



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021 MINUTES

Minutes of the 110th Annual General Meeting of the Society of Genealogists held online on Wednesday, 1st of December 2021, at 6pm.

180 members were recorded as being present.

President of the Society, Patric Dickinson, LVO, MA, FSG, Clarenceux King of Arms, took the Chair.

The Chairman reported that the Trustees minutes of the 109th Annual General Meeting were approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2020. They have been published on the Society's website and do not require the approval of this meeting.

1. THE AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Chairman invited the members to note the Auditor's Report on pages 12-14 of the Full Annual Report 2020, which has been published on the Society's website. He highlighted that the Auditors were satisfied that the Society's Accounts gave a true and fair view of the financial position. He took the Auditor's Report as read.

No comments were made.

2. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Chairman invited Mr Ed Percival, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, to speak on the Annual Report.

The Chairman noted that two questions directly pertaining to the Annual Accounts were submitted in advance by Dr Geoff Swinfield and Paul Blake, and these were answered first.

Question: Dr Geoff Swinfield and Paul Blake asked in what capacity was a member of staff was employed at an annual emolument of £90,000-£100,000, and has that level of remuneration continued into the 2021 financial year?

Mr Percival answered the member of staff was the outgoing Chief Executive of over 20 years, who left on an amicable basis. The amount reported was commensurate with her entitlement and is an anomaly in 2020, not a recurring item for 2021 or any following years.

Question: Dr Geoff Swinfield and Paul Blake asked what the total amount received for the 14 Charterhouse Buildings sale was. Was that total amount included in the 2020 accounts or was a percentage included in the 2019 accounts? The value of the assets of Society (see pages 15 & 16) appears to have increased by £3.4 million during 2019 and by an additional £3.5 million in 2020.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees answered that the full amount was included in the 2020 accounts, and is on page 19 of the Annual Report for 2020. It stands at £6.97 million.

Mr Ed Percival, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, presented the Annual Report of the Trustees for 2020. He reiterated that a combination of declining membership and a steady increase in costs meant that the Society's survival depended on the sale of the 14 Charterhouse building. Over £6 million was awarded for this sale, giving the Society vital funds for a complete overhaul. He ensured that the future of the Society would be healthier, and would include access to education programmes, unique assets, improved working systems, properly preserved collections, and a new affordable home for members.

He stated that the scale of this operation required a change in staff. Neil Allcock stepped off the Trustee Board to lead the Transformation Programme. In December 2020 the former Chief Executive June Perrin chose to retire after more than 20 years with the Society. Her dedicated service culminated in the sale of the Charterhouse Building. With the full approval of the Charity Commission, Laura Doyle stepped off the Trustee Board and was appointed the interim CEO.

This year's Annual Report was taken during this period of change. The task of coping and trialling new systems of operation was undertaken, and the storing and packing away the library was completed. Government documents were also in need of revision, and had been included in the 2021 AGM.

The Charterhouse premises was left in October 2021, and negotiations for a new premises in London were underway. The new premises was estimated to be operational by the end of 2022. In the meantime, the transformation and educational programme would operate out of the temporary premises. The Society will be revitalised through these changes.

Dr Wanda Wyporska became the new permanent CEO in October 2021. Laura Doyle was thanked for being the interim CEO, and the hard work of the volunteers was acknowledged. The Trustee Board was thanked for steering the Society through unstable times. Ms Amelia Bennett, the Vice Chair of the Board, was thanked for completing her term as a Trustee.

Mr Ed Percival thanked the Members for remaining with the society throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the dedication of the Society as a whole, a promising future for a revitalised SoG with a growing membership base was assured.

3. THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2020

In the absence of Mr Ray O'Connell, the Treasure of the Board of Trustees, the Chairman requested that Mr Ed Percival speak on the Annual Accounts of the Board of Trustees for the year 2020.

Mr O'Connell supplied bullet points and these were as followed:

- Net 2020 income was £3,245,122
- This income was distorted by the 14 Charterhouse sale, a revalued freehold of £3,265,334
- Donations and legacies remained strong at £130,4000, and were £171,056 in 2019
- Transformation was well advanced and fully provided for financially
- The designated funds for acquisition of a new premises and relocation were £4,000,000
- Surplus funds will be deployed in income producing investments

The Chair asked for any questions relevant to the Annual Report or the Accounts.

