



Annual General Meeting 2016 - 14 May 2016 - Skelmorlie & Wemyss Bay Parish Church

- Minutes -

1) Apologies for Absence received from: Jim MacIntosh, David Mackie, Charles McCrossan, Kevin Cummings, Doulas Hamilton, Colin Chrichton, Fred & Helen Hay, Ruth Reid & David Wilson, Rosemary Gibson, John Bailey, Jean St Clare, Liz Neill, Mary MacDonald, Pat Neeson, Cathy Galbraith, Hamish Kirk, Erika Charlier, Matt & Chris Holywood.

2) Minutes of last year's AGM read and approved: Brian Balmain, Greg Beecroft

3) Committee Report - presented by Simon Dell.

Simon introduced himself as chosen Committee Chairman for the day and opened the meeting by explaining that in a break from previous years, a Committee Report would be presented this year encapsulating the work of all aspects of the committee in the past year. He went on to say that this year has probably been the most challenging one yet since our establishment. Several factors were involved but the closure of the Pier for six months, with increasingly difficult working conditions, had led to the Bookshop and Gallery being shut for three months. Also the committee has had to get used to not having the steady hand of Nancy Cameron at the tiller. It was established early on that no one felt able, or had the time, to take on the Chair's role, so the committee has operated with a rotating chair at meetings. We also lost a couple of key committee members in Joy Stockton & Ian Mowat due to relocation to pastures new. Thanks was given to new member Gregory Beecroft who has become our contact and conduit with external agencies. Thanks also went to Nancy who has continued to progress certain matters for the Friends.

This year the Bookshop Report, from the Manager Sheena Inglis, was incorporated into the Committee Report. Last year (2014-15) income from the bookshop was almost £18,000. This year, it will be just under £13,000. We hadn't realised just how high a proportion of our custom was due to the Bute connection - we now do! It was decided to stay closed after Christmas until work on the pier neared completion. We re-opened on Monday 14th March, the ferries were back on Good Friday, and so were our customers!

There have been a few changes. Bookshop volunteers Ian and Rosemary Mowat have moved to Cardiff, and Pete & Joy Stockton to Cardross. Also one of our founding members, Margaret Cunningham, has retired, but we welcomed new volunteers Rosemary Gibson, Anne Hopkins, Julie Sambucci and Aileen Stanley to our staff rota.

The Gardening Team have not found this year easy. Hardly a week went by that the flower containers or tree tubs stayed in the one place! Working relationships with the contractors were good but inevitably basic maintenance has been the name of the game. However at last the gardeners are once more busy planning their summer displays.

During the winter break the volunteers enjoyed a trip out to visit Kilmarnock Station in November where the Community Trust at Kilmarnock Station have been very active in refurbishing parts of their station

2016 being the year of the Festival of Architecture, our Category "A" listed station is being advertised widely via the festival brochure and website. STV have approached us to have an online feature on the history of the station. We hope to receive more visitors this summer than usual as a consequence.

A couple of developments to enhance the station even more are also in the pipeline, and our Honorary President Nancy Cameron has been very active in taking these forward. We are now proud owners of an original Caledonian Railway bench and Nancy organised its delivery and restoration in Glasgow. We are also in contractual discussions with Angela Hunter, the artist who designed the Gourrock "girl on a suitcase" sculpture, for a companion piece to be commissioned for the station here.

The **Treasurer's Report** was presented by Sheena Inglis on behalf of Treasurer Pat Neeson. In brief the £5,000 drop in Annual Takings was clearly due to the enforced closure and general disruption of ferry services which led to a big reduction in customers. The bank balance stands at £31,699 with expenditure for the year totalling £10,148. Dugald Cameron commented on the very high electricity bill - almost £3k and suggested applying for a reduced tariff. The Financial Report was then agreed - Dugald Cameron, Proposer, Sue Hothersall, Seconder

The meeting continued with **Election of Committee members** and, with no new nominations received, the current Committee was unanimously re-elected en bloc.

Simon finished by thanking his fellow committee members who continue to champion the interests of the Station and the Friends in all the work they do, and introduced the Speaker, Lorna Spencer from Pier renovators CMAL.

The Guest Speaker gave us a most interesting and enlightening overview of the Wemyss Bay Pier Renovations. Many people do not know who is responsible for the Pier, assuming it is Caledonian MacBrayne who operate the ferries. Although most of the information can be found on their website a summary is included here for interest.

She explained that Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) are wholly owned by the Scottish Government and have been fully operational since 2006 when they separated from Caledonian MacBrayne. They own the assets (31 ships, 26 ports) and fulfil project management with a small highly skilled professional team in the areas of long term planning, sourcing funds, continuity and development of the asset base. Focus is on infrastructure NOT operations - these are the responsibility of Cal Mac.

Explaining the need for refurbishment she told us that the Grade A listed walkway, originally constructed in 1903 was in a very poor state. The concrete pier roundhead, constructed in the 1970s, was also in need of replacement due to the increased frequency of repairs and the risk of major failure. The Linkspan had had to be load-restricted to 44 tonnes with potential further restrictions due to corrosion.

She outlined the many challenges during the project, mainly that the terminal building works were to progress along with pier works. Additional repairs were identified as work progressed and alternative solutions had to be found for dealing with bird control. Also the very wet summer disrupted the progress of external painting. This all led to works taking around 3 months longer than initially planned.

The main challenges involved the actual Pier including whether to keep the terminal open - which meant work would take over a year, or to close it. The decision was taken to close the terminal and operate from Gourrock, offering more certainty regarding the service provided. The initial start date (March 15) was postponed till Oct 15 due to technical problems with the fendering which pushed the working window from Spring/Summer to Autumn/Winter. Then a decision was taken to reconstruct a new concrete roundhead, rather than repair the old.

There were two aspects which could have gone better: The method of encapsulating the linkspan was not wholly suited to winter working. The extent of the linkspan repairs was not fully understood until stripped down at Inchgreen, both of which created delays. In addition an engine room fire on the dredging vessel delayed work.

However overall the project went extremely well. Works were completed within budget (circa £7m total). Building works were completed with minimal impact on the operation of the terminal. Ferry services recommenced on time. Feedback from vessels is that new fender system works well and offers greater berthing flexibility.

In conclusion Ms Spencer said that although the Project had been challenging on a number of fronts, ultimately, CMAL delivered what they set out to do. Stakeholder feedback was positive, even with closure of terminal.

What they have accomplished will secure future of the ferry terminal for years to come.

On that positive note the meeting was closed, Gregory Beecroft offered a vote of thanks on behalf of all present and those present enjoyed the customary refreshments.