  

**The Battle of Prestonpans [1745] Heritage Trust**

**Trustees’ 13th Annual Report to October 31st 2019**

2019 has been a year of aestivation not only for our ambitions to create a Living History Centre but also to prepare to celebrate 2020 as the 275th Anniversary of the battle and the 300th Anniversary of Prince Charles Edward’s birth but also the 10th Anniversary of The Prestonpans Tapestry. Throughout the year we have wrestled with the National Lottery Heritage Fund’s [NLHF] *doubters* and *other directed* *officers* at East Lothian Council [ELC] alike. Neither have yet given their overt support to our ambitions the latter steadfastly refusing to consider two Petitions we tabled; but the Prince exemplified determination and patience until his Glenfinnan Moment and so do we.

**PathtoVictory1745.org sets down our unshakeable ambition to deliver our Objects**

Dr Stephen Connolly was commissioned to conduct an External Audit of the Trust’s Objects and Activities since our foundation in 2006 and reported in January. From that basis we created our own Path to Victory from 2019/ 2022 which was placed widely for consultation. Having taken on board plenty of feedback, it was presented with a request for support to NLHF to help us carry it to fruition. Their feedback urged caution with some doubt expressed whether a Centre was appropriate at all notwithstanding the economic and substantive viability repeatedly demonstrated. So we have ended the year with a more modest request for support in 2020/ 2021 to sustain momentum as we deliberately carry forward our agenda with some of our own Appeal funds as match.

The triple anniversaries in 2020 will be commemorated through the cultural legacy of the battle – as created over the past 275 years and as now to be recreated by 10-17 year olds across the nation in poetry, song, prose or visual howsoever. Our 105 metre Prestonpans Tapestry will tour the nation again. Concerts and exhibitions including The Pans’ Town Hall and Haddington’s John Gray Centre will be presented. The Clans who Came Out with The Prince at Prestonpans in 1745 will again be invited to share in these occasions with us and of course we shall be sharing these activities with the ongoing NLHF Great Places Project in our community.

**Seeking an optimal location for our Living History Centre**

We have spent the year seeking a *third* possible location after previous knockbacks at the Battle Bing and Prestongrange Museum BathHouse. At a time when planning blight across the battlefield perimeter excludes several good choices there we boldly concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with Hargreaves which is the lead developer of the new community being constructed over the next 30 years on the Riggonhead Defile. The NW corner of that community’s planned town square overlooks the battlefield and lies close to a proposed Prince’s Loch. It could well be an exciting location although the timescale remains predictably elusive as discussions continue. We are also ambitious to locate there Scotland’s first equestrian statue of The Prince accompanied by cheering Highlanders and our preferred name for the community is Charlestoun for which we have repeatedly advanced our case in competition with several others.

As year end approached we saw an unexpected, refreshed, opportunity emerging at Prestongrange Heritage Museum – our second earlier location which was ELC supported but knocked back by NLHF [then HLF]. Their major objection in 2017 had been that there was no Master Plan for the whole museum site of some 300 acres; but that has now begun to change and upside aspects of the Museum site, distant though it is from the battlefield, are certainly worthy of careful re-evaluation. ELC is hopeful of £1.5m capital investment in the site to restore all its fabric. We have the potential to be an anchor tenant at the Museum achieving not only our own goal but providing substantial footfall for neighbouring heritage activities.

**Brussels sprouts on the battlefield and newbuild at the Battle Bing**

Much to the Trust’s delight ELC resolved to put the battlefield back to agriculture in 2019 and with the support of local farmers we tendered to crop rye as was done in 1745. Alas, in their wisdom those charged with un-minuted decision making at ELC, ignoring their statutory obligation to take the Designated Battlefield into account, resolved to see Brussels sprouts grown by a higher bidder. Promises to make provision for surface archaeology were not honoured.

