



The Archaeological & Historical Section of the Perthshire Society of Natural Science

Minutes of the 64th A.G.M., held at the Perth Museum and Art Gallery, on Wednesday March 14, 2012 at 7.30 pm.

1. Domestics

The President, John Joyce, welcomed the twenty eight Members present, and read the Health & Safety Notice concerning the evacuation of the building in the event of the fire alarm sounding.

2. Apologies were received from Dorothy Alexander, David Bowler and Lois Lewington.

3. The Minutes of the 63rd A.G.M., previously circulated, were approved on the motion of Jean Kerr, seconded by Joyce Stevenson.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes - there were no such matters.

5. Secretary's Report, previously circulated, and attached, was accepted and raised no questions.

6. Treasurer's Report.

Patricia Matte presented the Accounts of the Section, and drew attention to the balance in the No.1 Account, used for everyday transactions, of £416.86, which was only up on the previous year because of donations from visitors and contributions for refreshments, with Speakers' expenses being the major outlay, and in the No.2 Account (Publications) of £1615.94, only up by £3 plus a little Interest, and in the No.3 Account (Adopt-A-Monument) of £459.30 with no transactions.

Questions arose (1) about what the initials CBA and CSA stood for - the Council of British Archaeology and the Council of Scottish Archaeology being the answers, membership for which the Section paid before being reimbursed by the Parent Body, and (2) how much the Section saved by not having to pay for the Accounts to be audited - the answer being up to £250.

The President signed a copy of the Accounts into the records.

7. Annual Subscriptions

These were agreed to remain the same as the current year, viz, Single £20, Joint £38, and Junior £1.

8. Election of Office Bearers and Committee

The President, John Joyce would be starting the third of his three year term.

Vice-President, David Bowler, proposed by Jennifer McKay, seconded by Patricia Matte

Secretary, John Lewington, proposed by Jennifer McKay, seconded by Richard Higginbottom

Treasurer, Patricia Matte, proposed by Colin McLeod, seconded by Jennifer McKay.

Committee Membership - Richard Higginbottom, Jennifer McKay, Colin McLeod and Graham Watson continue their membership, and Bill Grigg was elected to join the Committee on the proposal of Richard Higginbottom, seconded by Colin McLeod.

Mark Hall of Perth Museum and Art Gallery had agreed to continue in his role of Archaeological Adviser to the Committee.

9. Appointment of Examiner of Accounts

Lisa Ramsay ACCA had agreed to continue in that role.

10. Summer Outings 2012

The Secretary reported that the programme was not quite complete but would be as follows :

Wed April 18 or 25	The Laing Museum, Newburgh (TBC)
Sat June	A Scottish Medieval Church (Prof R. Fawcett) (TBC)
Sat July	The Antonine Wall II
Sun Aug	Forteviot
Sat Sep 1	Newton Castle, Blairgowrie.

A circular would be issued to Members when the dates were confirmed.

He drew attention to the parent Body's Outings as follows :

Sat May 12	To the Titan Crane and Riverside Museum of Transport in Glasgow
Sat July 28	A walk beside the Perth Lade
Sat Sep 8	To Leith Waterfront and the National Museum of Scotland

11. Any other competent business

i. Recruitment of new Members - the President asked those present to encourage at least one person they know to join the Section, or at least attempt its Talk programme - the future of the Section depended on its Membership growing (we had fallen from 68 Members in 2011 to 59 in 2012).

ii. Closure In closing the A.G.M. at 8.00 pm, the President thanked his fellow Committee Members for their efforts and support over the year, in particular Irene Green who stood down by rotation this year and who had served as Committee Member and Treasurer. He also thanked the Members present for their attendance and attention and handed the rest of the Meeting over to Jennifer Mackay, who issued a Members' Questionnaire, and then, with Graham Watson, conducted a Quiz based on slides taken of past Outings and parts of Perth both ancient and modern.

Survey of Members 2012 - Interim Report

So far the number of respondents is low and I will be encouraging more people to participate.

Nevertheless, trends are emerging.

