

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF TURNERS OF LONDON

Newsletter Summer 2000 Issue 16



Dear Liverymen and Freemen

Firstly, I would just like to say how delighted I am to have been elected Master. It is a great privilege to follow in the footsteps of nearly 400 predecessors and to be entrusted with the care of our "Mystery or Art" and of the Livery. I have a most able and willing Court, whom I know will help during the coming year.

I would also like to thank Past Master John Slater for all that he has done in his term of office. He played very much the Master's role in several important ways, such as: the selection of our new Clerk and the establishment of the Company office; bringing the Constitution of the Register of Professional Turners up to date in the current climate where litigation is ever-present; and the current drive to increase contributions to our Charitable Fund, which I most strongly urge you to support, please. I am delighted that our traditions include having the immediate Past Master as the Deputy Master.

In July we held the Millennium Turning Competitions. Our thanks for this goes to the Howe Committee, the Professional Turners, the Ornamental Turners and the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain for all their hard work in setting it up and running it on the day. The Guild role of the Livery, namely the support of the craft, is one of the most important of our activities.



The Master escorts the Lord Mayor to the Company's Millennium Turning Competitions in Apothecaries' Hall

I would therefore ask all of you Liverymen, though you may never have touched a lathe, to take an active interest in our future Competitions and Exhibitions, especially in those now being planned for our Quatercentenary in 2004.

My wife Sue and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible over the coming year at the regular social events as well as at those organised for us by the Livery Committee.

All best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Tyler

COMING EVENTS

- **Court Meeting (11.00 a.m.) & Livery Luncheon**
Wednesday 13th September 2000
- **Election of Lord Mayor in Guildhall**
Friday 29th September 2000
- **Golfing Society**
Friday 6th October 2000
- **Court Meeting (4.00 p.m.)**
Tuesday 7th November 2000
- **Lord Mayor's Day**
Saturday 11th November 2000
- **Patronal Service & Buffet Luncheon**
Wednesday 22nd November 2000
- **Livery Dinner**
Tuesday 19th December 2000
- **Court Ladies' Dinner**
Wednesday 17th January 2001
- **Gardner Williams Banquet**
Monday 26th February 2001
- **Court Meeting & Court Luncheon**
Wednesday 7th March 2001
- **United Guilds Service**
Friday 30th March 2001
- **Craft Meeting - Register of Professional Turners**
Wednesday 11th April 2001
- **Ladies' Dinner**
Thursday 26th April 2001

The Turner

The Turner

THE MASTER'S YEAR

Past Master John Slater reports on a busy year

It was a privilege to serve as Master of the Turners Company. It proved an eventful year - so busy that I failed to start my apprenticeship as a woodturner as I had planned, apart from studying a most interesting CD ROM produced by Tobias Kaye. Shortly after leaving office, however, I spent three enjoyable days in Over Kellett with our new Gold Medal winner, Malcolm Cobb, learning the rudiments of the craft. After some intensive and patient instruction, Malcolm let me loose on a lathe with a block of Padauk (a Burmese hardwood). He checked on progress and watched a little apprehensively, as I turned my first bowl for entry in the Millennium Turning Competition. Suffice to say, the delightful red colour of the wood impressed the judges sufficiently to elevate me from the Company's novice class. More important, however, the experience gave me an insight into the skills of the woodturner and recognition of how much more there is to learn.

A highlight has been the opportunity to meet woodturners and view the wide range of the craft's products, many of which were on display at the Millennium Turning Competition. The Register of Professional Turners goes from strength to strength thanks in no small measure to the hard work of Malcolm Cobb, its Secretary. It was clear from the Craft Meeting in April that Register members welcome their association with the Company and the support it gives them.

