



ORBIT

The Newsletter of the **Register of Professional Turners**
Supported by the Worshipful Company of Turners of London



As the AGM and Craft Meeting loom closer....

It certainly doesn't seem nearly a year since so many of us met up at the Skinners Hall last March, but time has clearly marched on and much has

happened in the meantime. For those members who don't make it to the AGM and Craft Meeting (to say nothing of the wonderful lunch), I'll report back to you on what happened on the day, but it will be early June before the next issue of our newsletter.



It is quite understandable that members living in the more distant and remote parts of the UK rarely get to travel so far south, but for those members who live closer, I'd urge you to make the effort to attend.

The venue is amazing; known formerly as Copped Hall, but more latterly as Skinners Hall, a venue has stood on this site since the days of King Henry III, some 800 years ago. It is likely that the only remnant of that early building, though, is the cellars, the rest of the property having been lost to the Great Fire of London in 1666 and what we now know as Skinners Hall was built on the ruined site, commencing in 1667. More recently, the hall suffered bomb damage during the Second World War, but a quick thinking Company's Butler, who was on fire-watch duty, is said to have plied the fire fighters with spirits from the Company's cellar in his successful attempt to persuade them that Skinners Hall was the most important building in the vicinity and therefore needed their attention before all else.....well done that man!



STOP PRESS!.....This year, there is going to be live streaming of the AGM....you can find more details in the red text in Martin Saban Smith's article on page 10.

Les Symonds RPT...Newsletter Editor



The AGM and our
thanks to Philip!

A word from the Chair!

You should all now be in receipt of the calling-notice and associated paperwork, regarding the AGM. As Philip Greenwood steps down as Vice Chairman, his position is taken by Andy Fortune, with effect from 24th March. With his extra responsibilities, Andy will hand over his former role as webmaster, to Martin Saban Smith, although this will need to be voted on at the AGM, as will the appointment of Dave Willcocks as Secretary.

Philip Greenwood

It is always a difficult time when a member of a committee stands down and more so when you have worked so closely with that person over a number of years. Philip Greenwood has been the Vice Chairman for as long as I have been Chairman and since the AGM of 2016 we have formed a close working relationship. As with all good relationships ours was built on trust and honesty, neither of us has been afraid to tell the other that this idea or that will not work or doing it this way it will work better, and that has been good news for the RPT because between us and with the co-operation and hard work of the other members of the committee we have formed the RPT into an organisation that runs smoothly and effectively as any professional organisation should.

When he first became the Vice-Chairman he presented me with a list of improvements that he would like to see and when we discussed what the role of vice-Chairman should be and agreed that he should pursue tangible benefits of membership we then had the basis of an organisation that we would help mould into the RPT as it is today. Philip went out of his way to seek out the companies that have given us discounts or supplied loan lathes or given us free advertising. The list that he gave me has seen the items ticked off week by week, month by month and yes year by year until we have cleared the whole list, even though on occasions we added a few bits.

At our recent committee meeting, which was Philip's last one as vice Chairman, I thanked him on behalf of the members of the RPT for the work he has done but also thanked him for being probably the best right-hand man a Chairman could wish for. (if Carlsberg made vice Chairmen...) I can assure members that he was never a man to walk the easy street by just agreeing with me, indeed we did have some very in-depth conversations about various aspects or problems as they came up. One of these conversations concerned succession of the committee, it was felt that more than one principal officer stepping down at the same time would not be beneficial for the RPT and so we agreed that Philip would step down this year and I would step down next year. That will give the incoming committee members a chance to learn the ropes, to feel the inner workings of the organisation and give them 12 months or so to get established before the next principal officer steps down. Indeed, according to the constitution this is how it is meant to be done.

The fact that both Philip and I are stepping down at these times demonstrates that joining a committee does not mean you are stuck there for the next 9 years, to ensure that we have a vibrant and modern organisation we should have a committee with flexibility and that is what we have achieved.





