



**MINUTES OF SVBWG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT
COWANE'S HOSPITAL, STIRLING ON SATURDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2015
AT 10.30AM**

**Present: Niall Logan (Chair), Veronica Fraser (Minutes) Peter Burman,
Frances Dunn, Munro Dunn, John Harrison, Stuart Jackson, Dorothy Kidd,
Jane Logan, Norman Middleton, Marion Robertson, Isabel Steel, Ben Tindall,
Alasdair Urquhart, Stewart Urquhart, Crissie White**

1. Apologies for absence were received from: Hugh Dinwoodie, Iain Fraser, John Gerrard, Sarah Headlam Stephen Jackson, John Knight, Margaret Mckay, Harry Mantell, Pat Newton, Carol Primrose, Ronnie Robertson, Bruce Walker, Marion Wood
2. The minutes of the last AGM held at RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh on 2 October 2014 at 10.30am were approved, proposed by Crissie White and seconded by Dorothy Kidd.
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
Item 3 Bruce Walker was initially reluctant when asked to become President but has now accepted the post.

Item 5 Niall has had further liaison with the Cumbria VAG.

Item 6 The proposed rise in subscriptions has now been implemented.

Item 10 Ronnie Robertson has now resigned from Council because of continuing ill health. The meeting expressed thanks to him for all his work over the years, and wished him well.

4. Chairman's Report

This time last year I reported that members were keen that the Group should continue to have conferences and field trips, must maintain its publishing, and might try to re-establish its surveying activity. However, the rather low turnout for our AGM and its attractive Conference programme today gives pause for thought.

A planned SPAB a thatch event, in collaboration with SVBWG, in Spring 2015 did not come to pass, and this is a shame as it had the potential to revive the Group's field meetings. However, there is still potential for collaboration with SPAB, and a meeting of Veronica, myself, and Lucy Stewart at SPAB is planned for the near future.

Another initiative is to collaborate with groups in the North of England, and to this end I attended the Vernacular Architecture Group's conference in Cumbria in July, and am in contact with the new Cumbria Vernacular Building Group. I submitted an account of SVBWG in the VAG August Newsletter. I shall be attending a joint meeting with the Cumbria and North East England groups on October 14th at Lanercost Priory in Cumbria, and making a presentation there; the objective of the meeting is to establish links between the groups. The Cumbria group would like to hold a joint meeting with SVBWG; their president, June Hall, has suggested a meeting in southern Scotland focused on bastles. It would need to be in a suitable location for members of both groups, with lectures and a practical or field trip element. My initial attempts to contact Tam Ward at Biggar have met with no success. I spent a fascinating day at Auchindrain Township with its curator, Bob Clark, and he is keen to host an SVBWG meeting there in the near future. What our group needs to discuss is what meetings are of interest, and what kind of contribution we might make to such meetings, so that they can truly be joint ones.

To my mind, the October conferences in Edinburgh for the last two years had attractive and successful formats and I am keen that proceedings be abstracted in *VB*, and appear on the website. However, if members show little interest in such a meeting – perhaps mainly because it is outside Edinburgh – we must think again. I have previously suggested that we might explore ways of involving members more. I wonder if letters to *Vernacular Building* might be of some value, or letters and comments appearing on the website; I feel that we need some ways of eliciting interaction between members outside meetings and *VB*.

Finally, I wish to thank my fellow Council members and office bearers for their support over the last year, particularly Dorothy Kidd our treasurer, Munro Dunn, publications officer, and especially Veronica Fraser who has kept the vital secretarial work going at a demanding time – with the merger of HS and RCAHMS – and who has organized today's meeting. I also thank Philip Graham, who is experiencing the same merger upheaval, but who is preparing our updated

website – which we hope to be able to launch once the dust has settled on the merger.

General discussion followed: Isabel Steel suggested the possibility of evening meetings in Edinburgh or Glasgow; Veronica noted that those organized by the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland are popular, though that organization has a much greater membership. The time of year of conferences needs to be considered, with May being chosen as the most popular in the 2013 survey of members. It might be worthwhile plotting the location of members when considering a venue.

