Middlesex Woodturners Association

NEWSLETTER

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Editor's Comments

I have good news and bad news which I need to pass on, hence this short two page interim newsletter.

First, the bad news. I was stopped in my tracks on Monday evening 5th May, when I received a telephone message from Mike Dennis to say that Frank Clarke, whom many of you knew, was dead. Not many details are known yet, but Frank died as the result of a horrendous car crash in bad weather. The other driver was killed outright, and Frank was cut out of the wreckage and airlifted to Dublin. Sadly the best efforts of the medical and surgical teams there were to no avail. It is a tragic event, bad enough in any circumstances, but doubly so happening so soon after Frank's move to Ireland, and the building and setting up of his long awaited super workshop. His wife and family must be devastated, and our hearts go out to her and them.

Now some good news. Member of MWA Learoy Byfield ran in and completed the London Marathon. He was raising funds for research into Multiple Sclerosis, and was well supported. Several MWA members pledged sums of money to the Charity at a recent meeting, and the Association as a whole has added £25 to pledges already made. I was surprised to hear that Learoy is 68 years of age, and I am lost in admiration of him. I could no more have done that when I was 68 than I could now. Come to think of it, I certainly couldn't have done it when I was much younger than that! I am sure that you will all join me in offering Learoy our heartiest congratulations

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(Two committee vacancies remain)

More Haste, Less Speed!

In our haste to get the Members' Handbook out for the May Meeting, proof reading was not as thorough as it should have been, and a couple of silly errors have been found. As we have also been approached to see if information included by us in good faith could either be amended or withdrawn, we have decided to reprint entirely. *If you wish us to amend your own entry in any way, please advise Richard Bird before 5th June 03, after which we shall reprint and re-issue the Members Handbook.*

Frank Clarke

The news of Frank's untimely death will come as a great shock to the wood turning fraternity, both here in Great Britain and also in Ireland, where he had already begun to contribute to the Irish woodturning scene. Frank was a big man, known to all as 'Big Frank', although with typical humour he often referred to himself as 'Little Frank' when telephoning friends. Frank was a big man in every other respect too. His sense of humour matched his size, and his capacity for hard work was limited only by the health problems which ultimately enabled his early retirement from employment with British Telecom. Above all, his dedication and reliability could not be faulted. Frank was always a 'hands on' person, and was quite disappointed when he was moved by BT into a managerial position after years out in the field. I believe that it was then that Frank began seriously thinking of early retirement.

By that time wood turning had become his major interest, and he was already active within the AWGB. For some time he served on the AWGB committee, and organised, among many other things, the stewarding of major public displays by the AWGB. Having stewarded at many such shows, I can vouch for Frank's efficiency in this part of his work. Notably, he never omitted to write after each show showing his appreciation of members' assistance, and this simple act ensured that there was never a problem in recruiting for the next show. Frank also pioneered cooperation between the woodworking trade and the AWGB, beginning the process, now continued by others, which enables members to obtain useful discounts on purchases, and secures advertising revenue from the AWGB Newsletter.

Frank was an excellent wood turner. Not surprisingly, his output included a good proportion of larger objects, which he exhibited and sold at some of the major crafts shows. Frank supported several wood turning groups, including MWA. Indeed, he played a significant part in the early days of the establishment of the MWA, and supported our activities until quite recently. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the founding of the Cheam Woodturners' Association. Until his move to Ireland, Frank lived in Cheam, and so had to travel some distance to reach other clubs. He had long dreamed of forming a local club, and had the pleasure of, with other local turners, bringing it into being not long before he moved to Ireland. Cheam Woodturners Association, like all young clubs, is a thriving group. It is run by a small committee in similar style to our own MWA. Frank had taken great pleasure in this achievement, which will be a lasting tribute to his memory.

I am sure that I am only one of many who knew Frank and regarded him as a friend. He was a gregarious man who had many contacts, all of whom will feel a real sense of loss at his passing. The circumstances were tragic in the extreme, and I am sure that all who knew him will wish to extend their sincere condolences to his widow and family.

A.T.S.

Programme Change

It's always a mistake to say that the MWA programme has been finalised! Since I said it last, we have, thanks to the good offices of Gary Rance, been given the opportunity of welcoming Nikos Siragas to our December meeting instead of the published 'Hands On" evening. Happily, the mince pies will still be available! Nikos Siragas is a professional turner and wood carver who lives and works in Crete. He is particularly known in this country for his 'Genie Vases' with turned tops and carved spiral stems. He is also the originator of a series of deep hollowing tools, now made by Hamlet Tools.

A.T.S.

MWA Seminar

Only a very few places now remain. If you are one of those who intend to come, but have not yet paid up, *do it now as the list will soon be closed!* Contact the Treasurer, Richard Bird.