

Minutes of the 39th Annual General Meeting of the Knitting & Crochet Guild held at The Ibis Hotel, 29 Ladywell Walk, Birmingham, B5 4ST on Saturday 8th July 2017 at 11am.

1/ Welcome and apologies

The meeting was quorate with 77 members present and apologies were received from 28 members.

2/ Announcements

Lunch is at 12.45pm, restart at 2.00pm with Trunk Show, Workshops start at 3.00 pm

3/ Minutes of the 38th AGM on 2nd July 2016

Copy of minutes available on website.

Proposed – Linde Merrick; Seconded – Betty Wood and approved.

There were no matters arising.

4/ Report and Accounts 2016-17

A summary of the financial activity for the year was published in the agenda circulated to all members with the June edition of Slipknot.

Tricia presented her report on screen – here are the details.

In summary total income is up to £43,098 from £35,587 in 2016. Membership subscriptions up 23% from last year, slightly down on the previous year high of a 33% increase which was no doubt due to the impact of the first year of our new website. Convention 2016 brought in £14,488 compared to £11,147 the year before, due to the increase numbers attending in Sheffield when over 60 members attended the whole weekend compared to nearly 50 the year before. Donations are slightly down probably because of the new method of renewals via PayPal.

Total expenditure is also up to £43,037 from £31,912 in 2016, with notable increases in Convention costs due to increased numbers and costs for Slipknot rising due to use of colour and the increased membership. Premises costs at Lee Mills have remained steady but still represent a sizeable proportion of our expenditure, we appreciate all the hard work of the volunteers at Lee Mills and we thank them for all their efforts on behalf of the Guild. Postage costs increased in the year and the continuing rise in overseas membership added to this element of expenditure. Our website costs are depreciated over three years from July 2015 and will not decrease until 2018-19. Increased numbers of Board members led to an increase in Committee expenses. All Board members are very mindful of amounts claimed on behalf of the Guild. The Board give their time for free but need to recover their expenses. Show costs have increased with the addition in March 2017 of the Edinburgh Yarn Festival where we were able to have a stand at a discounted rate. We will be applying for EYF 2018 in September and we hope to get a stand there as well as one or two more new venues in 2018, helping us to raise our profile and celebrate our 40th year. We are therefore able to announce a small increase in the total funds of the charity up from £64,867 2016 to £64,928 as at 31st March 2017.

A vote was taken to accept the accounts. Proposer – Ruth Hockney; Seconder – Janet Collins; Accounts Accepted

5/ Appointment of Directors

Maureen Wheeler: Proposer – Rita Taylor, Seconder – Judy Jones, all accepted.

Jacqui Taylor: Proposer – Rebecca Price, Seconder – Janet Collins, all accepted

Jane Hirst: Proposer – Anthea Winter burn, Seconder – Sue Cleaver, all accepted

Katie Ashwood: Proposer – Denise Musk, Seconder – Linde Merrick, all accepted

6/ Appointment of Office Bearers

Jane Hirst was appointed Treasurer until AGM 2018: Proposer – Elspeth May
Seconder – Fiona Morris; All accepted

Jacqui Taylor was appointed Secretary until AGM 2018: Proposer – Jane Barton
Seconder – Marian Dye; All accepted

The Board are looking for members with IT and other specific skills. Members are welcome to come to a Board meeting to find out about being a Director.

Betty proposed a thank you to Tricia Basham for all her hard work as working as Chair and Treasurer.

7/ Board Reports 2016-17

Collections

Maureen advertised the K&CG aprons which are being used for various shows up and down the country. We have now got 2 sets of aprons one set black and one white. Several members commented that they would be interested in buying one and the Board agreed to investigate.

Maureen then presented the Annual Report from the Collections Team 2016-17

"The unique variety of items in the Guild collection at Lee Mills continues to amaze, puzzle and sometimes bewilder both volunteers and visitors alike. The Collections team have had another successful year. At each Board meeting a full report of our activities is submitted. This report is an overall summary of our year.

Volunteers:

The number of regular volunteers continues to increase. This year we have gained a volunteer who came along to an Open day and decided to join us. She is raising our profile by blogging about her experiences at the mill. Over the year Anne Jackson Baker and Val Box have completed the job of cataloguing and reconfiguring the Library. Ruth Gilbert has listed our crochet sample booklets. Ruth will be here later today running the 'History of Knitting' workshop.

Barbara Smith and the pattern sorting team have continued to sort and order patterns assisted by anyone who comes along wanting a job. Pattern scanning is in full swing, with over 2000 patterns already scanned.

