



## **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021**

22 June 2021, 7pm – Online via Zoom

### **Attending**

#### **Board directors**

Annabel Smith  
Frances Brace  
Jacopo Mazzeo  
Kate Oppenheim  
Matthew Curtis

Paul Nunny  
Pete Brown  
Robert Humphreys

#### **Members**

Adrian Tierney Jones  
Anthony Gladman  
Barrie Pepper  
Bill Simmons  
Bryan Betts  
Christopher Claxton  
Dale Tomlinson  
David Jesudason  
Emma Inch  
Francesca Slattery  
Gillian Hough  
Harald Schieder  
Iain Loe  
Jane Peyton  
John Cryne  
John Porter  
Kate Hempsall  
Laura Hadland

Leigh Norwood  
Lotte Peplow  
Malin Norman  
Martin Oates  
Martyn Cornell  
Michael Clarke  
Natalya Watson  
Nigel Tarn  
Richard Dakin  
Roger Protz  
Roger Warhurst  
Ros Shiel  
Ruth Evans  
Steve Williams  
Sue & Fran Nowak  
Susan Boyle  
Tim Skelton  
Tracy McIntosh

#### **Apologies**

Christine Cryne  
Gabrielle Bertucci  
Gavin Aitchison  
Jeff Evans  
Jonny Garrett

Neil Walker  
Maureen Heffernan  
Nick Law  
Stuart Forster

## **1.Minutes of AGM 2020**

Minutes proposed by Bill Simmons, seconded by John Porter.

## **2.Matters arising**

None.

## **3.Chair's report**

P Brown summarised his prepared report:

- Things were already tough at the last AGM in August 2020 and last year was another tough year.
- We were worried that Guild subs may have fallen by the wayside, given possible financial constraints for both individual and corporate members, but we were happy to see that did not happen and that the Guild is in a strong financial shape.
- Membership revenue allows us to provide our ongoing services to members, all of which we've now moved online for the time being
- We've found that while virtual events and trainings are, of course, not the same as in-person activities, they have their advantages and moving forward we hope to have a mixture of both
- On the Dinner and Awards, last year, we ran a virtual Awards ceremony; we saw a very slight drop off with the total number of people entering and had a reduced number of categories, but were pleased to see that many of our members were still able to find places for their work and had plenty to write/communicate about. While sponsorship decreased slightly, all winners received cash prizes. Lily Waite was crowned Beer Writer of the Year 2020.
- For 2021, we're happy to announce that we'll be returning to One Great George Street for an in-person Dinner and Awards, likely returning to the categories used in the 2019 Awards, plus the addition of a books category, pending sponsorship.
- The Awards categories will be reviewed in full for 2022, with the review led by Board Director Matthew Curtis.
- We are hoping to host an in-person Summer Party in August, pending government guidance.
- We also wanted to acknowledge the passing of Guild members Guy Thornton and George Philliskirk who passed since our last AGM.
- Finally, P Brown shared that he will be stepping down from his role as Guild Chair, stating that it has been an honour and privilege to be the Chair of the Guild, especially during this challenging time. If re-elected to the Board, he looks forward to continuing to serve the Board in a new capacity under a new Chair.

## **Questions/comments:**

None

## **4. Treasurer's report**

P Nunny summarised the accounts and his prepared report:

- He started by thanking R Humphreys and F Brace for their work on corporate membership, as corporate subscriptions are a key part of our income.
- As P Brown mentioned, we did not see the drop off in subscriptions that we anticipated, which was good news.

- We spent the minimum required to deliver what we thought was appropriate for the membership and came out with a small surplus.
- We have been eating into the surplus brought forward. (He noted that in 2013, the surplus was £83K, which we agreed to start spending down for the member's benefit.)
- For this year, we are looking to break even, pending the receipt of expected subscriptions.
- It will be up to the new committee to look at what they'd like to achieve for the forthcoming year and will account accordingly.
- At the June Board meeting, the Board agreed that an ideal surplus for the Guild is £30-40K. Reason being, the Dinner and Awards is always a liability for us; we have a commitment to take a Secretary, so we need to budget for that; and we can never really guarantee how well we'll do with subscriptions, so we need to have funds available to deliver member benefits and achieve our objectives. This year's £8K surplus takes us back to where we'd like to be, with £30-40K as a reserve.
- Looking at the 21/22 balance sheet, we were quick off the mark with corporate membership invoices (which went out in March 2021), which is why we have creditors on there in such a large amount.
- In all, everything went according to plan for the 20/21 year.

### **Questions/comments:**

J Porter asked why we hold money in Paypal. P Nunny replied that funds sit in Paypal as subscriptions are received before they're moved into the bank account.

