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EDITORIAL The Editor's thoughts by LP

Dear News readers, these past few months have been very challenging for the Guild and life in general due to the Corona Virus, It's been very strange with no activities to participate in and nowhere to go, like being bored and wondering what to do next, I sure many of you, will have plenty to do and getting things on with, I have been doing lots of sewing and being artistically creative with things so, just as things were going so well, my poor old sewing machine has just given up the ghost and had to be sent to the menders, and it's not likely to be back for a month, huh! Am I going to be bored wondering what else I can do, no because I'm sitting here typing this newsletter, and have promised to start wood carving again, all though there is not a lot happening on the Guild front, there has been plenty of communication between the chairman and others about how people are getting on. So on that note enjoy your read.

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Chairmans musing by George Palmer

As I sit here pencil in hand, yes I like to write down my thoughts before committing them to computer, I consider the future. Yes it is difficult when everything seems to change by the day. It has been nice to keep up with so many of you and to find out that you are well and even contemplating it if not already woodcarving.

As the night draws in and the weather cools rather than hibernate find things to do. Not just housework or maintenance but things you would like to do to occupy your hands and or minds.

Don't make that trip out to your studio or workshop a chore but something to look forward to. I like so many others look forward to when we can get back together again in whatever guise that is. In the meantime keep in contact and I will keep you all in my thoughts.

Committee by John Vardon

The Committee have not met since January 2020 but have kept in contact via email. Nothing has really happened except decisions to cancel all events initially until end of the year and now until Easter 2021. Portsmouth Grammar School aren't taking any third party bookings until further notice.

Even if we could, go and noting current restrictions, we would have to restrict numbers.

Programme planning for 2021 is going ahead but will not be issued until the Covid-19 situation improves and regulations allow meetings and events to go ahead. Many of our usual demonstrations, including Milland Fair, have been earmarked to go ahead by the organisers.

We will just have to wait and see. We hope that current Members will continue with their Membership once life returns to normality or as normal as possible.

Sad News

I was sad to here that Mark Baker, Editor of various Wood working magazines such the Wood Carver, and wood Turner has died from cancer. As you know some of our members have had projects and articles in the woodcarving magazine. Many of our members have cut their teeth on beginner's projects, so I think he will be solely missed for helping to produce publication's, that have kept us all interested.

Members safe and well

Bert Cox and his wife, Marion, are both doing well. Bert has exchanged his car for a three-wheeler push-along! He is not doing any carving these days but he says he may get back to it one day. Many other members seem to be coping well in these difficult times

Workshops by George Palmer

Hi recently I asked members to send me pictures of themselves and their workshops I hope you enjoy a more personal look behind the scenes at what some of our members get up to. Here is the outcome. I will start with myself.

George Palmer

I have had this space for about 30 years and it is quite small and bijou. This is largely due to how much I've tried to fit in, as you know I've collected tools over the years. I have recently rearranged a bench etc to free up some space in the centre, not that you would think so.



I am at present working on two projects. The first is a copy of a Lewis chessman, the bezerker and no I am not going to complete the set.

The second is a woodcarving done by a deceased member Ray White. Eve his wife asked if I could restore the golden lion that was over her doorway. Ray made it in 1992 in honour of the pub that was two doors down from them of the same name and it was also in the street of the same name, Golden Lion Lane. This street was widened in Victorian times and it became part of Lombard Street. Ray wrote an article about it in the friends of Old Portsmouth newsletter in 2003. As you can see in the pictures the damp had got into it and swelled the wood forcing the sections apart.



I have planed the surfaces level and rubbed down the black paintwork. I have also stabilised the bottom of the stand and filled in where the rotten wood was. I will email pictures when I have completed it and of it in situ.

Jess Jay informs me that despite all this time off he has not done any woodcarving in his workshop.

But I will let him off as he has achieved much in the house and garden including making this fine Ukelele, but I will let him explain it in his own words. “This was made from old pieces of wood that has been kicking around in my garage/workshop since the last ice age. It’s amazing how a rough old bit of wood once passed through the planer comes up looking so good. Therefore despite what the wife would say about my pile of old rubbish, look what can be made from it!”



A lovely piece of work



Well posed and dressed for the occasion



Tony Cross and I have become good friends who despite ongoing health problems remain both upbeat and cheerful. He sent me this write up about his workshop how it evolved and what he is achieving in it, over to you Tony.

“As promised please find attached photos of my small condensed workshop or could be called my man cave.



A lovely set up with a place for everything. You put some of us to shame , alright then me!

