



President's Annual Report September 2012

After successive years in which the Guild has been involved in significant building programs, 2012 has been a relatively quiet year. Work had begun on the landscaping with some progress on the construction of the retaining. However, for various reasons, work on this project stalled and remains to be completed. I see this as being one of the major objectives for the coming year.

While work on the construction side and landscaping has slowed, 2012 has been a busy year for the Guild with much work being done behind the scenes. The Committee has been active in addressing many of the pressing administrative issues associated with the efficient and effective management of the Guild's business and in responding to members' needs.

The first major challenge for the committee this year was to respond to growing criticism of the failure of the accreditation process which many felt was not responsive to members needs. As a result, new systems and processes have been devised. Accreditation notes and test papers and more training sessions and trainers are now available. These measures have led to a reduction in the number of members waiting to be accredited. There is still more work to be done in ensuring that all machinery and equipment items are covered and accreditation and safety will continue to be a focus for the Committee.

In the process of the review, the Committee for the first time used an on-line electronic survey to ascertain members' needs and obtain information about the type of training and other details which would help the committee to plan a new approach. An electronic survey was also used to obtain members' views in relation to the annual exhibition. It has proved to be a useful tool in providing a clearer picture of members needs.

A second challenge this year was the need for a major overhaul of the Guild's Website which had been languishing for some time. On 6 March 2012, a Website Sub-Committee convened by Dan Steiner met to consider all the issues relating to the layout/design, content and regular updating of the website. The new site went live in July and contains many new features. To quote Robin Cromer, who was one of the driving forces behind the change, "...the aim of the upgrade was to present a more professional image of the Guild, particularly to members of the public who may be interested in joining. However, the site also aims to provide readily obtainable information on any aspect of the Guild's activities they may wish to pursue."

The new website is a credit to all those who were involved. In terms of sheer effort alone, and the important role it plays, it stands out as the most significant achievement for the Guild this year.

Allied to this, and also in keeping with the objective of presenting a more professional public image, the Guild has also introduced a new logo for use in all its promotional material. Thanks again to Robin Cromer who was responsible for bringing this about.

Another important focus for the Committee has been that of Membership. During the year a review of the membership procedures was undertaken by the Committee with a view to ironing out a number of procedural problems. As a result the rules, procedures and membership forms for both new members and renewals have been revised.

The Committee has also addressed the pressing need to attract new members through the introduction of Open Days at the Shed. The first of these was held in September 2011 following the Timber and Working



with Wood Show. It was a great success with twenty two new members joining on the day of which six were family and female members. In the light of that success the Committee agreed that it would continue to conduct Open Days following the Timber and Working with Wood Show and the National Folk Festival. Accordingly, successful Open Days were held again this year in May and September with a total of twenty nine new members including family members joining the Guild. For the twelve month period to the end of September this year, fifty one new members signed up through this initiative.

The Bar Code system, introduced some time ago to streamline administrative and financial management of sales, has extended to the management of the Library. It is proving to be a very successful tool which has greatly improved our efficiency in this area and made things a lot simpler. A special vote of thanks is Due to Derek Jewell, who did a tremendous amount of work in sorting out the system and also, of course, to those who helped him.

Newsletter and Library

Despite a number of setbacks, our witty and erudite editor has continued to produce the Guild's monthly newsletter. I believe everyone looks forward each month to what is an informative, well produced document which admirably serves its many purposes, just one of which is keeping members and the public at large informed of Guild activities. In addition, Rod continues to assist our new librarian Brian Treanor, in his duties. Thanks to both for their efforts this year in managing this valuable resource.

Finance

The Guild remains in a strong financial position as will be noted from the accompanying treasurer's report for the year. That it does so, despite significant increases in operational expenditure in recent years, is due largely to the success of our membership program and our revenue raising activities which continue to contribute amounts comparable with those in previous years. For the time being, the Committee holds the view that there is no need to increase membership or other fees, but if costs continue to rise, then at some time in the not too distant future the question of fees will need to be reviewed if we are to remain financially sound.

