

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF TURNERS OF LONDON

Newsletter Winter 1996 Issue 7



Dear Fellow Turner

It seems only a few weeks since I wrote to you in our summer newsletter. My year as Master is about half-way through and going fast. It has been a period of some change.

Our Clerk for eleven years, Past Master Richard Woodwark, will retire at the next Election Court. Happily, his successor is another Turner, Major-General Dennis Shaw, until recently of our adopted regiment, REME.

For twenty-four years, the Reverend Alan Fagg has been our Chaplain. He too decided to retire this year. Whether delivering a prayer, an address, a sentiment or an opinion, his eloquence and good humour have been unflinching and much enjoyed. We are fortunate that Alan is succeeded by our friend of long standing, Canon John Oates of St Bride's Fleet Street, that lovely church in which we enjoy worship together in our Patronal Service.

Our Craft continues to flourish. Visits to craft fairs and wood-working exhibitions, and reading the magazine Wood-turning, show increasing numbers of craftsmen producing a wide range of high quality work. Societies and clubs are growing in number and membership. Improved lathes and tools are readily available in great variety. Tuition and example are widely available. From hobby to livelihood to art form it is gratifying to see the growth and appreciation of turning.

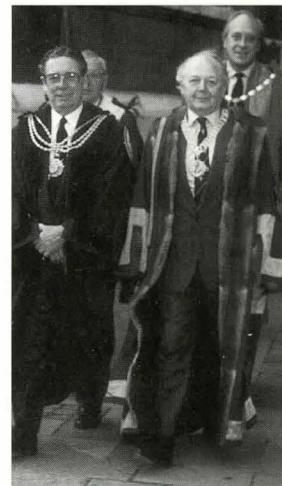
Our customary support for the Lord Mayor's chosen charity will this year go to St John Ambulance. My own nominations are the Parkinson's Disease Society and the Woodland Trust, the latter to help provide a stock of native woods for next centuries' turners. The Charity Committee will recommend others deserving our support.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year so far. My Wardens, the Court and our Committees have been very friendly and supportive. Our Clerk is, as he has been to my predecessors, I know, a tower of strength. So many members of other Liveries have been a joy to meet. Who could ask for anything more. After the next Election Court, I foresee an attack of immediate post-Mastership blues.

May you and yours all have a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely

Photograph taken by the Beadle: Gordon Sloan with Anthony Meeson of the Basket-Makers and Martin Laing of the Paviers.



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COMING EVENTS

- Awards Court (Prize-giving) - Tuesday 13th February 1996
- Gardner Williams Banquet - Monday 26th February 1996
- Court meeting (morning) & Court Luncheon - Thursday 14th March 1996
- United Guilds Service - Friday 22nd March 1996
- Craft meeting (Professional Turners) - Monday 25th March 1996
- Ladies' Dinner - Wednesday 24th April 1996
- Inter-Livery Clay Pigeon Shooting Competition - Thursday 9th May 1996
- Inter-Livery Swimathon (contact Tony Crooks-Meredith) - Tuesday 14th May 1996
- Election Court & Dinner - Thursday 16th May 1996
- Election of Sheriffs in Guildhall - Monday 24th June 1996
- Turners' Golf Day, East Berks Club (contact Peter Ellis) - Friday 5th July 1996
- Court Meeting (afternoon) - Thursday 18th July

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THE MASTER'S YEAR - HALF TERM REPORT

Gordon Sloan has had a fascinating half-year

The first event at which I represented the Company was the Feast of the Cutlers in Hallamshire, at Sheffield in May - and a splendid occasion it was. In their impressive Livery Hall, your Clerk and I were most hospitably entertained, with no less a dignitary than the Chancellor of the Exchequer addressing us. Next morning we rode on the City's new tram service, and went to see the Footprint hand tools being manufactured.

One June evening my wife and I went to Gosport for HMS *Sultan's* annual charity cocktail party, reception, display and beating of retreat. The next morning saw us off early to Ironbridge Gorge Museum, near Telford, for their Livery Day spent revelling in industrial history. What a fine job the Development Trust is doing there to remind us of the initiative and inventiveness that laid the foundations of our industrial revolution which spread world wide. Our Liveryman Professor Alan Gillett is a trustee. We shall visit the museum again, and strongly recommend it to you too.

