



BRITISH GUILD OF
AGRICULTURAL
JOURNALISTS

Council Report For 2013

Membership

Guild membership at the end of 2013 was 505. This is an increase of 1 on the 2012 year-end figure (504).

Membership levels for the past 10 years

2001, 556; 2002, 548; 2002, 548; 2003, 549; 2004, 535; 2005, 529; 2006, 525; 2007, 450 (approx); 2008, 405; 2009, 439; 2010, 453; 2011, 475; 2012, 504.

Honorary Membership

There were no Honorary Memberships granted in 2013.

Fellowships

George Thomson was appointed as a senior fellow on August 13, 2013.

Deaths

It is with great sadness that we record the deaths of 3 Guild members during the year: Derek Watson, Roscoe Howells and Joe Watson.

Officers (as from March 2013 AGM)

President: Lord Cameron of Dillington (Ewen); Chairman: Jane Craigie; Deputy Chairman and Marketing and Events Secretary: Howard Venters; Awards Secretary: Louise Impey; IFAJ Executive Representative: Joe Watson; Hon Treasurer: Tim Price; Membership Secretary: Liz Snaith; Website / eAlert Editor and Press Officer: Peter Hill; GAJ Charitable Trust Representative: Clive Rainbird; General Secretary: Nikki Robertson.

Senior Fellows

Peter Bell, Eddie Gillanders, Peter Ryder, David Steers and George Thomson.

Honorary Chaplain

We have a new Chaplain this year, the venerable George Pitcher. George is a journalist, author, public relations pioneer and an Anglican priest. He co-founded Jericho Chambers, a radical development of communications consultancy modeled on a set of legal chambers, with Robert Phillips, a former CEO at Edelman, in June 2013. Previously, he was appointed Secretary for Public Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury in October 2010 and left the post a year later. He was Religion Editor of Telegraph Media from May 2008 and wrote a regular column and occasional leaders for the *Daily Telegraph* and a contentious blog for telegraph.co.uk. He left the paper in June 2010 and has since been a regular contributor to RightMinds, the Daily Mail's on-line comment site.

He was Industrial Editor of The Observer between 1988 and 1991, during which his commentary on the high summer of Thatcherite utility privatisation led to the Industrial Society (the precursor to the Work Foundation) voting him National Newspaper Industrial Journalist of the Year in 1991.

In 1992, he co-founded the innovative communications consultancy Luther Pendragon with Charles Stewart-Smith, the television journalist. The firm grew through the Nineties off the back of major and often controversial clients such as British Gas, Kimberly Clark, Holocaust Memorial Day and the Hinduja family.

Pitcher had undertaken training for ordained ministry in the Church of England and was ordained curate of St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London - known as "the journalists' church". He has organised topical debates in church and Christmas concerts by Seventies supergroup Jethro Tull.

He occasionally attacks the conservative evangelical wing of the Church in print. He has also expressed concern about the entry of Anglican priests into the Catholic Church after the Holy Office accepted the creation of personal ordinariates for disaffected High Church traditionalists. He has been an outspoken opponent of the legalisation of assisted suicide and euthanasia in the UK.

Educated at Blundell's School in Tiverton, Devon, he has honours degrees in Contextual Theology from Middlesex University (2005) and in Drama and Theatre Arts from Birmingham University (1977). Pitcher lives with his wife and four children in Sussex.

He has written numerous articles in newspapers and magazines, usually on business topics and public ethics. His book, *A Time To Live: The Case Against Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia*, was published in July 2010 by Lion Hudson. In 2002, Wiley published his work *The Death of Spin*, an indictment of the superficiality of business and politics.

Council Members

Council started the year with 11 council members and President Lord Cameron. Jane Craigie commenced her first year in office as Chairman.

Council Meetings and Activities

5 Council meetings were held during the year, 1 via GoToMeeting and the other 4 at The Farmers Club, London.

President Lord Cameron of Dillington attended 3 meetings. Senior Fellow David Steers attended 0 meetings. Attendances by other Council members were as follows: Jane Craigie 5, Adrian Bell 5, Peter Hill 4, Louise Impey 3, Julie Mate 4, Tim Price 5, Liz Snaith 4, Howard Venters 5, Joe Watson 5, Ben Briggs 4, Clive Rainbird 4, Nikki Robertson 5.

