

Trustees' Annual Report for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Charity name: Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group

Charity registration number: 1131782

Objectives and Activities

Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document	The Charity's objectives are: to advance the education of the public in general (and particularly amongst professional and amateur historians, architects and archaeologists and local communities) on the subject of pre-1700 buildings in north Wales, where possible using dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) & architectural recording; to promote research into the history of such buildings by volunteers and specialists for the public benefit in all aspects of that subject; and to publish the useful results. Our vision is "celebrating Welsh Heritage through the study of traditional houses and the lives of the people who lived in them".
Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.	Main activities: i) Newsletter: this bilingual quarterly publication informs members of activities & projects planned & undertaken & grants received and Branch members also share their recent research. This is an important way in which the charity shows what has been achieved in relation to our mission. ii) Website: this site has been updated and is very well used by interested people all over the world. iii) Study Tour: These have not been revived following the Covid-19 pandemic. iv) Monthly lectures on Zoom have become a regular & well attended part of our annual programme. v) Branches: During this year another 2 branches have lost their secretaries, which we have not yet replaced. Having lost 2 branch secretaries last year, this means 4 out of the 6 branches have no person in an administrative one of these branches is limping along. New secretaries at one of the 2 other branches have generated a very active branch, with many new members. The other branch secretary is working hard and is including members from an adjacent branch with no secretary in their activities. The active branches are meeting face to face, intermittently visiting houses or studying topics of local interest. See 'Other optional information' for details. vi) Outreach & publicity: this normally takes place through an annual lecture, use of the media, the website and outreach events. Cancellations of some of these events which normally generate considerable public interest and are considered an integral part of furthering our charitable purposes. The annual lecture was given using Zoom. vii) Seeking additional old buildings to study: Members normally visit and research such buildings across north Wales inviting the householders to become involved and give written permission for their house to be assessed, sampled, recorded or researched. This year, fewer visits were undertaken following the retirement of personnel, but numbers of interested householders are again increasing and considerable online research continues to be undertaken. The Edeirnion Project has focussed on specific houses within the Denbighshire Branch area. viii) Raising funds: usually through seeking grants & fund-raising events in order to undertake additional dendrochronology, building recording, research and publications. No fund-raising events were held this year. One grant was successfully obtained.

Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit	It is confirmed that this is the case.
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Additional information

Policy on grant making	Grants are not made to others.
Policy on social investment including program related investment	N/A
Contribution made by volunteers	Volunteers / members undertake and freely contribute a considerable amount of time & expertise to the activities of the charity, especially in leadership roles, house visits and house history research.

