

## Nicholas Abbott 1939–2016

With great sadness we report the death after a long illness of Nick Abbott. With his distinguished husky voice, Nick was a well-known supporter of Society events, which he attended with Katie, his wife of fifty years. As chair makers Nick and Katie generously hosted instructional days at their home in Essex for members of our Society and numerous other groups, especially local schoolchildren.

From a very early age Nick was fascinated with how things worked, making a scale model of the Ark Royal at just four years old. A Classics scholar at Cambridge, he joined the family solicitors practice in Chelmsford and spent the rest of his life in Essex, believing that a life lived close to one's roots can be more rewarding than man's primeval urge to be always searching a better environment.

As a solicitor Nick was highly regarded for his calm incisive approach, but he was uncomfortable with an office-based life. In the eighties Nick and Katie bought a 25-acre beech wood at Maldon in Essex 'to liberate the spirit'. The family would stay in the wood for long periods, often spending Christmas Day around a campfire with a Thermos of soup and sandwiches. Managing the wood led Nick and Katie to attend a green woodworking course – they were immediately hooked. Nick took early retirement and they started making chairs of the highest quality,

which rapidly developed into a business. They attended many shows where they worked at their 'matrimonial' lathe: Katie turning the legs at one end while Nick shaped seats at the other.

Nick's funeral in the medieval barn near their home at Great Dunmow was packed by hundreds of friends and colleagues from the many societies with which he was associated. We learned from one of his oldest friends that Nick attributed his second career to a mid-life reaction to his parent's failure to recognise and encourage his creative talents in childhood. This perhaps explains his passionate encouragement of youth in later years. William Wall, from the Association of Pole Lathe Turners, of which Nick was a founder member and past chairman, celebrated the kind but critical encouragement Nick had given him over the years and his pleasure in visiting the family home where above the living room fireplace is carved Nick's mantra 'Persistence is as Important as Aptitude'. This house which meant so much to Nick is filled with furniture of Nick and Katie's own design and making, balanced with beautiful pieces by other makers and friends who share their deep love of wood and craftsmanship – the house where Nick died peacefully surrounded by his family, the morning sun streaming through the windows.

*Gill Pinn and Jeremy Bate*



Nick Abbott and his wife, Katie, assembling a stick-back Windsor chair