Monthly meetings

We have been fortunate this year in having a varied program presented by many speakers some of whom are among the leading practitioners in their field. They have variously entertained, educated and astounded us with the breadth of their knowledge and skills. As a quick reminder here is the program since last October.

In October we had a visit from the Kambah Fire Station officers who gave us a quick once over on our fire safety equipment and procedures. This was followed in November with Richard Raffan providing commentary on the many images he took illustrating woodworking in America. In the new year, Myles Gostelow, a fine furniture maker and carver from Tharwa, spoke about carving. In a change of direction in March, Neil Wilson took us back to the nineteenth century world of the wheelwright and carriage maker to show us how things were- and, and in some cases, still are -done a hundred or so years ago.



We went backwards (and forwards) in time again in March when Ashley Eriksmoen delivered a history on woodwork spanning the centuries from the Ice Age to Lasers. Based on her experience during a field Scholarship in Norway, her talk focussed on traditional woodworking techniques and the evolution of technology. In April, Mark Viner, the head of Sturt, took us away from ancient woodworking techniques to the world of theatre and stage and set design in London and the UK. Mark showed, with some very cleverly drawn cartoons and some amusing anecdotes about the theatre world, that the link between set design and construction, and fine woodworking is not as tenuous as some might think.

We were still abroad in May when young and talented maker Rolf Barfoed spoke of his experiences in the UK workshop of leading furniture maker Richard Williams. What stood out from this talk was the scope and very high standard of work undertaken and the opportunity that such an experience offers to young makers. Will Matthysen, the master wooden clock maker from Victoria was our speaker for June. Will demonstrated something of an evolution in his own making and design process through the clock he brought to display and the excellent photographs of his work in which he has been introducing other materials such as, glass, steel, brass and other metals in to his repertoire of designs with stunning success. His clocks are masterpieces of engineering, and though they may contain an increasing amount of other materials, the wood remains the essential ingredient and the material which unites his designs.

In July, Robin Cromer spoke on timber and woodcraft in Japan where their craftsmen retain a unique and traditional approach, particularly in the area of woodturning. In August Don Hung, demonstrated some of the many virtues of Festool Tools and equipment.

Tonight as a final note to round off the year, we revisit the subject of Violin and Cello making, this time with professional maker Hugh Withycombe.

Shed Facilities and Equipment

Following the acquisition last year of the new helical head thicknessing machine the Guild was able to sell the Carba Tec machine to one of the members. New purchases this year included the 14" Jet Bandsaw and the Jet Linisher, a Vicmarc VL100 variable speed lathe, and just in the last few days, two new 8"inch grinders to replace the current machines which were beginning to show signs of wear. These purchases are part of an ongoing program to review and assess equipment and machinery needs for the Guild to ensure that members continue to have access to reliable, accurate and safe equipment. I believe also that we all owe a debt of thanks to Dave Callan who has done a magnificent job as our machine maintenance man.

In the interest of reducing the fire hazard risk within the Shed the Guild purchased and installed a flammable materials storage shed on a concrete pad behind the container.

Community Activities

This year the Guild has again contributed to several community activities. The Schools to Industry Program, conducted in collaboration with the Lions Youth Haven, is managed by Phil Coleman, Mike Cammell, John McKenna and other members who volunteer their time each Thursday to teach woodcraft skills to young students who find it difficult to cope with a normal classroom situation and who benefit from a one-on-one learning framework in a more relaxed environment. Own Stewart has been a major contributor to the Toy SIG.s production of toys for donation to charities. This year we participated in the Canberra Show, the



National Folk Festival with demonstrations for Fisher Discounts and Bunnings Hardware store in Tuggeranong.

Commissions

Our redoubtable Shed Boss, Terry O'Loughlin, with assistance from Alan Walker and others completed a number of commissions during the year on behalf of the Guild. Among these were the display cases for Dremel which required a complex array of internal fittings to allow their reps to demonstrate the capacity of the Dremel tools. I also made a blanket box for the organisers of the NFF as a part of their raffle prize. Such commissions contribute to the Guild's annual revenue with more than \$3,000 received this year.