Margaret Callaghan has completed cataloguing the yarn samples. If you have any samples, including the ball band that you think could be added to the collection please send them to Lee Mills or contact us via the collections email. Shade cards have been sorted alphabetically and Margaret is moving on to getting them onto a database.

Angharad Thomas, Alex Rudkin and myself have continued to work our way through the boxes of garments and have completed the second (or maybe third time refinement). Our next task which will begin later this month will be to consolidate the database with the index cards and contents of the boxes. Wish us luck with this one.

A big thank you on behalf of the Board to all the volunteers who turn up in an array of warm clothing week after week to share the highs and lows of life at Lee Mills. Without such dedication, the collection could not be available to us as members and to the wider crafting community.

Julia Halliwell has once again produced an amazing display for our theme of 'Passing on the Passion'. This display has already featured at the Ickworth show and will travel to Yarndale, Ally Pally and Harrogate to name but a few. Many thanks to Julia for her creativity. The display now has its own designated boards, which can be configured in a wide range of formats and fit into the boot of an average car for transporting. We were able to purchase the display boards thanks to the sponsorship for shows provided by Knit Pro.

We thought it might be a good idea for us to create a collection of photographs to take to shows as a representative sample of the passion that members of the Guild have for their crafts. If you have a photograph, perhaps from a Branch event or special project that you would like to donate please either send a copy to Lee Mills or via the collections email. The address is in the front of the journal. We could include this collection as part of our celebrations next year.

Adding to the Collection

As a result of finally getting items in the garment boxes accessioned, we have been able to start discretely adding items to the Collection. We have brought some of the items along and they will be

available to look at after this meeting. This year we have taken possession of the Tessa Lorant collection. No work has been done on this collection yet and it will be a major project for the coming year.

Barbara Smith, the Publications Curator has received several mystery parcels containing patterns, many of which have been added to the collection. We recently received several boxes of bone and ivory knitting needles which we have also brought along.

We are particularly looking for items with a back story e.g. who made it for whom, when, why, type of yarn that can be used as examples in trunk shows. More about this after lunch. A good example sourced by Barbara is a table cloth, which has a back story and pattern. At the other extreme we have the crown on the display. We haven't found any documentation about this, so if you know anything do let us know. It was a highlight of a trunk show taken to a knitting group at our local high school.

Education:

The team have continued our relationship with the University of Huddersfield. The content of their course is constantly changing, so we haven't had students on placement this year, but have had a group visit to look at the collection for inspiration. Volunteers gave a presentation to students and staff at the University as part of a Textiles week. A student recently held her final exhibition, including a project inspired by the swimwear in the collection and for which she got a distinction.

Open Days:

We have held several Open Days for visiting groups and continue to host these for groups who approach us. These have included so far, the Sunny Bank mills textile archivists and Stylecraft Super bloggers.

Trunk Shows and Workshops and Exhibitions:

We are now providing items for a range of trunk shows, workshops and exhibitions. These have included several trunk shows for the Huddersfield Branch as part of their theme of 'Yarn' and a day at Up Country in Holmfirth. Workshops have included a Lace day in Birmingham, and a gloves day in London.

Items from the collection were displayed as part of an exhibition by Angharad Thomas at Bankfield Museum, Halifax, and as part a yarn day in Leighton Buzzard organised by Collette Seale. We also exhibited at Edinburgh Yarn Festival, Manchester Antiques Textile Fair, Spring into Wool in Leeds, and items were loaned to Colne Valley Museum, Huddersfield.

An increasing amount time is now being allocated to packing up and sending out collections requested by branches and groups. It's a good test for our storage system. Some of the photographs on the display show members of the team at Lee Mills in action. At times the mill has resembled an Amazon distribution unit. Many thanks to people who have requested items for trunk shows, talks and exhibitions. Getting the collection into the public eye is so important to raise the awareness of our Guild.

After lunch Barbara and I will be giving a short talk about hosting a Trunk show and might be able to persuade you to have a go.

Disposal of surplus:

The amount of surplus has continued to reduce. Some items that we cannot use in the Collection have been sent to refugees and we hear that they have safely arrived. Over the year, we have continued to sell items at shows where permitted and also sold items at Hebden Bridge Rag market, a market selling yarn, haberdashery, fabrics etc and a great place to de stash. (or re-stash). If you have any items that we could sell in at the October sale, we can accept donations or can sell your items for a small commission. The next sale is on the 7th October. If you haven't visited Hebden Bridge it is quite a unique place. Well worth a visit. The surplus books on sale here today are a result of the library restructuring by Anne and Val.

