

Hand Engravers – Chairman’s Report

This has certainly been an unusual year about which I now turn my hand to report to you. I will try to avoid this year’s most overused words (unprecedented) in relating what has occurred during 2019 and the early part of this year.

Angus McFadyen has previously referred in his Chairman’s Report to our status now as a Charity, which was registered in November 2017. So, 2019 was the Hand Engravers second full year in this form, and the summarised accounts for that year are what you have in front of you to consider. The trustees have approved these accounts as they stand, and the more formal statutory accounts for filing with the Charity Commission are still with the Independent Examiner as we meet. I will report here much more about the events, grants and courses which stand behind the figures.

2019 Courses and Exhibitions

HEA started the year by taking a stand at the Make Your Mark event in February, at Goldsmiths’ Hall, organised by the Assay Office, which positioned us alongside other specialist craft groups and suppliers. Several of our members who were willing to give up time to assist on the stand meant there was a good representation of various engravers’ work and much interest in the Association and its work was shown by the hundreds of visitors to this event. Then between April and July we were involved in an exhibition in the foyer of the Goldsmiths’ Centre particularly concentrating on lettering under the title **Inscribed - The Craft of Cutting Letters**, which was extremely well received by the many visitors. In the middle of this period the Centre was also involved in London Craft Week and we were able to put on an evening session, where Samantha Marsden and Louise Sorrell, (who by then had almost completed her apprenticeship) were able to demonstrate, with close-in camera coverage, their amazing skills.

In the midst of a wonderful summer many members were able to gather and share time working and learning together at Malcom Appleby’s workshop in Grand Tully in Perthshire, and then in July we had a week’s Summer School based at the Goldsmiths’ Centre as part of the project of Training the Trainer funded by their grant. In September we organised our first ever course outside of London, at the Hot Bed Press in Manchester, which concentrated on Copperplate Engraving. All our training of this nature relies heavily on members, particularly my predecessor as Chair, Angus McFadyen, who are willing to share with others their fantastic skills for which we are extremely thankful.

During 2019 we furthered our relationship with Craft Central at their newly developed premises at Mudchute in docklands including a beginner’s course in October last year, then in November David Bedford led a two-day Course at the Centre concentrating on Lettering. We returned to Manchester, at the Hot Bed Press, for another beginners’ course in December, and then in February, at Mudchute, there was a further course for beginners and a follow up course on lettering (led by Sarah Hobbs) which were able to go ahead.

At the start of 2019 Lucinda Rowe joined us to assist our Manager, Sally Dodson, particularly with organising our training courses; My thanks go to both Lucinda and Sally for all the work they undertake on behalf of the HEA. So, it is unfortunate to report that beyond the February 2020 course, it has been a case of much that has been planned but never happened, but then there is still plenty of work to be done in communicating with the membership. This hiatus in course planning was due firstly to the full force of the Covid-19 lockdown, but then later due to the continuing restrictions on such one-

to-one and close quarter group teaching sessions with the opening-up after lockdown. This has led to a lot of discussion and planning as to how virtual teaching sessions can be enabled over the internet; meanwhile, much is already being shared through Youtube videos. During this time of extreme hardship for some of our members, we must gratefully acknowledge grants which have been made available by the Goldsmiths' Company.

Funding

We are very grateful to the Goldsmiths' Company, who now distribute their grants in support of the craft through the team at the Centre, for their grant in 2019; also continued support from the Sir John Cass Foundation for two years funding of an apprentice £17,240 (Year 3 for Matt, just finishing, and the first year of three for Megan); also this year we also received a grant from the NAG Benevolent Fund of £6,600 for one-to-one training for another learner.

The Grant from Goldsmiths (£19,578) was restricted to one or two named projects, some of which were still ongoing at the end of December, but the extension on this was extremely helpful to give support in the early part of lockdown. The projects supported were the 2019 Summer School, a further stage of our vision of 'Training the Trainers' and developing new courses including a Copperplate course mentioned above.

2020 and beyond

Early in 2020 we were able to set up two courses before lock-down hit our training plans; Then at the end of February we were treated to an absolutely splendid evening at the Wallace Collection, which was a joint event for a members of HEA, The Clockmakers' Company, and Jewels, Plate and Horology. After an open reception in these wonderful surroundings, we were then ushered into the magnificent lecture theatre, where we were treated to presentations from various speakers; firstly, a brief introduction to the connections between Hand Engraving and the Clockmakers' Company by Joanna Migdal, the recently installed Master of the Clockmakers'. We were then given an explanation from each of three individuals involved in different forms of engraving; each speaker was supported by a close-in demonstration which was displayed up on the screen. We are extremely grateful to all those who took part, to those involved in organising the evening and particularly to Nigel Israel who facilitated the whole process allowing us to be at the Wallace Collection. The evening ended with a wonderful meal in the restaurant where all attendees from the various groups participating were able to meet and share together.

The Trustees have met regularly, virtually via Zoom, and continue to look into the new possibilities, raised by the current strange circumstances. This includes how we can meet together, give support by exhibiting members' work and offer training to interested newcomers and seasoned practitioners. Thank you for your interest in and support of the Association as we seek to maintain this amazing craft for the future.

PS - it is great to be able to announce that we are trialling our first online hand engraving course this weekend (19th/20th September.)