

MAPA – Chairman’s Report 2022 – 2023

It is my great pleasure as Chairman to present this progress report on the happenings at the Map, since our last AGM on 15th May 2022 – which was a little later than usual, due to the COVID pandemic.

It was a good start to the year when in June 2022 the website was notified as having 2 million views, proving there is a great deal of interest out there in the Map. The visitors to the map are many and the donation boxes are very healthy. Of great benefit has been the QR code to enable donations by mobile phone and we take this opportunity to thank Tomasz Schabowski and Anna Pytlik for their work: putting the Polish and English versions of the film and the book onto the website, setting up Paypal and the QR code for payment of memberships and donations, and their work in designing a logo and flag for the Maczek path.

On 24th June 2022 most members of the committee attended the Gen. Maczek Academy, Newbattle High School to the premiere of the film of The Great Polish Map of Scotland. Our secretary Majka Kozłowska and the ECP director, Malgorzata Firlit had arranged the funding from several sources for this film to be made, in Polish and in English. MAPA Scotland contributed £500 to the fund. Children of the school, told the story of Poland and Scotland in the war, and how the Map was constructed thereafter in the 1970’s. It was an excellent evening, with the children singing and dancing in traditional costume, a buffet and raffle in aid of Ukranian families.

In July a plaque was made and attached to the railings, near the flagpole, in memory of Roger Kelly, who died in 2020. Roger was a founding trustee and former chairman, who was integral in setting up the committee to save the map. He will be missed greatly, as will two longstanding members Czelaw Kruk and Ainslie Thin.

In August the water flow from the burn had to be diverted, and was not allowed to run into the map. This was under instructions from SEPA, because of the lack of rain. There was therefore no water in the sea for approx. 1 month. All now back to normal.

The Tweeddale Community contacted Majka in August and I met with Richard McDowell and Margaret Smail, at the map. They were very enthusiastic and said they would like to bring people to the map, to draw/paint and walk in the woods.

In the Sept/Oct edition of the Edinburgh Life, an article, was published by Peter Bourhill, about the opening of the Maczek Path, which was an excellent piece with narrative and photos.

In Oct 2022, Professor Magorzata Luc and her husband met with some of the Trust's members at the map. Malgorzata is from the Geography Department of the Jagellionian University in Krakow. She is interested in doing a project about the map involving her students.

The Polish community and organisations continue to help us, specifically the Ex-Combatants Association and the Polish Consulate in Edinburgh who frequently ask us to celebrations, openings and concerts and give us excellent support, both financially and practically. We have also had several emails from Tomasz Trafas (brother of Kazimierz, the designer of the map). He continues to show interest and encouragement with the map and was particularly pleased to receive copies of the book and see the film that was produced.

Myself and Majka met with Elaine Edwards from Biggar Museum in October, we gave her the book and showed her the film. She is keen to liase with us and gave us some very good contacts for further use. Majka was contacted by Polish Saturday School in Peebles and attended two events, one of which was also attended by Tish Chalmers.

Visit Scotland flew a drone over the map in November (hosted by Jim Chalmers) and took excellent photos.

An EGM took place by zoom in December 2022. All members were invited and it was nice to have over 20 members join the meeting, including Tomasz Trafas from Krakow. The sole purpose of the meeting was to reduce the numbers required to form a quorum from 12 to 6, in order that we could pass any resolutions required in the future. Vote was carried by 23 – 0. Many thanks to

Nigel Rose, our membership secretary, for the power of work he did for this and indeed for all his work relating to membership matters.

A meeting was held at the Barony Castle hotel on the 6th April, this year, with Keith Burns, Gordon Cameron, myself, Steven Colquhoun, the manager and Richard Spanner, the director. In 2013 a 10 year lease was set up with the Barony Castle Hotel to allow MAPA Scotland to reinstate the map. This lease comes to an end on the 30th June 2023 and the land passes back to the hotel who will be responsible for the maintenance of the map from then on. We, at MAPA Scotland thank the Barony Castle Hotel for the chance to work on this iconic piece of history and we are so pleased to have been able to restore it to its original glory and beyond. There are no old photos of the sea bed containing water, so to have achieved this is no mean feat. Much of this is due to Keith Burns' expertise, which we could not have done without. Keith has prepared a maintenance manual for the hotel to help them maintain the map as a listed structure. None of this would have been possible without the hard work of the initial volunteers, including Keith, who found the map and went on to set up MAPA Scotland. Many committees over the years have worked very hard on the map itself and on promoting it. Numerous volunteers have also helped over the years, many from groups and associations such as the scouts, schools, bank, army, to name a few. We are immensely grateful for all your input, whoever you are. You have helped to preserve a rare and important piece of history.

Keith Burns and Majka Kozłowska recently met (April) with the Polish Consul to advise him of us no longer having the lease of the map.

The metal map, donated to us in 2021, has still to be sited pending decision where to position it. It has had islands made which will be attached, and 2 metal posts to set into the ground. David Cameron has been liaising with the planners regarding the metal map, and also negotiated with the Borders Council to enable us to put up the flagpole. Thank you for your immense patience. David is to give a talk at the Barony Hotel on 17th May to the Map Society, about the Map.

BBC Scotland radio programme, Outdoors, contacted us recently regarding a visit. This is to be arranged.

It takes many individuals to make a team and our present committee has excelled itself during the last few years, not just through Covid, but also through many personal challenges.

Everyone has played their part and also taken the initiative to take on tasks when something needed to be done. In addition to those that I have already thanked, I would also thank -

Dave and Ailsa Peck who have tended the stumpery and the flower pots for several years now, and their long-standing help has to be thanked.

Jim and Tish Chalmers are always on call at the map and never miss anything. They collect from the donation boxes, which as you will hear from our treasurer Gordon Cameron, amounts to a considerable sum. Many thanks must go to Gordon for his diligent handling of the accounts and all that it entails.

Jim Barton visits the map regularly and often does work on his own. He also gave a talk about the Map, in Oct 2022 at Clovenfords.

I thank you all for very much, especially Majka. Her Polish connections have been such an asset and her calm and organized manner has always been there to keep things right and support me and the committee. I can't thank her enough.

In conclusion, the map is in a healthy state, with beautiful daffodils on the surrounding inner wall. It is truly a living piece of history that we can all be proud of. Many thanks to everyone concerned with the map in any way, your contribution is very much appreciated.

Lyn Barr, 30th May2023