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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOELAS ARMS PENTREFOELAS 11<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2011. 7.30PM

### 1. Present

Sean Adcock, Colin Brown, Craig Evans, Geraint Evans, Arwel Huws, Iolo Jones, David Say, Bill Sheppard, Paul Smyth,

### 2. In attendance

Brenda Lewis, Nick Perrin, Ray Guthrie.

### 3. Apologies

Lou Bibby, Anne Forest, Robert Godfrey, Alan R Jones, Richard Jones

### 4. Minutes of 2010 AGM

Acceptance of the 2010 minutes

Proposed Colin Brown                      Seconded Bill Sheppard

Being no objections the minutes were passed.

### 5. CHAIRMANS REPORT

Craig reported that he had essentially taken a year off as chairman and with nothing to say handed over to Sean

### 6. TREASURERS REPORT

As you can see from the accounts we ended the year in similar good financial health to last year. I will highlight a few of the main differences from the previous year:-

Our income was down by over £1500 but as our expenditure was down by about £1000 we still achieved a surplus of £597.78. There was less take up of training so training income was down by about £1000 but book sales were significantly up, with book purchases up reflecting the increase in sales. There was a sharp drop in DSWA membership coming through the Branch, and we spent a lot less on equipment having upgraded our events kit last year;

Acceptance of the 2010-11 accounts

Proposer                      Sean Adcock                      Seconder                      Craig Evans

Being no objections the accounts were accepted

### 7. SECRETARIES REPORT

Sean presented the written report included below to those present, and gave a slide presentation based on it illustrating the activities.

Once again the year started well with the Branch retaining the Association's best small branch award. However Branch membership stands at 16 plus 3 who have renewed Branch but not national yet. This is down 11 on 2010, and there are no new members. This is worrying, contacting lapsed members suggests one or two might re-join, lack of time to commit is the most common reason given. Press coverage through the year has been disappointing. Once again the Daily Post has

carried a couple of feature pieces, but the press in the North West as obdurate as ever, and there has been a lack of information to give the eastern papers, although we were able to get one event into the Oswestry area press.

The grant from Clwydian Range AoNB, had been extended for another year. Overall there had been 5 Dry Stone Walling Training days (2 taster 2 weekends) in the east. 15 different individuals had received training totalling 21 trainee days.

Figures for the east have not been released although there was at least one weekend course with 6 trainees on each day. No-one had attended the courses as practice days. In addition we held a 1 day single skin seminar at Pen y Pass which had been attended by 4 Branch members.

As a new venture we invited two English Branches to visit at new sites. 9 from Cheshire attended a weekend at Llanrhaedrym Mochnant where we rebuilt around 20 square metres of wall, and 6 from Otley and Yorkshire Dales attended a weekend in Corwen where 15 square metres was rebuilt. In addition to the 30 guest work days, 5 different branch members and supporters contributed 10 work days.

We held one guided walk this year which 3 members (inc guide) and 1 guest attended

Lack of numbers meant the Branch was unable to help at the Snowdonia Society Competition, which was hit by bad weather and a very disappointing turnout. The Branch also decided that due to the current lack of support it could not run its annual competition. This lack of support and manpower also meant that we had only attended 2 demonstration events through the year. Our inability to help at the RWS was particularly disappointing.

The CCW grant for a standards promotion suffered deadline problems. We were able to get the website up and running, and this continues to develop, and add to the event/display material and equipment however there were problems in producing the standards booklets and the grant offer for these expired before they could be translated. Both were more or less finished but on hold whilst other avenues of funding are explored. An offer to translate the website and some other material in return for training had been made; this would be instigated in the near future.

£290 from The Gareth Fund had been used to update the information leaflet (translation and printing of 2500), leaving around £400.

3 Talks had been given in Llanberis with mixed success and very limited Branch support. Talks to other groups had taken place in Conwy, Otley, California, Oregon (Twice) and Toronto. Disappointingly difficult to get out and about in North Wales. Invitations have been received to talk in Llandudno on 18<sup>th</sup> November and already one booking (Preston) November 2012.

Somehow Stonechat continues to develop and improve. An offer to bulk supply a number of Branches had resulted in 9 subscribing. In addition we have 20 supporters, this is same as 2010 with 3 new (foreign) replacing 3 (North Wales) lapsed. Back issues are available online via the welsh website, and downloads/views were monitored, with a view to seeking donations in future. Since March there had been 185, this is disappointing as it covers all issues up to number 22. It is still possible to access some back copies via the DSWA website which remain unaccounted for. Each edition is now professionally printed enabling more copies to be distributed free at events etc., and saving a considerable amount of time in home printing and collating. It costs around £350 inc postage per edition. Theoretically membership finances one edition although falling numbers is threatening this, with supporters (public and branches) financing another. We are currently looking for finance for one additional copy. One side effect of the wider spread/publication is the relative lack of space for Branch News. Consequently there had been one separate "Branch news" for members/local supporters.

## 8. DISCUSSION OF THE WAY AHEAD

### Meetings/talks.

There was a discussion as to whether or not it had been a mistake not to have any. It was agreed that the idea of holding meetings on an ad hoc basis hadn't come off. It was agreed to have fixed dates with in house speakers on walling related topics, the suggestion was 2 meetings a year in house one in east one in west. Plus AGM

### Wales get together .

The idea of a n all wales gettogether was discussed. It was agreed this should be in/around Aberwystwyth and before walling season got going, late march early April. arriving Friday Night/Sat morning. Saturday some project possibly incorporating taster day for locals. Sunday morning meeting to discuss combined Welsh issues and events.

### Training

The drop off in numbers was discussed, economic and having possibly reached much of the short term core market were thought to be key factors, plus problems in advertising/identifying markets.

