



scottish place-name society comann ainmean-àite na h-alba

Annual General Meeting

3 May 2025

The Wynd Centre 6 School Wynd, Paisley, PA1 2DB.

10.30-11.15

Agenda

1. Welcome; apologies

ST welcomed everyone and opened the AGM.

Apologies: Guy Puzey, Alan Macniven, Jake King, John MacKay, Alan James, Alison Grant, Simeon Krastev, Alasdair Whyte, Diana Whaley.

2. Minutes of 2024 AGM

3. Convener's report (summarised: for the full report see the Appendix below).

ST (Simon Taylor) explained that he has taken on the role as acting convener, but he is keen for someone else to take on the role of convener. He noted that reports from office bearers are available on the SPNS website. ST also noted his thanks to SK (Simeon Krastev) who has worked hard to put everything together for the AGM.

We are currently holding two conferences per year: one online in November and one in-person in May. Some people have queried if we can hold a hybrid conference in May. We have decided against it since we are not quite sure of the technology yet, so May will be in-person only for the time being.

The recordings of the November 2024 conference talks were made generally available on the SPNS Youtube channel via the SPNS website. The agreement was that they would be put up for a limited time and they were taken down in early March. However, if anyone would like access to one, please contact SEG (Sofia Evemalm-Graham) or ST.

In Montrose last year it was announced that the Berwickshire volume should be out soon – it is now out! The book will be on sale today and there will be a mini launch directly after the AGM. There are also several forthcoming volumes on the horizon, including Lanarkshire, which has received a subsidy for printing costs from SPNS. Iona and two Mull volumes are forthcoming. A Perthshire volume is on the horizon. ST noted that The Survey of Scottish Place-Names operates under the auspices of SPNS with TC (Thomas Clancy) as the director. Details of these volumes can be found in the Convener's Report below.

We have a new Newsletter editor, ES (Eilidh Scammell), taking over from BP (Bill Patterson). We have noticed that Newsletter contributions are becoming longer and longer, but *JSNS (The Journal of Scottish Name Studies)* needs articles. Because of this, we are going to try to point contributors in the direction of JSNS.

Carole Hough added that hybrid conferences are often problematic. People assume it is very easy to organise, but it is not.

4. Treasurer's report

PD (pd Drummond) reported that not much has changed since the previous year.

ES noted that Newsletter printing costs have gone down, but stamp cost is going up, so it evens out. PD added that we save £4 per member/year by sending out electronic Newsletters.

As queried during the AGM last year, Colin Forsyth asked what we are doing with surplus money. PD noted that some money is being spent towards survey volumes (e.g. £2000 towards Lanarkshire), but this is not visible in the accounts yet.

There was a question about the £300 donation from Slow Ways [Slow Ways - a network of walking routes connecting Great Britain](#). This is a walking network that wanted Scots forms of place-names for their maps. ST provided the data with input from Alison Grant (AG) and requested for payment that a donation be made to SPNS.

Maggie Scott asked about grants to students, but as PD noted, there is currently a general lack of students who would be eligible to apply for grants.

ST noted his thanks to PD for twenty-seven years as treasurer.

5. Newsletter Editor's Report (summarised: for the full report see the Appendix below).

ES reported that this has been her first year as editor. She noted her thanks to BP for his continued help.

The front cover has a new format. We are also looking to reduce length of longer articles. Could people who want to contribute longer articles submit them to JSNS?

We have also had various new features, including letters to the editor. If people wish to contribute responses to previous articles, have amusing or interesting names to share, etc. please contact ES. The number of members who have requested the digital Newsletter has gone up to 55 digital Newsletters this year, a large increase from 16 last year. There has been positive feedback on the electronic Newsletter.

ST noted thanks to ES for taking on this role.

6. Web manager's Report

ST recorded our thanks to SK for all his work. See Appendix for report.

7. Outreach Sub-Committee Report

SEG gave an update as secretary and social media co-ordinator.

