



Minutes for the Guild of Food Writers AGM  
p.m., Thursday 4 November 2021 (on Zoom)

Notice of the AGM was circulated by email and also flagged up in the Newsletter and on the Facebook Forum. 61 members registered to attend.

### **President's welcome**

Orlando Murrin welcomed and thanked everyone who attended. He thanked our 'fabulous' Chair, Charlotte Pike, and the committee, and said it was an honour to be president. He also wanted to add a nice word about the 'much adored' Jonathan Woods, administrator, to whom we will be saying goodbye soon.

In his housekeeping role, he advised that the meeting was being recorded and that anyone who did not want to be visible should turn off their video. Also, that he was turning off 'chat' until the floor was open to the members.

### **2020 Minutes**

Charlotte Pike, Chair, advised that the 2020 minutes had been circulated by email, and they could also be seen on the GFW website. She asked if there were any objections and, in their absence, considered them approved.

### **Secretary's report**

Ruth Watson delivered her report, the transcript of which is at the foot of these minutes.

### **Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts**

Sam Goldsmith reported the GFW's current financial state and delivered the Treasurer's report, the transcript of which is at the foot of these minutes.

### **The Chair's report**

Charlotte Pike advised that after the AGM she would be in her final year as Chair and thanked the members for their support. The transcript of her report can be found at the foot of these minutes.

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## **Resolutions**

The motion to increase the annual members' subscription from £85 to £90 was proposed by Sam Goldsmith and seconded by Orlando Murrin. It came in the light of the GFW's dwindling resources; that it would be the first rise in 12 years; and, in real terms, it was still substantially less pro rata than 10 years ago. Sam Goldsmith urged members to adopt GoCardless to pay their subscriptions and advised the committee's intention for the rate to rise annually in future, linked to inflation.

Charlotte Pike conducted an online poll and announced that the resolution to increase the annual subscription had been approved by 96% of those present, with 2% abstentions and 2% voting against. The motion was carried.

## **Results of committee election**

The Chair announced there had been no need for elections as empty committee places had been filled with the same number of candidates.

## **Any other business (AOB)**

The Chair invited contributions from the floor. Geoff Tansey asked if the committee had considered a lower rate of subscription for retired members. He also commended the invigoration of the guest accommodation scheme and approved the use of Zoom for events. He asked what had happened about the Food Policy initiative as he wanted people to connect with it.

Charlotte Pike thanked him for his comments and said the question of a lower subscription would be kept in mind. With a view to the Food Policy, she recognised its importance but unfortunately the committee member who had been asked to look after this area had had to step down. She had not been able to replace them as yet but would continue in her efforts to find someone to help. The Chair also added that a decision was taken about a decade ago that the GFW would neither campaign nor take a public stance on issues over which people were divided. But she would like to bring back debates and was happy to incorporate them into the Events programme. Geoff Tansey replied that the Food Ethics Council ran a debate that members might want to take part in. Orlando Murrin said he would like the information for the newsletter; it would be a real asset. Charlotte Pike confirmed that anything of this nature could go in the newsletter as it was circulated to all members.

Sue Barnard commented on the idea of a lower rate for retired members. Originally she had thought that a good idea but had changed her mind. She pointed out that members had already enjoyed a 50% reduction for a period but that one could get so much more out of the Guild nowadays, particularly with events being free on Zoom. She thought membership presented much better value than in previous years. It also concerned her that there had been no increase in the subscription rate for 12 years, and this was not a good idea: no other organisation would operate that way. Sam Goldsmith replied that the question of subscription rates was often discussed and that things were pivoting towards offering a monthly payment plan, as well as the current annual subscription. Charlotte Pike added that subscriptions were already free for the over 80s.