Next steps:

To catalogue the shade cards, accession the Tessa Lorant Collection and to find suitable venues around the country to display items as part of our anniversary celebrations"

Thanks to Maureen for her report.

Governance & Legal Matters

Gillian gave her report

"I joined the Board of Directors last July and was asked to take on responsibility for governance and legal matters. It's been an interesting year with plenty of challenges along the way, but it has also been a successful year, and I'd now like to report on some of the highlights regarding:

- Our lease at Lee Mills
- Charity relief and savings on our business rates at Lee Mills
- The Guild's Business Plan for the next five years
- Disabled Access at branch meetings
- And Data sharing

Forgive me for reading from my notes. There is quite a lot of detail, and I want to communicate it to you clearly and concisely, so that it will hopefully all make sense.

Firstly, our lease renewal: Late last year, we were contacted by our landlord's agents regarding the renewal of our lease at Lee Mills which was due to expire at the end of December. They were willing to renew our lease but they wanted to increase our rent by 27% from £3,950 to £5,000, plus an additional fee of £250 for drawing up the documents! Fortunately, having taken advice from one of my former colleagues, we were able to point out that the landlord had failed to serve notices at the correct time, and therefore he could not increase our rent, and we are legally entitled to remain in occupation of our premises at the same rent. As a result, I'm pleased to say our rent has not been increased and our tenancy continues for the foreseeable future.

As well as rent, we also must pay business rates at Lee Mills. Business rates are a property tax which all businesses must pay to their local authority. The amount of business rates payable is based on a 'rateable value' assessed by the Valuation Office Agency. Our rateable value was £4,200 but we lodged an appeal to the Valuation Office Agency and following negotiations, I'm pleased to say our rateable value has been reduced from £4,200 to £3,950 for the two years up to 31st March 2017. In effect this reduced the actual rates we pay from around £405 per year to about £380 per year, resulting in a small refund of approximately £50. This was fine as a first step but we then turned our attention to the Charity relief we receive.

As the Guild is a registered charity, we have always enjoyed 80% mandatory Charity relief against our business rates so we only actually pay 20%. However, in certain circumstances, Charities can top up their 80% relief to 100% by applying for an extra 20% discretionary relief. Following advice from Penny Ryan, our auditor, we applied to Kirklees council for the extra 20% Discretionary Charity Relief. We had to complete a lengthy questionnaire, supported by other documentation, but I'm delighted to report that our application was successful, and the Council has granted us 100% relief from all business rates from April 2017 onwards. This will save us approximately £390 per year going forwards, which I'm sure you'll agree is a very worthwhile saving on our annual expenditure.

This leads on to the Guild's new Business Plan which we have been working on over the last few months. A copy of our Business Plan was required to support our application for discretionary Charity Relief, and as we didn't have a Business Plan as such, we had to sit down and write one! I must say that the task was made much easier by the willingness of all the Directors, post-holders and the Collections Team to get involved, and by the work done by previous Board members and our former Chair, Jennifer Short. By pulling together, and updating existing documents and information from the website, risk register, and accounts, we were able to compile our Business Plan for the next five years. It contains details of our organisation, what we do, our background and achievements to date, our short and longer-term goals, how we measure performance, together with sections on finance, marketing, managing risks and our policies and procedures.

Our objectives from the Business Plan have also been put on the members area of our website; but just to give you a few examples:

Some of our goals for the next year are:

- To raise the Guilds profile with the public regarding our 40th Anniversary in 2018
- To increase our membership to 1000

- Make Slipknot available online in the members area of the website
- Increase our social media presence on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook
- Forge stronger links with Local Yarn Shops
- Scan and record 2500 pattern covers and make these available to members
- Complete our catalogue of textile items

Our longer-term goals for the next two to five years include plans to:

- Carry out a survey of guild members to understand what they value about the Guild
- A major review and refresh of the Guild's website
- And to add original stories to items in the Collection, to enhance their contribution

I am confident that the work we have undertaken in producing this important document will help the Guild to grow and develop strategically in the years to come. We have some copies of the Business Plan available here today, and if any of you would like to look at them afterwards, you are most welcome to do so.

You will also find at the back of the grey binder, a copy of our new 'Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy'. Again, this was a requirement for our application for Charity Relief, but as the Guild is already firmly committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all, and to ensuring that no individual is discriminated against, it seems reasonable that we should have a written policy to say so. Disabled access to branch meetings was the subject of a query from one of our branch members and we have now updated our model rules for branches, in line with the Equality Act 2010. Basically, branches of the Guild have a duty to ensure that meeting venues are accessible to all members including disabled members. A ground floor venue should therefore be used wherever possible. Branches must make reasonable adjustments if it is likely that a disabled member could be disadvantaged, providing it is reasonable to make such changes.