Question: James Halsted asked a question on the accounts. In last year's report, the Treasurer said that a long-term, sustainable financial model was being aimed for. Where can the evidence for this be seen in the accounts?

Mr Ed Percival answered that this was being built towards by reducing rising costs, moving to an affordable premises, and focusing on membership growth. Tackling these three tasks would ensure future financial sustainability.

There being no further questions, the Chairman stated that voting to approve the Annual Report and Annual Accounts was carried out in advance.

Resolution to receive the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees: Frank Hardy moved to receive the motion and Neville Taylor seconded. All in favour 54; all against 0; abstentions 3. The motion was carried.

Resolution to receive the Annual Accounts to 31 December 2020. Julian Duffus moved to receive the motion and Graham Walter seconded. All in favour 53; all against 0; abstentions 4. The motion was carried.

4. THE APPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITORS

In accordance with Section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, the appointment of Richard Place Dobson as Auditors must be put to the Meeting, proposed and seconded by a Member from the body of the meeting.

Dr Colin Chapman moved to appoint Richard Place Dobson as auditors of the Society. Nova Atkinson seconded the motion. All in favour 56; All against 0; abstentions 0. It was noted that one ballot was not marked on this motion. The motion was carried.

5. CEO'S REPORT AND UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Chief Executive Dr Wanda Wyporska.

Dr Wyporska reported that though not a genealogist, she is an Social Historian who specialises in the Early Modern period. She is passionate about sharing her own passion for history, and has spent most of her life deeply involved with history at all levels.

She was a Starun Senior Scholar at Hertford College, Oxford; her first book was shortlisted for a Folklore Award; she was recently elected as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and she is a Visiting Fellow at the University of York. Through her own academic background and interest in history, she hopes to build partnerships with academic institutions, disciplines, and community organisations. Her love of the varied collections of the society has allowed her to pursue her own interest in her Polish and Bajan roots, as well as her family in Devon.

Her previous experience as a charity CEO, working with membership organisation, and fundraising could be utilised to address to the anxieties regarding the Society's survival. She stressed that SoG could not survive on the funding of membership subscription alone, and that diversification of income was vital. Becoming knowledge exchange partners with universities, connecting with a range of disciplines, working with communities, and building offers towards trusts and foundations would forge new connections and allow for SoG to diversify.

Dr Wyporska gave an update on 2021. She thanked Ms Laura Doyle, the casual workers, volunteers, members, the Board, and Mr Neil Allcock for leading the transformation of the society. The transformation of the membership system, events system, website, banking system and HR were needed in order to build a strong foundation for the society.

The digitisation of the Monumental Inscriptions and Parish Registers were being worked towards and was a priority. She assured in 2022 the online systems would be replaced, new ones would be integrated and new deals would be made. This new system would ensure that members have a streamlined online experience as Frontis would be retired. The agreement made with Free BMD, FreeCEN and FreeREG would also be integrated into the system. 12 Days of Christmas had been launched, and SoG Saturdays would follow.

The education and events programme would be continued, to entertain current members and advertise to new members. Corporate sponsorships and academic partnerships would be pursued. Displays and exhibitions were hoped for in the future space, though the library and archives will always be at the heart of the organisation. Additionally, a rota system allowing for volunteers and members to visit the current premises was being worked towards and is hoped to be established in in the first half of 2022.

6. THE APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES OF THE SOCIETY

The Chairman announced that the Articles of the Society currently allowed for a maximum of ten members of the Board of Trustees. There were four vacancies, and the end of one Trustee's term meant that there were five vacancies.

Mr Andy Douglas, Mr David Gill and Mr Darris Williams offered themselves for election. Short biographies of the candidates were circulated.

The Articles allowed that if the number of those nominated or standing for re-election are fewer than the number of vacancies, those offering themselves could be appointed to the Board of Trustees without a formal election. This year there were more spaces than candidates, and therefore the nominees Mr Andy Douglas, MR David Gill and Mr Darris Williams were automatically elected.

7. THE ADOPTION OF THE UPDATES ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF THE SOCIETY BY SPECIAL RESOLUTION

The Chairman noted that three questions pertaining to the articles were submitted in advance by Dr Geoff Swinfield and Paul Blake, and these were answered first.