AGM 2013

After three years outside London, the BGAJ AGM returned in style with the 2013 AGM held at the Tower of London. It was, once again, organised by the Midlands Group and AGCO generously sponsored the event.

Formalities dealt with at the AGM included the re-election of the Guild's enthusiastic and supportive President, Somerset farmer and former Government Rural Advocate, Lord Cameron of Dillington and the election of the new Chairman, Jane Craigie.

The speakers at the 2013 AGM were George Freeman MP, who updated delegates on the Government's 'Agri-Tech' strategy and the vision for its impact. Paul Lay from AGCO also spoke, outlining his support for the 2014 IFAJ Congress being held by the British Guild in September 2014. Mr Lay also outlined some of the international work and initiatives being undertaken by AGCO globally.

After the formalities guests were treated to a lovely buffet lunch and were then free to tour the Tower of London.

Finance

Honorary Treasurer Tim Price's audited figures are accompanying. His full report will be presented at the 2014 AGM.

Awards

The Guild's Awards programme are going from strength to strength, with record numbers of entries received and three new Awards introduced in 2013.

- The Netherthorpe Award – the Guild's own award for outstanding service to agricultural journalism was won by Ken Fletcher
- The Yara Journalism Awards, presented at the Harvest Lunch, were won by Aly Balsom, Tim Relf and Sarah Henly
- The Stuart Seaton Regional Newspaper Award went to Joe Watson
- The Perkins Power Award was won by Tom Allen-Stevens, with Louise Impey as runner-up
- The NOAH Animal Health Award went to Gemma Mackenzie, with Rachel Queenborough as runner-up
- The John Deere Training Award was presented to Anna Bowen, with Andrea Beddows as runner-up
- The Keenan Innovation Award went to Peter Hill, with James Andrews as runner-up
- The Institution of Agricultural Engineers Award was won by Peter Hill, with Oliver Mark as runner-up
- The BSPB Award went to Tom Allen-Stevens
- The Germinal Seeds Travel Bursary was awarded to Sara Gregson
- The Photography Award winners were John Eveson (arable) and Wayne Hutchinson (livestock), with Marcelo Garbagnoli and Bruce Jobson as runners-up
- The IFAJ Star Prize for print journalism went to Mike Abram.

The Guild welcomes a new sponsor, DuPont, for the arable category for the 2014 Photography Award and looks forward to launching the Don Gomery Memorial Award, with a new sponsor, later this year.

Communications

Keeping Members and Friends of the Guild informed and involved as to the activities and opportunities their membership brings is the main role of the Guild's communication effort, which is led by Council member Peter Hill and supported to the full extent of all costs through generous sponsorship of the monthly eAlerts by AGCO (thanks to Guild member Paul Lay) and the website by Perkins Engines (via Guild friends Annette Johnson and Adrian Talbot).

Peter has enjoyed the support this year of fellow Council member Ben Briggs in producing news stories for the website. In addition, Wendy and Peter Ryder continue to compile a paper Bulletin based on eAlert and website news material for those retired members who do not use email.

After an outstanding 30-year record, Peter and Wendy decided to step down from publishing the Year Book for the Guild. This has been an invaluable source of contacts and information over the years and is one of the most tangible benefits of membership. The editors' diligent updating of the membership listing and contacts at other organisations throughout the year has maintained the value of the publication, which has been produced at no cost to the Guild. The process of finding their successors has begun.

From this year, the membership listing for the Year Book will be drawn from the Guild's new Farming Media Centre, which is at the heart of a new online membership database. Piecing together this project has proved a long, drawn-out process but it will soon go 'live'. It will provide online membership application and direct debit facilities, replacing somewhat clunky paper-based processes, and will make monitoring and management of members' subscriptions considerably easier and less time-consuming.

Benefits of the new Farming Media Centre include an enhanced 'search and display' design for anyone within or outwith the Guild wanting to locate a photographer, freelance or staff journalist, or someone with agri PR and marketing expertise. Password access will enable Members and Friends to update and edit their Farming Media Centre record at any time.

By the 2014 annual meeting, posting of individual records from the Year Book to the online database will be complete thanks to the time contributed by Charles Abel, Michael Bird, Andrew Blake, Ben Briggs and Steve Mitchell, and by Peter Hill who has also completed a directory of farming and rural magazines, regional newspapers, radio and television programmes, and websites for the new Farming Media Centre.

