

## *Around the Archives*

# **The National Trust for Scotland and its Archives**

*Ian Riches*

On 1 May 2021 the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) was ninety years old. Since its foundation our conservation charity and Scotland's largest membership organisation has become a part of the Scottish way of life.

Sir John Stirling Maxwell,<sup>1</sup> one of the Trust's founding fathers, said at the Trust's first Annual General Meeting in 1932: 'The National Trust for Scotland serves the nation as a cabinet into which it can put some of its valuable things, where they will be perfectly safe for all time, and where they are open to be seen and enjoyed by everyone.'<sup>2</sup>

For many, this is the essence of the National Trust for Scotland: looking after historic castles and country houses, smaller properties such as the birthplaces of famous Scots, beautiful gardens, spectacular countryside, mountainous regions and islands, and making these places open and accessible for everyone to enjoy. When Maxwell spoke about 'things', it would also include many of the Trust's wide-ranging collections including magnificent paintings, porcelains and historic furniture and, perhaps just as importantly, its archives.

This article will describe and select examples from the two main elements of the Trust's archive collections: first, the corporate or institutional archive, most of which is held at the Trust's Head Office in Edinburgh. This consists primarily of volumes of minutes and papers relating to the Trust's governance committees; annual reports and yearbooks; many acquisition, project, legal, conservation, administrative and management files; and the guidebooks, leaflets and other publications produced by the NTS during the past nine decades.

Secondly, there are the collections of historic archives which relate to Trust properties and the families associated with them and include family, estate and personal papers. Some, but not all, of these collections are held at our properties. Together this wealth of archival material helps to tell the story of the NTS and its properties.

<sup>1</sup> Vice President of the NTS from 1931 to 1943, and then President from 1944 until his death in 1956.

<sup>2</sup> From the Minute of the first AGM of the NTS held at City Chambers, Edinburgh on Wednesday, 29 June 1932. Despite holding the office of Vice President, Maxwell chaired the meeting.

The role of Archivist for the NTS is a relatively new one. In the 1990s volunteers were engaged to begin sorting through and organising into a coherent order the many boxes and files held at its then Head Office at 5 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. It was only in 1997 that the Trust engaged its first professionally qualified Archivist who, only a short time afterwards, had to oversee a major move of the corporate archive as the Trust offices relocated from one side of Charlotte Square to the other. Not long after that, I was taken on to assist further with the organisation of the institutional archive.

Since 2002, I have had the privilege of looking after not only the Trust's corporate archive but also its property archive collections. This has involved the various archival processes such as identification, appraisal, preservation, cataloguing and making accessible for researchers, our many and disparate archive collections. One of my own research activities has been to look further into the Trust's history and foundation. In this ninetieth year of the NTS it seems appropriate to look at how the Trust came into being. Using key early documents taken from the archives of both the NTS and the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland (APRS), as well as drawing heavily on the account of the Trust's early days by George Russell senior, what follows is a summary of how the NTS was officially established by those people of wisdom and foresight who enabled Scotland to have its own National Trust.<sup>3</sup>

Although the NTS officially came into being in 1931, plans had been put in place to initiate a body like it for a couple of years beforehand. The prime mover behind this was the APRS. An equivalent body to the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE), the APRS was set up in 1926 for the purposes of protecting Scotland's rural scenery and the amenities of country districts, towns and villages from unnecessary disfigurement or injury and to act as an advisory and lobbying body. Crucially, however, the APRS didn't have, or perhaps did not wish to have, the power to own or hold land.<sup>4</sup>

In 1929, the APRS was offered as a gift the Loch Dee estate in Galloway. At a meeting of its Executive Committee in May of that year, the committee members debated the merits of this gift and then, 'discussion ensued on the

<sup>3</sup> George Russell OBE, NTS Law Agent, 1951–82, and son of the first NTS Secretary, Arthur Russell. His paper, 'The Formative Years 1929–1935', is a brilliant summation of how the NTS was founded. The full account can be viewed in the Appendix to D. Bremner, *For the Benefit of the Nation* (Edinburgh, 2001). Russell also referred extensively to the archives of both bodies. With much gratitude to the APRS for granting permission to quote from their archives.

<sup>4</sup> The objectives of the APRS, as stated under Clause 2 of their constitution were: 1) to organise concerted action to protect rural scenery and the amenities of country districts, towns and villages from unnecessary disfigurement or injury; 2) to act either directly or through its members as a centre for getting or giving advice and information upon matters affecting the preservation of such amenities; 3) to influence public opinion in order to further the promotion of these objects; and 4) to take such action as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of the Association.

position of the National Trust'. The organising secretary, Kenneth Ferguson, was instructed to contact the Trust to seek its advice.<sup>5</sup>

Why approach the National Trust (NT)? This body was set up in 1895 by its founders Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley. They helped to initiate a body which would, 'act as a Corporation for the holding of lands of natural beauty and sites and houses of historic interest to be preserved intact for the nation's use and enjoyment'.<sup>6</sup> The 'nation' also meant Scotland as the NT was empowered to hold land north of the border, but it just so happened that none had been offered to this point.<sup>7</sup>

In his capacity as the Secretary of the NT, Samuel Hield Hamer had met with representatives of the APRS at a conference in Glasgow in 1929 and then began acting in an advisory capacity to them about the Loch Dee offer.<sup>8</sup> Although not directly detailed in the APRS minutes, we might imagine that there were those among its committee against the idea of the National Trust down south acquiring and managing property in Scotland, and so the plan of forming a discrete Scottish Trust was put into action. The minutes of the APRS meeting which followed in June 1929 reflected this and record that: 'there was a general feeling that while the National Trust was constitutionally in a position to deal with lands in Scotland, the formation of a separate Scottish Trust would be desirable'.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps there was a genuine feeling of Scottish nationalism in the approach to form a distinct National Trust in Scotland and, in effect, to 'break away' from the NT. However, far from being antagonistic towards this proposal there appeared to be genuine support and encouragement from the NT that there should be an autonomous Scottish organisation.<sup>10</sup>

In 1929 and 1930 the official records of the APRS committee meetings describe how negotiations continued regarding the setting up of this new body. Alongside this, further, more informal, conversations were undoubtedly held at Pollok House in Glasgow, the home of Sir John Stirling Maxwell. Indeed, the

<sup>5</sup> Minute of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the APRS, 3 May 1929.

