



## **Scottish Records Association Annual Report of the Council for 2022-2023**

The full Council met three times during the year. For administrative reasons and to reduce travel expenditure, full meetings of Council have remained online, while smaller meetings of the Council's two working groups have taken place in person.

This year has seen many changes on Council. At the Forty-Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Association, held online on 8 December 2022, Mrs Elizabeth Roads resigned as Membership Secretary and Mr Robert Urquhart was elected as her successor. Ms Liz Course also stepped down as Treasurer, and thanks are due to both Liz and Elizabeth for their significant contributions to the work of the Association. Ms Kirsty Stewart and Ms Lesley Bryson were elected as Ordinary Members of Council, while Dr Iain Hutchison, Dr Douglas Lockhart, Ms Catherine Maxwell Stuart, Dr Ronnie Scott and Mrs Ingrid Thomson all retired from Council, having completed their terms of office as Ordinary Members. In January 2023, Council co-opted Ms Joanne Wishart and Mrs Ingrid Thomson as joint Newsletter Editors, thereby filling an office that had lain vacant since April 2022. In April of this year, Mrs Tahitia McCabe was co-opted as an Ordinary Member, and Mrs Alison Diamond was co-opted to the vacant office of Treasurer. Council is grateful to the Membership Secretary, Robert Urquhart, who had acted as interim Treasurer for several months. At the forthcoming Annual General Meeting, Ms Jo Dixon will retire from Council on completing her term of office as an Ordinary Member. Our long-serving Journal Editor, Mrs Carol Parry, will also be stepping down, and Council would like to thank her for all her hard work and dedication over the years.

### **Membership**

At the end of the financial year (31 July 2023) the Association had 191 members (135 individuals and 56 institutions). This represents a slight decrease on the 2021-2022 figure of 192 members. Subscription reminders for individual members who do not pay by annual standing order or bank payment were sent out very late in the financial year, due to delays in the administrative procedure for granting the incoming Treasurer and Membership Secretary access to the bank accounts. Three new individual members joined in the first two months of the 2023-2024 financial year, so overall the membership level appears to be stable and above that of 2020-2021 (175 members).

### **Finance**

The Association ended the financial year 2022-2023 with £11,518.89 in the current account and £5,366.84 in the savings account, representing an increase of £958.69 across both accounts. However, this is significantly lower than last year's increase (£1,936.85). Income from both subscriptions and publications was down on that for 2021-2022, while expenditure on publications and administration was higher, largely due to travel costs arising from the resumption of in-person meetings, stationery, and the costs of administering the website. The website expenditure included domain renewal for another eight years at £169.20. The Gift Aid repayment for 2021-2022 is included in this year's accounts. The Gift Aid claim for 2022-2023, which has yet to be submitted, will feature in next year's accounts.

This year's Annual Conference generated no income as it was delivered at minimal expense, with attendance free for delegates and the venue provided by our conference partner, the National Records of Scotland (NRS). Associated expenditure totalled £85.35 (the cost of the speakers' travel).

As in previous years, the Association's biggest outlay was on publications. Production and distribution of **Scottish Archives**, volume 28, cost £3,642.01, compared to £3,317.73 for last year's volume 27. Production and distribution of **Retour** cost £340.12 (£332.20 in 2021-2022). Sales of back issues of the journal decreased by £42.79 this year, generating £1,170.80 overall (£1,213.59 in 2021-2022). 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.

### Conference

This year's annual conference, held in conjunction with the NRS, took place on Friday 24 February 2023 at New Register House, Edinburgh. Entitled 'On the Write Track: making sense of older handwriting,' the conference featured a series of presentations on advances in online palaeography tuition and the use of Artificial Intelligence to transcribe handwritten sources. The speakers included Alison Diamond (Inveraray Estate Archives), Andrew Mackillop (University of Glasgow) and Alison Rosie (NRS). The afternoon session took the form of an open event where researchers could bring in older handwritten documents that they were struggling to read or understand and receive assistance from experienced palaeographers. Also present were representatives of societies who publish transcriptions of original sources of Scottish history, showing how their publications can help researchers understand similar records. The NRS kindly mounted a small display of original records related to these record publications. The conference marked the launch of a new edition of **Scottish Handwriting 1500-1700: a self-help pack**, published jointly by the Scottish Records Association and the NRS. The Association is grateful to the speakers, to Duncan MacNiven (formerly the Registrar General for Scotland) for chairing the conference, to the record publishing bodies (the Scottish Record Society and the Scottish Text Society), and to the NRS for hosting the event.

