

Northern Potters Association

Minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting

Held at St Olave's Church Hall, Marygate Lane, York YO30 7BJ,
At 1pm., Saturday 28 October 2017.

Present

Margaret Lawrenson (chair), Elizabeth Smith (minutes), John Robinson (treasurer), Joan Hardie, Dianne Cross, John Cook, Kit Hemsley, Mia Frampton, Carl Gray, Peter Humpherson, Hazel Anderson, Penny Withers, Alison Wren, Bev Seth, Kathy Watson, Barbara Wood, Pete Watson, Lyn Clarke, Kay Butterworth, Shirley Doyle, Jack Hardie, Colette Hennigan.

1. Apologies

Sally Streuli, Roger Bell, Ann Johnson, Alison Brayshaw, Ian Marsh.

2. Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes were approved and signed.

Proposer: Barbara Wood, Seconder: Dianne Cross.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Chairperson's Report

My report concerns the financial year April '16 to March '17.

Exhibitions and Events

The main selected exhibition of the year was 'Northern Colours' at Gallery Oldham last October/November. It was well curated by David Wright and received very positive comments but the number of sales overall was disappointingly low and it made a small loss. Finding suitable venues for selected shows continues to be difficult but, on a more positive note, we are in the process of booking somewhere (a gallery) for a large selected exhibition next summer.

The year generally was very busy. In June '16 we had a table at Earth and Fire – the last to be held at Rufford – and we displayed a pot from each of our members who was exhibiting there. This gained a lot of attention from the public, resulting in many interesting conversations and ultimately a lot of new members. But this only worked thanks to the team of a dozen or so volunteers who manned the stall in shifts over the 3 days. We did a similar thing at Potfest in the Pens in August '16 though unfortunately our table was not in a very accessible position. Also at Potfest, many of our members joined regional teams and had fun competing in the 'Potfest Olympics'.

(I have to add that the NPA tables at Potfest in the Pens *this* year were amazing! Hopefully you have all seen the photos: the display of ceramic food for our 40th birthday party, made by so many of you, was truly incredible and resulted in an enormous amount of interest – BBC local radio were so impressed they broadcast about it on their news programme. I want to personally thank everyone who contributed and also Chris and Geoff Cox for letting us attend.)

There were very many regional events throughout the year: In the summer the east region held an exhibition 'Natural Inspirations' at the Joe Cornish Gallery in North Allerton, and this February Lottie Inch hosted a small exhibition 'Pop Art and Pots' in her nearby York gallery.

The West held 'Clay Collective' at the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe. The SW group surpassed themselves with three exhibitions: the first at The Old Parsonage in Didsbury in April; then at The Two Doors Studio, Alsager in September and finally at The Middleport Pottery in Burleigh this spring.

The SE had a demonstration day with Jitka Palmer and the East region were at the CoCA Day of Clay in May. The NE region had a raku demonstration given by Alan Ball and a 'Potters Corner' at Tynemouth Christmas market.

The NW held a paper clay demo and later an exhibition called 'Cumbrian Ceramics' at the Upfront Gallery in Unthank. West region also held an exhibition at UCLAN called 'Pot West,' – and I have probably missed several other events – sorry!

I think that holding regional exhibitions makes a lot of sense. They have a more intimate feel, are more attractive to the local public and involve a lot less travelling for both organisers and exhibitors. Thanks to all who have been involved in this way and long may regional exhibitions flourish.

I'm pleased to say that we are in a good position financially as you will hear from John Robinson and also that our membership continues to increase as Elizabeth Smith will report later.

As a result of this increased membership we have taken the decision not to increase the annual subscription (this was discussed at last year's AGM), since our bank balance has increased over this last year.

Newsletter

Our sincere thanks to Joan Hardy who continues to produce an extremely high quality magazine. It is always informative and interesting, but it does need all of us to keep contributing articles and photos. Also, Joan would appreciate the help of an enthusiastic assistant! Could someone offer a little help?

