



The Woodturners Association of Western Australia (Inc)

Life Membership

John Douglas Lathwell – 36

John Douglas Lathwell is one of our very early members, joining in November 1985.

John soon became involved in the activities of the Association when he cut a number of silk screen designs for our overalls etc., and spent many hours decorating our various clothing items. His professional skills were soon evident in our familiar WAWA signs, plus many others appertaining to our regular workshops.

John spent many hours over the years carrying out a very necessary service visiting members in hospital.

When the then new Chuck Wagon came into being John, along with several other members, put a lot of time into designing and establishing an efficient means of carting the necessary items to our regular Workshops which had become a feature of our organisation.

John was instrumental in setting up a PA System for our workshops; this involved him in a lot of investigating of equipment suitable for our needs; he was on constant call for adjustments to the equipment in those early days.

John took on the onerous position of Workshop Co-ordinator and served in this position for some six years. He was instrumental in getting the Workshops to that efficient stage with which most of us are familiar. He produced check lists so that Group Convenors hosting a workshop had reference to every item that had to be organised and attended to. John, like many others, spends quite a lot of time answering telephone inquiries and giving a few hints to new disciples of our craft.

John has been ably supported by his wife Marie, who is involved in ensuring the smooth running of the monthly workshops catering section amongst other activities of service.

In presenting John with Life Membership, we acknowledge his tremendous contributions to the well organised Woodturning Weekends of this Association.

Presented 1994

PROFILE OF A TURNER

(extract from newsletter number 67, February/March 1997)

John Lathwell is a genuine sandgroper having been born and educated in WA. After leaving school soon after the end of World War 11 he obtained a job making musical instruments. The business was started by two ex-prisoners of war who employed John. Using mainly Queensland Maple or Butternut when maple was scarce, they produced ukuleles and full-size guitars. The finger boards were made from WA Peppermint which was very hard and resisted wear.

At one stage John thought he might like to go farming and for about 18 months worked on farms at Bodallin and Wagin. He decided that he could only become a farmer under one of three conditions - be born with a silver spoon, marry a rich farmer's daughter or win the lottery. As none of these appeared likely he decided to leave farming.

John enrolled at Perth Technical College and studied art for 2 1/2 years. He became a ticket writer and this occupation served him well in travels around Australia. He was almost always able to get employment and while working in Sydney he met Marie who was to become his wife. While working for David Jones he was transferred back to Perth.

John became involved in full time commercial art in design, water colour, oils and acrylics. This involved designing such things as letterheads, logos, book jackets and record covers as well as advertisements for the press. John in fact designed the WAWA logo. John finally became art director at several art studios.

His interest in wood turning started after a visit to a cousin in Manjimup who had been turning for 20 years. When John expressed an interest in learning his cousin gave him a day during which he turned an 8" bowl under his direction.

John purchased a cheap lathe in 1981 but soon graduated to a Tough lathe. In 1982 he collected green jarrah planks from a timber mill in the Hills and sealed and seasoned these so that he had a good supply for many years. He turns standard lamps, table lamps and a range of perfume atomisers and pens both ball point and fountain. At one time he turned legs for 16 birdcage tables for a client. The table tops were marble 900mm x 1200mm and the 64 legs of Honduran Mahogany and Asian Teak were 5'6" diameter.

John joined WAWA at their second meeting so he is one of the early members. He was a member of the Committee for 8 years and for 6 years was the Weekend Workshop Coordinator and a great worker for the Association. His sterling efforts have been rewarded with Life Membership of the Association. After a spell from the job of Coordinator he now finds himself back in his old position. All the members of WAWA have greatly appreciated his dedicated service.