Question 1: Dr Geoff Swinfield and Paul Blake asked a question on the constitution. How can it be correct to have a vote to accept the Report from the Board of Trustees, the Accounts for 2020 and the Special Resolution for the Adoption of the Updated Articles of Association in advance of the AGM, before members have had the opportunity to raise any questions, voice any and all concerns or object to any of the suggested amendments?

Mr Rob George answered that holding an AGM during the Covid pandemic had been challenging. The current constitution did not envisage and did not clearly permit online meetings and online voting. Last year, temporary legislation enabled all charities and companies to hold meetings online, and this year an agreement was obtained from the regulator. Regular items requiring a vote at the AGM are to elect trustees, the President and Vice-Presidents: appoint auditors; and accept the accounts. The constitution allows for voting at the meeting, voting by proxy or voting in advance. Voting needed to be made accessible to the largest proportion of membership possible, and in the 2021 AGM the attendee number was significantly larger than in the last in-person AGM conducted. The limitations of the software being used to host an electronic meeting also needed to be accounted: hence the reliance on proxies and voting in advance.

For the Society as for charities and companies, the accounts are approved by the Board of Trustees, following a review by the auditors. If members vote not to accept the accounts, that would normally be because of some material misstatement or something so significant that it is effectively a vote of no confidence in the auditors. There is time between the publication of the notice of the AGM and the date of the vote to raise significant questions, so that votes can be valid in advance. Ideally there should be an opportunity at the AGM to ask questions about the accounts, though such questions would generally be matters of presentation or interpretation, in other words questions of clarification.

A similar logic applies for the Special Resolution. The Articles themselves will later be discussed at length, but any significant material changes to the constitution would be of the nature of a change to the charitable objects, or to the rights of the members: no such changes have been taken. The changes made come largely under two headings – bringing the constitution in line with current law and regulation; or else bringing more clarity to how the trustees exercise the powers they already have. Both those types of changes also create more flexibility than there was previously, including the flexibility to change the ways of working to accommodate the sorts of concerns and questions that are likely to be voiced in discussion with members.

Question 2: Dr Swinfield and Mr Blake asked about changes to the Articles of Association. There has been no opportunity for members of the Society to discuss, in advance of the meeting, why the listed changes have been proposed. It seems that there will be no discussion at the meeting of each individual change and why it has been deemed by the Trustees to be required. The membership has been asked to vote for their acceptance en bloc before the meeting. How can that be democratic? It seems that, in some cases, the Trustees are aiming to grant themselves increased powers without recourse to the membership. If one objects to any one of the changes, how can that vote against be registered? This would appear to be unconstitutional.

Mr Rob George answered that legally, the trustees have ultimate accountability for the work and assets of the SoG and trustees therefore also exercise full control over the charity. This is already set out in article 44 of the ‘old’ constitution of the SoG, perhaps too sweepingly.

This article was quoted: ‘The business of the Society shall be governed by the Board of Trustees which may exercise all such powers of the Society, and do on behalf of the Society all such acts as may be exercised and done by the Society’.

Trustees are in fact restricted by the need to deliver a public benefit, aligned only to the purposes of the charity, within legal and regulatory frameworks. The trustees’ regulator expects that trustees review the governing document regularly, and each year the board are asked by the Commission when the last review took place with the expectation that they should review the document every three years. Most recently, the Commission has actively encouraged charities to change their constitutions in a number of ways, in particular to allow for electronic meetings and voting.

SoG’s constitution had not been reviewed comprehensively for some time, and was out of step with company law, charity law and the changed circumstances of the charity. To meet that regulatory expectation, the trustees commissioned a review shortly after the last AGM, working with a leading charity law expert. In a membership charity, members do have specific powers, set out in the constitution and in the case of the SoG, the powers and duties of different categories of membership are prescribed by the Board, which is in article 9 of the ‘old’ constitution.

The powers of the members are to elect trustees, elect auditors and elect the President or vice-President (depending on term limits). The members also receive the report and accounts, and they vote on resolutions such as a resolution to change the governing document. Among the changes to the governing document there is greater clarity on the powers of the trustees but also how those powers should properly be exercised, again in line with charity law and good practice, and that includes greater clarity on the appointment and removal of officers, members and fellows.

