

APPG *for* CRAFT

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Craft

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 12th January 2022 at 10am on Zoom

Attending

Terri Adams	Scientific Glass Instrument Blower	Patricia Lovett MBE	APPG Secretary
Daniel Carpenter	Heritage Crafts Association	Carole Milner MBE	Heritage & Craft Funders Network
Judy Cobham-Lowe	Worshipful Co of Goldsmiths	Tony Millyard	Flute & Wooden Instrument Maker
Dr Kelly Cordes	Independent Researcher	David Mortlock	Worshipful Co of Wheelwrights
Dr Harriet Deacon	Coventry University	Sophie Norton	Historic England
Gillian Dye	Lace maker	Ann Packard	RSA MCICH Network
Dr Chrissie Freeth	Tapestry Weaver	Jonathan Reid	Putter, Ernest Wright
Baroness Garden	House of Lords	Wendy Shorter-Blake	AMUSE, Upholsterer
James Grierson	ICON, York Consortium Craft & Consn	Derek Stimpson	WC Gunmakers
Lisa Hammond MBE	Adopt-a-Potter & Clay College	Rebecca Struthers	Watchmaker
Sir John Hayes MP CBE	Chair	Deborah White	Damask Weaver
Caroline Jackman	Hd Craft Bus Skills, CC	Greg Whyte	Margaret Morrison, Sporrans

1. *Welcome and Introductions*: While Sir John Hayes was delayed, Baroness Garden welcomed the members and associate members of the APPG and guest speakers.

2. *Apologies for absence*: Apologies for absence had been received from: Deirdre Brock MP, Lord Cormack, the Earl of Clancarty, Greta Bertram, Michael Osbaldeston, Paul Playford, and Ann Whittall.

3. ***Daniel Carpenter: Operations Director, Heritage Crafts, The Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts***

Daniel explained that the Red List of Endangered Crafts was first published in 2017 as a result of research by Greta Bertram and a grant from the Radcliffe Trust. The second version was published in 2017, and the third in 2019 funded by the Pilgrim Trust. The methodology was based on Red Lists for other endangerments and ranked crafts according to their likelihood of dying out. The crafts relate to the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage where traditional craft skills are one of the five identified domains. Mary Lewis spent six months researching the latest list which gained widespread media interest including BBC Radio 4, the Telegraph, ITV News at 10 and also was a quiz on BBC1's 'Have I got News for You?!' The Red List of Endangered Crafts is recognised by the sector as increasingly important and is a source of information and research. The number of crafts featured in the list is 244 (213 in 2019 and 169 in 2017), with 56 critical (previously 36) and 74 critically en-

dangered. There are more critically endangered crafts now because sub-sets are being revealed, such as specific types of baskets. Publicity given in the first Red List of Endangered Craft to the near demise of Devon stave basket making resulted in 5 people now able to make them as well as one apprentice. Heritage Crafts have also had symposia on musical instrument-making and industrial pottery which have increased knowledge of endangerment. They have also established the Endangered Craft Fund through funders and donations and so far 35 crafts have been supported in this way. The President's Award for Endangered Crafts, initiated by The Prince of Wales, has also helped to highlight these crafts. Over 500 craftspeople engaged in the 2021 Red List and makers are regarded as having the best ideas to ensuring their craft skills continue into the future. The effects of Covid have been varied in that some businesses thrived and others had to close. Some older craftspeople decided to give up making earlier than expected because of the challenges. The plan is to repeat the Red List of Endangered Crafts research every two years as long as funding allows.

4. *Greg Whyte: Margaret Morrison, Sporrans Making*

Greg explained that a sporran was essentially a purse or a pouch and that the company of Margaret Morrison is in Perth and part of the wider industry of Scottish highland dress. It was set up in 1999 when the industry was booming and at that time there were 50–60 people making sporrans, in 2016 there were only 20 and even fewer now. In some ways sporrans have become a victim of their own success with cheaper sporrans made overseas where the cost of living is much lower. Margaret Morrison designs have been copied, sometimes in weeks, and even the images from their website used by makers abroad. Customers have even bought a Margaret Morrison sporran and then got a cheaper overseas maker to copy it and supply in bulk. At one point even Lidl was selling sporrans! There is, though, a diminishing supply chain now and whereas previously it was possible to buy mainly British this is more problematic; there are, for example, no hair-on tanners in the UK so supplies have to come from South America. Now 60% of sales are online so physical shopping is not a necessity, and this also allows for a huge variety of bespoke designs, colours and materials – they have over 5 million design options! The challenge of cashflow was solved by nothing coming in or going out without being already paid for. They have zero tolerance on quality and believe this is crucial to their business. This is why the Ministry of Defence procuring sporrans from Pakistan was so disappointing, but sporrans have now been taken out of the tender. Greg explained that they are now taking on restoration work and supplying film and tv. Every day is a challenge but craft and tradition doesn't mean that they can't be modern. One foot is in the past but the other foot is striding forward with the next generation onboard already.

