

Handweavers Spinners and Dyers Guild of Tasmania Inc.

Annual General Meeting 2016/2017 - President's Report

Can I say at the outset, what a pleasure it has been to work with such a lovely, co-operative and committed group of people! It makes the work of the President a joy in chairing meetings with everyone bound to a common purpose. I took up spinning with the Guild to get away and recover from the impacts of the outside world as an Alderman and university doctoral student and it has been anodyne to such woes to meet at the Guild. I'd recommend working with this committee to any member of the Guild.

Can I also say what a pleasure it is to acknowledgement the work of our volunteer Group convenors who keep the Guild's many activities going and our craft practice so available in so many regional areas around Tasmania. I am a great supporter of Tasmania's regions and the communities that make Tasmania so special. Our many groups add to that sense of distinctive community.

After a fitful attendance at committee due to a PhD commitment, once I found I was President, it was then evident just how little I did know about the Guild, its history and myriad activities. This year has been all about remedying that, and for anyone who comes after, and onto the committee. It is imperative as our Life and other Members move on to weaving/dyeing/spinning in the heavens, that we ask questions and document the past for the benefit of the Guild's future. I've found out so much through small conversations about the Guild that is not written anywhere. More worrying for me are assumptions that everyone knows or at least, someone will write, about things and will speak up in a timely manner when needed. If you're no longer there, how can you?

This past year has been about the need for good communication. The Guild continues to flourish, albeit at risk of over-extending what it wants to achieve by reacting to requests for assisting at outside events, rather than planning and learning to say "no, perhaps next year with a bit more notice". That said, the Guild acquitted itself with an excellent display of skills and stalls at various events including the Royal Hobart Agricultural Show (thanks to **Ailsa Richards, Maureen Hudson, Jutta Roper**, and many other volunteers), the Bream Creek Show, as well as at St Distaff's Day at Westbury and on the lawns at Ross, on Mothers' Day at the Female Factory in South Hobart and at the Richmond Heritage Farming Expo, to name a few, and let's not forget the **Alison Smith** and her volunteers at the Tasmanian Craft Fair at Deloraine or indeed **Irene Hall** and her team at the Burnie Exhibition. My thanks to all those members and their supportive families involved in bringing the Guild together to show, tell and teach what we know to a wider public.

Attempts at getting a calendar of events in place for the committee to plan the year ahead have been successful, and with pleasure I see on the website a calendar for Group meetings so Guild groups can plan meeting one another from time to time. There is so much to learn from each other. In the few visits that I have managed to make around the State, the breadth of skills and array of knowledge of people has stood out, albeit sometimes siloed within local areas. I hope the *President's Precip* has enabled Guild members to keep in touch with committee deliberations. I'm not always sure it is getting out to all the Groups or members so if members want to have it individually emailed to them, please let me know. Some already do and I'm happy to expand the email list. Postage is also an option.

I'd like to acknowledge particularly the efforts of the Guild committee and co-opted members who have assisted throughout the year.

We'd be in a total muddle without the efforts of **Margot Wilson** as our Secretary. Initially unable to take on the full role, she has proved a wonderful recorder of meetings and organiser of records and correspondence on Guild business. I'd like to thank her for her support and willingness to continue on in this role.

Ken Wagstaff has multiple roles in the Guild as Treasurer, book publisher/seller and all round corporate memory. His role as Treasurer is highly valued in keeping the accounting books in order as

well as providing sage advice on assets and investments. **Joy Rees** has also assisted as needed as Assistant Treasurer as well as her inspiring role with the Tuesday weavers group.

Speaking of other books, Ken reports that sales of *Textile Journeys* are slow but still selling. The sales from Life Member **Mary William's** book, *The Weaving Patterns of Edward Hussey*, have also slowed, however more sales from interstate and overseas are expected when the book gets introduced to various weaving venues. The Guild launch of *Weaving Patterns* was a happy event at our 45th birthday celebration at Battery Point with Mary Williams speaking. She was recorded by **Stefan Karpiniec**, and thank you to him for his kind efforts and expertise. I'd also like to thank Ken for all his efforts in lining up Forty Degrees South publishers. It was no mean feat to get all the logistics of publishing sorted. **Di McPherson**, **Joy Rees** and **Di Kearney** also played an important role organising the initial launch with the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society, with especial thanks to Di Kearney for her hard work in creating woven samples from the book which were used for presentations.

Our Vice President, **Don Waller** and Life and Committee Member, **Doris Banks**, have successfully implemented Stage One of archiving the Guild's records. This has been a particularly important task as it is a scant five years to the 50th birthday and various projects will need consideration and planning. Having records in order is a first step. Don also visited a number of Groups around the State in the past year and, as I do not drive, enabled me to get to a few of them also. Doris is a stalwart for the committee and her commonsense keeps us grounded in reality.