### **5. Accounts for 2019/ 2020**

Acceptance of the accounts: proposed by Matthew Curtis, seconded by Bryan Betts. Passed unanimously with no abstentions.

### **6. Proposed changes to the Guild's objectives**

P Brown noted that these changes were proposed at the 2020 AGM, but it was felt that the Board barnstormed into this last year, and quite rightly members said that this should have been consulted on more widely. He felt there was not much opposition to the spirit of the proposed changes, but opposition to the wording and how it was presented.

P Brown shared a slide with the objectives as they currently are in our Articles of Association. He then noted that the reasons for the proposed changes is because the way things are changing is faster than the Articles of Association can keep up with. The idea is that the Articles should not change often, so they should be more overarching. We therefore want to be broader in our statement of objectives in the Articles and use the Guild's Strategic Plan to detail how we plan to deliver on our objectives. Although the name will always be the British Guild of Beer Writers, we do not want to be biased towards people who communicate about beer in other media/other forms.

Following last year's AGM, the meeting recommended that we have a wider consultation on this, so P Brown formed a subcommittee with P Nunny, J Porter and C Cryne to revise the proposed changes.

P Brown shared a slide with the proposed changes to the objectives and talked through them, noting that the text in italics is for explanation only. He stated that these are the revised objectives that we'd like to put into our legal document (our Articles of Association), making sure that at all times, these points are detailed in other documents (like our Strategic Plan) that we can update more frequently.

## Questions/comments:

None.

A vote was taken on the acceptance of the proposed changes to the Guild's objectives: the vote passed unanimously with no abstentions.

## 7. Election of Directors

- P Brown reported that three Directors (F Brace, P Brown and A Smith) had to retire by rotation, and R Humphreys as a co-opted Director also had to retire. This left three vacancies on the Board.
- F Brace, A Smith and R Humphreys decided not to stand for re-election and were thanked by P Brown for their many years of service before stepping down.
- P Brown announced that he was re-elected to the Board, alongside Emma Inch and David Jesudason. New Directors were welcomed and congratulated.
- P Brown thanked M Heffernan and M Norman for standing for election and for their contribution to the Guild as members.

## 8. Reports from Directors

### Annabel Smith: Individual Members

A Smith summarised her prepared report:

- We knew we were going to be in for a tricky year, given that many members likely had their income reduced as a result of the pandemic, but we've come out of the year better than expected and she thanked all members for their support.
- As of May 31, 2021, we had 259 members in good standing (240 Full, 19 Associate), and 2 new Full members have joined since we published the report.
- J Porter and B Betts were thanked for their assistance on the membership sub-committee
- Annual subs have remained at £57.50
- All members who have not yet received their pin badge were asked to send their postal address to the Secretary.
- Finally, A Smith thanked all existing members who proposed new members and asked members to keep their thinking caps on for new bloggers, broadcasters, podcasters, photographers, trainers, etc. who could be potential new members, as all beer communicators are welcome.

## Questions/comments:

None

### Frances Brace & Robert Humphreys: Corporate Members

F Brace and R Humphreys summarized their prepared report:

- Two to three years ago, the membership structure for corporate members was revised: categories of membership were introduced, subscription rates increased, as did member benefits, and that was going really well until the pandemic.
- As other Directors have noted, there was a lot of uncertainty at the start of the year, but we have had many of our members return to support the Guild and F Brace shared her gratitude to our corporate members and asked other individual members to share their thanks, as well

- In the 20/21 year, the Guild reached 68 corporate members and received a very respectable income.
- So far for the 21/22 year, 49 of the 69 members have already renewed, with the rest likely to do so soon.
- Without the help from Cask Marque in providing the background support, the Guild would be paying vast sums of money for financial and administrative support. F Brace noted her thanks to P Nunny and Lisa Potter at Cask Marque.
- F Brace commented that our corporate members are in integral part of the Guild who play a hugely important part and asked all individual members to value their contribution
- F Brace thanked P Brown and N Watson for their help in lifting the Guild to the next level of professionalism, alongside the support of the rest of the Board; she also noted that R Humphreys has been a joy to work with in her time on the Board and that he has contributed massively, not only to corporate membership, but to Awards sponsorship, too.
- R Humphreys endorsed F Brace's report and added that it's delightful to see everyone and that he's had a great pleasure in his 13 years on the Committee/Board.
- He feels that both the corporate membership and Awards sponsorship have been left in a healthy state.
- He commented that there is mutual interest in collaboration and engagement and a great deal of synergy between the two halves of our membership, both individual and corporate. And that with 70-odd corporate members – across suppliers, brewers, pub companies and trade associations – there are plenty more fish in the sea.