Events

14th March 2013 - AGM and IFAJ Launch at the Tower of London

The historic surroundings of the Tower of London was the venue for the 2013 Guild AGM which was very well attended by close to 100 people, coupled with the launch of the IFAJ 2014 Congress. Chairman Adrian Bell passed the baton to Jane Craigie and the event was presided by Lord Cameron.

Much of the time was taken up with presentations in relation to this year's Congress which is covered elsewhere within the IFAJ 2014 report.

The normal reports were presented and the Guild is grateful to Massey Ferguson for their kind support and sponsorship of the venue and occasion.

The normal election of officers resulted in elections and re-elections including Archdeacon David Meara as Guild Chaplain. This will be superseded this year following his retirement and the appointment of a new Guild Chaplain.

One of the most important elements of the 2013 AGM was adoption of a new constitution which had been seen through by immediate past Chairman, Adrian Bell. Future events were discussed and a presentation was made by Paul Lay of Massey Ferguson.

12th June 2013 - Bangers and Beer at the Cereals Event

The presentation of new writing and photography awards was a highlight of the Bangers'n'Beer reception, which was enjoyed by a good turnout of Members and Friends of the Guild.

Bayer CropScience sponsored the excellent sausages; Limagrain supplied some fine bottled beer; and Gleadall Agriculture, a major trader of grain in the UK and a leading exporter of all grains, oilseeds and pulses, produced a good quantity of strawberries and cream. Also, PGRO and BBPA provided pulse-based snacks.

For the first time, the Processors & Growers Research Organisation (PGRO) and British Edible Pulses Association (BEPA) provided a taste of the Middle East as part of their 'Pulses on the plate' initiative. The dishes on offer, eaten in Britain and around the world, were made from products grown by UK pulse growers.

PGRO is the levy body that promotes and carries out research and development in peas and beans, whilst BEPA is the trade association representing the processors and users of British-produced pulse crops.

Tom Allen-Stevens, editor of *Crop Production Magazine* (CPM), was applauded for the writing award he won from the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) on the evening before the Cereals Event. He is pictured with Guild chairman, Jane Craigie.

Another new writing award was presented in its 75th year by the Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE) to Peter Hill, machinery freelancer, for an article in *Crops* magazine. Oli Mark of *Farmers Weekly* received the runner-up prize.

Photographers John Eveson and Marcello Garbagnoli were announced winners of the Arable category of the Guild's rejuvenated photography awards. They received their cheques from Steve Flanagan of sponsor Safagrow.

It may have rained yet again but the mood at the Bangers'n'Beer event was decidedly upbeat as Members and Friends enjoyed good company and refreshment at the end of a busy first day at the Cereals Event.

20th June 2013 - Reception at the Royal Highland Show

The press party at the end of the first day of the Royal Highland Show has become a popular feature with working journalists attending the show over the past few years.

It is held in a room right next to the press centre and attracts 30-40 members of the BGAJ and guests who are ready to relax and enjoy some welcome food and drink after a hard day at the show.

Arrangements are in the hands of Eddie Gillanders and his wife, Marion, and as you would expect in Scotland, it features a sumptuous repast provided by a number of generous sponsors whom Eddie has persuaded to support the function.

The main course last year was a roast, along with a selection of salads and potatoes, provided by Quality Meat Scotland, followed by strawberries from Marks and Spencer, ice-cream (and crisps) from Mackies, cheese from First Milk, wine from McDonalds and other drinks courtesy of NFU Mutual.

The show's press director, Keith Brooke, came along to thank journalists for their efforts in reporting the show, while Guild chairman, Jane Craigie, welcomed guests and Joe Watson outlined plans for the IFAJ Congress in Scotland later this year.

Sadly, Joe will not be among us this year but I am sure we will drink a toast to his memory.

3rd July 2013 - Reception at Livestock Event

Livestock Event drinks party: over 60 members enjoyed a selection of English cheeses washed down by English wine at the Livestock Event party held in the media centre, thanks to sponsor NFU Mutual and organiser Liz Snaith and to host, event organiser the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers. The event provided a great wind down after a busy first day and at which the Germinal bursary presented and IFAJ 2014 was discussed.

