

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Kinloch Castle Friends Association held via Zoom on Saturday 12th June 2021 at 12 noon

Present: Professor Ewan Macdonald, EBM (Chair), Catherine Duckworth, CD (Sec), Jackie Roberts, JR (Treas), Sheila Mather, Sheila King, Ian Spouse, Thomas Krebs, Grace Callegari, Andrew Marsden, Alexander Wood, Don Bullough, Bryan Stewart, John and Ann Hall, Robert McAndrew, Joan Purvis, Gordon Davies, Bob Eden, Mhairi Ferrier (part-time), Mairi Gaffney (part-time)

Apologies for Absence: Martin Carty, Alan Rodger, Peter Macaulay, John Urquhart, Mhairi Ferrier

1. Welcome

EBM welcomed all to the meeting, which was the second AGM to be held using Zoom technology due to the coronavirus pandemic. CD explained that, in order for the meeting to be manageable using Zoom, attendees would be on mute and she asked those wishing to comment at any stage to raise a hand.

2. Minutes of AGM held on 13th June 2020

The minute of the previous AGM held on 13th June were agreed as a correct record.

3. Report from Chair

EBM briefly summarised action taken since the previous AGM held in June 2020. He referred to the huge amount of work undertaken by members of the committee, including numerous meetings, submission of applications for funding, increased use of social media, and the recent organisation of a number of well-attended and much appreciated Webinars. Social media has been much developed, thanks to Mhairi Ferrier. A revised business case is being put together. T

4. Report from Secretary

The Secretary presented a report, which had been previously circulated. The report is attached.

CD referred to the helpful advice and support provided by the Heritage Trust Network which KCFA had joined. She also acknowledged the invaluable contribution of members of the Fundraising Group, formed in the course of the past year following a successful request on Facebook for support with fundraising.

During the year applications had been made to various organisations for funding, but it had not proved possible to attract funding due to lack of progress on the ownership issue. A Webinar on the future for the castle held on 17th May, included input from speakers including Kate Forbes MSP for the area as well as Finance Minister for the Scottish Government and Lord Thurso, Chair of Visit Scotland It led to Historic Environment Scotland, an organisation who had always been very supportive of KCFA, having an increased awareness of the contribution Kinloch Castle would make in terms of much-needed visitor accommodation on the island. The Webinar had also resulted in a potentially promising route forward being identified.

In conclusion, CD thanked Thomas Krebs for initiating and funding the establishment of the Topotheque (a way of linking photographic and archival material to a location map), the first developed in the UK.

EBM expressed thanks to CD for the huge contribution she was making to many aspects of the project.

5. Report from Treasurer

The Treasurer presented a report, which had been previously circulated. The report is attached.

JR expressed concern that funds currently available to KCFA stood at only £5,543, an amount she considered to be low in view of the work needed to take the project forward. She made a plea for Facebook members, numbering almost 500 currently, to become members of the Association. A separate savings account contained £2,792 specifically for the restoration of the Orchestrion in the castle.

EBM thanked JR for her work as Treasurer during the year, in which she had suffered considerable health issues. He paid tribute to her dedication and fortitude in overcoming serious ill health, and continuing to do sterling work for the Association.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members

The following officers and committee members were elected:

Officers

Chairman – Ewan Macdonald proposed by SK and SM

Secretary – Catherine Duckworth proposed by EM and SK

Treasurer – Jackie Roberts proposed by EM and CD

Committee Members

Mairi Gaffney

Sheila King

Thomas Krebs (nominated by EM and SM)

Sheila Mather

Ian Spouse

All proposed by EM and CD

7. Any Other Business. Don Bullough and Martin Carty have both offered to become more involved although Don wishes to defer for a while.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Saturday 11th June 2022 at the earlier time of 9.30 am, again using Zoom technology.