Achievements and Performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.	i) Membership: At the end of the financial year there were 244 paid up members. ii) Publications: iii) Projects: The Denbighshire branch has been awarded a £1,000 Tesco “Bags of Help” Community Fund grant towards a local history project which has now been delayed. iii) Projects: The Denbighshire branch was awarded a £1,000 Tesco “Bags of Help” Community Fund grant towards a local history project, pre Covid. It will probably be used to complete the Edeirion Project. The Conwy Branch was awarded a £1,166 Tesco “Bags of Help” Community Fund grant towards a local history project, just as the first Covid lockdowns occurred. The money is being used for Branch activities, printing House Histories and funding small scale research. iv) Grants: A Woodtiger Fund grant for £5,224.70 and a Vernacular Architecture Group grant for £3,300.00 were received to help fund the Edeirion Project. £137.20 remains of these grants and a small additional sum may be needed to fund one further visit. The delay in completing this project is down to the fact that the Swansea University laboratory has accumulated big backlogs caused by heavy demand and serious equipment problems. All the dating results are now with us, but further research is still needed before reports can be finalised. Two houses dated using conventional ring-width analysis: one (Hafod yr Afr, Cynwyd), despite rather wide date ranges (1522-52 and 1533-63) showed that one bay of the hall was floored shortly after the primary construction phase and that it never functioned as an open hall— a rapid response to changing fashion that we are encountering a lot in North Wales; the other, dated 1560, small but high status, built quite possibly for a cleric, has rare integral boarding between the rafters (maybe using church carpenters). The other two houses were dated using the stable isotope method. Both are substantial gentry houses: one, a cruck-framed open hall and storeyed cross wing, dated 1425 and 1426 respectively and the other a cruck-framed hall range with storeyed ends in series dated 1417: these are very early in a Welsh context but especially striking here because both are deep in Glyndwr country, an indication of how rapidly the pacification process was expressed in major building projects. The latter two will feature in an article on building in the post-Glyndwr period; the tree-ring dating reports, building surveys and house histories will be available on the Discovering Old Welsh Houses and RCAHMW websites. (One, on Hafod yr Afr, Cynwyd, is already on our website.) The TRD results will appear in <i>Vernacular Architecture</i> 57 (2025).
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Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.	v) Completed work is published digitally on our website (discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk), and is available on <i>Coflein</i> - the RCAHMW website, <i>Archwilio</i> and the Welsh Heritage Environment Records (HER) & in local Archives / Record Offices. vi) Consolidation of previous research: Started in previous years, this is being developed and is becoming our major focus. This important new phase of activity will inform our future planning. It will, for a time, result in fewer of our traditional activities. vii) House visits: Although 'formal' DOWH house visits were far less than usual (seeing that 4 branches were without secretaries), considerable numbers of house owners were contacted by DOWH members who are helping with 'outreach' in Denbighshire and neighbouring parts of Merionethshire and Conwy etc. These contacts were in relation to Parishes Project research as well as possible DOWH 'assessment' visits, resulting in far more suitable houses to visit than can be fitted in. viii) Dendrochronology: Again, due to the charity's new focus, dendrochronology (and isotope dating) was only undertaken within the Edeirnion Project. ix) Architectural Recording: In 2024-2025 architectural recording was only undertaken within the Edeirnion Project. x) House History & other Research: This continues at a number of houses as part of each of the above projects & branch activity, and by individual members. xi) Accountability: The charity continues to share its achievements widely & give opportunities for others to participate in our charitable purposes through the website, but without the normal range of activities. The charity continues to manage its resources responsibly showing good stewardship through the roles of trustees & branches and through externally examined accounts adopted by the trustees.
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Financial Review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period	The charity remains in a healthy financial position with £ 6,429.16 available for running of the organisation centrally. In addition, the charity holds £7,013.85 in its Project Fund (of which £1,300.00 is the reserve fund) and £2,417.14 in grant funds - these can only be used for the purpose for which they were granted. £ 323.05 is held in a non-monetary asset (equipment). Branches have £ 2,902.77 available, held both centrally and locally.
Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held	The reserves are held to cover any sudden drop in subscriptions or other income so that all invoices in a financial year can be covered.
Amount of reserves held	£1,300
Details of fund materially in deficit	None
Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern	None

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of charity's trusts:	None
Type of governing document	Constitution

How is the charity constituted?	Unincorporated charity
Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees	Trustees are elected at the June AGM and may stand for re-election. The Trustees may appoint any members who are willing to act as Trustees if vacancies arise between AGMs. The Trustees may allow members to observe Trustees' meetings, but those members are not permitted to vote.

Additional information

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	Agreed policies & procedures have been adopted for the induction & training of trustees. A new trustees Welcome Pack is now available online.
The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works	The charity is controlled by its governing document, a revised constitution adopted on 21 June 2013, and constitutes an unincorporated charity. All trustees gave their time voluntarily and received no remuneration apart from travelling @ 45p per mile and other out of pocket expenses. Trustees' meetings are held on Zoom three times a year. A small Management group meeting is held on zoom three times a year and focuses on Governance (including Admin & Finance). Research (including database management, & Parishes Project) and Engagement (including IT /Website, PR-Outreach, Publications & Newsletters occasionally meet as needed. These meetings report back to the trustees meetings. Minutes are kept for all meetings. The trustees regularly review all policies including safeguarding, governance and management arrangements.
Relationship with any related parties	The charity has excellent working relationships with organisations active in related fields. These normally include joint meetings, information exchange, sharing of speakers etc.