<sup>6</sup> Printed notice as referenced in M. Waterson, *The National Trust: The First Hundred Years* (London, 1994), 14.

<sup>7</sup> In 1899 a motion was passed by the NT which proposed to set up branches of the NT in Ireland and Scotland, but this never happened. Later there were also NT meetings held in Edinburgh in 1908, and then again in 1914, in an attempt to initiate a movement for a branch of the NT north of the border, but again these never bore fruit. J. Jenkins and P. James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree: The Growth of the National Trust, 1895–1994* (London, 1994), 64.

<sup>8</sup> Hamer was the Secretary of the National Trust between 1911 and 1933. Waterson, *National Trust*, 60.

<sup>9</sup> APRS Meeting, 6 June 1929.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, in his book describing the history of the NTS, Douglas Bremner points out that there was an increase in Scottish nationalism in the late 1920s and it was this growing sense of Scottish pride that the founders of the Trust were reflecting. Bremner, *Benefit of the Nation*, 5.

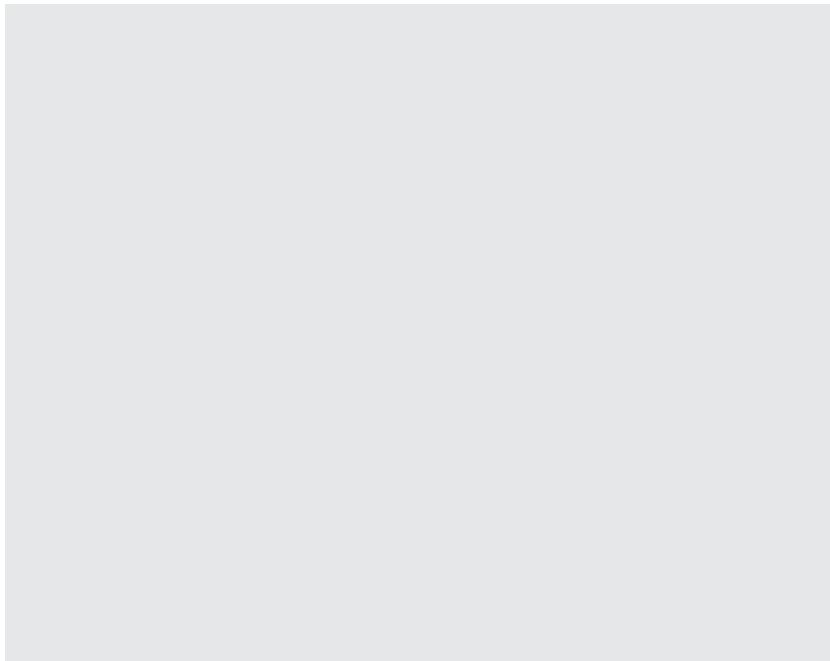


Plate 1 The Cedar Room, Pollok House.

Cedar Room (also known as the Smoking Room) now proudly displays a sign that says the National Trust for Scotland was formed there (Plate 1).<sup>11</sup>

Discussions continued throughout 1930 and the APRS lobbied the then Secretary of State for Scotland, William Adamson, to help facilitate the process. However, no further advice or instruction was received from the Minister and they decided to press ahead with their plans. It was suggested there were three possibilities open to the APRS in establishing this new body: it could be set up either by a Royal Charter, by an Act of Parliament or by being formed under the Companies Act. It was felt that the first two processes would be either too cumbersome or costly, and that the third course was the quickest and simplest method.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Some of the initial post-holders of the APRS were later to play significant roles in the early years of the NTS. For instance, the APRS Honorary President, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres became, along with Maxwell, Vice President of the NTS. Sir Iain Colquhoun, Chairman of the Associations Executive Committee, later held a similar position as Chair of the Trust's Council.

<sup>12</sup> APRS Memorandum, July 1930.

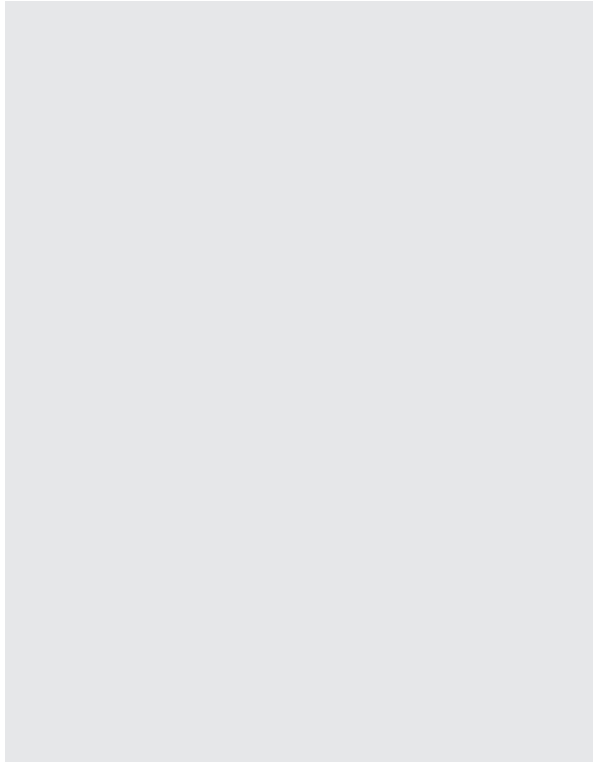


Plate 2    APRS Letter, 6 August 1930.