1. There is a preference for a 3:3 split of Archaeology and History topics
2. 64% look at the website
3. 36% look at the notice board in the Museum
4. 1 respondent has consulted the Library collection
5. 68% would attend more Meetings, especially if held in the daytime
6. 82% expressed an interest in finding another venue for Meetings
7. 36% expressed an interest in participating in activities

The most popular speakers were :

First : Prof Richard Fawcett : A Corpus of Medieval Churches

Second : Prof McKean : The First Railways in Perth

Third equal : Prof Watkins : The First People to be Like Us
Prof Geddes : Pictish Sculptured Stones and St Anthony and St Paul
Geoff Bailey : The Antonine Wall
Ollie O'Grady : Excavations at Scone Abbey
David Bowler : Malta

Analysis :

Preferred speakers are very knowledgeable, confident, enthusiastic and able to engage an audience.

Topics which appeal are :

Medieval church architecture + detective work
Victorian infrastructure with historical background
Pre-history + interpreting evidence and forming hypotheses
Pictish sculptured stones + stories depicted thereon/interpreting symbolism
Romans in Scotland
Local excavations
Foreign topics with good slides

The Archaeological and Historical Section of Perthshire Society of Natural Science
(Registered Charity Number SC012718)

Agenda for the sixty-fifth Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Café of the A K Bell Library, Perth, on Wednesday, 20th March, 2013, at 7.30 p.m.

- 1. Domestics
- 2. Apologies for absence
- 3. Minutes of previous A.G.M. (attached)
- 4. Matters arising from those Minutes
- 5. Secretary’s Report (attached) [Constitution paragraph 41 a]
- 6. Treasurer’s Report and Annual Accounts for 2012/13 [Constitution 41 b]
- 7. Annual Subscriptions [Constitution 41 c]
- 8. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members [Constitution 41 e]
- 9. Appointment of Examiner of Accounts [Constitution 41 f]
- 10. Summer Outings 2013
- 11. Any other competent business [Constitution 41 g] :-
In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee propose amalgamating Current Account No.2 (Publishing) and Current Account No.3 (Adopt-A-Monument) to create a new No.2 Account (Special Projects).

Both of these require a two thirds majority of the Members voting.

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP NOMINATION FORM

We, the undersigned, propose and second the nomination of

.....

as (Committee / Secretary etc).

Proposer

Seconder

Date



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Secretary's Report 2012-13

Committee Meetings

The Section's Committee has met on seven occasions in the year 2012-13, with an average attendance of 85 %, with one Committee Meeting to come. The Committee has met in various venues, arranged by the President, and at no cost to the Section.

Summer Outings 2012

There were five Outings - to the Laing Library & Museum in Newburgh (on a Wednesday afternoon, poorly attended but much enjoyed), to Fowlis Easter (one of the Section's most successful Outings), to the SERF project, and to Newton Castle, Blairgowrie (one of the most enjoyable of our Outings). The Outing to the Antonine Wall had to be cancelled on the day because of lack of support. Most were reasonably well attended (between 8 and 18 Members + guests, including ones from Broughty Ferry and Belgium !!) and thoroughly enjoyed. Risk Assessments were completed timeously for each Outing.

Winter Programme 2012-13

The Committee thought that the Winter programme was up to its usual very high standard, with a range of speakers on a range of topics from a range of eras. The Section is most grateful to all those who addressed the Section. The highlight was the Inaugural Dr Margaret Stewart Lecture, in honour of the founder of the Section.

- Oct 17 Perth Museum's Photographic Collection
Paul Adair
- Oct 26 Mapping on the edge : recent discoveries on St Kilda
Ian Parker (to the full Society)
- Nov 21 The Inaugural Dr Margaret Stewart Lecture :
Supernatural power dressing in Britain & Ireland 2500 BC to 1500 BC
Dr Alison Sheridan
- Dec 5 Lost Perthshire
Ann Lindsay
- Jan 9 Recreating magnificence (Stirling Castle)
Peter Yeoman (replaced by Graham Ewart)
- Feb 20 The Scottish Tower-house Tradition
Prof Richard Oram

Already, dates and venues are in place for next session, which means that the shape of the Winter programme will remain as it has been in recent years i.e. the Section will meet on Wednesday evenings.

Weather had no impact this year - neither postponements nor cancellations - a great relief.

