Convenors report August 2020

When I agreed to become Convenor in January 2020 I little thought that our well-planned season of talks and events would be in tatters by the end of March.

There had been a very successful programme of events and talks in 2019. It was an eclectic mix and the success of The Tumbling Lassie, Donald Findlay’s talk and Carols at Innerpeffray in particular raised not just significant funds for the Library but also awareness of Innerpeffray to a wider audience many of whom had travelled from all parts of Scotland, and further afield, to attend.

As a result of these successes we were delighted on 31st December 2019 to be able to transfer the sum of £6,250.00 to the Governors. One of my main aims on becoming Convenor of FOIL was that we should continue to build bridges with the Governors. It seemed to me there were three groups working for the Library; The Governors, the Volunteers and FOIL all with a common purpose but no common strategy. In February John Mauchline and I met with Jim Grant and Bellsie Connell to discuss how the money donated by FOILcould be put to best use and how we could all work together. Back in 2018 The report of the FOIL committee had said ‘*Our current challenge is with regard to the website and its maintenance’* at the meeting in February 2020 that challenge was overcome when it was agreed that FOIL would have a link on the new Library website which was to be launched in April 2020. The first step towards a common strategy was in place.

The new website has been a communication lifeline for the Library and FOIL throughout lockdown. It is appropriate at this point that I thank Dr. Jim Grant for his support of FOIL and his agreement that we move forward with one website rather than maintaining the two, rather confusing , options previously available to supporters of Innerpeffray. I must also thank Peter Parke for his work on the website on behalf of FOIL both in the past and since the launch in April. Peter is a stalwart supporter of the Library, his quiet efficiency and good grace are hugely appreciated by FOIL. I am delighted that he has agreed to join the Trustees as his expertise and interest in the Library will be of great value to them.

For twenty-six years the Friends of Innerpeffray Library have provided financial support and practical help for the benefit of the Library. As 2020 unravelled it became very apparent that the FOIL programme for the year was not going to happen. While subscriptions provide FOIL with approximately half its income the other half of FOIL income comes mainly from the entry fees to meetings and special events. The Library has also had a huge drop in income with no visits for four months.

With all of this in mind the Governors decided that a direct appeal for support would be appropriate, with FOIL playing a central part. They also felt it was a further opportunity for them to work closely with FOIL in identifying those who we know have the best interests of the library at heart.

Under the auspices of a sub-committee led by Bellsie Connell and comprising Trustees and members of the FOIL committee The Appeal was launched at the end of July. To date the response has been excellent we are most grateful to all who have contributed.

A joint sub-committee will plan for and co-ordinate events post Covid for FOIL and The Governors; the FOIL programme has been rearranged and will hopefully launch in April 2021, the Three Inch Fools will return in July 2021, we hope to return to the Schoolhouse but just as other events such as the Carols and the Innerpeffray lecture are subject to government rulings in the autumn of 2020 we must be prepared to ‘think out of the box’ in 2021. My thanks go to the Governors of the Mortification of Innerpeffray for their support of FOIL in 2020 and in particular to Bellsie Connell whose energy, enthusiasm and vision for the Library is encouraging and exciting.

I am most grateful to my committee who have been incredibly supportive since I took over as Convenor. We have held several meetings on Zoom and I am delighted to report that the membership data base has been reviewed and, although not perfect, is certainly more accurate and user friendly. Iain Gilmour has taken on the specific role of membership secretary and a system will evolve which will remind members of how to pay and when to renew. The Friends area of the website provides us with a direct communication link (Friends@innerpeffraylibrary.co.uk) and a much easier way to pay online. My thanks to Iain and Kirsty Macdonald, the new Hon. Secretary, for their work with the membership lists.

All Committee members have undertaken a specific role and while some of these are on ‘unpaid furlough’ at present I hope that 2021 will see us back to some sort of normality. Thank you to Alison, Charles, Gillian, Iain, Kirsty, Pamela and Shona. In particular I want to express my thanks to John Mauchline who not only looks after the finances, on many occasions he also provides a balanced view, a voice of reason and a sounding board for some of the Convenor’s more outlandish ideas!

Lara Haggerty, the Keeper of Books at Innerpeffray, has played an enormous part in keeping the Library alive since lockdown in March. She has embraced change, worked tirelessly to keep the website relevant, filled in endless forms and worked her way through all the red tape involved in the reopening of the Library. FOIL is indebted to Lara for her help, patience and good humour.

Finally a huge thanks to all members of FOIL for your continued support of the Library.

Joan Taylor

August 2020