In August 1930, the APRS sent out a letter which was later described by Russell as one of the most important documents regarding the setting up of the Trust.<sup>13</sup> We don't know how many copies of this letter were sent out but without doubt the recipients were the kinds of influential individual based in Scotland who were known to the eminent signatories of this missive. It asserts that 'a National Trust for Scotland was very necessary, and indeed essential'. Further, it states that although the APRS has proposed and promoted the new body, it will have 'no further direct connection with it'. The APRS did, however, place the services of the Secretary and its offices at 3 Forres Street, Edinburgh at the disposal of the NTS<sup>14</sup> (Plate 2).

Events then moved quickly and on Monday 10 November 1930, a meeting took place of the Provisional Council of the National Trust for Scotland,

<sup>13</sup> Bremner, *Benefit of the Nation*, 285.

<sup>14</sup> APRS Letter dated 6 August 1930.

presided over by the soon-to-be President of the Trust, the 8th Duke of Atholl. It must have been an incredibly exciting moment for those present, as their hard work and persistence was about to pay off. Also attending the meeting was Hamer who, on behalf of the National Trust, ‘welcomed the formation of a Scottish Trust’ and ‘assured the meeting of the full sympathy and support of the National Trust’.<sup>15</sup>

The Memorandum and Articles of Association (based largely upon the former Constitution of the NT) were drawn up by Arthur Russell, NTS Secretary.<sup>16</sup> All of the preparation, discussion and administration came to its full fruition when on Thursday, 1 May 1931, ‘The National Trust for Scotland for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Ltd’, was officially constituted under the Companies Act of 1929. We can only imagine the mixture of feelings ranging from delight to relief that this venture was finally under way.

The first official meeting of the Trust’s Provisional Council was held on 27 May 1931 at 3 Forres Street, Edinburgh (Plate 3). One initial point made was that the Trust was refused the right to remove the word ‘Limited’ after its title by the Board of Trade. However, perhaps the most significant item discussed was that the Trust gratefully accepted its first property from Sir John Stirling Maxwell – Crookston Castle in Renfrewshire.

The NTS as a Limited Company was dissolved and in 1935 it applied for a private Act of Parliament.<sup>17</sup> A further Order of Parliament in 1938 gave it greater powers and enabled the NTS to enter into Restrictive or Conservation Agreements, which would allow it to help preserve areas of land without taking ownership.

As the NTS began to find its feet in the 1930s and 1940s, more and more properties came into its care. In fact, from its foundation until the outbreak of World War II, the Trust accepted almost thirty properties. These included historic battle sites such as Bannockburn and Culloden; the birthplaces of famous Scots including J. M. Barrie, Hugh Miller and Thomas Carlyle; and Gladstone’s Land, a historic tenement building in Edinburgh’s Old Town which the Trust had helped to rescue from demolition. According to Bremner, by the end of the war the Trust had ‘firmly established itself in Scotland as the country’s leading conservation charity’.<sup>18</sup>

From around 1944, the NTS began to acquire the larger country houses and castles for which it is now renowned. One of the first was the House of the Binns, home to the Dalyell family, which came to the NTS via the Country House Scheme in 1944.<sup>19</sup> An image of the traditional ‘handing over of the

<sup>15</sup> Provisional Meeting of the NTS Council, 10 November 1930.

<sup>16</sup> Also father of George Russell.

<sup>17</sup> This was passed as the National Trust for Scotland Confirmation Order Act of 1935.

<sup>18</sup> Bremner, *Benefit of the Nation*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> The NTS set up a Country House Scheme based on one previously adopted by the NT. This allowed the owner of a property to transfer to the NTS their home, either with or without the attached policies, but with an endowment to provide for the future

