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Annual Report of the Council of the Scottish Records Association for 2024-2025

The Council met three times during the year, with all three meetings taking place online. At the Forty-Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Association, held online on 17 December 2024, Professor Chris Whatley stepped down as Convener after six years in the role, and Dr Alison Rosie was elected as his successor. Two Ordinary Members of Council, Ms Marietta Crichton Stuart and Ms Keren Guthrie, also retired on completion of their terms of office, while Ms Jenny Duffy was elected as an Ordinary Member. Ms Alison Metcalfe was co-opted as an Ordinary Member on 5 February 2025, and Mrs Elizabeth Roads was co-opted as an Ordinary Member on 25 August 2025. Mrs Joanne Lauder resigned as joint Newsletter Editor on 17 July 2025 (Mrs Ingrid Thomson continues as sole Newsletter Editor). We would like to thank Joanne, Marietta, Keren and especially Chris for their invaluable contribution to the work of the Association, and to wish them all the best for the future.

At the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in January 2026, four Ordinary Members – Mr Phil Astley, Ms Lesley Bryson, Ms Fiona MacLeod and Ms Kirsty Stewart – will complete their terms of office and retire from Council. The Membership Secretary, Mr Robert Urquhart, has also indicated his intention to step down during the coming year, or alternatively to split the role with someone else.

Membership

At the end of the financial year (31 July 2025) the Association had 197 members (138 individuals and 59 institutions). This represents a slight increase on the 2023-2024 figure of 195 members.

Two changes to membership categories were proposed and approved at the Annual General Meeting on 17 December 2024, to resolve anomalies or unfairness affecting a small number of members. Firstly, the difference between the category of student membership and the wider reduced-rate membership category, whereby 'student' members received a copy of the journal but 'reduced' members did not, was eliminated so that all members on a reduced rate (student or otherwise) now receive the journal. Any members in reduced circumstances, who are not already paying the reduced rate, and who want to take

advantage of the reduced membership subscription rate, should contact the Secretary or Membership Secretary and their requests will be discreetly considered.

Secondly, the Council instigated a new category of dual membership, for households with two individual members. Several couples had been in the position of paying for one full individual membership plus a reduced one, which together cost more than the institutional rate for membership. The new category of dual membership, set at £36 per couple, allows both members to receive their own copies of *Retour* and all communications from the Association, with the couple receiving a single (shared) copy of the journal.

Finance

The Association ended the financial year with £14,906.84 in the current account and £5,485.76 in the savings account, representing an increase of £3,526.55 across both accounts.

Subscription income for 2024-2025 was down on that for 2023-2024. While the collection of individual subscriptions was virtually completed within the financial year, with some success in recovering arrears, the collection of institutional subscriptions was more problematic and protracted, with the result that some of these subscriptions are being paid in the financial year 2025-2026.

Expenditure on publications was also considerably lower this year, as the production invoices for *Scottish Archives* volume 30 were received and paid after 31 July 2025 and will therefore appear in next year's accounts. With volume 31 expected imminently, the Association will be paying for the publication of two editions during the financial year 2025-2026. Sales of back issues of *Scottish Archives* were strong this year and we are grateful to Robert Urquhart for processing these. As usual, the total income and expenditure figures for *Scottish Archives* include the sum of £250 received from Thomas Tunnock Ltd for the annual Tunnock Prize and awarded to the winner. Production and distribution of *Retour* cost £576.34 as against £502.50 in 2023-2024, largely due to increased postal charges. Administration costs for the Association's website were significantly lower than last year at £250.16 (£371.30 in 2023-2024).

The two-part Annual Conference held at Aberdeen and Perth made a loss of £705.05, compared to a loss of £197.54 on the 2023-2024 Annual Conference. This was a larger deficit than anticipated due to the costs of venue hire in Perth and to the number of delegates being fewer than expected.

During the year, it was discovered that the Association cannot claim Gift Aid on membership subscriptions because members receive their copy of *Scottish Archives* as a benefit of their subscription. To qualify for Gift Aid, charity subscriptions must cover membership fees only.

Conference

The Council originally planned to hold a one-day Annual Conference on the theme of 'Estate, Household and Family Collections and their use in Research', but the call for papers attracted so many high-quality abstracts that it was decided to expand this into a two-part/two-day conference, organised in conjunction with the Scottish Association of Country House Archivists (SACHA). The first part took place at the Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen and online on Wednesday 23 October, while the second part took place at the AK Bell Library, Perth and online on Friday 15 November. The conference encompassed a range of comprehensive and diverse presentations, a full report on which appears in *Scottish Archives* volume 30 (2024), pp. 105-113. We are grateful to the presenters and session chairs for their excellent contributions, to our hosts in Aberdeen and Perth, and particularly to Iain Hutchison and Robert Urquhart for their organisation of two thoroughly enjoyable days.