She has proposed that for the time being the social media duties be subsumed under the secretary role.

The full report, see appendix below. The SPNS social media accounts are:

Twitter/X (@scotplacenames)

Bluesky (@scotplacenames.bsky.social)

Instagram (@scotplacenames)

Youtube (@Scotplacenames)

In particular, SEG noted that four of the John MacFarlane videos are now available on the society Youtube channel:

[Nelson's Column & Cnoc Aingeil 'the hill of sacrificial fires'](#)

[Muckairn Church and Graveyard](#)

[Balindore Road Junction-Balindore](#)

Mouth of the Awe to Iron Furnace. ‘Bun Atha’ and ‘Eitag / Loch Èite’

Colin Forsyth asked if we receive any feedback. SEG said that there is some, but it is quite limited. There was some general discussion regarding publicising our social media presence. We discussed the possibility of making recordings of conferences more accessible or failing that. ST noted his thanks.

8. Survey of Scottish Place-Names Report

See convener's report which covered the Survey. There is considerable work in progress and forthcoming volumes on the horizon.

9. Elections

Office bearers are all prepared to continue: SK, ES, ST, PD, SEG, TC *ex officio*

Alan Macniven is stepping down as a committee member. On behalf of the committee ST recorded thanks for all Alan's work for SPNS, both as convener and ordinary committee member.

Morag Redford was on the committee many years ago (25 years?). She is nominated by ST, seconded by BP.

10. AOCB

ES encouraged Newsletter contributors to submit articles in Gaelic or Scots if they wish to do so. Our first ever Scots talk was given by ST at the Spring conference in Montrose last year, with a summary in the Autumn 2024 Newsletter.

ST thanked everyone, especially the committee for all their hard work.

AGM officially closed.

Appendix: office bearers' reports

Convener's Report
(Simon Taylor, acting convener)

At our last AGM in Montrose, when Alan Macniven stood down as convener, there was no one who wanted to take on the role so, as vice-convener, I agreed to do so temporarily until someone else came forward. Unfortunately, no one has, so I'm still here.

The Society continues to flourish. Since our first conference in 1996, and our first AGM in 1997, we have managed to hold 2 conferences every year apart from May 2020 for obvious reasons, although we did manage to hold the AGM, thanks to the digital expertise of our web-manager Simeon Krastev. In November of 2020 we held our first online conference, since when we have kept the November conference online, with only the May conference with AGM in person. At our November conference last year we recorded all the talks and put a time-limited link to them on our website. I would like to thank all the speakers for their willingness to allow us to do this. The time-limited link has now expired but if any member would still like to access a talk, please contact our secretary and social media co-ordinator Sofia Evemalm-Graham.

The committee has discussed whether our Spring conferences might be hybrid, but we have decided that it would be too difficult, given that we are in a different venue every year, some of which may not have the necessary facilities.

Since Covid and the Zoom-age, all our committee meetings have been held on-line, our last in person one having been held in Glasgow in December 2019.

It was mentioned at our last AGM that the next volume of the Survey of Scottish Place-Names was about to be published, namely Place-Names of Berwickshire vol. 1. For various reasons outwith our control it has still not appeared, but we are confident that it will appear within the next two months. This will be the latest volume in the Survey of Scottish Place-Names series, following on from Fife, Bute, Kinross-shire and Clackmannanshire. After Berwickshire there are several volumes in a relatively advanced stage of preparation: Pete Drummond's Place-Names of Lanarkshire vol. 1; the Glasgow University-based Iona Namescape Project's volume on Iona; and Alasdair Whyte's Place-Names of Mull and Ulva vol. 1 (Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon Parish excluding Iona) and Place-Names of Staffa (as part of The Place-Names of Mull and Ulva, vol. 3 (Kilninian & Kilmore Parish).

The Survey of Scottish Place-Names is under the auspices of the Scottish Place-Name Society, its director, Thomas Clancy, being an ex officio member of the committee. The Society has contributed to publication costs of both the Berwickshire and the Lanarkshire volumes.

