

AGM REPORTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 2024

Chair's Report

In my first year as Chair, I am delighted to see that the eagerness to learn new craft skills continues to grow. With the dominance of social media more and more young people are being attracted to the craft and many have turned a hobby into a part-time or full-time career.

We have an excellent relationship with the Worshipful Company of Basketmakers mainly through Sasha Kier, chair of their Trade Committee, and there is increased interest from them in supporting the basketry trade financially whenever they can. They have supported basketry with:

Basketry Showcase in March – an event in the City of London showcasing and selling basketry to other livery company members and attended by the Duchess of Gloucester – Yeoman members attended as did the BA.

Their generous Walmsley Bursary has been increased to £4,000

They support two basketmakers to have a working space at Cockpit Arts in London.

Significant funding to Tear Up, and will also be supporting the Lewes Basketry Festival.

Funding towards our 50th anniversary

Possible match funding for developing our TBP website, an amazing resource for all basketmakers.

Festivals

In October last year we saw the introduction of a new basketry festival in Lewes, East Sussex, "Under & Over", running again this year, in fact next Saturday. In August there was the second "Tear Up" festival in Staffordshire, run by Eddie Glew, where two fantastic "festival" weekend days saw the coming together of the great and the good in the basketry world alongside specialist traders, wood turners, toolmakers, leather workers – all relevant to our craft.

The BA had a presence at both these festivals. Most significantly however, Tear Up provided the venue for the launch of our Traditional Basketry Project's exhibition, the latest phase of the TBP, chaired by Clare Revera and her team, for whom incredible thanks are due. The exhibition is now on tour. The exhibits have been photographed and along with written content will form the initial part of our new TBP website: an incredible ongoing resource. The TBP's appointment of a short-term Project Officer, Helen Voce, has demonstrated unequivocally what a difference it makes having a professional administrator on board. She has a wealth of experience in the craft sector and we couldn't have found a better person to slot in with us and to deliver this exhibition and more.

Residential Schools

Back in April the regular Spring School was held in Harrogate with course tutors Mary Crabb, Jane Bradley, Rachel Hutton, Simone Simons, Lewis Goldwater and Sue Kirk. A couple of weeks ago the Autumn School took place, this time at its new and very successful venue, Waterperry Gardens near Oxford, with tutors Sarah Hatton, Kim Winter and Penny Maltby.

We did not hold a Summer Meeting this year, but are hoping to do so next year when we will be celebrating our 50th anniversary.

50th Anniversary

On that topic, much work has been done in making plans to mark this milestone in our organisation. Rae Gillott, our President, will be detailing these later in the Autumn Day

proceedings, as well as in the November Journal. And of course, there will be a bumper issue of the Journal next year in celebration of our 50th anniversary.

Supplementing our Basketmakers' Professional Development Programme, we are now planning a new "pre-start/early stage business" programme to assist up to 8 basketmakers in the initial stages of their basketry careers.

In the recent Member Survey, we sought your views on many aspects of the BA and we had responses from 217 members, about 20% of the membership. Thank you to all who contributed.

Your Board is working hard to make our organisation more efficient and to make your membership fees work harder. The Treasurer's Report details our financial situation; I hope you have been able to examine this. It is the Board's role to ensure we regularly assess our finances and make sure that our income is being used efficiently to benefit our entire membership. Pru, our Treasurer, will be explaining how we are doing this.

Alongside the BA Board is another group of volunteers who take part in running various projects or services for our Association. Our Secretary will be thanking many of these personally in her report, but I would like to add my gratitude to everyone who gives up, however small, an amount of time to support the BA. Many will go un-named, but you all form the backbone of the BA – this is truly an organisation for members, run by members.

Finally, I have just one year left of my tenure on the Board; then sadly I have to go. This means we will be appointing a new Chair in October 2025. Every year, various roles come up for re-appointment, but they can only be filled if new members come forward. If you feel you have skills to offer, whether as a Board member or on a sub-committee, please make yourself known to me either through info@basketmakersassociation.org.uk or directly to me at chair@basketmakersassociation.org.uk.