The Birth of a Professional Register

This article, written a few years ago by Peter Gibson, gives some interesting insights into how the Register came about.

It was in March 1976 that Assistant Felix Levy informed the Court of his enquiries about ways in which the Worshipful Company of Turners could more actively support the development of the craft of wood turning.

He had found that the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (CoSIRA) would be willing to co-operate in sponsoring a design appreciation course and design competition. During the next twelve months he contacted the Crafts Advisory Committee, and turners around the country. He also inspected the Victoria and Albert Museum's considerable collections of examples of the craft.

During his year as Upper Warden he quartered the country, examining work in craft shows and galleries, and meeting individual turners whenever possible, using the lists maintained by CoSIRA and the Crafts Advisory Committee. Often he was accompanied by Col. W.F. Nesbitt, then CoSIRA's Chief Advisory Officer. He told the Turner's Company Court in March 1978 that he had learnt of the commercial turners' various needs and business interests, and suggested that it might be useful if the Company promoted a meeting of such people in the autumn for a free discussion, followed by a buffet luncheon. Representatives of the craft from all over the country would be invited.



His motivation for this appears to have been the protection of members of the public from inferior hand-turned work. By identifying the better turners, and bringing them under the Company's banner, their position in the market place would be ensured.

Felix Levy, now Master of the Worshipful Company of Turners, and members of the Court welcomed about fifty of the "professional commercial" turners at the first Craft Meeting on 2 November 1978. Representatives of CoSIRA (now the Rural Development Commission) and the Crafts Advisory Committee (now the Crafts Council) were in attendance. (This was just 100 years after the creation of the City & Guilds of London Institute, which the Turners' Company could not join other Livery Companies in founding, being already fully committed with its slender funds to its own annual competitions and exhibitions on turning.)

Corporate steps suggested at the meeting were that a register of turners could be compiled by the Company and made available to all interested, that similar meetings should be held regularly, that exhibitions should be organised, preferably with the objects shown on sale to the public, and generally more should be done to make the public aware of the craft and its products.

Many appreciative letters were received from those who had attended. It was apparent that such a meeting was immensely worthwhile, and that a similar discussion should take place next year. The Court agreed that future meetings should be held, that the feasibility of an exhibition with items for sale should be explored, and that the Company would compile a register of practising turners and keep it up to date. More names were required, and those present were encouraged to seek them out.

There has now been a Craft Meeting since then in every Master's year, from the third onwards, in the spring as requested by the professional turners. Felix Levy, who has been described as the father and mother of the Register, took part in every meeting until his death in 1990.

From the start, the emphasis was evidently on the more speculative turner who makes things and then needs to sell them, rather than the jobbing turner who offers a service, making things in response to definite orders (though both categories were evenly represented by those attending). Consequently a large proportion of each meeting's time was devoted to aspects of marketing existing products. Ideas that became recurring themes fell under the headings Training, Choice of Market Place, and Education of the Buying Public.

Mooted in the third meeting in 1981, but developed in the fourth, was the important issue of some identifying mark indicating an association of the professional turner with the Company, and, of course, a declaration that his work was approved. The Company would take again some of the functions of a medieval guild, but now for the whole country. It was at that meeting that the question of assessment was addressed.

The Court decided that Past Master Levy would choose six eminent turners, living in different parts of the country, as Assessors to review the work of professional turners who wished to claim some connection with the Company. Successful applicants would be issued with certificates, and would be entitled to put the words "On the Register of the Worshipful Company of Turners of London" on their letterhead. Assessments were to be at the Company's expense. A logo was devised, and a very fine certificate designed.

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The Birth of a Register

(Continued)

These decisions were made known and warmly welcomed at the 1983 Craft Meeting. Later in the year Felix Levy met all the Assessors to decide a uniform assessment policy. The main criterion for acceptance should be the “merchantable” quality of the work rather than “prize winning” quality. Craftsmen, such as furniture makers, who do relatively little turning in their business, would be eligible, if good enough. Working with materials other than wood, such as metal and stone, was to be included, provided that craftsmanship was directly involved. The logo designed at the Company’s request was presented at the meeting held in 1984.