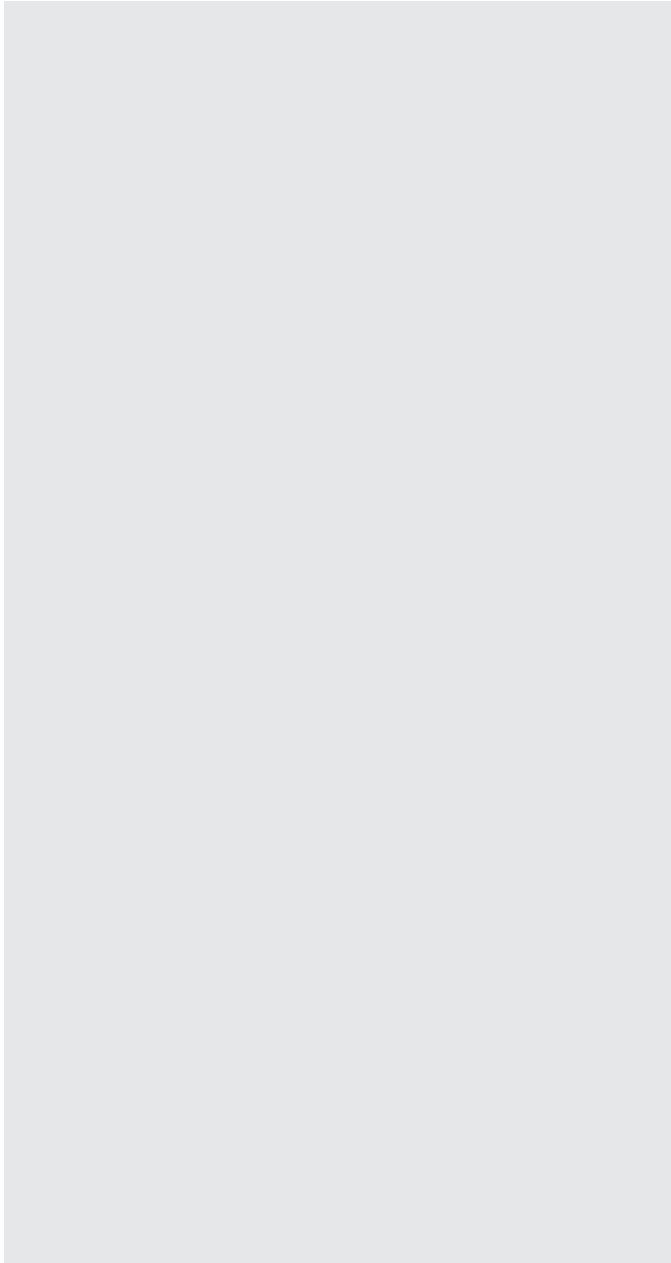


Plate 3 First Minute of the Provisional Council of the NTS after its foundation, May 1931.

sasine' ceremony, whereby the ownership of a property was passed from one to another can be seen at Plate 4. Here, Mrs Eleanor Dalyell is passing a clump of earth to the then NTS Chairman, the Earl of Wemyss and March.<sup>20</sup> In the background we also see a young, kilted Tam Dalyell.<sup>21</sup>

It is appropriate at this point to explore some of the historic archive collections that relate to NTS properties. It is important to note that while the NTS looks after a wide and eclectic portfolio of properties, it is not necessarily the case that an archive collection would automatically come into the Trust's care with the property. In fact, those that do are the exception rather than the rule. It is likely that many of the Trust's country houses and castles will have had a collection of estate and family papers at some stage, but in some cases, they may have already been passed by the family to a national or local archive repository prior to the Trust taking over that property.<sup>22</sup> These collections often detail how a large house and estate was run, and could include estate and legal records such as rentals, tacks, writs and leases. There might be historic charters, inventories of the house contents and other household documents, as well as papers relating to associated families, including personal correspondence.

Alongside this, and at various points in its history, the Trust has also received donations of documents from members of the public, which have augmented the existing collections and each in its way adds to the stories and interpretation of its properties. These historic collections are held either at the properties themselves or at the Trust's Head Office in Edinburgh. An example of the latter is the collection of archives relating to St Kilda.

In 1957, the remote islands of St Kilda were bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland by the 5th Marquess of Bute. St Kilda is an isolated archipelago situated around forty miles from North Uist and forms part of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. It is the UK's only dual UNESCO World heritage site, attaining this prestigious award for both its natural and cultural heritage. At about the same time that the islands came to the Trust, we also received a collection of letters, books, photographs and other items relating to St Kilda,

maintenance of the property. In return, the owner might remain in a part of the property. The NTS Scheme stipulated that the house had to be of architectural or historical merit and that the parts of the property not occupied by the family would be open to the public on specified days. Bremner, *Benefit of the Nation*, 26–7.

<sup>20</sup> Although the property was transferred to the NTS in 1944, this ceremony took place sometime later, in April 1946.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Thomas Dalyell, 11th Bt, a Scottish Labour politician who served in the House of Commons from 1962 until his retirement as 'Father of the House' in 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Examples where archive collections have been deposited elsewhere include: the Castle Fraser papers held at the Special Collections at Aberdeen University (MS3470 and NRAS2508); the Papers of the Erskine family of the House of Dun held at the National Records of Scotland (GD123); and the Newhailes/Dalrymple papers held at the National Library of Scotland (MSS. 25276 and following).



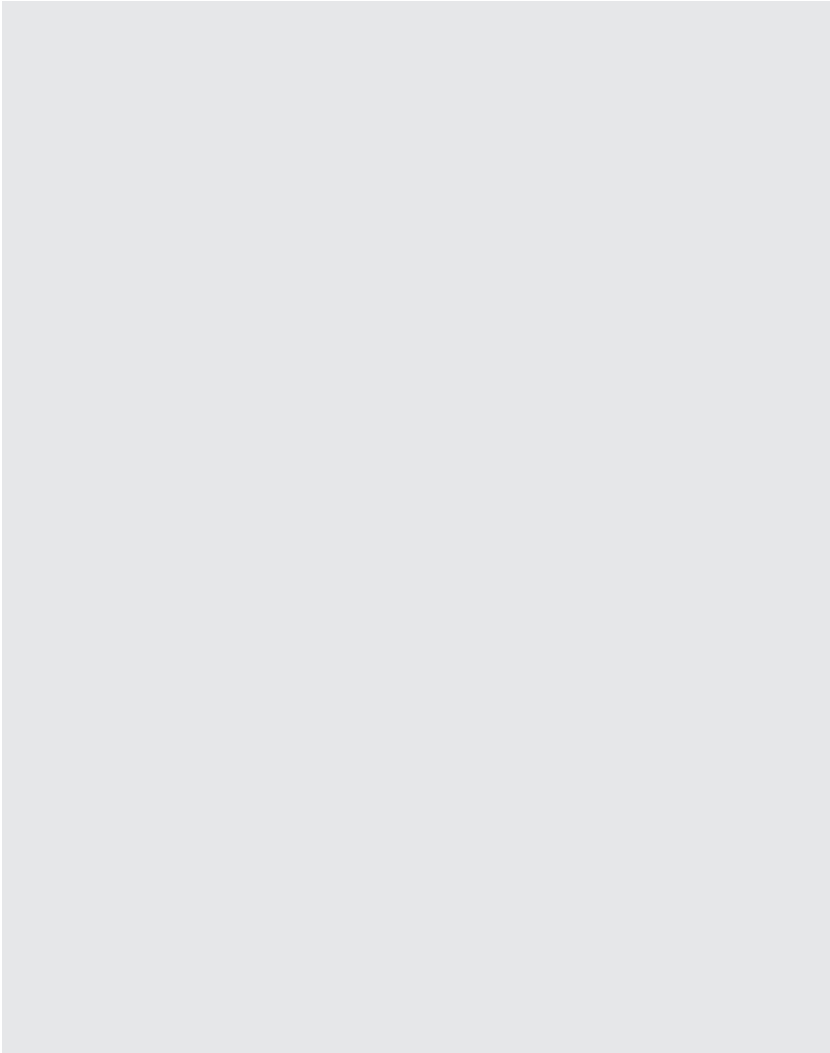


Plate 4 Handing over of the Sasine ceremony, House of the Binns, 1946.

known as the 'Bute Box'. This collection of St Kilda archives has since been augmented with many kind donations and gifts from members of the public.

