

The Fly Dressers' Guild 2023 AGM

Chairman's Report

In truth it's been quite a difficult year for the FDG. Owing to serious ill health, Stephen Millington, our longstanding treasurer found it impossible to continue in the role and understandably, had to step down without being able to do a proper hand over as he wished. We all wish Stephen well and a full recovery and I'd like to thank him for the time and effort he has given to all of us as Guild members.

Unfortunately the arcane nature of the banking system meant that the full transfer to our new treasurer John Butler took a good deal longer than we'd hoped. John has a great deal of experience in the field of accountancy and acting as treasurer for societies and we look forward availing ourselves of his services as a new member of the FDG Committee.

Although the Guild's finances are a quite healthy for the time being, there has been a significant fall in members which will obviously have an impact. With an ageing membership it's no surprise that a proportion of this has been the result of natural causes but there has also been a noticeable hangover from Covid and clubs are finding that a significant number of individuals are no longer comfortable attending live club events.

While the branches already do a great job encouraging and instructing fly-tying, especially for the beginner and intermediate levels, I think we should all make it our focus to increase the Guild's membership numbers. That hopefully will feed into the Guild's Fly-Tying Awards system where members can progress from Bronze to Silver and then Gold as their tying skills improve. These awards are held in high esteem though in the past twelve months or so there have been problems with the system and I would like to take this opportunity to apologise to those of our members who were affected either in mentoring or judging. Which brings us onto the topic of Dave Taylor who was for three years our Awards Manager.

After suffering serious health problems for quite a time, Dave sadly passed away in November 2022. It came as a great shock to us all and I can only reflect on the point that while he was well Dave did a great job both with the Awards and the annual FDG Fly-Tying Competition, which is where I came into contact with him most closely. As a Guild and as individuals we will miss him greatly.

Given the travails of the past three years hopefully, in time, we'll return to something like the old normal. I've always considered that the Guild's strength lies in its various branches and with those who dedicate their time and experience in helping those new to fly-tying. So this year my plea is not only to encourage ordinary members to take part in our fly-tying competition but also encourage them to bring along any fishing friends and acquaintances who might enjoy tying the odd fly and, of course, being part of the Guild.

Given the difficulties we have experienced in 2022, I'd like to end on a positive note. Our annual John Watts fly-fishing competition was a great success. Fished on Draycote Water, it was actually a great fishing day and plenty of fine rainbows were caught. So congratulations to the winners Trout 'n' Gout and individual winner Melvyn Wood and let's all look forward to a calmer, less stressful year in 2023.

Peter Gathercole
February 2023