

THE ISLANDS BOOK TRUST
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
AN LANNTAIR, STORNOWAY, LEWIS
TUESDAY 19TH JULY 2011

PRESENT - John Randall (Chairman), Iain G Macdonald, Catriona M MacLeod, Malcolm Burr, Donald John MacDonald, Margaret MacLennan, Martin Smith and Fred Silver.

1. APOLOGIES – Donnie Morrison, John MacIver, John Love, Alasdair MacEachen, Michael James Wilson, John Baldwin, Richard Deveria, George Broderick, Peter Cunningham, Jean Urquhart, Ian MacDonald

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM: 27th JULY 2010

Proposed by I.G.Macdonald
Seconded by J. Randall
Minutes agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is set out below.

Overview

1. The year ending 31 March 2011 was one of further consolidation and encouraging growth in our activities, and I am also pleased to report a significantly improved financial position. The prospects for the future are good if we can use the opportunities now available to us to build a sustainable social enterprise.

Recent Developments

2. There has been a further broadening of our activities, helped by the two-year 'New Horizons' project starting in early 2010 funded by LEADER Innse Gall and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. All our activities aim to further understanding and appreciation of the history and culture of Scottish islands in their wider context. Highlights include:

** Over 30 events took place in 2010, in all the main islands of the Outer Hebrides, Skye, and Raasay. And a record-breaking 33 events have been planned for 2011, including our first ever events in Eigg and Shetland, a boat trip to North Rona, and book launches in Fort William, Lerwick, and Foula.*

** Our big conference took place in Benbecula in August 2010 on 'The Historiography of St Kilda' to mark the 80th anniversary of the evacuation. The occasion was enhanced by the presence of several relatives of St Kildans, the issue of a special postal cover, and a*

boat trip to St Kilda. The event shed new light on the way St Kilda has been portrayed in literature over the centuries, and was judged highly successful by those who attended.

* Our publications programme has continued to increase and book sales exceeded £50,000 per annum for the first time. These included three new full-length publications relating to St Kilda ('Destination St Kilda', 'From Cleits to Castles', and 'St Kilda Diary'), two concerning aspects of emigration from the islands ('Island Emigrants' and 'Return to Patagonia'), and further Gaelic or bilingual publications ('Obair gun Duais' and 'Dileab ar Sinnsear').

* We have prepared several series of radio programmes in Gaelic and English on island historical and cultural themes for broadcast on local and community radio stations.

* We contribute regular features to publications such as 'Back in the Day' and the Scottish Island Explorer magazine.

* We have developed our work for Gaelic Medium education through the 'Ar Dileab' project in conjunction with the Education Department of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, drawing on the resources of the Angus Macleod Archive and other Book Trust material.

3. A further welcome development was the donation to the Book Trust of the working library of Derek Cooper, the well-known journalist and broadcaster, who has close family links with Lewis and Skye. This is now on display at Ravenspoint in South Lochs, Lewis, and was opened in May 2011. We are most grateful to Derek and his family for this generous gift.

Financial position

4. Building on the improvements reported last year, our accounts for 2010-11 show a significantly increased surplus of income over expenditure. This mainly reflects a high level of grants attracted during the year, particularly for the 'New Horizons' project, but also increased income from book sales.

5. We must not however become complacent. Only two years ago we had to take unpalatable action to reduce costs. We need to use the window of opportunity we have through the 'New Horizons' project to plan a future which is sustainable. Much effort is going into increasing our skills and professionalism in relation to publications, and I believe this can make an increasing contribution to our future strategy. We will be launching a new website shortly and this has the potential to increase book sales further.

Looking ahead

6. We are playing an important part in the Government-sponsored 'Scotland's Islands' year of events from Spring 2011 to Spring 2012 to celebrate island culture and strengthen links between islands. The highlight will be our big conference next month in Shetland to mark the 60th anniversary of the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University. We have already held successful events as part of the 'Scotland's Islands' year in Glendale (Skye), Eigg, and Ness (Lewis) – following which we managed to land on North Rona.