Also well worth a visit is the Black Country Museum. More compact than Ironbridge, it gives an excellent impression of life and work in bygone days. It surprised me how many exhibits I recalled from childhood.

I attended both Common Halls - to elect the Sheriffs in June and the Lord Mayor in September. It is particularly pleasing that our current Mayor is a Past Master Apothecary. I confess to being disappointed at our sparse representation on both occasions, particularly as the Apothecaries are such good friends to us. Please support your Master better on future occasions.

We were honoured to be one of the Livery Companies invited to send their Master to receive the Lord Mayor at Mansion House upon completion of his procession. Twenty or so Masters stood at the kerb beside Mansion House waving at the passing floats of which we, and our wives seated in an adjacent stand, had a close-up view. Lunch, hosted by the Lord Mayor, was enjoyed afterwards. Taking our leave I thanked and congratulated our host and promised him our support during his tenure. We visited the Turners on HQS *Wellington* earlier in the day and saw the Mayor's fireworks in the evening.

I also attended the presentations of Shrieval Chains and Badges of Office to each Sheriff and of brooches to their wives; and in November, the Lord Mayor's briefing of the Masters, when he outlined his intentions for the Mayoral year and invited questions.

It has been a treasurable experience to represent the Company at formal lunches and dinners at the Pattenmakers, Glaziers, Apothecaries, Wheelwrights, Engineers, Launderers and Scriveners Companies and REME. I have also been to presentations of their prizes for craft and design excellence of the Pewterers and Carpenters. At the latter, two fine turned pieces were on show amongst prize-winners' work.

I attended the AGM and reception of the Sheriffs and Recorders' Fund, to which the Company contributes. The Fund, established in 1808, provides relief for prisoners' families in distress and help to rehabilitate offenders living in the Metropolitan Police District.

The Painter-Stainers' Art Exhibition showed many beautiful works produced by their Livery and Prizemen. More than half the City's Livery Companies were represented there by their Masters, with spouses.

Our informal social events have been great successes. First a conducted tour, jointly with the Glass Sellers, of St Paul's Cathedral; then a fascinating visit to the recreated Globe Theatre.

The Livery Lunch was again a success, although a cliff-hanger for the Clerk as acceptances were slow to come in. Our Patronal Service and the following lunch were most enjoyable and well attended. Our new Chaplain arranged the service, which received much favourable comment. The music was superbly played and sung, not least by the Turners, and the Reverend Christopher Lawson delivered an uplifting address.

We had a full house for the Livery Dinner; and I look forward to welcoming you in great numbers at the Gardner Williams dinner in February.

May the remainder of the year go as well.



Andrew Ciclitira with other Turners and their guests at the convivial lunch aboard HQS Wellington.

TURNERS AT ST PAUL'S

Andrew Ciclitira was one of over fifty Turners and guests who attended a tour of St Paul's Cathedral

The visit was memorable, with a musical presentation and a tour of both the main body of the Cathedral and Crypt. We heard a résumé of the main historical events during St Paul's long history. For instance, a place of Christian worship has stood at the summit of Ludgate Hill since 604 A.D., Wren's masterpiece being the fifth building to grace this hallowed spot.

The evening was organised by the Friends of St Paul's Cathedral, and part of the proceeds were donated to this worthy cause. It culminated in an excellent cheese and wine buffet in the Crypt, giving Turners an opportunity to meet the new Master and his wife.

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EUROPEAN TURNERY CONFERENCE

Malcolm Cobb went to confer (and to lunch) in France

In mid-October my wife and I attended the European Turnery Conference in the Département du Jura, in France. The event had been prompted by the formation of an association of local industrial, family and individual turners, "Art, Tournage et Culture", for their protection against increasing competition from outside the European Union. The area had been dominant in France for the production of small turned wares (*tableterie*), including rosary beads, tobacco pipes and napkin rings.

We travelled by Eurostar and the superb TGV's. One of their strikes ended at 8 am on the day of our journey!

The association ATC was aided in the conference arrangements by the Musée d'Archéologie in Lons-le-Saunier, and by the main school in France awarding a CAP (*Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle*, roughly equivalent to NVQs) in wood-turning, at Moirans-en-Montagne.

