

APPG for CRAFT

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 5th November, 5–7pm Committee Room 6, Westminster

1. Welcome and Introductions

In the absence of Sir John Hayes, Baroness Garden took the chair.

2. Introductions

Those attending the APPG introduced themselves.

3. Apologies for absence

The following sent their apologies for absence:

Greta Bertram	Crafts Study Centre	Robert Howard	NHTG
Katy Bevan	Craft Specialist	Gail McGarva	Boatbuilder
Patrick Burns	WC Saddlers	Peter Mojsa	Allchurches Trust
Prof May Cassar	UCL	Ann Packard	RSA
Lord Cormack	Vice-Chair	Dunja Roberts	All in a spin
Nick Crean	QEST	Derek Stimpson	WC Gunmakers
Sara Crofts	ICON	Dr Rebecca Struthers	Struthers Watches
Dr Oliver Douglas	MERL	Dr Nicola Thomas	Exeter University
Gillian Dye	Lacemaker	David Viner	WC Wheelwrights
Sir Michael Fallon MP	Vice-Chair	Harriet White	DCMS
Sharon Hodgson	Vice-Chair	Ann Whittall	National Museum Wales

4. Attending

Baroness Garden	Vice-Chair	Lisa Hammond MBE	Adopt-a-Potter, Clay College
Earl of Clancarty	Vice-Chair	Tony Kindell	Aldershaw Tiles
		Lindy Latreille	Aldershaw Tiles
<i>Associate Members:</i>		Patricia Lovett MBE	Heritage Crafts Assn
Terri Adams	British Society of Scientific Glassblowers	Lucy McGrath	Marmor Paperie
Julia Bennett	Crafts Council	Peter Martindale	ICON (Conservation)
Daniel Carpenter	HCA Communications Officer	Carole Milner	Radcliffe Trust
Judith Cobham-Lowe CBE	WC Goldsmiths	David Mortlock	WC Wheelwrights
Prue Cooper	Potter	Michael Osbaldeston	City and Guilds
Dr Kelly Cordes	Researcher	Wendy Shorter	WC Upholders and AMUSF
Jane Cox	Art Workers' Guild	Robert Wade	Bicycles by Design
Brian Crossley	Chair caner		
Harriet Deacon	Coventry University		

5. Craft Businesses 1: Robert Wade, Bicycles by Design

Peter Bird started making bicycles and tandems while still a student but Rob had another career and it was only when he met Peter in 1983 that the two started working together. Bicycles by Design is based in Ironbridge and they

produce a hand-made quality product. Their skill is in making bespoke bikes with lots of fine detail, including in their Swallow brand, solid silver head badges. All the stainless steel tubes, made in Birmingham, are cut and mitred by hand and brass or silver is used to weld the joints; this process alone can take 4–5 hours and is highly skilled. The look is retro but the result is completely up-to-date. The two-man business employs 3 people, and most frame builders have a supporting partner or have a supplementary business. Business rates are a real problem; those for their company are four times that of the Co-Op at the other end of the valley simply because of the history of the building. LEPs are usually business-to-business but their main contacts are with customers. They would like to pass on skills but there is no funding for apprentices and finding a Training Provider is impossible. The under 35s have no workshop experience and the under 18s no creative experience at all and this has a serious impact on what they can do.

Questions and points made included:

- Why the demand for UK-made bikes dropped in the 80s and 90s, and it was because of the production moved from Nottingham to the Far East and so bikes were cheaper.
- Was there a demand from abroad, and the reply was that there is a demand because few bikes like theirs are made there.
- What are the routes to market – word of mouth, reputation and returning customers.

6. Craft Businesses 2: Lucy McGrath, Marmor Paperie

Lucy was thanked profusely for kindly stepping in when a speaker had to drop out because of an urgent order. She explained that the craft was an old one with its heyday in Victorian times when many books were covered with marbled paper, or had marbled endpapers or fore-edges, but it went into a decline at the beginning of the 20th century as the cost of production pushed up the price. Only Cockerell papers were left in the 1960s and they shut completely in 2012 when the last trained apprentice in the business retired. When Lucy started in 2016 she was one of the youngest, and most marblers are in conservation or restoration. She makes books and covers them with marbled paper, makes gift tags and notebooks and also ceramic decorations. Her university degree at Brighton was very hands-off and it was only when she went on holiday to Turkey that she saw the papers and learned on a course at the hotel. The process involves making a thick gel with carrageen moss on which coloured paints are applied by dropping from pipettes or brushes. The gel holds the paint on the surface such that special combs or skewers can be used to create patterns. The gel has to be cleaned after each 'lift' of paint and no two papers are the same – although they may be alike. Lucy heard about the Heritage Crafts Association's Awards and was successful in obtaining a bursary