In that same spirit of clarity, the new constitution aims to include some elements that were previously covered by standing orders and were therefore harder to access. Significant material changes to the constitution would be of the nature of a change to the charitable objects, or to the rights of the members: such changes have not been made. If they were made, it may have been logical to split the vote into sections, but ultimately a vote has been proposed that favours the principles of modernisation and clarification.

Question 3: Dr Swinfield and Mr Blake asked that in article 15, as the members of the Board of Trustees may not have sufficient genealogical knowledge and expertise to pass judgement on potential Fellows, so why should the membership rely on the Board to decide on their suitability and elect or decline those proposed? Were the Fellows or their chairman consulted regarding this amendment?

Mr Rob George answered that the organisation was satisfied with the sufficient genealogical knowledge on the Board; Graham Walter, Heather Nowlan, Darris Williams, Ray O'Connell and Andy Douglas all bring genealogical expertise to the Board. Furthermore, the Board acts on advice from the staff and the Fellows themselves.

The Board is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the charity.

The Standing Order A Section A Scope (2) state that the 'Board of Trustees may delegate its powers except: (k) Matters regarding Fellowship and Awards.'

Standing Order F also states that 'A Scope (b) Nomination for Fellowship shall be made by six Fellows of the Society and the procedure for nomination and election shall be such as the Board of Trustees shall from time to time prescribe in its SOs, provided that the election shall require a total of votes not less than one quarter of those eligible to vote and not less than two thirds of those voting.'

These provisions bring forward the trustees' responsibilities into the articles. On that basis, there was no need to consult the Fellows, as the provisions were already in place.

The old constitution – and charity law – imply that the trustees have full power, including to appoint and remove Fellows and, in theory, to completely to abolish fellowship as a category too. The new articles make explicit how that power should be exercised, including any recourse that should be available if that were to happen – it is a limitation on power.

This will, of course, be kept under review. However, if a significant problem arose from the actions of a Fellow as a result of using their credentials – for example fraud, or safeguarding – the ultimate responsibility rests with the trustees. At the time, there did not appear to be a mechanism that sets out a clear process for the removal of Fellows.

The chairman asked if there were any more questions on the Special Resolution.

Question: Dr Geoff Swinfield asked whether, theoretically, the 8 Trustees that are going to propose Fellows and decide who are eligible could nominate and vote in themselves as Fellows?

Mr Rob George answered that this was always the case. The Special Resolution would make this explicit and make restrictions on it, rather than making a change.

Question: Mr Alec Tritton stated that the updated Article of Association mentioned in numerous places “Standing Orders”. These did not appear anywhere on the SoG website. He had for a copy in order to fully understand the updates. Should these not be freely available to members, particularly as, for example, the criteria for being a Trustee are not in the Articles but “hidden” in the Standing Orders?

Dr Wanda Wyporska answered that unfortunately, it was not known why the Standing Orders were not on the website. However, they were due for revision at the next Board meeting. Following this, they will be made public. Additionally, the new Articles will include many of the Standing Orders so that there will be one document for external issues, as some Standing Orders apply only to internal issues (such as finance and expenditure). The process of amending and updating the standing orders was underway. The Board will decide to make the relevant standing orders public in the future.

Mr Ed Percival answered regarding the criteria for becoming a trustee. He stated that anyone who would like to become a Trustee should put their name forward.

Question: Mr James Halstead asked about the updated Article 10: Trustees’ powers. Can an example be given of a Standing Order that rarely changes?

Dr Wanda Wyporska answered that the Scheme of Delegation to Committees would most likely would not need significant changes in terms of the procedures. The Order on the Scheme on Delegations to Officers, who are the internal officers of the organisation, would also likely not need significant changes. With that said, everything was under revision because Orders have not been revised for an extended period.

The Chairman noted that standing orders were previously available in the past but this may not be standard current practice.

Question: Mr Alec Tritton asked a supplementary question. Why can a potential member ask to become a Trustee without nomination or reference from a pre-existing Trustee?

Ed Percival answered the full responsibilities of Trustees are told to all prospective applicants prior to their application, so that they are fully aware of the intricacies of the role and the significant hours Trustees need to commit.

Question: Mr Tritton asked another supplementary question. Why is the routine for becoming a trustee hidden within the Standard Orders?