Report from Honorary Secretary to Kinloch Castle Friends Association for the AGM 12th June 2021

Little did we think back last June that in June 2021 we would again be holding this AGM by Zoom and that the world is still in the throes of the pandemic. While in the UK the vaccine roll-out is going apace, the same cannot be said for other countries and here there is yet another rise of infections in certain areas. Covid-19 has impacted on our KCFA working team with one of our group being quite seriously ill and two others working or researching in the occupational health implications of Covid and Long Covid. Thankfully using online applications like Zoom has made some things much easier to set up.

We have been unable to visit Rum at all this past year and were therefore unable to see for ourselves how the Castle has been over the time since our last visit. We had a major visit planned for March 2020 but this was cancelled and we have tentatively booked to go in October 2021 but are unsure yet as to how many of us can be accommodated and indeed if we will be allowed access to the castle. Access to the castle on health and safety grounds has become increasingly problematic which makes it difficult to assess what has and hasn't been done and what extra needs doing.

I want first to thank Jackie our treasurer. After being taken seriously ill, we managed to cope without her at first because everything was in such good order: another potential treasurer then had personal issues and pulled out, then another but by this time, Jackie was coming back to health and amazingly found dealing with our accounts to be therapeutic. Future potential treasurers take note!

One major plus of this past year has been to join the Heritage Trust Network. There are many sources of heritage advice but this has been money well spent and we get a huge amount of support via the website and the 'Toolkit' but also from individuals who have readily given advice. Again, that people can join meetings online without moving from their office or spending travelling time has assisted greatly and kept our costs down too. A subscription to Zoom, initially taken out just for the AGM 2020, has been extremely helpful and cost saving.

Another major plus was when we asked via our Facebook page for helpers in fundraising. This brought along three people who have been a massive help. Dawn had to leave our group as she was unexpectedly able to go back to work, but Mairi and Mhairi have become enormously valuable parts of the team and I'm very grateful to them both for all the assistance they have given us and especially me personally.

Last year we were asked by Katherine Riley of Manchester University to take part in work towards her dissertation in visual anthropology. This was very Covid affected as it had been intended that we would be video recorded during the March work party, however, Katherine worked round this and sent us the finished recording which had had to be made online. Sheila Mather and I both took part creating maps

of our views of Rum and then talking about them, and Katherine was successfully awarded a distinction in her Masters degree.

Another achievement this year is to set up our very own Topotheque. Those of us who were at last year's AGM will remember KCFA member Thomas Krebs telling us of this scheme started in Austria whereby photographs and documents etc can be linked via a map of a local area such as a village. The scheme has taken off all over Europe, and ours of Kinloch Castle and the Isle of Rum is the first in the UK. Thomas started with one for the Grandhotel Giessbach in Switzerland although he's now got several going and with his able assistance and continued support, we set one up for Kinloch Castle and the Isle of Rum. It is very new and as yet has only about 100 photos etc on but we are gradually adding to it as well as to the information included and we would welcome more and more if anyone is willing to lend them. It will become a permanent and accessible online archive of the Castle and the island.

Our team has spent a lot of time in putting together a revised business plan, Sheila King has spent a lot of time on this and Ian Spouse worked unstintingly to get the figures to make sense. Again, time was spent in trying to source funders since we were told by SNH (who had a name change to NatureScot along the way) that we had to show we had funding in place before they would consider us for ownership. Experience then showed us that without ownership or any sort of ownership or lease agreement, we could not have funding from any of the major funders. We were advised by Highland Councillor Denis Rixson to apply for some funding from the Coastal Communities Fund. This had to be for a small and finite project. We suggested the walled garden but again after checking with NatureScot this was rejected as it was said that any work we did may impact on any potential buyer. This became increasingly frustrating, and again advice and support from HTN was helpful.

The fundraising team also increased our social media presence hugely and Mhairi has brought in a small team of students who work on a variety of aspects of the work. We are now actively on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and there is talk of TikTok. The students have been analysing which posts get the most attention etc. We have also shared our feeds with others such as with a geology student and with Trudi Clarke the previous Rum Ranger and more are planned.

