

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF TURNERS OF LONDON



Newsletter Summer 1995 Issue 6

Dear Fellow Turner

On Ascension Day, with pride and gratitude, I received the honour of being elected your Master. Almost forty years ago, when I came to live in London, it had never occurred to me that I might become a Liveryman, let alone Master of a City Livery Company. For twenty-seven of these years now I have enjoyed the friendliness that attends our gatherings and the friendships that have come with being a Turner.

All my working life has been spent in engineering manufacture and consultancy. Our Company's role in promoting craft and technical education together with our rewarding of innovative engineering design have therefore been a particular satisfaction to me. I will do all I can to support and enhance these efforts during my year. If we are to survive as a useful body, to my mind it is vital we continue to be active and constructive in this field.

Our social calendar is most important. We are rightly proud of the standards we have set for our functions, both formal and informal. They are a joy to attend. I hope even more of you will find time to do so this year.

Charitable giving to Craft, Company and City-related causes continues to be needed. I would like to see an increase in our giving. This can only be done meaningfully through our Livery and I hope many more of you find it in your hearts to support the Company's charity fund.

Good relations with other Companies, built on mutual understanding and respect, have been established through years of contact. I would like to increase and widen our activity in this respect, particularly with crafts who share the same principal working medium with us - wood - and those which are like-minded in working to keep their craft skills alive and relevant.



With your support and the guidance of the Court and our committees, I will do my best to keep the Turners in good heart, maintain our traditions yet look forward, and promote a happy and active future for our Company.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Sloan

COMING EVENTS

- Court meeting (afternoon) - Thursday 20th July 1995
- Visit to St Paul's Cathedral - Wednesday 26th July 1995
- Court meeting (afternoon) & Livery Luncheon - Friday 6th October 1995
- Lord Mayor's Show from HQS Wellington - Saturday 11th November 1995
- Court meeting (afternoon) - Monday 13th November 1995
- Patronal Service & Buffet Lunch - Monday 27th November 1995
- Livery Dinner - Tuesday 19th December 1995
- Awards Court (Prize-giving) - Tuesday 13th February 1996
- Gardner Williams Banquet - Monday 26th February 1996
- Court meeting (morning) & Court Luncheon - Thursday 14th March 1996
- Craft meeting (Professional Turners) - Monday 25th March 1996
- Ladies' Dinner - Wednesday 24th April 1996
- Election Court & Dinner - Thursday 16th May 1996
- Court meeting (afternoon) - Thursday 18th July 1996

The Turner

The Turner

THE MASTER'S YEAR

What is basically cuboid, has four round discs at either corner, one in the middle, and is partially made on a lathe?

A Turner car. Your Master had the honour of inspecting one recently. The Turner Car Company was making cars in Wolverhampton before the First World War and is still engaged, as part of the Spicer Transmissions Group, in automotive parts. (ED: Has any Turner got a Turner car?)

We journeyed to the Black Country Museum at Dudley where we saw several other vehicles made locally and rode on an old trolley bus and tram. There was a fascinating trip in a narrow boat into the old limestone workings under Dudley Castle, and a visit to a drift coal mine. In the village of period shops we saw what local shops used to look like. Said one Master, "I really do remember all those things in the shops as a child".

Your Master had two days with the Army, both spent sitting outdoors in an armchair (a Master's life is one long snooze? ED). The first was at Arborfield College passing-out parade for young REME soldiers, who move on to postings as trained craftsmen. As the band played I was impressed by the marching, and reminded of the Company's awards to Arborfield Apprentices.

Only two days later saw me, this time accompanied by our Clerk, sitting in another armchair, at Longmore Camp, Bordon, on the final day of the annual Southern Craftsman competition for REME Territorial Army units in Southern England plus the OTC units from Cambridge, Oxford and London Universities. Amateur soldiers of both sexes did mechanical exercises and were subjected to a cross-country route march, time on the firing ranges, and a crawl through storm drains. Some former married quarters are now an urban training area where part-time soldiers, not all under 35, climbed along roof tops laden with rifles and full kit. Then down a manhole for a couple of hundred yards' run through the drains with army encouragements being shouted at them at every intermediate manhole. Finally out into the fresh air but via a manhole much smaller than the one through which they entered. The overall winners receive the Turners' Trophy and an invitation to attend and form the guard of honour at our annual Livery Dinner in December.

Before leaving Longmore Camp I did ask whether future Masters could experience more of the physical tasks on the exercise. It would have done me good and I would not want my successors to miss this opportunity.