to work in a space at Cockpit Arts funded by The Arts Society; Cockpit also provide business advice. This was a turning point for Lucy as she then gave up her job and became a full-time paper marbler. The craft has also moved from critically endangered in the Heritage Crafts Association's Red List of Endangered Crafts to endangered as there are now 8–9 practitioners. Business has grown and Lucy now has an apprentice, but the funding is for a business apprenticeship not for marbling; there are no craft apprenticeships. Lucy also spoke at the Ambacht in Beeld festival, recommended by the HCA, and has written a book. Her visit to the festival resulted in being asked to make marbled papers especially for a hurdy gurdy maker.

Questions and points made included:

- What paper is used – very smooth paper to take the pattern.
- Can you marble on to other surfaces? Wood takes marbling well and ceramics but the substrate has to be one when it can be lowered on to the gel in a horizontal tray.
- It was suggested that all makers should go into schools to tell them about their craft through the Education Employees Task Force – it was very worthwhile to do.
- At a symposium at a craft school in Sweden people could try 5–6 different craft in the same building. With no crafts in state schools the chain was broken, and with few craft courses at FE and HE (no full-time book binding courses in the UK for example, and only 6 ceramics courses and all the degrees are joint) the chain is broken.
- The Sorrell Foundation runs Saturday Clubs for the arts and crafts in a variety of locations.
- The problem of no hand skills was exemplified by those who spend 4–5 years in silversmithing creating beautiful CAD designs but have no idea how to use the tools to make the products.
- With craft and creative subjects in schools the focus is on not making a mistake and getting the correct answer, whereas in craft trial an error is the way to make progress.
- Work going on at Dumfries House for wellbeing and the Heritage Crafts Association's conference this year 'Making is Good for You' emphasised the importances of craft and practical subjects to people's mental health.

7. Craft Businesses 3: Tony Kindell, Aldershaw Hand-made Tiles

Tony explained his background in that he had worked for large companies for most of his life, and had studied at North Staffs College when there was still a ceramics industry. At Aldershaw Tiles they dig clay from their backyard. They have 9 full-time and 3 part-time staff and 2 unpaid directors. They manufacture anything that people wants as long as it is hand-made – roof tiles, glazed tiles, mathematical tiles etc. The iron in the clay creates beautiful

colours and the sand prevents it cracking; rain water makes the clay malleable. Everything is done onsite but they are having to dig deeper in the pit because they can't get planning permission to start a new pit. Recruiting is a problem as people now don't have the skills needed, and the physical hard work and long hours often put people off. Wages are 46% of the turnover and is often cheaper abroad with zero import tariffs a problem, and 33% of the turnover is spent on fuel. The site is not linked to the National Grid so they have to make their own electricity which is very expensive. It is a tricky balancing act to be sustainable and ecologically sound. Roofing products are 80% of the business with 6 different colours and 3 different types of tiles. Floor tiles, as in the Heritage Crafts Association's Red List of Endangered Crafts, is 15% of business. Truly hand-made tiles are only just viable because of the competition from abroad where there are fewer planning restrictions and cheaper wage costs. Examples of tiles were passed round.

Questions and points made included:

- It was explained that workers don't have experience and have to be trained inhouse.
- The specific materials needed for conservation have an effect on the viability of craft skills. Much of the material for thatching is now imported.
- Examples of Aldershaw Tiles can be seen at the Tower of London, the Queen's House in Greenwich and in other prestigious historical sites.

8. Craft Trailblazer

Patricia Lovett gave an update on the Craft Trailblazer, explaining that a meeting was planned with representatives from the APPG for Craft, led by Sir John Hayes, and the CEO of the IfATE. The main challenges were the need for a generic craft Trailblazer, the problems of finding a suitable Training Provider (if one can be found at all!), the fact that all those on a Trailblazer have to have the equivalent of a Maths and English GCSE (there is a higher proportion of those with dyslexia in crafts) leading to the exclusion of many who would be good at the hand skills, and the need for all those involved including assessors who may assess only once every few years having to be registered.

This was the last meeting of the APPG for Craft in its current form and all were thanked for their input and contribution.