



Annual Report of the Council of the Scottish Records Association for 2023-2024

The Council met three times during the year, with all three meetings taking place online. At the Forty-Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Association, held online on 14 December 2023, members voted in favour of several amendments to the constitution. These included a titular change from 'Chairman' to 'Convener' of Council; the introduction of an explicit provision for two people to be jointly elected or co-opted to the office of Journal Editor, the office of Newsletter Editor or the office of Secretary; and a reduction in the number of members required for a quorum at regular Council meetings to four, exclusive of the Convener, Secretary and Treasurer.

This year has also seen various changes on Council. At the Annual General Meeting, Mrs Carol Parry resigned as Journal Editor, having discharged this honorary and time-consuming office with aplomb for more than a decade. In recognition of her capable editing of *Scottish Archives* and of her significant wider contribution to the archive profession, Council has admitted Carol to honorary (lifetime) membership of the Association. Dr Charlotte Berry and Dr Cathryn Spence were jointly elected as our new Journal Editors, while Dr Ronnie Scott and Dr Malcolm Bangor-Jones were elected as Ordinary Members of Council, and Ms Jo Dixon retired on completion of her term as an Ordinary Member. Dr Iain Hutchison was co-opted as an Ordinary Member of Council on 12 February 2024. Our Convener of Council, Professor Chris Whatley, has announced his intention to step down at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in December 2024, when Ms Marietta Crichton Stuart and Ms Keren Guthrie will also retire on completing their terms of office as Ordinary Members. Council would like to thank all of them, but particularly Chris, for their significant contribution and commitment to the work of Council.

Membership

At the end of the financial year (31 July 2024) the Association had 195 members (139 individuals and 56 institutions). This represents a slight increase on the 2022-2023 figure of 191 members. The collection of subscriptions for the year 2023-2024 proved to be protracted and, in some cases, problematic, especially from institutional members who use electronic financial systems. At the end of the year there was a shortfall in subscription renewals from about 25 individual and institutional members (equating to about £625 of

income). The Association hopes to recoup most of this before the next issue of **Scottish Archives** is due to be sent out or to take the necessary action regarding striking off non-paying members.

Finance

The Association ended the financial year 2023-2024 with £11,432.52 in the current account and £5,433.53 in the savings account, representing a slight decrease of £19.68 across both accounts. Income from subscriptions was down on that for 2022-2023, while income from publications was higher. Expenditure on publications was also greater than in 2022-2023, and administration costs were markedly higher, with postage for **Retour** costing £236.40 (£120.12 in 2022-2023) and postage for **Scottish Archives** costing £243.84 (£79.65). Additionally, the website administration costs have increased to £371.30 (£250.58). This year's annual conference made a loss of £197.54. A claim for Gift Aid for 2023-2024 will be made together with that for 2024-2025; both should feature in next year's accounts.

As in previous years, the Association's biggest outlay was on publications, with production and distribution of **Scottish Archives**, volume 29, costing £3,869.27 (volume 28 having cost £3,642.01 in 2022-2023) and production and distribution of **Retour** costing £502.50 (£340.12 in 2022-2023). The increase in respect of **Retour** is partly due to postage charges, which have almost doubled from £120.12 in 2022-2023 to £236.40 in 2023-2024, as well as a slight increase of £56.00 in printing costs compared to the previous year.

Sales of back issues of **Scottish Archives** increased by £195.17 this year, but so also did the cost of posting journals, to £243.84 (£79.65). As usual, the total income and expenditure figures for the journal include the sum of £250 received from Thomas Tunnock Ltd for the annual Tunnock Prize and awarded to the winner.

During the year, the Association applied for a debit card to facilitate immediate and necessary purchases and introduced a PayPal account for receiving membership subscriptions and conference payments, which is proving popular with members.

