



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Stewartry Literary Society (TSLs)
held on 11 March 2026 at Broughton House, Kirkcudbright.**

Present: Hilary Alcock (Chair), Pauline Brown (retiring Treasurer & Membership Secretary), Douglas Alcock (retiring past Chairman), Gwen Shaw (retiring Press & Publicity), Charlotte Taylor (Schools' Co-ordinator), Sandie Gay (incoming Treasurer & Membership Secretary), Anna Hale (Website Editor, and incoming Secretary), Karen Thewliss (new post: Vice-Chair), Alison Orford (incoming Marketing & Communications Co-ordinator), and John Brown (Acting Secretary for AGM). Plus 22 members.

1	Welcome. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. A total of 32 attended including the outgoing and incoming committee members. Apologies had been received from: Brenda Burkitt, Val Bradbury, Ian McIlvenna, and Yvonne Moore.
2	The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 12 March 2025 were approved. Proposed by: Maxine Burns ; and seconded by: Gwen Shaw. There were no Matters Arising.
3	Chair's Annual Report 2025 - '26 The Chair, Hilary Alcock, referred to her Annual Report (circulated to members by the Acting Secretary on 23 February) and in particular thanked those committee members who were retiring for their dedicated and valued work for the Society. The Report <i>is provided in full below</i>. 1. Introduction This month sees another season of the Stewartry Literary Society draw to a close. The final session on 11 March is an illustrated conversation and presentation with the celebrated BBC presenter and photographer from the Landward programme, Shahbaz Majeed, who will recount a fascinating visual story of his life and work. 2. The Committee Since Covid - when the Society was re-launched - the TSLs Committee, like so many voluntary committees both locally and nationally - has struggled to recruit enough members to support the Society's effective organisation and delivery. After the last AGM, we were very pleased to welcome Charlotte Taylor onto the Committee to oversee our Schools' commitment. She worked for many years with libraries, and has extensive experience in this field. Thus, this year we have had six people on the Committee: Pauline Brown, who has carried the double responsibility of Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Gwen Shaw who continued as our Press & Publicity Officer and liaised with our NTS venue, Douglas Alcock (past Chairman), Charlotte as mentioned, and myself as Chair and Programme Co-ordinator. Such a tight structure does not allow for happenings such as illness. Also, we were initially unable to replace our Society Secretary, and also Web Co-ordinator. Much to my relief, Anna Hale agreed to take on the specifics of the latter with some help and valuable support from John Brown, the previous Secretary and Web Editor. By being flexible

and covering for one another in times of illness and other commitments we have managed to deliver what I know has been a most successful season.

After several years on the Committee, Pauline Brown, Gwen Shaw, and Douglas Alcock have decided to stand down, and I am very aware that the success of the Society owes a great deal to their hard work and commitment. I am happy to report that several (new) Members have come forward and offered to stand at the 2026 AGM for election. Therefore, next year we shall hopefully have some new faces, and the individual roles will be somewhat less demanding. Charlotte, Anna and I will all stay on the Committee, and there will be good continuity.

3. Membership and Finance

The membership numbers have risen this year from 54 to 60. Seven people did not renew, and we welcomed 10 new members to the Literary Society. We also continued to attract visitors for specific events providing useful additional revenue.

The committee had decided last year to retain the subscription at £25 by again using the Society's reserves. We did not raise the subscription - as many societies and Book Weeks/Festivals had done - who were charging between £8 and £15 for a talk. However, our annual subscription of £25 for 6 Talks is regrettably *no longer sustainable*. The cost of fees and expenses has meant that we have continued to resort to using the Society's reserves – as stated at last year's AGM.

The committee has now decided that we cannot keep utilising our reserves. Therefore, and importantly, looking ahead, *the subscription fee will have to increase* for the 2026-27 season to cover increased speakers' fees and their travel costs, the website, and room hire at Broughton House.

At the AGM the Committee will be recommending an annual membership subscription of £40, and £10 per talk for Visitors. For members at just over £6 a talk this is well below other comparable local literary societies and arts organisations. The committee asks you to support this increase in order that the Society can continue to invite and present an exciting programme of Authors to Kirkcudbright.