Viv Crawford has excelled in managing the Yarn Store in 2016/17. A thank you to the volunteers and now more permanently, her sister, Glennys, in assisting with this vital element of the Guild. While the emphasis is always to stock items to inspire and delight, Viv's aim over the last year was to increase and improve the range of products for the weaving area. Saori items were added plus new ranges of fibre. The area was enlarged by re-arranging the storage and adding new shelving. Her yarn of the month display never failed to evoke interest and sales. She and her helpers have worked tirelessly in taking the Yarn Store to Bicheno, Deloraine and Bothwell. Sales have been excellent and a good point of renewal and application for memberships.

Irene Hall took on Exhibitions Officer with last year's exhibition to be remembered as living up to its title, "Diversity". Fifty five state-wide members contributed 145 articles for display, illustrating the range, colourfulness, and diversity of members' skills. Introductory workshops were popular, being attended by young and old. The inclusion of a first-time exhibitor's encouragement prize yielded many new exhibits. Perhaps the best outcome was the inclusion of all, with newer and older members living up to the name of the Guild, working with all aspects of fibres - including carding, felting, spinning, weaving, dyeing and many other uses of yarns and fibres. A very big 'thank you' is due to the many members who participated in making this event happen, especially the exhibitors.

Irene is passing on that as she will not be renominating this year, she'd like to report for the next Exhibition Officer that Burnie Gallery is not available for 2018. It is pencilled in for the Guild in for mid-2020, subject to committee approval. Thorough as ever, she did check around other galleries. Devonport Regional Gallery is considered unsuitable and too small and the Ulverstone Gallery, at this stage, also appears too small. It is a well used gallery complex, with lots of weekly workshops, so an exhibition of the Guild's size could not fit in with all their other activities. As such, an exhibition in the North West is not looking feasible for 2018. Irene is of the firm opinion that the Guild should look at other areas and another Exhibition Officer for 2018 as she is taking a well-earned break. Your new Guild committee will sort this out as a priority. The good news is that the Yolla group are happy to resume the mantle for 2020. I believe all would join me in thanking Irene and her helpers for their efforts with the "Diversity" exhibition.

Tara Ulbrich, as Editor of Island Yarns, reports that the enthusiasm for Island Yarns seems to have grown, after some initial teething adjustments to the new quarterly format. While she is glad that contributions from members far and wide seem to be (slowly) increasing, she does appreciate it when as much detail can be provided in emailed notices about up-coming events, and to even make

invitation inviting! Some key people regularly offer words and photos and Tara could not produce Island Yarns without them. It is also encouraging to see the format being used for paid advertising and as a vehicle for selling/passing on equipment. Tara has worked hard to keep our Island Yarns a dynamic reflection of our active Guild and she is to be thanked for her creativity and efforts in this.

Anne Frost continues as our Librarian. For her it has been another busy and productive year in the library. She reports adding 20 new book titles which reflect the changing trends and needs of Guild members. They include several new felting books, some fabulous new and inspirational books on weaving, as well as new spinning and knitting titles. The Guild has continued to subscribe to "The Journal for weavers, spinners and dyers", "Ply" magazine, "Felt", "The Wheel", "Spin Off", "Hand woven", "Shuttle, Spindle, Dye-pot" "Knitters Magazine" and "VAV". As new titles are purchased for the library, they are featured on the Guild web page (with thanks to **Valeri Pain**) and are also added to the on-line catalogue. This is a great way for members state-wide to keep up to date with new books as they are processed and available for loan. Anne wishes to thank Guild members for making her task easier by returning library materials promptly, and for making suggestions for new titles for the library.

Valeri Pain has performed a wonderful role as our Web Mistress/Web Elf. She keeps the Guild's website up to date and full of useful items, such as the meeting calendar, workshops and web links. I'd like to take this occasion to also thank her as I know she is working on stepping down in the coming year and wanting to find a replacement.

Our Membership Officer, **Lorraine Wagstaff**, is to be thanked for all her continued efforts to track and maintain the membership register. She reports 293 members to the 19th of March, which is the same as this time last year. This includes 52 New Members and 6 Family Members registrations. Membership is steady however we will need to pay attention to the demographics and consider opportunities for passing on skills to the next generations. The decision has been taken to not print and post a copy of the Membership Register for all members and to supply on request. This represents a significant saving for the Guild.