Throughout the late 1980’s and early 1990’s the Register of Professional Turners continued to develop and thrive under guidance from the Turner’s Company. The assessment process was strengthened and workshop visits were introduced, in April 1993 the Court authorised the use by members of the Register of the letters RPT on business cards, bill headings and so on.

Since 1993 the RPT have been invited to take part in regular woodworking shows that allowed members the opportunity to demonstrate in public the skills of hand-turning. Special Register badges with a small colour representation of the Company’s Arms were issued to those demonstrating on the Register’s stand in the early years, these have proved distinctive and popular, and are now standard issue to all the membership, who are in a sense ambassadors for the Company.

In 1997, following a great deal of work by members of the Register, the Woodturning NVQ was finally accredited by the Awarding Body, City & Guilds of London Institute, and was formally launched at Apothecaries Hall in Blackfriars. For the first time, there was a nationally recognised qualification for our craft.

In 2002 a new constitution was approved and Malcolm Cobb was appointed as the first Chairman of the Register of Professional Turners. For the future, the Register is now a strong and resilient organisation, although it is unlikely to have the same cohesion as the Turners’ Guild or Company in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Turning has become a major hobby in the last thirty or so years, and there is now a world of specialist shops and periodicals, new lathes, tools and gadgets, which would have amazed our forerunners.

Our Members have reached their positions as professional turners by a variety of routes. A few have been turners for almost the whole of their working lives, some have moved over from neighbouring skills such as furniture-making, while others have taken to turnery as a second career. The Members’ range of skills, as exemplified by their products, is wide, not to say disparate. Some operate as jobbing turners, accepting any commissions that come along, exalted or commonplace; this can



require some fairly rapid questions and answers on occasion! Some make only products within a restricted range, such as exquisite lace-bobbins or table lamps. Others create unique works of art speculatively, and there are turners who confound this simple classification by doing all of them!

In 2004 the Worshipful Company of Turners organised the very first Wizardry in Wood exhibition in Carpenter’s Hall. This event is now held regularly every 4 years and gives our professional turners the opportunity to showcase their work and advertise their skills to selected guests and members of the public. It allows our members to exhibit alongside some of the top turners in the world and demonstrates what can be achieved when a London Guild such as the Turners’ company chooses to lend its support to the craftsmen and women that are its namesake.

And long may it continue.



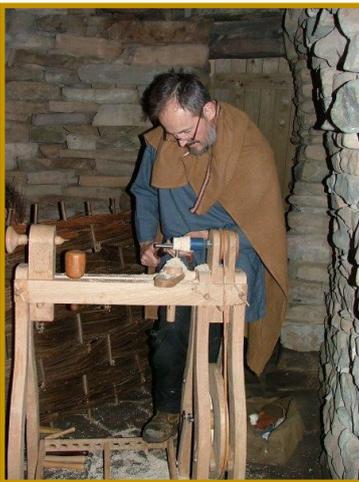
Members' Focus

Terry Atkinson RPT

A virtual-visit to one of our more remote members

I imagine that few of you will have met Terry Atkinson RPT, despite the fact that he seems a sociable, friendly sort of guy, but because he is the remotest of our members, geographically. Terry lives and works at the wonderfully sounding Tingwall, in Shetland, some 600 miles by road and sea from our HQ at Dowgate Hill, but just a quarter of a mile from his nearest neighbour, which is handy if you're concerned about workshop noise! I have had the pleasure of at least exchanging emails with Terry recently, in a sort of virtual interview so as to bring him more into focus prior to the AGM, just so that we realise why so many members may not be able to make the journey south.

