

Bannside Stitchers

Chairperson's Report 2024

Thank you all for coming today to our annual AGM.

Another busy crafting year has passed since our last AGM and three of our classes are at full capacity and one space available in the fourth, at the time of writing. We have welcomed Libby [Padgett] on to the committee and her agreement to come on board means that all four classes now have a committee member available.

Our first event since then, our Christmas Craft Fair, followed closely on the 2nd December. This was a fund- raising event, and several members booked tables to sell their own crafts. Some ladies donated items to the Stitchers Table, and the Refreshment Table proved very popular as well. The feedback was very positive, and we would think of doing it again, perhaps in alternate years, providing members had had enough time to build up their stock, and hold the fair in mid-November rather than the beginning of December.

Our Christmas Dinner, complete with Secret Santa, followed soon after, and was, as usual, well attended in The Wild Duck. A lovely meal, served with efficiency by the Wild Duck staff, was enjoyed by all.

In February we ran a Machine- Embroidery workshop, as we were becoming aware that our embroidery machine was under used due to lack of training. Lynette [Arbuthnot] and her friend Jacinta [Diamond] volunteered their time to run this workshop, and it proved so popular that two four-week blocks of tuition were organised by them for later in the year. Lynette has said she could be available to help during Thursday class hours in the Community centre by arrangement. A small fee would be required to cover expenses.

In March we were at last to get the good news that we'd been successful in our application for Lottery Funding, although it would be Autumn before any funds could be distributed. Applying for the grant was an important task undertaken by the committee to help us keep the cost of the classes financially accessible to all .

In April, four committee members attended a 'Vulnerable Adults' training course in Cullybackey, which informed us how to update our own policy.

We have been able to negotiate a 10% Discount Card with The Factory Craft Shop in Wakehurst. If any new members haven't received one, please let a committee member know.

Our Summer trip took place on 15th June. Twenty-four ladies travelled to Carrickfergus Castle, and then on to 'The Craftswoman's Fabrics' at Kilroot. There were mixed reports back on this trip. We didn't have a guide at the castle, and the fabric shop seemed

unprepared for such a large number of eager fabric collectors. In future, it was felt that we should perhaps only have shopping venues on our trips.

Our end-of year coffee morning was held in June in 'The Library' section of Fullans' coffee shop. This was our opportunity to express our thanks to our tutors, Patsy [Gribbin], Caitriona [Mackle] and Rose- Marie, for their expertise and patience over the year, and also, to have an opportunity to enjoy meeting up with Stitchers from other classes. It was very well attended, and we decided to consider using this arrangement again.

Our former Treasurer Anne [Williamson], a founder member, who helped set up The Bannside Stitchers, has stood down from committee for personal reasons. We are sorry to lose Anne, as her help, advice and commitment over the years has been invaluable. We are extremely grateful to Philma [Doherty] who has stepped into the breach and agreed to be our new treasurer. She is currently getting to grips with this challenging role.

We are looking forward to our trip to the Titanic Exhibition Centre on Saturday 9th November for the biggest and best craft show in the UK, 'The Knitting and Stitching Show', similar to that formerly held in the RDS, Dublin, to which we've travelled in the past. Among the hundreds of exhibitors will be Diane from 'Sewing NI' who's based in Coleraine. Diane will be hosting our own Winter workshop on November 30th, in which many of us will be taking part.

Our communications secretary, Lynette, is as busy as ever getting information out to you all via WhatsApp or text, and we decided that a newsletter attached to each new session timetable could also be a useful means of providing general information.

We remember that several of our members lost close family relatives this past year, and on this occasion, we'd like to express our condolences again.

Before our Chair declares all situations vacant, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our hardworking committee for all their efforts over the past year. In alphabetical order that's Annie, Carmel, Helen, Libby, Lynette, Nathana and Philma. These ladies have attended many meetings and undertaken all that was required of them to keep our group running smoothly. A lot goes on behind the scenes and they're always prepared to go the extra mile!

Thank you for giving your time to attend this AGM today.

Inelda Breslin
CHAIR PERSON