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group
Other name the charity uses	Darganfod Hen Dai Cymreig
Registered charity number	1131782
Charity's contact address	44 Rhos Manor, Penrhyn Avenue, Rhos on Sea, Conwy, LL28 4PN.

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Date of Appointment
Mrs Janice Dale	Denbighshire branch sec till June 2022 Chairman - from June 2022	Co-opted Sept 2012; App June 2013
Ms Alison Montgomery	Former Secretary	App June 2023 Resigned November 2024

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Mr Michael Sharratt	Secretary	Co-opted January 2025
Mrs Rosemary Brotherton	Treasurer – from April 2021	Co-opted April 2021; App June 2021
Dr Wally Barr	Former Flintshire branch sec	Co-opted Sept 2012; App June 2013
Ms Eleanor Carpenter	Engagement – from December 2024	June 2017
Dr Martin Cherry	Research; Former Merioneth branch sec	June 2014
Mr Richard Cuthbertson, MBE	Chairman (retired June 2022)	December 2008
Mrs Margaret Dunn	Secretary (retired June 2023) Former Caernarfonshire Branch sec	December 2008
Ms Zoe Henderson	Group Membership Secretary till December 2020	Co-opted Sept 2012; App June 2013; Resigned as membership secretary in December 2020, remains a trustee
Mrs Gill. Jones	Former Conwy branch sec	June 2021
Mr Peter Masters	Group website manager; Former Anglesey & Caernarfonshire branches sec	December 2011
Ms Jane Parry-Evans	Houses Management	June 2019
Mr John Townsend	Treasurer till April 2021	Co-opted June 2011; App June 2013 remains a trustee Retired June 2024

List of Discovering Old Welsh Houses - Talks:

Wednesday 10 April 2024.

Martin Cherry DOWH trustee. After Glyndŵr: Building in an age of anarchy.

Wednesday 8 May 2024. Dr Jenny Day. "The fair court of St Bernard": the poets' view of the Cistercian abbeys of Wales.

Wednesday 19 June 2024 (AGM). Robin Grove-White. Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates, Bangor University . "My dad the Communist landowner and other Anglesey tales"

Wednesday 9 October 2024

Matt Osmont, Practice Director at Donald Insall Associates conservation and creativity: breathing new life into old buildings

Wednesday 13 November 2024

Mary-Ann Constantine, Professor at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies
Recovering Downing Hall: Exploring the world of Thomas Pennant (1726-1798)

Wednesday 11 December 2024

Scott Lloyd, research manager for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales. Mapping North Wales before the Ordnance Survey

Wednesday 15 January 2025 Edward Parry and Martin Cherry

'The building that moved: Cwrt Plas yn Dre, Dolgellau and the enduring myth of Owain Glyn Dŵr's Parliament House'

Wednesday 12 February 2025

Vic Tyler-Jones, Doctoral Researcher, University of Bangor (ISWE)

'A trajectory of marginality - the life of the squatter settlement on Ruabon Mountain'

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Jessica John, Independent consultant on cultural heritage in Wales

'The lost Farmsteads of Ardudwy. Recording ruins and sharing the excitement'

Additional information

Corporate trustees – none

Name of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity - none

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others – none

Exemptions from disclosure - none

Other optional information

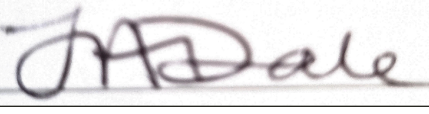
These monthly Zoom lectures proved very popular and are continuing on Zoom.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

	
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Full name(s)

Janice Dale

Michael Sharratt

Position (eg
Secretary, Chair, etc)

Chair

Meeting Secretary

Date

12th May 2025