During the year ELC demolished a supply depot at the foot of the Battle Bing which might have been a potential location for the Living History Centre. However ELC was adamant it could not be made available because it was to be rebuilt for their own pressing needs. A promise was given however that the new inhabitants would take on responsibility for maintenance of the Bing area which is an ever present requirement attracting several thousand visitors each year.

**Prestonpans as the highpoint of Jacobite hopes for restoration of Stuart Kings**

One of the unsurprising conclusions from the External Audit was that the success of our Living History Centre would depend on its changing programme of events and activities to attract visitors and returners, as well as the continuous display of the tapestries and the interpretation of the battle. The Trustees had always been aware of this and have inter alia throughout the year with leadership support from Dr Michael Taylor sought to better understand how Prestonpans victorious role as a highlight of the Jacobite Cause might be enshrined through our Living History Centre. As the year ends we have convened a Colloquium of myriad institutions across Scotland to explore the scope for us to act as proactive hub of a national and indeed international Jacobite Trail and a linking Jacobite Asset Register.

**Friends of The Prince and our Funding Appeal**

It has necessarily been the case that the Trust’s digital presence has been incremental since 2006, building an extensive archive and news store whilst always deploying Facebook and Twitter for events. However we are long overdue a comprehensive systems redesign that not only meets those well established needs more imaginatively and effectively but also provides the ‘well recognised home’ for our Friends of The Prince – the designation we give to our signed up supporters.

And the moment is arriving when we will be able finally to present the case to Friends and other potential sponsors for donations to create our Living History Centre and endow it for the future. We expect to be seeking approaching £7m capex altogether depending on the precise arrangements made with our landlords but remain convinced that our repeated economic feasibility studies are sound and we will certainly be able to trade successfully.

**Scottish Diaspora Tapestry continues to attract large visitor numbers on tour**

During 2018/ 2019 it has mainly been the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry on display, with The Prestonpans Tapestry resting before its planned 2020 Anniversary Tour. An exceptionally successful exhibition was held at Garioch Heritage Centre close by Inverurie for four months which connection augurs well for a future exhibition of The Prestonpans Tapestry itself since December 1745 saw a Jacobite victory there. Glasgow’s St Mary’s Episcopalian Cathedral also welcomed the Diaspora Tapestry for a summer exhibition after a sojurn at New Lanark Mills. In summer 2020 it will be seen for three months at Dundee’s Verdant ‘Jute’ Mill. The APPs developed for both tapestries and the Battlefield Walk continue to be successfully used by visitors and the Diaspora’s Official Guide is shortly to reach its 3rd Edition – which will enable it to include details of five donated Diaspora Saga Panels from Iceland presented to the Trust.

**Magnificent support continues from Volunteers and Sessional Staffs**

It remains the case that the Trust’s achievements these 13 years are largely attributable to volunteers and sessional staff, who together have now attracted approaching a million visitors. This pattern continues most particularly with hundreds of embroiderers, the Alan Breck Regiment of Prestonpans Volunteers and countless others re-enactors, led by Dr Arran Johnston, Sharon Beck and Brett Fletcher, providing so much to advance the Trust’s Objects. Commemorations on September 21st were provided in partnership with the 1722 Waggonway Heritage Group re-enacting Walter Grosset’s excursion to Tranent churchyard, wreaths were laid and a plaque honouring Colonel Gardiner placed in that churchyard. Dr Johnston also led numerous Battlefield Walks during the year and delivered School presentations and lectures. The Prestoungrange Gothenburg now under the leadership of Calum and Michelle Wilson acts as voluntary home to a micro-museum of artefacts, our battle paintings gallery, administration and many activities; our open access micro-museum at Bankton Doocot continues to attract visitors and tour groups.

Finally, it was with great pleasure that we welcomed Dr Joe Goldblatt, Emeritus Professor of Event Management at Queen Margaret University as an additional Trustee. He has been a supporter of the Trust for many years and is already making his anticipated substantial contribution to our development bringing as he does a wide body of germane experience to our deliberations.