I asked Terry to tell us about the challenges, the advantages and disadvantages of living and working on what he describes as a "rocky outcrop", and he responded that whilst the lack of opposition is a great advantage, the lack of trees is not! Thus he relies partly on local timber suppliers, although when he first started turning his supply came from a sawmill built by a friend of his, and stocked with about 70 ton of timber. As the years passed and as his business developed, Terry became confident enough in the sales of his products to order timber from the mainland, in bulk quantities and, like many rural turners, he found that living and working in a community of about 22,000 souls meant that he became well known and people soon sought him out when they had timber to sell.



Over a period of three years, Terry provided demonstrations of traditional wood turning at an Iron Age archaeological site, but just three weeks prior to his first visit there, he was informed that there would not be any electricity, so he hastily built his own oak-framed treadle lathe, which proved to be very newsworthy amongst the local press, bringing him a front-page spread and all the publicity that comes with it.

Along with his wife, Terry used to attend craft fairs, selling many smaller items, but when his main supplier of kit-parts ceased trading, he found it difficult to source sensibly priced parts and craft fairs became a thing of the past so he concentrated on his main product of pepper mills for the future. Indeed, his prolific output of pepper mills resulted

in most Shetland households becoming the owners of one, whilst his main supplier of the mechanisms (Constable Woodcraft), reckoned that he bought more mechanisms than any other woodturner in the country.

In such a small community, poor workmanship would soon be spotted and there isn't the market for artistic bowls in any quantity, whereas giant versions of his pepper mills became highly prized. You see, Shetland weddings are amazing affairs which last three days. The first for close family, the second for more distant family and the third for friends and workmates. Formerly, the pepper mills were selling for about £30, but Terry did a clever bit of marketing, designing an attractive logo and packaging somewhat similar to that which is used for a good bottle of malt, thus his pepper mills went from being "third-night" gifts to "First night" gifts, with an increased price to go along with the packaging. At occasional two-day fairs he would sell almost his entire stock of mills, valued at around £1,500 with his smaller mills being posted far and wide, especially at Christmas. He gave a life-time guarantee with his product, a strategy which paid off with only two mills ever being returned, whilst the largest mill that he made was 20" tall (50cm) and was made as a shop display, but it sold anyway!

In more recent days, Terry has downscaled his business but still keeps it ticking over, making bases for silver cups and such-like.





Product
News

RPT member Martin Saban Smith shares his news...

The following text is a copy of Martin's press release dated
1st February 2021.

1st

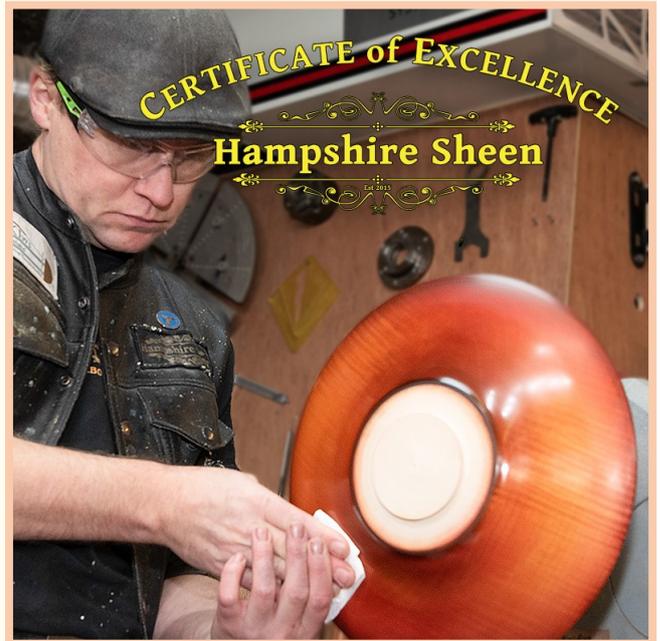


POPULARITY of the finishing and colouring products by Hampshire Sheen has grown hugely in the last five year. As a result, in 2020, this dynamic company is to outsource its manufacturing whilst bringing food contact and toy safe compliance to the products.