As well as working on the newsletter, Joan and her husband Jack have worked many long hours writing and organising the exciting NPA@40 on-line competition. I do hope you have all entered! Thanks also to Dianne Cross and John Cook for getting £900 worth of prizes from our sponsors.

Regional Groups

Earlier in this report I spoke of how well everything is working at regional level. Although several of the regions have enough volunteers to help, others are finding it very difficult to find coordinators, particularly the NW and East regions. Ruth Charlton is currently NW coordinator but after 5 years will be stepping down at the end of this year – and she can find no one to take over despite many requests.

The East region has no coordinator in place at all. Please, is there anyone here who would take over? Barbara Wood took on the role most efficiently for 2016 and arranged some excellent social events. She is, once again, relaying all necessary emails for us – but only until Christmas. I ask you all again. Please will someone offer to be the new coordinator? Or can you suggest someone? We badly need someone in both these areas. Please consider it and have a word with any of us later.

In the NE Geoff Proudlock stood down as coordinator after many years in the role and for which we thank him; Stephan Aal has taken over.

Website

Following on from last year's discussions at the AGM a working group was set up to look at the running and design of the website. We looked at the possibility of running the website ourselves. It would have cost **£1250** to convert the site into a WordPress document and there would be other annual costs including website hosting and domain renewal. However we had to abandon the idea as we could not get any volunteers to administer the site.

We decided however that we would introduce two new tabs onto the site: Exhibitions and Events, and Courses and Workshops. These are administered by the NPA, and Barbara Wood kindly offered to undertake the work. Although a very large number of members run courses and workshops, when I last looked there were only three listed. It's good free advertising, so do put on details of your courses and encourage others to do so too.

We also decided to introduce new headers for the eight sections of the site, and members submitted images for consideration.

In the Artists section and Gallery we still have fewer than 200 members listed, and that's out of a membership of nearly 600. If you are not there, please send your details and images to John Cook. It's free and good advertising both for your selves and for the NPA.

2016 CoCA lecture

The lecture was given by Christie Brown and had a good attendance. This annual lecture is a joint venture for the NPA with the Friends of York Art Gallery.

Committee

The election of committee members comes later, in Item 7 on the agenda. However, you may have read in the last newsletter that I wish to resign from the committee within the next six months. I have been on the committee for over nine years, seven as Membership Secretary and now two as Chair. Since the position of Vice-chair is also vacant I will be asking for nominations for these two positions later on in this meeting. Please consider it.

Just one thing now remains: I want to thank the present committee most sincerely for all their efforts over the last 2 years, and especially for the continued support they have given to me personally. They really are a great team.

5. Treasurer's Report

The financial statement (30 March 2017) was printed in the October/November 2017 newsletter. A copy is attached to these minutes.

The NPA's financial position remains healthy, with the balance at the Co-op Bank at the end of the financial year at just under £12,000. ([t currently stands at £12528.88 on 25/10/17.] At the end of the last financial year on 31 March 2017 the NPA had a 'trading surplus' of £777. The trading surplus for 2016 was just over £2,000. The difference in these two figures is mostly accounted for by the fact that only 5 newsletters were produced during 2016. This year we are back to the normal 6 newsletters.

Committee travel expenses have come down, and are now 60% of the 2016 figure. This has been achieved by meeting in more central locations accessible by public transport, although this can be awkward for members who live in outlying areas.

The Yorkshire Bank NPA account has finally been closed. A Paypal account has been set up with the email address: treasurer@northern-potters.co.uk.

With exhibitions, 'Northern Colours' at Gallery Oldham made a small loss of around £100, and

one workshop in the South East region also made a small loss of £65. Subscription rates have remained unchanged since 2009.

John Robinson proposed the re-appointment of Steve Wood FCMA as auditor for 2016/17. This was seconded by Dianne Cross and carried.