Finally I want to thank all Turners for their support during my year as your Master. Many sincere thanks.

Picture: The Master observed by Alan Gillett at the Gardner Williams Dinner.



THE NEW MASTER

Gordon McMillan Sloan was born on 30th December 1934 and educated in Scotland. He lives in Wimbledon, is married to Patricia (Patsy) née McKim, whose father was a Past Master. He has four daughters and a son, all grown up, and not least, one grand-daughter.

A chartered Engineer since 1967, he has varied design experience which includes steam locomotives, colliery winding engines, a swing bridge, ferry-loading ramps, a fire station, air frames and control surfaces for strike fighters, a major steel bridge, mechanical handling and processing systems for ore mining, coal and grain handling, ship loading and unloading. He has also studied, planned and designed major new commercial and oil port facilities in the UK, Middle East and SE Asia.

He is a Fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Institute of Petroleum, and a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, all of the UK, and of the Société des Ingénieurs et Scientifiques de France. The title European Engineer (Eur. Ing.) was conferred on him in 1989.

He has been employed in engineering consultancy for more than thirty-five years, twenty-two of which at partner/director level. His interests are music (classical and jazz), the countryside, good food and wine and appreciation of fine craftsmanship, especially turning.

THE TALE OF A TREE

In December 1995 Mark Hatt-Cook, newly-elected Freeman of the Company, contacted the Clerk about a box tree in his garden. It needed to be cut down, and as worthwhile lengths of box wood are increasingly rare, he wanted to find a craftsman who could make good use of his tree.

The Clerk put Mark in touch with Malcolm Cobb, who in turn told him of Ted Payne, who is on the Company's Register of Professional Turners and is an Assessor for new Register candidates.



The happy result of these introductions can be seen in the photograph: Ted carefully cutting up the tree into suitable lengths for him to use.

Mark spent a happy two and a half hours listening and learning from a true craftsman.

The Turner

AN ENGINEER FOR LIFE

"Talk to Geoffrey," said Gordon Sloan, "He's one of the most brilliant engineers of the century, a marvellous ornament to the Turners." So Penrose Halson talked to Liveryman Professor Geoffrey Wilde, OBE, CEng, FIMechE, FRAes, FRSA.

When I was 14, at Warwick School, I went to the Headmaster and said: "Excuse me sir, I want to drop history and do engineering." He looked down at me from a great height and said: "Well my boy, you know, I suppose, that if you don't know history you'll never be educated." After a long pause I said: "Well, sir, I'd still like to do it." And I did. My father was a clever and versatile designer. In the first World War he worked on the design of Howitzers for the Army and aero engines for the Air Force. He died at 39 and his unfinished projects and calculations intrigued me as I grew up.

What happened when you left school?

After School Certificate and (at technical college) a Higher National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering, I started a five-year engineering apprenticeship at the famous Daimler/Lanchester Company. My mother was a widow with three young children so I had to prepare myself for gainful employment as soon as possible. I finished my apprenticeship as a junior designer earning £2 10s a week. I joined Rolls Royce in 1938 as an engineering pupil at £5, intending to enter the aero design office.

What did you start on at Rolls-Royce?

The possibility of improving the supercharging of the Merlin engine that powered the RAF's Hurricanes and Spitfires. I submitted an outline design of a variable speed supercharger in 1939 for the Rolls-Royce Sir Henry Royce fellowship scholarship, valued at £450, but it was not awarded in that year. However, the top company engineers were sufficiently interested in my proposal that I was transferred immediately to work for Dr S. G. Hooker on supercharger research and development.

Were you pleased?

No, because I did not wish to become an experimental/research engineer. I wanted to be a designer. However the work was vital to the war effort. In 1939 the Merlin engine was giving about 1,000 horsepower and by 1944 we had increased this to over 2,000 h.p. This gave the Spitfire combat superiority over the German Messerschmitt ME 109, which from the beginning had a larger engine (34 litres capacity compared to the Merlin's 27). To increase the engine power at 40,000 feet altitude we designed and developed the 2-stage supercharger with aftercooler, forming the famous Merlin 61 series of engines which finally enabled the Spitfire to outperform all enemy fighters. Both Hooker and I said that this was the most important work we had ever done in our lives.



Professor Wilde has just received the American Society of Mechanical Engineers' most prestigious award, the R. Tom Sawyer, in recognition of his work.

What happened after the War?