Questions and points: SG – Do sporrans have a clan link? No but there are different sporrans for daywear, evening wear and military wear.

DC – can you expand on the MoD contract? MM has supplied to the MoD when the Royal Regiment of Scotland was established since 2006 but then the order went to Pakistan. Last year tenders were again issued but the contract was awarded to Pakistan but this has now been removed from the rest of the tender so there is a glimmer of hope.

AP – where do orders come from? Pewter from Birmingham, sealskins from approved Inuit sources, 40% leather from the UK.

5. *Tony Millyard: Historical wooden instrument maker and flute makers mainly for Irish and Celtic musicians*

Tony began by explaining that he makes instruments for baroque orchestras, as well as keyed and unkeyed flutes mainly for marching bands and Irish and Celtic folk music. He exports 50% of his instruments overseas. Through a grant from Heritage Crafts Endangered Craft Fund Tony has developed a flute for beginners which is about a third of the price of other flutes; it's sold through distributors and music shops and already, in just six months, £8,000-worth of flutes have been sold. Tony was an apprentice at Hawker Sidley and now finds that even the skills he found tedious, such as the eight weeks he spent filing, are proving to be useful. The barriers to making flutes are the requirement to be able to play, space to work, machinery, and product skills and development. Encouragingly there is great peer group support, and many of Tony's colleagues have a 1–4 year waiting list. Also needed is training in basic skills and design and here the closure at the London College of Furniture of their 4-year course, and the course at West Dean has been disastrous. The need to make these practical courses into a degree to access funding meant that people graduated but didn't know how to make the instruments, and realising that resulted in people not applying for the course, thus its closure. Tony knows of 25 makers who trained but there have been no new makers for 20 years – there are courses on repairing flutes but none on making. The short-sightedness of this is emphasised with probably total sales of these instruments of excess of £1.5 million pa, mainly from overseas, which is not insignificant! Specialist crafts courses teaching basic skills are needed.

Questions and points: SG – the problem is also made worse by the lack of music in schools something that she and others have raised in the Lords on many occasions.

DC – makers have noted that those coming from colleges etc have no basic skills and so trainers have to start them on the basics.

WS-B – explained that she trained at the LC of Furniture as an upholsterer but in 2007 the college stopped all craft courses. Upholstery was saved by taking the qualification away from government funded awarding bodies and the

Association of Master Upholsterers and Soft Furnishers set up the standards and run what are called 'close qualifications'. The problem is that craft equipment and tools take up more room than computers so there are more bums on seats and payers for the latter. She is now working on T-levels but they still require academic standards and a number of students are very good at craft but have limited academic ability. They have the handskills but won't get qualifications at the end.

DM – as liveryman of the WC of Wheelwrights he works with the Wood Group and knows that the WC of Turners had a project on making recorders. Can he help to put people in touch? Tony said he would be grateful as he is also a Trustee of Halsway Manor which is looking to run more craft courses.

GD – Where are the teachers going to come from?

Zoom comments:

AP – Was there not an utter idiocy in turn technical colleges into universities! We need to acknowledge, celebrate and nurture the technical and creative. The Germans have a better attitude on this.

TA – Even core academic subjects such as chemistry has encountered issues with a serious lack of basic level practical skills.

SN – I'm really interested in the gap that you've identified where the West Dean and London courses used to be. As SG says, in other craft industries (particularly related to construction), there are still FE Colleges that teach skills at a basic level as part of apprenticeships, but there are very few opportunities to progress those hand skills or learn transferable skills outside quite narrow apprenticeship standards. Do you think that gap be in any way similar to the one you've spoken about?

HD – Germany has listed its co-operative system which provides support and training for craftspeople on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/idea-and-practice-of-organizing-shared-interests-in-cooperatives-01200>. France has done a similar thing: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/compagnonnage-network-for-on-the-job-transmission-of-knowledge-and-identities-00441>

6. *Deborah White: Damask Weaver*

Deborah started by giving the history of damask weaving in that it was brought over for Queen Anne and was often the first choice for royal and diplomatic gifts. Down and Armagh specialised in this craft and over the next three centuries it was carried out over an area less than 80 square miles in all; it was a small corner of Ulster but certainly not provincial. Irish hand-woven damask linen had great reach. The power loom may have threatened its survival but the craft prevailed. The Great Depression had a terrible effect because of the lack of wealthy customers and by the end of the 1930s it was on its knees and looms were even chopped up for firewood. John McCollum saved looms and

revitalised the craft with the best weavers in the world. Cloth was woven for the Coronation and for royal residences and more orders came from their guests. However in 1968 John McCollum died suddenly and young and the factory closed; most of it was burned and 3 centuries of damask weaving went up in smoke. However, one loom, the royal loom was saved in a nearby linen mill and in 2018 Deborah offered to take it. She contacted Heritage Crafts who gave her a grant to restore the loom, and she also applied to AHRC for funding to research hand-woven damask. Other craftspeople have helped with getting the loom into good order.