5. Secretary's Report

Veronica has been engaged with correspondence resulting from the summer mailing, mostly relating to the rise in subscriptions, and also with organising the AGM and conference. She attended a meeting that gave an update on the SPAB/Historic Scotland Thatch Database project, which will hopefully lead to liaison between SVBWG and SPAB. She had a meeting with Philip Graham to discuss ongoing developments of the website and has also been looking into SVBWG banners for conferences. RCAHMS, where she is based, has now merged with Historic Scotland to form Historic Environment Scotland (HES); she will inform members if any of her contact details change.

6. Treasurer's Report

Dorothy thanked those members who have raised their subscriptions, and also thanked Hugh for his efforts in bringing in subscriptions in arrears; so far £1500 has been banked. SVBWG's greatest expense is the publication of Vernacular Building in hard copy, also the cost of postage has risen. However, funds raised by subscriptions next year should stand at £6000. To save money, the group's insurance has been cancelled as it is not needed for meeting in venues which are covered by public liability. If field meetings are carried out, this would be considered. Dorothy presented the accounts for the year 2014-15 to the meeting; these had previously been emailed to those members who have submitted email addresses.

7. Membership Secretary's Report

Membership stands at 205 people (of whom 25 are joint members) and 22 corporate members. 57 people were removed for non-payment or resigned following the recent rise in subscriptions and also a communication campaign by Hugh aimed at those members not paying the full rate. A suggestion from the floor raised the idea of Facebook or Twitter communications to reach different potential members, and considering other means to attract younger people.

8. *Vernacular Building* Editor's Report

VB 38, containing seven main articles and several shorter ones, was printed in the second half of July, in time to be sent out with the annual SVBWG newsletter. All contributors were delightfully cooperative and quick to respond to queries. Veronica was as supremely helpful as always, and it was great also to have Niall on board, giving various pieces of feedback and also reviving the Reviews section. Dave Barber, our regular contact at Robertson Printers, kindly proposed a new type of paper for the inside pages: thicker, ensuring less show-through; better printing quality for images; and lighter in weight than the one we have used for previous issues (hence reducing, or certainly not adding to, postal costs) – all for the same price as we paid before. I am delighted with it, and hope that everyone else is too.

We so far have six very likely articles lined up for next year, and several further possibles. Additional proposals or submissions are welcome, as always. Abi had informed Council that she is now obliged to charge VAT; despite this extra cost, Council is keen for Abi to continue in her role while exploring any avenues which might result in the VAT being refunded.

Discussion: The meeting congratulated Abi for producing another excellent journal. There was discussion regarding the sale of PDFs of publications on the SVBWG website; this could replace the need to retain old stock. Grants can be obtained from bodies as Scottish Natural Heritage for such activities. Niall is liaising with the Scottish Local History Forum to have recent issues of *Vernacular Building* on sale through the SLHF website.

9. Publication Sales Report

Munro reported that publication sales have been very low, but there are some signs of improvement. Niall and Iain Fraser have sold volumes at conferences. Moving the book stocks from the Glasite Meeting House to Carricknowe Church has reduced costs, and made access easier.

10. Conferences: Update and discussion of future events.

At last year's AGM, a suggestion was made of a thatching event with SPAB; this has not yet taken place but discussions continue. SVBWG has been invited to revisit Auchindrain. Niall is to attend a meeting of the Cumbria VAG at Lanercost Priory on 14th October, and invited members to join him (details had been circulated to members by email). In Summer 2016, HES is to launch its conservation centre at the Engine Shed, Stirling, and it is hoped that might be a future venue for activities. Mark Watson is liaising with the Scottish Industrial Heritage Society regarding joint meetings. The Inner Forth Landscape Initiative is another organisation of interest. The Museum of Rural Life will in 2016 be

holding events relating to its basket collections, which could tie in with thatching. The future of SVBWG activities may lie in ad hoc rather than formal events, which would be advertised through the website and by email. All members are invited to provide suggestions, and if possible, offer assistance.

11. Election of Office Bearers and Council members

At a Council meeting in January, Bruce Walker was invited to become President. This move, and the re-election of the current Council was proposed by John Harrison and seconded by Peter Burman.

12. AOCB

There was no further business, and the meeting closed at 1125.

President	Dr Bruce Walker
Chair	Prof Niall A Logan
Vice-chair & Conference Secretary	vacant
Treasurer	Dorothy Kidd
Secretary	Veronica Fraser
Membership Secretary	Hugh Fearn
VB Editor	Abigail Grater
Publications Sales	Munro and Frances Dunn
Council members	Mark Watson, Crissie White