This isn't intended to be a detailed description of St Kilda, its history or its peoples – there are many books around which serve that purpose far more adequately than I can here – but I will instead look at selections of archives within the Trust's St Kilda collection.

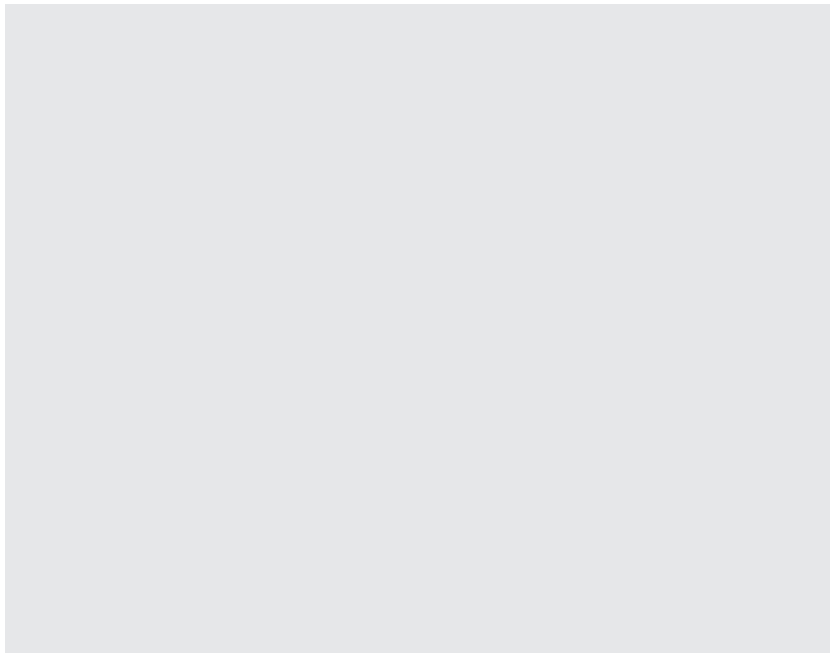


Plate 5 Alice MacLachlan's diary, August 1906.

The NTS holds the early-twentieth-century diaries written by Alice MacLachlan, the wife of the then Minister of St Kilda, Peter MacLachlan. These three volumes cover the seven-month period prior to the MacLachlans going to St Kilda, and then describes their time on the islands between August 1906 and May 1909.<sup>23</sup> Born in 1872, Alice Scroggie was the fourth child of six to John Scroggie and his wife Mary, and in 1899 she married the Reverend Peter MacLachlan. Their first joint position was in the village of Garve, north of Inverness but in January 1906 the MacLachlans received a letter saying they were being transferred to St Kilda. Initially the couple had their misgivings about this new posting but soon settled into St Kildan life, as Alice's diaries reveal.

Her diaries offer an extraordinary insight into day-to-day St Kildan life, as well as providing a rich source of research material as she mentions several of the then residents of the island. Plate 5 is an image from volume one of Alice's diaries which describes the few weeks prior to their voyage, relating their journey

<sup>23</sup> NTS/02/103/STK/01/05/01/10. The diaries and transcripts have been presented on the NTS website, an example of which can be found at: <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/st-kilda-diaries-reflections-on-st-kilda>.

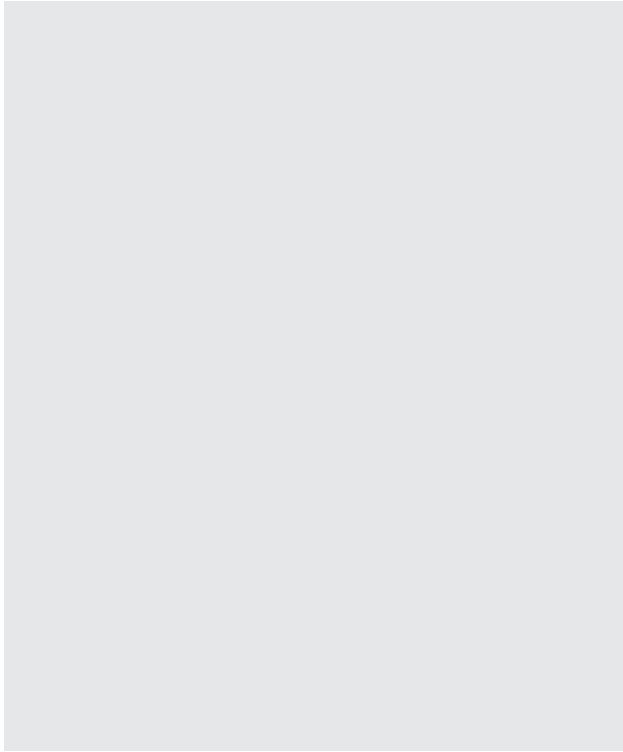


Plate 6 John Ross's St Kilda journal, 1889.

throughout Scotland visiting friends and family before finally being taken to St Kilda by the SS *Hebrides*. We'll come back to Alice shortly.

