



Minutes of the 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Guild of Food Writers

The meeting was held at on Thursday 21 April 2016 in The Nave at St Ethelburga's, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. There were 40 members present, 7 fewer than in 2015. There were 41 apologies.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last AGM were proposed by Jane Suthering and seconded by Christopher Trotter and approved by the meeting.

Welcome by the President

Xanthe Clay welcomed and thanked all members attending, noting that it's 'incredibly important to be at the AGM'. Xanthe thanked the committee, who work extremely hard on top of their 'day jobs... if you can call food writing a day job!'

Xanthe observed we cannot stand still as an organisation, we must constantly evolve – hence the new inspiration award, designed to celebrate those who inspire our work, and honour the huge knowledge and expertise we have as a Guild. She announced there were nearly 50 nominations for the inspiration award, which for 'purely practical reasons have been narrowed down to four, but please, I do hope members will carrying on nominating those year on year you are excited about.' Xanthe revealed the shortlist: Tim Baker, Jo Ingleby, Carmel McConnell and Tristram Stuart: voting opens tomorrow.

Report by the Secretary

Felicity Cloake reported that:

- ☛ Entries for the Awards up are nearly 15 per cent on last year, and the judging process is now complete. Felicity thanked all those involved.
- ☛ Entries are now coming in for Write It 2016, but Cook It has been retired – Felicity thanked everyone involved over the years, particularly Jane Suthering, Jayne Cross, Kate Morris and Nicola Graimes.
- ☛ The Guild now has 490 members, up from 476 at the same time last year
- ☛ The Guild's social media presence continues to go from strength the strength. The Guild has almost 21,000 followers on Twitter, and despite technical problems in January, the website has had 78,500 visitors in the last 12 months.
- ☛ In the real world, 12 workshops have happened in the last year, and 209 members have attended Guild events, including the Awards and AGM – reminded those who have not been able to make particular workshops and trips that in many cases links to films of them can be found in the relevant monthly newsletter.

Felicity thanked the rest of the committee for their welcome.

Report by Treasurer

Laura Washburn Hutton reported:

- ☛ She was pleased to say the Guild accounts this year have shown a surplus
- ☛ Income from sponsorship has risen significantly, thanks to hard work from the team.
- ☛ The surplus can also be attributed to the steady rate of membership, and skilful management of accounts by Jonathan Woods.
- ☛ Workshops continue to be a successful part of the Guild's activity, but attendance fees, which have not increased in recent years, merely seek to cover the costs, so the surplus is vital if they are to carry on.

Chair's Address

Kate Hawkings admitted there was a point last year where she was so overwhelmed by the 'enormous amount of work' involved that she was on the verge of resigning the Chair, but instead called on Jayne Cross and Angela Clutton to be 'my vices' – thanked all the committee 'but particularly these two for taking some of the weight off me'.

'I care enormously about the Guild, and those of us who are in the Guild, who support the Guild by being members, running workshops, attending workshops, being on the committee – we are part of something important, and that's why I stuck around.'

Kate thanked departing committee members Jane Gifford and Beverley Glock, and announced that the two vacancies on the committee have been filled by Tom Fahey and Charlotte Pike 'who has been amazing on sponsorship already as a special officer'.

Kate extended Felicity's thanks to all committee members, and especially the Cook It and Write It team; times have changed, and we're very sad to lose Cook It, but Write It is carrying on, hopefully for many years to come.

AOB

BENEVOLENT FUND

Vice-president Clarissa Hyman reported that the fund is 'something we've been concerned about for quite a long time' – it currently stands at about £41,000 and is growing slowly, but 'it's just sitting there not being of benefit to anybody' so 'we've felt very conscious of a need to use this money'.

To this end she has convened a small group of past and present Guild officers to look at opening the terms of this benevolent fund. One suggestion has been to change the name to the Guild Fellowship Fund, to broaden its scope and allow us to do more things with this money. A hardship fund will continue to be the *raison d'être*, but we would also like to extend its remit to cover bursaries, for members who feel in need of a research fund or similar. The committee hope to be able to announce more details soon: 'we don't want to be profligate, but we want to make use of the money'.

John Whiting said that on the matter of benevolent versus fellowship, 'benevolent is a vertical relationship, fellowship is a lateral one and I think that's an argument in its favour'.

Hattie Ellis thanked Kate Hawkings for staying, praising her verve and energy – even when emailing at 2am.

Close

The evening continued with canapés and wine, and doors were opened to paying guests.