After making over 14,000 pots of wax by hand in 2019, demand for the finishing products by UK based Hampshire Sheen has grown so much that developer Martin Saban-Smith has invited a specialist wax blending company to take on the manufacture of the range of products.

Since the products first became available in 2015, the finishes have been labelled 'for decorative use only' but now, with the experience and expertise of a specialist blender, the flagship High Gloss and Microcrystalline Wax products comply to food contact and toy safe regulations in the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa.

"I'm so excited about this move!" says Martin "The food and toy safety compliance will encourage more people to pick up a tin, give it a go and enjoy it as much as the thousands of existing users. This also means, I should have extra time to reach more people through social and traditional media, teach and demonstrate more, too."



Disheartened by the quality of finishes he was using when he started woodturning, Martin wanted a finish that met simple criteria: It should keep its shine with regular handling for considerably longer than other available waxes, whilst also being

fingerprint and splash resistant. Hampshire Sheen was then developed through the summer of 2015 with a special blend using carnauba and microcrystalline waxes. Sales grew rapidly, and within a few months of the launch, it became clear that the Hampshire Sheen wax blend was on course for rapid growth.



Since then, the company has gone from strength to strength with retailers in the UK, Europe, America, Canada, Australia and South Africa. The company produces a simple, highly effective and long lasting finishing system for woodturners that includes finishing and embellishing

waxes, cellulose sealer, food and toy safe oil and an acrylic spray lacquer. The company also produces a range of 12 atmospheric water based dyes in the 'Intrinsic Colour Collection'.

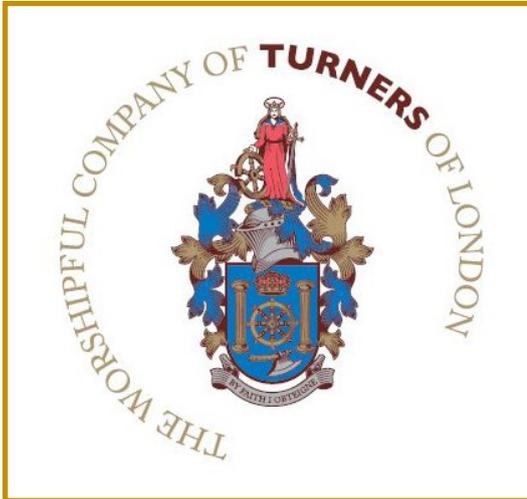
"The products I developed work brilliantly and it was important for me to ensure that Hampshire Sheen users receive the same quality product as when I was making them myself." Martin says "The samples from the new manufacturer have not disappointed and I'm thrilled that Hampshire Sheen users will now be able to use the new products on a wider range of projects."

Starting at the end of January, the new food contact and toy safe High Gloss and Microcrystalline waxes will start to be sent out to retailers. Interested turners and woodworkers are encouraged to visit www.hampshiresheen.com to find out more information and to find their nearest distributor.



Wizardry In Wood

It's another "Wizardry in Wood" again this year, so here's the latest info.....



Launch of Europe's largest woodturning competitions – call for entries

The Worshipful Company of Turners announces its 2020 competitions at Carpenters' Hall in the City of London held 13th - 17th October. With categories for all levels of interest, skill and turning speciality, including plenty for young turners in schools and colleges, it is the largest of its kind in Europe with entries from the UK and abroad. All entries registered with the Turners' Company by Monday 5 October and received by Monday 12 October will be exhibited as part of Wizardry in Wood, the Company's major exhibition, which attracts over 2000 visitors. Competition entries can be offered for sale as part of the 'Love. View. Buy' theme. Held every four years, Wizardry in Wood was launched by the Turners' Company in 2004 on the 400th anniversary of the granting of the Company's Royal Charter in 1604. Melissa Scott, Upper

Warden of the Turners' Company, said "The Turners' Company Competitions are now firmly embedded in the turning community's calendar, and we're excited to provide a platform that reveals the very best in contemporary turning as well as an opportunity for turners new to the craft. Simply by entering, their work will be seen by turners, art lovers and the curious public who decide to come to Wizardry in Wood and be amazed at our time-honoured craft." Please enter - and remember there really is a competition for everyone!