Our Programme continues to be ambitious, and I believe we do exceptionally well for a comparatively small literary society by providing speakers who people would normally only hear at one of the major book festivals, or in the media. Speakers such as Sara Sheridan who was a recent guest in the Queen's Reading Room Project and Alan Taylor a highly regarded and experienced journalist, and Kim Sherwood who spoke passionately about taking on the world of James Bond and turning it on its head. The talks were indeed varied, and covered memoirs, historical fiction, the environment, biographies and poetry, and members were full of praise for each and all of them.

4. Educational Links with the Stewartry Community

The Annual Essay Literary Award this year was led by new Committee Member Charlotte Taylor. Again, all three High Schools/Academies participated but a number of difficulties were experienced in contacting schools, and getting them to respond effectively. Winning entries were chosen and participants received book tokens to the value of £50. Charlotte is keen to reassess this programme for next year, and she will propose a new more effective educational programme linked to school libraries.

5. Broughton House (NTS)

We have continued to meet in Broughton House, and are grateful for the help and support the staff provide. Lisa Langton-Boyd has once again helped this year by designing our posters, and though she is no longer based in Kirkcudbright, she will generously provide us with the template that we can continue to use. Unfortunately, the NTS is unable to provide the venue next year on Wednesday afternoons, so please note we will be moving to **the third Tuesday of each month** at 2.30pm, starting on Tuesday 15 September 2026.

6. Conclusion

TSLS continues to add another dimension to the Stewartry's programme of events. Membership numbers are strong, and we even have people travelling from Dumfries and beyond to attend the meetings. The literary offerings in Kirkcudbright alone are powerful with a Spring Book Week, Burns events, book groups and writing groups, as well as a well-stocked local independent bookshop catering for both adults and children. National statistics highlight the growing concern that people are reading less and less. However, this can't be said of us as described above, and during the long cold winters, what could be nicer than to escape to Broughton House and enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of sitting together and listening to an author take us on a journey of discovery and adventure?

Our thanks to you all for your continued support and encouragement.

Hilary Alcock

TSLS Chair

	The Meeting: Welcomed and noted the Chair's Report for 2025-26.
4	Treasurer's Report and Adoption of the Statement of Accounts The Treasurer, Pauline Brown, referred to her Report which she had circulated to members on 5 March 2026, together with the Statement of Accounts - approved and signed by Mr Lindsay Forbes, Independent Examiner - for adoption at the AGM. She thanked Lindsay for his continued and most valued input, and announced that he had agreed to continue for the year 2026-27. Pauline spoke of the Society having come a long way since it started in 1910, with many changes having taken place on the literary landscape. The Society now had access to the Live Literature list of Speakers registered with the Scottish Book Trust (SBT), and the SBT's continued part-funding guaranteed that the Society could continue to maintain the standard of Speakers. Pauline wished to highlight that with the on-going support from a very active and steady membership, the numbers should mean that, with the proposed increase in annual subscriptions, the Society possibly could break even without the need to use reserves for a fourth consecutive year, whilst still continuing to offer an interesting and varied programme. She advised that the committee had given serious consideration to the annual membership subscription for 2026-27, and was recommending an increase to £40. The members were asked to give their support to this recommendation. The Report <i>is provided in full below</i>. This Report is for the Accounting Year 1 February 2025 – 31 January 2026. The Society is indebted to Lindsay Forbes for continuing to act as Independent Examiner of the Accounts. 1. Income Membership subscriptions are represented by an income of £1,525. The only other Income was from visitors' fees to Talks of £505; and there was a transfer from the closure of an old RBS account of £17.66. The total income for the accounting period was £2,047.66. 2. Expenditure The major expense incurred by the Society is from the Fees and Expenses paid to the six Speakers - totalling £1,112.89 this year. In addition, the other annual running costs of the Society totalled £1,460.26: Hire of the Broughton House Room - £500; Schools Book Tokens - £150; Public Liability Insurance - £75; Banking Charges – £53.32; Website – £472.50; and Printing £117.90). The total expenditure therefore was £2,573.15. The deficit for the accounting year is £525.49. 3. Banking The banking arrangement continued with the Bank of Scotland, Castle Douglas, in the 'Community Account' incurring monthly bank charges since January 2025. No fee is charged for FPI (BACS). 4. Conclusion As there has been no annual increase in the membership subscription since 2023, it has been necessary to use the Society's Reserve Funds. It is important for members to note that, per the Chair's Report, at item no. 7 on the AGM Agenda of 11 March 2026, the Committee is now recommending an increase to both the membership and the visitors' fees.

