

APPG *for* CRAFT

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2–3.30pm

By Zoom

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

2. Apologies for absence

Earl of Clancarty	Vice-Chair	Susan Coles	Education Specialist
Diedre Brock	SNP	Derek Stimpson	WC Gunmakers
Terri Adams	Scientific Glass Instrument Blower		

3. Attending

Members

Sir John Hayes CBE	Chair
Baroness Garden	Vice-Chair

Associate Members and Speakers

Patricia Lovett MBE	Secretary	Judith Cobham- Lowe	WC Goldsmiths
Daniel Carpenter	Heritage Crafts Assn	Lisa Hammond MBE	Adopt-a-Potter and Clay College
Charlotte Diamond	Heritage Crafts Assn	James Grierson	
Harriet Deacon	Coventry University	Wendy Shorter-Blake MBE	WC Upholders & AMUSF
Rachael Linton	Gilder	Dr Rebecca Struthers	Watchmaker

Dr Chrissie Freeth	Tapestry weaver	Katy Bevan	Craft specialist
Siân E. Evans	Coppersmith	Dr Kelly Cordes	Researcher
Mary Lewis	Heritage Crafts Assn	Dr Brian Crossley MBE	Chair caner
Ann Packard	RSA	Gillian Dye	Lace maker
Nicola Peel		David Mortlock	WC Wheelwrights
Michael Osbaldeston	City & Guilds		

4. Report from Patricia Lovett MBE

Sir John Hayes invited Patricia Lovett to speak to matters that had arisen since the last APPG.

Patricia noted that she could speak only for heritage crafts and since the last emergency meeting the focus has largely been on the effects of Covid-19. She reported that the Heritage Crafts Association had done a great deal of work in sourcing funding for small grants of up to £500 for makers to ensure craft skills are maintained with over 50 businesses and makers supported to ensure craft skills continue. She noted that the HCA has been concerned about a lack of peer support and networking due to cancellation of craft fairs and teaching, and has responded by running Zoom 'In Conversation with...' meetings to bring together the craft community.

Sir John Hayes suggested making a particular case to the government regarding the fact that makers are disproportionately affected by Covid-19 restrictions. This proposal was welcomed by Associate Members and Speakers, including Patricia Lovett, Judith Cobham-Lowe, Rachael Linton and Mary Lewis. The group was in agreement that lockdown had been 'a story of two halves' for makers – with those set up for online sales faring more favourably than those who had been unable to reach their market. Sir John Hayes agreed to write a statement on behalf of the APPG to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport requesting specific financial support for craftspeople.

Sir John Hayes requested a declaration of any other business before moving on to the speakers' presentations. No other business was declared.

5. Presentation: Siân E. Evans, Coppersmith

Siân spoke of the origins of her apprenticeship as a Coppersmith, and noted the often serendipitous way that craftspeople come to their profession. Her introduction was through her local coppersmith, Sam Fanaroff BEM, who received the British Empire Medal 12 weeks before he died. Following the completion of her four year apprenticeship with Sam, Siân left the forge for ten years in order to care for her young family. She then received support from QEST for a year's Masters degree, and subsequently opened her own workshop at home to allow for flexibility with childcare. Siân noted that online presence, social media following, and mailing lists were key for maintaining a connection with buyers and the public. She spoke of the 'mischief' she had inherited from her mentor Sam, of hiding notes within objects - with the hope that years down the line someone might find it. Siân expanded this anecdote to make the point that legacy and heritage exist in tension with the future of objects, and how they might interact. Supported by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, she has had the opportunity to research coppersmithing origins and traditions in France and India, and has conducted research into the 'DNA' of making technique that traverses boundaries of language and geography. Siân went on to raise issues surrounding the romanticisation of craft and the fact that it is not recognised as a viable and living aspect of intangible cultural heritage.

Points raised:

- Global heritage traditions feeding into British technique and production
- The romanticisation of craft and how to accurately portray life as a craftsperson
- The positives of online presence
- The UNESCO agreement and how we could formalise official channels of communication between international craft organisations

6. Presentation: Rachael Linton, Gilder

Rachael discussed her path to becoming a gilder by way of digital media artistry, visual communication design, and filmmaking. Her first introduction to gilding came whilst researching illuminated manuscripts as

part of a project with her father to recreate the complete Bayeux tapestry from offcuts from an industrial knitting machine. From this early interest in gold, Rachael spoke of how she began incorporating the metal into her paintings and other work. She moved from New Zealand to the UK in 2012, where her gilding work began in earnest. Projects she discussed included gilding during the restoration of The Robing Room at Westminster Palace, gilding a sculpture of a baby elephant, and gilding 'the gingerbread' on The Cutty Sark - which was an HCA project funded by the Goldsmiths' Company. She noted the positives of being a sole-trader, which included autonomy over projects undertaken, the range of work available, collaboration with other artists, and having her own timetable. She also discussed the necessity to dedicate time and energy to the minutiae of being a sole-trader - pitches, estimates, site visits, risk assessments, accounting, taxes, social media etc. Rachael concluded her presentation by raising the ethical issues of working with gold - and introduced a new project called Mycelium Gold, which aims to extract gold from e-waste using mycelium.

Points raised:

- Ethics of extracting the materials used for heritage crafts and how we might invest in viable alternatives
- How to best support freelance/sole-trader/small business crafts people

Sir John Hayes left the meeting, and Baroness Garden took the Chair.

7. Presentation: Wendy Shorter-Blake MBE, Upholsterer

Wendy outlined her journey to a career in upholstery - from secretarial college, to PA to Stanley Kubrick and work in the film industry, before changing careers in order to best support her family. She noted that retraining was a difficult process, and was told that it was unlikely that anyone would accept her as an apprentice - an issue that still faces ambitious individuals training later in life. She made the point that since her retraining, this has become even more difficult due to the introduction of high tuition fees. Following a formal qualification in soft furnishings, she began working in educational positions at institutions such as the AMUSF and City & Guilds. Due to cuts in funding for various course providers, she founded her own upholstery training centre without any government funding. Wendy spoke in detail about the limitations of the current apprenticeship schemes, noting that

they are not long enough to incorporate the necessary depth of knowledge and, despite the apprenticeship levy, are too costly for many small businesses to deliver. Wendy highlighted that support for Level 2 was £9,000 but for Level 3, more advanced with more costly materials etc, it was £5,000! She emphasised that because the apprenticeship scheme is unattractive to many business owners, participant numbers are low, which in turn suggests to the government that there is no need for an upholstery apprenticeship. Wendy noted that a change in attitudes toward craft should begin in early education, and highlighted the importance of working with schools and communities to promote vocational career paths and provide affordable craft education.

Discussion:

- Baroness Garden: Is there a way in which the apprenticeship levy might be more effective for small businesses?
- WS-B: Micro-business need access more than anything, and the limited funds are difficult to access, with lots of bureaucracy, administration and red tape. Less time-consuming administration would make the process more appealing to these businesses

Points raised:

- Improving accessibility to training
- Providing affordable introductions to craft for school-aged children

8. Closing statements

Patricia Lovett MBE outlined plans for two meetings next year; one on intangible cultural heritage, the other to continue conversations regarding improvements to the apprenticeship scheme.

Baroness Garden thanked all Members, Associate Members and Speakers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.