Susan Wolk seconded Sue Barnard's approval of Zoom for events and meetings. However, she had thought the in-person AGMs were marvellous for catching up with other members and asked if the 'formal' part could be on Zoom with a live meeting, too. Charlotte Pike said she was considering all options, but the AGM needed a quorum for voting and it was a democratic way for members to

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attend without cost. Susan went on to talk about how she wanted access to the Forum but did not want to be on Facebook. She was reassured by Orlando Murrin that he could help her participate without having to interact with FB as a whole. He also said that while the Forum was a lovely social thing it was not the main conduit for information: everything of importance was reported in the newsletter. In response to more questions about actual events taking place again, Charlotte Pike said there were lots of things coming up and that she had asked regional coordinators to arrange events, too. Later Sue Barnard confirmed that while she had gone on to FB 'kicking and screaming', and had only signed up because of the Forum, it had completely changed her involvement with the Guild and nothing private need be revealed. Lyndon Gee said he only joined groups and had only one FB friend.

Lyndon Gee added that he, too, thought there should be a special subscription rate for those who were retired. He also advocated a blend of events that could be live-streamed as well. Sam Goldsmith said events were recorded but understood this was not the same thing. Both the Awards and events were being looked at to see if they could be more internet friendly.

Gilli Cliff said she felt she was missing Jonathan Woods (outgoing Administrator) already. She asked if he could be made an honorary member. Charlotte Pike thought this a very interesting idea and said it had already been mooted. Orlando Murrin concurred.

Rosemary Moon wanted to say how immensely rewarding she had found the Mentorship scheme and thanked everyone for setting it up. She encouraged other 'wizened' members to take it up. Orlando Murrin rejected the idea that Rosemary was wizened and said the scheme needed more mentors and could not run without them.

The AGM concluded after 55 minutes.

Chair, Secretary and Treasurer's reports follow:

**Chair's Report**  
**The Guild of Food Writers AGM – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

Good evening. I'm delighted to see you all here this evening for our second virtual AGM.

Exactly a year ago, I commented on how much extraordinary change we have seen in all of our lives, and there is no doubt that the last year has continued to present challenges.

The Guild has continued to work hard over the last year for our members, and I'd like to start by thanking everyone involved in the running of the Guild - the committee, special officers, President, Vice President and Administrator for the hundreds of hours they put into the Guild every month.

I'd like to take the opportunity to reiterate my sincere thanks to Jonathan for all his work for the Guild over the last 16 years.

The last year has been busy for the Guild on all fronts. With most of our business taking place virtually, we have been able to hold more events than ever, and I'd like to extend my thanks to all Guild members who have generously shared their time and expertise with us all. As Ruth reported, our event attendance numbers have significantly increased both in terms of booking numbers per event and also the number of members who participate in our activities. We will continue our programme of social and educational events virtually and in person when we can. We have had a slow start with attempting to reinstate in person events, but we will persevere. Zoom has been a huge benefit to the way the Guild does business internally as well, as committee meetings are now held monthly on Zoom, rather than less frequently in person and in London.

We continue to offer professional advice, more discounts than ever as part of our discount scheme, plus a new recipe testing network, accommodation scheme and quarterly coffee mornings to meet with other members.

We launched our mentorship scheme nearly a year ago, which has been a huge success, with a second tranche of mentors and mentees in progress and our first external mentorship programme was introduced in the Spring.

Our Futures Fund has awarded a number of bursaries for members to support their work, having offered £4000 of funding for members this year. We have supported nearly a dozen members with a free year of membership due to hardship as a result of the pandemic. A small number of very generous members have also donated a year of membership to others who have been struggling to renew.

We have revamped our newsletter, we are improving our website and have produced a new FAQs web page and document which you can consult to find out about all our activities and to answer any questions you may have about your membership.

We held another successful virtual awards ceremony in June, celebrating some truly outstanding work which was supported by a full house of sponsors and we very much look forward to our 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Guild of Food Writers Awards in June next year. We are

Guild of Food Writers  
Treasurer's Report  
2021

Good evening everyone. This is the Treasurer's Report for the financial year ending 2020.