Our Data sharing procedures have also been reviewed recently. The Guild must keep membership data (such as members' names and addresses) for the purposes of:

- Establishing and maintaining membership
- and administering activities for members

As a 'not for profit organisation', the Guild is officially exempt from registering under the Data Protection Act. However, it is still good practice to have a data sharing agreement in place, so that everyone who has access to our membership data understands exactly how it can and cannot be used. It protects the security of that data, and ensures that obsolete data is destroyed appropriately. A data sharing agreement has now been signed by all directors, and will also be signed by those few other people who have access to membership data such as branch co-ordinators.

SO, to conclude.... We now have a Business Plan with defined objectives for the next five years. We have 100% relief from business rates which will help our finances, and we are able to remain in our premises at Lee Mills at the same rent as before. We have updated our branch guidelines regarding disabled access and we now have official policies for data sharing and equal opportunities. I do hope this summarises the governance matters which have arisen in the last twelve months satisfactorily. Thank you for listening and if anyone has any questions, I'll be more than happy to answer them. "

Thanks to Gillian for her report

Membership

Tricia presented her report on screen – here is a summary.

Our membership database consists of paying members, reciprocal contacts i.e. knitting magazines, legal deposit libraries, life members and admin contacts.

We finished the financial year with 814 paying members up from 657 the previous year. In the year to 31st March 2017, a total of 299 new members joined, 19 former members re-joined, we lost 161 in the year to 31st March 2017 and we lost 158. The peak month for new joiners was May 2016 when 62 joined, very many following a blog post from Kate Davis about her visit to Lee Mills for research for her book on Haps.

We continue to lose members after their first year of joining and indeed the trend appears to be worsening in 2015-16 62.50% of new members did not renew but in 2016-17 this has increased to 72.78%. The problem of member retention occurs in many organisations but we need to try to focus on this issue to reverse the trend.

Tricia was thanked for her report and all the membership work.

Yarn Shops

Fiona has written to over 300 yarn shops since the initiative started at the beginning of 2016. 35 shops joined initially. Only a small number have not renewed. Despite regular emails to them there has been little feedback from yarn shop members on ideas for us to work together. We are very keen to increase our yarn shop membership but it is clear that the best way to achieve this is for members to speak to them personally and we are appealing to members to do this whenever they have an opportunity. Feedback from The Association of Independent Yarn Shop Owners (AIYSO) showed that many were unaware of Guild activity in their area and we in turn don't always know of events and initiatives that could be of interest to our members both locally or on our website. Fiona encouraged members to maintain regular contact with their local yarn shops.

Learning

Marian reported as follows: -

"Nothing much has/had appears to have been done about learning for a number of years. I therefore propose to compile a list, to be accessed via our website of all workshops givers of both Knitting & Crochet, this will be a big task and so far, the following has happened;

Last year, at the AGM, I spoke to a number of members requesting their details, unfortunately I have mislaid this list and I would appreciate it if those of you that are here could let me have your details to go on this list.

I have also spent nearly two days, contacting our Yarn shop members, by phone, all of whom agreed that it was a good idea. I asked them to send me their contact details, only a handful have done so. Yarn shop members feel that we as a Guild don't do anything for them, however now we are offering a service, they appear very reluctant to even let me have basic information that is, web site address, contact details [email/phone] and where they are.

Looking forward, I would like to try and contact as many educational establishments as possible to make them aware of our archive and to tell them that this list exists. This however is a mammoth task and will take some years to do and a continual job to keep up to date."

8/ Future Plans

The Board reminded attendees that the Business Plan and our goals for the next five years was available to read over the break and that the goals were also published on the members area of the website. Future of the Guild and plans for our 40th Convention will be discussed at a meeting on Sunday.

9/ Any Other Business

Mary Gordon proposed a vote of thanks to Penny Ryan for all her hard work in the audit and governance advice – Agreed. It was hoped that Penny recovered speedily from her knee operation which kept her from attending this year's event.

Julie – queried the submission deadlines for Slipknot. Tricia confirmed that it was always 30th of the month following publication of a current issue: -

December 2017 edition – 30th September 2017

March 2018 edition – 30th December 2017

June 2018 edition – 30th March 2018

September 2018 edition – 30th June 2018

Thanks to everyone for being at the AGM. Thanks to the Facebook moderators. Thank you to speakers and stall holders. Thank you to Frances and Janet and the Birmingham branch for all their help.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 12.34pm