

The Legacy

In 2016 a pair of flats in the Heaton/Jesmond area of Newcastle were bequeathed to be shared equally between both NEMT and NFHT by Gordon Brown who passed away in May that year. At that time the pair would have fetched something around 150,000 if they were both in a good state of repair but it seems that they were not and one had to be sold to pay for the cost of renovating the pair of them.¹

I was the secretary of NFHT at that time and received an email, from the secretary of NEMT, dated 22nd May 2018, saying:

Mick,

Please find the attached letter of intent from the NEMT board. with Gordon Brown's bequest of the flats at Dinsdale Road.

I hope that you find it useful.

Best regards

Jerry

He said:

Dear Mick,

As promised, I said I would send you a 'letter of intent' on behalf of the board of trustees of NEMT concerning our intentions for Gordon Brown's bequest of the flats at Dinsdale Road, in response to NFHT's recent proposal.

At our board meeting on 16th May 2018, the following resolution was passed:

"That NEMT would sell the upper flat and retain the lower flat for its sole use in the future. NEMT would make a donation to NFHT of the proceeds of the sale of the upper flat of an amount equal to the monies realised from the sale, less an amount to defray all costs of renovation of both flats up to the point of sale, including all professional, legal and estate agents' fees, council tax, utilities, loan costs and interest etc." As this confirms NFHT's proposal to us, I trust that you will find it a satisfactory way forward.

Best regards

Jerry Dudman

I saw immediately it could never be a satisfactory way forward because the only way to share the bequest equally, would be to share the expense of doing up both the flats and to share the income from the lower flat, equally between the two Trusts and that Jerry was being disingenuous when he concluded his email to me with: *As this confirms NFHT's proposal to us, I trust that you will find it a satisfactory way forward.*²

I was invited to attend the 2019 NEMT AGM, which I not able to attend but it appears that he was duly elected to the Chairmanship because he circulated the NEMT Membership with a disturbing email on the 30th September 2019 saying:

Dear NEMT member,

Almost on the eve of this year's AGM, I have received a lengthy formal letter of complaint concerning myself and the board of trustees. As the accusations are serious and falsely imply financial irregularity, I feel obliged to provide you with a note of some key facts in order that you may reach your own conclusions, in the event that this complaint has been forwarded on to you in some form or other.

If you are wondering why I am not attaching the complaint itself, I do not want to provide it with further oxygen - being defamatory and containing as it does, a degree of profanity.

Please see the attached and contact me if you wish to discuss further.

Best regards

Jerry Dudman
Chairman NEMT Board of Trustees

The attached was the “Reply to official complaint 2019-09-30”³, [copy with numbered paragraphs](#) was long and complex but it confirmed, that Gordon wishes with regard to his bequest to the two Trusts, had not been met. Please see paragraph 7:

7. The next matter of rumour is the Gordon F. Brown legacy and a supposed improper transfer of NEMT funds to NFHT. Gordon was an honorary life member of NEMT, as well as a founding trustee of NFHT. Before his death in 2016, he informed both trusts of his wish to leave his housing property to be shared between both trusts. Because of the complications with NFHT not being a corporation Gordon arranged for all to go to NEMT - on the basis of proceeds being shared. Gordon’s note dated 14/9/15 confirmed this and NEMT agreed terms with NFHT on 16/5/18, confirming same in writing to NFHT on 22/5/18. This was following legal opinion on the arrangement received by NEMT from John Devine, Muckle LLP, on 15/3/18. To have ignored the wishes of a dying benefactor would not only be wholly unethical, it would also have rendered it most unlikely that anyone would support NEMT with legacies in future.

Paragraph 4 goes into more detail and the parts to counter the NEMT v NFHT row have been highlighted:

4. As a significant part of the letter and the rumours concern the Northumbrian Fishing Heritage Trust (NFHT), it is necessary to inform members about this trust. NFHT was set up 23/11/06 by NEMT trustees and members to care for historic vessels and protect funds for same. It does so to ensure the vessels are not subject to any commercial risks and to keep funds isolated solely for those same vessels. On 29/1/10 NEMT wrote to the Charity Commission supporting NFHT’s application to become registered, that registration was completed on 29/3/10. NFHT actively supports NEMT in fulfilling the latter’s objectives and continues as a junior partner, with a successful alliance of interests – not a conflict of interests. NEMT also has corporate membership of NFHT⁴. These arrangements accord with NEMT’s objectives to “To assist, advise, collaborate with and work in partnership with any other body, organisation or group”. The legal relationship was discussed with Jason Wainright of Muckle LLP in 2016 when he advised on its probity. NFHT does not compete with NEMT for funds. It is important to note that NFHT is a non-incorporated association and thus prohibited as an entity from owning real estate property in its own right.⁵

In March 2019 I received a letter addressed to my home in Amble from a former Trustee of NEMT, demanding answers to many questions about the NFHT⁶ and although it was only a tenth of the length of the lengthy formal letter of complaint received by Jerry Dudman, one does not have to read far into it to see that while it was not especially profane nor defamatory it [could well have been the basis of the actual letter of complaint](#).