	At 31 January 2026 Funds in the Bank totalled £3,167.79. The deficit for the accounting year is £525.49. The total Funds at February 2026 were: £2,642.30 (including cash float of £40.00). I commend the attached Accounts, approved by the Independent Examiner, for adoption at the Annual General Meeting. Pauline Brown Treasurer and Membership Secretary 5 March 2026 The Meeting: 1. Adopted the Accounts as presented; proposed by: Colin Milligan; and seconded by: Barbara Deering. 2. Noted that the Annual Accounts had been ratified and signed by Mr Lindsay Forbes, member, who had acted once more as the Independent Examiner. 3. Thanked Mr Forbes for agreeing to continue as Independent Examiner for the year 2026 – 27. 4. Noted that the Statement of Accounts would be appended to the Minutes in full. 5. Noted that the Society had operated at a deficit during the past three years, and that an increase to the membership fee was required for the 2026-27 season.
5	Election of Officers of the Committee 5.1 Chair. John Brown, the Society’s Acting Secretary for the AGM, advised members that, as noted on the Agenda, Hilary had agreed to stand for re-election for one more year. He invited members to re-elect Hilary, and asked for a Proposer and Seconder. The Meeting: Re-elected Hilary Alcock as Chair; proposed by: Gwen Shaw; and seconded by Sandra Walsh. 5.2 Treasurer. Hilary thanked members for having re-elected her as Chair. She advised members that, per her Annual Report, Pauline was retiring as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. On behalf of the Society, she thanked Pauline for her dedicated work over the years in these roles and also that of Schools’ Co-ordinator. The Chair introduced Sandie Gay who had offered to take on the roles of Treasurer and Membership Secretary, and invited the meeting to elect her to these positions. The Meeting: 1. Re-iterated the Chair’s appreciation of the work carried out by Pauline for the Society. 2. Welcomed and appointed Sandie Gay as Treasurer and Membership Secretary; proposed by Anna Hale, and seconded by Karen Thewliss. 5.3 Secretary. The Chair referred to the Agenda and invited the meeting to elect Anna Hale to the post as Secretary (which had remained vacant for the past year). The Meeting: Welcomed and appointed Anna Hale as Secretary; proposed by Pauline Brown, and seconded by Sandie Gay. 5.4 Vice-Chair. Hilary invited the meeting to elect Karen Thewliss to the new role of the Committee’s Vice-Chair.

	The Meeting: Welcomed and appointed Karen Thewliss as Vice-Chair of the Committee; proposed by Alison Orford, and seconded by Anna Hale.
6	Election of Ordinary Members of the Committee 6.1 The Chair referred to her Annual Report and advised that Gwen Shaw (Press and Publicity) and Douglas Alcock (past Chairman) were both retiring from the committee after many years sterling work on behalf of the Society, and in particular their decisive roles at the re-launch of the Society in June 2022 (and during the 4 years since) when the Society became known as ‘The Stewartry Literary Society’. The Meeting: Thanked Gwen and Douglas and acknowledged their dedication and commitment to the Society over many years. 6.2 Hilary advised that: she had agreed to continue as Programme Co-ordinator; that Charlotte Taylor had agreed to continue as Schools Co-ordinator; and that Anna Hale had agreed to continue as Web Editor. Hilary invited the members, by a show of hands, to agree these three appointments. The Meeting: Re-appointed Hilary Alcock as Programme Co-ordinator, Charlotte Taylor as Schools Co-ordinator, and Anna Hale as Web Editor. 6.3 The Chair informed the Meeting that Alison Orford had agreed to stand for election as an Ordinary Member of the Committee and with the role of Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator, and invited members to do so. The Meeting: Appointed Alison Orford as an Ordinary Member of the Committee, with the role of Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator; proposed by: Anna Hale; and seconded by Sandie Gay.
7	Committee’s Recommendation for Membership Subscription Fee. The Chair referred members to her Annual Report and the Treasurer’s Report at items 3 and 4 respectively regarding the need to increase the annual membership subscription fee, and the committee’s recommendation to raise it £40, and the visitors’ entrance fee to £10 for the year 2026-27. Members briefly discussed this recommendation and were informed that with this increase – the first since 2023 – the Society would hopefully be in a position to ‘break-even’ financially this time next year without the need to use reserves for a fourth consecutive year. Members were given details of the amounts paid to the Speakers. The Chair asked the meeting to agree the committee’s recommendation. The Meeting: 1. Agreed the committee’s recommendation to raise the annual membership subscription to £40, and the visitors’ entrance fee to £10 for the year 2026-27. 2. Noted the increasing amounts paid to Speakers, and noted that there had been no increase in the membership subscription since 2023.

	3. Agreed that this issue needed to be kept under review to ensure a 'break-even' position without reverting to the use of the Society's reserves, as had been necessary.												
8	Any Other Business and Chair's Closing Remarks. 8.1 There being no other business, the Chair, in her Closing Remarks, expressed her appreciation of the dedicated work of the Committee throughout the year. She once more referred to those retiring from the Committee, and welcomed, with appreciation, those new members who had stepped forward to take on roles. 8.2 Presentation to Gwen and Pauline. Hilary made a presentation to Gwen and Pauline on behalf of the Literary Society, referring to their valued skills which had been much appreciated by members. Gwen, in her reply, mentioned that many of our Speakers had expressed their appreciation of Broughton House as a venue, and that the extensive library had also been of interest to them. 8.3 Hilary, on behalf of members, thanked the staff of Broughton House for their valued contribution in making the Society's six Talks so successful. 8.4 The meeting was brought to a close, with immediate preparations to be made for the final Speaker of the Society's season, Shahbaz Majeed, commencing at 2.30pm. 8.5 *New Programme of Speakers for 2026 – 27 as announced at the end of the Talk* Hilary was pleased to announce that she and the Committee had successfully completed the Programme of Talks for the new season, the six authors and dates being: <table> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Rosemary Goring</i></td><td><i>15 September 2026</i></td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Doug Johnstone</i></td><td><i>20 October 2026</i></td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Margaret Elphinstone</i></td><td><i>17 November 2026</i></td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Anna Marshall</i></td><td><i>15 December 2026</i></td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Kenneth Steven</i></td><td><i>16 February 2027</i></td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Jean Robson</i></td><td><i>16 March 2027</i></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Rosemary Goring</i>	<i>15 September 2026</i>	<i>Doug Johnstone</i>	<i>20 October 2026</i>	<i>Margaret Elphinstone</i>	<i>17 November 2026</i>	<i>Anna Marshall</i>	<i>15 December 2026</i>	<i>Kenneth Steven</i>	<i>16 February 2027</i>	<i>Jean Robson</i>	<i>16 March 2027</i>
<i>Rosemary Goring</i>	<i>15 September 2026</i>												
<i>Doug Johnstone</i>	<i>20 October 2026</i>												
<i>Margaret Elphinstone</i>	<i>17 November 2026</i>												
<i>Anna Marshall</i>	<i>15 December 2026</i>												
<i>Kenneth Steven</i>	<i>16 February 2027</i>												
<i>Jean Robson</i>	<i>16 March 2027</i>												
9	Date and Venue of next Annual General Meeting. Tuesday 16 March 2027, in Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, at 1.45pm.												

The Stewartry Literary Society

Statement of Receipts and Payments for the Year to 31 January 2026

Receipts	<u>General Funds</u>
	£
Membership Subscriptions	1,525.00
Visitors Fees	505.00
Old RBS Account Transfer	17.66
	<u>2,047.66</u>
<u>Payments</u>	
Fees and Expenses paid to Speakers	1,112.89
Website	472.50
National Trust of Scotland, Broughton House	500.00
Printing	117.90
Schools' Book Tokens	150.00
Entertaining	91.54
Insurance	75.00
Bank Charges	53.32
	<u>2,573.15</u>
Deficit/Surplus for the year	(525.49)

Statement of Funds as at February 2026

Funds as at 31 January 2025	3,167.79
Add/Deduct Surplus/Deficit	(525.49)
Total Funds	<u>2,642.30</u>
Represented by Cash at	
Bank of Scotland at 31 January 2025	2,602.30
Cash Float	<u>40.00</u>
	<u>2,642.30</u>

Hon Treasurer *R. Brown* 4 March '26

I have examined the foregoing Accounts of The Stewartry Literary Society for the year to 31 January 2026, and find them to be correct and in agreement with the records given to me.

Date: 4th March '26

R L Forbes, Examiner

R. L. Forbes