

# **Northern Potters Association**

## **Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting**

Held at St Olave's Church Hall, Marygate, York.  
At 1.00pm, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

### **Present**

John Cook (chair), Sally Streuli (minutes), Emmeline Butler (treasurer), Joan Hardie, Dianne Cross, Ken Taylor, Ann Davis, Sue Kaskiewicz, Nadine Blakemore, Kay Butterworth, Juliet Myers, Lyn Grant, Gerry Grant, Eryl Fryer, Kathy Watson, Lyn Clarke.

### **1. Apologies**

Geoff Wilcock, Bev Seth, Helen Pickard and John Kershaw.

### **2. Minutes of the last AGM**

The minutes were approved.

### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### **4. Election of committee members**

4.1 John Cook (chair), Ken Taylor (vice chair), Emmeline Butler (treasurer) and Ann Davis (membership secretary) have taken up their posts in the last year and therefore require confirmation of their position. John Cook was put forward for election by Joan Hardie and seconded by Dianne Cross, Ken Taylor was proposed by Dianne Cross and seconded by Joan Hardie, Emmeline Butler was proposed by John Cook and seconded by Joan Hardie, Ann Davis was proposed by Joan Hardie and seconded by Dianne Cross. All were carried.

4.2 Sally Streuli has held the position as secretary for the last 3 years and, as she is willing to continue in this role, has put herself forward for re-election. Sally Streuli was therefore proposed for re-election by Emmeline Butler and seconded by Nadine Blakemore. This was carried.

4.3 Nadine Blakemore has recently joined the committee and was proposed by Joan Hardie and seconded by Dianne Cross, this was carried.

### **5. Chairperson's Report**

5.1 John Cook took over from Joan Hardie in January of this year as Chair of the NPA. He thanked all those who had travelled to the 2019 NPA AGM and reminded those who were attending as regional reps (or their representative) to claim their travel expenses.

5.2 John Cook gave his report with the main points outlined below:

The NPA has maintained a large membership of around 600 and is in a healthy financial position with assets of £14,335 as of March 2019, an increase of approximately £800 from the accounting year ending March 2018. As of the 20<sup>th</sup> of June the figure stood at £15,500.

5.3 The NPA came close to being dissolved towards the end of 2018, with no treasurer or membership secretary in post, however, largely through the efforts of Joan Hardie both roles were filled with Emmeline Butler taking on the role of treasurer and Ann Davis the role of membership secretary.

5.4 Thanks were given to Elizabeth Smith, the outgoing membership secretary, who supported Ann through the transition. A number of general committee members have also left the

committee since the last AGM., Thanks were given to Mia Frampton, Kit Hemsley and Viv Mitchell for giving their time and supporting the NPA. However the committee requires more than the current 2 general members, to support the committee and hopefully take over responsible roles. Fortunately, all the committee members with responsibilities are continuing at the moment. Despite several appeals since John took office in January, there have been no volunteers from the 600 members. The appeal for the NE Regional Rep was more successful with Helen Pickard volunteering. All the regions now have at least one rep.

#### Exhibitions and Publicity:

5.6 The NPA has had two major selected exhibitions in the last year, *Vessels* in Sheffield organised by the SE Region, and *Heat* at the Waterstreet Gallery in Todmorden, both were successful. The Heat exhibition which John was involved with, has introduced new ceramics artists to the gallery and could lead to more opportunities for individual NPA members. Both exhibitions were promoted through the NPA and good sales were reported from several members.

5.7 The NPA Facebook page, together with the regional ones, are working well, enabling members to share information about events, exhibitions, getting advice, selling materials and equipment and generally networking. However, the Website is still underused as a promotional tool. John often has to remind members that it not only exists, but also gets many hits mostly, according to Google Analytics, from new visits, presumably from individuals interested in ceramics.

5.8 We are in early discussions with the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe for a 6 week summer exhibition in 2020 which a NPA West member has agreed to oversee once the details have been established.

#### Events:

5.9 We had promotional stands at Earth and Fire and Potfest in the Pens. Many thanks to everyone who gave freely of their time to man and organise the stands. The Potfest stand was manned by the NPA Committee over the 3 days and we saw a spike in membership in August of 14 new members. It wasn't the sole objective to increase membership but to support the 63 members who were exhibiting, however it was a bonus to get so many new members and interest in the stand, with many old copies of NPA News taken away.

#### Regions:

5.10 Many of the regions have been active over the year, with new regional reps encouraged to revive the quieter regions.

