

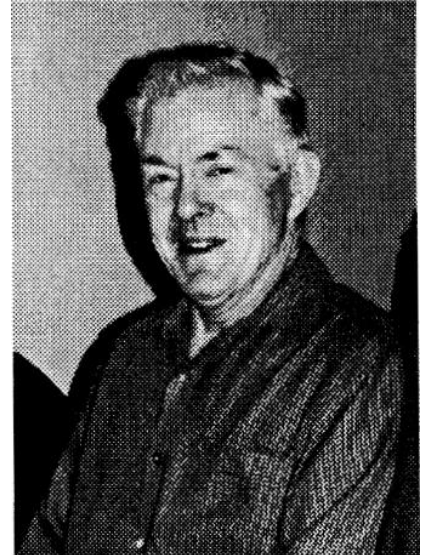
PROFILE OF A TURNER

Alan France, arguably one of WAWA's best turners is another of our genuine Sandgropers. He was born in Vincent St. North Perth, overlooking the football ground. Alan's father was a jeweller and watchmaker.

His father's business was in Katanning and Alan's primary schooling began there, but at age 9 the family moved to Subiaco where his primary schooling was completed. Alan's secondary schooling was undertaken at the Junior Technical School in Newcastle St., where, in addition to the normal academic subjects, instruction was given in technical drawing, metal work, woodwork and blacksmithing. He successfully obtained his Junior Certificate at the school.

While still at school, Alan bred and competed with racing pigeons as a member of the junior section of the Subiaco Racing Pigeon Association. A loft was built in the back yard of their home and Alan built his own time clock for the timing of the bird flights. He had about 40 birds and continued this hobby for about 4 years.

After completing his Junior Certificate, Alan obtained an apprenticeship with the WAGR at the Midland workshops as a



Pattern Maker. This entailed making a huge variety of different patterns for mouldings of articles as diverse as handles and brake pads through wagon and engine wheels to a propeller for the state ship Kanimbla. The patterns were made in yellow pine as this gave minimum warping and the moulds would be made from these patterns.

For a change of scene, Alan then went with his brother crayfishing at the Abrolhos Islands. In between pulling cray pots, Alan partook one of his favourite pastimes, which is wet line fishing. During one of these trips, he managed to put a hole in his boat which, unbeknown to him at the time, was very close to where the wreck of the Batavia was ultimately discovered. In between fishing seasons, Alan worked at Chamberlain Tractors as a pattern maker.

Alan says that in many ways the crayfishing and fishing were one of the highlights of his life, but having met and proposed to Maxine, with the long periods away and the uncertainties, he decided to leave cray fishing. As a point of interest, he was offered a fishing boat, together with licences, for \$500, a far cry from today's prices.

Having always had an ambition to be a teacher, Alan then enrolled at Teachers College and trained as a Manual Arts teacher. Over the years, he taught at Fremantle Boys, Geraldton, Cyril Jackson and Como Senior High School.

While woodturning was part of his trade as a pattern maker, it was mostly with scrapers and skew chisels and practically never with gouges. At the Midland Workshops there was a huge wood turning lathe which had a travelling post and they used a ring gouge for making patterns for cylinder rings for steam engines. They would turn slightly tapered cylinders and then cut them into rings from which the moulds were made.

In the schools only a limited amount of turning was done and he had never used high speed steel tools until he joined WAWA. Joe Saat introduced Alan to WAWA and most of what he has learnt has been learnt in the Association. He has obviously learnt well as he consistently wins the weekend competitions and the 'highest points for the year' competition. In particular, he is renowned for the accuracy of his joins in his segmented work and the innovative forms he has accomplished. He is a popular and extremely competent demonstrator, and his demonstrations are always eagerly attended.

Alan is a great asset to our Association.