



# Minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of The Fly Dressers' Guild

Held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 4.00 pm  
at British Fly Fair International 2023,  
Staffordshire Agricultural Show Ground, ST18 0BD

**Present:** Peter Gathercole (Chairman), Chris Reeves (General Secretary), John Butler (Treasurer), David Richards (Membership Secretary), Lee Hooper (Fishing Competitions Secretary), Phil Varney (Merchandising), Caroline Emmet (Member without portfolio and Editorial Committee).

**In attendance:** Stuart Bladen (Herts), Paul Cramp (North Kent), David Hild (Leeds), Dennis MacDonald (Pendle), Liam Matthews, David Palmer (North West), Tony Richards, Regan Skinner (Herts), Steve Sunley (North West), Eddie Wilkinson (North West).

**Apologies:** Mike Humphreys, John Sawtell, Chris Watson, Aimee Kitching.

## 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

It was noted that the minutes of the 53<sup>rd</sup> AGM, held on 30 January 2022, had been uploaded to the FDG website in advance of the meeting. It was proposed that the minutes be adopted as a true record of the 2019 AGM and the proposal was approved by the meeting.

## 3. Officers' Reports

It was noted that 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 uploaded onto the FDG website in advance of the meeting. Each Officer provided a brief summary of their report.

### Chairman's report

Peter Gathercole, the Chairman, noted it had been another challenging year for the FDG, starting with the transfer of the Treasurer's role to John Butler when Stephen Millington became too unwell to continue in post. On behalf of the Guild, the Chairman wished Stephen a full recovery and thanked him for all his efforts since taking over as Treasurer in November 2010. The Chairman also extended his thanks to John for taking over in difficult circumstances and for succeeding in getting Barclays Bank to complete the handover of Guild bank account to John and the other appointed signatories. The Guild's finances remained quite healthy, but there had been a significant fall in members which would have an impact going forward. The Chairman apologised to members who had experienced problems with the administration of the Fly-Tying Awards over the previous 12 months. Unknown to the Executive Committee, David Taylor, the Guild Awards manager, had suffered serious health problems for some time and passed away suddenly in November 2022, just as he had re-established contact. The good work Dave had put into the Awards and the Fly-Tying Competition when he had been well was highlighted, and it was noted he was much missed by the Executive Committee and both the Guild Branches where he had been an active member. The Chairman noted the role played by Branches in promoting fly-tying and thanked all those involved for their time and effort. He thanked all other members for their support of the Guild and urged them to take part in the Guild fly-tying competitions and encourage others to join the Guild. The Chairman ended by highlighting the success of last year's John Watts competition and congratulating the winners of the team and individual events: Trout'n'Gout, Dennis MacDonald and Melvyn Wood.

### General Secretary's report

Chris Reeves, General Secretary, thanked all members who had chosen to show their support for the Guild by staying on at the show to attend the meeting. He summed up his past year as "dealing with bits falling off the Guild". He welcomed John Butler to his first general meeting as Treasurer of the FDG and noted the challenges encountered with getting the Barclays Bank account handed over to the new signatories, which

had taken six months or more, causing problems with members. The General Secretary had also assumed temporary responsibility for the Fly-Tying Awards and Fly-Tying Competition. He had been hampered by not being able to access David Taylor's electronic records but thought he had been in touch with everyone who had contacted Dave over the past twelve months. He was also processing the entries which had started to come in for the Fly-Tying Competition, and was amazed at so many entrants' inability to follow instructions! Following recent conversations, he was hopeful that he had identified someone to replace David as the Guild Awards Manager. He had also identified a replacement for the current webmaster and introduced Liam Matthews to the members present at the meeting. It was noted that two other members had expressed interest in helping with social media. The General Secretary thanked all the Executive Committee members for their hard work during the year, helping the Guild to continue despite all the tribulations and hoped that 2023 would see the Guild and Branches grow and flourish.