Thank you for being part of our wonderful, friendly basketmaking community. Each of us benefits from the friendship and collaboration of others. Have a very good year.

Louise Brown – October 2024

BA Treasurer's Report

When I became the BA treasurer 2 years ago, I had no idea what the role required and how I could contribute. I thought, yes I can do a little book-keeping, banking, monitoring budgets and perhaps some fundraising. With over 30 years experience working in Local Authorities and Community Development I've done plenty of this. How wrong could I be! The financial systems were in very good shape and still are. We have online payments in place (STRIPE & PAYPAL), accounting apps (XERO) and 3 bank accounts. I had to learn about these whilst processing thousands of transactions with limited banking access. This was quite exciting, but things felt vague and a little overwhelming at times.

Before I knew it, the first year was over! Our very patient auditor, helped me finalise our company accounts (my first time). I completed my City & Guilds Level 2 in Basketry, spent time visiting board members in Cardiff and attended board meetings in London. With the support of new and old board members, everything started to fall into place.

Financially the BA looks healthy. Our books balanced for 2023/4 with ringfenced monies for the BA Traditional Basketry Project covering the spend on this project showing as a shortfall in income against expenditure. However, the books and the excellent services that we provide, don't show the reality of what's happening behind the scenes. When I joined the board, people were tired. They'd been working tirelessly throughout Covid, before and since. Their passion for Basketry and the Allied Crafts, their camaraderie for the organisation itself and its members drove them and they had become exhausted. No wonder! The BA has grown in excess of 30% in the last 2 years alone and the workload has become unsustainable. Recruiting new volunteers to roles is tricky when it's hard to see the wood for the trees.

We asked and you answered...the results of the Members Survey have:-

- helped us to understand where and how to focus our resources in future
- informed a financial review
- enabled us to devise a budget which provides for some modest salary costs for paid staff, led by members
- highlighted areas for further consultation, engagement and review

The membership fees are our core income and need to cover our basic costs such as insurance, the website, the PDF journal, key staff roles etc. Postage costs have become a heavy financial burden from our subscriptions income. They have increased 3 times since our last membership fee increase and continue to rise. As such we have taken the difficult decision to increase Members fees to cover the actual cost of printing and posting a journal to each member. This seems like a big hike but will enable us to begin the long and exciting journey of making the BA a sustainable and secure organisation for the 50 years to come.

If you are interested in being involved in developing the finance and fundraising work of the BA please don't hesitate to contact me at treasurer@basketmakersorganisation.org.uk

Pru Todd – October 2024

Company Secretary's Report

I want to start by expressing my appreciation to Sue Higham for her comprehensive and smooth handover of the Company Secretary's role. Anna Stickland and I have now taken on the responsibilities, with Anna handling the minute-taking at Board meetings and myself overseeing the regulatory aspects.

Since the last AGM, we've held four full Board meetings, along with several ad-hoc meetings for urgent decisions. I'm pleased to share that most Directors are willing to stand for re-election and continue their terms, except for Jo Brook, Rachel Evans and Gill Jones, who will be stepping down. We extend our heartfelt thanks to them for their dedication to the BA Board during their tenure.

Our membership continues to grow steadily, with an increase following the Tear Up Festival. We now have approximately 1,080 members.

We recently reached out to our members to seek more involvement in the Association's operations. We are grateful to those who have shown interest, but we still need additional volunteers, especially those with skills in WordPress, finance, legal, and administration.

Bursaries and Awards

The Bursaries sub-committee would firstly like to thank Mary Butcher and Alison Dickens as they are both stepping down at this AGM. We really appreciate all the work they have done for us. Our thanks also go to Jo Brook for her time as Secretary to the Bursaries sub-committee; she is succeeded by Angela Edward, and we are pleased that Jo is going to stay on the sub-committee. We would also like to welcome new members Catherine Beaumont, Mary Herbert, Karla Pearce and Ruth Denison.

We are very grateful to The Worshipful Company of Basketmakers' Charitable Trust and three donors for their support in funding many of our bursaries.