Among many other memorable occasions, the visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery was a great success, and provided an opportunity to meet Liverymen, their spouses and friends informally. The Livery Committee is planning other social events, particularly to involve new and younger members. The Ladies' Dinner, enjoyed this year by my children, is always a delightful occasion, as is the Dinner given by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress for Livery Masters and their wives. The Lord Mayor, Alderman Clive Martin, appears to be doing a splendid job in helping to move the City on in an increasingly commercial world, whilst recognising the importance of the traditions embodied in the Livery Companies.

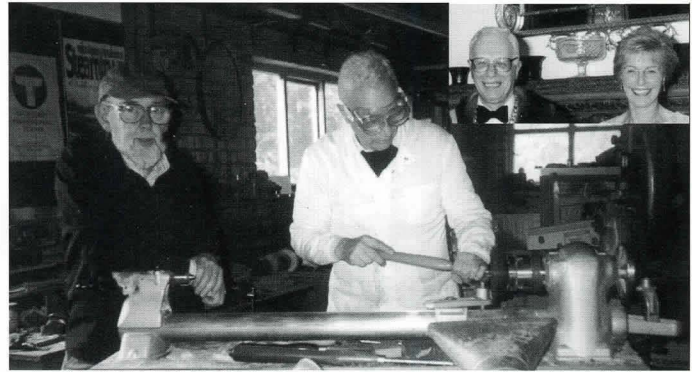
I hope the Turners will continue to support the institutions and activities of the City of London, and will also actively promote the Craft. Your support is necessary and I am grateful to those who have responded generously to the recent appeal for the Company's Charitable Fund. We will be reviewing the situation and following up where there are gaps.

Finally, I would like to thank all those in the Company, especially the Wardens and Chairmen of Committees, for their support in a memorable year for Susan and me.

CITY ELECTIONS

Liveryman Barbara Newman comments

It was good to see so many Liverymen gathered at Guildhall on 26th June, to elect two Sheriffs to serve for one year from September. All seats in Great Hall were



John Slater turning his award-winning bowl. Malcolm Cobb appears to be confident enough to take his eyes off his pupil. Inset: John and Susan at the Livery Dinner in the Mansion House

occupied, and it was standing room only when I arrived. Our Master looked splendid as he processed to his allotted seat, among the Masters of the City's 102 Livery Companies

How many Turners were present, I wonder. And how many were mystified by the question asked by Mr Dennis Delderfield, aimed at one of the Aldermen present. All the City's Aldermen are also magistrates, and the question referred to the need for all magistrates to be above reproach. Perhaps it was prompted by sour grapes, because the questioner had recently been a candidate in a Ward Election - unsuccessfully, for which he blamed the Alderman. Well, nobody likes to lose, we can sympathise with Mr Delderfield; but winners and losers are what elections are about. I thought it impressive that, although I feel sure that the majority present were unaware of the background to the questions, they quickly picked up that someone was being got at, perhaps unfairly. Their applause made it clear that, as the Recorder had stated in his reply to the questions, this was not a matter for Common Hall.

After the proceedings, many Liverymen trooped off to their Halls for well-earned refreshment and no doubt to talk over the events of the day. It appears that the Turners do not do this, which seems a pity. Meeting together, perhaps for a sandwich lunch, might be a good thing?

On Michaelmas Day we shall be called to Guildhall to elect the next Lord Mayor. Be there early if you want a seat.

THE NEW MASTER

Major General Christopher Tyler's family has strong military connections. After Sandhurst, Cambridge and an enjoyable Army career, including NATO in Norway, he was sent to the Tower of London - as Governor, fortunately. It was a happy family home, completely untroubled by spooks, for Christopher, his wife Susan, son William (married, two daughters, a Film Production Accountant and Liveryman, on the Livery Committee), daughters Catherine (in Melbourne with two future prop forwards for the Wallabies and a baby girl), Louisa (two girls), and Sophie (props buyer in film production). Christopher is Secretary of the Royal Humane Society.

The Turner

MAN OF MANY PARTS: THE BEADLE

Engineer, actor, craftsman, soldier, train-bearer, head waiter, bugler, story-teller and beadle: the multi-faceted Douglas Baker talked to Penrose Halson

What was your first job?

