

The Clarsach Society – Comunn na Clàrsaich  
82<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 11.00 AM  
Via Zoom

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present: Jennifer Port (Convenor), Charles Hope (Vice-Convenor), Mary Scott (Hon. Secretary), Andrew Melville (Hon. Treasurer), Màiri Macleod (Gaelic Adviser), Isobel Mieras (President), Jenny Blain (NE Scotland), Margaret Thompson (Northumbrian), Morag Philips (Edinburgh), Irene Watt (NE Scotland), Karen Marshalsay (Edinburgh), Frances Younson (Bristol & West of England), Gill Beeley (Transpennine), Catherine Dowell (Life: Edinburgh), Bill Taylor (Wire), Anne Chorley (London & South East), Allison Bremner (NE Scotland), Helen Forster (Edinburgh), Margaret Collin (Life: Edinburgh), Màiri MacLeod (Isle of Lewis), Ruth Mackay (Glasgow), Sheona Ure (Edinburgh), Wendy Stewart (Life: Edinburgh & Dumfries & Galloway), Catherine Mitchell (Edinburgh), Gwen Yorke (Glasgow), Marianne McGhee (Wire & London & South East), Kara Terwey (North East Scotland), Janette Bain (Edinburgh), Laurina Strachan (Edinburgh & Wire) Alison Carmichael (Northumbrian), Felicity Merchant (London & South East), Simon Barker (London & South East), Elinor Evans (Edinburgh), Anne Chorley (London & South East), Hazel Briton (Edinburgh), Corrina Hewat (Edinburgh), Neil Wood (Non-member.)

In attendance: Toby Hawks and Glenn Robinson

**1. Opening & Apologies**

Neil Wood performed the clarsach for five minutes prior to the meeting.

Jennifer Port began by thanking Neil Wood for his musical introduction.

Jennifer Port then provided a warm welcome to all the attendees to the AGM. She noted this was the first ever Clarsach Society AGM to be held by Zoom and it is fantastic to see so many people on the call.

Jennifer Port introduced the membership to Glenn Robinson, the Clarsach Society Office Manager. She then introduced the membership to Toby Hawks, Administrator, who joined the team in December 2019. Jennifer mentioned that both Toby and Glenn had been doing excellent work, in very difficult conditions. Glenn is only recently back into the office and Toby, started in December but has been working mainly from home since March. Jennifer said she was proud of how much work both have managed to achieve. Also, as both are still relatively new, both Glenn and Toby have managed to learn the ropes in challenging circumstances.

Apologies from Toni Russell, Jean Fleetwood, Katie Harrigan, Mary Macmaster, Morag Pugh, Rachel Hair, Callum Macleod.

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the 81<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

Correction to item 6: Karen Marshalsay's name to be removed from the bold print under elected members.

Correction to item 6: In the next paragraph, it should then show that Karen Marshalsay was nominated by Dawn Leask and seconded by Laurina Strachan.

Correction to item 6: Laurina's Strachan's name should be removed from the bold list as she did not nominate herself. Instead, it should be noted that Laurina was nominated by Isobel Mieras and Catherine Dowell.

Correction item 6: Susanne Lloyd-Jones should be removed from the bold list.

Correction on Attendee List: Marianne McGlee should be changed to McGhee.

Correction item 2: Màiri's name to remain consistent.

Correction on Attendee List: Helen Forster to be added.

Charles Hope proposed the minutes and Gill Beeley seconded

**3. Matters Arising**

Staffing – Jennifer Port wanted to highlight it had been the best part of two years since the last AGM. Since then, Glenn Robinson took up his post of Office Manager in June 2019. Toby Hawks then took up post of Administrator in December 2019. This is something that had been spoken about before but the staffing issues had been reviewed and some questions were asked. i.e. If there was anything which was causing there to be such a high turnover of staff. So it was decided that

things would be changed, so instead of there being two administrators, it was decided that there should be an office manager and one administrator. Jennifer then asked Glenn and Toby to give everyone a brief outline of their work.

Glenn Robinson confirmed he worked 28 hours a week; Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday's normally. In terms of everyday role, currently managing Harp Hire, F&A Minutes, AGM and Executive Council Minutes. Glenn indicated he is responsible for some of the financial record keeping on a day to day basis, and reports to Andrew Melville. For instance, he would regularly update banking information online using accountancy software. He has works with harp arrears payments and some of the membership queries that come through on a regular basis. Glenn indicated there were a further list of tasks and mentioned that he and Toby do work for The Edinburgh International Harp Festival and mentioned a recent application with Creative Scotland for a commissioned piece of work.

Toby Hawks stated he works 22 hours a week, normally Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Toby mentioned he offered admin support to anyone in The Society when needed. (membership, EIHF, websites etc.) He also works at improving office systems and processes.

Jennifer Port mentioned that she hoped everyone would agree that The Clarsach Society has acquired two excellent employees and hopefully going forward, we have some excellent ideas and fresh approaches.

Gill Beeley wrote a message of support to Glenn and Toby in the Zoom type box.