The conference was ambitious! Each of the three days was at a different town, and we stayed at a sports hotel at a fourth location. The coach transport was well organised and involved 30-40 kilometre journeys each morning, when we had to endure the bright sunshine and autumn colours of the scenically-unchallenged Jura mountains.

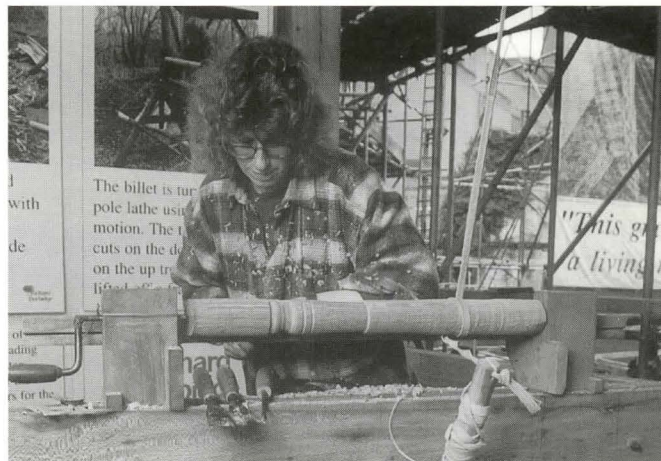
On the first day in Lons there were two exhibitions, one of the history of turning and one of current work by MOF's (*Meilleurs Ouvriers de France* - an accolade given to the best workers in over two hundred crafts). At this second exhibition I took the opportunity to present to the Principal of the Moirans school a letter of greeting from our Master and Company to the conference. Lunch was a splendid buffet given by the municipality. It was akin to a certain food-hall in the Brompton Road, but we had knives and forks!

The countries represented were Australia (1 person), Belgium (2), Germany (5), Israel (2), Switzerland (6), UK (3) and USA (3). The French delegates made the numbers to about 150. There was simultaneous translation into English and German, the lectures being mainly in French.

The afternoon's talks, and those of the following morning, were concerned with examples of wood, bone and metal turning found in archaeological investigations. This tied in with the theme statement for the conference, "*il ne saurait y avoir de création sans mémoire*".

After further lunchtime hospitality, non-French speakers described aspects of turning in their countries, and we could look at an international collection of about sixty pieces of artistic turning, and attend lectures and demonstrations illustrating special techniques.

The final dinner was preceded by a vigorous performance of folk dancing by a local group. The three days went all too quickly. The whole event was a great success and it is always a pleasure, and a stimulus, to meet working turners from other countries.



TURNERS AT THE GLOBE

Andrew Hamilton reports

The whole world is a stage and so it was in September when the Turners visited the Globe Theatre being rebuilt on its original site in Southwark. Although the structure was not finished there was more than enough there for us to be *within this wooden O* (but not sharing it with the *vasty fields of France*).

We were entertained to a short history of the theatre and a masterly exposition of the acting techniques required in the modern Globe, like its original, without artificial lights and sound reproduction.

Then, fortified by a welcome glass or two of wine (*good wine needs no bush*) we moved to the theatre proper. We admired the rows of galleries topped by the thatched roof surrounding the evening sky of London. In due course each gallery will be fronted by turned balusters, all to be hand made from English oak, and there in the pit was Gudrun Lietz (*full of wise saws and moral instances*) who is making the 350 spindles necessary (photograph above). Firstly the billets of oak, which had been left outside to remain green and wet, are roughly shaped with azure and draw knife to a round cylinder; then inserted between centres in a treadle pole lathe and turned to shape with gouges and scrapers. It was the first time that many of us had seen a pole lathe in operation and Turners could try their hand.

Declining to try his hand, or go on stage, our Master (*with spectacles on nose and pouch on side*) made a most suitable speech of thanks noting that the Turners' name will be recorded in the Globe for posterity.

Finally, it was out of the pit and into a temporary building for excellent cheese and more wine (*in fair round belly with capon lined*). We all now plan to visit the Globe for our favourite Shakespeare play *that ends this strange eventful history*.

(Editor's note: For a fuller description of the building of the modern Globe and the woodwork and turning involved see Practical Woodworking January 1996).