Mr Ed Percival answered that this issue predates his time in the chair. However, it will be amended.

Question: Ms Maria Roberts asked would the new regulations would allow for voting at a zoom meeting? The approximate 60 votes received was lesser than the 180 attendees at the zoom meeting's peak attendance.

Dr Wyporska answered that Ms Roberts' concerns were shared. There had previously been hope for the AGM to be hosted in person in the current premises, where in person voting could go ahead. Under the advice of the Charity Commission, it was decided that the AGM would continue online. Proxy voting was undertaken so that as many people could vote as possible, and multiple reminders were given to members online and in the post. The future AGM may be a hybrid event so all who cannot visit London can join and combine this with a face-to-face meeting.

Question: Ms Roberts asked a supplementary point. A poll function is available on zoom, so regarding the possible future of hybrid meetings, could this not be considered?

Dr Wyporska answered that this will be explored in the future so that a hybrid vote could be available in future AGM meetings.

Question: Mrs Deborah Stock asked if the standing orders could be made available in a members only section of the website, so the public could not see their potentially sensitive matters?

Dr Wyporska answered that this was a matter for the Trustees.

Mr John Barnard commented that Article 26 defines Standing Orders as being made and published by the Trustees from time to time which suggests that the published items should be available to members.

The vote on the Special Resolution was conducted in advance.

Special Resolution: That the Articles of Association in the form attached to the notice of the meeting be approved and adopted as the Articles of Association of the Society in substitution for and to the exclusion of the existing Articles of Association of the Society, including the relevant provisions of the Memorandum of Association that would otherwise be treated as provisions of the Articles of Association under Section 28 of the Companies Act 2006.

Graham Ford moved to receive the Special Resolution to adopt the updated Articles of Association of the Society. Janice Tullock seconded the motion. All in favour; 54; all against 2; abstentions 1. The Special Resolution was adopted.

8. AWARDS

The Chairman noted that the Trustees did not think it correct to highlight some as opposed to others due to the exceptional circumstances of the previous year.

He concluded that normal nominations for Fellowship, certificates of appreciation, certificates of recognition, and the presentation of the Prince Michael of Kent Award would be resumed in the following year.

All volunteers, staff, members and non-members were thanked for the support they had given to the Society.

9. OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

The Chairman noted that a question had been submitted prior to the meeting and would be answered.

Question: Ms Diana Swinfield asked what the current, up to date membership figure was? How does it split up into full and associate members? How many full members are paying the 'old' rate? In regard to her membership question, she considered a total figure to help show the situation since the Annual Report of 2020, where the members totalled at 7,530. She stated that the general presumption was that membership would suffer during the closure period, and members wished to know the full extent, especially considering the importance of membership fees as regular income.

She stated her reason for asking was because of the differing categories and fees for memberships; annually, new full members paid £80, old full members paid £53, and associate members paid £56 in 2021. If it was not possible to share specific figures, could she hear about the general trends of membership? What category of membership is lost and what category was gained in the previous year?

Ms Rebecca Gregory, Head of Membership, answered. The current up to date membership figure was taken on the 29th of November as 7,123.

This broke down into; Member UK: 5,380, Full Members: 367, Associate Members: 732, and Overseas Members: 456. Additionally, there were 150 Members subscribed for over 50 years, and 38 Honorary Members, both of which were free. The Member UK category paid the legacy rate of an average £51 annually, and the Members' Overseas category paid the legacy rate of an average £38 annually. In 2020 there were 452 new Members, made up of 115 Full Members and 336 Associate Members. However, predictably, some Full Members were lost.

Diversification of income was being explored, and the membership packages, rates and institutional packages for the education sector, corporate sponsorships and more were under review. Various campaigns were also underway in order to promote the society. These included SoG Saturdays, the Twelve Days of Christmas and regular releases of treasures, lesser-known collections and newly digitized materials, such as the Pedigree Rolls, Parish Registers and Monumental Inscriptions.

The Chair asked if anyone had a question on these figures.

Question: Mr Alec Tritton asked if there were still country members?

Mrs Rebecca Gregory answered that the category no longer exists and no one is paying that rate.

Question: Ms Moira Black asked how much of the income in the 2020 accounts related to membership subscriptions?

