

APPG for CRAFT

Minutes of the 'Unofficial' meeting held on Zoom

Thursday, 25th June 2020, 3–4.30pm

1. Welcome and Introduction

Sir John Hayes, Chair, welcomed Members, Associate Members, Speakers and Guests.

2. Attending

Members:

Sir John Hayes CBE	Chair	Lisa Hammond MBE	Adopt-a-Potter, Clay College
Baroness Garden	Vice-Chair	Mark Henderson	QUEST
		Mary Lewis	Endangered Crafts Officer

Associate Members, Speakers & Guests

Katy Bevan	Craft Specialist	Rachael Linton	Gilder
Patrick Burns	WC of Saddlers	Patricia Lovett MBE	Heritage Crafts Assn
Lesley Butterworth	Maker	Adam Marriott	Speaker / Millwright
Daniel Carpenter	HCA Communications Officer	David Mortlock	WC Wheelwrights
Judith Cobham-Lowe CBE	WC Goldsmiths	Carole Milner	HCFN
Dr Kelly Cordes	Researcher	Michael Osbaldeston	City and Guilds
Carla Costa	Speaker / Upholsterer	Paul Playford	Allchurches Trust
Jane Cox	Potter	Ian Rimmington	DCMS
Catherine Davies	Speaker / Basket maker	Simon Sadinsky	The Prince's Foundation
Harriet Deacon	Coventry University	Ambrita Shahini	Designer and RCA
Gil Dye	Lace Maker	Wendy Shorter-Blake MBE	WC Upholders and AMUSF
Sian Evans	Coppersmith	Derek Stimpson	WC Gunmakers
Dr Chrissie Freeth	Tapestry Weaver	Dr Rebecca Struthers	Watchmaker
		Bill Twigg	City and Guilds
		+Bill Twigg x 2 (named incorrectly on Zoom!)	?

3. Carla Costa: Upholsterer and Consultant

Carla explained that she is from Lisbon, Portugal, and has a background in marketing and advertising. She trained as an upholsterer and has an open space to teach mainly upholstery to those finding difficulty getting work or who have special needs. She is a pro bono consultant to those establishing small and micro businesses. The effects of Covid-19 are that she has been working from home as her workshop is closed, and there have been problems with the supply of materials. It has also meant that all her classes have stopped too. Carla is, though, helping creatives and businesses to prepare for when things are more normal. She is finding the situation very challenging.

- Is the upholstery world growing or declining? How well is this craft taught? Lots of people want to learn this and lots of people are teaching the craft both to a professional standard and for leisure, but she is relatively new and so doesn't have knowledge of things nation-wide. The cancellation of craft fairs has affected her detrimentally and many others, and a digital presence is the key. (See also AMUSF: <https://www.upholsterers.co.uk/>)

- How can the variety of craft skills be taught? Longer courses cover much more, shorter courses such as 'bring your own chair to cover' obviously just cover that.

4. Adam Marriott: Millwright

Adam Marriott has always been interested in old machinery from a young age and studied agricultural engineering at university. Within a few years he had moved to Essex where the County Council have 12 mills to maintain and worked with a millwright who 'needed a hand' – Adam was very much thrown into the deep end. There are 120 water and wind mills in Norfolk alone and many throughout the country. Covid-19 has very much highlighted the need for local mills with the flour shortage and the hope is that buying locally like this will continue after the emergency. There are, though, only half a dozen millwrights and most are in their 60s with no apprentices. SPAB have been talking about training millwrights but they don't seem to have made much progress. There are no actual qualifications in it and it encompasses being a structural engineer, a blacksmith, machinist and draughtsman amongst other skills. Adam's order book was for 18–24 months but it now looks rather empty and the expected recession doesn't bode well.

- Was there ever an apprenticeship scheme? Often the skills were passed down from fathers to sons as happened with many crafts, but commercial millwrighting stopped in the 1930s. It involves many years training and there is no funding.
- QEST would be very interested in funding training in millwrighting.
- There is a push to restore old mills but there is no funding to do so – it rests usually with the community. The flour shortage with Covid-19 may result in greater support.
- Are there female millwrights? None known, though no reason why not.
- There could be a crossover with wheelwrights and perhaps this could be explored.