5.11 John Cook raised the question, often raised at the AGM, of why we don't allocate the majority of any surplus NPA money to the regions. There may be a perception that the NPA Committee is distant from the membership and appears to retain funds. It has also been put forward as an argument why members are unwilling to join the Committee or participate in the Regions. At an AGM some years ago it was proposed that the NPA should always have a minimum balance of £10,000.00 to cover unforeseen expenditure and this was agreed and passed as a motion.

5.12 It is not possible for funds to be directly reallocated to the regions as we have to have a central treasury role with the accounts audited by a qualified accountant. This does not stop any group setting up and financing their own association, but it cannot be under the umbrella of the NPA. The funds of the NPA belong to all the 600 members and the Committee is charged to look after them.

5.13 We offered each of the 6 regions £200 as a grant for regional development at the 2018 AGM. However the SE Region was the only one to take up this offer. They were also the only region to use the NPA events underwriting facility to organise other events. We are again offering the £200 grant for 2019/2020 AGM for the regions to access. We have not put any hurdles in place to access the grant and individual applications in a region could be considered.

5.14 Some NW regional members inquired re a grant for a pop-up ceramics exhibition at the Printfest in Ulverston this year, hopefully they will apply earlier next year which will help in paying for some of the running and set up costs. Kathryn Stevens had an article published in the August/September issue of NPA News describing the event and the reasons behind it which may give others some ideas.

5.15 We are also researching the possibility of a Bursary scheme which would allow individual members to access funds. The Bursary is still under discussion but could be for travel, researching a particular technique etc. It is likely that individual member would need to submit an article in the NPA News for all to share.

#### Newsletter:

5.16 NPA News continues to be of a very high standard but the editor is always looking for interesting copy. NPA News belongs to all the membership and everyone is encouraged to contribute. The online NPA Archive continues to grow and is a valuable resource of information going back 11 years.

5.17 A special mention for Roger Bell who continues to submit his book reviews. We are unsure when he started but we have found reviews going back 13 years so he has to be the best ever contributor. A special mention also for Amanda Graham who submitted a valuable feature on pottery classes and dementia sufferers, and a feature on John Rivers and his work. The Chair's favourite article was by Kate Stride, writing on digging and processing clay from a nearby reservoir.

5.18 Joan would still like help in the production of NPA News with responsibility for content and design being split. We could also produce an electronic version of the NPA News but again this requires a volunteer to manage two distribution lists, one for hard copy and one for digital distribution.

#### Website:

5.19 The website is now 10 years old in its current format, and in consequence cannot be adequately protected from being hacked and even destroyed because of the way it is constructed. We have taken advice from our website provider who recommended that we convert the site into a WordPress format. A WordPress format would give us continual security updates and protection. This was highlighted in the recent August NPA News. We have ordered the conversion at a cost £2,300. Once this is finalized we should be able undertake all edits ourselves (if volunteers can be found) and hope to be able to handle membership more efficiently.

5.20 The website only contains about 25% of the membership and as outlined in section 5.7 above is not fully used as a publicity and information resource.

#### Conclusion:

5.21 John ended his report with the positive position of investment in the NPA through the £2,300 modernisation of the website, the regional grants being made available to a total of £1,200 and the development of a Bursary fund, totaling over £3,500 in the NPA and its

development over the next year.

5.22 We as a Committee currently meet midweek in Sheffield, convenient for train travel and those who wish can join the meeting by Skype. The meetings seek to make attendance as easy as possible for all and their location can vary according to the makeup of the committee.

5.23 However once again the NPA committee is underpowered and needs more volunteers. Unless people come forward we will face the same problems as we have for a number of years – this is not a recent phenomena. We might have to reduce the function of the NPA to the bare bones to keep going if we cannot get volunteers. John asked for questions from the floor and opened the meeting up for discussion.

5.24 Points arising from a wide ranging and positive discussion included:

- Lyn Clarke (East) suggested a questionnaire might be useful to analyse what members would like to gain from their membership. Joan Hardie agreed that we know surprisingly little about our members and her background in market research would be useful in putting together a questionnaire which could be included in NPA News. It was agreed this should be taken forward.
- The regions, like the committee, find the same core of people attend meetings and get involved. It is often difficult to find volunteers to help arrange events at a local level.
- Although the regional reps are invited to attend the committee meetings there needs to be more clarity in inviting them and informing them of dates and times. The committee will address this.
- Lyn Grant suggested exhibitions are more geared towards the decorative, rather than the functional potter. Although this may be a sign of the times the NPA does need to represent all members. It was also felt that active members came from the more amateur or early career areas rather than professionals.
- An annual digital exhibition was suggested, following up on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary competition. Joan reiterated that this had been a major undertaking which she personally could not repeat but would be able to help others use the setup she and Jack Hardie had developed. It was noted that the participation rate in the competition, whether entries or voting, had been excellent, as had the members' response to GDPR.
- Juliet Myers suggested it would be good to get those who live near each other in contact. This had also been discussed by the committee previously. It would require a gazeteer with the permission of all those members included.
- Kay Butterworth, who has been helping the committee with considering improvements to the data management of members details, was assured by the committee that they hoped to improve this by linking to a plug-in on the new Wordpress website. Her offer of further help was very much welcomed.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

6.1 Emmeline Butler proposed the re-appointment of Steve Wood FCMA as auditor for the 2019/20 accounts, seconded by John Cooke and passed.