Summer Outings 2013

Regrettably, the Committee has decided to organize NO Summer Outings in 2013. The reason for this is lack of manpower on the Committee and other demands on the time of the Secretary (see below).

The Future of the Section

This was the sole topic of a special Committee Meeting, caused by the concerns of the Committee about its future, and whether it was headed in the right direction.

It was agreed that the President would complete his three-year term at the AGM in March and that the Secretary and Treasurer were seriously considering their positions on the Committee and that there were no obvious replacements on the horizon.

Further, there was competition from other groups in the community for the interest and attendance of Members, and a malaise in the Society as a whole.

The Committee agreed that

- (i) it wanted the Section to continue, and flourish if possible;
- (ii) the organisation of Summer Outings be suspended pro tem;
- (iii) Committee members would stay on until replacements could be found ;
- (iv) the role of Publicist become a Committee post;
- (v) individuals be approached to join the Committee at the AGM ;
- (vi) other groups be approached with a view to closer ties.

Website

We have tried to add Reports of the Section's activities (Lectures and Outings) to the website, although they have not yet appeared, because the webmaster has had technical problems.

The website can be accessed at PSNS.org.uk.

Communications with the Council of the Society

Remain as in the past.

Section Library

We are little further forward in the maintenance of the Library and its contents.

Committee Membership

As usual, the Committee would like to see new faces elected, so a nomination paper is attached to the Agenda - these must be lodged with the Secretary not less than seven days prior to the date of the Annual General Meeting, that is before March 13th 2013.

Nominees must be fully paid-up Members of the Society of at least 12 months standing, have shown an active interest in the affairs of the Section, and be proposed and seconded by fully paid-up Members.

There has been an unfilled vacancy on the Committee for a few years now, and I should very much like it to be filled.

I would add my thanks to my fellow Committee Members, who represented your interests at all times.

John W. Lewington

Section Secretary

Inaugural Dr Margaret Stewart Lecture

The first Dr Margaret Stewart Lecture was delivered on 21 November, 2012.

The idea behind the lecture was a desire to help keep her memory alive within Perthshire Society of Natural Science and to introduce her to people who had never known her.

Margaret Stewart was a pre-historian and naturally the topic was on an aspect of prehistory. The Section was delighted to welcome Dr Alison Sheridan, Head of Early Prehistory at the National Museums of Scotland, Honorary Research Fellow at Edinburgh University, Honorary Fellow of the French Prehistory Society and President of the British Prehistoric Society to speak on "Supernatural Power-dressing in Britain and Ireland, 2500 BC to 1500 BC". Dr Stewart would have recognised many of the artefacts which illustrated the lecture and Dr Sheridan answered questions posed by Dr Stewart before the development of current diagnostic techniques.

We were remembering that Dr Margaret Stewart was unanimously appointed convener of the newly established Archaeological Section of Perthshire Society of Natural Science in January 1948.

During World War II the society was more or less mothballed as it was not practical to run lectures against a background of fuel rationing, blackout, threat of air raids and the absence of members and speakers on war service. In 1947, as the society was rebuilding itself, Margaret Stewart, having returned from her war service as a code-breaker at Bletchley Park, gave a talk:

"Recent Developments in Scottish Archaeology". Twenty members were present. The following account is given in the society's minute book:

"Despite the difficulties of the war years, much valuable work was done in Scottish prehistory. There was an outstanding discovery in Orkney in the prehistoric village of Renyo (sic) on Rousay; a piece of pottery, typical of great chambered tombs of Scotland, was found on the first occupation level, this dated the village of Renyo and Skara Brae to the later Stone Age.

It goes on: the first pre-historic pottery manufactory, on a tiny island in a loch in North Uist, where Neolithic pottery was being turned out on a large scale (sic). It may have been exported; could it be the earliest example of organised trading?

Finally a re-assessment by V G Childe of a double cist burial of the Early Bronze Age at Kirkcaldy showed a wealth of human detail could be extracted from scanty remains by strict application of scientific methods.

