**14th Annual Report of the Trustees for the year ending October 31st 2020**



**Our *best laid schemes* for the 275th Commemorations *gang agley*** but, good to report, that *didn'e lea'e us nought but grief an' pain!* We’ve seen alternative *promis’d joy*! We adapted and thrived, resorting comprehensively to digital media with webinars and live streamed eventing from the nationwide lockdown on March 23rd to year end at October 31st adding tens of thousands more digital visits to the hundreds of thousands annually already over the past decade at our battlefield and tapestries’ websites and APPs. We resolved as soon as the realities of lockdown became apparent to heighten further our appreciation of the opportunities digital facilities offered and to utilise them as much as we could manage, learning as we went. We’ve worked with IT faculty and graduates from Edinburgh College to upgrade all our website services. We resolved that whilst some face-to-face elements could be rescheduled into 2021 a 275th Anniversary and 300th Birthday come only once and they would be honoured timeously to the best of our ability.

**We had begun the year** with the most ambitious face-to-face programme we had ever contemplated since our foundation in 2006. We had a budget of £200,000 in place to invest as the highly visible backdrop to the launch of our final drive to create our Living History Centre on the Riggonhead Defile at Blindwells with Hargreaves and East Lothian Council [ELC] support. Our own Restricted Funds combined with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund [NLHF], Bòrd na Gàidhlig and EventScotland’s Clans & Historic Figures Fund enabled us to invite fresh and honour past cultural contributions, tour our tapestries nationwide, welcome families and Clans to the community for the Commemoration weekend, present a concert at Prestongrange Church, mount a three month exhibition at the John Gray Centre, host a Symposium of Jacobite authors and historians, commemorate the sinking of HMS Fox and celebrate The Prince’s 300th birthday in fine style.

**We end the year** **with none of this face-to-face programme yet delivered** *an’ forward tho’ we canna see* much of it is presently rescheduled for presentation in 2021. That welcome prospect is possible because our total planning horizon had always been to end 2021 and we received additional ‘emergency’ support during the year from both the NLHF and via ELC. That horizon now also encompasses a spectacular September re-enactment led by our own Alan Breck Regiment in partnership with the Scottish Battlefields Trust. We cannot yet know whether our face-to-face programme will be straightforwardly delivered or call for yet more creative invention and development in pursuit of our Objects if *we art no thy-lane in proving foresight may be vain!*

**Our enhanced digital programme** across the year was able to build on firm foundations. We have made continuous use since our establishment of website services, consistently building archives and deploying social media. We had pioneered the use of multilanguage QR tag driven APPs for our tapestries as they toured and created the animated multilingual DVD of The Prestonpans Tapestry in Bayeux. Our NLHF sponsored External Audit in 2018/ 2019 had led to the creation of our *Path to Victory* website which metamorphosed to [www.prestonpans275.org](http://www.prestonpans275.org) as the go-to reference point. Our Facebook pages both streamed and continually offered our existing digital files and our archives enabled weekly *Jacobits*. A successful series of webinar *Lectures*/ Powerpoint presentations was created and is now to continue as a regular feature embracing our increasing attention to the broadest recounting of the Jacobite Cause. The particular commemorative weekend saw streaming of a film recorded *Beneath the Thorntree* drawing on the originally planned concert for Prestongrange Church, daylong live streaming of an excellent programme from *The Prince’s Pavilion* supported by the Alan Brecks and Charles Edward Stuart Society from Derbyand finally of *Wreath laying at the Memorials to the Highland Clans and British Army Regiments* that fought in 1745 standing on the 1722 Waggonway at the heart of the battlefield.

**But ……** we have learnt a very important lesson during this extraordinary ‘digital year’ – whilst we have gladly and diligently augmented the scope for continuing use of digital communications in pursuit of our Objects the thirst and appetite for face-to-face engagement has been heightened and our ambition both to create our Living History Centre and to protect and interpret our battlefield has been greatly reinforced. Visitors at our websites and all we Trustees have realised just what we have not got, what we are missing, when our only experiences are perforce digital.

**Not surprisingly therefore we’ve been keeping careful watch on the battlefield itself** throughout the year as its second harvest of brussels sprouts is being gathered in. We received no further invitation from ELC to tender for its cultivation but remain committed for the future as opportunity presents. During the year a new and unexpected threat to the battlefield emerged on the site of initial military contact to the east of the Tranent/ Cockenzie road. Inspired by Hargreaves plans at Blindwells to create The Prince’s Loch ELC’s planners have developed bold proposals northwards to create a water park for the community right atop the battle site. Whilst we are strong believers that battlefields in urban areas can and should preferably act as green lungs for the community we will never be able to accept such a proposal and lobbied to seek its location somewhere less intrusive preferably to the east.

**The Jacobite Trail:** Our campaign to partner across Scotland and then into Ireland, England, Brittany/ France and Italy to create a Jacobite Trail saw a successful and supportive Colloquium in Edinburgh last November led by Herbert Coutts and Dr Michael Taylor. The initial plan is to create a website facility carrying links to one another identifying each partner’s Jacobite specifics and to regularly share such partners’ events as widely as possible. Discussions are to begin shortly with VisitScotland and links to the Trust’s website will be embedded.

**Launching our Appeal for capex funding:** During the year Hargreaves agreed to a formal ‘first refusal’ for the Trust on the land to the NW corner that overlooks the battlefield at the edge of The Prince’s Loch where we propose to build the new Centre. This has enabled detailed specifications to be shared with ELC and in the coming months artist’s visuals will be prepared as the launch of the Appeal goes public. Our ambition is to raise the capex for the new Centre and its furnishing together with an Endowment Fund by 2026. The NLHF Emergency Grant recognised that the pandemic was causing some delays in moving this forward and missing the impact of the 275th Commemorations and has given support for the details to be finalised by end 2020. We have of course considered the relative merit of delaying our Appeal until the nation’s future is much clearer but have resolved it is best to keep pace with the housing and town centre developments already in train for Blindwells within which we expect our Centre to play a significant role in giving the exciting new community a true sense of place.

**Planning for 2020-2027 – our Interregnum:** Our plans for the Centre envisage a five year cycle from 2022/ 2027 which we had named our ‘Interregnum’. During those years we are committed to [i] raise the funds required to build and equip the Centre; [ii] sustain high visibility public momentum with a programme of engagements and activities across our own community including educational visits; and [iii] develop the programmes for Years 1-3 after the Centre opens. The leases we took from ELC over the past decade to restore the Bankton Doocot and Gardiner Obelisk and then create the Memorial Tables have worked effectively and we confidently expect to assume greater responsibility during the Interregnum for imaginative restoration of community assets.

**Support from Sessional Staff and Volunteers:**  The Trust has continued its staffing policies working with extremely knowledgeable and talented sessional staff and volunteers led by Dr Arran Johnston and Sharon Beck. That team very much includes all members of the Alan Breck Regiment and the publicans and staff at our HQ and micro museum in The Prestoungrange Gothenburg. It is they who have carried forward the commitments made along our *Path to Victory* that was the outcome of our NLHF sponsored External Audit. It is they who have ensured we not only honour but also brave the restrictions of the pandemic and learn as much as we can from the deep immersion in digital interpretation and sharing of the history of the battle fought here in Prestonpans in 1745.

The Trustees have met as was occasionally possible and maintained the fullest contact throughout the year including ZOOM sessions and we were delighted to welcome as a new Trustee John Home-Robertson, former MP and MSP for East Lothian and a consistent supporter of community engagement across the county. His wisdom as we move forward with our Living History Centre and with government interaction has already been shown to be an added strength for our governance.



**S Porter**

**Secretary to the Trustees**