23rd July 2013 - Reception at The Royal Welsh

The Guild reception at the Royal Welsh entered its second year hosted by the kind generosity of NFU Mutual. Whereas the first year (2012) was well attended, the 2013 event unfortunately attracted only a few people. The livestock photography award sponsored by JG Animal Health was presented at that event, an important award consequently disappointing as few people attended. Guild Treasurer Tim Price who kindly instigated the reception is in conversation with NFU Cymru to explore the opportunities for a joint event in the future. There is every intention to continue as the Royal Welsh is an important show and well attended but the timings and location need to be further considered.

10th October 2013 - Guild Harvest Service and Lunch

The 2013 Guild Harvest Service in co-operation with St Bride's achieved yet another milestone with the church being close to capacity. The service followed a similar religious format coupled with more lateral thinking in terms of musical content. Once again we enjoyed a full choir of 12 sponsored by Shepherd Publishing and the address was given by Baroness Hazel Byford, past President of the Guild and newly installed Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers.

With the kind co-operation of St Bride's Church a collection was split evenly between the Church and our own Charitable Trust.

Thereafter we moved to Stationers' Hall for traditional roast beef and the guest speaker was Colonel Hugh Campbell-Smith, MBE, Commanding Officer of the Queen's Own Yeomanry who described the important role of the military in relation to future food and water security. The Guild is once again grateful to Lloyds TSB, Waitrose and Keenan whose kind contribution resulted in yet another wonderful event. We are equally grateful to the Kelseys for their contribution of produce and to Diana Spellman of Partners in Purchasing for their involvement. The Jersey Cattle Society provided dairy produce for which we are grateful. Stationers' Hall was once again sold out with in excess of 200 people attending and during the lunch we enjoyed the professional services of an auctioneer to auction on behalf of the Charitable Trust after which the winners of the 200 Club were announced.

The whole event was once again a great success after which a number of people adjourned to the Press House below St Bride's for further socialising.

17th January 2014 - IFAJ 2014 Reception for IFAJ country delegates at the British Embassy, Berlin

January 17th saw the launch of the IFAJ 2014 Congress to the international delegates of the IFAJ during Green Week, a large food and agricultural related exhibition that takes place annually in Berlin. Event organiser Caroline Millar and her staff arranged a reception to be held at the British Embassy in Berlin which was attended by the majority of delegates from the 32 member countries of the IFAJ.

Secretary of State Owen Paterson attended and presented to the Congress and the late Joe Watson made a first class speech and invited all to join the Congress in Aberdeenshire along with the associated pre- and post-Congress tours.

Following a champagne reception at the British Embassy IFAJ delegates enjoyed the sounds of a piper as well as a taste of traditional British fayre including haggis. Further details will be included within the IFAJ Congress Report.

IFAJ - General

This comes in two parts: from a wider IFAJ perspective and Britain's role within it, and the IFAJ Congress itself (this second part accompanies this report).

I can't start without mentioning Joe Watson's invaluable contribution to IFAJ as the British Executive member for the last five years. He thoroughly enjoyed the experience of representing Britain on the world stage - albeit with a distinctly Scottish flavour - and had helped hugely in its development, as well as further raising its profile here in Britain. Just as with his contribution to BGAJ itself, he leaves a tremendous legacy.

Last year was the first time an IFAJ World Congress had taken place in South America. Official BGAJ delegates who travelled to Argentina were Chairman Jane Craigie and IFAJ Exec rep Joe Watson, joined by immediate past chairman Adrian Bell. Initially based in Buenos Aires, before moving north-west into the pampas region near Rosario, approximately 180 delegates enjoyed four days of Argentine hospitality and insight into its very different agricultural industry. As usual, numerous opportunities for good copy were matched by the unrivalled networking that these Congresses provide to delegates.

Britain scored in the IFAJ Awards, with Mike Abram's win of the Star Prize for print journalism. His article published in *Crops* examined the concept of 'controlled traffic farming' and was already a winner in our own domestic Awards. The IFAJ judging panel - drawn from Holland, South Africa and Denmark - said of his article, picked from a total of 13 entries: "The author shows us all how to transform a very technical subject into an easy to read and practical article; and most of all, he gives us an insight about the financial aspects of this subject - something we should do more of as journalists." Mike was presented with his cash award by IFAJ President Markus Rediger, at the Guild's own Harvest Lunch in London in October.

We had no successful applicant for the 2013 Alltech Young Leaders award, otherwise known as 'Boot Camp'.

