



Minutes of the 53rd Annual General Meeting of The Fly Dressers' Guild

Held on Sunday 30th January 2022 at 10.30 am
via Zoom

Present: Peter Gathercole (Chairman), Chris Reeves (Secretary), Stephen Millington (Treasurer and Wiltshire Chalk Streams), David Richards (Membership Secretary and Cardiff), Lee Hooper (Fishing Competitions Secretary and Wiltshire Chalk Steams), David Taylor (Guild Fly-Tying Awards & Fly-Tying Competition Secretary and Surrey and Wey Valley), Ben Beckwith (Member without Portfolio and Ringwood), Caroline Emmet (Member without portfolio, Editorial Committee and Surrey).

In attendance: Simon Beales (no Branch), John Butler (Surrey Branch), Les and Tricia Cooke (Wiltshire Chalk Streams), David Felton, Mark Lewis Griffiths (Surrey Branch), Malcolm Price (Ringwood), Keith Robertson (Surrey Branch), John Sawtell (Surrey Branch).

Apologies: Ken Nutting (Worcester Fly Dressers).

1. Apologies for absence, quorum and chair

The apologies for absence received were noted. Nevertheless, a quorum was present and accordingly, the meeting could proceed to business. The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting, noting with disappointment the low level of attendance. It was agreed that before the next AGM, a reminder would be sent to all Branch secretaries and to members for whom the Guild held an email address, together with detailed instructions for joining.

2. Previous Minutes

It was noted that the minutes of the 52nd AGM, held on 10 November 2019, had been uploaded to the FDG website in advance of the meeting. The Chairman proposed that the minutes be adopted as a true record of the 2019 AGM and the proposal was approved by the meeting.

3. Reports of Officers

It was noted that the reports from the Chair, General Secretary, Membership Secretary, Fishing Competitions Secretary, Guild Fly-Tying Awards and Fly-Tying Competition Secretary and the Editorial Committee Secretary had been uploaded onto the FDG website in advance of the meeting. Each Officer provided a brief summary of their report.

Chairman's report:

The Chairman, Peter Gathercole, reflected on an eventful past two years and the solace that members were able to take in fly-tying and fly-fishing during lockdowns. The national Guild had managed to weather the COVID-19 pandemic so far but the curtailment of in-person meetings had affected Branches' ability to support and encourage beginners to fly-tying. However, a number managed to maintain contact with members through online meetings and fly-tying instruction. His report also touched on the Guild Fly-Tying Awards, membership, the financial position of the Guild and the 46th John Watts fishing competition. John, one of the founding members of the Guild, had passed away earlier in the year but the competition represented a wonderful legacy. Peter thanked everyone involved at all levels in supporting the Guild and its Branches, and hoped that, with the further relaxation of restrictions in the coming months, most of the things we previously took for granted would return, including face to face meetings.

General Secretary's report:

Chris Reeves, General Secretary, provided a summary of his report, touching upon the key points of the last two years. In particular, he thanked the Branches for adapting to COVID-19 and keeping in touch with their members, and Mrs Watts for her support of the Guild in her husband's name. Chris noted that Stephen Millington was due to step down as Treasurer of the Guild and asked the meeting to endorse a vote of thanks for his service, having taken the Guild on at a particularly difficult time and helped it to recover to its current healthy state. John Butler was introduced as Stephen's successor: John is a retired accountant, former magistrate, and experienced treasurer for other similar organisations. Chris was also working with the current webmaster to find someone to take over his duties, and also requested for help with managing the content of the website. Lastly, he thanked all members of the Executive Committee for their hard work and

members for their support. He encouraged any member interested in getting involved in running the Guild in any capacity to get in touch and looked forward to 2022 as a year when we would regain a semblance or normality and resume business as usual.

Membership Secretary's report:

The Membership Secretary, Dave Richards, noted that there had been a slight decrease in membership numbers as a result of the pandemic, lack of participation at the various shows and decreased Branch activity. However, there had been a recent influx of new members, from overseas and the UK and he hoped that former members would return as activities picked up. A membership drive would take place after Dave received the missing bank statements and completed the 2021/22 renewals.