Training/Workshops

In keeping with one of the major objectives of the Guild i.e., to provide opportunities for members to acquire woodcraft skills and techniques and broaden their knowledge and expertise several training courses and workshops have been held over the last twelve months.

In January, Richard Raffan, assisted by several other members who know a little about turning, ran a one week turning course for eleven students all of whom enjoyed the week and managed to produce some credible pieces as well.

Workshops have been conducted on creative design, the use of the Gifkins dovetail jig and ornamental turning. Following the NFF David Callan and Terry O'Loughlin ran an introductory hand tool skills course- Woodworking 101- with eight participants each of whom managed over the weekend to make themselves a marking gauge. John Armstrong organised an introduction to carving course which was also well attended, while the pyrographers, not to be outdone also conducted a number of workshops during the year. I also conducted another boxmaking course and a projects course this year. Each of the SIGS has also played a part during the year in assisting members to develop new skills. Further opportunities in the next twelve months include another masterclass with David Upfill-Brown towards the middle of next year, and, within the next few months, a weekend workshop at the Shed on steambending with Angus Watson. Plans are also in hand for a one week course on making a double-bow Windsor Chair with Neil Wilson, Ian Guthridge from the ANU and myself at Kialoa on the south coast, in the first week of December.

Timber and tool sales

Both these activities continue to generate income for the Guild and more importantly provide a resource from which members can draw on. In the current, year revenue from timber and tool sales amounts to \$9705. The timber drying shed is full at the moment with varying species including elm, oak, cypress, osage orange plus others which have come to the guild from various sources including a number of fallen trees from Government House in Canberra. The timber has been slabbed and is in the process of drying. A number of logs some, among them a large Claret Ash, are waiting to be milled. The tool sales continue, but with the departure of Keith Houston to the south coast we are in want of another volunteer to manage this area. The Guild is particularly indebted to Graham Hargense for his role in recovering and milling urban trees donated to the Guild and which form a large part of our timber sales operation.



Annual Exhibition

The recent Annual Exhibition was again held at EPIC in conjunction with the Timber and Working with Wood Show. A number of changes were made this year to the competition rules the most significant of which was the abolition of the Open section. Other changes were made in an effort to streamline the administrative effort involved. The exhibition Sub-committee introduced this year a trophy for members champion the inaugural winner of which was Terry O'Loughlin. Another change this year was the decision to delay the draw of the Annual Raffle, a major fundraiser, until the Canberra Home and Leisure Show which will be held at EPIC from 26 -28 October.

The number of entries overall was much the same as in previous years with a marked increases in boxes but a downturn in furniture standing out as two significant variations. The overall standard in all categories has improved steadily over the past four or five years, a fact that was related to me at the show by a number of independent observers. This is a pleasing result. One other matter of note is that, this year, the exhibition was mounted without the assistance of the RNCAS on whom we have relied in the past for assistance with display cabinets and other items including the bollards and chains. The Guild has purchased its own bollards and its own high visibility safety vests and managed to stage the exhibition using its own display stands. I think this should continue although we will need to give consideration to refurbishing or building some new display stands or cabinets and this matter will be referred to the next exhibition sub-committee.

Disappointingly, the total number of visitors this year seemed to be remarkably less than in previous years. That aside, the Exhibition was a great success.

Conclusions

The above by no means represents an exhaustive account of the Guild's activities for the year, but it touches the highlights and gives an overall account of major undertakings and events. It does, however, indicate that the Guild is an effective organisation which continues to fulfil all of its eleven objectives. That it does so is in large part due to all the members, and especially the many dedicated volunteers who contribute their time skills and energy to the Guild's activities. In particular to my fellow members on the committee, who have done so much during the year and in general to each Guild member, thank you all for your generous support.

Fred Buckley

President

September 2012