John Ross was a schoolteacher who went to St Kilda in the summer of 1889 and whilst spending time on the islands observed all that was going on. He later recorded his observations in a beautifully handwritten journal,<sup>24</sup> which came as part of the Bute Box of archives (Plate 6). Part of this extract refers to 'Steamer Day', that time when visiting ships carrying tourists would land at Hirta, the main inhabited island of St Kilda. Ross noted that:

On a 'steamer day' the village will be found to be a 'deserted village' as the entire population crowd to the shore some carrying eggs and others cloth stockings or other articles to be offered for sale to visitors and possibly you may at times make a Glasgow merchant reduce his price but the St. Kildan stands to his price firm as the rocks that surround his island home. Once his price is set you must either pay it or want the article.

<sup>24</sup> NTS02/103/STK/01/05/01/07.

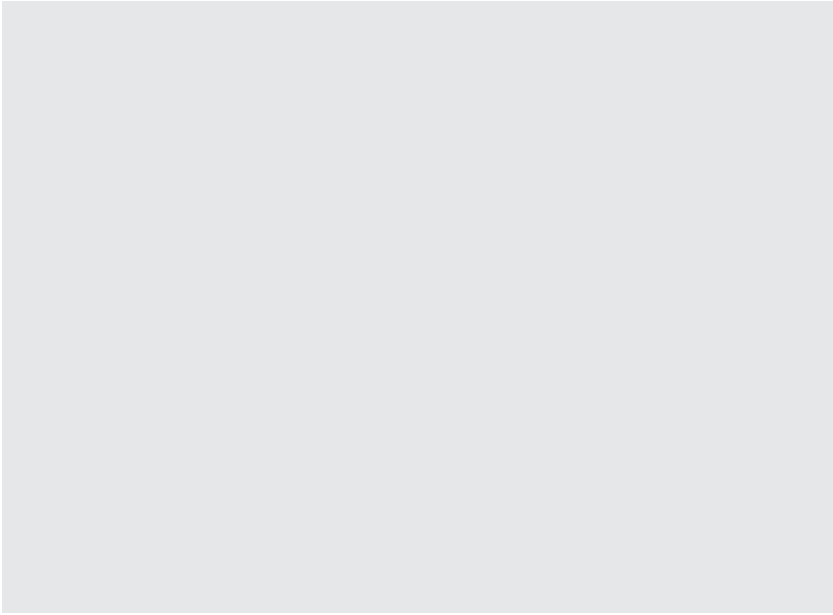


Plate 7 Robert Milne's photograph of Alice MacLachlan, c.1907.

One of the more valuable items in the St Kilda archives is a photograph album containing images taken by the photographer Robert Milne.<sup>25</sup> Milne visited the Outer Hebrides including St Kilda in 1907 with a friend, Mr Clarence. What is notable about this is the co-relation between Milne's album and the MacLachlan diaries in how they are linked to and reference each other. For instance, in Alice's diary for 1 August 1907 she writes, 'Mr. McKenzie (Factor) introduced me to two young gentlemen (Messrs. Milne and Clarence) who were coming to St. Kilda & who have taken up their abode with us.' Milne took some remarkable images during his stay including those of Alice and her husband Peter. Plate 7 shows Alice MacLachlan at her spinning wheel.

St Kilda is a major seabird breeding ground. For the St Kildans this was a rich source of sustenance and provision. The islanders took the gannets, fulmars and puffins for food, feathers and oil, some of which they consumed themselves, the rest was used as a means of paying rent to the Factor who represented the owner of the islands. For many years this would have been MacLeod of MacLeod of Dunvegan in Skye. The birds were taken during the breeding season which lasted from about March to September, and were caught by hand or with a fowling rod or a snare.

<sup>25</sup> NTS02/103/STK/01/08/02/02.

The islands of St Kilda have fascinated and intrigued many people over the centuries and doubtless will continue to do so for years to come. It is incredible to think that these remote isles, with their population – varying in numbers over the years prior to the evacuation and enduring the privations that came with living there – have stimulated so much interest and provoked much literature.

The St Kilda archives are currently held at the NTS Head Office in Edinburgh, but there are also a few significant collections of archives held at Trust properties and what follows is a brief overview of some of them.

One of the ‘Birthplace’ properties that came to the Trust was that of the author and playwright J. M. Barrie in Kirriemuir. We are fortunate to have a wonderful assemblage of documents relating to Barrie including letters, photographs, posters and programmes.<sup>26</sup> This collection has come from diverse sources: some of the documents are likely to have been at the Birthplace when the Trust acquired the property in 1937, some have been gifted to the Trust since that time by various generous donors and others have been purchased.

James Matthew Barrie was born in 1860 in Kirriemuir. While still a child, he devised and produced plays for himself and his friends, and staged them in the wash house opposite the family home. This same wash house would later become a model for the Wendy House in *Peter Pan*.

After studying at Edinburgh University, Barrie moved to London to continue his writing, particularly for the stage. While there he befriended, and entertained with stories, the three children of Arthur and Sylvia Llewelyn Davies.<sup>27</sup> The stories and games devised by Barrie were acted out in Kensington Gardens by the two eldest Llewelyn Davies boys, George and Jack, and later made their way as Peter Pan stories into Barrie’s work, *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*. This was first produced and staged in 1904 at the Duke of York’s Theatre in London.

Within the Barrie archive collection there are four silver prints of another production of *Peter Pan* at the same theatre in 1905. Plate 8 shows Peter Pan in Napoleonic costume along with the Lost Boys after the defeat of Captain Hook. This and the other photographs came from the studio of Alfred Ellis & Walery, who were the pre-eminent theatrical photographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often photographing live performances. These prints were purchased by the NTS in 2004.

In 1930, Barrie was granted the Freedom of his home town, Kirriemuir. A great fan of cricket, Barrie offered to fund the building of a new pavilion for the Kirriemuir cricket team. The opening of the new pavilion also occurred in 1930 and within the collection there are several letters and postcards relating to both these events.

