



GUILD of St GEORGE

14th October 2019

Dear Companion,

AGM PAPERS & ANNUAL COMPANIONS CONTRIBUTION

I am delighted to enclose your copy of our annual accounts and AGM papers, in anticipation of our annual gathering in Sheffield on 16th November. I do hope as many of you as possible will come. This year's edition of *The Companion*, covering the entire Bicentenary year, will be published in the spring of 2020.

In my speech to the Guild's AGM two years ago, I announced that we would be introducing an annual Companion's Contribution scheme in the course of 2018. I stressed that the contributions would be voluntary and the level determined by what could be afforded. We duly asked for contributions last year, and in response to this, a number of you generously gave, or renewed, a contribution, for which everyone in the Guild is very grateful.

A year on, as we approach this year's AGM, I am writing to remind you why we ask for a contribution in this way.

Membership of the Guild has risen steeply over the past ten years and, at the same time – particularly in this year of Ruskin's Bicentenary – our work has been expanding. This is very good news, of course, but our growth inevitably entails further obligations and higher costs. For instance, though the two great exhibitions we put on this year received a measure of grant funding, they were largely financed out of Guild capital, which over time needs to be restored. We are also looking ahead towards the 150th anniversary in 2021 of Ruskin's foundation of the St George's Company, as it then was, in 1871, while continuing our commitment to our responsibilities in Sheffield and the Wyre.

In the early days of the Guild, Companions were expected to donate a tenth of their income per annum. We are not asking for anything like that level of sacrifice, but it seems reasonable that some contribution should be expected. When we look around us in 2019, the commitment we are invited to make seems more and more necessary. As you will see from the accompanying form, we are asking Companions to commit to some sort of annual contribution, whether financial or otherwise and since it is a voluntary scheme, your rights as a Companion will not be affected by how you decide to respond.

In the same vein, I do hope you will consider taking up the offer to all Companions, via recent newsletters from Simon Seligman, to speak for 2 or 3 minutes about a Ruskinian interest, project or passion that you are involved with, during the afternoon of the AGM. Please let him know if you would like to do this, via communications@guildofstgeorge.org.uk.

I am conscious, as I write, that this is the last time I shall address Companions as Master of the Guild. At the AGM on 16th November, all things being well, I shall hand over the Mastership to my friend Rachel Dickinson, who has served the Guild as a Director for the last five years. She will be the first woman Master of the Guild. With her inspirational speeches and lectures, her imagination and her capacity for hard work, she seems sure of success. As for me, after ten years at the helm I am ready to move on, but I want you all to know how conscious I am of the honour the Companions bestowed on me when they accepted my appointment. It has been the most exciting job I have ever had, and it has been a privilege to work with and for such a talented, varied and inspiring body of people. It is so good to be able to work for the things you believe in, and it has also been such fun! I hope I shall go on seeing as many of you as possible. I shall miss everyone!

Meanwhile, I hope to see you at our AGM in Sheffield, where all the Directors will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the contribution scheme or any other aspect of Guild policy and practice.

Warm good wishes, as ever,

Clive Wilmer