

## MY YEAR AS MASTER

*Christopher Scott, now Deputy Master, reflects on his year.*

People often ask if I enjoyed my time as Master. *[Picture of us both]* I say 'yes, hugely'; but I always add that it was such a privilege. I have to pinch myself that after a lifetime working in the City, I would return in retirement to lead a 420-year-old institution. Although it was for just twelve short months, I savoured every moment.

Building on the excellent work of my predecessor Nigel Lusson, I said at the outset that I would try to steer the ship so that we **enlarged** the membership, **engaged** more with them, and with the craft of turning, and that we **enhanced** the way we do things. People will judge from what follows how well we achieved these things, but I think we did make some progress.

**Welcoming new people** into the Company was always a pleasure and to see their pride as they read their declarations was moving; and it was great to get to know several of them at special event in October at a Chinese restaurant. It was also good to see Renter Warden Bill Morris take on the newly created role of Membership Steward to further engage with our members. My last Livery ceremony was particularly special as we welcomed our Chaplain, Alison Joyce, as a Liveryman by Presentation. Her leading of our Patronal Service in November was, as always, very special and I enjoyed helping to prepare the liturgy and music - the latter led magnificently by the St Bride's choir.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was my **Master's weekend in Normandy**. We had such fun at the farmhouse of friend of the Company Jean Claude Charpignon who taught us intricate turning techniques. *[Photo]* The day contrasted with our reflective mood at earlier visits to World War II battle sites, especially near Caen where Past Master the late Sir Brian Neill fought and was wounded.

I loved being **on the road as ambassador** for the Company, be it presenting a lathe to a community workshop *[photo Workbridge]*, awarding the Turners' trophy to the best REME battalion, giving certificates to teenage turners after their Youth Training days or presenting sporting awards for golf. And it was good to actually take part in a couple of sporting events: the inter Livery croquet and the Livery pancake race, though no prizes came my way in either! *[photo of pancake race]*. On a sad a sad note, it was moving to represent the Company at the funerals of members who passed away, and to hear many remarkable stories about their lives.

**Chairing Standing Committee and Court** was a real privilege, and I'm grateful for the careful thought that members bring to the meetings and the good humour in which we conduct business. The committees who report to Court all do magnificent work in organising social events, liaising with the craft, running the Charity, keeping a careful watch on our finances, developing membership policy and Livery matters, and making sure our communications are sharp and engaging. On this last point, I was particularly pleased to see the Company website revamped to project an attractive and modern branding.

And then there were **the civic events**. Supporting the Lord Mayor is always a key responsibility of a Livery Master. I was glad to attend fund raising dinners at Mansion House, serve on the Curry Lunch committee, march in the Lord Mayor's show, and to go to Liverpool to celebrate the Brigantes' Breakfast with the Livery movement in the north of the country. Another trip north was to Sheffield for a dinner and a fascinating industrial visit courtesy of the Cutlers of Hallamshire. Back in the City there were moving services at St Paul's Cathedral, all the fun of the Sheep Drive on Southwark Bridge, the Lady Mayoress's Bavarian Ball in Mansion House and the Lord Mayor's 'Grand Finale' bash at Guildhall. It was also special to take my granddaughter to Mansion House for the Lord Mayor's children's party. But of course, the civic highlight was the Lord Mayor's weekend for Masters which he held in London, during which Angela and I got to know our fellow Masters and their consorts.

**Entertaining other Liveries** and being entertained is always a great pleasure. I managed avoid putting on the pounds (I'm lucky in my physiology) and to not overdo the wine (having to give a speech is a good moderator!). The Livery Dinner at Goldsmiths' Hall was very special, as was the Court Dinner at the House of Lords *[photo]*.

**Promoting the craft** is a key aspect of any Master's year, which was bookended by the 2024 Association of Pole Lathe Turners' Bodgers' Ball in Sussex and their 2025 event in the West Midlands. They champion the original craft of turning when there was no electricity and artisans had to use a treadle lathe. We also support the Register of Professional Turners which goes from strength to strength, and their annual craft day in the City was very special. It was good to liaise with the Society of Ornamental Turners and to see the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain thrive under their new leadership. At the AWGB seminar in Staffordshire, I saw some of the very best turners demonstrating the craft. And at the Company's turning weekend at the Max Carey Centre in Portishead I received some much needed tuition.

The Company has close **links with the Armed Services**, and during my year, I was proud that the Court agreed to sign the Armed Forces Covenant. This is a Government initiative for employers to commit to respect and support serving military and veterans, and we join many other Livery Companies in making this commitment with a series of events during each year.

Our gallant clerk Niall, learned Assistant Clerk Becca and indomitable Beadle Terry have all been a huge support, and I thank them. Each year they have a new Master to deal with, so they have seen it all before. Yet their enthusiasm is as fresh as ever!

Finally, I must thank Angela who, as Mistress Turner, has thoroughly enjoyed the year. Between us, we have had some 180 engagements, many of which we attended together and some of which were consorts events that she went to by herself. As we hand over to Andy and Gerry we wish them well and hope they will have a wonderful year, just as we have had.