

Livery Dinner

Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Alderman, Masters, Wardens, Clerks, Fellow Turners and honoured guests.

It is my privilege and pleasure as Master Turner to welcome you, my Lord Mayor and mayoral party and to propose the Civic Toast. I feel honoured to be here on this top table with another who has also served in your office, our Liveryman, Dame Fiona Woolf.

We are dining here in this splendid Skinners' Hall where we now have our Company offices, due in part to the numbers who have come to grace our table. It is interesting to note that the second and now demolished Hall of the Turners' Company from 1736 to 1766 adjoined the back of this Hall, not 100 feet from where we are sitting and next to the site of Dick Whittington's College – But it surely cannot be that this link led to the famous couplet "Turn again, Whittington", can it? Come what may, the entrance to the Hall yard is still there on College Hill marked by a blue plaque and worth a visit.

I know, my Lord Mayor, that yours is a distinguished background in the commercial maritime world but the experience of the Turners' Company has touched mostly on the military aspects of our navies particularly supplying the equipment for them over the centuries. We have seen examples of the ships' tableware – wooden cups, plates, bowls – in the Mary Rose collection shown at our Wizardry in Wood exhibition in 2012 and it is timely to remind everybody that this exhibition returns in October 2016 to Carpenters Hall. Turners and turning were later involved in the naval shipyard at Portsmouth (and later Chatham) in what is widely recognised as the first mechanised mass production plants in England – using special lathes and other machines to manufacture the pulleys and pulley blocks used in the rigging of our men 'o war in the Napoleonic campaign. Instrumental in this were some giants from the industrial revolution – Maudsley, Marc Brunel and Bramah. I felt a tingling sense of history when I met a direct descendant of Bramah at a dinner in Sheffield earlier this year.

My own abiding memory of the sea is a voyage I made on a yacht to St.Kilda off the North West coast of Scotland some 100 miles out into the wild North Atlantic Ocean. It is a rocky island uninhabited except for a small group of servicemen manning a radar station for tracking guided missiles. The visit was highly unusual in that there was no wind so the auxiliary engine had to be used in both directions. Being short of fuel I decided I would have to "chat up" the commandant who was linked to an organisation I used to work for in the Ministry of Defence. He readily agreed to filling our gerrycan but when asked if we could pay for it pointed out that cash was difficult at this remote location. "That's on us" he said but one of our crew piped up "oh, can we have 2 gerrycans then?" His retort was "now that's stealing"!

We are also honoured tonight, my Lord Mayor, by the presence of your two sheriffs. Charles Bowman is a senior figure in audit and tax matters and has been considerably involved with numerous committees in the City of London Corporation. Chris Rigden had a career in the specialist material "underpinning" the construction industry but latterly has put her considerable energies into the Livery Movement, the City Ward clubs and other City Institutions. I am sure that these disparate skills sure will assist you during the year. From

the City we also have Alderman Alison Gowman who is Alderman of our Ward and the City Marshall, Philip Jordan.

The Turners place great store on our hospitality and hope each one of you is enjoying this evening and will take away warm memories of this occasion.

Turning now if I may, my Lord Mayor, to some of the achievements within the Turners' Company within the last year, we have several exceptional woodturners as fellow members and we were particularly delighted that Freeman Ray Key was honoured recently with the British Empire Medal for a lifetime of services to Turning. It was indeed a proud moment for the small party of Turners who witnessed Ray receiving his medal from the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire at the Guildhall in Worcester last month. Perhaps, Ray, you could be upstanding whilst we recognise this achievement.

Sadly, this year the Father of the Company, Hugh Lindley-Jones, passed away; he had been a Liveryman for an incredible 74 years and was Master in 1965. The new Father of the Company is Sir Brian Neill and just last week was recognised by the French Ambassador with the award of the Legion D'Honneur for his part in the D-day Landing (applause). In his absence, I shall ask his son Andrew Neill, our Renter Warden, to pass on our congratulations.

We are pleased to have supported you, my Lord Mayor, in your Election, after a year when Magna Carta and Agincourt have been to the fore with your predecessor. We are looking forward to supporting you in The Great Fire celebrations during 2016. Meanwhile I am delighted to present you with a memento of your visit tonight with a Tazza, turned by our Liveryman, Paul Coker, a prize-winner at many of our competitions over the years. He has used a particular style of work - a favourite of mine – known as Ornamental Turning, which dates back to Tudor times. It is a fine balance of shape and form, capturing the figure of the wood and then suitably ornamented. I trust this will serve as a reminder to you of your visit and our hospitality to you this evening.

Knowing the emphasis you have placed on charity, I am also pleased to present you with cheques in favour of the Mansion House Scholarship Scheme and secondly the Lord Mayor's Appeal. I understand that your areas of special interest are supporting the Sea Cadets and also Research into Type I Diabetes. I may say, I have particular identification with the latter condition, being a Type 2 sufferer myself.

My Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Turners' Company and our Guests this evening, we wish you every success in your year. I would ask you all to be upstanding for the toast. The Toast is: The Lord Mayor, the City of London Corporation and the Sheriffs.