

## **Inverness Civic Trust Calendar of Events, Meetings & Speakers for 2014-15**

### **The 2014-2015 Program.**

#### **Meeting that took place on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014.**

#### **The Earl of Moray and Andrew Howard. Tornagrain and the New Towns.**



L-R: John Stuart The Earl of Moray, Andrew Howard and ICT members Susan Mathieson and John West.

We are very pleased to welcome the Earl of Moray and his aide de camp, Andrew Howard to address the meeting on his plans and visions for his new development at Tornagrain. Many will be aware that the antecedents of the present Earl were responsible for some of the most dramatic developments in Edinburgh's New Town, displaying a foresight and imagination which stand as testament to him to this day. Some members will recall the Earl showed us round Darnaway Castle some two or three years ago and his knowledge of history and his families' impact on Scottish history was astonishing, as it was delightful. He was a spectacular host, a great speaker and a man with foresight and knowledge of his families influence on architectural and political developments throughout Scottish history. If you miss this meeting, you will have denied yourself a memorable experience.

#### **16<sup>th</sup> October 2014.**

**It's a bit early for fireworks but this evening there was a 'Common Good Fund Debate'. Topic being is the current governance of Inverness Common Good acceptable? Supporting the affirmative was Richard Laird and David Henderson and for the negative, yours truly John West.**

As most members were/are aware I am very concerned at the erosion of the Common Good, both from the point of view of the uses to which it has been used and the filching of its assets by those charged with its governance. I did express my reservations recently and both Richard and David challenged my interpretation of events and the governance of the Fund. I believe that Inverness is very unusual in having a significant Common Good Fund, but I do fear for its future, mainly as the result of political developments and the governance of the fund passing from Inverness to the wider Highland Region. Richard and David will have equally and strongly held

beliefs that the Fund remains in good hands. I look forward to debating and discussing this question with them.

### **13th November 2014.**

Click here [\*\*INVERNESS CIVIC TRUST MINUTES 13th NOVEMBER 2014\*\*](#) for a copy of the minutes of the Committee Meeting that was held on 13th November 2014.

### **20<sup>th</sup> November 2014.**

#### **John Addison.**

John is a conservation structural engineer, who has worked on buildings throughout Scotland for the National Trust and Historic Scotland. He has been instrumental in the conservation of many castles including Dalcross and Brodie. John is not only very knowledgeable and experienced but he is an excellent speaker, in addition to which he is a friend of James Maxwell, with whom he has worked on many occasions. His experiences and his oversight of preservation matter provided a fascinating evening.

### **18<sup>th</sup> December 2014.**

#### **Architectural Students spoke about their submissions to the recent Architectural competition run by Inverness Courier.**

Some may have seen the exhibition in the Eastgate Centre, where architectural students from UHI was asked by the Courier to submit designs for areas of Inverness they felt in need of renewal. They were asked to be imaginative but not unrealistic. The results were stunning, with not all of the designs appealing to everyone, but I feel that most people will feel an empathy with at least one of the designs and they were meant to be the basis of discussion and debate. They agreed to come along, which is a testament to them as they are between 20 and 22 and the prospect of addressing a meeting must be daunting. Their lecturer, Ross Cairns, is very anxious and keen that the students interface with the community, exchange ideas and philosophies and become involved with like-minded people. I feel that this is a tremendous opportunity for the Trust who welcomed 20 young, committed people. I would hope that some, if not all, may become members of the Trust and subsequently bring along their friends. It has long been an ambition to inject youth into the Trust but young people coming along singly can feel a little intimidated. This was an opportunity to welcome a larger number, who will hopefully feel more relaxed in the company of their peer. Members join me in giving them the very warmest of welcomes and encourage them to join us soon. This was one of the best evenings of the ICT so-far this year!

### **15<sup>th</sup> January 2015.**

#### **Planning Procedures and Principles by Malcolm MacLeod.**

Planning is central to many of the things which are of interest to the Trust and the complexities of the planning procedures can be frustrating and impenetrable. The purpose of meeting with Malcolm and Thomas is to elicit a layman guide to planning and to share some of the frustrations which they also experience. They are governed by regulations which they possibly not agree with, and remaining within guidelines can sometimes alienate them from the general public. Malcolm is charged with implementing Council policy whilst Thomas is influential in formulating those policies.

Come, listen, let off steam, clarify and emerge wiser. Let us give these guys credit for raising their heads above the parapet.

**19<sup>th</sup> February 2015. NOTE VENUE CHANGE – Inverness Town House 7:30pm Sharp.**

**Andy Wightman!!!!!!!!!!**

The February meeting is different for several reasons, firstly as we will be at the Town House, to allow more people to the meeting and secondly it is appropriate that the meeting is held in a venue associated with democracy, both national and local. This is significant as the speaker is Andy Wightman, who some may have heard at previous Trust meetings, or elsewhere. Andy is a radical thinker and campaigner, without being political in the party political sense. Andy is always worth an evening of anyone's time, but on this occasion his presence is particularly welcome. The subjects he will discuss are the Scottish Common Good and the proposed Land Reform in Scotland. Andy is respected by all as an expert on both of these subjects and is listened to by the Scottish Government. I think that it is no exaggeration to say that some of the ideas and principles enshrined in the proposed legislation reflect Andy's influence. Often you have people who are passionate, sometimes people who are expert in their field and on other occasions people who have vision. Rarely do you have someone who encompasses all three virtues.