Bursaries awarded during 2023/4

Spring School Bursaries including the Fred Rogers Award - 6 of £350 each

Four funded by The Worshipful Company of Basketmakers Charitable Trust, one by an anonymous donor and the Fred Rogers award which is funded by the BA.

- Janice Burley, Sheena Ferguson, Cherry Chung, Richie McBride, Jenny Paine and Fiona Arnold (Fred Rogers Award).

Autumn School Bursaries - 3 of £250 each

All funded by The Worshipful Company of Basketmakers' Charitable Trust.

- At the time of writing these were being evaluated

Course Subsidies for Groups - 4 of £250 each

Funded by the BA.

- There were no applications this year.

Progressive Skills Development Bursaries - 2 of £350 each

Funded by the BA.

- Rachel Evans for Wood, Water, Weave with Lorna Singleton (course delayed from 2024 to 2025).
- Emma Purcell for 1:1 tuition with Jenny Crisp (Fitching and English square work).

Progressive Skills Development, Joy Viall Bursary - £350

Funded by the BA.

- Elizabeth Crawford to study willow skein work.

Traditional Basketry Project Bursaries - £350 each

One funded by the Worshipful Company of Basketmakers' Charitable Trust and two by the BA.

- Mary Lewis to research Marram Grass baskets.
- Sophie Francis to research the Southport basket.
- Rob Knight to research the Tregaron Peat basket

Exhibitions Bursary for groups - £1,000 shared between the two groups

Funded by the BA.

- The City Lit students for their end of course show.
- Sophie Francis on behalf of the Shropshire and regional makers collective for 'Weave only a Trace' at the Footprint Gallery.

Christiane Sand Professional Development Bursary - £500

Kindly funded by Nigel Sand in memory of Christiane Sand (1956 – 2017) in recognition of the personal fulfilment and friendship Christiane gained from studying on the City Lit basketry course in 2011 and 2015.

- There were no applications this year

Cups/Awards 2023/4

Christiane Sand Outstanding Final Project Awards - £250 each

Kindly funded by Nigel Sand in memory of Christiane Sand (1956 – 2017) in recognition of the personal fulfilment and friendship Christiane gained from studying on the City Lit basketry course in 2011 and 2015.

- Stephanie Yeomans
- Rosie King

The Barbara Maynard Cup for City Lit students - £50

Funded by the BA.

Awarded for consistently solid work and focus, really tried to get things right, well made and then better.

- Janet Walker

The Barbara Maynard Competition Cup - £50

Funded by the BA, to be awarded at the AGM.

The Joy Viall Award for Westhope students - £50

Funded by the BA.

For exemplary Level 3 work and outstanding contribution to Traditional Basketry.

- Mary Lewis

The BA Professional Progress Award for a Westhope student - £500

Funded by an anonymous donor.

- Ruth Denison

Cockpit Professional Development Programme - £600 per person

Jointly funded by The Worshipful Company of Basketmakers' Charitable Trust and the BA.

- Claire Shilvock
- Angela Firth

As we approach 2025, the BA is excited to celebrate its 50th anniversary. We have a range of activities planned for this milestone year, and we hope you will be enthusiastic about participating.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Kim Winter, Anita Lomas, Sarah Hatton, Gill Jones and Mel Hart for their outstanding work on the Journal, E-news, and website. Their engaging and informative articles significantly deepen our understanding and appreciation of basketry. I often refer to the research section of the BA website, which offers a wealth of valuable information—if you haven't explored it yet, I highly recommend you do.

Additionally, after many years of dedicated service, Geri Clarke has passed the management of the BA Library to Julie Livesey in order to concentrate on the BA Archive. We deeply appreciate Geri's commitment to providing members with a comprehensive collection of books.

We also want to recognise Iris Hawkes and Dawn Ohlson for their ongoing efforts with BA sales.

Lastly, thank you, as a BA member, for your continued support and involvement as we look forward to a memorable 50th anniversary year.

Fiona Arnold - October 2024