

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF TURNERS OF LONDON

Newsletter Summer 1997 Issue 10



Dear Fellow Turners

My godfather Cyril Turner asked me in 1959 if I was keen to learn about the history of the City and the origins of its greatness. On my enthusiastic acceptance he suggested that I join one of the City Livery Companies, particularly either the Turners' Company of which he was Master in 1954 or the Basketmakers of which he was also Master. I happily chose the Turners.

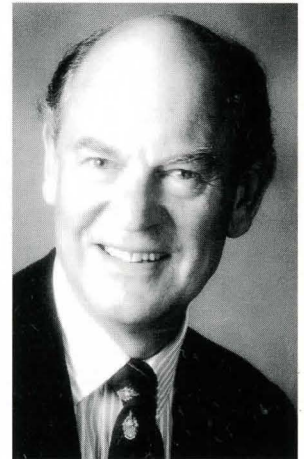
After many years as an admirer, I have even at this late stage started my apprenticeship to the craft under the masterly tuition of Past Master Edward Field, who is a highly skilled practitioner in our noble art.

I was then persuaded to enter my "work of art" in the Novice section of our Turning Competitions in July. What excitement there was in the Worlidge family when I was awarded a prize! I should tell you of course that there were three prizes and three entries! Your Upper Warden was also a prize winner, so your Company has a mass of turning skill on the bridge!

At the other end of the scale there is no greater opportunity to see Ornamental and Plain turning of the very highest standard by the country's leading craftsmen than at our biennial Turning Competitions. This year was particularly impressive and inspiring.

From its foundation, the Company had responsibility for overseeing the "Mysterie or Art" of Turning. Although we do not now exercise the role of a Guild, since about 1850

the Company has seen it as its duty to foster the craft in any way possible. To preserve as much as possible of the old traditions, we formed the Register of Professional Turners, and are concerned with the evolution of the National Vocational Qualification.



We Turners are proud of our continuing involvement with our ancient craft, and are specifically interested in the qualification which establishes the holder as fully competent in the skills and Arts of Turning. City and Guilds tell us that the Turners are unique among Livery Companies with relevant NVQs in the degree of interest and support we have given to this qualification.

It is an enormous honour to be Master of this great Company and I will do everything in my power to ensure the confidence that has been shown in me is not misplaced.

I greatly look forward to meeting many of you at our various functions and events.

Yours sincerely

Peter Worlidge

COMING EVENTS

- ◆ **Election of Lord Mayor**
Monday 29th September 1997
- ◆ **Court Meeting (morning) & Livery Luncheon**
Friday 3rd October 1997
- ◆ **Court Meeting (afternoon)**
Tuesday 11th November 1997
- ◆ **Patronal Service & Buffet Luncheon**
Tuesday 25th November 1997
- ◆ **Livery Dinner** - Tuesday 16th December 1997
- ◆ **Court Dinner** - Thursday 22nd January 1998
- ◆ **Awards Court - Prize Giving**
Tuesday 10th February 1998
- ◆ **Gardner Williams Banquet**
Monday 23rd February 1998
- ◆ **United Guilds Service** - Friday 27th March 1998
- ◆ **Craft Meeting (Register of Professional Turners)**
Friday 3rd April 1998
- ◆ **Ladies' Dinner** - Thursday 30th April 1998
- ◆ **Election Court & Dinner** - Thursday 21st May 1998

The Turner

The Turner

THE MASTER'S YEAR

John Ciclitira reports

My year as Master finished last May and I must say the year passed at a very quick speed. I trust that the Livery enjoyed my term of office as reflected by the various functions they attended.

I am pleased to report that the Company is in good shape both as regards finances and its relationship with other Livery Companies. The problem area could be the need to widen our outlook as regards competitors, prize-giving scholarships etc, all as quoted from Roland Champness in the previous edition of the newsletter.

In my term we made contacts with the Royal College of Art and this needs following up with the idea that some of their students may be interested in entering into competitions concerned with Turning set by the Worshipful Company. An idea that I understand is now being followed up by the Howe Committee.

As you will understand the Master has a difficult job as he is new to the various problems set before him. In a normal year he has a well established Clerk to guide him. In my case the Clerk had the same problem as he also was in his first year. However this in fact worked very well with the Master and the Clerk assisting each other with joint ideas and ventures. I would like to say at this juncture: Thank you very much, Dennis (Major General Dennis Shaw) for your help and assistance over the past year, it was much appreciated.

I am now well into the Past Masters' Association and will expect you to come and cheer and throw money at the Past Masters' train in the Lord Mayor's procession in November. A very enjoyable day with luncheon on HQS *Wellington*, to be joined by the Lord Mayor for fireworks in the evening.



The Master receiving the Father of the Company, the Reverend Alan Fagg, on Ladies' Night

THE TURNERS & FREEMASONRY

Freemason Tony Crooks-Meredith writes

Recently Freemasonry - "the Craft" - has been portrayed by journalists as a secret society or even as an *imperium in imperio*, a government within a government. All this was nullified by the Report of the last Government's Home Affairs Committee which found that there is nothing sinister about Freemasonry; that Freemasonry does not encourage malpractice of any kind; that there is no evidence of any conflict between the Oath taken by a judge or policeman and the Obligation of a Freemason; and that the large number of Freemasons in the judicial system gives no cause for concern.

I feel we have unwittingly brought these problems on ourselves. Before World War II Freemasons, including royals, paraded at public functions in full regalia, wearing lambskin aprons, collars with rank badges, white gloves and gauntlets. In the public Exhibition at Freemasons' Hall there are many photographs of such events. At this time, the Craft was seen as a force for good works and a great supporter of charities. It was also a mark of one's social standing to be a Mason. The Craft still had its secrets but these were (and are today) confined to methods of recognition and the traditional passwords contained within the ceremonies.

In World War II, many lodges suspended themselves. After the War, austerity became the watchword and the wearing of regalia in public was thought immoderate. This sowed the seeds of the present distrust. The Craft mysteriously and imperceptibly crept down the road of increasing secrecy, almost of paranoia.

When I was initiated in 1963, my father would say no more than "Be there on time!" I had no idea what the Craft was about or what I was letting myself in for, I acted only out of a sense of duty to my father. But I have never regretted becoming a Mason. When I initiated my own son, I made sure he knew exactly what to expect.

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternal societies, its first initiate being recorded in 1646. It is concerned with moral and spiritual values. It gives enormous support to charities. Initiates must believe in a Supreme Being, thus membership is open to all races and religions; and be of good repute (so new members join by recommendation).

Freemasonry is not a religion nor a substitute for religion. It follows three great principles, firstly *Brotherly love*. Every true Freemason shows tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and behaves to them with kindness and understanding. The second is *Relief*: Freemasons practise charity, caring for their own and for the community by charitable giving and by individual voluntary efforts. Third comes *Truth*: Freemasons must require and aim for high moral standards.

In conclusion, a Freemason is encouraged to do his duty first to his God and then to his fellow men.

The Turner

A TURNING LIFE

Oliver Plant is a Registered Professional Turner, working in an atmospheric former coaching inn in Devon, where Penrose Halson talked to him

• Can you make a living from turning?

In the 1990s it's hardly possible to earn enough from turning, even if you include teaching, retail sales and demonstrating. You'd have to raise a hefty loan from the bank, buy a large automatic machine, have half a dozen really good patterns and a couple of youngsters from the Job Centre, help them load the machine and make 5,000 an hour. You've then got the problem of selling them and you're back at a mahogany desk shouting the odds down the phone again. That isn't at you want. You can add to an Income - I add to my Army pension. I think a lot of turners do that.

• Do you teach turning?

Oh yes, since 1980. Some of my students are carpenters and joiners who want to add to their skills, some are young men going into furniture restoration - from such places as the furniture school at Thame in Oxfordshire which doesn't, oddly enough, teach turning. The others are chaps (and 12% ladies, who are very good at being taught) looking for a retirement hobby.



A student turning a bowl on the second day of her course

• How long are your courses?

One or two days, sometimes four. I've recently had a number of warrant officers and civilian instructors from the School of Engineering at Chatham. They've taken on the training of Royal Marines in carpentry and joinery. I don't know how true this is, but it's a nice story: the Marines still have a turner because in Nelson's day they had a Royal Marine treadle lathe and a turner on board ship to make the thousands of pulley blocks all over the rigging. There aren't any pulley blocks now, but nobody cancelled the job - the Navy takes a long time to change!

• How did you come to be on the Company's Register of Professional Turners?

I'd been aware of it for a long time, I'd seen people at craft shows display their registration certificate. My work had to be assessed. I took what I think are the two most difficult things to make in turning: a decent round ball; and half a dozen things exactly the same, like a stool. Every leg has to be the same, for one stool and for sets of stools. But the wood is never the same, because it's a living thing.

• Has it been a benefit to you, being on the Register?

Yes - an excellent lunch at the Craft Meeting! No, joking apart, there's a certain kudos, and it's a very worthwhile group to belong to. There are knowledgeable and fascinating people, who keep up to date with what's going on. Not a great deal changes in turning, but NVQs are having an effect.

• You write books and you teach, so do you get time to make things yourself?

Yes: chair legs, baluster rails, newel posts and bowls. The tree of that protester, Swampy, was cut down and sold as bits of local history. A woman bought a big chunk and put it in her greenhouse. Being green wood it cracked; but she wanted me to make a bowl. I stuffed it with the strongest adhesive I had and filled the cracks with beeswax, and I turned her a bowl and a knife handle and a thimble. She was pleased, though we just hoped the beeswax would hold the bowl together!

• What does a beginner need to start turning?

A good small lathe is the Record DNL 24, which is cheaper and better than the Taiwanese lathes. He'll need some basic tools, and a bit of space (much less than a carpenter). A cellar is good. Garages are often poorly lit, and cold in winter, and tools get rusty.

• And to learn how to do it a beginner needs your book (Wood Turning: Step-by-step Techniques, Crowood Press) and one of your courses, doesn't he?

Yes, and he or she would be very welcome!