5. Catherine Davies: Basket maker

Catherine Davies fell in love with basket making in 1999, not only the skills but the fact that it was part of the low carbon economy and part of a sustainable future. She went on many courses and ended up on the Isle of Eigg which then had a population of 60 (now just over 100). She built a workshop in her garden and planted willow to use at the same time as continuing to go on courses. Catherine went to France for over a year and found there a totally different attitude to crafts and basket making, where it is regarded as a profession and supported as such. Eventually she and her husband went back to Eigg where they continued to make, sell and learn. They now have a thriving basket making business, grow their own willow and teach. Catherine still

makes baskets for the TV 'Outlander' series, and was a basket maker extra in the first series. Covid-19 has affected her in that all her courses have been cancelled so there is no income from that source. Catherine felt strongly that basket making should be regarded as a profession, and that hand skills should be part of everyone's lives. Everyone should also buy local and support makers.

- Hand crafts should be regarded as vital, not quaint.
- There is a viable market and basketry is vital for a sustainable future. There is a way forward with, for example, the funeral industry and willow coffins, but so often funeral directors allow only their own source of willow coffin which have been important from the Far East.
- As consumers, the choices we make are critical and it's not acceptable when people don't support their local economy.

6. AOB

- Sir John Hayes: explained that he would be seeking an urgent meeting with Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport looking for support for makers post-Covid-19 and beyond. The absence of craft fairs and the cancellation of teaching has had a major effect on income. As well as this it was emphasised that the focus should be not just on the buildings but on the practical heritage, living crafts and our intangible cultural heritage.

- Patricia Lovett updated the APPG for Craft on the support the Heritage Crafts Association had been able to give as a result sourcing funding for the effects of Covid-19 on craft skills. The Association gave a first round of emergency grants of £50 just for food etc. Then a second round of grants were made to as varied crafts as a book binder, saddler, harpsichord maker, millwright, wheelwright and chair seater; and these extended from the Scottish Islands to Devon, and from Lancashire to Kent. The number of grants is now up to 29, with the last tranche going to basket makers as a result of a donation from the Basketmakers Association.

Comments received during the meeting and afterwards:

- I have been hit hard by Covid-19 with all 5 big gilding jobs I had lined up for this period of time either postponed or cancelled.
- A number of organisers of craft fairs are keeping deposits and not returning them, which in some cases amounts to £1,000s. They are saying that they will keep this payment for next year which presumes that these makers will be around to take part, but also this will keep out anyone who plans to take part in craft fairs if they haven't already booked for this year!
- The government payment for the self-employed presumes that makers

earn the same amount each month, however for most makers the summer – craft fairs, demonstrations, summer courses, etc etc – is when they earn most, so losing the summer earnings this year will have a knock on – and in some cases – disastrous effect.

- The Radcliffe Trust supported apprenticeships at Heron Corn Mill <http://www.heronmill.org/>. This was a really good example of community engagement, off-grid investment etc.
- At the moment it is unclear what will be happening to craft education in the future, I have a nasty feeling that the mantra will be 'children have lost so much schooling so we must concentrate on the academic subjects' without recognising the important part that creativity can play in the healing so many children (and adults) will need after the past months of damage.
- There seems to be some overlap between upholstery (given the variety we were shown) and basket making but it will only be relevant as to learning the skills needed in each case – unless the basket makers can help the upholsterers.
- The Association of Master Upholsterers and Soft Furnishers now have 17 training centres based around the country and have been running courses since 2006.
- The City of London is keen to encourage the recognition of creativity as one of the fundamental skills needed in society and business. Do you find you problem solve by bringing your craft and other skills?
- Would it be possible to use other apprenticeships as a building block for millwrights e.g. some wheelwrights have worked on mills.
- The Dutch government promotes their windmills as a kind of national heritage, having listed their windmills as world heritage sites and the skills of operating and maintaining them as intangible heritage. This means that tourism to mills can be tied into government funding and possibly community projects in a more long term way.
- What do you think the best online sales platforms are for heritage crafts? How do you communicate the value of your products in the online space?
- There is more and more choice in terms of online platforms. The best ones tend to be those that allow you to tell the story of your craft as well as show the product.