



# Minutes of the 55<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of The Fly Dressers' Guild

Held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 4.00 pm  
at British Fly Fair International 2024,  
Staffordshire Agricultural Show Ground, ST18 0BD

**Present:** Peter Gathercole (Chairman), Charles Jardine (Vice Chairman), Chris Reeves (General Secretary), John Butler (Treasurer), Lee Hooper (Fishing Competitions Secretary), Robert Lomax (Guild Fly-Tying Awards Secretary), Phil Varney (Merchandising), Caroline Emmet (Member without portfolio and Editorial Committee).

**In attendance:** Simon Beales, Stuart Bladen (Herts), Neil Brooks, Paul Cramp (North Kent), Paul Healey, David Hild (Leeds), Dennis MacDonald (Pendle), Tony Mitchell, David Palmer (North West), Malcolm Price (Ringwood), Malcolm Salthouse, Regan Skinner (Herts), Robin Spaight, Riley Spaight, Steve Sunley (North West), Chris Watson (North West), Eddie Wilkinson (North West), Brin Woodsford (Ringwood).

**Apologies:** Mike Humphreys, David Richards (Membership Secretary).

## 1. Apologies for absence, quorum and chair

It was agreed that the General Secretary, Chris Reeves, would chair the meeting. The apologies for absence were noted; nevertheless, a quorum was present and accordingly, the meeting could proceed to business. The General Secretary welcomed all members to the meeting.

## 2. Previous Minutes

The General Secretary informed the meeting that the minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> GM, held on 11 February 2023, had been left behind. It was noted that the key decisions approved the prior year were as follows:

- The minutes of the 53<sup>rd</sup> General Meeting were approved and the accounts for the financial year ending 31 August 2022 were adopted; and
- Phil Varney was elected as Merchandising Officer, Chris Reeves was re-elected as General Secretary and Caroline Emmet was re-elected as member without portfolio.

It was agreed that the minutes would be proposed for approval at the next General Meeting.

## 3. Officers' Reports

It was noted that copies of the reports from the Chair, General Secretary, Membership Secretary, Fishing Competitions Secretary, Guild Fly-Tying Awards and Fly-Tying Competition Secretary and the Editorial Committee Secretary had been made available before the meeting. Each Officer provided a brief summary of their report.

### Chairman's report

Peter Gathercole, the Chairman, reported that after a couple of turbulent years, 2023 was a relatively calm one for the Guild. Membership was stable, a new branch is being formed in Lincolnshire and potentially another one in Northern Ireland. The 48<sup>th</sup> John Watt boat fishing competition took place in August at Draycote Water. Last year's winners, Trout'n'Gout, secured second place, with the winning team being the North Kent Salad Dodgers. Team member Paul Cramp was the Top Rod and Brin Woodsford from the Wilts Branch caught the longest fish.

Bob Lomax was co-opted as the Guild Fly-Tying Awards Manager, to carry on David Taylor's good work. Bob is a qualified GAIA instructor who leads the popular fly-tying classes formerly run by Wendy Gibson – he is a great addition to the team. Peter also paid tribute to our former Treasurer, Stephen Millington, who sadly passed away in April 2023. The Guild finances, now overseen by John Butler, remain healthy, although the printing and mailing costs for Flydresser remain a concern. The Chairman thanked the members and other authors who contributed to Flydresser and everyone involved in the production of the magazine. He thanked members who give their time and share their fly-tying skills to help others become proficient fly-tyers, and encouraged all members, but particularly novices, to participate in the Guild's fly-tying competition.

## General Secretary's report

The General Secretary, Chris Reeves, also acknowledged the loss of David Taylor and Stephen Millington, as more recently the Reverend Robert Spaight, a long-time stalwart supporter of the FDG. He was grateful to Robert Spaight's son, Robin, offering to join the Executive Committee as Events Manager. Guild branches continued to experience mixed fortunes and the Secretary hoped that FDG members would carry on supporting their local branches, joining their Committees and sharing the workloads. It was encouraging to see the Lincolnshire Branch up and running thanks to the hard work of Rob Spaight and Barry Grantham and the first meeting of a prospective branch in Northern Ireland had been arranged. Correspondence during the year had been sparse and related mainly to the website – largely due to users not being familiar with the set up but unfortunately, the Guild was still in need of a new webmaster to help with the technical set up. The Guild insurance was being renewed and entries for the Fly-Tying Competition were beginning to trickle in. The Chair concluded by saying that, while he was happy to carry on in this role for the time being, the Guild as a whole should think about succession planning for Executive Committee members who had held the roles for a long time, and thanked all members of the Executive Committee for their time and contributions.