From 1944 the Rolls-Royce development effort switched to the gas turbine jet engine. I was in charge of all gas turbine compressors, aerodynamic design and compressor performance development from 1943 to 1956, when I was appointed Project Engineer for future advanced designs. From 1960 this included Chief Designer of new engines. So my ambition to work on new engine designs was at last fulfilled! From 1971-75 I was in charge of the high-temperature turbine research department to increase the capability of axial turbines in Rolls-Royce jet engines to operate efficiently and reliably at high turbine entry temperatures. Our turbine blade cooling designs can now be seen in the latest Rolls-Royce Trent turbo-fan engine in the new Boeing 777 jumbo jet.

How did you come across the Turners?

At Rolls-Royce I started a design induction scheme for young graduates who had never been in a workshop, didn't have a clue how things worked. It was amazingly successful. Once, of eleven graduates in the scheme I thought four might choose to be designers. How many do you think did?

Er... 11?

It was 11! This got around, and I also gave one or two papers on how designers should be trained. I wanted to propagate the idea that design is an exciting and rewarding profession. This interested people, and the Turners asked if I would be one of the judges of their annual design competition. I was very pleased to help.

Has the standard of entries improved?

I wouldn't say so, no, it's disappointing on the whole. There have been some outstanding projects: one on the heating of turbine blades, clever schemes for cleaning and even repairing nuclear power equipment, and a simple but ingenious seal for the propeller shaft of boats. But the competition is not well supported by the professional institutions. Recently we've awarded only one gold medal because the standard wasn't high enough.

You became a Liveryman, didn't you?

The Turner

Yes, the Turners kindly made us judges Freeman, then Liverymen. It's a very nice social club, with very interesting people. But I don't have time to enjoy all the activities, I live 140 miles from London, I'm 78 and I'm busy. When I retired I formed a company to develop my ideas for improving the engine performance of motor cars, for example a new design of turbo charger for lorry diesel engines. It's a sort of disease, I could never drop the technical interest and design!

THE BEADLE IS FREE!

At the Election Court held on Thursday 25th May 1995, by a unanimous decision and to recognise his cheerful co-operation, loyalty and efficiency, Douglas Baker, Beadle of the Company since 1984, was made a Freeman by Presentation.



Douglas is a craftsman. Here: his grand-daughter with the rocking horse he made for her mother.

BEWARE THE MAN IN THE WHITE COAT



Alan: a self portrait.

If you are taken ill and have to go to hospital, avoid Ealing. For in an Ealing hospital you may find yourself in the care of a man in a white coat with a charming bedside manner, whom everyone is treating as a doctor. But he is a surveyor and Turner, Alan Gillett by name.

Having just retired after 41 years with his family firm, one of Alan's many activities is as Chairman of Ealing NHS Hospital Trust. One way of finding out how hospitals

work was to spend a few days as an auxiliary nurse. However, says Alan, "If you wear a white coat buttoned up, you look like a lab technician; but if you undo the buttons, as they (and I) do, people think you're a doctor, and come and ask you questions!"

BEFRIEND THE CITY CHURCHES



St Katherine Cree, Leadenhall Street, one of only ten pre-fire churches (of which only seven are not bomb-damaged).

"Before the Fire of London in 1666 there were ninety seven parish churches within the walls of the City of London. Fifty-one were rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren and new ones were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today a mere thirty-eight survive and each one is worth a visit." So wrote Sir John Betjeman.

Sadly, many of the City's churches are under threat of closure. The Friends of the City Churches want to help ensure that these unique buildings are preserved both for us and for future generations. For a minimum contribution of £10.00 (£5 over 60's) you can help. Contact: The Friends of the City Churches, 68 Battersea High Street, London SW11 3HX Telephone 0171-228 3336.

WATCH WOOD-TURNING

The Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings runs demonstrations of historic arts and skills. Highly recommended by Liveryman Christopher Tyler are:

Bank Holiday (August 26-28th): Medieval Building Weekend with demonstrations of chain-making, windmilling, racksawing, brick-making, wood-turning & miniature train rides.

15-16th September: Man, Machine & Beast including Oil Engine rally, Living History, demonstrations of racksawing, cider-making, brick-making, chain-making, wood-turning & miniature train rides.

Details: Museum of Historic Buildings, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4JR. Telephone: 01527 831363; fax: 01527 876934.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE!

Do you have something to tell other Turners? A useful or entertaining piece of information? Or an interesting photograph, or drawing? Please send any contributions to: Penrose Halson, 18 Thayer Street, London W1M 5LD. Telephone: 0171-935 6408; fax: 0171-486 3817.

© The Worshipful Company of Turners, 1995. Except where specifically stated, none of the material in this issue is to be taken as expressing the opinion of the Court of the Company.