

Grosvenor & Lansdowne Crescents Proprietors
Notes from the Questions and Answers Meeting
held in the Palmerston Place Church on
Wednesday 26 March 2025.

The meeting was attended by the following Proprietors

- Nancy/Braid, [REDACTED]
- Sonny / Emilia Dudas, [REDACTED]
- Barbara Ross, [REDACTED]
- Alison, Lady Sinclair-Ford, [REDACTED]
- Anthony Leftwich, [REDACTED]
- Steven Canny / Orla O' Loughlin [REDACTED]
- Paul Jenkins and Catherine Ilett, [REDACTED]
- Richard / Nicola Spalding, [REDACTED]
- Stuart McKenzie, [REDACTED]
- Susan Ireland and Ivan Broussine, [REDACTED]
- Angus and Ann Tod, [REDACTED]
- Iain Cameron & Prof Sarah Henderson. [REDACTED]
- Susie Gibbs, [REDACTED], on behalf of her husband the Rev John Conway , a senior official acting for the Scottish Episcopal Church
- Scott McKenzie / Frances Auburn, [REDACTED]
- Anne Norman, [REDACTED]
- Ross / Linda Robertson, [REDACTED]
- Susanna McGrath, [REDACTED]
- Michael / Georgina Ritchie, [REDACTED]
- Mrs R Birdsall, [REDACTED]

Scott McKenzie acted as Facilitator and the meeting was also attended by Evan Canny, acting as microphone-carrier and Gordon M Wyllie, the Secretary to the Committee and a former Proprietor.

WELCOME

Mr McKenzie as Facilitator welcomed everyone to the meeting, whose purpose was to explore a number of issues which had arisen, and to give people an opportunity of exchanging information concerning the management of the central garden lying between the Crescents. He obtained general consent to the discussions being recorded, and called for any views expressed to be treated with respect.

INTRODUCTIONS

At Mr McKenzie's invitation, Mr Tod introduced himself as Chairman-Designate of the Committee following upon Mr Ken Murray's recent resignation, and explained his professional background, as did the other attending Committee members in turn - Mr Tod's career has included being a law graduate of the University of Cambridge and a senior Director of the Brewin Dolphin firm of wealth managers and financial advisers :-

Stuart McKenzie, from Lansdowne Crescent, a retiree from the Royal Bank of Scotland, with IT experience and the President of the Edinburgh Allotment-Holders Federation

Richard Spalding, from Grosvenor Crescent, a retired engineer

Gordon Wyllie, a Writer to the Signet, a former resident of Grosvenor Crescent and experienced lawyer.

The Committee Treasurer had been unable to attend, and had sent apologies - he is a company director with a background in finance, regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

Apologies had also been tendered on behalf of the following Committee members who had been unable to attend:-

Leonora McAndrew, a retired physician, from Lansdowne Crescent

Millicent Masters, a retired university scientist, from Grosvenor Crescent, and

Magdalena Murray, a computer specialist and research scientist , from Grosvenor Crescent.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Mr McKenzie reiterated that a purpose of the meeting was to explore how things are done and receive suggestions as to how they might be done better in future,

So saying, he invited Mr Tod to address the meeting, and said that he had received a number of questions which would be addressed later in the proceedings

CONDUCT OF AFFAIRS

Mr Tod commenced by explaining how the Covid-19 lockdowns had made it illegal to hold large gatherings until the end of 2023

and apologised on behalf of the Committee for not having taken advantage of these changed conditions to call a General Meeting in 2024. He also apologised for the mistake which had been made in calling Mr Spalding to the Committee and chair its proceedings without proper induction and explanations regarding the conduct of business. Mr Spalding had held that position for seven weeks, at the end of which period the other members of the Committee had found it necessary to temporarily recall Ken Murray to replace him.

Mr Tod hoped that this evening's meeting would help to clear up a number of misunderstandings, and went on to explain how the Committee conducts its affairs and responsibilities in enabling the Proprietors to act as responsible trustees for one of

Edinburgh's historic cultural assets. That included an acceptance by the Crescents' Proprietors that the conduct expected in the garden was that of someone enjoying the privileges of a guest in someone else's garden, not acting as if it were an individual's own property.