How to enter the Competitions

The Competitions are run in association with the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain, the Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Greenwood Workers, and the Society of Ornamental Turners. Full details are at <https://turnersco.com/turning/turning-competitions-2020/> There are thirteen categories, including those requiring special turning techniques such as combining two species of wood, or special themes such as creating a piece depicting 'Music'.



ARMISTICE
Margaret Garrard's winning entry from last year's Open Competition



Some of the successful 2016 entries

There are categories for young turners, and several where you can just enter whatever you like. The top prizes are worth over £1,000, along with sponsors' prizes of tools. Some of the UK's leading turners will be exhibiting including Sally Burnett, Margaret Garrard, Mick Hanbury, Louise Hibbert, Simon Hope, Phil Irons, Tobias Kaye, Richard Kennedy, Carlyn Lindsay, Stuart Mortimer, Gary Rance, Joey Richardson, Mark Sanger and Les Thorne. In addition there will be exhibitions of 400 years of turning in music, turning in magic and prehistoric

turning, as well as curated talks on specialist turning subjects. There will be demonstrations of plain turning, ornamental turning and pole lathe turning, and all entries to the Company's 2020 Competitions will be displayed. The AWGB will display its travelling exhibition, and the Register of Professional Turners' stand will include a retrospective of the work of Master Turner Ray Key.



Bursary
Awards

The Worshipful Company of Turners

Bursary Awards

Full information about the successful applicants for 2019 Bursary Awards can be found at <https://turnersco.com/turning/bursary-awards/> . We have already taken a look at one awardee, namely Miriam Jones, and in future issues of your newsletter, we'll be featuring individual awardees.

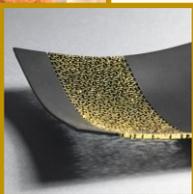


The Worshipful Company of Turners
Supporting the Craft, City and Charity for over four hundred years

For 2019, the Turners Company offered bursaries worth up to a combined value of just over £10,000 to assist talented woodturners

to develop their craft skills and to move to a higher level of achievement. The awards were open to UK resident turners whose work is well regarded by their peers and who could put forward a clear plan of how the award will advance their work, expand the boundaries of the craft of turning and raise the profile of the craft. In that year, there was an unprecedented amount of applicants, and the panel had to make some difficult decisions.

The successful applicants who are now spending their bursary awards were.....



- Jonnie Crawford, Fife, Scotland
- Joe Creed-Kaile, Dorset, England
- Miriam Jones, Gwynedd, Wales
- Richard Kennedy, Argyll, Scotland
- Adrian Lloyd, Cumbria, England
- Jason Lock, Colchester, England

- Matt Underwood, Loughborough, England
- Matthew Whittaker, Durham, England



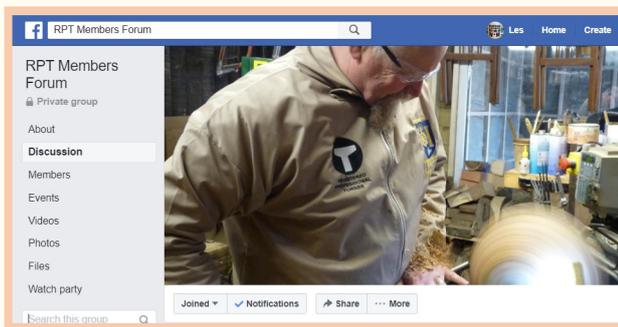


Social Media

Martin Saban Smith shares with us, his knowledge of Social Media Marketing

Like it or loathe it, social media is here to stay and for many, it has become an integral part of running a business. The platforms available can be used to generate new business, nurture existing customers, and bring you a wealth of ideas and inspiration from around the world. And financially, it's mostly free of charge.