#### **Questions/comments:**

P Brown noted that we have just heard from our three Directors who are stepping down at this year's AGM and that, while all Directors give a lot, between the three of them, they represent a quarter of a century of experience on the Board, which is a wealth of knowledge to be losing. He noted it has been tough to be Chair over the last 18 months, but he has been able to rely on F Brace, R Humphreys and A Smith to get things done for our members. He shared a formal note of thanks to them for their contributions and for their role in keeping the Guild in a healthy financial state. This statement was seconded by M Curtis, B Betts, G Hough, F Slattery and M Cornell.

#### **Annabel Smith: Events/ Training**

A Smith summarised her prepared report:

- She noted this was a challenging task to tackle when we went into lockdown last March, because we couldn't meet face-to-face and we had to think of ways to repurpose our training. Our main focus was to continue an educational program that was fit for purpose, provided value for money, and was delivered by knowledgeable people. She's very pleased with how it has all gone
- From the 2020 AGM, all trainings have been delivered online – including Advanced Beer Photography, How to Build a Great Marketing Campaign, Developing Your Book Writing Skills, How to Produce Brilliant Copy for Editors, and more.
- A Smith thanked all trainers and hosts who quickly adapted to delivering engaging information in a virtual way.
- She also shared a piece of feedback from a participant, who stated: "I've been to 2 BGBW sessions over the years and both of them led to paid work". A Smith said this is the purpose, that there's a commercial edge to our courses.
- All members were asked to get in touch with their specialist expertise or knowledge, if they'd like to offer a training course or propose an event idea.

- N Watson thanked all members who spoke at and attended our events, including our Q&A series with the 2020 Guild Award Winners and member-suggested and -hosted events, including 'Fog on the Channel' and 'Pandemic Pandemonium... or Maybe Not'
- Our next online event 'The Drink Question in Britain' will be held on July 6<sup>th</sup> with more virtual events to follow.

### **Questions/comments:**

None

### **Chris Claxton: Social Media**

C Claxton summarised his prepared report:

- C Claxton shared that he took over from K Wiles while she is on maternity leave
- His attention and focus has been on Twitter; he is delighted with how the account is performing and thanked everyone for their engagement with the content to help increase impressions
- Follower numbers have increased by +885 over the last 12 months, standing at 4,513
- Tweet impressions are averaging around 71K per month, increased by the Annual Awards in December
- Profile visits have also gone up from an average of 660 visits per month to 1911 per month
- This trend follows the number of tweets posted, which has gone up, and he noted that we've been living in a virtual world for the last 12 months as well.
- He's been working on making our posts more engaging and is testing posting at different times of day, new imagery, etc. For the future, he plans to share more video content and increase the number of tweets. He'd also like to improve our presence on other platforms.
- Finally, he thanked the Board for the opportunity and shared that he's really enjoying his time in the role.

### **Questions/comments:**

P Brown thanked C Claxton for all of his help.

### **Matthew Curtis: Mentorship Scheme**

M Curtis summarized his prepared report:

- M Curtis started by extending his thanks to R Humphreys, F Brace and A Smith for their work for the Guild. He joined the Board back in 2014 as a blogger and with their help, he forged a career in beer.
- A Smith in particular was thanked as she helped M Curtis to develop this scheme; upon his return to the Board in 2020, he wanted to give Associate members a path to achieve Full membership and to give newer members a chance to work with established writers.
- The mentorship scheme has started as a pilot and has 2 mentor/mentee pairs: Phil Mellows and Gabriele Bertucci, and Adrian Tierney-Jones and Dan Lyons.
- He noted that the pilot scheme will run for 6 months and we will learn as we go. The aim is to roll it out to all Associate members and then to all members.
- He said he hopes the scheme will encourage growth in membership and help the Guild meet its objectives of improving beer communication wholesale, as the scheme is not just about writing, it will cover all forms of communication.
- He thanked the Board for the mandate and A Smith for her help.

## **Questions/comments:**

None

## **9. AOB**

P Brown reminded members that this is not your only time to share any thoughts/ feedback/ comments with the Board; any and all members can share what they think the Guild should be doing by speaking to someone on the Board or to the Secretary. We will consider all ideas, can set up sub-committees as needed, etc. He also noted that summary reports of all Board meetings are now also made available on the available on the member area of the Guild website.

G Hough asked how will the new Chair be decided. P Brown replied that the chair is elected by the Board and asked all members of the new Board to stay on the call after the AGM ends for a vote. N Watson will share the results in the eNews tomorrow.

R Humphreys congratulated P Brown for all of his work as Chair and for this many contributions to the Guild. This was seconded by M Curtis, M Cornell, L Hadland, G Hough, B Simmons, S Williams, E Inch, F Brace, and T Skelton.

P Brown noted that it was been a pleasure and he looks forward to helping the next Chair. He hopes to see members at the Summer Party and/or Guild Dinner and Awards.

All members were thanked for attending.

The AGM ended.