant provided by Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland to build on the George Bain collection through a number of activities. In the previous year it was about animation and dance to bring Celtic art to life, and this year it was more about developing a new bespoke interactive website to extend access to the George Bain collection and to encourage artists and craftspeople world-wide to contribute to the discussion on the development of Celtic art. We also received a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop our local history exhibition – into what became our 2022 exhibition on the history of Rosemarkie, "Storyways to Rosemarkie's People".

As for our Trustees, Jan Donald joined us as a trustee at the start of the year, but stepped down later and continues as a volunteer, working on researching the local history of Rosemarkie.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of the museum – they do the work that enables us to operate as a museum – everything from greeting visitors, to looking after and documenting the collections, helping at our events, catering, and much, much more. They have been supported by our two paid part-time staff, Jo Clements, our George Bain curator, and Carola Martin-Smith, our administrator. Jo suffered considerable health problems and was off sick for several months, but has returned on reduced hours. Carola stepped down from paid work at the end of the year, though I am pleased to say she continues as a volunteer. Jenny Brogden also provided some paid input to the museum, as the administrator to the George Bain project. Since Carola left her paid role, we have appointed Charlie Leggatt as our administrator.

Jill Harden, long standing contributor to the work of the museum and former Trustee, stepped in to cover for Jo's absence on sick leave on a voluntary basis to ensure that the George Bain project for which funding had been obtained, would continue to be delivered. We are extremely grateful to Jill, as always, for this very significant contribution of time and expertise.

We managed to deliver a full programme of lectures during the year, based on using Zoom. This enabled us to extend the audience beyond our normal geographic boundaries, and also to involve speakers from further afield. We also reduced our costs through not having to hire a meeting room, and with larger audiences, our lectures began to make a profit.

Last year we reported that we had been given notice to vacate both our storage facilities at the Rosehaugh estate and at Balintore, and in preparation for that, we initiated a bid for the Community Asset Transfer of a near-derelict building on Bridge Street in Rosemarkie. We advanced that application quite considerably, but as time went on we began to doubt the suitability of the property for our needs and decided to withdraw our application shortly after the end of the financial year. Since then (in the current financial year) we have made progress towards acquiring a different property at 19 High Street Rosemarkie – a property much nearer to the museum itself, and in a better state of repair. We hope to develop this as a store for our collections and as an extension exhibition space.

During the year we started to work on a business development plan for the museum – work that will be on-going through the current year.

The museum had been well-served by its Directors/Trustees – at the end of the financial year, the Board comprised: Doug Maclean (Chair), Paul Pritchard (Treasurer), Barbara Cohen (Vice Chair), Sylvia Macdonald and Richard Hotchkiss. Helen Avenell continues to provide support.

The Chair summarised what has been happening since the year end, including the work to seek replacement storage accommodation for the museum's collections, developing a long term business plan for the museum, looking at a possible future extension to the building to permit the Rosemarkie Stone to be on display 24 hours a day, and looking at how the income of the museum can be increased to ensure a sustainable future..

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

- All the members 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 circumstances
- Our Members, Angels, 100 Club members, visitors and supporters for the financial and other support you provide
- Our grant providers and supporters, The Highland Council, Highlife Highland, Museums and Galleries Scotland, National Lottery Heritage Fund, ArtFund
- Everyone who makes Groam House great!

3.1 Treasurer's report

The Treasurer had provided the accounts for the period ending 31 March 2022 through the website and presented his financial report for the year.

KEY POINTS ON ACCOUNTS TO 31ST MARCH 2022

The treasurer noted that in the previous financial year the museum continued to be in a strong financial position, largely due to the government grants provided to counter the most serious impacts of Covid. Overall we broke even over the year, and with the payment made by MGS shortly after the end of the year, we ended up with around £50,000 in reserves. However the restrictions on opening times, and on the number of visitors permitted in the museum at a time, this had a negative effect on the income generated. The result is that for the current financial year (2022/23) we are expecting to end up with a deficit of around £10,000.

The Independent Examiner has completed his review of the Accounts. They will now be submitted to the OSCR.

KEY POINTS ON ACCOUNTS TO 31ST MARCH 2022

Reserves

- Unrestricted Reserves at £30,393 (2021: £32,100)
 - Of which £15,000 in a Designated General Reserve
- Restricted Reserves at £2,995 (2021: £7,449)
- Project Expenses recoverable from MGS £19,286 (2021: £13,164)

Income

- General activities £11,398 (2021: £6,859) – an increase of 67%
- Shop activities £9,022 (2021: £4,352) - a increase of 107%
- Unrestricted Grants £15,272 (2021: £36,272) –a decrease of 58%
- Restricted Grants for specified projects £22,409 (2021: £32,580)

Expenses

- General activities £25,705 (2021: £25,283) – increase of 2%
- Shop Activities £5,573 (2021: £3,345) – increase of 107%
- Restricted Grants on specified projects £26,682 (2021: £47,459)

Main Continuing Financial Impacts on Income resulting from COVID (comparison to 2020 financial results)

- Donation income £7,929 (2020: £9,851) – a decrease of 20%
- Group Visit Fees £0 (2020: £886) – a decrease of 100%
- Events & Lectures £3,459 (2020: £3,736) – a decrease of 7%
- Shop Margin £3,449 (2020: £7,318) – a decrease of 53%
- The above total a reduction in income compared to 2020 is just under £7,000 primarily as a direct result of COVID on the operation of the Museum. However due to having been able to access Government related COVID business grants of £30,000 during the previous financial year and a further £9,000 in the current year the museum was able to cover this year's deficit meaning he museum was able to move into the current financial with a strong position in its reserves.

During the current year the impact of COVID continues to have a negative impact on income and will again result in a deficit for the year.

Norman Newton asked for more detail on the figures for the shop trading. The Treasurer explained that increasingly the shop is obtaining goods on sale or return, which is beneficial to the museum, and steps have been taken to reduce the value of stock held by the museum. Average shop spend per visitor was down compared to the previous year but this seems to be typical of other similar organisations. Donations per visitor have also declined slightly. Our priority now is to revert to the 6-hour per day opening so as to increase footfall. We are also looking to develop our on-line selling capacity.

The accounts as presented were noted.

4. Proposal to make amendment to the Constitution

Existing clause 61:

A person who has served on the Board for a period of three years shall automatically vacate office. Optionally the person may serve one further year, and then not be eligible for re-election until a further year has elapsed.

Proposed revision to clause 61:

A person who has served on the Board for a period of three years shall automatically vacate office. Optionally the person may, if so willing, be re-elected to serve for a further three years, and thereafter may be re-elected on an annual basis.

Reason for revision – to ease the difficulty of finding and recruiting suitable Trustees.

The proposal was carried by a substantial majority.

5. Trustees standing down under the three-year rule

Sylvia MacDonald and Richard Hotchkiss were due to stand down this year. They were immediately re-elected for a further year.

6. Appointment of New Trustees

Alastair Morton, a previous Trustee and continuing volunteer at the museum had put himself forward for election as a Trustee. Agreed unanimously.

7. Plans for the future

These were largely covered in the Trustees' report. Priorities were to make arrangements for the move of the museum's collections from the premises at Rosehaugh estate and to develop and agree a long term business development strategy. Longer term, the museum had aspirations to develop the existing Groam House so as to provide an annex for the Rosemarkie Stone, which would make it visible 24 hours a day, independent of the museum's opening hours. It would also enable the installation of a lift and toilet to the building.

8. 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.

9. AOCB

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20:14.