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OUR THANKS TO ALAN

Richard Woodwark pays tribute to Alan Fagg

Alan Fagg is in his 90th year and finding travel from St. Albans to the City more tiring, he has regretfully relinquished his appointment as our Chaplain.

The broad outline of Alan's career was given in Newsletter 4 (June 1994) but there was only one passing note of his life in the Turners. Yet his is a remarkable Livery Company story and can be recorded thus:

- 1929 *Admitted to the Livery (67 years ago!)*
- 1946 *Appointed to the Court (50 year span)*
- 1951 *Elected Master*
- 1971 *Appointed Chaplain*
- 1993 *Achieved the status of "Father of the Company"*
- 1994 *Became an Honorary Court Assistant*

More importantly, despite his demanding responsibilities in the commercial world of shipping and (since 1948) in the Church, Alan has been a loyal supporter of the Company, both as a wise counsellor on the Court and as Chaplain. In gratitude, the Company gave him a burr wood and silver mazer made by Liveryman Cecil Colyer.

Alan has earned the great respect of us all and he has everyone's affectionate best wishes in his retirement.

GOLFING NEWS

Peter Ellis reports

Our Golf Society Day was at Welwyn Garden City Golf Club, home of two famous golfers: Liveryman Malcolm Slaughter and of course the other chap, Nick Faldo! It began with an individual Stableford Competition with Liverymen and Freemen competing for the Turners' Cup. The winner was Peter Worlidge with an outstanding score of 40 points off a handicap of 24, closely followed by that well known "bandit" Richard Woodwark in 2nd place with 37 points off a handicap of 20.

In parallel we ran a Morning Stableford for our guests, and John Slaughter, cousin of Malcolm, came 1st with an amazing 40 points off a handicap of 14. Colonel Nick Holland of REME scored 38 points off a handicap of 23.

In the afternoon Turners and their guests formed themselves into teams of two for a Greensome Stableford Competition. 1st placed were Nigel Woodwark and his guest and brother-in-law Peter Mitchell, with a high-scoring 40 points off a combined handicap of 14. In 2nd place came John Slater and Richard Mordue, with a highly creditable 37 points off a combined handicap of 20.

These sparkling scores were matched by the weather which remained cloudless all day adding to the delight of playing what was for many a new course with welcoming staff, whilst continuing to foster the friendship and camaraderie enjoyed by golfers within the Company.



Alan Fagg drawn by Alan Gillett at the Gardner Williams dinner in February 1995

Toast List

THE QUEEN

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THE PRINCE PHILIP DUKE OF EDINI

NEHEMIAH THE TURNER

Brian Burnett writes

My brother, long resident in America, recently gave me a book I had come across: *Wallington's World - a Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-century London* by Paul S. Seaver, Professor of History at Stanford University, California, published in 1985. It is a portrait of Nehemiah Wallington, a London Puritan turner, based on 2,600 surviving pages of his memoirs, religious reflections, political commentary and letters.

Wallington witnessed the persecution of the Puritans by Archbishop Laud under Charles 1, welcomed what he thought would be the godly revolution brought by the Long Parliament, and watched with disillusionment the failure of that dream under the Rump republic and the Cromwellian Protectorate.

Nehemiah's father John was Upper Warden of our Company in 1604, the year of the Charter, and Master in 1613 and 1614. His brother John was Master in 1647 and 1648. Nehemiah was born in 1598. By December 1621 he was a practising turner, free of the Company by patrimony, had bound his first apprentice and hired his first journeyman, had married, and had made a New Year resolution "to begin a new life" as a Puritan.

The rest of Nehemiah's 60 years, lived entirely in Eastcheap within a stone's throw of our first hall, were spent in a continuous struggle to make ends meet (lacking the success of his father and brother, he was too poor to take up the Livery), coping with births, miscarriages and infant deaths, and maintaining the vocation of a deeply conscientious Christian.

Nehemiah's surviving writings comprise six notebooks (out of about fifty) copied out in his italic hand and clearly intended for posterity. Paul Seaver found one in the Guildhall Library, four in the British Library, and the sixth in the Folger Library, Washington D.C. His sources for this absorbing book include our own records deposited in the Guildhall Library - Charter and Ordinances, Court Minutes, Freedom Admissions and Apprentice Bindings.

THANK YOU... & PLEASE

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

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