At 14 I got pushed out of school - that's what happened in Bermondsey. I wanted to make things, not go into some slave factory, and the local council wanted me as a painter. But my father said "Never put on an apron or dungarees"! So I became a sewing machine engineer. I took our Singer treadle machine to pieces, I got to know everything about sewing machines - and then the factory moved to Croydon. It cost 6d to get from Bermondsey to Croydon, and my wages were 11s 9d. So I moved to a big leather works. I've still got some of the tools. I've made leather boxes for the Company's badges and mace, and two big cases for the Howe collection, so you can carry it around. At the works I made belts for officers and horse's harnesses. Then I worked in a cigarette factory which turned over to machine gun work when the War came. I was called up and sent to Dunkirk, all kitted up with a big strong overcoat and a gun which fired one bullet - then you had to reload. What use was that, against six-foot Germans with machine guns?!

Were you in Dunkirk for long?

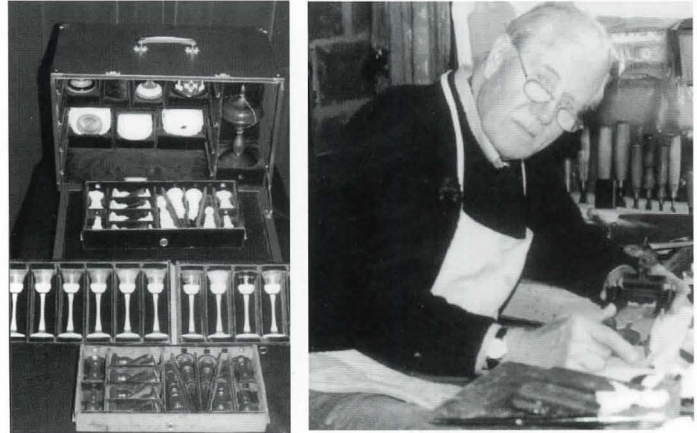
No. We defended Dunkirk, ending up the Germans while our men were getting away. But we didn't get the



The Beadle outside the Law Courts

right messages about who was where, so we were encircled and captured. I had five years in Germany. What a sight to see, those Americans who freed us. They took us in a lorry, with a German they made sit on the mudguards - I can see him now, scared out of his mind - to the coast of France. And there was a great big table loaded with every chocolate and sweet and food we hadn't seen for years. I couldn't go back to Bermondsey, our house was flattened, the Germans had blasted all round the dock area. I was demobbed with a suit and boots that didn't fit and a terrible hat, and I went strolling in the City, looking at all the beautiful buildings, and I thought "It's marvellous, this place. Can you work here?" I walked past the Law Courts and I don't know why but I fell in love with the place. I got a job there doing night security plus cleaning. You had to walk round the corridors in the gloom - there was only one gas light. One day they needed someone to help serve lunch at the Inns of Court, and I started to do lunches, dinners, cocktail parties, receptions. I

saw all the famous people who were in the papers - the Queen Mother, who used to tick off her daughters, they were little terrors. I've got a photo of the Queen, much later, when I served her at the only dinner ever held in the Law Courts. I've worked in almost all the embassies in London, and the most marvellous houses, like Lord Goddard's. It was in Chelsea, enormous, with a great hall, dark and panelled, full of marble and statues, with two huge staircases. The first time I worked there he came down the stairs, very stern and strong (he was a boxer, a runner and



The Beadle in his workshop; and one of the red leather cases with cunningly fitted interior which he made for the Howe Collection

a fighter), and held out his hand saying "Oh, Baker". I thought he was going to shake my hand, say "Jolly nice to have you", so I held out my hand, and he pressed a pound note and a shilling into it and walked on!

Did you work for other lawyers?

