

SAFHS Council Meeting - Report by Bruce Bishop, SAFHS Deputy Chairman

With input by MBGRG Delegates, Keith & Helen Mitchell

The meeting was held at the Gillis Centre, Edinburgh on Saturday 25th October and began punctually at 1.30 p.m. In addition to the five members of the SAFHS Executive and Andrew Campbell, the Minute Secretary, there were 22 representatives of member societies present at the Council Meeting on a very wet and stormy day. The tree branches were blowing about with great gusto and there were some fears about damage to parked cars outside.

Prior to the meeting proper, lunch was served in the canteen and it was certainly a useful meeting point for delegates. Keith and Helen were in discussion with the Delegate from the Buchan History Society of Buchan who expressed some interest in the way we do things in Moray. It was agreed that an exchange of information might benefit to both Groups.

The Minutes of the Council Meeting of 15th March 2008 were approved.

The new SAFHS Leaflet outlined the expectations of SAFHS regarding the planning of a Conference, and also gave some guidance to societies planning to organise such a Conference. This was distributed and met with general approval. The question of signing for the deaf at the Conference was raised again, but the experience of the Inverness Conference had shown that the costs of providing this service could be prohibitive. It was suggested that transcripts of the talks could be made available if required, and also that mention of the lack of signing facilities should be mentioned on the booking form for Conferences.

The organisers of the last Conference at Motherwell were congratulated on their excellent organisation and on their choice of speakers. The 2010 Conference, scheduled for 17th April, and hosted by West Lothian FHS, will be held at the Howden Park Centre in Livingston. The SGS commented on their difficulty in finding a city-centre venue for the 2011 Edinburgh SAFHS Conference, and Tay Valley FHS made a tentative offer to host the 2012 event. The Minutes of the Executive Council Meeting of 16th August 2008 were approved, and Andrew Nicoll was approved by Council as the Assessor for the SAFHS Accounts.

The Secretary reported that he had received very few communications since the last meeting, and in his role as Acting Treasurer he informed the Council that SAFHS currently had a balance of £1893.11 in the bank. The number of Scottish members of SAFHS now stood at 30 and there were 8 Overseas Associate Members. Representatives were asked to consider possible candidates for the vacant post of Treasurer, and were to contact the Secretary with suggestions as soon as possible.

A formal resignation of his post as Patron had been received from the outgoing Lord Lyon King of Arms, Robin Blair, and the incoming Lord Lyon, David Sellar, was to be invited to become the new Patron. Following the resignation of Peter Ruthven-Murray as President, it was decided to invite Mr George McKenzie, Keeper of the Records of Scotland, to become the new President. It was agreed that a change to the SAFHS Constitution would be proposed to allow the Publications Manager, presently Margaret Mackay, to become a member of the Executive Council of SAFHS.

The Secretary and Deputy Chairman commented on matters relating to GRO(S). There has still been no formal decision on a date for the full opening of the new ScotlandsPeople centre, but there were suggestions that this could take place in late November or in December. The two hour free 'taster sessions' had been open to misuse since their introduction, but this would be tightened up once the centre was fully operational. The 1881 Census images were expected to be available by the end of November, and the OPR Death Indexes by about Christmas.

Some societies had been approached by GRO(S) regarding the licensing of their CDs, especially MIs, for use on the system in GRO(S). It was considered by the Council that this was a matter for individual negotiations with Helen Borthwick, the Librarian there, but that the licence fee paid by GRO(S) must relate to any possible loss of income by societies due to a reduction in the retail sales of such CDs. The Executive were requested to

take this matter to their next meeting and consider whether SAFHS should take up the question of licensing on behalf of member societies.

The voucher system was reported to be providing a valuable service, and the secretary requested feedback from member societies on this pilot project as soon as possible. *(please see below).

The matter of insurance provision by SAFHAS was raised again. Due to recent changes in the regulations, SAFHS is now unable to act as an insurance broker, and it was considered that it would be uneconomic to all parties for SAFHS to continue to offer any sort of insurance facilities to member societies.

The lack of activity on the website over the last year was raised by the council, although it did appear that the Webmaster had made some changes during the week previous to the council meeting. The Webmaster stated that he was unable to do anything with the site for two reasons, firstly due to its original construction and secondly the fact that societies were not sending him information to add to it. The representatives commented that the reason he was not being sent information was that most member societies had felt that as the website was not being maintained it would have been a pointless exercise. It was also pointed out that our Group had attempted to communicate with the SAFHS Webmaster, via the website, but had received no response. The Webmaster was given a period of one month by the Council to make changes to the site, after which matters would be reviewed by the SAFHS Executive.

The Graveyard Working Group reported that the publication of the final searchable version of the 'Inventory of Scottish Graveyards' had been delayed by about a month due to problems with the encryption process, but that the CD would be available before Christmas. The Projects Working Group, having produced the SAFHS Conference Leaflet, reported on planned publications, and sought guidance from the floor regarding future projects.

The matter of copyright was raised by at least one of the representatives. It was agreed that the SAFHS Executive would consider this very complex area more fully at their next meeting and report back at the next Council Meeting.

The date of the AGM and Council Meeting was set as 4th April 2009 at 1.30 pm (note change of date), and a new venue was to be considered.

[The new venue has, since the Council Meeting, been confirmed as the Boardroom, Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel, Haddington Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh. There are no arrangements for lunch, but the venue has a café-bar which is open all day and there are numerous eating places nearby].

** For the benefit of MBGRG members, the Voucher Scheme relates to the following.*

GRO(S) ScotlandsPeople Voucher Scheme

In 2006 it was agreed that SAFHS would operate a Pilot Project during 2007/8 for the sale of GRO(S) ScotlandsPeople vouchers at a reduced rate to Family History Societies and other groups who are members of SAFHS. The scheme was aimed primarily, but not exclusively, at those societies having retail premises at which their members can access the ScotlandsPeople website.

Individual members of such societies are able to purchase the £6 vouchers at the reduced rate of £4.80, and can then use them either in Family History Society premises or on their own home computers.

Member Societies of SAFHS can purchase these vouchers in various quantities (minimum order 20) to re-sell to their members, but apart from a small 'administrative charge' they are not permitted to make a profit on the sale of such vouchers.

The success or otherwise of the Pilot Project will be reviewed at the end of 2008, but in general it seems to have been well-received by all parties concerned.