I did not bother to answer Mr M Wilson’s demand for information about the NFHT because it appeared,⁷, a) that he had missed the point that the second Trust had been set up to look after the growing fleet of vessels that had been restored by the NEMT and that NFHT was manned by the same as those who had helped with the restorations, and b) that he was asking all the questions, 40 plus, on behalf of someone, if not himself, who wanted to sow division between the two Trusts.

The advantage of sowing division between the Trusts would be that all of Gordon’s bequest would be handed to NEMT leaving not a drop for NFHT which brings me to paragraph 13 and that Jerry was writing for and on behalf of the other of NEMT’s Trustees: P. Nicholson, A. Finnegan, A. Renwick, P. Weightman.

13. Worst of all is the suggestion that the board does not value the volunteers – this is most disturbing; nothing could be further from the truth. The trustees work with and admire their fellow workers and recognise them as the essential bedrock upon which NEMT is built.⁷

I believe Alex Finnegan was the treasurer who was defended by Jerry in paragraph 12 and I was a was one of the Trustees of NFHT along with Paul Nicholson and Peter Weightman for a good many years which leaves Alec Renwick as the main beneficiary for sowing the division between the Trusts since Martin Wilson had his membership of NEMT deleted about the time of the division of the legacy.

As far as I know, I was the fourth to lose his membership in this way and was told that my membership of NEMT was deleted just over a year ago by Alec Renwick on the 7th July:

Micheal,

You will have received a recorded delivery letter regarding the immediate deletion of your NEMT membership.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Regards

I did not acknowledge the receipt of his email while I was waiting for the receipt the recorded delivery. It never arrived and it appears that Mr Renwick was treading a well worn path of giving out misinformation then acting as if it was the truth. A good example of this, arose last year, when he wrote to me on the 24th March:

Michael

May I remind you as before that your words are somewhat aggressive to me and hope you can calm down and think before you write, especially referring to NEMT V NFHT in your title here!

I had written on the 19th March a complex email, explaining:

First: I want to dispel the rumour going around that Peter Weightman as one of NFHT, had anything to do with the alterations made by me to the NEMT website. In fact he asked me to remove the most contentious of them and I was in the process of doing that when it appears the provider, TSOHOST was told I was not a member of NEMT and I was excluded from nemaritimetrust.co.uk and was not able to complete Peter's request.

*Secondly: in his email dated 17-Mar-24, Mr Barnard says that I am not a member of NEMT which both, you and I, know to be untrue. We were both part the group of people interested in preserving the traditional vessels of the North East and we became part of the team of which Peter was one, who with the aid of the Coble and Keelboat Society, set up what was to become the North East Maritime Trust and all three of us are still members.*⁸

Mr Barnard's email of the 17th March was made in response to an email to the Chairman of the NFHT, 16-Mar where had mischievously made him the Director of NEMT but more importantly I condemned the Chairman, Mr Renwick, when I said:

Mr Renwick's comment, that I have conspired with anyone to scam the website nemaritimetrust.co.uk with unauthorised data, is ridiculous, as is the falsehood: An attempt to remove his access from our website about two years ago has obviously been circumvented.

*It has never been his or their website. Nemaritimetrust.co.uk has been in my name from the time that NEMT became a charity and there is nothing Messrs Renwick and Barnard can do about it, that is, if they desire to keep the North East Maritime Trust as a charity.*⁹

When I wrote to Mr Renwick on the 19th I said:

It does however leave you with the problem of what to do about Mr Barnard. He has been spreading a lie, that I am not a member of the Trust and we both know it to be untrue and it is up to him to admit that he was in the wrong and to apologise to those members of the trust whom he has misled and for you, the Chair of the Trust to determine why he was so ready to repeat the lie on the 17th when he had already hinted that I was not a member of NEMT on the 15th.¹⁰

It appears that he, by his responses, first to Peter's then to my emails, has given you no choice but to back him or sack him. ¹¹

A stark choice, I know but I had added that I looked forward to hearing his decision and I'll leave him to explain why he said my words were *somewhat aggressive!*

Mick Dawson

15th July 2025