#### **4. Adoption of the Annual Report for the year 2018/19**

Jennifer Port asked the membership to remember that while we are very far into 2020, the AGM should have happened in April 2020.

The Annual Report was professionally printed and posted to those who requested a paper copy. An electronic version was emailed to all branches, advertisers and anyone wishing to receive a paper copy.

Jennifer Port stated that due to environmental concerns, there have been less paper copies, but this will continue to be available for those who need it.

Jennifer Port requested a show of hands for the adoption of the Annual Report and The Annual Report was then confirmed.

#### **5. Convenor's Remarks**

Jennifer Port began by congratulating Isobel Mieras who has been recognised on The Queen's Birthday Honours List and will receive an MBE. Jennifer Port mentioned how thrilled everyone is with this news and that it is thoroughly deserved for the work Isobel has carried out.

Jennifer Port mentioned it has been a very unusual year for everyone. There have been challenges for the staff, needing to work from home, all members have had to keep socially distant and one of the biggest impacts was the cancellation of the physical Harp Festival and therefore there was no AGM in April 2020.

Jennifer Port mentioned it was her intention about two years ago to step down but as Laurina Strachan, who was at the time Vice Convenor, decided to step down then too, she stayed on for another period to help with continuity. It therefore became her intention to step down April 2020 but as the AGM did not go ahead then, she has remained in post until today, when she will resign as Convenor. Jennifer Port stated it has been her honour to be Convenor and she has thoroughly enjoyed it. There have been some bumps on the road but hoped that everyone agreed The Society was now in a better place than a few years ago. The other thing Jennifer Port thought very important was engaging with the branches. Jennifer Port mentioned that in some ways, she succeeded with this work but that the engagement with the branches would remain a work in progress. She asked those in attendance who felt that their branch was still a little disconnected from the National Office to try and re-double efforts at connecting. Jennifer then asked everyone to try really hard to engage with each other. Some branches are successful in financial terms and other may not be. Jennifer therefore encouraged there be more joint branch events.

Jennifer Port mentioned that she leaves The Clarsach Society in a strong financial position, as indicated by The Treasurer's assessment, that the accounts are looking good. The Clarsach Society Harp Hire Scheme is almost at the best it has ever been. Glenn Robinson has finally got to the bottom of the waiting list, which Jennifer Port does not remember ever happening. With Covid, this has been tricky, as harps have a longer turn around in the office due to the new safety procedures in place. Jennifer Port then gave thanks to Elinor Evans for the work she carries out serving and retuning the harps when they are returned to The National Office after the initial quarantine period. There is good income coming from the harp hire which covers much of the expense associated with running the office.

Jennifer Port then reported that Andrew Melville and Glenn Robinson managed to track down some significant debt arrears associated with long term hirers who The National Office had lost contact with all together.

Jennifer Port thanked her fellow Committee members, as well as the three vice Convenors she has worked with: Jeanette Bain, Laurina Strachan and Charles Hope, for their support during her time as Convenor. The only downside she can now see, is that everyone cannot get together and play. This has an emotional and social impact but perhaps has allowed members a little more time at home to practice and play their instruments.

Jennifer Port opened the floor for questions. There were no questions from the attendees. Jennifer Port introduced everyone to The Treasurer, Andrew Melville, to provide the Treasurer's Report.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

Andrew Melville indicated that the last AGM was in 2019. Since then, the 2019 accounts have been signed off and were lodged in March 2020 with OSCR. The 2020 accounts have now been prepared, which are in draft form and are waiting for The Executive Council to approve.

Andrew Melville indicated that the position of the 2020 accounts are not as bad as one might think, when one considers the cancellation of the harp festival. Branch income has remained high and there has been an increase in The National Office harp hire scheme. In fact, the cash level of The Society as of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June is the highest it has ever been.

Andrew Melville stated that 2021 will be interesting as one needs to recognise that the period up to Christmas in the 2020 accounts would have been normal, with Christmas concerts etc. In 2021, there will be little or no income from these sources for that period. He stated, there would hopefully be income from the virtual EIHF in 2021. Andrew indicated that the finances look quite good so everyone should be reassured from that point of view.

Andrew Melville than asked if there were any queries and none were forthcoming. Andrew then thanked the membership.

## **7. Proposed Amendment to The Constitution**

Jennifer Port then indicated the next agenda point, which was the proposed amendment to The Constitution. Jennifer reminded everyone how this has been sent as an attachment prior to the meeting and everyone should have seen what the proposed changes are. She thanked Charles Hope for the work he has carried out on these changes: She stated that Charles has went through The Constitution very thoroughly to find what needs to be changed. Jennifer then handed over to Charles Hope to discuss in more detail.

Charles Hope summarised the present circumstances. The Constitution as it stands is ten years old and working practices have changed. All the amendments bar one, therefore reflect the change of working practices that do not comply under the current constitution. The only other change relates to the status of Trustees as reputable people. He indicated there had been changes with what is expected via The Charity Commission and it has been suggested that Trustees sign a declaration that they are reputable people. Charles then asked if anyone has any questions.

Helen Forster had a question at item 5, which refers to Head Office. Helen wished to know if it was Head Office or National Office.