### **Treasurer's report**

John Butler, the Treasurer, reported that the Guild's finances were stable and membership income had been recovering in the last couple of months. However, an increase in membership would be welcome given the likely impact of inflation on Guild costs. It was also important to note that the current membership fees were only possible due to reliance on the work undertaken by the Executive Committee on a voluntary basis. The General Secretary pointed out that putting together the accounts had been a major challenge based on the records available to John, and thanked him for the efforts made. It was suggested by one member that, should Barclays continue to cause difficulties regarding access to the account, the Executive Committee should consider opening an account with Metro Bank.

### **Membership Secretary's report**

The Membership Secretary, Dave Richards, noted that there continued to be a decrease in membership of FDG Branches and the FDG as a whole as a result of the pandemic, lack of participation at the various shows and decreased branch activity. However, there had been a recent influx of new members, from overseas (especially Finland) and the UK and he hoped that former members would return as activities continued to pick up. The Membership Secretary encouraged members to support their local Branch and if there wasn't one, to consider setting one up, offering to advise whether there were other FDG members living nearby. The membership renewals process had been easier this year, as the Membership Secretary now had direct access to the FDG account. Members to ensure that renewals by standing order were set to take place on 1 September, rather than at random dates during the year.

### **Fishing Competitions Secretary's report**

The Fishing Competitions Secretary, Lee Hooper, provided a short summary of his report. He noted the disappointment at having to cancel the Spring Bank Fishing Competition at Elinor for lack of entries, and hoped that the later date selected would encourage more members to take part. However, the John Watts Boat Fishing Competition held at Draycote later on in the year was a great day out, with 44 Guild members taking part. For the first time, the competition was fished completely on a catch and release basis, which worked very well. The Fishing Competitions Secretary was also looking to organise another pike fishing day at Elinor in the Winter. He encouraged all members to take part in these events, which are very friendly and a great way to meet up with fellow Guild members.

### **Merchandising Officer's report**

Phil Varney, the Merchandising Officer, presented a brief summary of his report, noting he had been speaking to members at BFFI about ideas for increasing or expanding the FDG merchandising offering, including taking orders for clothing from members on a quarterly basis, to avoid ending up with items in sizes that proved hard to shift.

### **Editorial Committee Secretary's report:**

On behalf of the Editorial Committee, Caroline Emmet thanked members for their patience with the delays in publishing *Flydresser*, and to everyone who contributed to its production, particularly the members of the FDG, Partridge and Semperfli teams who sent in articles, Keith Harwood for his historical insights and patterns, Peter Stephens for his proof-reading when time permitted, Medlar for professionalising the layouts and WPG for fitting the printing in on an ad hoc basis. It would not be possible to publish the magazine without this level of support.

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

The Treasurer outlined the basis on which the accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2022 and comparative figures for the prior year were prepared, reflecting the limited information available to him. It was

agreed that for the next financial year, the Treasurer would seek to have the accounts examined by a suitably qualified person. The adoption of the accounts was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Caroline Emmet and was duly approved by the meeting.

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

It was noted that Phil Varney had been co-opted as Merchandising Officer by the Executive Committee 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) Chris Reeves - General Secretary; and
- (ii) Caroline Emmet - member without portfolio

The election of Phil Varney and re-election of Chris Reeves and Caroline Emmet were proposed *en bloc* to the meeting by David Hild and seconded by Stuart Bladen and were duly approved by the meeting.

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

It was agreed that the merchandise available from the Guild would be listed on the FDG website as well as being promoted via *Flydresser*.

It was agreed that the new webmaster would look into the possibility of the FDG offering Branches the option to have their own website hosted on the FDG site, if that would be helpful for the Branch.

Further to a question received from a member, the General Secretary enquired whether any branches represented by members in attendance at the meeting were still meeting electronically rather than in person. It was noted that none of those present were meeting electronically, but the Ludlow Fly Tying Club (which were supporters of the Guild but not a Branch) continued to hold online fly-tying talks.

Tony Richards kindly proposed a vote of thanks to all members of the Executive Committee for their hard work during the past year.

There being no other business the Chairman thanked all participants and closed the meeting at 4.25 pm.