

British Woodcarvers Association

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 5th May 2018

Winterbourne House & Gardens, Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham, B15 2RT

The meeting was called to order at 2.20 pm with 44 members present and welcomed by the chairman Richard Waite.

1. **Apologies for absence.** These were received Terry Nokes (Bedfordshire), Ian Bruce and Vince O'Donnell (Cleveland), Sally Ward (Glos), Duncan McConnachie (Durham & N. Yorks) and Lynn & Stan Kimm (Herts).

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held at The National Memorial Arboretum on the 13th May 2017 were taken as read and approved *nem.con*.

3. **Matters arising.** There were none.

4. **Chairman's report.** At this juncture the Chairman alerted the audience that he intended to leave his report until much later in the agenda (vide infra) in order to better match the last item (14) open discussion.

5. **National Secretary's report.** Following my appointment last year I have begun to more clearly understand what was required of me. I have attended all 4 Council meetings (+ AGM) and produced minutes/agendas as required in a timely manner. A brief summary of these minutes has been circulated to ALL Regional Leaders so as not to overburden them with written matter! This seems to be helpful.

Communication with members via the Regional Leaders has been surprisingly awkward and has tended to be largely one way, which is of only very limited value. Steps have been taken to alleviate this issue and improvements have been noticed but more has to be done on this.

Quite a bit of my "chasing" the regions has been around the BWA Regional Promotion project wherein ALL 32 regions get a reserved slot, to include material representing their region, in one of the Gazette issues. This got off to good start with the Spring issue.

All told a busy start with some interesting issues and problems coming up.

6. Treasurer's report. Tim Holmes reported on the accounts up to 4th April 2018. The full accounts and his report are available as an appendix. In summary we were £2,658 to the good mainly arising from the subscription increase and outgoings and incomes were in line with expectations. The publishing dates for the Gazette has meant advertising income has been delayed and approximately £900 is due for the period, this when received will inflate the next budget year. Advertising has brought in £600 with many thanks to Jason.

Membership numbers remain a critical issue as far as budgeting is concerned. We need to keep the recruiting efforts going.

The cost of publishing and distributing the Gazette has increased but so has the quality. It is our flagship production and continues to be a very important contribution to the image of the BWA. Well done the editor! At this there was a round of applause....*not for the Treasurer you understand* but for the Editor.

There were no questions.

7. Membership Officer. John Tybjerg reported that membership remains fairly constant with 1040 members (6 up on last year) at 31st May. New members making up for those lost for a variety of reasons.

He offered a big thank you to all the regional leaders for their efforts in collecting membership fees and generally dealing with his questions to them. This does help in building up a bigger and better picture of how the BWA is doing.

Unfortunately every year he has around 20 people who for some reason pay their fees twice. Could everyone take care on this as it's quite a palaver finding this out and then refunding monies(to unsuspecting members).

The Chairman recently put an e mail out to around 700 members. About 10% of these bounced back. If you have changed your e mail address since you joined it may not be up to date on our membership database. If this has happened with you could you please let John know?

The question was asked, do we know why people do not renew? John explained there was no clear single factor to account for this.

Publicity Officer's report. No report.

Regional Liaison. Before Eileen was allowed to speak the Chairman rose and explained that Eileen was standing down at this AGM after a (very) long stint in

office. The membership enthusiastically joined in a round of loud applause for what Eileen had done for the BWA. Thank you Eileen for your hard work and dedication.

Eileen congratulated all the Regional Leaders and other Officers in their outstanding efforts. "It is you who make the BWA what it is and makes our job easier". We currently have 32 regions the latest being North Wales, Flintshire under the leadership of Murray Taylor.

Copies of the latest Regional Directory (May 2017) were made available to Regional Leaders present and would be sent to those absent on the day. **The directory is full of excellent contact and other regional details.**

Gazette Editor. Jason reported that he had now completed his studies and was a fully qualified teacher. He hoped he could devote a bit more time to the Gazette! Production/distribution costs are continuing to go up and he was actively seeking other more competitive quotes from printers. Advertising revenues were steady and continuing but perhaps could be improved. Do please keep sending material in for publication. It is all used, as and when possible. How-to type articles are particularly helpful to members. There was yet more generous applause for Jason BUT when he enquired if someone present would volunteer to write a short article on the AGM (membership point of view), you could have heard a pin drop!

Web Manager's report. Graeme Murray advised that this year we have had 150 enquiries via the website and a further 10 via the phone. These enquiries cover a range of topics and where appropriate have been passed on to the membership for interest and even action. We are receiving about 20,000 visits to the website with 80% of these now coming from Smartphones/tablets. Changes to the website to bring it more up to date and make it easier to use are ongoing. Graeme will coordinate with the new Publicity Officer to ensure we get a new "better" system in place.

8. Election of Officers. The position of Publicity Officer had remained sadly vacant for the last year. Recently an applicant came forward! Moreover he was an enthusiastic applicant with excellent credentials for the role. Steve Underhill from the W. Midlands Region was duly co-opted onto the Council as Publicity Officer.

Very recently another candidate for the role came along. This was David Edwards from S. Wales. David has an excellent woodcarving pedigree (and is the son of Derek Edwards) from S. Wales region. He has agreed to assist Steve in his role as Publicity Officer and share the challenging work load.

We had one candidate for regional liaison officer and that was Dave Taplin from Shropshire Region. Dave is a long standing member and is known to many of you.

On this happy note the Chairman asked for agreement to formally appoint Steve and Dave into the vacant roles. These elections were enthusiastically accepted *nem.com*.

9. Member's proposals. There were none.

10. National Council Proposals. To provide simplification and clarification to the role of Regional Leader paragraph 6d.1 of the constitution will be removed entirely (leaving 6d.2 and 3 in place). Paragraph 6e will now contain the additional wording; each region must designate a regional Liaison Officer (who may or may not be the Regional Leader) as the contact with the National Council.

These changes reflect some local current practices and reduce the existing communication onus on the Regional Leaders.

The proposal was accepted unanimously with no votes against and will be incorporated into the constitution forthwith.

11. The National Council has set membership fees and capitation as for 2017. Annual subscriptions of £25/member (£17 for second member at the same address) will fall due on 1st June 2018. Capitation will be assessed as £10/member as of 30th June 2018.

12. Appointment of auditors. Ian Ford will again be asked to undertake this role.

13. AGM arrangements for May 2019. S Wales was the only region to come forward at the meeting. Our thanks go to Derek Edwards and S. Wales for the prompt offer. As most regions were not present it was felt that we should extend the invitation to ALL BWA regions for 2019. If you do have an interest an early indication to that effect is requested. S. Wales is in pole position as of today.

The Chairman indicated that Gloucestershire would like to be put down to host the May 2020 AGM. Duly noted in the record.

14. At this point the Chairman rose and did item 4 of the agenda with a State of the Nation address, summarised as follows,

After the 2017 AGM we had three new members of Council and one noted absence, that of Publicity Officer. Despite extensive searching and enquiry no

volunteer appeared. However, he was delighted to announce that we DO now have a Publicity officer in the shape of **Steve Underhill** from the W. Midlands region. He is a photographer by profession and has a background of website design and social media. He has already been discussing some exciting ideas.

Dave Taplin (Shropshire) will join us as Regional Liaison Officer and **David Edwards** will assist Steve in the publicity role. We are delighted to have them on board.

Job descriptions for each Council role are now on the BWA website for everyone to access to aid future recruitment. A risk assessment pro-forma has been sent to all Regional Leaders and put on the website to be amended and used as appropriate. We have grappled with the General Data Protection Regulation which comes into force very soon and we now have a simplified way forward. More on this in the Gazette.

Communications between council and members has not been without its problems as many members do not have, use, read, or respond to e mail. We rely heavily on the Regional Leaders for contact with most members and their efforts in this regard are much appreciated. In order to get views and opinions Council members have personally visited 12 regions and plan to visit more.

The Gazette, as the prime newsletter of the BWA has and continues to be an excellent vehicle and the Editor has to be congratulated on its quality. All regions/members are encouraged to send in material for publishing.

As well as looking internally the Chairman has contacted and sought the opinions and views of outside parties, including the Chairman of the Association of Woodturners, Mike Hancock (a BWA member)the MD of Classic Hand Tools and Mark Baker the Editor of Woodcarving Magazine.

We continue to be a viable and active organisation and we took part in around 150 public events throughout the regions in 2017. The BWA's strength is its membership and that is **YOU**. Thank you for your support and please continue to enjoy your membership.

Looking to the future.

With around 1000+ members our finances are very sensitive to small changes in this number. We need to attract more members to lessen this risk and generate more income that will enable us to invest in providing more benefits to all members.

To some people, inside and outside, the BWA as a National organisation seems to have lost its way. In contrast the local regions are for the most part thriving.

This begs the questions, what value does the BWA bring to its members and would it be better to operate on a local regional basis alone?

Three options were outlined and gone through. Briefly these are, **1. Continue as is; 2. Make the BWA a more dynamic organisation; 3. Close down the National part of the BWA and adopt a regional-only structure.**

The view of the Chairman and Council was that we should select option 2. In particular we should focus initially on two areas, first to provide training/tutoring, particularly for newcomers and secondly make the BWA a national voice for woodcarving through the use of social media. We should form a small group of Regional Leaders and Council members to address the issue of training and we should make the second issue one of the priorities of the Publicity Officer.

The BWA has a long and proud history but if we are honest, we've lost our way. Rather than being down about this, the Chairman felt that we're at a turning point, with a bright and vibrant future ahead. He asked members to join him in making the BWA an organisation to which we are proud to belong, which does even more for its members and which actively promotes wood carving in the UK.

On this note the Secretary ran out of ink, the formal meeting ended and the results of the two woodcarving competitions were announced.

Best of W.Midlands carvings, **Rob Preston** Prize:--a set of Flexcut gouges
Two of a kind invited competition, **Lynn McCracken** (Glos) Prize:--a set of Sabre Burrs

There followed a lively and interactive discussion on what Richard had said and what might be done! Departures were then rapidly made with everyone taking home some "food for thought".

Ken Veal BWA National Secretary
15th May 2018

PS. There are no prizes for getting to this point BUT you should definitely be feeling a sense of achievement!