IFAJ finance is in good health currently, and much of this 'war chest' is now committed to helping IFAJ deliver on its new strategy. To that end, two new appointments were made to IFAJ late last year. Jose van Gelder takes on the role of Global Manager, while fellow Dutch Guild member Anne Kluivers becomes Global Coordinator. These two part-time paid roles will be responsible for a new approach to communications and an overhaul of the IFAJ website to make it more functional. Watch this space - the two global officers will be providing an update on their first half year of the global office in September.

At the executive meeting in Argentina, changes to the IFAJ election procedure were approved, following the concerns raised by secret ballots and non-disclosure at the 2012 elections in Sweden. Non-voting scrutineers will now be appointed for every election, and results will be made available immediately.

The process of revising the IFAJ constitution has begun, after a sub-committee was established under the chairmanship of Germany's Katharina Seuser. Proposals are likely to be put to the delegate meeting in Scotland later this year. Joe Watson had been asked for his involvement in the constitution committee, despite stepping down as IFAJ rep - a role he was looking forward to. Markus Rediger has asked BGAJ if we would like to retain a role on the committee; we will accept his offer and make an appointment in due course.

The British Guild will handover the IFAJ Congress flag to New Zealand later this year; their Congress will take place in October 2015. Germany will host in 2016 and at January's executive meeting in Berlin, South Africa's application to host the 2017 Congress was unanimously approved.

IFAJ – Congress 2014

As I write this, we're in the final stages of preparing for the onslaught of anxious IFAJ members keen to secure one of the 220 places available on this year's IFAJ World Congress, Innovations from a Small Island. Barring any last-minute hiccups with the payment processing service, the registration portal should open at 1300GMT on Friday 28th March; if the volume of enquiries received by members of the Organising Committee over the last few weeks is anything to go by, places are going to go like the proverbial hot cakes.

And so they should. The British Guild's Congress Organising Committee has brought together what is quite simply a superb, detailed and comprehensive Congress programme, which is totally representative of modern British agriculture. This is the sixth time the British Guild has hosted Congress - more than any other IFAJ member - and the expectation of a Congress to remember has been firmly in the minds of IFAJ members ever since Joe Watson and I presented our initial plans to the IFAJ Executive in January 2013.

Joe, of course, was the driver behind bringing the 2014 Congress to Britain - and Scotland in particular - in the first place. As Guild Chairman, together with Don Gomery as the then IFAJ Executive member for Great Britain, he worked hard first to canvass support for Britain's bid with the IFAJ, then at several initial exploratory meetings with the movers and shakers of Scottish agriculture. It's been a long time coming - his first recommendation to Council was made in 2007 - but today we're just 160 days away from declaring Congress open. It's tragic that he won't be there to share it with us.

Those next 160 days still hold a lot of work for everyone involved in Congress, and that's why we - as the Congress Committee - are inviting and encouraging more Guild members to get involved and play a part in welcoming those 220 delegates to Britain. Why don't we all show how proud we are of our industry, and how professional we are as a Guild, by helping to make this Congress go with a bang!

Even though we head the table on hosting Congresses, they don't come here very often (thank goodness); the last occasion was in 1997, and before that in 1981. We often hear (understandably) that part of the reason for not attending Congress is the cost of travel; two of the last three Congresses have involved long-haul flights. But getting to Scotland presents no such challenges; this is going to be the most BGAJ-accessible Congress for years. Whether you choose to come as a full delegate, as a helping delegate or even as a Guild member who's simply prepared to muck in and help out - you'll all enjoy the opportunities to meet fellow journalists and communicators from almost 50 countries, to learn new facts and gain a fresh insight into, and a different perspective of, the industry from which you earn a living, as well as

benefiting from the CPD opportunities that make up an important part of every Congress.

The sheer amount of hard work that has gone into organising this year's Congress has been phenomenal - particularly when you consider that it's been a voluntary team behind it. Of course, we've been generously supported by our sponsors - principally Massey Ferguson, Perkins Engines and Waitrose, without whom we would not have been able to get the programme underway. Their foundation support has been boosted by further monetary and in-kind support from more than 40 companies and organisations, providing further essentials such as transport, food, logistics and more, and ensuring that the final cost to delegates of this bespoke, four-day food and farming showcase, is fair and affordable.