All along we have tried to keep in contact with NatureScot but it has been an uphill struggle. All staff were working from home apparently without access to papers. We did manage a couple of meetings, one of which was I think the worst we have ever had, in which we were asked why we were rushing around trying to find funding. For our next meeting we included Andrew McConnell from the Glasgow Buildings Preservation Trust (via HTN) who was excellent. However, out of our combined anger after the first meeting came the decision to set up a big webinar which we held on the 17th May and I'm delighted that many of our members joined as well as many others from all over the world. Before that, to raise the profile and interest we held a short series of three information webinars which again were well received with people joining from all over the world, including Argentina, Canada, the US and all over Europe, and we will be continuing the series from September next and I hope as many of you as possible will find time to join them. There are so many possible

subjects related to Kinloch Castle and Rum and if anyone has a suggestion for a subject or has a talk they can put on please let me know. While we are looking for 40 minute talks, if anyone has a much shorter one then that is fine.

The main webinar on the 17th May had more than one result. One was the greater understanding by HES of the value of Kinloch Castle as potential visitor accommodation for larger groups and that while we had told them of this, the webinar gave them clear indications that our words were evidenced based and that although hitherto to them Kinloch Castle is a superb and interesting building which needs restoration, it is clear that it is also on an island which had many other reasons for people to want more group and other accommodation to visit. This has led to a higher level meeting with HES on the 9TH June and suffice it to say we are going down a potentially promising route.

I have mentioned our frustration with NatureScot. It is 25 years since KCFA was founded by Ewan Macdonald and George Randall. 25 years of watching the castle deteriorate and the contents also steadily either deteriorate or disappear. We know that NatureScot have no further use for the castle, and we know that they find looking after it to be a burden. We have also found no other interested parties. KCFA keenly felt that the refusal of our asset transfer bid was based on invalid reasons and have experienced persistent and longstanding stonewalling. We have tried to be polite. Recently one of our team wrote personally to Francesca Osowska the CEO of NatureScot to express her opinion. This got quite a speedy reply and she was sent a copy of the Conservation Plan produced by James F Stephen Architects (who have long been the consulting architects concerning the castle, Doug Reid being the main contact). This report dates from 2012 and many of the items marked as of first priority have not yet been done. SNH/NatureScot informed us that they have a policy of not making good any work that is done, meaning that destructive and invasive work on dry rot is not restored. This has left, amongst other places, the billiard room in an appalling state, Monica's bedroom with the bare bricks showing round the window, the gun room destroyed and William Bass room stripped out. We know further work has been done but have not been able to check. I wrote asking to know what work had been done and what planned and was very recently sent a 'Property Fabric Condition Inspection and Report' by James F Stephen architects from a survey Doug Reid and others did in March 2020. This report is thorough and is 124 pages long plus plans but no costings and no photographs. Why were we not informed of this despite frequent requests and despite our mentioning even during the webinar that the most recent report we had was from 2012? Sadly, NatureScot have even now got contractors on Rum at the castle. We have no confidence in the quality of the apparently unsupervised work they are doing. The recent report states that, for instance, new high level gutters have been fitted but that the existing downpipes are blocked and need clearing as they are overflowing and thus making the new gutters pointless. It would be normal policy that all connected rainwater goods would be renewed or cleared as part of the same contract. This is a relatively cheap and cost effective means of maintaining any building, but imperative for a Category A listed building.

The report specifies that the prioritised recommendations are classed in 4 headings:

1. Immediate commencement for reasons of public health/health and safety reasons, to prevent imminent damage and/or to prevent further deterioration to the fabric of the building.
2. To be carried out within a short term/definitive timeframe to guard against further significant damage, deterioration and increased costs of repair/remediation
3. Routine maintenance works necessary to maintain a reasonable level of repair and functionality
4. Desirable but not essential works to improve the function of performance of the building or to enhance its architectural or aesthetic appearance

SNH has requested that only the aforementioned Prioritised Recommendations 1 and 2 be considered for inclusion within the budget cost report. NB This does NOT include routine maintenance work.

