

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF TURNERS OF LONDON

Newsletter Winter 1999 Issue 13



Dear Fellow Turners

Just how many times have you sought the inspiration required to commence an article such as this? Looking back at previous Newsletters, I found that our Deputy Master Peter Worlidge commenced his letter of this time last year with the word change.

That is what we are faced with, as our joint sharing of the Clerkship with the Spectacle Makers will end on 30th June.

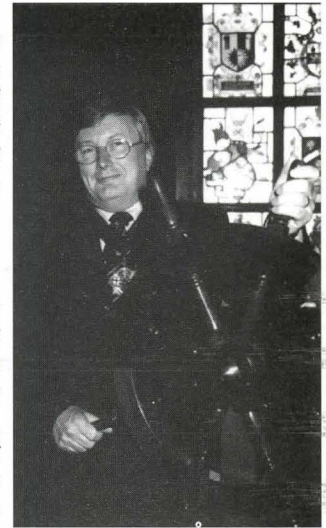
Whilst naturally disappointing, it does show what busy and active Companies we both are, and reminds us that we must not underestimate the achievements of our Clerk John Salmon in coping with the task of working himself into two disparate Companies, and taking on an increasing workload. John has been the very model of that professionalism and efficiency which encourages enthusiasm and commitment, indeed someone's law dictates that the more professional you are, the more you demand of people and the more you get out of them. This is the reason for the Spectacle Makers' decision to go solo again.

I am inspired by the thoughtfulness and commitment of the members of the Finance and Standing Committees in their resolve to find both a successor and affordable office space.

I am sure our predicament would amuse some of our forebears, bearing in mind our recent history, "to lose one Clerk may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose two looks like carelessness"! This is not the case. The demands of the City Corporation, our commitment to promoting the Mysterie or

Art of Turning, our strengthening association with the Services and our commitment to Charity, all present an unprecedented burden.

The Company is constantly being pushed to move away from being a "dining club", hence our conflict in terms of time needed for the exclusive services of our Clerk.



The Master with a ship's wheel - a fine example of Ornamental Turning - at the 1998 Turning Competitions

Advertisements will soon appear and any of you who feels the Clerkship is a challenge you wish to take on should apply in writing to Upper Warden Dr John Slater at the Turners' office, Apothecaries' Hall. The committee to find our new Clerk is chaired by John, assisted by Renter Warden Christopher Tyler, Master's Steward Tony Sherred and Assistant Andrew Mayer.

In wishing this important committee success may I also wish each of you success in 1999.

Yours sincerely

Colin Field

COMING EVENTS

- * Gardner Williams Banquet
Wednesday 24th February 1999
- * United Guilds Service
Friday 19th March 1999
- * Court Meeting (morning) & Court Luncheon
Wednesday 31st March 1999
- * Craft Meeting - Register of Professional Turners
Wednesday 7th April 1999
- * Ladies' Dinner
Thursday 29th April 1999
- * Election Court & Dinner
Thursday 15th May 1999
- * Election of Sheriffs in Guildhall
Thursday 24th June 1999
- * Court Meeting (afternoon)
Thursday 1st July 1999
- * Turning Competitions
Friday 23rd July 1999

The Turner

The Turner

THE MASTER'S YEAR
or, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE
(*the Master being a nautical man*)

How can one single out one of the many functions of a year not yet finished as being the best or pinnacle, when there are so many memories, even at this early stage, associated with differing occasions?

Undoubtedly the Patronal Service, bringing together the family of the Company to celebrate the life of our Patron Saint St Catherine, must be top because of my attachment to faith and because it was truly a family occasion for Christine and I. We had considerable help in our selection of hymns and music from our youngest son Charlie, currently studying A level music. The problem was they were all played to us on the trumpet! Jeremy and Emily were also a great help, sharing with us in the decisions for the day, culminating in all three of them joining us for the service. The other great family day, although our children were unable to join us, was aboard HQS *Wellington* for the Lord Mayor's show. I certainly recommend the Clerk's personal commentary on military units and their nicknames!



Jeremy Field at his admission by his father to the Livery

I am most anxious not to appear to rank or rate specific events. That said however, I was really lucky to be allowed to admit Jeremy, our eldest, to the Livery, a great occasion made more so as Edward, my father, was also present: three generations in one Company. Jeremy served his apprenticeship under his Grandfather.

Credit must go to the committees who have worked so hard in promoting the well-being and works of the Company. As I have visited, so too have I learned of the works of other Companies and found out facts about our own, which were previously a mystery.

Christine and I attended the prize-giving at the City of London Freemen's School and were notified by the Clerk of the two names of the winners of Turners' awards. Sadly we were unable to meet up with them, their proud parents and family had prior claim.

The Sail Training Association, which does so much good work, hosted receptions aboard the training ship *Winston Churchill* in the Pool of London. This was a fund-raising exercise which enabled me to enjoy a personal tour. They are building two new ships: they have the hulls and are seeking to fit them out. Other Companies have given cutlery and galley equipment. Our Howe Committee, chaired by Peter Worlidge, has risen to the challenge and subject to cost, is hoping to give a wheel for each ship. An imaginative and definitely useful gift, which we hope, if we are successful, will long be remembered.

Visiting the Carpenters' Company awards to the Building Crafts College students, we found phenomenal

craftsmanship in wood and stone. Your Clerk and I noticed that of the assembled Masters, I was the only one whose Company was not associated with a prize. The Howe Committee is now remedying that. The Committee also unveiled drawings for a planned gift in the millennium, an exciting project the reporting of which I shall leave to others! They also have agreed to an annual award to the best Fitter Machinist at the Royal School of Military Engineering, thus expanding our association with the Services to include the Royal Engineers. There are no more such schools, as we are associated with them all!

I am conscious that the Gardner Williams Banquet will soon be on us, when the Master gives his "State of the Company" address. If we commit too much more to writing there will be little else on which to comment, other than of course the disappointment of not having our Lord Mayor's attendance at the Livery Dinner. His loss was perhaps our gain as Steven Norris proved to be an enlivened and witty speaker.

To conclude, I do appreciate the support you gave to my abseil from St Lawrence Jewry to help the Lord Mayor's appeal, and to my own appeal for gifts and covenants for our Charity. You supported our visits to the College of Arms, a real experience organised by the Livery Committee (chaired by Tony Crooks-Meredith), and you attended at luncheon or dinner. By such support you have helped to make this year, for me, the pleasure it has been and I have no doubt will continue to be.



The Master at the November election to the Court of new Assistants George Kieffer and Penrose Halson

ELECTION OF SHERIFFS — BE THERE!

Please put the following two dates in your diary:

* Thursday June 24th *

11.30 a.m. (earlier if you wish to guarantee a seat)

First round of the Election by show of hands
at the Guildhall

* Thursday July 8th *

any time between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.

Final Election by ballot, also at the Guildhall

PLEASE DO YOUR UTMOST TO GET TO THE GUILDHALL

One of our Liverymen, Hugh Harris, is standing for election as Lay Sheriff. It is most important that there is a maximum turnout to vote for him on both days

The Turner

WHAT IS ORNAMENTAL TURNING?

Nigel Maggs is a Safety Consultant with British Telecom - and a keen student of the art, craft and history of turning. In 1994 he took over the presidency of the Society of Ornamental Turners from his friend and mentor Geoffrey Brandon. He talked to Penrose Halson

* *How did you come to have an interest in turning?*

Whilst building my house I needed some stair spindles and bought a lathe from my local tool dealer, Bill Thurlow, then Vice President of the SOT. We became friends, and he introduced me to Ornamental Turning. Perhaps it was fated, because my father later told me that my branch of the Maggs family includes a line of Wheelwrights and Millwrights, so my interest in turning may even be genetically based!

* *When did the Society of Ornamental Turners start?*

In 1948 - we've just had our fiftieth anniversary! We encourage, develop and promote the study and practice of the art and science of Ornamental Turning, through meetings, lectures, demonstrations, outings, a bulletin and competitions.

* *Do most professional turners learn plain turning, and not do ornamental work, or do they do both?*

Few professional Plain Turners are involved in OT work, but OT's have to have a significant knowledge of Plain Turning. OT's usually have a background in mechanical engineering or similar, and many started as Plain Turners and model engineers, or they dabbled in jewellery or lapidary. In the UK, only a few SOT members are professional OT's; there are more in the USA.

* *What skills and characteristics does an OT need?*

Patience, planning ability, artistic flair, a knowledge of form and design, and mechanical know-how - especially the correct operation of machines and tool sharpening, and three-dimensional awareness.

* *What sort of objects do Ornamental Turners produce?*

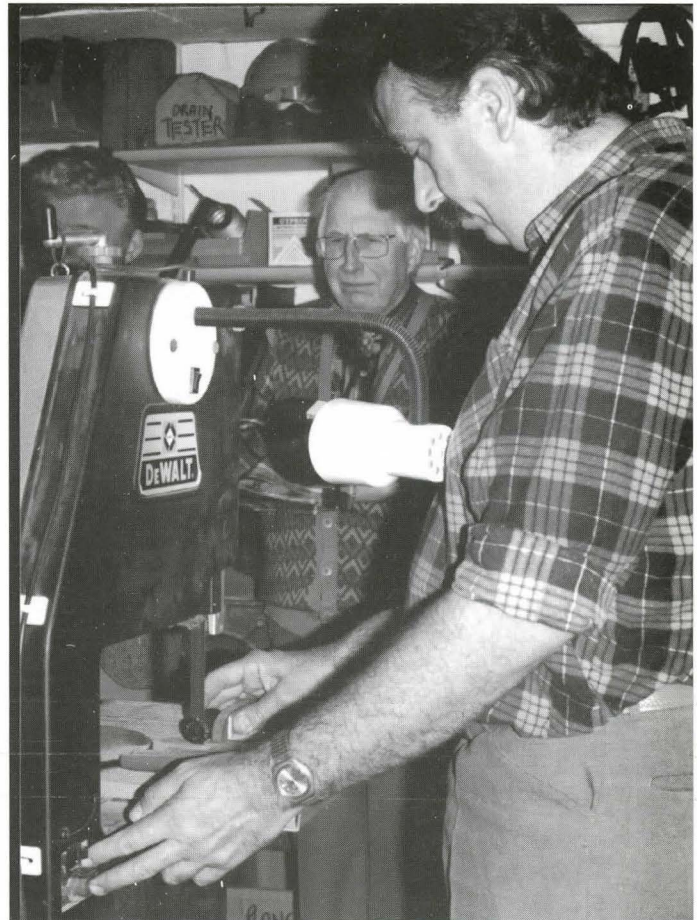
Decorative items: cups, bowls, lidded boxes, stands, medals, jewellery, chess pieces, photo frames and so on, made from exotic woods and ivory, and also precious metals, minerals, plastics and gems.

* *How are the Society of Ornamental Turners and the Worshipful Company of Turners connected?*

They have members in common; and since 1952 the Company has set OT competitions, with two main prizes: the Lady Gertrude Crawford and the Twentyman medals.

* *How has the craft of Ornamental Turning evolved - are there any historic developments or landmarks?*

It developed in the middle years of this millennium. Few early pieces have survived, notably the Coburg ivory collection in the Pitti Palace in Florence. These amazingly fragile and intricate works of art were plundered during the sack of Coburg in 1632. Several of these items are



Nigel Maggs (right) in his workshop. He owns a Holtzappfel & Deyerlein no. 484 ornamental turning lathe, built in Newgate Street in 1806, and a French rose engine, circa 1820, reputed to have come out of the famous Breguet & fils horology workshop in Paris. Nigel complains that he does not get enough time to use them due to his work interfering with his play!

believed to have originated in Dresden. Holtzappfel was an 18th-century German immigrant who made lathes and tools in London. They were of very high quality and were sought after by gentlemen and royalty, for whom turning became a popular pastime. Nearly 3,000 Holtzappfel lathes were made, but the new-fangled car diverted the interest of gentleman from turning, and the firm closed between the Wars.

* *What is the future of Ornamental Turning?*

Connoisseurs of the international art market regularly commission items. OT is sometimes seen as Gothic in style, but public taste can be very fickle, and it would not need much of a shift in appreciation for it to become a fashionable art form again.

* *How can people find fine pieces of Ornamental Turning?*

Old pieces are not unusual in auctions and antique shops - keep your eyes open! Contemporary pieces can be obtained direct from artists such as Michael Brooks, Paul Coker, Theo Fabergé, Paul Fletcher and David Spriggett. For more details, Company members should contact Nick Edwards (SOT Hon. Secretary).

The Turner

THE HOWE COMMITTEE REPORT

Peter Worlidge brings us up to date



Fred Howe, Master turner in wood and ivory, and founder of the Society of Ornamental Turners.

As indicated in my *Master's Year* article last year, brief reports on the activities of our sub-committees will in future appear in *The Turner*. Penrose has asked me to set the ball rolling with the Howe Committee!

This Committee has a very important role to play in our Company. It is really the engine room of the Company's Craft activities. The Committee's Terms of Reference set out our Purpose, as follows:

- * To promote "The Mysterie or Art of Turning"
- * To seek out those whose achievements in the practice of the Craft and related technical studies the Company may wish to reward
- * To encourage innovative mechanical and engineering design when and where appropriate
- * To organise and manage Craft competitions
- * To organise and manage the Company's participation in exhibitions where appropriate

The current members of the Committee are, firstly, Past Masters Edward Field, the father of the Committee and a gifted turner, and Gordon Sloan, my extremely hard-working predecessor, also a keen turner. The experience and knowledge of both make them essential members. From the Livery we have Geoffrey Brandon, immediate Past President of the Society of Ornamental Turners (SOT), with whom we have such a close association, Malcolm Cobb, Hon. Secretary of the Register of Professional Turners, Nicholas Edwards, Hon. Secretary of the SOT and Brian Lewis, Director of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. Past Master Edward Sawney, after many years of wonderfully enthusiastic service, retired this year, and we have been joined by Tony Johns, one of our excellent Design Competition judges.

Recently the Court accepted the Committee's recommendation that we combine the Awards Court Prize Giving with our Turning Competitions, which take place in June every second year. Considerable thought was given to this change, but we finally concluded that it will give the Company an opportunity of staging one much larger event, which will have a greater impact in Livery circles as well as on the professional engineering and educational Institutions, the Association and also the Press. It will also reduce our overheads and enable us to channel more money to promotion of the Craft.

The Design Competition has also given us cause for

concern. After discussion with many of the Institutions, in an endeavour to promote design in numerous fields, it became apparent that for a multitude of reasons competitions have become a low priority and are attracting fewer and fewer entries. All are having difficulty in making awards. This is indeed sad but a sign of a changing world and we have to adapt. Again, we shall now be looking for other ways to support and promote our Craft and related technical education.

A brief word about current projects: specifications are being drawn up for a font which the Turners wish to present to St. Bride's to mark the Millennium and our much-valued association with the church.

We are also drawing up rules of entry for a Millennium Turning Competition. Contestants will be asked to make a Wassail Bowl and the best of these we plan to present to the other woodworking Liveries to mark the Millennium. Lastly, we are hoping to present two ship's wheels to the Sail Training Association's project to replace STS *Winston Churchill* and STS *Malcolm Miller*.

Watch this space for the next exciting instalment!

BY FAITH I OBTEIGNE

On the gravestone of Liveryman Anthony Foord there is carved a simple but decorative wheel and, in beautiful calligraphy, the Company's motto, By Faith I Obteigne



I SURVIVED!

Liveryman Mark Hatt-Cook during his epic race across New Zealand. He cycled, ran, walked, climbed and canoed 250 kilometres in two days, avoiding dead possums, whirling water, loose rocks and the other competitors. He survived to raise over £11,000 for charity, including the Company's Charitable Trust.