Carl Gray proposed the approval of the Financial Statement. This was seconded by Shirley Doyle and carried.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

NPA membership has increased this year by 62. This follows an increase of 53 between 2015 and 2016. Increases in membership over the past two years are much higher than usual. It may be worth noting that the first *Great Pottery Throwdown* screened in November 2015.

In 2017 to date, 84 people joined or rejoined the NPA, and 30 left. The number of membership entries on the database now stands at 574, 17 of which are joint memberships, so the total number of members is 591. There are three student memberships and four honorary memberships.

Around three-quarters of members pay their subscriptions by standing order, and the rest by cheque. The administration required for cheque payments and cheque renewals in particular takes far more time than any other aspect of running the membership database. The NPA committee has recently discussed the possibility of phasing out payments by cheque. This was also discussed at the AGM, and the feeling of the meeting was generally in favour of cheque payments being phased out, but no vote was taken.

7. Election of committee members

Over the last year four committee members have resigned. Wendy Turner was unable to attend meetings owing to the pressures of a full-time teaching job. David Wright was exhibitions officer for several years but has also had problems attending meetings. Lesley Nason served on the committee for seven years and has now left. Nina Wright has moved to London and resigned from the committee. We thank them all for their contributions.

Dianne Cross (publicity), Joan Hardy (newsletter), John Robinson (treasurer) and John Cook (website) have held these positions for the last 2 years and do not need re-election. Several people have joined the NPA committee since the last AGM and require formal election:

Sally Streuli joined the committee before the last AGM, but has been NPA Secretary since October 2016. Joan Hardie proposed Sally Streuli as Secretary, Barbara Wood seconded: carried.

Elizabeth Smith joined in January 2016 as Membership Secretary. John Cook proposed Elizabeth Smith as Membership Secretary, Penny Withers seconded: carried.

Three new general members have joined the committee:

Kit Hemsley – proposed by Elizabeth Smith, seconded by Penny Withers, carried.

Carl Gray – proposed by Barbara Wood, seconded by John Cook, carried.

Mia Frampton – proposed by Bev Seth, seconded by Shirley Doyle, carried.

The NPA constitution states that as well as Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer there should be 'no fewer than 8 and not more than 14 other general committee members'. The Chair asked the AGM for nominations for Vice-Chair but none were forthcoming. Colette Hennigan

offered to join the committee as a new general member. John Cook proposed Colette, Kit Hemsley seconded, carried.

8. Any other business

8.1 Unfilled roles

The Chair emphasised that NPA members need to play an active role in the running of the organisation. The post of East coordinator is currently unfilled, and the NorthWest coordinator wishes to step down but cannot find anyone willing to replace her.

Newsletter Editor Joan Hardie needs volunteers to become part of the newsletter team. Each issue currently involves two weeks of intensive work. While the newsletter functions best with a single editor, the job has many aspects which can be made into individual roles, for example managing the database, writing, taking photos of events and exhibitions, reviewing, and desktop publishing. Joan is happy to provide training for these roles.

8.2 The AGM minutes

The minutes of each AGM are currently published in the newsletter just before the next AGM. Joan Hardie raised the concern that by the time they are published, they are out of date. She suggested putting the AGM minutes in the newsletter immediately after the AGM. The financial report would still be published just before each AGM. There was some discussion about this. The view of the meeting was generally in favour, with some reservations about availability.

8.3 Newsletter frequency

Shirley Doyle asked if the newsletter needed to come out every two months, given that each issue costs so much to print. Margaret Lawrenson commented that she had recently been to a meeting of potters associations, and one association, for example, publish their newsletter 4 times a year with an e-bulletin in between. Joan Hardie commented that the current frequency suits her well. Colette Hennigan raised the question of having the newsletter sent round as a pdf, which would cut out printing costs. A discussion ensued about the pros and cons of a physical newsletter, with some members expressing the view that a published newsletter was an important aspect of Northern Potters.

Elizabeth Smith. 1/11/17