Oh yes. I used to take Lord Denning to dinners, escort him, make sure he got back home safely. Sometimes I ran him and other judges to the station - I had an A30, you could almost wind it up, silly thing! I was always treated like a guest, I had the same food and wine - it was out of this world. I worked for livery companies too, I was head waiter in Apothecaries' Hall when they still had big kitchens - you can still see the old spits with the chains and wheels out in the garden. We had beautiful meals, fillets of beef cooked and carved on the premises. Most people think City people are big fat fellows with big white shirts guzzling the best wine and eating the best beef. But that's ignorance, those people don't understand the City. I tell them that livery companies have charities, they run hospitals and hospices and almshouses, they help teach children and train engineers and so many other things.

You enjoy your job as beadle, don't you?

Oh yes. I'm interested in what the Company does, I like looking after the Master so he doesn't have to worry about where his badge is or which toast comes next, I enjoy seeing people enjoy their evening. The Company's a club, and I like being part of it.

The Turner

MAGNIFICENT MILLENNIUM TURNING

The Millennium Turning Competitions produced the most magnificent work, of breath-taking quality. It had to be seen to be believed. Penrose Halson reports from Apothecaries' Hall



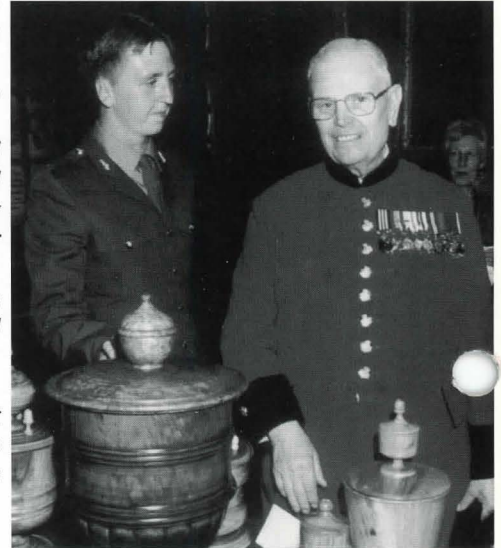
The Lord Mayor came to present the prizes, make a short speech and view the exhibits - all in a crowded hour of his very tight schedule. But talking to the competitors, admiring the superb winning entries for the Millennium Wassail Bowl Competition, he over-stayed and had to be prised away by his entourage.

Everybody present was as overwhelmed as the Lord Mayor by the virtuosity of the entries. The seventeen wassail bowls were the centrepiece: designs of astonishing intricacy incorporating elaborate fluting and scallops, lids lifted by knobs of great delicacy, carved figures, silver inlay, shapes and patterns which made spectators wonder "How on earth is it done?"

Not all the wassail bowls were made of the traditional lignum vitae: there was pale sycamore, lime, elm, yew, colours ranging from swirling greens and creams to deep gold and rich, deep brown with whorls of black.

Displayed around the room were more treasures: bowls large and small, heavy chunky ones and feather-light ones, turned to paper thinness; candlesticks, splendid gavels, tazzas, a shaving set with handles turned in soapstone, an ivory spinning wheel. "How fortunate you Turners are to have such a vital and truly beautiful craft," said a visitor. "Not many Livery Companies are so lucky."

Chelsea Pensioner Alan Gale admiring the wassail bowls with Dean Loveridge of SEME. Alan belongs to the Society of Ornamental Turners, and now has a workshop in the Royal Hospital where he is making a wassail bowl. When no craftsman could be found who could make barley twist for repairing antique chairs in the Royal Apartments, Alan mentioned that he could make it - and was promptly snapped up



Photograph on left: The portable font presented in February by the Company to St Bride's church, to celebrate the Millennium. Here three tireless supporters of the craft, Past Masters Gordon Sloan (left) and Peter Worlidge (right) and Liveryman and craftsman Geoffrey Brandon, listen to Philip Holden, Freeman by Presentation, who designed the font. On June 28th, the Lord Mayor presented both Philip and Malcolm Cobb with the Company's gold medal, in recognition of their services to the Company and to the craft.



Winners in the Company's own competition, for Freeman and Liverymen