A number of people seemed to misunderstand the position. and a number of hurtful and inaccurate comments had been made using WhatsApp. This was very regrettable and he hoped it would now cease.

On the topic of Finance, Mr Tod explained that Mr Meade is currently working on the annual Statement of Accounts to 31 March and that apart from a number of serial non-payers good progress had been made in collecting outstanding Assessments. The financial results were expected to be laid before the Committee at their next meeting on 12 April (subsequently altered to Friday 25 April) , after which they would be circulated with a letter from the Chairman in the usual way.

It was intended to hold the next General Meeting of the Proprietors on 4 June (to which everyone would be invited) and there would be an opportunity of asking further questions.

COMMUNICATIONS

Stuart McKenzie as master of the media invited everyone who had not yet consulted the new website to do so now. He referred briefly to the wealth of material it contains, and its role as a provider and disseminator of information.

Some people had experienced difficulties in accessing material sent by e-mail. As Stuart McKenzie had been able to monitor the situation and confirm that material had reached the correct destinations, he advised anyone experiencing difficulties to check their "spam" or equivalent receipts. The dispatch of relevant e-mail had always proved to be successful, including the material dealing with the recent polls of Proprietors.

Regarding the programme of work being undertaken in the garden, the chief priority areas had already been addressed, following the walks around the garden with consultants in the closing days of 2023. Details are available on the website.

The next areas to receive attention include the following:-

- enhanced planting at the east end of the garden
- repainting the garden hut, itself a listed building, and repairing its roof
- refurbishing the wooden path-liners
- cutting back the excessive growth of snowberries and cotoneasters, which could be a task for volunteers
- enhancing the area surrounding the south-west gate
- creating compost from suitable material, in which connection the dump areas beneath holly trees had already been employed. In that connection, he explained that the garden contractor had altered the way in which the grass is mown, so that cuttings are left to desiccate and dissolve upon the ground instead of being collected.

A periodic Newsletter is in preparation, in which a variety of useful information could be contained, including Minutes.

After thanking Stuart McKenzie for his presentation, Scott McKenzie invited Gordon Wyllie to speak next.

THE DECISION-MAKING PRINCIPLES

The Proprietors of the houses in the Crescents are custodiers of a garden which forms an important part of Edinburgh's cultural history. Gordon Wyllie explained the background principles of the decisions taken by the Committee in managing the garden.

QUESTIONS

Scott McKenzie called for questions, and a number of points arose.

In response to a query regarding the acceptance of donations for the garden, Mr Tod advised that Richard Le Sueur of the gardening company would be happy to co-operate with intending donors, and also to have volunteers working in the garden under his supervision. He could be contacted through the Committee.

There would be another walk-round in the not-too-distant future, to which all the Proprietors would be invited.

Regarding the financial statements, a call was made for their independent examination and their approval by the Proprietors in general.

In response to a suggestion that the notices on the gates about prohibited activities were unfriendly, Mr Tod undertook to take this under consideration.

Regarding appointments to the Committee, differing views were expressed regarding the merits and demerits of co-option and election. A previous suggestion that a number of people had been unsuitable to serve on the Committee was news to its present members, and much to be regretted. Sincere and deep apologies were expressed about this.

The spouse of a former Committee member said that the appointment of Richard Spalding had been a breath of fresh air and it was time for a change.

One of those who had been behind the pamphlet calling for a meeting to take place c/o St Mary's Cathedral on 3 April confirmed that this would be taking place.

OUTCOME

The Secretary undertook to produce a note of the proceedings in early course. The Chairman-designate regretted that the good behaviour observed at the meeting had not extended to a number of comments made via social media prior to today's meeting and hoped that the mutual respect exhibited today would be continued into the future.

Calls for more detailed constitutional provisions and the sanctioning of elections would be given future consideration by the Committee.

THIS CONCLUDED THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION.