

My Year As Master

It has been the most tremendous honour to be the Master of this ancient Company of Turners for the past year. Both the Mistress Turner and I have been fortunate to have had a wonderful, unique, but exceedingly busy, year.

In most years, the activities of a Master are very much the same as that of his predecessor; but not in 2012/13! Within days of becoming Master, the Mistress and I were attending a garden party at Buckingham Palace; Di getting herself into the official DVD of the afternoon. There is no sign of me.

The very next day we were back again, albeit at a REME function on this occasion, with Prince Philip joking that he didn't think much of Livery Companies – he is Patron of a number and a Past Master of others. To show him what the Turners can do, I sent him a couple of Ray Key bowls and a framed picture of him standing, with the Queen, behind Stuart Mortimer's finials on the Jubilee Pageant barge.

As thanks to the Turners' Company for providing the finials, the Mistress and I were invited to watch the river pageant from the Millennium Bridge over the Thames. It was a wonderful experience and, as even more of a bonus, we were not quite as wet as those in the small boats on the river below.

I had a few hours to dry off before being in the presence of the Queen once more. This time at the lunch in Westminster Hall when she – and most of the top-ranking members of the Royal Family – were entertained by the Livery. The Livery Companies had been encouraged to invite some of those who benefited from our charitable giving and who belonged to our Craft and so I was joined by Reg Hawthorne (the AWGB Chairman), Guy Ravine (the RPT Chairman), Colonel Mike Pendlington (from REME) and Mr Aonghus Gordon (from Ruskin Mill School).

Once the Jubilee celebrations and the wonderfully successful Olympic Games were over, the highlight of the remainder of the year was our Wizardry in Wood exhibition, organised by Master's Steward Nick Edwards, which was held at the same time as our biennial Turning Competitions.

The Competition entries were outstandingly good and, on this occasion, included the Company Candlestick competition – the brainchild of the Chairman of the Howe Committee, Assistant Nic Somers. The outcome of the candlestick competition is thirty splendid candlesticks to grace the tables at Company events.

Amazingly, the exhibition gets better each time we put it on. This year it was opened by

Alderman Woolf who, in the same evening, made our first award of Master in Turning to Freeman Ray Key and handed over the prizes and certificates to the Competition winners.

Wizardry in Wood was a fantastic success and considerably enhanced the Turners' Company's reputation within the City of London and beyond. The name and logo have now been registered as our trademark.

The award of Master in Turning was able to take place thanks to the work undertaken by Past Master Peter Ellis over a number of years. Not satisfied by this great achievement, Peter Ellis has gone on, in partnership with the AWGB, to inaugurate the first Certificate in Turning courses. I had the great pleasure of presenting the first two certificates at a meeting of the Crow Valley Turners in South Wales in March this year.

I have visited a number of woodturning clubs and courses through the year and, of course, there was the Company turning course that I arranged in the South of France. I particularly enjoyed visiting some of the youth training courses, co-sponsored with the AWGB, which play such a valuable part in encouraging young people to take up woodturning.

Another interesting event was a dinner held in honour of the King of Romania, one of the Queen's cousins and 91 years old. King Michael is a Liveryman of the Wax Chandlers and a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order. The dinner was attended by a large number of Masters and partners (all of whom were presented to the King) and other dignitaries including most of the Romanian Royal Family and Royal Household.

Di and I were seated on the same table sprig as Sir Ben Kingsley and quite a few of the Romanian Royal Household. Next to me was seated the most amazing woman – the Secretary General of the Household - who spent much of the, very formal, meal on her mobile phone, while she coordinated the arrival of the Romanian TV cameras and other activities.

This amazing year concluded with a final memorable event. Immediately before the Ladies' Dinner on 24th April – by coincidence, the Mistress's 29th birthday – I had the great privilege of making Alderman Fiona Woolf the Company's first female



Master Peter Gibson in the Guard of Honour at the Lord Mayor's Show

Honorary Liveryman of the 21st century and only the second Honorary Liveryman for nearly 100 years.

Most of the Company will be aware that Fiona Woolf is to be the next Lord Mayor after Roger Gifford, but may not be aware of her interest in all things wood and particularly turning.

To show our Company's support for her, the Turners' Company will take part in the Lord Mayor's Show in November 2013. Members of the Company who wish to take part by parading, or helping with the float, should contact the Clerk without delay.

In addition to everything mentioned above, the Charity Committee has continued to raise money and to make donations to schools, the military and the City.

We have held some very successful and well-attended Company functions; attendance at the Masters and Clerks lunch was at record levels – virtually nobody refused their invitation.

I have processed with the Masters of all other Livery Companies at the Sheriffs' election and the Lord Mayor's election. I was a member of the Guard of Honour when The Lord Mayor finally arrived back at the Mansion House at the end of the Lord Mayor's Show.

On top of all this, I have done my best to train our new Clerk. Despite my poor training, it is clear that Alex Robertson is going to be a great success and I wish him well for his future years with the Company.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Company, the Court, my two outstanding Wardens and the Clerk and Clerk's Assistant, for helping me through this amazing year and to wish the new Master and Monica every good wish for their year.

PM Peter Gibson