This year, we have ended with a financial deficit of £1,752. For obvious reasons, 2020 was a difficult one. Though our expenditure was down significantly due to no in-person events from early in the year including workshops and the Awards, we decided to use Guild reserves to allow Members to have a 50% refund on fees, if they wished. We also lost significant income from Awards Sponsorship and ticket sales (this was close to £70,000 in total).

Though we suffered a financial hit to sponsorship, the team still managed to secure over £3,000 so that we could put on a digital event. I am sure you will join me in congratulating them on a job well done. These relationships allowed us to secure further sponsorship this year to hold a second digital event. We are hopeful that the 2022 Awards will return to being in person and the team will share more details with you soon – rather exciting that this will be the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

Ticket sales for events and workshops were, as you'd expect, significantly down on 2020 – in fact, they were just 14% of our 2019 figures. The events team and committee did a fantastic job of pivoting to an online model and I know that many of you got to experience a plethora of excellent workshops and events that were held online. In a year when many people were left without the company of others, events such as the Coffee Mornings were a great way to raise spirits.

Income from membership, due to the opt-in 50% refund, was down on 2019. We have seen membership numbers increase this year, which should leave us in a better position when I report in 2022. Though I did say the same last year, I am hopeful that I won't be saying this again next year. We have now implemented Direct Debits

## Secretary's report GFW AGM

4 November 2021

2021 has been another curate's egg of a year in terms of both the restrictions and the opportunities afforded to the Guild and its members.

With many members being rather more dormouse than hare-like in renewing their annual subscription, your committee made a concerted effort to speed the process up this last year, and also introduced easier payment methods. While my predecessor accurately reported membership as standing at 597 last year, it transpired that only 485 had actually paid their subscriptions. The current, fully paid-up membership now stands at a healthy 540.

The Guild has nearly 30,000 followers on Twitter and over 7,500 on Instagram - nearly 3,000 more than last year. Laura Hadland reports that the six-monthly Instagram challenge in which people post photographs to reflect a daily topic creates a lot of interest with non-members and those wishing to join the Guild. The Facebook Forum, which members are encouraged to join, has 299 members. Why not be the 300th?

Apart from one regional event, workshops and events continued to be held via Zoom - Covid's silver lining. The 27 Zoom sessions have run the gamut from social media, photography, aperitifs and eggs to wartime rations, recipe-writing and challenging mind-sets. Members have been delighted to participate in something that formerly could be time-consuming, expensive or impossible to attend. Whereas actual attendance in 2018-19 comprised 115 members, the Zoom workshops in 2020-21 secured attendance of 300 people.

Even when restrictions are completely eased the intention is to continue using Zoom for the majority of workshops. Visits and regional events will, of course, resume in actuality.

One thing that has suffered from Covid-19's incursion is the annual Awards ceremony which had to be recorded and put online for the second year running. This year there were 15 categories. Bearing in mind this was another difficult year for publishing, entries were remarkably buoyant with only marginally fewer entries in particularly affected categories such as Restaurant Writing. The newly split Drinks Book and Drinks Writing categories attracted 20 and 10 entries respectively. Two completely new categories, Self-published Work and Specialist or Single Subject Cookbook saw 13 entries for the former and a magnificent 37 for the latter. Plans are now in progress to hold the 2022 Awards and after-party live in London.

The Young Food Writer of the Year award bridges the 10-18 age group with three separate categories. This year's topic was Food Discovery and drew a decent number of entrants considering the chaos and uncertainty school children have been enduring. The judges were delighted with the quality of the work submitted. Our partner in 2021 was The Week Junior but there are plans for different sponsorship and a patron in train for 2022.

All in all it has been a very positive year for the Guild with much-needed attention being given to such matters as research for the Chairman's report and publishing a coherent diversity policy. The newsletter has been successfully redesigned, work continues on improving our website, and the criteria for membership has been clarified. Members have received support in many ways, from help with subscription payment and project-funding from the Futures Fund.