The main thrust of this report, however, must recognise the supreme effort that has been expended by those involved with the Congress Organising Committee. Their willingness to take on tough tasks - none of us has ever done anything like this before - and to dedicate so much time to the project should not be allowed to pass without due recognition. While we all remain excited at the prospect of bringing Congress to Britain, and sharing our industry with what's estimated to be a worldwide combined audience (amongst IFAJ-affiliated outlets) of some 30million, we're nevertheless all looking forward to getting our lives back once we've waved goodbye to the last delegate in September!

Guild Future

Hosting Congress highlighted the fragility of the Guild's old structure; this has now been rectified with the setting up of The British Guild of Agricultural Journalists as a company limited by guarantee. In addition, the 2014 IFAJ Congress, including the pre-congress and the post-congress tours, will be operated via a new limited company (registered in Scotland) entitled Small Island Innovations Ltd. This company will be wound up after the congress financial trading ceases - which is anticipated to be towards the end of 2014.

Burges Salmon's team has provided invaluable professional advice in setting up the BGAJ's new company status and its associated memorandum and articles of association. They are now starting on the memorandum and articles of association for Small Island Innovations Ltd. Campbell Dallas, a Scottish Accountancy firm, is very generously providing the accounting service for Small Island Innovations Ltd, including the set-up of the company. These professional services would have cost the Guild dearly under normal commercial circumstances.

Nikki Robertson, the BGAJ Secretary, has also taken over as the BGAJ Company Secretary. The Council members have become Directors of The British Guild of Agricultural Journalists.

ENAJ (European Network of Agricultural Journalists)

Now into its third year, the ENAJ continues to grow both its membership and its offering.

During the course of the last 12 months, another three countries have joined the organisation. Romania and Croatia each joined after formally establishing their own domestic agricultural journalists' Guilds, and Switzerland was admitted after delegates voted to include EFTA countries alongside those from the EU.

ENAJ members have had the opportunity to take part in two delegate meetings during the year. The first, held in Dublin in May, was organised to coincide with the Informal Council Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture. Tramping through the lush grass at a research station belonging to Teagasc, the Irish agricultural extension service, gave delegates the perfect

opportunity for an extended meeting with either 'their' minister, or an opposite number from another state. BGAJ was represented by Roger Trehwella, and Adrian Bell attended in his ENAJ management committee role.

December saw the annual Ag-Press Networking Event in Brussels, where ENAJ holds its AGM. Once the administrative duties were complete, delegates were assigned to one of three working parties: the future development of ENAJ; incorporating and developing young entrants; and the ENAJ programme activities. From these breakout sessions came some valuable feedback, direction and opinions about the role of the ENAJ and how member states would like to see it develop. This will be fed back into the next delegate meeting, taking place in Greece in May.

The other highlight of the December meeting was the final of the CAP Communications Awards. Britain had one entry in the final - the Agrichat initiative founded by Guild members Simon Haley and Jez Fredenburgh - but sadly narrowly missed out on taking the top prize.

British attendees in December included BGAJ Chairman Jane Craigie and Deputy Chairman Howard Venters, Alison Mann, Simon Haley and Adrian Bell.

One of the other benefits of ENAJ and its close integration with the AG-PRESS service run by DG AGRI is the opportunity to participate in numerous press trips during the year. These are extremely good value; DG AGRI usually pays for travel, accommodation, food and transport for the trip itself, typically over two or three days. Participants from the British Guild over the last 12 months have included Charles Abel, Alison Mann, Richard Crowhurst, Matthew Sharp and Chris McCullough. However, it is fair to say we often struggle to find willing British participants, despite the wide variety of content and range of businesses and enterprises that the trips embrace and despite regular communications and appeals through eAlerts, Twitter and the BGAJ website. If you would like to be included on a shortlist of applicants, please pass on your name to ENAJ Communications Officer Adrian Bell.

A new form of press trip available to ENAJ members is the 'low cost' visit, an initiative agreed during this past year. Individual member guilds have offered to run short, 48-hour press trips at cost, giving attendees the opportunity to examine closely a particular industry or region. 'Innovative pig production' is the first to be organised; a two-day trip to the Netherlands and Belgium has been jointly arranged by the two guilds. A second trip, to Spain, is planned later this year; BGAJ has also offered to host one - possibly based on the Livestock Event - in 2015, once this year's Congress is out of the way.