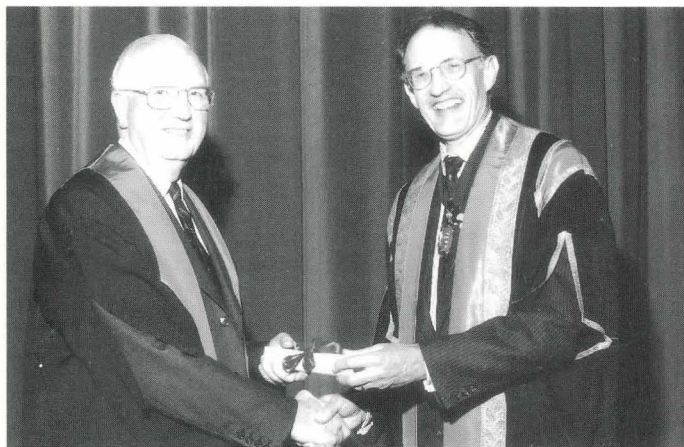


Oliver Plant with the traditional measuring yardstick presented to him by two carpenters who took his four-day course

The Turner

A RARE HONOUR

Barrie Johnston tells of a happy surprise



Dr Michael Brindle conferring the Honorary Fellowship

Some seven years ago I was asked by the Royal College of Radiologists if I would advise them over their finances, which needed a fair degree of assistance. While I was on the Finance Sub Committee the College's financial state was transformed and their investment portfolio was restructured to their considerable benefit.

When I told the President that I really felt I could retire, my wife and I were invited to the College's annual dinner. To my utter amazement, the President announced that the great and unusual honour of Honorary Fellowship of the College had been conferred on me.

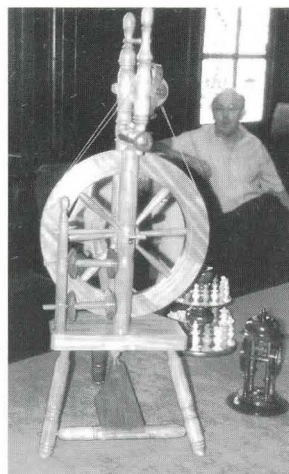
This really was a huge surprise and their generosity is somewhat unique - whether I shall get priority if needed I cannot say, but the doctors said I should certainly try it on!

TURNING

COMPETITIONS & NVQs

Gordon Sloan reports

At the Company's Turning Competitions in Apothecaries' Hall on July 24th, awards were on offer for ornamental and plain turning. Members of the major turning associations nationwide competed. Much beautiful, well produced work was on show, e.g. the spinning wheel (photo), and our judges had a difficult time.



After the well-attended event came the launch, under our aegis, of the recently accredited NVQ in wood turning. Our Education Committee contributed to the development of the NVQ and we hope our Registered Professional Turners will take an initiative and figure prominently in the teaching of students aiming for this award.

THE NEW MASTER

Peter Worlidge: born 1931, married Shirley (née Pryor), two sons, two daughters, three grandsons. Lives Leigh, Surrey. Interests: sailing, music (sings with Madrigal Society), golf, gardening, wine & grandchildren.

Represented Marlborough College at rugby, hockey and cricket (captain); played for English Schools XI. Was offered a place at St John's College Cambridge but did National Service in Royal Artillery. Commissioned & posted to what is now Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight, so enjoyed two wonderful sailing seasons.

After Army, commerce beckoned, Cambridge forgotten. 1952, went as marine broker to Lloyds, worked 41 years, last 14 years with Thomas R Miller, with whom formed Energy Broking company 1979. Retired as Chairman 1997.

A MASTER OF DISGUISE

The Master, on the customary visit to the Ironbridge Museum, visited the Estate Office in the Blist Mill Township (circa 1889). To his consternation, he was accosted by a bearded and top-hatted figure, the Earl of Craven's agent Mr Pemberton, who said he was in arrears of rent and about to be evicted from his cottage. Luckily, looking closely at the beard and whiskers the Master saw his old friend Turner Liveryman Professor Alan Gillett. The Master's arrears were waived, on condition that his wife Shirley dusted the office and the Master paid a fine. Fortunately a cheque for £1,000 from the Turners' charitable fund was already in the post to the Museum, so "all's well that ends well"!



ST CATHERINE'S LODGE

Liverymen will have seen reference, both in the Annual list of Members and in *The Turner*, to St Catherine's Lodge No. 3743. St Catherine's was consecrated in 1914, and has seen many Liverymen initiated into Freemasonry.

In March, the Master, Wardens and Clerk of the Turners dined with members of the Lodge. The evening was such a success that the invitation will be repeated next year.

Membership of the Lodge is not restricted to Turners, and currently some 60% of members are also members of the Company. Liveryman George Kieffer, Master-Elect of the Lodge, would be delighted to welcome new members.

THANK YOU . . . AND PLEASE

Many thanks to all contributors to this newsletter. Please send contributions - words, pictures, suggestions - to: Penrose Halson, 18 Thayer Street, London W1M 5LD. Telephone: 0171 935 6408, Fax: 0171 486 3817.