

DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES

A Meeting for Trustees, Officials & Branch Secretaries, using Zoom, was held on Wednesday 25 May, 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Wally Barr (WB), Richard Cuthbertson (RC), Martin Cherry (MC), Janice Dale (JD), Margaret Dunn (MD), Gill Jones (GJ), Peter Masters (PM), Ann Morgan (AM), John Townsend (JT).

Apologies: Rosemary Brotherton (RB), Eleanor Carpenter (EC), Shaun Evans (SE), Fiona Gale (FG), Zoe Henderson (ZH), Jane Parry-Evans (JPE), Terry Williams (TW). Ann Alston, Margaret Barr and Sue Hurst (branch reps) were also unable to attend.

PART A

1 The Chairman (RC) welcomed trustees. He noted that two of the most energetic and hard-working trustees had both reached the age of 80 and he thanked MD and PM for their commitment and achievement.

2 There were no **Declarations of interest** in any items on the agenda.

3 The **Minutes of the last meeting** (2 March, 2022) were approved. The minutes of the Executive Group meetings of 22 March, 22 April 2022 and 22 May 2022 were noted.

4 There were no **matters arising** not covered on the agenda.

5 **Officers' reports** were all noted and accepted. A small number of supplementary points were raised: (1) MD explained that the fall in membership from 246 to 238 noted in the membership secretary's report reflected a systematic overhaul of the list of non-subscription payers; (2) MD announced that the death of David Dixon, a long-standing member, will be reflected in an obituary for the next Newsletter; and (3) MC announced that the Vernacular Architecture Group's annual building recording training session would be held this year in North Wales on 1-2 October in and around Ruthin (the announcement in the Newsletter is attached to these minutes); (4) PM noted that the reference in the Membership Report to 'PayPal' should read 'Square'.

6 **Branch Secretaries Reports** were noted. MD alerted trustees to the vacancy for a branch secretary for Merioneth and JD for Denbighshire: both JD and MC (the current secretaries) would hold the fort until successors were found – recruitment would start within the branch membership and the initial period of office would be 3 years or less. **Action MD, JD, MC**

A request was made for FG to let branch secretaries have the names of lapsed members so that they could adjust their records. **Action FG**

PART B

7 **Trustees' Annual Report. This was agreed and passed unanimously** as a true record of the Group's activities and will be submitted to the AGM. RC noted that although charity reports may not be widely read, they provided an important record and, cumulatively, a history of the Group's activities and achievements.

8 **Financial Annual Statement. This was agreed and passed unanimously as a true record and** will be submitted to the AGM. RD (who was unavoidably absent) was warmly thanked for her hard work and efficiency.

9 **2022 Revised Policies. These were agreed and passed unanimously** and will be submitted to the AGM. A huge amount of work had gone into compiling these very comprehensive documents and MD and RB were especially thanked. Once in place, these documents would only need reviewing on a quinquennial basis or in the light of changes in the law effecting the conduct of charities.

10 **Trustees' Welcome Pack. These were agreed and passed unanimously.** These had been closely vetted and agreed by the Executive Group. MD was thanked for pulling them all together – a herculean task.

Two small but necessary tweaks to the Constitution had been agreed by the Executive Group and were submitted and approved by trustees. For convenience, these are attached to these minutes. These can now be submitted to the AGM.

WB noted that under 'Committee Structures and Roles', section 5a, the Flintshire Branch had been inadvertently omitted (it was present on the list of contact details). **Action MD**

11 **Date of next meetings** (by Zoom):

- **Trustees:** All Wednesday at 7.00 p.m.: 14th September, 7th December 2022. (TBC)
- **Executive Group:** All Monday at 7.00 p.m.: 6th June, 5th September 2022.

Thereafter, it was agreed that meetings would be held on a less frequent basis along the like set out below (subject to confirmation).

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
						AGM						
Trustees	*				*				*			
Exec etc			*				*				*	

Additional Notes

DOWG Constitution: Agreed amendments.

Two issues on the DOWHG Constitution have arisen over the past year:

1. There is nothing in the Constitution about Trustees making policies. It is recommended by the Executive Committee that the following addition is made to clause 19 (Powers of Trustees):

[The Trustees have powers] *to make policies required by law, or for the good conduct of the Charity.*

2. The meaning of 'meeting' is not defined in the Constitution and with more Zoom meetings taking place, it is recommended by the Executive Committee that the following addition is made to clause 35 (Interpretation):

'Meeting' in this Constitution means a planned occasion when people come together, either in person or by electronic means, to discuss matters relating to the Charity.

VAG Training Workshop

The Vernacular Architecture Group (to which DOWH is affiliated) holds an annual training conference for people interested in developing their historic building recording skills. It's a relatively recent initiative, unfortunately interrupted by covid, but sessions so far, in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, proved very popular. Numbers are kept low, to between around fifteen and twenty. This

year DOWH is co-hosting it during the weekend of 1-2 October and it will be held in and around Ruthin. We are lucky to have secured three of the most experienced tutors in the business and the emphasis is practical – looking closely and thinking in the field about a small but varied selection of buildings, usually three or four, with discussion sessions (usually in the pub) afterwards. There is a modest fee in the region of £25 to cover tutors' expenses and students must find their own accommodation and subsistence.