Social media is there to use, and I would urge you to explore it properly before dismissing it as a waste of time, too difficult, too time consuming, too dangerous or any of the other negative things you may perceive it to be. Like most things, the more you put into it, the more you can get out.



To support my business, I use Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. To keep my personal posts separate from my business posts and vice-versa, I use a Facebook page for engaging with customers and followers, fellow turners, sharing ideas, thoughts, pictures, live demonstrations and occasional paid advertising.

YouTube is used for the sharing of properly edited video project demonstrations which are then shared

out onto Facebook and my websites. I use Instagram for sharing snippets of life around the workshop and the business as well as running a monthly competition through Hampshire Sheen.

Whether you are a production turner, demonstrator, teacher, arty turner or something else, there are ways you can use social media to bring in more business. For example, you can use Facebook pages to promote your business and gather potential customers, join groups to discuss woodturning ideas, practices and share pictures of finished work. Instagram can be used for sharing pictures of finished work for sale using hashtags, as can Pinterest. There are so many ways you can use social media for free to find new customers and develop your business.

The Register of Professional Turners has a growing public Facebook page that anyone can follow and see posts written and shared by the administrators. There is also a private Members Group which allows members to communicate with each other and discuss RPT business and ideas in private. Currently, the page has 573 followers, and the Members Group has just 48 members. These figures will be improved as I take up the mantel of webmaster for the RPT should I be elected at the AGM.

I will also be promoting every member of the Register using the Facebook page over the coming months. I will be using the photos and links provided by you on the RPT website profile. It will be very difficult to promote members if there is little or no information on their profile to use, so I urge all members to get their profiles up to date.

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Social
Media

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On my first glance at the RPT website, I was shocked at the number of incomplete profiles. Many had no images of work completed, no email address, no website address, or worse still, a website address that lead to nowhere.



But that is not enough though. The Register needs to be further promoted too. To do this, I will be utilising pictures posted by you on your RPT website profile. They will be used to promote the various aspects of the Registers work and drive visitors to the website and therefore member profiles.

Your profile on the RPT website is the window where visitors can find you. Profiles with engaging and up-to-date information will be more successful in attracting business from the RPT website. It is your responsibility to ensure your profile on the website is accurate. If you have lost your login details, visit <https://www.registerofprofessionalturners.co.uk/wp-login> and click on the Lost Password link below the login form. Instructions for resetting the password will be sent to you. There are also instructions on how to update your profile and add photos, links etc.

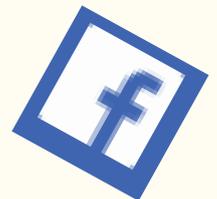


The AGM is an important day in the Register's calendar and the committee are very aware that not all members are able to attend because of time, distance or expense. To help with this, it is our intention to stream the AGM and the Masters address live in the Facebook Group on 24th March. To watch and listen to the proceedings, you will need to be a member of the RPT Members Forum on

Facebook, which requires a Facebook account.

If you do not have a Facebook account, opening one is easy and free. You can get started at www.facebook.com. When you have created your account and are logged in, visit RPT Page at <https://www.facebook.com/registerofprofessionalturners/> and click the 'Like' button. This will ensure you see posts by the Register in your news feed.

The RPT Members Forum Group is a private group where we can discuss things out of the public-eye. To join the group, visit www.facebook.com/groups/991669447555191/ and click on the 'Join' button. When we see that you have requested membership, we'll grant you access to the group. After we have done that, you will have access to the Group and be able to join in the discussions and post for yourself, too. You will also be notified in your Facebook account when someone posts in the group.



Facebook has comprehensive Help pages should you require any assistance in setting up your account. If you have any queries about the page or the group, contact me at the webmaster email address as I'll be happy to help.

Martin Saban Smith - Webmaster - The Register of Professional Turners