### Visits

Two visits to repositories were arranged for members and guests of the Association this summer. On 23 June, a group of ten people spent the day at Blair Castle in Pitlochry, Perthshire, where they received an introductory talk from the Castle and Estate Archivist, Keren Guthrie, followed by a guided tour of the archive stores and some time to browse a specially selected display of items from the collection. After lunch, kindly provided by our hosts, the group enjoyed an opportunity to explore the Castle, gardens and grounds. On 25 August, six members visited Stirling Council Archives, where they were welcomed by the Council Archivist, Pam McNicol. After explaining the history and development of the Archives and the types of collections it holds, Pam led the group on a tour of the store and provided a fascinating display of records for them to look at. We would like to thank Keren Guthrie and Pam McNicol for hosting this year's Summer Visits and for giving so generously of their time, expertise 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, palaeography workshops for beginners were held on 29 November 2022 at the AK Bell Library, Perth, and on 15 December 2022 online. A (more advanced) Palaeography for Private Household Collections training session was run on 22 February 2023 at Glamis Castle and again on 11 July 2023 at Inveraray Castle, the latter being a hybrid event with eleven attendees on-site (including three who travelled over from the Island of Mull) and three

joining online. The Association would like to thank the venue hosts at Perth and Kinross Council Archives, Glamis Castle and Inveraray Castle, as well as the tutors: Ingrid Thomson, Alison Diamond and Robert Urquhart.

### **Publications**

During 2022-2023, the Association's website ([www.scottishrecordsassociation.org](http://www.scottishrecordsassociation.org)) was viewed 7,113 times, which is a slight increase on the 2021-2022 figure of 6,842 visits. While most visitors accessed the site from within the UK, there was also some interest from the USA, Canada, Australia, France and Germany. Articles from **Scottish Archives**, volume 27, were published on the website and made available to all visitors. The winner of the 2022 Tunnock Prize was also announced on the website and details of the Tunnock Prize competition for 2023 were made available to potential entrants. The website was migrated to a new provider, WiX, which introduced performance improvements to its content management system as well as a built-in analytics feature.

A new edition of **Scottish Handwriting 1500-1700: a self-help pack**, published jointly by the Scottish Records Association and the National Records of Scotland, appeared in February 2023. A digital version of the pack is available to download, free of charge, from the Association's website (<https://www.scottishrecordsassociation.org/publications>) and the National Records of Scotland website (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/palaeography>). Hard copies of the pack can be purchased from the ScotlandsPeople shop (<https://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/store>).

Issues 38 and 39 of **Retour**, the Association's newsletter, appeared in autumn 2022 and spring 2023. **Scottish Archives**, volume 28, was published and distributed to members in March 2023. Volume 29 is expected later in the year. Mrs Olive Geddes, the Reviews Editor for **Scottish Archives**, and Dr Iain Gordon Brown, a long-standing member of the Editorial Board, have both intimated their intention to step 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 2022 Tunnock Prize was awarded to Alison Spence, a PhD student at the University of Glasgow, for her essay entitled 'Milton Printworks, Patrick Mitchell and Calico Printing in the West of Scotland, 1796-1861'. An Honorary Mention went to Esther Draycott, a PhD student at the Glasgow School of Art, for her essay on Glasgow Green entitled 'All Shadows are Alive'. Alison provided a presentation based on her research at the Annual General Meeting of the Association in November 2022 and her winning essay will be published in **Scottish Archives** volume 29.

The closing date for the 2023 Tunnock Prize competition was 1 September 2023, and the winner will be announced at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

### **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 representation to the Chief Executive of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC), requesting clarification on future administrative and access arrangements for the NHSGGC Archive.