As you will read in the Newsletter Editor's Report, we are aiming to reduce the length of the summaries of talks given at our conferences. Some of them are becoming so long and detailed that, with a little more work, they would be more suitable for Journal of Scottish Name-Studies as articles, or at least as a Varia item (i.e. a shorter, more focussed piece). The Journal has not appeared since 2022 as articles are not being submitted as frequently as before.

There is very little more for me to report which is not covered in the reports of the other office-bearers. It just remains for me to say a huge thank-you to my fellow-committee members for their hard-work and support throughout the year.

Newsletter Editor's Annual Report (Eilidh Sgaimeal)

Overview

The Autumn 2024 Newsletter was my first newsletter as Editor (in charge). We ended up with too much content for a change, a first for me. This meant we were unable to add everything, and we had to set one article aside for the next newsletter. The Spring 2025 Newsletter a new format for the cover, which included the addition of the "Did you know" teaser. We also had some letters to the editor which is something I'd like to encourage from our members, whether it's a possible solution to a puzzling place-name or just an interesting place-name you found and would like to share.

I am extremely grateful to still have Bill Patterson on board as proofer as his experience and onomastic knowledge is invaluable to me. I'm also grateful to Jake King for additional proofing when needed. We have one puzzling issue which came to light whilst proofing the Autumn issue. When copying text over from Word to the publishing software, special characters altered, which meant all the IPA forms copied over were altered. The jury is out on the cause of this issue, but it does highlight the importance of proofing.

Some changes in the past year include moving the name of the author from the end of each article to the start. This was as a result of member feedback and is hopefully a useful change.

We have in the recent past received some quite lengthy articles for the newsletter, which, although interesting, does quickly eat up the limited space we have. With this in mind we have set a new word count for articles and shorter summaries which is detailed in the newsletter's stylesheet:

- Long articles should be no longer than 1,000 words.
- Short articles and letters should be no longer than 300 words.
- Footnotes and bibliographies should be kept to a minimum.

We would also like to encourage members who might have an idea for a longer article to consider writing something for the Journal of Scottish Name Studies. The last volume of the journal was published three years ago in 2022. There have been no issues since due to a lack of submissions. Any enquiries for submissions should go to the journal's editor Prof. Thomas Clancy, thomas.clancy@glasgow.ac.uk. All submissions are subject to peer-review.

Distribution

Our Spring 2025 newsletter was distributed to 55 members digitally with 238 hard copies posted out twenty copies hand delivered at the SNISBI conference in April. A steady increase of digital copies has seen the number of printed copies fall from 310 to 270 in the past year.

As of the Autumn 2024 issue I took over the mailing of the newsletter from our treasurer, Pete Drummond, which has helped relieve him of some of his duties. This includes purchasing stamps and envelopes and the newsletter being delivered to my home by courier instead of being collected in person from the printer. The latter was one of a few reasons why the Autumn 2024 newsletter was distributed later than planned. The scheduling of the newsletter has therefore been altered slightly to ensure timely distribution in future:

- Newsletter sent to the printer 6-7 weeks prior to the conference
- Newsletter distributed 3-4 weeks prior to the conference

We received the following very positive feedback from one of our digital recipients after the Autumn 2024 newsletter.

“This is really excellent. It makes a world of a difference having hyperlinks in the text to follow through.

I think those (at the Montrose conference) who were reluctant to shift from the dead-tree form to the digital ought to sample the electronic form. I'm sure they'd realise the benefits. And the SPNS would save by not having to rely on the increasingly-expensive, foreign-controlled 'Royal' Mail!”

Web Coordinator’s Report (Simeon Krastev)

The website continues to perform well. Since my last report for the AGM in May 2024, we have had no technical issues, no reported downtime, and no security incidents.

We haven’t had any changes of note either, and my duties have mainly involved maintaining the current structure, adding new content, assisting with the online side of conference organisation, and sending out announcements to the e-mail subscribers.