Conference

This year's annual conference took place on Thursday 23 November 2023 at the Soutar Theatre within the AK Bell Library, Perth. Entitled 'The Body as Evidence,' the conference addressed themes relating to the human body in archives, including death, post-mortems, forensic science, and reconstruction of traumatic events that caused injury and death. The speakers were Dr Dee Hoole on the Aberdeen anatomy records, c.1820-1920; Dr Cheryl McGeachan on police surgeons and body geographies; Dr Ashleigh Black on the physiognomy of the fallen woman, focusing on tattoos as expressions of identity in nineteenth-century female convicts; Natasha Preger on medical examination in the Victorian and Edwardian recruitment process for the Post Office; Jenny Duffy on a tale of three thieves and their journey to the gallows; and Dr Malcolm Bangor-Jones on attitudes towards the

burial of suicides in the northern Highlands during the nineteenth century. The Association is grateful to the speakers and session chairs for their invaluable contributions to the event.

Visits

On 24 June 2024, seven members and guests of the Association visited the Archives of John Dewar & Sons Ltd, whisky manufacturers, located at the company's processing plant in Glasgow. There they received an introductory talk from the Archivist, Samantha Case, followed by a guided tour of the stores, presenting a rare opportunity to see a repository that is not generally open to the public. Our second visit of the year took place on 26 August, when nine members and guests spent the morning at Edinburgh City Archives, and the afternoon at Edinburgh Central Library. We were treated to extensive, behind-the-scenes tours of both repositories, and to fascinating displays of treasures from their respective collections. We would like to thank Samantha Case at the Archives of John Dewar & Sons; Ashleigh Thompson and her colleagues at Edinburgh City Archives, and Karen O'Brien and Iain Duffus at the Edinburgh Central Library for hosting this year's Summer Visits and for giving so generously of their time, knowledge and enthusiasm.

Palaeography Training Sessions

The Association provides occasional palaeography training sessions for small groups, which can be delivered either on-site or online. This year, work was completed on a second part of the Association's more advanced workshop: 'Palaeography for Private Household Collections.' Part two deals mainly with correspondence and journals, drawing on the records of Glamis Castle Archives. This part of the workshop was run for the first time at Glamis Castle on 16 February 2024. The Association would like to thank Glamis Castle for hosting the event, as well as all the palaeography tutors: Ingrid Thomson, Alison Diamond, Kirsty Stewart, Charlotte Berry and Robert Urquhart.

Publications

During 2023-2024, the Association's website (www.scottishrecordsassociation.org) was viewed 6,589 times, which is a slight decrease on the 2022-2023 figure of 7,113 visits. While most visitors accessed the site from within the UK and the USA, we also noted an increasing number of visitors from Canada and Australia. Articles from **Scottish Archives**, volume 28, were published on the website and made available to all visitors. The winner of the 2023 Tunnock Prize was also announced on the website and details of the Tunnock Prize competition for 2024 were made available to potential entrants. A new content page to publicise the Association's palaeography workshops was created in the events section of the website.

Issues 40 and 41 of **Retour**, the Association's newsletter, appeared in autumn 2023 and spring 2024. **Scottish Archives**, volume 29, was published and distributed to members in March 2024. Volume 30 is expected later in the year. Mrs Olive Geddes, the Reviews Editor

for **Scottish Archives**, stepped down in December 2023 and has been succeeded by Dr Chris Cassells. Dr Iain Gordon Brown, a long-standing member of the Editorial Board, also stepped down in December 2023. We extend sincere thanks to them for their invaluable contributions to the journal and wish them all the best for the future.

Tunnock Prize

The Association's annual essay competition for postgraduate students and early career researchers is kindly sponsored by Thomas Tunnock Ltd. The 2023 Tunnock Prize was awarded to James Fox, a PhD candidate at the University of St Andrews, for his essay entitled 'Recordkeeping and the Business of Books in Pre-Union Edinburgh: the Debt Book of John Porteous, 1699-1702.' James provided a presentation based on his research at the Annual General Meeting of the Association in December 2023 and his winning essay will be published in **Scottish Archives** volume 30.

The closing date for the 2024 Tunnock Prize competition was 1 September 2024, and the winner will be announced at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in December 2024.

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). This year, the Council has also made further representation to the Chief Executive of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC), requesting clarification on the future administrative and access arrangements for the NHSGGC Archive.