

Andrew Neill – Master's Letter 2017

It is a great privilege to become Master Turner and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the range of events planned for the year ahead.

The Turners' Company is renowned for bringing together a wide cross-section of people from the City, from active practitioners of the craft and from the REME joining with those introduced by family or friends. In the past 3 years we have attracted nearly 30 new members that will ensure continued vitality of the Company in the years to come.

I am delighted that two of those new members are my own daughters, Alexandra and Ginny, both of whom also work in the City. They represent the fourth generation of my family to be Turners. My grandfather, Sir Thomas Neill joined the Livery in 1909, having moved to London from Ireland via Glasgow. He became Master for the year in 1931.

In 1947, his eldest son, Brian, became a freeman, becoming Master in 1980. Now Sir Brian Neill is not only my father but also Father of the whole Company. I became a freeman in the year that Sir Brian was Master and my brother Michael joined in 1992

Since 1980, I have been working in the Square Mile as an investment banker dealing initially with international trading companies and subsequently with long-term infrastructure and project finance. This has included telecommunication and power cables; ports, tollroads and windfarms; the re-provision of Wembley Stadium and the substantial investment of public and private funds into new NHS Hospitals since 1995.

I look forward also to sharing the opportunity with the City of London's 109 other Livery Company Masters of participating in the huge range of educational, commercial, craft and charitable activities promoted by the Livery movement.

A particular attraction of the Turners' Company is its strong commitment to the continuing support of the craft. Wizardry in Wood 2016 was the most successful so far in terms of visitor numbers and sales by the exhibitors. It also provided a fantastic showcase of all aspects of the craft to friends from other Livery Companies.

During the coming year we are offering bursaries to fund further study, research or training and practical experience for craftsmen and women, who want to improve their craft and trade skills. The bursary scheme is in addition to the continuing financial support by the Company and its charity of lathes for educational establishments (schools, colleges and rehabilitation centres) for people of all abilities.

In recent years, the Company has established a successful Certificate in Woodturning. We expect to award the 100th such certificate later this year at one of the increasing number of accredited centres around the country.

Most of the Company's work is done by its members who volunteer to sit on the range of Committees and to carry out the many and varied tasks. Four of the Committee chairmen are changing this year and so particular thanks are due to Peter Gibson, who is standing down from the Howe Committee, Christopher Roberts (Membership), Matthew Gaved (Communications) and Gerry Thwaites (Events). We welcome in their places respectively Christopher Scott, Nicholas Edwards, Nigel Luson and Paul Logan but I must pay tribute to all of the volunteers that make the Company as vibrant and effective as it is. We look forward to the growing number of newer members playing a role as soon as they are ready.

Meanwhile, in the office, we are extremely fortunate in being able to continue with the unstinting work of the Clerk, Alex Robertson, his assistant, Becca Baker, and our Beadle, Stephen Grundy. Throughout the year they support the Master and Wardens and all of the members.

Finally I must pay a special tribute to the Master 2016-2017, Nic Somers, and to his wife Anne. He has worked tirelessly during the year and for several years beforehand in supporting the craft and the Company. He played a huge role in Wizardry in Wood 2016 both in attracting sponsorship and in sealing the participation of Kew and the Daniel Collection. I know that he will actively continue to support the Company from the Past Masters' benches.