A full announcement will be made in due course, but note the date now if you might be interested.

Places are normally allocated on a first-come first-served basis, although a small number of dedicated places for DOWH members will be secured.

Minutes drawn up by MC.

Signed: Chairman Date:

DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES

A Meeting for Trustees, Officials & Branch Secretaries, using Zoom, was held
At 2pm on Wednesday 28 September, 2022 at 2.00 p.m. at Craig y Don Community Centre, Queens
Road, Llandudno.

final revised MINUTES

Present: Margaret Barr (MB)*, Wally Barr (WB), Rosemary Brotherton (RB), Eleanor Carpenter (EC), Richard Cuthbertson (RC), Martin Cherry (MC), Janice Dale (JD), Margaret Dunn (MD), Gill Jones (GJ), Jenny Lees (JL)*, Peter Masters (PM), Ann Morgan (AM), John Townsend (JT) and Terry Williams (TW).

Apologies: Zoe Henderson (ZH), Shaun Evans (SE), Fiona Gale (FG) Sue Hurst (SH)* and Jane Parry-Evans (J P-E) were unable to attend.

* = Branch reps. but not a trustee

PART A

1 The Chair (JD) welcomed trustees. She warmly thanked the outgoing chairman for his dedication and inspiring leadership over the last many years, a sentiment warmly acclaimed by all. Richard reciprocated, thanked trustees for their gifts, assured trustees of his continued commitment to the Group and said that Plas Penmynydd would remain available to the Group for fundraising and other events.

2 There were no **Declarations of interest** in any items on the agenda. JL completed the form as it was her first attendance at these meetings.

3 The **Minutes of the last meeting** (25 May 2022) were approved and signed. The minutes of the Executive Group meetings of 6 June, 11 July and the AGM minutes of 22 June 2022 were noted.

4 There were no **matters arising** not covered on the agenda.

5 **Officers' reports.**

(i) Secretary's Report was noted. MD reiterated her intention of not standing as secretary of the Group after the 2023 AGM and trustees were reminded to prepare for her succession in good time (see 11).

JD thought it important that governance documents were reviewed annually. Since these had been recently overhauled by RB and others, this was unlikely to be a time-consuming exercise. RB confirmed that the revised list of trustees' details had been completed.

A point about trustees' terms was raised by TW and, after a short discussion, it was agreed to leave the convention as at present: if a trustee was unable to attend more than three meetings with insufficient reason, his or her term would be deemed to have lapsed.

(ii) Treasurer's Report was noted. RB confirmed that personal names would be omitted from the report in future to comply with GDPR requirements; the invoice number would be retained. RB has re-submitted her report without personal names & suggested that replaces her original report.

For the removal of doubt (historically, variously named branches had come and gone) the Group branches comprise Anglesey, Caernarfonshire, Merioneth, Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire. Wrexham, which has no active group at present, is nominally included in Denbighshire.

(iii) Membership Secretary's Report was noted. The essentials were that there are 192 individuals on the database and 57 joint memberships making a grand total of 249 members. It was noted that non payers for 2022/23 have NOT yet been removed (58 members have not paid yet in 2022/23) but that reminders had gone out (April 2022) and a further will be sent imminently. **Action FG.**

JD reported back from the morning's meeting of branch secretaries and noted the general up-beat reports: gradually (but at an accelerating rate) people were gaining confidence in returning to in-person meetings and visits.

One bugbear: until all branch members receive an up-to-date list of members, it was not possible to be sure that they were catching all the members in their areas when circulating details about meetings. **Action FG.**

Various privacy issues would be dealt with in JT's GDPR review, underway. **Action JT.**

(iv) Website report was noted. PM reported that a large number of tree-ring dating reports that had been drawn up before the current template was agreed had now been revised and reformatted and some house histories that dealt with several individual buildings had been split to make it easier to access specific houses. He had developed a search facility on the map page to quickly locate an individual house but this was complicated by the search engine's confusion with Welsh names – a problem shared with Coflein. PM also noted that he was mapping the houses on the houses database.