The possibility of organising additional courses once one was full was discussed as was just having fewer dates or running a more intensive programme. There should be a couple of tasters in advance of a course.

It was agreed to try a limited programme for one year and to consider adding courses from South Wales and Cheshire to give alternatives/wider choice

It was thought specialist clawdd and single courses were a good idea and should be run in addition to the programme, possibly at either end of theseason.

There was discussion on how can we push certification – there was concern expresses that it was poorly regarded by others and seen as foisting outside ideas/standards on Wales. It was agreed it would be a good idea to look into grants for translation/printing of certification leaflet, and that this might be a good use for Gareth Fund, plus twist DSWAs arm into doing more. Arwel expressed concerns as to the Craftsman Certification Scheme and had resigned as an examiner over issues vis stripping out marking. This was the first the committee had heard of this. There was a wide ranging discussion on concerns re value/legitimacy of certification vis non members and great concern expressed re-standards and problems of enforcing them. It was noted that the Branch had met with a DSWA brick wall in trying to raise/deal with this and there was little appetite nationally for enforcing standards. Without this there is little that can be done lovally and there were no new ideas on how we might progress this.

### Membership

More needed to be done to try and encourage trainees to join. One suggestion was to offer free DSWA& Branch membership rather than current refunding of taster fee for those doing a taster and Training course. The idea of helping meet this cost by raising fees to £25 taster £90/£120 course was generally thought a good idea, although there were some concerns as to putting up prices when numbers were dropping. There was some concern that it could potentially mean weekend courses would make a (bigger) loss if not full, and increase membership churn. Any churn would be good, in order to keep a member they needed to join in the first place.

The possibility of offering free 1<sup>st</sup> year Branch (not national) membership if join at events was thought to be a good idea.

There was an inconclusive discussion on how we could go about getting wallers to join,

There was some discussion of the level of branch fees . £16 might discourage some especially when taken in conjunction with national, however the fees do not really cover Stonechat and basic running costs.

### Joint events

Events with other Branches had been popular with the groups from OYD and Cheshire, but had limited Branch attendance, with no Branch members at BBQ. There was possible funding for work at Plas Derwen and a possible return to Llanrhaedr yM. For now these events should continue as long as Sean was happy to organise them andthe other Branches wanted them.

### Walks

Sean was very disappointed with attendance. One way forward would be to run in conjunction with other walking groups

### Competitions

It was felt that organising a competition was too much of a drain on resources, both manpower and financial and efforts were not really appreciated by competitors who by and large gave little back to the branch.

We had been asked by Snowdonia Society to help. They had already got funding but were not sure on site. It was felt we really ought to be with them, but it was essential that it was at an event, that Hafod y llan was far from ideal, also we would need more out of it in terms of publicityas a major reason for organising a competition was to raise the profile of walling and ourselves

### Demonstrations

We must have a presence at Royal Welsh, Ray and Colin offered to help. There was a problem with commitment and numbers to be at many, often a lot of effort. Whilst important was very much a case of we could only do what members willing to do rather than try to be at many.

### Stonechat

There was a discussion as to scheduling/ Branch news, and general distribution. Possibly better to have a Branch news advertising AGM rather than Stonechat, but that this wouldn't necessarily work with the reality/inevitable hiccups when trying to get Stonechat out. Sean said he hoped to work out a way of getting a copy to every DSWA member at some point but funding this would be an issue and DSWA would be unlikely to meet the cost.

There were no substantive ideas as to other methods of fundraising/increasing circulation.

Ray suggested that for general fundraising it might be possible to have a specialist 'fundraising talk' from Freeman-Attwood ie charging for the event. There was scepticism as to the viability but Ray would consult and see what might be arranged.

## 9. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

At this point Arwel Huws questioned the agenda order and procedure He was assured this was a format adopted by DSWA GB AGM, and was standard as carried out by the branch in recent years. The agenda had been properly tabled in advance and accepted as it was thought best to see where we thought we might be going and what was expected before people stood.

Chairman - Geraint Evans

Proposed – Sean Adcock      Seconded - Arwel Huws

Vice Chairman – Iolo Jones

Proposed – Geraint Evans      Seconded – Craig Evans

Treasurer, Colin Brown

Proposed – Craig Evans      Seconded – Sean Adcock

Secretary, Sean Adcock

Proposed- Craig Evans      Seconded – Colin Brown

Training Officer, Paul Smyth

Propose – Sean Adcock      Seconded – Bill Sheppard

Eastern Representative, Craig Evans

Proposed – Sean Adcock      Seconded – Colin Brown

Sean proposed a vote of thanks to outgoing officer Richard Jones for his work on the committee, this was unanimously agreed.

## 10. Appointment of Independent Inspector/Auditor for the Annual Accounts

It was noted that in future we need to get accounts out with AGM Notification (officially 14 days before hand). This had been a problem this time because of Sean absence.

Noted that we should have the accounts audited in the past this had not been done for a couple of years, previously it had been done by our bank HSBC Cerrig y Drudion. Not sure what the current position

was as we now deal essentially internet banking. Craig would ask his contacts in HSBC Ruthin and liaise with Colin to take forward for next year

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS as may be properly accepted at an AGM

Sean reported that Geraint Evans and Karl Roebuck had had their Master Craftsmen certificates reinstated following a review of procedures partly instigated by questions he had raised.

The importance of voting in the forthcoming DSWA ELECTIONS in order to assure a chance of Welsh representation on the reformatted Trustee Board

There being no other business the meeting was concluded at 9.40pm

The meeting was to be followed by a presentation from Bill Sheppard on the 'Rock Carved City of Petra' Time being short this was postponed, Bill would be unable to give before Spring so tentatively booked for Autumn meeting.