The talk stimulated many questions.... It was evident that the subject had aroused great interest in those present. "

Minutes of the Council meeting of January, 1948 read:

"Mrs Margaret Stewart and Mr R Gloag Thomson, the Society's representatives on the Scottish Regional Group of the Council for British Archaeology, reported that Abertay Historical Society had raised the question of archaeological work in Perthshire. After hearing Mrs Stewart and Mr Gloag Thomson, Council resolved to form an Archaeological Section.

Mrs Stewart was unanimously appointed convener of the Archaeological Section."

At the Society's 81st AGM in March 1948, Council reports:

“Archaeological Section. This is a new section recently formed under the leadership of Mrs Stewart, and at the first meeting 12 members were enrolled. It is expected this will prove to be a very attractive and energetic section of the society.”

A year later the AGM report goes as follows:

“The society now has an Archaeological Section; it is ... an active, enthusiastic section. Over the Spring and Summer there had been excursions to places of historic and prehistoric interest in Perthshire; some 15 sites were visited.

The section had started a research survey of the archaeological remains in the county and also a detailed index of the proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries for all references to Perth and Perthshire.

The continued success of this section is in large measure due to the enthusiasm and energy of Mrs Stewart, and acknowledgment is made of the Society's appreciation of her work in this connection.”

Margaret Stewart continued to be a constant presence at the heart of the section until her death in 1986.

She was tireless in her support of and involvement in archaeology in Perthshire. She lectured, she excavated, she published her excavation reports in The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries and in the Proceedings of the Perthshire Society of Natural Science, she delivered seminars, some in her own home, she encouraged young aspiring archaeologists, she led excursions, she trained volunteer diggers, she helped set up local heritage groups, in Breadalbane and Strathearn and she directed survey work. She was still adding to a list of cup and ring marked stones at the time of her death.

Margaret Stewart emerged as a national figure in Scottish archaeology. She was president of the Scottish Regional Group of the Council for British Archaeology; she edited Discovery and Excavation in Scotland; she was heavily into what is now called ‘awareness-raising’, endeavouring to ensure that the people of Perth appreciated and understood the great wealth of archaeology lying under their streets. She was a founder member of Perth Civic Trust and was immovable in her opposition to threats to heritage.

Margaret Stewart was duly recognised for her scholarship and public service. She was appointed MBE and St Andrews University awarded her an honorary D.Litt. Her most prized accolade was her election as the first female Honorary Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland – a cherished honour, richly deserved.

Margaret Stewart was a scholar and a doer. She set the highest standards in her practice and demanded the same of those who worked with her. She was a kindly, modest lady who carried her knowledge lightly and shared it generously. She graciously acknowledged the support of her husband John Stewart.

This writer's particular personal memory is, of her heartfelt expression of deep gratitude to her parents for having allowed her the education, which had enabled her to pursue her passion for archaeology.

Dr Margaret Stewart was a legend in her own lifetime and it is fitting that she be remembered by Perthshire Society of Natural Science, the people of Perth and the wider world of Scottish archaeology.

Jennifer McKay

December 5 - "Lost Perthshire" - Ann Lindsay, author

Ann's well-illustrated talk referred to her book of the same title, one of a series published by Birlinn in the "Lost . . ." series, and published in 2011.

It covers some of what has been lost in the Big County - not surprising since people have been using the land and water of Perthshire for so long, so that wherever you are, you are close to something which has been lost from the sights of today, and, of course, much has changed. She acknowledges that her talk and her book only scratch the surface, so there is more, much more, that budding investigators could uncover.

Her sources were generous in both time and providing the information the book contains, not least the A K Bell Library in Perth which is obviously a very valuable source of knowledge, plus many others from the Archivist at Blair Castle to individuals whose families have lived in the county for many generations.

An early step was to examine some of the earliest maps of the county, which, like all maps, show what was there at the time that the map was drawn. These maps show how some settlements have today disappeared, except perhaps for a pile of stones, the only visible evidence of lives that have been.

The military have always had an important presence in Perthshire, from the Roman remains, only some of which are visible today, right up the Second World War, from which many constructions are still visible although no longer in use. How Perth's Barracks have changed we were reminded of by seeing a photograph of the current police station in the street which bears the name of the Barracks.

Harnessing the power of Perthshire's waters has been a constant through all this time, and fashioning it for man's use as important today as in the past - we can still argue about who constructed the Lade in Perth, and there is the current belief that the floods which so devastated the city in the past, are just that - something of the past. The textile industry, so important in the past, has gone, as have the water mills which provided its power, although remnants can still be seen.

Many of the large houses of the past have gone forever, some by accident, some by design, although more remain today, although perhaps reduced in size. The problems which land-owners have had in the past have been re-lived in the recent television series 'Downton Abbey' - who knows where that family will end up in the 21st century! Ann's favourite house, Seggieden on the banks of the Tay near Kinfauns is one which has gone forever, important to us in that it was the home of Henry Drummond Hay an Honorary Curator and President of the P.S.N.S.

Transport too has seen many losses, and many changes. Little remains of the many ferry crossings of the Tay, once so important to both royalty and commoners, although the sight of the 3000 year old Carpow Log boat in the Museum is a reminder of how important the river has been over the years. Apart from the drove roads which brought livestock to and from Perth and which were fit for animals and their attendants only, we forget that roads, such as we know them today, are modern, and that they were preceded by other, now lost, forms of transport. Perthshire is criss-crossed by many railway lines, which had their stations, and which are now gone.

The Scottish Tower-house Tradition

February 20, 2013

Prof Richard Oram, University of Stirling

Prof. Oram is a well-known speaker in Perth, and the audience of around 40 who gathered in the AK Bell Library's Soutar Theatre heard an excellent lecture which placed Scottish tower-houses in their wider context.

Although often said to be a distinctively Scottish form of building, similar fortified dwellings are widespread across much of Europe: but they only started to appear with the emergence of primogeniture, ensuring that these costly assets would remain in the immediate family of the builder.

For this reason, the first Scottish examples are found in the Viking-ruled far north - Cobbie Row's Castle is generally considered to be the earliest surviving stone castle, being mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga*.

Several other stone castles in northern Scotland may also be of early date, but dateable evidence is absent.

While conventional history tells us that few tower-houses were built before the end of the Wars of Independence, Prof. Oram did speculate that this belief may be a misunderstanding based on the very poor survival of buildings from that period - the protagonists were anxious not to leave any fortress standing that could be of benefit to an enemy, and over the centuries following, even major Royal Castles such as Perth and Dundee have vanished without trace.

The fragmentary ruins of Dunnideer Castle, isolated and relatively safe from plunder in stone-rich Aberdeenshire, may be all that survives of a possible earlier generation of tower-houses.

Whatever earlier tradition there may have been, the real boom in tower-house construction was started by David II, with his great tower at Edinburgh Castle (since engulfed within later defences), a symbol of power and status that other nobles were keen to emulate.

These towers were too cramped for a large entourage: the hall and chambers provided a high-status dwelling for the lord, and a place to conduct business and entertain (and impress) honoured guests.

The tower was surrounded by a complex of buildings which accommodated lesser officials and staff - one such complex has been excavated at Threave Castle.

Later towers became larger and more sophisticated in plan, the addition of projecting wings or jambs enabling some of this ancillary accommodation to be brought into the main building - Crookston Castle had such space at all four corners; Borthwick is a more intact example.

Although defensible, defence was never the sole objective of the tower-houses - inside and out, they were always intended to impress and awe and demonstrate their owner's high status.

The finest towers are carefully planned, built of high-quality ashlar stonework, much more decoratively finished than would be needed for a mere fortification, sometimes with armorial panels asserting the owner's elevated position.

The heraldry above the door at Balvaird Castle is a local imitation of the highly ornate panels similarly-positioned at Huntly Castle.

Modern visitors often imagine tower-houses to have been spartan dwellings, but in fact the interiors were designed for comfort and to display the wealth and sophistication of their owners.

The typical bare-stone look is a result of being 'primitivised' to suit the preconceptions of a later antiquarian tradition - much fine panelling and decorative plasterwork was stripped in Victorian times, leaving us only rare fragments of once richly-decorated interiors, some of which can be seen locally at Huntingtower Castle.

Every castle, of whatever date, inside was as sophisticated as any other new large house of its period.

Colin R. McLeod