There was a conversation about consistency of reports regarding both format, place names and terminology. It was suggested that branches might review the reports for houses in their areas to pick up errors and omissions, but PM pointed out the logistical challenge of editing archived pdf material. It was generally agreed that we should live with some degree of disorderliness since the scale of a full review would be disproportionate to the gains achieved. It was left to branches to decide whether *major* errors and omissions should be flagged and perhaps noted in a separate document to be placed on the website. **Action Branch Secretaries.**

Relevant to this was the inconsistent use of terminology regarding building features – a long-term problem nationally. MC noted that the Vernacular Architecture Group had just released a 'vernacular Building Glossary' freely available at <https://www.vernacularbuildingglossary.org.uk>

TW raised the issue of website management security and was assured that the various codes that allowed access to the site in the event of the webmaster's indisposition were held by JT. It was agreed that another set should be held securely by the chair. **Action PM, JD.**

(v) An earlier Research coordination report had been circulated and noted and was still current. MC observed that branch activities across the whole region were identifying houses with important features hitherto 'unknown to science' – i.e., not listed, or recorded in the standard sources such as Coflein or the archaeological units' databases. This heightened the likelihood that small-scale but significant research projects would emerge on the back of these discoveries and might justify some investment (for survey work or dendrochronology). Another useful, but sometimes difficult to access source was the local lists that local planning authorities compiled: EC agreed to circulate a list of the relevant LPA contacts. **Action EC.**

MC emphasised that the main thrust of research activity should remain branch-led but might feed into wider projects: for instance, further work in areas such as Edeirion where tree-ring dating has proved successful and identified houses of a wide date-range might be rewarding; or focus on house types or houses of a certain date (for instance: do the large number of tree-ring dated houses from the 1570s and '80s represent a 'great rebuilding' in North Wales?). More partnerships with other bodies such as

the Ruthin Research group (which has commissioned tree-ring dating in the town) as well as with ISWE and the RCAHMW should be developed.

(vi) Houses database Project JP-E's report was circulated and noted. J P-E would continue to maintain the database. The figures are summarised here:

Count of Unique House Number							Grand Total
Row Labels	C	D	O	R	U	X	
Anglesey	44	3	1	9	1		58
Conwy	100	13	79	16	5	1	214
Denbighshire	175	5	42	15	15	1	253
Flintshire	110	7	41	14			172
Powys	3		1		2	10	16
Wrexham	22	5	1	22			50
Gwynedd-C	121	14	12	7	1		155
Gwynedd-M	114	7	60	15	6		202
Grand Total	689	54	237	98	30	12	1120

- C = Visit Completed
- D = Visit Declined
- O = Visit Outstanding (i.e., not yet visited)
- R = Revisit Required
- U = Unsuitable for visit (e.g., too grand a house, ruined)
- X = External to DOWH

(vii) The Parishes Project report was noted. The first stage of work on the parishes of Anglesey and Conwy is now complete. JT announced that the management of this project would be taken on by Gareth Davies, an experienced, retired database manager who would, inter alia, convert the houses spreadsheet into a user-friendly database. JT was thanked for this successful recruitment mission and for all his work to date with the project.

(viii) In TW's Newsletter Report, he emphasised the importance of feeding him with meaty material. There was currently an imbalance between routine announcements about forthcoming events and brief reports of past activities on the one hand and more substantial articles on the other. The former might be better placed on the website, given that this was frequently updated and members were aware. Although trustees had decided to reduce the number of NL issues to three p.a., not all were persuaded that this was the right frequency. The matter needed to be reconsidered by the Executive Group in the first instance and the practicalities of a regularly updated website reviewed, given PM's current heavy workload. **Action Executive Group.**

While TW was relaxed about when material should reach him, a realistic deadline for the next issue would be mid-December.

(ix) Zoom lecture programme MC reported that the remaining 2022 lectures had been advertised. Four out of five winter/spring 2023 slots were filled and a finalised programme would be circulated to members (and placed on the website) soon.

6/7 Branch Secretaries Reports were noted. JD reiterated the positive feedback from branch secretaries and suggested that branches liaised more systematically with local archives both to arrange training events that might interest more than a single group and heighten the branches (and the Group's) profile.

8 DOWH data storage. There was considerable discussion about the relative importance of data backup (priority) and archive retention (important but secondary). JT recommended a small working party and PM and RB agreed to take this forward. **Action PM and RB, in coordination with MD.**

MC suggested that local archives should be approached with a view to DOWH's papers being deposited in a suitable setting. Given the shared interests with the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates (ISWE), the University of Bangor archive should be approached.

9 Trustees' welcome pack. No further progress was made but this would soon be covered under 8.

10 Paper leaflets. It was agreed that corrections (membership secretary details) would be physically inserted into the current leaflets and then distributed to branches. **Action PM (to print new names) (MD to insert)**

11 Secretary's terms of reference. A draft had been circulated and trustees were asked to review and comment; this would be considered at the Executive meeting on 7 November.

12 Draft letters to owners. MC had revised these and awaits comments from ZH. Insurance cover had been raised (how best to reassure owners that any damage caused by members on visits to their houses would be covered); MC confirmed that our present insurance policy covered this (public liability) along with the cover for reputational damage if members brought the Group into disrepute. Our insurance does NOT cover personal injury for members aged under 16 or over 75. The revised letters would then be translated & circulated to branch secretaries.

13 **Dates of next meetings** (mainly on zoom):

- **Trustees:** 18 January 2023; May & September 2023, date and time to be agreed.
- **Executive:** 7 November 2022 zoom at 7.00 p.m.; March & July 2023 date and time to be agreed.

Minutes drawn up by MC.

Signed: Chairman Date: