

DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS

Minutes of an Annual General Meeting of Designer Bookbinders held at 6, Queen Square, London WC1N 3AR on Saturday 7th May at 2.30 p.m.

Present: **President/Chairman** Elizabeth Greenhill
 Hon. Secretary John Plummer
 Hon. Treasurer Edward Gray

Fellows: Angela James, Denise Lubett, Faith Shannon, Sally Lou Smith, James Brockman, Jeff Clements, Arthur Johnson, Trevor Jones, Ivor Robinson, David Sellars, C. Philip Smith, Edward Womersley

Hons: Dora Middleton

Associates: Wim Begemann, Gillian Boal, Claude Boisset, Jane Cameron, Gabrielle Falkiner, Penelope Forster, Miss H Drummond, Susan Greenhill, Wendy Harte, Catherine Hemington, Gemma O'Connor, Dr. F. Somerville, Rosemary Stubbing, Pegeen O'Sullivan, Marianne Titcombe, Susan Wilson, Jessie Yapp, Dalma Flanders, Paul Collet, G. Cordery, Alan Farrant, David Brech, Nigel Bradley, John Burfield, Frank Broomhead, G. Douglas East, D. Eastgate, Martin Evans, John Fuller, Jack Goodger, E.B. Harding, G. Hetherington, Ian Mortimer, John Perkins, Tony Sismore, Sam Somerville, David Stevens, David Swarbrick, Cyril Titus, Alan Wood.

The President opened the meeting, welcoming all those present. She then spoke of the death of William Mathews (Fellow) who had died on Good Friday. She said that he would be sadly missed by all those who knew him, he had been a great bookbinder, teacher and friend. An appreciation had been written by Bryan Maggs for the Times and this would be published later in the Review. She then asked if anyone else wished to add to what she had said. The Hon. Sec. said that many of those who were his pupils remembered him with gratitude; he had set a standard which had raised the quality of English bookbinding and his influence spread across the whole field of craft bookbinding today.

Faith Shannon said that she would always remember him for his help and kindness to her when she was a student new to London and his continuing inspiration and advice.

1. The Minutes of the previous meeting were then approved; proposed by Trevor Jones and seconded by Ted Womersley.
2. There were no matters arising from the Minutes.
3. The Hon. Secretary then said that if the Associates were to take part in subsequent business the amended Instrument and Articles of Conduct had to be ratified. This could only be done by the Fellows voting at an AGM.

The Instrument had been drawn up on the basis of work done by a Sub-Committee chaired by Ivor Robinson and consisting of Fellows and Associates; it had been amended, further discussed and at two meeting members had been asked to comment or send ideas to the sub-committee. The final draft had been the result of this and had been circulated to the members. It had been discussed article by article by the Fellows, at a Fellows meeting.

The Secretary then said that he had reason to believe that the motion would be lost and because of this it was necessary to have the result of the ballot as soon as possible.

Voting slips were handed out to the Fellows: the result of the ballot was 7 for and 9 against, thus rejecting the amended Instrument.

Ted Womersley said that in view of the agreement at the Fellows Meeting the verdict should be reconsidered. Philip Smith said that perhaps there should be another ballot because at the Fellows meeting there had only been two dissenting votes.

Denise Lubett said that there should be time to consider the whole thing with further discussion. The Hon. Secretary pointed out that the matter had been discussed for nearly eighteen months.

Marianne Titcombe said that there seemed to be some fear that the Associates could alter the whole nature of the Society. The Hon. Sec. pointed out that this was not possible because of the Veto clause in Article 14.

Claude Boisset said that perhaps the Associates present could be asked if they wished to see a change in the Instrument and Articles. When the question was put from the Chair only 5 members

voted in favour. The Secretary pointed out that as only 5 nomination slips had been returned from Associates, along with the present showing it was obvious that there was no great desire for voting rights by the Associates. Ivor Robinson said that perhaps each item should have been dealt with separately. The Hon. Secretary replied that this had been done at great length in the Fellows meeting and it had appeared that the majority were in favour of the new version; it could only be a waste of time to go through the process again. He felt that he had wasted enough of his time on this already. Denise Lubett said that work for democracy was never a waste of time. George Cordrey said that he had been a member of the sub-committee and was disappointed by the result and felt that he too had wasted time and effort on the project.

Ivor Robinson asked that there should be a meeting of the Fellows as soon as possible to re-consider the matter.

4. The Honorary Secretary said that there had been no other nominations for the office of Secretary and so he presumed that he was returned unopposed. He added that he would be quite happy to hand over to any willing taker.
5. Voting slips were then handed out to the Fellows for the election of three Members to the Executive Committee.

6. The President then made her report. She said that there had been some changes in the team running the D.B. Review, Alison Shaw had now retired and she thanked her for all her work as co-Editor, this would now be done by Marianne Titcombe who had also managed to keep the Newsletter going until it was taken over by Trevor Jones. The Review was now with the Printer and would be issued soon and Trevor's first Newsletter would be circulated with the Minutes. There had been some discussion about contributions to the Newsletter and it had been decided that unsigned copy or that over a pseudonym would not be published.

The Bookbinding Competition was being planned and would be held in October, the exhibition would be at The Stanhope Institute. The Committee this year consisted of John Plummer (Chairman) Angela James, Arthur Johnson, Bernard Middleton, Faith Shannon, Tony Sismore, Ted Womersley. Bryan Maggs had sent a message saying that he had collected £335 for the Competition Fund.

7. The Honorary Secretary said that the Society now had 372 members, 249 in Great Britain and 123 overseas.

He then said that he wished to thank Dalma Flanders for all the help and support during the year; she has carried the burden of assistant secretary and membership secretary but also the greatly increased postal work occasioned by the introduction of the Newsletter. We are now trying to reduce this load and she will continue as Membership Secretary and all communications relating to that should be addressed to her, but that the postal work would be taken by himself for the time being.

He said that he was pleased to report that the United Kingdom Paper Group was now firmly established and had issued its first journal 'The Paper Conservator' which was extremely well produced and of considerable importance to all those concerned with this aspect of our work.

He said that he had just received a notice from the Arts Council of a Bookbinding Award sponsored by the Arts Council and the Provincial Booksellers Fairs Association, the award was £250 and the closing date was June 1st.

8. The Honorary Treasurer said that a copy of the yearly account had been distributed for members to see; the account had been audited by Ted Womersley. He said that the balance at the bank was satisfactory; the Bertram Rota Exhibition had not been a great success from the sales point of view. The income from membership fees should be about £2000 for 1977/78.

Marianne Titcombe asked how many members had not paid their subscription and the Treasurer said that there were 37 outstanding but that a reminder would be sent to them.

Arnold Strange said that those who had not paid within one month from April 1st should be dropped from the list.

The Hon. Sec. said that he had forgotten to mention earlier that he was trying to compile a new members list and would anyone who had changed his address or relevant information please let him know.

9. The result of the ballot for the three members of the Executive Committee was then announced and was as follows:

Jeff Clements	10 votes
Trevor Jones	10 votes
Gemma O'Connor	9 votes

10. The President then said that she was retiring from office but had enjoyed her period as President. There had been quite a lot of change and interest during her term and she particularly wanted to thank the officers and members of the Committee who had helped her during this time. She said that she was now handing over to Philip Smith who, she was sure, would be a great strength and would lead the Society into new and productive directions. She then introduced Philip Smith, the new President of D.B. who took the 'Chair'.
11. He made the following tribute to the retiring President:
- Elizabeth Greenhill has been at the centre of Designer Bookbinders affairs from its inauguration in 1969 when she was Honorary Secretary. She was instrumental in establishing the Society's address at 6 Queen Square. Her great talent and contribution to this Society lies in her charm and diplomacy, and in her breezy and tolerant good nature. She has been ever ready with friendly advice which has helped many of our members.
- Her two-year term as President has been no easy ride, for it has seen a certain turbulence in the internal affairs of the Society as it suffers from growing pains. This uncertainty of direction still remains unresolved, but Elizabeth has faced it without fear or favour and if her profile has seemed low this merely hides her continuous activity behind the scenes, ever jollying members into helping with this or that administrative chore. She has been most generous with her time, and in spite of considerable ill-health during her term of office she has continued as always to present a cheerful face and to entertain members with great hospitality in her apartment, for meetings and for parties.
- Above all, her talent in persuasiveness has stood the Society in good stead. The fact that I am now to take over the chair is largely due to this. On behalf of all our members I would like to thank her for her generously given service to the Society and to wish her well in her continuing bookbinding career.
12. The Secretary then said that a paper on the need for restructuring the Society had been sent to all Members and he thought that the President had some thoughts on this subject and he asked him if he would speak on this.
- Philip Smith said:
- As much of the circulated proposal for a re-structuring of our administration follows from the deliberations and advice of the Ivor Robinson sub-committee (to extend the voting rights to Associate Members), it can now be seen that any further planning can be undertaken as a matter of procedure in the Executive Committee exercising its discretionary powers (article 8[b]) to appoint acting officers or to co-opt specialists for their advice. The new Executive Committee should be charged with the task of planning a programme which includes activities of special interest to the whole membership. (Lectures by distinguished speakers – visits to places of interest etc.)
- If, however, any Fellow or Associate has any specific proposals to help with the broadening of the Society's activities and help with its administration please could these be put very briefly; otherwise I think further deliberations on these matters should be sent to the Hon. Sec. for discussion at the next Executive Committee meeting.
- Claude Boisset said that she thought that it would be a valuable idea if a Fellow or Fellows could be available at a given venue so that associates could discuss their books and binding problems – perhaps once a month.
- Arnold Strange said that he thought that provincial meetings could be arranged, a lot of people were away from the centre.
- Philip Smith said that he would be pleased to hear from people with special expertise who could help with the administration; with accounts for example, he was open for suggestions.
- Gemma O'Connor suggested that a seminar on bookbinding would be helpful in improving the scope and work of members, held perhaps at West Dean College for a week or so in the summer. The President suggested that anyone interested in such a scheme should get together with Gemma O'Connor and try to organise this. Arthur Johnson said that the L.C.P. could perhaps help as they were starting a new course in September, anyone interested could contact him.
- Any Other Business
- The President (Philip Smith) announced the receipt of a letter from one of the organisers reminding members that entries for the American International Exhibition should be returned with slides by July 1st 1977 to the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco.
- He also summarised a notice from Northern Arts about a Bookbinding Fellowship for which applications would be required. The business meeting was then closed.
- TEA
- After tea Jeff Clements reviewed slides of work by Fellows using 'Alphabet and Image' as a sequential theme beginning with bindings using letterforms and moving through imagery of a figurative nature and back to more abstract forms in the final examples. All members present found this a most rewarding and stimulating experience, contributing to the discussion with comments and answers to questions about their works.
- The meeting was closed at 5.45 p.m.