Lack of routine maintenance means that weeds are growing in gutters, that trees have been growing out of chimneys for several years, that downpipes are still blocked and causing serious issues with damp inside the castle. Doug Reid in his report also comments that he was unable to check out the roof for health and safety reasons. He attaches a note about the weather during their stay which is itself reason enough to stay inside! At least they would be able to check for any rainwater ingress inside the castle. Over the winter we asked one of the residents to take some photographs for us of the exterior of the castle as a way of finding out what the situation was as we had been assured that the gutters had been cleared in winter 2019-20. Nothing had changed except everything had grown.

Our surveyor Hugh Garratt reported that the roof vents he insisted upon were doing their work in making the roof space well ventilated, conditions disliked by dry rot. However, when he visited later he saw surfaces covered in a layer of spores from the dying dry rot which needed cleaning up as a matter of urgency as they would spread the dry rot further. There is no indication that this has been done.

SNH/NatureScot frequently talk of how much they have spent on repairs to the castle. Over the years they have also spent formidable sums on reports and surveys into what the castle could be used for. Each and every one talks of visitor accommodation.

We were informed a little while ago that items had been stolen from the castle. We have not yet been informed as to what items. We received an unusual letter from one of the alleged perpetrators, a foreign national who had moved in with one of the Rum residents. He informed us that taking items from the castle was long term, commonplace and accepted practice. He named current and past residents who he alleged to have done this. It is subject of a current court case. We have long deplored the lack of security at the castle. This is further evidence of that. The castle and the contents are of not just national importance but of international interest. It is rare that both are kept together.

Another person who joined the webinar was Jonas Roters of Bern University of the Arts Conservation and Restoration and he is so impressed by the contents and the castle being together still that he has put together a paper, 'The future of Kinloch Castle – first steps towards a search for the balance between authenticity, preservation and use'. This is a proposal for a summer school project by the

University and clearly demonstrates the importance of the castle not just for Scotland, of the UK but on a much wider level.

For the first time in many years, I start to see a glimmer of hope. Thank you to all who have stuck with us over the years. Please listen to what Ewan has to say, and let us take the castle forward.

Catherine Duckworth Hon Secretary KCFA. June 2021

Report from Treasurer to Kinloch Castle Friends Association for the AGM 12th June 2021

The combination of the pandemic and the treasurer's illness last year, and the fact that the records are in Scotland, meant that the accounts for 2020-21 had to be 'created' using bank statements, the documents still on my computer and the expenditure recorded by the Secretary. The records are scrappy but Independent Examiner Mrs Jennifer Hindshaw was happy to sign the OSCR report.

There was little Expenditure apart from the payment of £5997.96 to Smith and Garrett and the charges for Zoom. As regards Income, one casualty was the normal chasing of arrears of subscriptions ; I would doubt that any member has idea whether they paid their subs last year or not. Some paid twice, many not at all, and one paid three times! No Gift Aid was claimed but a claim has now been lodged with the HMRC.

The income and expenditure lists on the Receipts and Payment Sheet give details of the main items.

- Subscriptions have remained the same since at least 2012 - £12 for single members and £22 for family members. In June last year the AGM 2020 agreed to change to £15 and £25 and some members paid the larger amount.
- The Crowdfunder site from last year was left open and we will use it again when our plans are settled. A supporter in the Netherlands gave £500 for the Orchestrion and another general donation of £500.
- Easy Fundraising and Recycle for Charity raised small sums.
- In 2019 stalls at the Dundee Mountain Festival and the International Sheepdog Trials brought in a few hundred pounds, but Covid but paid to that in 2020.
- In the autumn of 2019 it was decided to re-launch the Orchestrion Appeal. Initial support brought a world wide community of enthusiasts, but it has not been possible to proceed further. The money in the Savings Account is 'Orchestrion Money'.

Our bank balance at the moment (£5,543) is worryingly low for the work that lies ahead if the project of saving Kinloch Castle is to continue.

There is still support for the project and on Facebook and other platforms plenty of people express enthusiasm, but this does not translate into cash.

In the last few months the Working Group has decided to try to break the cycle of rejection. A series of webinars about Rum (a superb collection of photographs, and a

fascinating talk about the Deer Study have proved very popular) and the fight goes on.

Jackie Roberts. June 2021