



Minutes of the 2010 Annual General Meeting of the Guild of Food Writers

The meeting was held at the Inter-Continental Hotel, London W1, at 6.30pm on Monday 12 April. There were 95 members present, 31 more than in 2009. There were 50 apologies. Minutes from 2009 were agreed.

Secretary's Report

Richard Ehrlich delivered the report. He focused on the healthy level of involvement in events (176 members attended in total) and on changes in emphasis in Guild activities to working online. He spoke of the heavy investment in our new website, which had begun in 2008 and continued into 2009. Lewis Esson and Jonathan Woods were thanked for their hundreds of hours of work on the website. He also spoke of the transformation of Savour, the GFW magazine, into an online-only publication. This was described as inevitable in the face of loss of sponsorship and the high cost of printing and posting. The same decision had been made with the Guild newsletter, which is now distributed solely via email. There would be further developments and refinements in the newsletter, made possible by Jonathan Woods's ever-increasing mastery of the technical aspects of design and format. Finally he spoke about the Guild's book, *How the British Fell in Love with Food*, and thanked Lewis Esson for his hundreds of hours of work on the book and Janie Suthering for doing the styling for photography.

Treasurer's Report

Our Treasurer Anne Benson was not at the meeting so the accounts could not be presented formally. Instead, members were referred to the accounts for year ending 31 December 2009. Clarissa Hyman described the accounts as generally healthy, with membership numbers holding fairly steady and a small surplus at year's end.

Chair's Report

Clarissa Hyman spoke of the pride we should all feel about the Guild. Our organisation had gained immensely in stature, and the original members could never have imagined the growth we have seen over recent years. We owed all of them huge thanks. The Guild's strength lies in its members, she said, and all of us have a stake in running it, in our different ways. Some do it through the Foodforum, some through work on the Committee, others by supporting our events. She celebrated the wealth of knowledge in our membership – 'an amazing pool of talents.' Clarissa Hyman spoke further of the sense of fellowship that comes from sharing knowledge in all Guild activities. She thought that this would increase as we expanded our activities in cyberspace. That expansion would help us make more of an impact and give us increasing recognition as a professional body. Clarissa Hyman gave her thanks to the Committee and in particular to Colin Presdee for the invaluable service he has given in organising events and to departing members Carol Godsmark and Rosemary Moon. Carol Godsmark had given dedicated service and hard work to raising the profile of Savour while Rosemary Moon had raised the stature of the GFW Awards. She gave particular thanks finally to our President, Jane Suthering, and to Lewis Esson for his work on the website and on the Guild book.

Resolutions

There were two resolutions before the Guild this year. One was a proposal to change section 8 of the Constitution as follows:

'8. The annual subscription of the Guild shall be the same for all ordinary members. The subscription rate will be decided on by the Committee and set at the Annual General Meeting.

Members aged 75 years and over at the date of renewal (31 December) will be eligible for Senior Membership with a 50% discount on the subscription, based on a minimum of ten years unbroken membership.

Members aged 80 years and over at the date of renewal (31 December) will be eligible for free honorary Emeritus Membership, based on a minimum of ten years unbroken membership.'

This resolution passed unanimously, with no debate.

The second resolution was to change section 16 of the Constitution as follows:

'16. The position of President will be filled by invitation of the Committee. The President will serve for a five-year period. The position of Vice-President will also be by invitation for a five-year period, but the latter appointment will be optional and filled at the Committee's discretion. These appointments may be reviewed at any time by the Committee.'

This was proposed as an alternative to the original system in which the Vice President was the runner-up in the five-yearly elections. Clarissa Hyman explained that the Committee thought it simpler and more attractive to have the Vice President appointed in this way. Questions were raised by Valerie Mars and Sue Wolk, and there was brief discussion of the topic. The resolution passed with 6 nay votes and 2 abstentions.

Committee Elections

There were two places being left vacant on the Committee with the departure of Carol Godsmark and Rosemary Moon. Carol Wilson, Silvija Davidson and Jane Hughes were all standing. Carol Wilson and Silvija Davidson were elected to fill the two places, but Jane Hughes was co-opted by prior agreement of the Committee, which had decided to co-opt the unsuccessful candidate because of the pressure of their workload.