Our Equipment Officer, **Di McPherson**, reports that the Equipment Store continues to be an important adjunct to workshops and members use. It makes a small return to the Guild yet is highly valued. The warping boards and the Guild looms are used by the southern Tuesday Night weavers and the increase in numbers has necessitated the purchase of two fold-up tables. At these nights members are exchanging ideas and under **Joy Rees'** encouragement learning new skills with existing ones extended. Di also asks that the new committee reviews the Guild's looms with a view to purchasing a Saori Loom and/or one or more contemporary loom/s. From time to time the carders, drop spindles and spinning wheels are hired out together with the wheels used in the Learn to Spin Workshops. The older style wheels are rarely if ever used and could be sold with the aim of purchasing modern ones. Donation of a tassel twisting machine by Don Waller is appreciated. The body and head forms were used at the Deloraine Craft Fair and the Felting Group are using the hat moulds. The dyeing equipment has come in very handy for Guild demonstrations e.g. fibre dyeing workshops and at the Royal Hobart Show etc. In summary, the Equipment Store continues as an important service to our members.

Kerrie Parsons reports from the Tassiefelters that after their move from St George's Hall to the Art Hub at Kingston, the access to a light and friendly space has caused an increase to twelve felters a month on average. Now they are spreading out to the adjoining hall with an increase in time from two hours to a whole day and able to offer a whole day to finish a project. Tassiefelters have a theme each month, covering scarves, hats, slippers, handbags and vessels. The August theme of "art bras" created much frivolity during and after. Many of these had a theme, one resembled antlers, some were covered with flowers, one was a peacock and another had tassels which the owner will use for her belly dancing! The art bras were entered as a group entry in the Royal Hobart Show and provided a wonderful display at the Bothwell Spin-In. In January the group organised a two day workshop with

professional felter, June Hope of Devonport. Ten participants created a collage and some lovely vessels. The plan for the year ahead is to increase the group's skills.

Jillian Brammer has very conscientiously undertaken her role as Projects Officer and produced an excellent policy, *Costs for Workshop Tutors and Participants*. It is important we acknowledge the time and efforts to prepare for workshops both before and after as "burnout" is the number one killer of volunteering. This year a decision was made to ensure all tutors for workshops were adequately recompensed whether they were Guild members or outside tutors. Guidelines for payments and fee structure for tutors and costs to participants were developed and will be reviewed in 2019. Her update of the policy is a very thoughtful and careful document that should stand the Guild in good stead and we have been lucky to draw on her professional expertise in developing this document.

Workshops have been conducted in various forms from play days, needs as required, to one and two day workshops around the State. There has been a renewed interest in weaving in the past year. After asking around the Groups, Jillian confirms that workshops have been around the State including conducted at the third West Coast Wilderness retreat (23 participants), Guild Exhibition in Burnie and Bicheno. Weaving is popular with Saori (tutor: Kaz Madigan) at Poatina and Hobart (27 participants) and two additional workshops in the north (18 participants), Beginning Weaving (8 participants) and Give Weaving a Go (8 participants). Hand spinning continues to thrive with Give Spinning a Go (9 participants) and Art Yarns – two workshops (19 participants). Dyeing workshops included Painted Silk (10 participants), Solar Dyeing (12 plus participants), Shibori Clamping (8 participants), Dyeing Day in the North West (estimated 25 participants). A Pottery button making attracted 15 participants and a new innovation, the UFO Day, attracted 8 participants. Inspiring tutors include Viv Crawford, Di Kearney, Maureen Hudson, Strati Stratford-Pearn.

Jillian reports there will be a number of workshops in 2017. In the South the committee resolved to hold workshops on the third week in the month where feasible so that members from outside Hobart can plan ahead. Jillian recommended to the committee that Guild activities at the Royal Hobart Show be allocated specifically to two members with a set focus. As a result **Maree Cowen** put her hand up to help development a significant display.

For discussion in the Statewide Meeting, Jillian is asking that the Project Officer role also be delegated to one person for workshops and one person for projects and communication. She also asks that all workshops conducted through the state have numbers and dates reported to for accurate record of educational activities of the guild.

Cathy Hodgman and **Maree Cowen** have also contributed to the Guild Committee's work over the year. Cathy has acted as the link to Tassiefelters for the committee. As a late addition to the committee, Maree has quietly assisted with ideas during meetings and as mentioned above, inspired the committee with the Royal Hobart Show project. **Alan Shaw** as Immediate Past President is to also be thanked, not only for his guidance on meeting procedure, but also with his past knowledge when needed and capacity for keeping the current President in order when needed. I look to him, Ken and Doris as the Corporate Memory of the Committee and thank them for all their good words and deeds keeping the Guild going.

In closing, the year has been a steep learning curve. There hasn't been enough time to pursue all the good ideas that were raised or opportunities that presented themselves yet we will soldier on. My role in all this has been to keep the committee focused. Given the achievements listed, I thank the Committee and all in the Guild for what has been a solid year of handweaving, spinning, dyeing, felting and textile craft.

Eva Ruzicka

President

25 March, 2017