The work area started life as the garage, but as cars got bigger the garage remained the same size. When I retired I needed some space to do my carving and other hand crafts etc.

The garage was also being used for the normal domestic needs so I was allowed by the Boss the end section with the window, which faced north and gave me day light, so I was a happy bunny.

It's split into three sections really. The left side is for my carving, and keeping my chisels safe. They are now in one place as I have had some time on my hands ha! ha! The right side as you can see is for the various electrical tools, Band saw, drill, the scroll saw (which was a great gift from a good friend). It also has my Grandad's old wooden toolbox which I have repaired and now keep my small tools in. Some of the engineering tools which belonged to him are special.



Hard at work on the horses head

The centre is the bench which I made out of some old scaffold boards cleaned, planed and polished. It's solid as I do have the habit of using a mallet!!"

Over the last few months I have only done a small amount of carving as the garden has been my main job. Some of the other things I have been working on are stripping and rebuilding an old model steam engine which again was my Grandad's it now looks good after repainting and obtaining the missing parts. I spent some fun time framing my Dads service medals and finding out and recording his service records for the future generation. I thought it would be

of interest to know what he got up to and where he went and managed to stay out of trouble I do miss the friends that I have made in the guild and the banter and laughs we all have during the Saturday carve-ins.

Andrew Pickering informs me that he is trying to get busy and inspired to do another carving. In the meantime he has been able to work on and finish these two. Well done Andrew keep up the good work.



Sandra Barnes has been hard at work in her garden but has found time to finish some work for other people in her lovely workshop.



German shepherd

That's not still the last supper,
you waiting for an invite.

Xmas is a coming

Dave Newsam informs me that he has been busy both in the garden building a wall and in the house. But Sue has let him have some time off to make these bird boxes for xmas. Only kidding Sue.

What birds are they for Dave?



Alongside this I have heard from **Jean Cripps** who informs me that her workshop is a space in the garage alongside the freezer about 5 ft square. This is why she misses the carve-ins so much as well as the interaction and conversation with other members.

Chris Mason has been in contact and tells me how much he misses the camaraderie of the Guild and that he is getting back into the swing of carving again.

Mike Charlton Has also found the time to get on with two projects. One was to complete a mechanical model of a canoeist. I have a friend who has made quite a few of these mechanical models that are on show in the “The Spring” in Havant. He is also having a go with the cogged wheel and hands but is going to change the timber from poplar to beech. Another person who has a well organised workshop.



As a different take on things **Beryl Shepherd** whose husband Don, who passed away some 16 years ago, was a member for many years. She has decided that the time had come to sort out and transform her garage with her son Duncan’s help. They have transformed this unworkable space into a potting shed.



What a transformation into a more useable space, But where have you hidden all that clutter?

Alex Jones – woodsculptor by George Palmer

As you know I have been keen to get Alex to come and talk to us about his work, which is amazing. He has kindly agreed and is looking forward to meeting us. Since I set up this visit we have been hit by the corona virus outbreak which has pushed it back and back, at the moment tentatively booked for April. In the meantime he has been keeping us updated on his projects that he is doing for clients. The one he has just completed is the bee. You might remember I emailed out the pictures of work in progress. Well he has now sent the latest two to show the completed article. I must say I am suitably impressed not only by the standard of work but also by the level of detail, I hope you are too. Well done Alex.



There's more to life than Woodcarving (by John Vardon)

When I am not carving I often sit and watch the birds. This can be quite mesmerising as one could sit watching them all day long. I sit out on the patio (in the summer) or when it's cold or wet at the French-window in the study with my mug of coffee. After (my) breakfast the birds are sometimes still in bed and then all of a sudden they start to arrive. The tits are normally the first. The blue tits, two or three, come along. They are followed by the great tits who bully the blues off who then have to wait their turn. The tits go between the feeders and the bushes around the feeders. A coal tit may then arrive. We know we have at least two coal tits as one has its feathers deshelled; we call that one 'scruff'. Scruff is fussy what it eats. It will pick a sunflower heart up and the discards its, repeats this several times until it likes a particular seed, a suet pellet or a dried mealworm. After a while one or two nuthatches may arrive; again we know there are two as one is much more ginger in colour.