6.2 A copy of the 2018/19 Financial Statement was printed in NPA News and copies were circulated. In summary:

- at the end of March 2019, the bank balance stood at £14335.71, giving a surplus of £834.35, which is nearly £800 less than last year.
- Income is down just over £500 from 2017/18 due to slightly higher events expenditure costs and a slight drop in membership fees. This fluctuates year on year and is similar to previous years, so no cause for concern
- Expenditure is roughly in line with 2017/18, despite some higher website costs, and some higher costs for committee travelling. As John has mentioned, the committee has recently

been experimenting with Skype and has started to use this for some committee members this current year, so this should help to reduce travelling costs for meetings in the future.

- Membership fees are roughly in line with the previous year, as were newsletter costs.
- SE Region successfully ran a number of events which were self-funding. Some produced a surplus which has been added to their event surpluses this year which, combined with the Regional Fund of £200 is enough for them to purchase a projector that they wanted – this is being bought imminently.

## 7. Membership Secretary's Report

7.1 Ann Davis took over as membership secretary from Elizabeth Smith in February 2019 and reported as follows.

7.2 Overall membership numbers have been static over this last year, although there have been 42 new members since Ann took over.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total membership	457	510	574	593	590
Joint	16	19	17	22	22
Student			3		1
Total inc joint	473	529	591	615	612
Hon members	4	4	4	4	4
New members/rejoined	48	74 +3 joint	84	63	60
Lapsed/withdrawn	51	24	30	n/a	65
Payment by SO or BACS	383	406	448	n/a	577
Payments by cheque (approx. nos.)	70	88	76	77	7
Payment by cash		4			1
GDPR 'Yes'				452	483
GDPR 'No'				131	99

7.3 There has been a significant increase in payments by standing order (SO). In the future members who wish to lapse can stop their SO with their bank, the membership secretary will need to check payments against bank statements and update the database accordingly. Hopefully it will be a more accurate way of keeping track of current members and less labour intensive.

7.4 Using email to communicate membership status rather than letter post has been explained in a number of NPA News issues and this has also been added to the new member welcome letter they get when they join.

## 8. Any other business

### Potfest

8.1 Gerry Grant has been approached by Matt Cox as he would like to include demonstrations by NPA members at Potfest in the Pens which Gerry has offered to organise. The Committee thanked him and encouraged him to take this forward. He will put together an article for NPA News and hopefully get some volunteers.

### Honorary membership proposal

8.2 On behalf of the NPA Committee, Joan Hardie proposed that the NPA recognise the contribution to studio ceramics of NPA member Christine Cox by making her an honorary member. Together with her husband Geoff Cox, Chris has been responsible for

introducing and establishing the Potfest potters' markets into the UK. Potfest and the NPA have several shared objectives which have been met by

- giving potters direct access to customers
- raising the profile of studio ceramics in the UK
- educating the public about ceramics
- giving many people their first experience of hands-on pottery
- providing opportunities for potters to socialise, share experience and give mutual support

8.3 Potfest in the Pens is the only major unselected ceramics fair in the UK, which has given many NPA members their first experience of such a large selling event. There were 65 NPA members exhibiting at the 2019 event (more by the end), with many others visiting. We have been very lucky to have the Potfests in northern England. Chris and Geoff have also consistently provided us with opportunities to participate and raise the profile of the NPA at Potfest in the Pens.

8.4 In 2018 Potfest celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This year Chris and Geoff have handed over the running of Potfest in the Pens, Potfest in the Park and Potfest Scotland to their son Matt Cox, so this is a fitting time to honour Christine. Joan's proposal was seconded by Dianne Cross and passed.

Constitution amendment

8.5 Finally John Cook proposed amending the constitution at items 6.1/6.3 to add reference to payment by standing order. An amendment which can be put to the membership at next year's AGM.

## **9. Next Meeting**

The 2020 AGM will be held in Penrith to coincide with Potfest in the Pens.