Before I give him the accolade of 'walking on water', Andy's background is as a son on the soil, having been a gamekeeper who became interested in the fundamentals of land ownership and governance. He pursued these interests to become Scotland's acknowledged authority on the Common Good and the changes needed to effect a more equitable distribution of land assets in Scotland. Andy is radical but pragmatic, accepting the practicalities of Scotland geographical and economic situation. This will be no left wing blast, full of political rhetoric, but an impassioned plea for a new and challenging revision of our nation's future.

The practicalities of the situation force us to impose a, one off, discipline in regard to this meeting. The Town House can take a maximum of 110 people and the demand will far exceed our ability to accommodate all those wishing to attend, as we intend to open the meeting to other organisations and possibly individuals. Trust members have absolute priority but on this occasion we would ask that you advise Fiona, within the next seven days, of your wish to attend. This will then let us to know how many other people we can accommodate. We will be delighted to see you, but please ensure that you are free before booking a place, as a no show will deprive someone of the opportunity to attend. Here endeth the lesson.

Andy's visit chimes with a movement which is gaining momentum, that of examining and challenging the democratic principles by which we all wish to live. Leaving aside the main purpose of the Referendum, the debate about governance has spread from national to local democracy. Groups are appearing, dedicated to seeking a new system where democracy is taken back by the people in a more direct way than is currently being exercised. The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy has made proposals for fundamental changes in Local Government, with the conclusion that the Wheatly Commission, which led to the development of huge local authority areas, was fundamentally wrong, leading to the separation of the people from the administration of their communities. The Trust has adopted the principles of the Commission's report and will campaign for their further discussion and implementation. If the main recommendations of the Commission report were implemented, this would mean the break up of the Highland Region as we know it and the establishment of more local councils, meaning the re-introduction of an independently elected Inverness Council, to administer those matters

relating to Inverness. There may still be a place for an overriding administration for those matters common to all communities, but with their agreement.

Another development is the growing influence of the Common Weal, a movement which recognises in their principles the many shortcomings in our present system and lays out a series of principles, to which, I suspect, many people would concur. This movement has thrived on the disillusionment amongst the populace in regard to the apparent dismissal of their opinions or representations. It is a broad Church and only time will tell if they are able to formulate a common policy acceptable to all, or the majority, of their members. Their very existence, however, underlines the dissatisfaction with the present system. Both the Commission's report and details of the Common Weal can be obtained by Google-ing these names. The reason for mentioning these matters, is that Andy is a figurehead in the challenge to the status quo, not a rabid, ill-thought out approach, but one based upon the pragmatic needs of Scotland going forward. You will not agree with all that Andy advocates but he is genuinely interested in the views of the people he meets and his opinions are highly influenced by such views, as well as his own experiences. A commercial .... stop reading now if you already have one! ....

To the great relief of many I shall be standing down as Chairman in April, but before you think it's safe to buy the Courier again, it is my intention, bearing in mind the matters mentioned above, to set up an organisation 'Democracy Highland'. This would be designed to engage with the general movement previously mentioned but have a specific remit for the Highland area. We are a unique area, with unique advantages and some unique problems. There is a widespread acknowledgement that the Highland Council area is too diverse for the present system to implement effectively any true democratic mandate. My pre-occupation with Option 6 is a good example, where we are dealing with the symptom, not the disease. If we had a true democratic system locally, Option 6 would have been discounted a long time ago as it has no meaningful support in the community and a widespread opposition to the side effects of the savage medicine prescribed by the Council to relieve a manageable problem. I would be interested in the response to such an initiative, as my ego and time are not sufficiently big or long enough to go into a Don Quixote campaign without some empathic support. Sorry for the length of this epistle ... but it was either that ... or doing the Hoovering!

Please note that we will be asking for voluntary donations on the evening to help fund the cost of this event. Thank you in anticipation.

Andy Wightman's website – <http://www.andywightman.com>

John West

Chairman

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2015.**

**David Worthington. The history of Scotland and the Baltic.**

David was one of my tutors in History at UHI and has now followed James Hunter as Head of History. One of David's passions is that element of Scottish history relating to the Baltic. For the vast majority of Scottish history, Scotland's culture and trade were closely allied to the Baltic countries, resulting in all the main Scottish ports being on the east coast, including Inverness. It was only after the joining of the parliaments and the Clearances that the Highlands started to look West. David brings to life and loves of those Scots who pioneered East. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, for

instance, there were 35,000 Scotsmen in the Swedish army and the army was commanded by a Scotsman, A Scotsman founded the Russian navy and there was so much emigration from Scotland to Poland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that an Polish equivalent to UKIP was formed and the crown were forced to clamp down on immigration from Scotland. The immigrants were mainly pedlars but some Scotsmen were rich traders and on two occasions Scotsmen became Mayors of Warsaw. Come and listen to an aspect of our history which is not always appreciated ... you could have a Polish great grandmother!

**16<sup>th</sup> April 2015.**

**AGM & Speaker.**

The AGM will follow our guest speaker, with the election of the new Chairman and committee. He are hoping for a large turnout please.

Inverness Civic