Charles Hope confirmed it should be National Office. Jennifer Port confirmed that in all correspondence this should be The National Office. Charles thanked Helen for spotting this error and confirmed this will be changed.

Mary Scott asked Charles if all Trustees would therefore need to sign a form which The National Office can devise and send.

Charles Hope confirmed this is the case. In another charity he is involved with, Trustees would sign this form once a year. While this is an English charity, Charles indicated that it would still be good practice.

Mary Scott therefore stated she would work with the office to design this each year.

Karen Marshalsay asked about section 5 which stated that all subscriptions would last 12 months from the date of joining. Karen asked if this is how it works, as she understood everyone would join on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July and it would last for a year.

Charles Hope confirmed this has been changed and it is now a rolling 12 months subscription.

Laurina Strachan confirmed it was a conscious decision to make the change as it would give The Society more flexibility to encourage members to join at any time of the year.

The amendments to the Constitution was proposed by Gill Beeley and seconded by Jennifer Port.

## 8. Election of Convenor, Vice-Convenor and other Members of the Executive Council

At this point, Jennifer Port and the current committee stepped down and Mary Scott as Hon Secretary took over by chairing the meeting.

Mary Scott started by thanking Charles for his work on The Constitution. Mary then indicated that she has received nominations for all the posts via email, so nothing needs to be opened to the floor at this point. It was confirmed that all those proposed had provided permission to be nominated. Mary then read through the nominations as follows:

### **Convenor – Charles Hope**

*Nominated by Isobel Mieras, MBE*

*Seconded by Felicity Merchant*

### **Vice-Convenor – Irene Watt**

*Nominated by Angela Porchez*

*Seconded by Margaret Cassie*

### **Gaelic Adviser – Màiri Macleod**

*Nominated by Charles Hope*

*Seconded by Jennifer Port*

### **Elected Members**

*Margaret Collin – Nominated by Jennifer port and seconded by Janette Bain*

*Helen Forster – Nominated by Laurina Strachan and seconded by Isobel Mieras*

*Corrina Hewat - Nominated by Màiri Macleod and seconded by Patsy Seddon*

*Ruth Mackay – Nominated by Gwen Yorke and seconded by Jennifer Port*

*Isobel Mieras, MBE - Nominated by Janette Bain and seconded by Laurina Strachan*

*Laurina Strachan – Nominated by Helen Forster and seconded by Isobel Mieras, MBE*

Mary Scott indicated that she would welcome further engagement in the future, in terms of who people would like to see in these esteemed posts. Mary mentioned it is nice to see some new names and welcomed both Ruth Mackay and Margaret Collin as newly installed Elected Members.

Mary Scott also wanted to give a special mention to Susanne Lloyd-Jones who is no longer with us and how much she will be missed. Mary also thanked Karen Marshalsay, who stepped down, for all the work she has done over the previous five years.

Mary Scott then asked the membership if they had any questions about the nominations. As there were no questions, Mary Scott went on to thank The Society's retiring Convenor, Jennifer Port. Mary mentioned Jennifer had been on The Executive Council since 2010, two years as Vice-Convenor and eight as Convenor. Mary reminded everyone how Jennifer has brought some bright inspirational ideas; Jennifer wanted to engage more with the branches, and she had done that by visiting them all over the country. Jennifer has collaborated very closely with the office staff and this has been particularly important in recent years, when there have been so many changes. Mary mentioned how Jennifer is always very thoughtful and diplomatic and is known for her extremely prompt responses to every form of communication. She has meticulous attention to detail which is really useful and any drafts or anything that needs to be proofread. Mary Scott said this skill will be missed.

Mary Scott went on to outline Jennifer Port's legacy: Jennifer lead on making improvements to the database. She encouraged The Clarsach Society to replace the websites and Toby Hawks is now working hard on getting contracts in place, so the websites are improved. Mary mentioned that Jennifer Port has embraced The Music Folio typesetting and brought this forward over the last few years. Most spectacularly, she has done all this while raising five children. Mary praised Jennifer as one of the best multi-tasking mums around and that The Society would miss her energy, her positivity, skills and friendship. Particularly, Mary wanted to highlight the important work over the last eight months during the Covid crisis and the leadership Jennifer provided.

Mary Scott then (virtually) presented Jennifer with an engraved quaich which would be posted to her later. The engraving has Jennifer Port's name alongside The Clarsach Society's logo, stating Convenor 2012-2020.

On behalf of everyone, Mary Scott expressed heart felt thanks.

Jennifer Port thanked everyone for their kindness.

**9. AOCB**

Mary Scott then asked if there was any other business. Isobel Mieras said that there have been many deserved thanks throughout the meeting but she wanted to highlight the work that both Mary Scott and Andrew Melville carry out for The Clarsach Society. Isobel mentioned that both these individuals are the ones that carry on quietly and how both these individuals are the rocks in which The Society depends.

Mary Scott thanked Isobel Mieras for her words before thanking all attendees for giving up their Saturday morning.

**8. Date of Next Annual General Meeting**

To be decided at The Executive Council Meeting and in conjunction with the F&A Committee.