The Council would note, however, that the costs of conference venues, accommodation, travel and catering are rising steeply year on year, making it very difficult for the Association to run on-site conferences and keep the attendance fee affordable for most members. Additionally, even where on-site technical support is available, challenges inevitably arise in putting on hybrid conferences for an online and on-site audience simultaneously. In the post-covid era we are finding that, while some people are keen to return to physical gatherings with the social interchanges that these allow, others appreciate being able to take part without travel demands that in some cases might preclude their participation altogether. This year, we endeavoured to satisfy both groups by holding a hybrid conference, but the financial and technical challenges of doing so are such that it may be preferable to hold future Annual Conferences either entirely in-person or entirely online.

Visits

This year's Summer Visit, which took place on 21 August (postponed from 20 June) was almost fully subscribed, with thirteen members and guests taking the opportunity to explore two fascinating repositories in central Glasgow. In the morning, the group received a talk and behind-the-scenes tour of the Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre from the Assistant Archivist, Heather Panayiotaki, who also provided a large display of treasures from the collections. In the afternoon, Neil Sutcliffe and Tracey McNamara, Archive Managers, introduced the group to the Scottish Music Centre and its collections of rare and unique sound recordings, sheet music, manuscript records, photographs, posters and associated memorabilia. We would like to thank Heather, Neil and Tracey for hosting this most enjoyable and instructive visit, and for giving so generously of their time and expertise.

Palaeography Training Sessions

The Association provides occasional palaeography training sessions for small groups, which can be delivered either in person or online. This year, two in-person workshops were held in

Aberdeen to coincide with the first part of the Annual Conference on estate and household papers. The beginners' workshop, 'Palaeography Pointers: reading Scottish historical handwriting' took place on 22 October, and on 24 October the more advanced workshop, 'Palaeography for Household Papers and Correspondence in Private Collections', was run, for the first time combining the two parts of that workshop in a single day. The Association would like to thank Aberdeen University Library for hosting these sessions, as well as all the palaeography tutors: Ingrid Thomson, Alison Diamond, Kirsty Stewart, Charlotte Berry and Robert Urquhart.

Publications

During 2024-2025, the Association's website (www.scottishrecordsassociation.org) was viewed 9,325 times, representing a significant increase on the 2023-2024 figure of 6,589 visits. Like last year, most visitors accessed the site from within the UK and the USA, but there were also increasing numbers of visitors from Canada, Australia, France and Germany. Articles from ***Scottish Archives*** volume 29 were published on the website, and a sample back issue of the Association's newsletter, ***Retour***, was also uploaded, to give prospective members an idea of the benefits of joining the Association.

The website was completely rebuilt and moved to a new hosting provider, Netlify, in late 2024. This has dramatically reduced the administrative costs associated with the site (the hosting charge was formerly around £31 per month, whereas Netlify charges no hosting fees). We are indebted to our Web Editor, Mr Dawid Palgan, for his expertise and effort in this regard.

Issues 42 and 43 of ***Retour*** appeared in autumn 2024 and spring 2025. ***Scottish Archives*** volume 30, which included an index for volumes 21-30 and full colour illustrations, was published and distributed to members in autumn 2025. This was the first volume to be overseen by Dr Cathryn Spence and Dr Charlotte Berry following their election as co-Editors in December 2023. During the year, the Editorial Board for ***Scottish Archives*** was refreshed, with Mrs Carol Parry and Professor Chris Whatley accepting invitations to join the Board.

Tunnock Prize

The Association's annual essay competition for postgraduate students and early career researchers is kindly sponsored by Thomas Tunnock Ltd. The 2024 Tunnock Prize was awarded to Grant Schreiber, a doctoral student at the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, for his essay entitled 'Kirk Session Financial Records and the Poor of Aberdeen, 1602-1627'. Grant provided a presentation based on his research at the Annual General Meeting of the Association in December 2024 and his winning essay will be published in ***Scottish Archives*** volume 31.

The closing date for the 2025 Tunnock Prize competition was 31 October, and the winner will be announced at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in January 2026.

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 again made 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.