Questions and points: SG – are you working on your own or are there others, and can you make a living from this? There are now only two weavers and Deborah explained that she has to supplement her income.

HD – how difficult was it to recreate this craft and the knowledge to do it? Deborah said that she was known as ‘twenty questions Deborah’ when she learned from an old weaver. She believes that practice comes through doing and making, but people need to do this themselves and learn from their mistakes.

CM – Can the loom be copied for future use? Yes, but usually looms are languishing in museums and stores as there’s not the knowledge to set them up.

DS – Sadly destruction of heritage items, let alone craft machinery is a real issue. Lack of storage space for items not in use for example. (And from a later point but relevant here). If craft equipment is in a museum then at least it’s not being thrown away by the makers when they upgrade. Quite a few private collectors also have such equipment and look after it, but it does need skill.

PL – The problem is that even in a museum things are not always safe. The museums in Stoke have just made all their curators redundant and the pottery museum is hugely significant with the history of the town. (Please also see attached document on this sent after the meeting by Lisa Hammond, Potter.)

Zoom comments:

CJ – Two challenges facing all craft businesses: charging enough for their work to earn a reasonable living (such a challenge for craft that has a price ceiling in many markets) and providing access to education for those that are from more diverse backgrounds. With the continued closures of formal education (sadly I heard UCA Farnham are losing their craft courses despite having a World Craft Town status), there is minimal scope for access especially those that cannot afford private fees.

CF – One of my looms was rescued from a skip by its previous owner – not an unusual story sadly.

DW – I concur with your key point. Heritage traditional made products! Bespoke and artisanal products have currency.

HD – Perhaps museums who receive funding to house equipment for heritage crafts should also be encouraged to have projects in which makers can

use the looms and other equipment, and teach others.

GD – Museums need to be prepared to accept the knowledge of volunteers with specific craft skills/knowledge.

DW – I am providing consultancy currently with NMI collections, to enhance their archive and inventory. Partnerships and co collaborations are crucial.

Sir John Hayes then took the Chair.

7. Jonathan Reid: **Putter, Ernest Wright Scissors**

Jonathan began by pointing out the importance of steel and steel making in Sheffield where working in steel was part of the personality and a badge of honour. But now very little exists apart from the legacy of companies' names. Steel declined in the 1980s and many cutlery makers went out of business. He showed a substantial book recording just the scissor makers in Sheffield and now there is only one. Ernest Wright almost went out of business 4 years ago but in 2019 Jonathan was hired and there are now four apprentice putters with diverse backgrounds – Sam was a wood worker, James worked in hot forged metal, Neil in communications and Jonathan himself comes from a translation background – but what they all needed was a passion for scissor making. There are now ten people working in the company including Cliff and Eric, both in their 80s, who are master putter together. It's a risk putting a lot of resources into training to make scissors because the skills are always transferable, but all have been learning every stage of making scissors over the last two years. Scissor making involves horizontal production from drop forgers, borers, grinders, hardeners, and then putters and finally logo engravers – 7 businesses work together to make one pair of scissors. Cliff started at 14 learning putting and Eric started as a grinder. When the company was saved they were making over 100 types of scissors but this was reduced to 4 and gradually this has been built up to 12. Now they are introducing the Turton Scissor, a kitchen scissor developed by Frank Turton, born in 1884, who Eric worked with. Ernest Wright are not only restoring the scissor heritage in Sheffield but are working to restore the pride of Sheffield steel throughout the city.

JH – Are there cutlery makers still in Sheffield and how do they produce cutlery? There are but they tend towards conveyor belt production rather than hand skills.

JH – How do you market your scissors? Ernest Wright has a great story and we sell mainly to those working in textiles; it's a good product and word gets around.

CM – Do you have a Royal Warrant? No, but we'd like one!

8. AOB

PL – updated the APPG on the work done in 2021 on persuading the government

to ratify the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. Sadly, although Oliver Dowden was keen, he was moved on before sufficient progress was made. However Sir John's office had asked for an urgent meeting with Nadine Dorries, the new Secretary of State at DCMS.

JH – Confirmed that a request had been made for a meeting and a strong case will be made for ratification, and a recommendation for this to be a Minister request.