Finally, ENAJ Communications Officer Adrian Bell completed a new website for ENAJ earlier this year. Still in its early stages, it will eventually contain details for all ENAJ member states and their respective guilds, associations and contacts, as well as information on forthcoming events and ENAJ news items.

Regional Groups

The Guild's regional groups continue to provide a well-supported programme of activities for members, featuring visits to places of interest, seminars, talks and, increasingly, CPD events. These events are usually open to all members, irrespective of their location.

The Midlands regional group continues to be extremely active offering a well-supported programme of meetings for members, with the main focus on CPD events to meet with their interests. These events are open to all members, irrespective of their location. In addition, the Midlands group staged a successful collaborative meeting with CIM's Food Drink and

Agriculture group, it organised the national AGM, and is pleased to organise and host IFAJ 2014 Post Congress.

Council thanks those who run these groups and would welcome and support requests from members to set up groups in other areas of the country.

Charitable Trust

It has been another busy year for The British Guild of Agricultural Journalists' Charitable Trust. Requests for financial assistance came from both working and retired members of your Guild and covered a range of special needs. These included: financial support following loss of income through illness; the provision of disability and mobility equipment; allowances for respite care, as well as additional physiotherapy to make-up for shortfalls resulting from NHS cut-backs. In addition, and in many cases just as helpful, were the confidential conversations between trustees and members, or their families, who appreciated being able to share their problems and discuss the best way of utilising the Trust's limited resources.

For the first time in its 21 year history, grants awarded to Guild members and their families asking for help came close to exceeding its investment income. Fortunately, the financial markets showed an encouraging, albeit small, recovery throughout 2013 which contributed to a slight increase in dividends from the Trust's investment portfolio. However, much of that additional return was also the result of further investment in the Trust's two charitable funds thanks largely to legacies received in the previous financial year. Thus, by the year end the value of the Trust's investments stood at more than £120,400, compared with £102,000 for the same period in 2012.

Had it not been for these additional investments and their yield, the Trust would have needed to draw down on its investment portfolio in order to meet its on-going grant aid commitments. Unfortunately the Trust's other traditional income streams, while most welcome, did not perform so well as in the previous year.

Consequently, your trustees remain mindful that because of the uncertainties in the financial markets, and the fact that demands on the Trust's funds are likely to increase in the future, the Charitable Trust must be run with a long-term view, in the same way as a pension fund, if it is to continue to benefit Guild members in the years ahead. This means it is vital we find new ways of raising money.

Acknowledgements

Council pays a warm and heartfelt tribute to Joe Watson, who died at 6pm on Thursday 6th March 2014 in his home in Turriff. Joe was our friend, our colleague and a passionate Guild Council member for over a decade, latterly, the British IFAJ representative. Joe's contribution to the Guild and IFAJ has been far-reaching and highly valued. Amongst many other contributions, it is thanks to Joe that the 2014 IFAJ Congress will be hosted in Scotland.

Council graciously thanks The Farmers Club for providing its facilities for Guild meetings and functions. It also thanks Guild Chaplain Archdeacon David Meara, Rector of St Bride's, Fleet Street, for his time serving the British Guild. Thanks also go to St Bride's for hosting the Guild's magnificent Harvest Service in October each year, as well as James Irving, St Bride's administrator, who does so much to make the Harvest Service such a terrific success. Also to Guild Deputy Chairman, Howard Venters, for his continued generous sponsorship of the service, choir and church.

Council would like to extend a very big thank-you to Peter and Wendy Ryder, publishers and coordinators of 31 issues of the Guild's Yearbook. Your years of professional and warm service in delivering our flagship book, as well as your extensive support of the British Guild in other ways, is very much appreciated and will be remembered.

Council also appreciates very much the time given, on behalf of the Guild, by all those judging the awards, members or otherwise, as well as those who sponsor such awards and Guild functions.

Many sponsors have already been acknowledged in the report, but Council would like to thank all those who give of their time and effort to ensure the Guild remains an organisation to which people are proud to belong - that much is evident from the growing membership.

Council as a whole records its thanks to the Trustees and Friends of the GAJ Charitable Trust, all those who have donated to the Trust, to John Allan for his administration of the Trust 200 Club and to those involved in producing and distributing the 2013 Guild Christmas card.

Finally, Council thanks the officers of the Guild for all they have done throughout the year on behalf of both Council and Guild members.

Jane Craigie
Chairman
March 2014