Fly-Tying Awards and Fly-Tying Competition Secretary's report:

David Taylor, Guild Fly-Tying Awards & Fly-Tying Competition Secretary, noted there had been an increase in interest in the Guild's Fly-Tying Awards programme, especially in the Silver and Gold categories, from the UK but also overseas members. There had been less interest in the Bronze level than in previous years, perhaps as a result of Branches not being able to meet in person. However, a lot of non-Branch members were taking part in the Awards. David and the Chairman thanked the more experienced members of the Guild, who gave their time mentoring applicants.

Fishing Competitions Secretary's report:

The Fishing Competitions Secretary, Lee Hooper, provided a short summary of his report, noting that he was pleasantly surprised to have been able to hold three events during the past year: the Spring Bank Fishing Competition at Elinor; the John Watts at Draycott; and a new pike fishing competition at Elinor again. Lee hoped to be able to do the same again in 2022. He noted that, following feedback at last year's competition, the John Watts would be moving over to a catch and release format. After some discussion about handling the fish, it was agreed that only the first 4 fish would be measured (using a half-drainpipe measure provided by the Guild) and the rest would be brought to the boat and released in the water.

Editorial Committee Secretary's report:

Caroline Emmet apologised to members for the delays in producing the last few issues of *Flydresser* and thanked them for their forbearance, the kind encouragement and the feedback received, good and critical. She extended her gratitude to everyone who sent in articles for the journal and encouraged members to come forward with ideas for articles, fully written articles or something in between, emphasising that the Editorial Committee was always happy to help with advice on content or length and with organising photographs. Caroline also thanked the members who helped with proofreading the journal and Jon Ward Allen at The Medlar Press and WPG Press, who turned her rough drafts into the polished publication that members received.

4. Treasurer's Report, Adoption of Accounts and Appointment of Examiner

The Treasurer, Stephen Millington, informed the meeting that unfortunately, he had not been able to finalise the accounts, as some bank statements had not arrived whilst he was in hospital. He had subsequently requested the statements from Barclays, but the bank had been incredibly slow to respond, despite repeated chasing and assurances received. The Chairman proposed that an SGM be held once the accounts had been finalised and circulated to members and the proposal was approved by the meeting.

5. Re-election/ election of officers

- a) Election of John Butler as Treasurer, to take over from Stephen Millington at the conclusion of the AGM.

It was noted that Mr Millington wished to remain as Treasurer until he had finalised the accounts, in order to ensure an orderly handover to his successor. It was therefore proposed that Mr Butler be elected as an Executive Committee member without portfolio in the meantime, and take over as Treasurer in due course.

- b) The following officers were required to retire under the Constitution, but, being eligible to do so, stood for re-election:

- (i) Chairman - Peter Gathercole; and
- (ii) Ben Beckwith - member without portfolio

The election of Mr Butler and re-election of Messrs Gathercole and Beckwith were proposed *en bloc* and approved by the meeting.

6. New constitution

Caroline Emmet introduced the draft constitution circulated to members as an insert in the Autumn 2022 issue of *Flydresser*, together with the Notice of Meeting included in that issue. It was noted that amendments proposed after the 2019 annual general meeting had been considered and addressed where appropriate. The adoption of the new Constitution was proposed by the Chairman and approved by the meeting.

7. Any Other Business

Lee Hooper raised the possibility of funding the maintenance cost of the website through advertising or sponsorship, potentially by trade members. It was noted that lack of new content could be a drawback. It was suggested that the purpose of the website should be reviewed.

John Sawtell enquired as to how many branches had started to meet in person again, on what criteria had the decision been taken and what guidance had been given by the Guild. The General Secretary responded that the Guild had made available an updated risk assessment at the start of COVID-19 but under the Guild structure, Branches operated autonomously, in accordance with the determinations made by their Branch officers and members. Some Branches had started to meet in person again, and were being guided by Government guidance and any additional requirements imposed by their meeting venues. Representatives from Ringwood and Wiltshire Chalk Streams confirmed they had started to meet in person as well, adopting sensible precautions, for example, using a camera and projector to allow members to see the demonstration clearly without having to crowd round a speaker. It was acknowledged that some members were not keen on meeting in person, but the General Secretary emphasised Branches were responsible for conducting their own business, in accordance with the wishes of their members.

There being no other business the Chairman thanked all participants and closed the meeting.