Later in the day other birds may start to feed. Squeal! Squeal! Mr and Mrs Wood Pigeon may arrive and sit on the railing or fences. I assume they are Mr & Mrs as they peck/kiss each other; I have not checked them close up! Blackbirds, male and female come along and raid whatever is on the soil before attempting the feeders. Early in the year it was quite comical to watch one blackbird attempting to get food from a suet block in a cage. It would fly up and attempt to get a quick bite and then fall back to the ground. Over time it managed to realise it could hang on to the cage with its feet. Squeal! Squeal! A robin may come along. They often appear when

I am out gardening (hence the carving I have done of a robin on a fork handle).

For many years, maybe 25, we never got any sparrows. Over the last couple of years we have had several each day although recently they have become scarce again. We see/hear them in neighbouring gardens but not in ours. We also get a duncock or two usually on the ground. Even though they are different families it can be difficult to distinguish between the two.



Some days we may get a flock of long-tailed tits; occasionally there may only be one but other times they come in flocks of six or more. The same applies to gold finches. It's interesting the gold finches never went for the niger seeds when I put them out. Very occasionally we have a visit from one or two bull finches. We used to get chaffinches and green finches but these have not been around for several years (a national problem).



During winter/cold we have been putting a suet block in a cage; in the summer it melts in the heat. This has attracted a greater-spotted woodpecker. As soon as the block was taken away the woodpecker stopped coming. We'll have to see if it comes back this winter; we have heard it. We have also had, only a couple of times, a family of green woodpeckers.



What is a Squeal! Squeal! all about? It is those buzzards flying around possibly hunting or being chased by crows. We have seen up to three at a time. They have been very noisy this year. Why? Even in Staunton Park they are very noisy.

It is possible that one of the buzzards may have been mistaken for a white-tailed eagle which is around the Havant / Langstone area.

We often see and hear magpies, crows and occasionally one or two jays in the woods behind our garden. Recently the two jays were in the garden. Very occasionally we may see a wren walking along the patio pecking at the small insects. This year we have also had a stock and collared dove. In the past we've even had a heron on the fence presumably after the carp in a neighbour's garden. Another interesting happening is gulls high up and gathering together from afar; I assume there must be a load of insects in the air. We never get gulls in the garden. Oh, I've forgotten the

thrushes we sometimes see but not for a year or so.

I mustn't forget the squirrels and the rat. I think I have got rid of the latter. There's also all the butterflies.

There are a lot of berries on our holly trees this year. Will it attract redwings and even waxwings?

So there's more to life than just woodcarving.

PS: As an alternative, I'm now watching and counting the leaves falling from the trees!

John Goes Back to Basics!

Over the past six months I have been spending one/two days a weeks in the workshop mainly carving. I have completed my Bishop's Writer and Crab as shown in the previous Newsletter. I have also completed a Kestrel which was started by another carver who passed away. This was a little difficult as I did not have the original design and had to guess the intended pose. One thing I learnt from this carving is not to carve another bird.

I started a new carving based on a Gothic design using some oak I had. I found the oak was very dry and 'splinted' quite easily and because of that the enthusiasm to continue diminished. I have always had difficulty carving faces so I went back to basics and thought I would try the 'Peter Benson' method as given various issues of the Woodcarver. This actually helped me a lot except for the eyes – carving eyes that is. I still have problems so will need to practice even more. Obviously getting eyes right is important and there are two of them (one eye apart) and they have to be the same. Yes I know you have two ears but they are on opposite sides of the head and you cannot see them both at the same time. It was relaxing to do something relative easy. I have now gone back to my Gothic carving and progressing reasonably well.

Practice pieces – eyes not show



Gothic Carving



I have now started another carving based on a 'Pirate Knocker' given in the Woodcarving magazine. I liked the face but decided not to include the 'knocker' part. I will have to practice

eyes a bit more but at least there is only one! Due to my eye problem it was difficult to be precise and also I had to be careful not to saw my fingers off.



Pirate Carving



Me – pretending to carve my Gothic carving

New Members

None

Sickness

To all those members who are struggling with health issues, please take care of yourselves and in the mean time we hope you get better soon.

Well done to!

To all those members out there who have contributed articles for the News letter this quarter, I'm certainly very pleased with the knowledge that you take it seriously, it makes my job a lot easier. I thank You and on that note I'm taking the chance to say stay safe. I am sorry that we won't be celebrating with our usual Christmas supper. So from me and the Committee we are wishing you all a very very merry and hopefully safe Christmas.

Well just a foot note, let's pray that the New year brings better news our way so there's a glimmer of light on the horizon.

Hopefully if all goes well the next news letter will be **Issued on January the 31st 2021**
If you have any things that you think might interest any of our members, it would be nice to let me in on your thoughts Lin Palmer.