As always, I am very grateful to Dr Alan G. James, who continues to provide regular updates to *Brittonic Language in the Old North* (BLITON), which is one of our most accessed resources. I would also like to express my thanks to Liz Curtis for her continued support with the Useful Links section of the website, which continues to grow.

The website has unlimited capabilities and I am afraid we haven’t quite utilised all the opportunities it offers in terms of engaging with members and supporters, exchanging information, making useful connections and so on. I am always very keen to hear from members who have any ideas or suggestions on how we can improve the website, and what other features would be of use to our visitors.

We do have some ideas which we are still refining, most of them aiming to make SPNS more modern and accessible. Stay tuned in for more in the coming months.

If you would like to share any comments or suggestions, you can do so via the contact form on the website - <https://spns.org.uk/contact>. Please also show your support by sending the website to anyone you feel might be interested in visiting, and encourage them to subscribe to our e-mail news system via the form found on each page.

Secretary and Social Media Report (Sofia Evemalm-Graham)

After Jane Drummond officially stepped down as minutes secretary in August 2023 I took on the role temporarily. At our last AGM in Montrose, I offered to stand for the role of secretary.

In my role as secretary, I have mainly been responsible for minute-taking at the committee meetings, but I would be open to the possibility of taking on further duties to alleviate some of the burden from Simon Taylor as the convener.

There have been various discussions during committee meetings of the format of the membership list. The responsibility for the list is currently spread across several committee members (Pete Drummond as treasurer, Eilidh Scammell as Newsletter editor, Simeon Krastev as web co-ordinator). In my role as secretary, I would propose that the main responsibility be transferred to the secretary. I would liaise with relevant committee members to try to produce a 'master'-membership document which can be shared with the committee. This could be discussed during the AGM or next committee meeting.

Social media:

In my role as social media co-ordinator, I have created a Youtube channel for the society, available at Scotplacenames.

At the previous AGM I gave an update on the progress of the John MacFarlane videos. These videos were shot between 2021 and 2023 by Ben Thomas Scheschkewitz, a friend and neighbour of John and his wife Val in Taigh an Uillt ~ Taynuilt. This was brought to the society's attention by Alasdair Whyte following John MacFarlane's death and he has contributed research for the videos. The possibility of creating a society Youtube channel to provide a platform for this material was discussed at the AGM last year. Four of the videos have now been uploaded to the SPNS Youtube channel:

[Nelson's Column & Cnoc Aingeil 'the hill of sacrificial fires'](#)
[Muckairn Church and Graveyard](#)
[Balindore Road Junction-Balindore](#)
[Mouth of the Awe to Iron Furnace. 'Bun Atha' and 'Eitag / Loch Èite'](#)

The videos are published with the permission of Ben and Val.

Following the Autumn 2024 online conference, we also added an unlisted playlist¹ with recordings of the conference papers to allow access to society members who were not able to join on the day. Although we originally intended to make these available for a limited time only, it was decided that we will keep them available for members who may still wish to view the papers. Anyone who would like access to these recordings is encouraged to contact me to receive the link.

Twitter/X & Bluesky:

As was reported at the AGM last year, the running of the SPNS social media accounts has mainly focused on maintaining a Twitter/X presence by publicising conferences and other relevant events. The Twitter/X account (@scotplacenames) has 428 followers and the Instagram account (@scotplacenames) has 312 followers. During the committee meeting in December last year it was decided that the society would maintain a presence on Bluesky in addition to Twitter/X. This account is available at @scotplacenames.bsky.social. Eilidh in her role as Newsletter editor has proposed that we use our social media platforms to promote the Newsletter and society more broadly. It was agreed

in the last committee meeting that I will share a limited piece of content from each Newsletter via social media for publicising purposes.

Although the role of secretary and social media co-ordinator are currently two separate roles, if there are no objections, I would propose that for the time being the social media duties be subsumed under the secretary role. This could be reverted in the future if necessary.

END

