



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

2023-4 CONVENER'S REPORT

Introduction

This is my fourth and final report as Convener of the Scottish Place-Name Society. I think it's fair to say that we've come a long way since the start of the decade (!), when I first embarked on that journey. But as I write this missive in the run-up to our third consecutive Spring Conference to be held in person, it is clear that the Society has settled into a productive new rhythm.

Main Activities

May 2023 saw us decamp to the 'contested territory' of Berwick-upon-Tweed for a Spring Conference covering a range of onomastic and contextualising topics from both sides of the border. Thanks are due to Leslie Fraser for liaising with the venue and caterers. If you haven't yet secured yourself a ticket for this year's Spring Conference in Montrose, the last few are available via the Society's website at: <https://spns.org.uk/spns-agm-spring-conference-2024-4th-may-2024-the-links-hotel-montrose>

In November, as has become our new custom, we alternated with an online event, this time in collaboration with the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland. Thanks to Alasdair Whyte for coordinating between the SPNS and SNSBI.

Both events were well-attended, and well-received. In time-honoured tradition, the presentations enjoyed by delegates have also been distilled for a wider audience through the Society's Newsletter, with issues No 55 & 56, appearing on schedule as expected.

As you will see from our Newsletter Editor's Report, there have been some changes in the format of the editorial team, which we will vote to ratify at the AGM. Our (very) long-term editor Bill Patterson, is now stepping back from his frontline editorial role after 21 years to that of Proofing Editor, with Eilidh Scammell taking up the reigns as Overall Editor. Jake King remains as Assistant Editor. I'm sure you'll join me in saying thanks to Bill and congratulations to Eilidh.

The substantial increase in the cost of printing and posting the Newsletter in recent years, has led to our promotion of the new, electronic version. Members who would like to avail themselves of this service are encouraged to get in touch with the editorial team at newsletter@spns.org.uk

It is a sad reality of the current economic climate, however, that if costs are to be met, there will have to be changes to our membership fees, our subscription model, or both. The simplest solution would be an increase to all types of membership fee. An alternative, would be increased fees for members who would like to continue receiving a physical copy of the Newsletter. These issues will be discussed at our AGM, with the favoured solution being implemented by our Treasurer in due course.

There have been a couple of other changes to the Committee. Sadly, our secretary, Jane Drummond, has had to demit office for personal reasons. We are very grateful for the time she gave us, and very fortunate that fellow Committee member Sofia Evemalm-Graham was able to step in to fill the gap.

Pete Drummond, is still holding the fort as Treasurer, now with the help of Alison Grant, who has taken care of our Newsletter mailing. Many thanks to everyone for all their hard work!

Other Projects and Publications

The Society's Outreach programme continues apace, with Outreach Officer, Sofia Evemalm-Graham publicising our events and activities via our social media channels – X, and Instagram. Sofia has also set up a new YouTube account for the Society. While we plan to use it in the first instance to host relevant video materials, it will also give us scope to archive recordings from our conferences and other events.

Publications of note include *Glasgow's Gaelic Place-Names* by Alasdair C. Whyte with Katherine Forsyth and Simon Taylor, available from Birlinn books, which explores the city's 1000 years of Gaelic heritage and the namespaces it has produced, including an A-Z list of Glasgow place-names and their Gaelic origins.

Elections for Committee Posts

As part of the usual cycle of Committee membership: 'Office-bearers and ordinary members of the Committee shall retire annually, and shall be eligible for re-election, up to a maximum of three successive years, unless otherwise recommended by the Committee.'

This applies only in part to our Newsletter Editorial team. As the position of Editor has never been named in the Constitution, changing the familiar role of 'Editor' to 'Overall Editor', supported by the non-office-bearing positions of 'Proofing Editor' and 'Assistant Editor', are presented for your approval, rather than with a view to changing the Society's Constitution.

Having received no new nominations this year, most of the Committee are happy to remain in place

Following Jane Drummond's departure, Sofia Evemalm-Graham has offered to stand as Secretary, with the role being expanded to cover outreach and social media co-ordination.

While Pete Drummond remains Treasurer and *de facto* 'Membership Secretary', he is still keen to step back. This means that there is an opportunity here for a member who would like to get more involved in the running of the Society. There is no need to be based in the central belt to take care of the Treasurer's responsibilities, which also open to reconfiguration. If this is of interest, or if you have further questions, please use the appropriate box on the AGM form to let us know.

Finally, after four years as Convener - a period which has covered the Covid years, our recovery afterwards, and a year beyond the usual term of 36 months - the time has come for me to step down, and make way for a fresh face. Before doing so, I'd like to thank everyone on the Committee for their co-operation and collaboration over the past four years, and to wish my successor the very best of luck.

With very best wishes,

Alan Macniven (SPNS Convener) 23 April 2024