Ms Gregory answered that is in the 2020 Annual Report on page 24, and the amount is £362,894.

Question: Ms Diana Swinfield asked that as the 2021 AGM was held in December and was out of date, would it be held in July next year?

Dr Wanda Wyporska answered that this was not ideal, but the Society was dependant on the completion of the audit to host the AGM. There was a huge upheaval due to the move, and complex financial issues meant that the audit took much longer than expected, hence the AGM being held in December. The next AGM was expected to be held in June or July.

The Chairman noted that a question had been submitted in advance by Dr Swinfield and Mr Blake.

Question: Dr Geoff Swinfield and Mr Paul Blake asked on the 2021 Accounts. As the Accounts to hand covered 2020, a period that had ended 22 months prior, they are now of historic interest. They asked to be informed of:

- a) The cost of packaging and storing the library until a new premises is purchased. Can this include the costs of packing materials, casual labour, transport to restore and additional expenditure?
- b) What was the budgeted purchase price and cost of fitting out a new premises?
- c) What was the estimated annual cost of maintaining the majority of the books and microform in storage, year on year?

Dr Wanda Wyporska answered:

- a) The full figures will be available in the 2021 accounts. In addition, it was difficult to predict these costs as they were affected by how long the temporary office was occupied for. Some parts of the costs incurred, such as removal or conservation work,

ought to have been carried out in the normal scope of business. The current estimate was roughly £44,000 for removals between various storage sites, £3,500 for ingest, £3,500 for commensurate insurance, £20,000 for labels and boxes, £12,500 for storage and £28,000 for casual workers. This totalled at £111,500.

- b) The budgeted purchase price for the premises and fit out was £4 million.
- c) The estimated cost of maintaining the majority of materials was not known at the time, for multiple reasons. Firstly, what would become open access, what would be digitised, and what will be disposed was not yet known.
 - i. LDS microfilms. Trustee Darris Williams reported that the LDS digitisation programme would result in only 15% of LDS microfilms being retained. This would substantially reduce heritage storage costs. Mr Williams provided a spreadsheet indicating which films could be extracted, and entering barcodes into Restore's retrieval system had begun. The digitisation was hoped to be commenced by the beginning of 2022.
 - ii. Heritage Storage. Store A contained many duplicate items, eliminating and retaining the best copies only was planned. The possibility of rehousing a large collection of GWR ledgers from the former storage at Braintree, whilst retaining control of them, was under consideration. This would free up considerable space. Once a new premises is occupied, at least one third of the collections is aimed to be on the shelves, further reducing the costs of items in heritage storage.
 - iii. General Storage. The 750-800 reports of the Amalgamated Engineering Union was being held in general storage, which drove up the general storage cost considerably. These reports were bulky, and only two to three could fit in a single R14 box. They could not be admitted to heritage storage because many of the covers were mould-affected at the former Braintree storage space. The cost of mould-cleaning would complicate rehousing the reports at another repository. It also complicated the Society's ability to derive value for them for members.

The remainder of the general storage items were furnishings, IT and other equipment. These were anticipated to be removed to the new library, or disposed of if not needed. This would therefore bring down their storage cost to virtually nil.

10. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chairman asked for any specific questions regarding the CEO report.

Question: Ms Anne Ramon asked is Wanda full time at SoG?

Dr Wanda Wyporksa answered that she was employed full-time.

The Chairman asked for any questions regarding the meeting as a whole.

Question: Julian Duffus asked have we completed the purchase of a new premises?

Dr Wanda Wyporska answered no, this has not been completed.

Question: Mr Grant White asked if the Trustees had set a budget for digitisation?

Dr Wyporska answered that the Trustees had approved the digitisation of some of the collection, including Monumental Inscriptions. She was confident that more records would be digitised in the future, but this was not yet decided. The range of records needing digitisation was vast, and a supplier who works to a high standard was in need of selection. Therefore, a pilot scheme would be initiated.

Question: Mr White asked a supplementary question. Has this therefore not been budgeted?

Dr Wyporska answered that the 2022 budget would be presented to the Board in December 2021, and was therefore still being worked on.

Question: Fiona Caskey asked if the temporary premises large enough for volunteers, members and all the staff?