Other documents we have in the Barrie collection include a charming little note written in September 1930 which provides a fascinating insight into the author. We don’t know to whom this note was written but it apparently sees

<sup>26</sup> NTS/02/11/BAB.

<sup>27</sup> Sylvia was the daughter of the writer George Du Maurier.

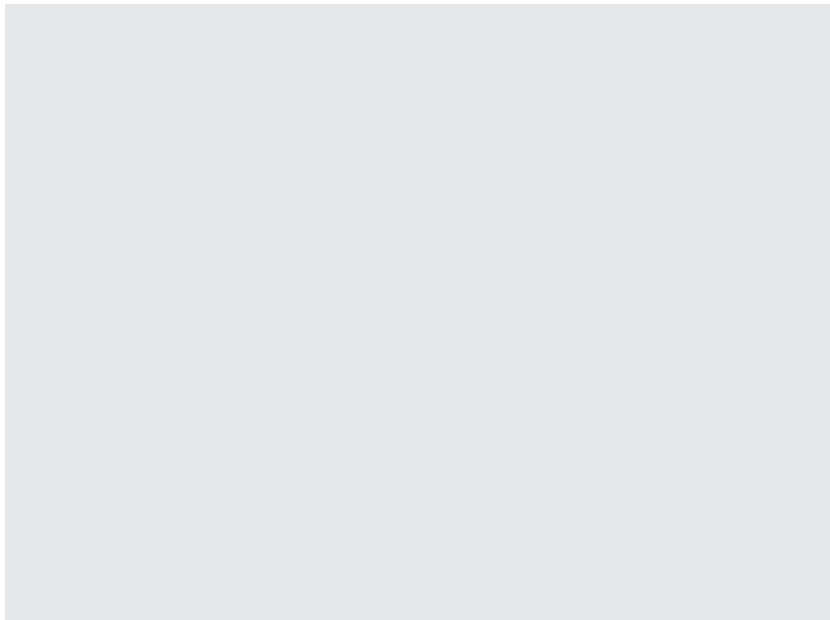


Plate 8 Production of *Peter Pan* at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, 1905.

Barrie writing left-handed (we have another document in the collection with similar handwriting where Barrie states that he is writing left-handed) and purportedly from Peter Pan, granting the recipient the right to call their garden house Wendy House as 'she has to do wot I tell her'.

The Barrie archive collection is a small but valuable assemblage of documents from a range of sources. The mixture of letters, photos, postcards and other items helps to paint a fuller picture of James Matthew Barrie's life and allows us some invaluable insights into the author's personality and character.

The papers relating to the Irvine family and Drum Castle came to the Trust when the property was acquired in 1976.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to say with certainty, but it is likely that the Drum collection of papers was the first such gift to the NTS, coming as it did with the contents of the castle.

Drum Castle was the family home of the Irvines for many centuries. Within the castle is a Muniments Room housed in a secure turret on the first floor of the property. This room contains a treasure-trove of manuscripts and other archival material consisting mainly of the Irvine family papers and documents relating to the Drum estate. This whole collection dates from 1323 until well into the twentieth century.

<sup>28</sup> National Register of Archives for Scotland (hereafter NRAS), NRAS1500.

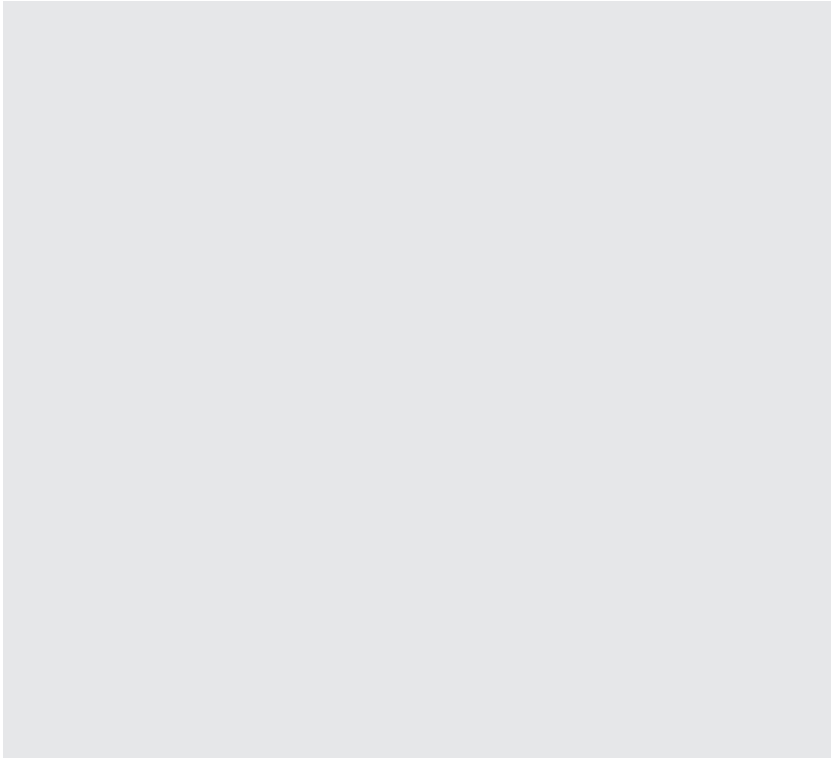


Plate 9 Drum Charter, 1323.

The importance of this archive cannot be overstated. It is a relatively complete collection of papers encompassing the 650 or so years of the Irvine residence at Drum and contains many wonderful treasures including a Great Seal Charter dating from 1323 of Robert I granting to ‘Willmo [Willelmo or William] de Irwin the Forest of Drum outside the Royal Park’ (Plate 9).