## Treasurer's report

The Treasurer, John Butler, reported that the Guild has continued to operate successfully in the post pandemic period, although membership had not yet recovered to prior levels. The FDG's major expenses were Flydresser and the insurance, but expenditures on postage and printing supplies, particularly in relation to awards and the administration of membership, were increasing in significance. The value of unsold items held in inventory had been written down, and the new merchandising strategy would avoid the Guild buying and holding items on stock. Apart from this accounting adjustment, the Guild had operated on a break even basis. However, this was only possible because of the unpaid contributions received from members for Flydresser, and the unpaid work undertaken by the whole of the Executive Committee. The Guild continued to have strong reserves.

## Membership Secretary's report

The Membership Secretary, Dave Richards, had tendered his apologies for absence and provided a report for the meeting. A recent influx of members, particularly from Northern Ireland, had resulted in a slight increase in membership, to approximately 900 now. Dave encouraged members to support their local branch, and if there wasn't one, to consider setting one up, as there is no substitute for the tuition and advice to be gained at a branch meeting. Dave wished to remind members that renewals were due in September of each year and asked that members who have standing orders set up for other times of the year could amend these to 1 September, please. Also that members wishing to access the Members' Area on the website, should use the name on their membership card without the title (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Dr, etc.) for the user name and their membership number for the password.

## Fishing Competitions Secretary's report

The Fishing Competitions Secretary, Lee Hooper, provided an update on the two fishing competitions held by the Guild last year: the Spring Bank Fishing Competition at Elinor and the John Watts Boat Fishing Competition held at Draycote later on in the year. It was the second time that the John Watts had been fished on a catch and release basis. Both events had proved to be very enjoyable - very friendly and a great way to meet up with fellow Guild members. Lee encouraged all members to come to them in 2024.

## Merchandising Officer's report

The Merchandising Manager, Phil Varney, reported that sales had been slow since the 2023 BFFI, but hopefully this would improve once the merchandise available was listed on the website and in Flydresser: polo shirts and fleeces, ordered on demand, and baseball caps, for the time being.

## Editorial Committee Secretary's report

Caroline Emmet thanked members for their continued patience with the delays in publishing *Flydresser*, and to everyone who contributed to its production. It would not be possible to publish the magazine at all without their support and encouragement.

#### **4. Adoption of Accounts and Appointment of Examiner**

The Treasurer provided an overview of the accounts for the financial year ended 31 August 2023. It was noted that the Guild had made a small loss of £1,023 during the year, but remained in a healthy financial position. The accounts were duly adopted by the meeting.

#### **5. Re-election/ election of officers**

It was noted that Bob Lomax had been co-opted onto the Executive Committee during the year, as Guild Fly-Tying Awards Manager and this being the first subsequent general meeting, was therefore standing for election.

It was further noted that the following officers were required to retire under the Constitution, but, being eligible to do so, stood for re-election:

- (i) Charles Jardine – Vice Chairman;
- (ii) Membership Secretary – David Richards; and
- (iii) Fishing Competitions Secretary – Lee Hooper.

Bob-Lomax, Charles Jardine, David Richards and Lee Hooper were duly elected/re-elected to their roles by the meeting.

#### **6. Any Other Business**

It was noted that Robin Spaight had offered to take on the role of Events Manager, and was duly proposed, seconded and elected into the role at the meeting.

It was noted that the Guild website required updating and further improvements. Caroline Emmet reported that she was following up on two offers to help with the technical side of the website.

There being no other business the Chairman thanked all fellow members of the Executive Committee and all members of the Guild present and drew the meeting to a close.