Dr Wanda Wyporska answered that the temporary premises could house all the staff, though how often staff come in was flexible due to health concerns. The possibility of renting out extra space was being explored, and a rota system where members could book time slots to visit and retrieve items was hoped to be offered in the future.

The Chair declared the formal part of 2021 Annual General Meeting to be closed.

Informal Session

Mr Neil Allcock made a presentation on the progress of the transformation programme between the four quarters of 2020, of 2021, and of 2022. There were 17 workstreams open at the beginning of the transformation programme. This was a major undertaking.

Quarter four of 2021 was currently underway, and 9 workstreams were completely on track and operational. These were: 1. Transformation Planning; 2. Education and Events; 3. Finance; 5. Investment Strategy; 6. Membership; 7. Marketing; 9. Document Processing and Storage; 12. Website; 16. Fundraising and Grants.

9. Document Processing and Storage. This was a much bigger stream than initially expected. The move was accelerated for financial reasons.

12. Website. It was delivered on time, but not all components were in place. It would be fully integrated by the end of the programme, once all components were in place.

16. Fundraising and Grants. Many were applied for, and the Arts Fund for the Pedigree Rolls was received.

8. Relocation. This was undergoing complications surrounding planning and the fabric of the building itself. No conclusive news could currently be given.

10. Data Online. This was crucial and linked to digitisation of materials. The replacement options were still under consideration and a front-runner was being determined so contractual negotiations would begin.

11. Unique Assets. This was currently under development and was expected to be released in the second quarter of 2022.

13. Library Published Materials and 14. Bookshop and Magazines. These were awaiting the start of development as they are towards the end of the programme.

4. Transformation Finance and Project Management and 15. Systems Architecture. These are to be undertaken for the entirety of the transformation programme and were therefore not yet complete.

The Chairman asked for any questions on the transformation.

Question: Mr James Halstead stated that a fit out time between 6 and 9 months is quoted for the new premises. If a shortage of materials extends this period to two years, what steps will be taken to allow in-person activities in the interim?

Neil Allcock answered that once a space is secured, its speciality needs would be considered. There was a budget for the fit out, and the estimated time for it was 3 to 6 months. Companies also needed to be consulted so that a fit out quote could be generated.

Question: Ms Deborah Stock asked if alternative premises were being considered if current negotiations break down?

Mr Neil Allcock and Dr Wanda Wyporska answered that contingency planning was being considered. **Question:** Mr Paul Blake asked that surely we would have heard if the planning application was successful because its deadline was the 25th of November? Would this new property be a leasehold or freehold purchase?

Mr Ed Percival clarified that the leasehold would be 960 years, and thus akin to a freehold. Mr Neil Allcock confirmed that this was the case, and that the planning application had not yet finished, which was why it was not known if it was successful.

The Chairman asked for any general questions.

Question: Ms Elizabeth Butler asked what was being done to attract younger members?

Dr Wyporska answered that there was much potential to draw in younger members, and she was in discussions with her previous contacts in the area. She acknowledged that younger people had felt excluded from the genealogical community, and to tackle this, the educational resources the Society could offer would be updated and implemented.

Question: An attendee asked has the society produced a plan of what will be digitised and when?

Dr Wyporska, answered that yes, this was in phase one.

Question: Robert Whitfield asked if specified financial donations could be given towards certain schemes, for example digitisation?

Wyporska answered this was hoped to be developed in 2022. A Christmas conservation fund was under consideration. And what members consider to be a priority would be considered going forward.

Question: Mr Alec Tritton asked if the new building is lease hold, is there not an annual charge and would it be substantial?

Neil Allcock answered that there are service charges from the entire property but it is a functionally free hold property otherwise; these costs would be minimal.

Question: Ms Fiona Caskey asked if events were being advertised? These would be an important source of income when the premises are closed.

Dr Wyporska answered that indeed this was a vital source of income, and that a cross-fertilised marketing programme, for example in magazines, would help broaden who would join events in the future.

Question: Ms Deborah Stock asked what plans were there for tapping into the overseas market?

Else Churchill answered that was definitely being explored. Overseas partners had been made in the previous year as courses were run for them. They are significant way to raise the income of events and these courses would be held again in the future.

Dr Wyporska added that the colonial records the Society holds could help address the emerging interest in the former colonies, these would be explored with academic partners in the future.

The Chairman thanked all attendees and ended the meeting.