Among other items of interest are the papers relating to noteworthy figures such as James Irvine, the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century art dealer. These detail James’s travels around Italy purchasing works of art by the likes of Rembrandt, Rubens and Velázquez for his clients. There are also extensive accounts, rentals, bonds and other papers relating to the management of the estate of Drum and the surrounding areas.

A similar collection is held at Brodie Castle, Moray. The Brodie archive, which consists of personal and family papers as well as estate records, was given to the nation by the family in 2004 and remains *in situ* at the property.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> NRAS0770.

Both these collections, while incredibly important and essential for the understanding of the history of the properties and their associated families, also present challenges and opportunities for those of us charged with the responsibility of caring for them. It is at this point that I should offer my deepest and sincerest thanks to those property staff, volunteers and conservation colleagues who have all assisted with the preservation of the collections and in helping to facilitate access to researchers over the years.

At both Drum and Brodie, the logistics of managing an archive collection within their existing spaces have presented challenges. Projects at both properties, involving the auditing of their archive contents against their respective NRAS surveys and repackaging papers into conservation-standard archive supplies has resulted in updated listings and, hopefully, the longer-term preservation of the collections. Also, in both archive spaces, we have sought to monitor and manage – where possible – the temperature and relative humidity levels by use of data loggers.

Another significant collection which also presents such preservation and access issues is the remarkable assemblage of archives held at Canna House, Canna, one of the small isles off Scotland's west coast. These archives represent the life and work of the Folklorist John Lorne Campbell and his wife Margaret Fay Shaw and the whole house is a treasure-trove. The extent and diversity of the collections range from sound archives, photographs, films, music and personal letters, as well as the research files and writing undertaken by Campbell into Gaelic and Celtic cultural heritage.

The Trust has a full-time archivist dedicated to looking after the Canna archive collections as well as responding to the many enquiries received. Again, this presents challenges of not just caring for a collection in a remote location but also looking after mixed media within the same area. To help with this, a room within Canna House has been converted into an archive store housing appropriate racking and conservation heating, where the environmental conditions can be monitored.

To help with preservation and access further, the various collections have been subject to digitisation projects. These include the scanning of the Margaret Fay Shaw photographs as part of the Morton Photography project,<sup>30</sup> the Tobar an Dualchais project<sup>31</sup> which has seen the digitisation of Campbell's sound archive and a programme of digitising the disparate parts of the paper archives.

Within the Canna collection, the archive series I would like to focus briefly on here, however, are Campbell's farm and Lepidoptera diaries. The first is a succession of desk diaries kept by Campbell during his time on the island and dating between 1939 and 1991. They record the workings of Canna's farms, noting at various intervals the census of animals on the island and the many and varied farming activities throughout the calendar year. The second series

<sup>30</sup> For instance, see: <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/the-photographic-archive-of-margaret-fay-shaw>.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/major-contributors/john-lorne-campbell>.



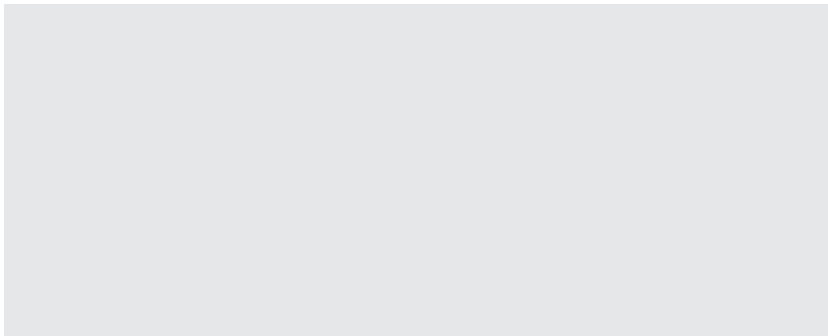


Plate 10 Extract from Canna Farm Diary, March 1941.

relates to Campbell's interest in Lepidoptera. These diaries principally record the series of butterflies and moths seen by Campbell between 1951 and 1995, mainly in Canna House garden.

Aside from farming and insects, the subjects and events covered by the records in each set are wide-ranging. As well as occasionally recording the day-to-day life of the Campbells, they also document the many visitors to Canna House, their pets, bee-keeping, the weather and even the impact of World War II upon the island. In his farm diary entry for 6 March 1941, John noted how there was a mine floating in Canna harbour and refers to various attempts by the Navy destroyer *Bridport* to blow it up. The next day he records that he and Margaret went on board the minesweeper and 'Mgt. got 500 cigarettes!' (Plate 10).

The Canna diaries have been the subject of one of a set of promotional articles written about the various parts of the NTS archives. These have included pieces about archive collections it has not been possible to include here but may still be found on the NTS website.<sup>32</sup> This has served to raise the profile of the Trust's archive collections and has also elicited further enquiry and research questions.

Research by NTS curators into both the Trust's corporate archives and historic property collections underpins much of the knowledge about and presentation of Trust properties. Archives also have a role to play in the presentation and interpretation at some NTS properties. Robert Burns Birthplace Museum is an obvious example where some of Burns' manuscripts are on display.

This has been a whistle-stop tour of just a part of the NTS archives. The body of the corporate archive describes the establishment of the Trust, details the acquisition and management of all its properties and highlights the various conservation activities, projects and events which have occurred in the Trust's

<sup>32</sup> For instance: <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/hill-of-tarvit-picture-bills-and-receipts>; <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/the-jacob-letters-from-the-house-of-dun>; <https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/the-lorimer-archives>.

ninety-year history. The collections of historic property archives – whether they are held at the properties or elsewhere – offer an insight into how a country house and its estate was run and have been, and still are, the subject of much scholarly research.

The National Trust for Scotland’s archives offers a unique insight into the history of this conservation charity and the beautiful and historic properties and collections for which it cares, for the benefit of the Scottish nation.