7. We will also have a presence at this year's Mod in Stornoway in October. We will be launching a new edition of the autobiography of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser 'A life of Song', including a reassessment of her contribution to Gaelic song by Per Ahlander; and the Angus Macleod memorial lecture this year will be in Gaelic and take place at the Mod – details to be announced shortly.

8. Other exciting publications planned include a new edition of Alexander Nicolson's classic 'History of Skye' (which is one of the assets we acquired a few years ago from

Maclean Press); a wonderful book about Foula (Shetland) in the 1950s by Chris Mylne; 'Island Conversion' by the well-known Gaelic poet Myles Campbell and his wife Margaret about Myles's conversion to Christianity, including many of his beautiful poems in Gaelic and English; and another selection of excellent photographs by Dr Kenneth Robertson taken in Uist and Eriskay in the 1950s and 60s.

Conclusion

9. It is with great regret that I must record the death last December of Isobel Holbourn of Foula, one of our Trustees. Isobel took part in several of our events and was a wonderful ambassador in Shetland for all we are trying to achieve – it is deeply disappointing that our conference and publication in Shetland next month will now have to take place without her.

10. And I should also like to record our great regret at the passing last year of Armand de Mestral, one of our most active members. Our deepest sympathy is extended to Ginette and family.

11. Finally, I should also like to thank all our Trustees, particularly those most active in the running of the Trust, Alayne and all our staff, and all our members, for their hard work and support throughout the year. Much of this input has been made on a voluntary basis, and it remains the case that our success depends to a great extent on the enthusiasm and commitment of Trustees, staff, and individual members. All existing Trustees step down this year, and are eligible for re-election. I should particularly like to thank Norman Thomson, who has been Treasurer for many years, and John MacIver, who are not standing for election again this time.

*John Randall
Chairman
July 2011*

The Chairman's report was adopted.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

A financial summary was circulated showing a surplus for year ending 31st March 2011 of £55,444.

The chairman cautioned that, while this indicates a financially secure position, we should guard against complacency in the year ahead.

The Treasurer's report was adopted.

6. RATIFICATION OF CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP FEES AND BENEFITS

The changes to subscription rates introduced for financial year 2011-12 were approved: Ordinary Membership now £20 a year, Gold Membership £30, Full-Time Students £7.50, Family Membership £30 (Ordinary) or £45 (Gold), Gold Life Member £325.

Changes proposed by Fred Silver
Seconded by Martin Smith
Changes agreed.

7. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO BOOK TRUST CONSTITUTION

The chairman confirmed, as previously intimated, in the interests of continuity and in line with good practice elsewhere, that Trustees proposed to amend paragraph 5(a) of the constitution so that, in future, one third of Trustees (to the nearest whole number), would stand down each year, instead of all Trustees standing down simultaneously after 3 years.

To give effect to this, 'up to' should be inserted before 'three years' in the penultimate sentence of para 5(a); and the final sentence should read: 'One third of Trustees (to the nearest whole number) shall stand down each year, and shall be eligible for re-election.'

Proposed by I. G. Macdonald
Seconded by Malcolm Burr
Amendments agreed.

8. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Thirteen of the current Trustees were willing to stand again: John Randall, Iain Gordon Macdonald, Catriona MacLeod, Jessie Murray, Donnie Morrison, Calum John MacKay, George Macdonald, Alasdair MacEachen, Sine Ghilleasbuig, Calum MacNeil, Donald William Stewart, John Love, David Green.

In addition, the following three nominations had been received: Donald John MacDonald, Malcolm Burr, Donald Meek.

The 16 names listed above were elected to fill the 16 places as Trustees.

Office-bearers would be elected by Trustees. John Randall agreed to act as interim Chairman pending the election of office-bearers.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Martin Smith suggested that a membership leaflet should be enclosed with sales of all new publications. This was agreed to be a useful suggestion where sales were made to non-members.

Catriona MacLeod
Secretary/Interim Secretary