



"TURNINGS"

Avon and Bristol Woodturners

*Affiliated to the Association of Woodturners of
Great Britain*

FEBRUARY 2007

INTRODUCTION (By Editor)

Corrections: January's newsletter contained two inaccuracies - one about our founding year and the other about AWGB subs. Max corrected both for those at the January meeting but for the record our twentieth anniversary year is 2009, and AWGB subs are £14 and NOT £14.50.

It is very pleasing to report receipt of a note from **our founder - Don White**. His eagle eye had spotted the founding year slip and he advises that the precise date to set our sights on for the '20th' anniversary is FEBRUARY 2009. He sends his thanks for the newsletter and his regards to all, and says that Simon and John's field project has caught his interest. (Gentlemen – you can expect a visit!)

FROM THE CHAIR Hi!! Ten new members in the last month!! That's worthy of note! Over the last six years more than eighty members have left, for a variety of reasons, but the overall membership is increasing and stands now at 100+! AWGB subs are overdue, and St Theresa's membership fee is **now** due. Experience shows that a few members drop out at this point in the year, but that's how it goes.

Attached to this newsletter are an AGM agenda and nomination forms for your attention. **Prospective new committee members are sought please!** Enthusiasm and a modicum of common sense are all that is required of a member. You will gain a good insight into day-to-day running of the Club, leading hopefully to your becoming instrumental in affairs at some point in the future.

My count-down to a smooth handover is well in hand, and the names of a very able team are pencilled in to carry on the good work. AGMs are a necessary part of every Club's activities and they require some preparatory work. It will help to speed things along if members submit any motions or proposals by the end of this month (February) thereby leaving plenty of time on AGM night for socialising and taking part in 'Show and Tell' and the monthly theme.

Tich's January 'Idiot Stick' demo went down well, and I was surprised that so few members had seen one before. Well done and thanks a lot.

Tim McEvoy has joined us on the Mill staff and is extremely welcome! His fresh approach to training will be another great asset. Thanks Tim!!

Perhaps 'Pick-a-Peg' requests need a little clarification. Neil Gow's concept, and his making of the tree, resulted in the idea taking off like the proverbial rocket, turning a loss-making 'Westonbirt' into profit.

Ray Chambers, ably assisted by Becky Heryet, was the 'chief barker' for the first couple of years. Lorraine took over and has fronted the team admirably, still with Becky's help, and with the able assistance also of several others including Richard Cridland with his bell, and Don Box. Members have donated thousands of items over the years including mushrooms, whistles, spinning tops, carrier bag handles, idiot sticks, dibbers and rolling pins plus the essential 1st and 2nd prizes. **Lorraine would now like to encourage all members to participate please and to make all you can.** If you need a steer do have a word with her on Club nights. Thereafter, she will accept gratefully all your offerings, and if you are lucky you may get a hug and/or a kiss, followed up perhaps with a request for your help in coaxing folk to part with their money at Westonbirt. Nearer the time, please do tell her when you will be available so that she can draw up a staffing plan. The whole festival (or whatever else it may be termed) is a great fun event not to be missed! Do put the August Bank Holiday weekend firmly in your diary and plans!

This month's committee meeting will be held after the newsletter goes to press because neither Chairman, nor Vice-Chairman, were available for the regular 'second Tuesday of the month'. However, improvements to Sound and Visuals, staffing and a rationalised Hall layout plan are on the agenda (the last mentioned being to ensure that all willing helpers will know exactly where everything goes in the very short time span available). The need to apply for the award of lottery funds to meet a variety of needs is also being addressed actively. Stuart Bradfield has offered his expertise.

Please give Chris Eagles a warm welcome tonight. He will be new to some more recently joined members but familiar to a good many others. He is a great friend, and our neighbouring (Gloucestershire) club's chairman. His innovative, and inimitable method of demonstrating is illuminating and very entertaining. I feel sure you will all be impressed.

Finally, there are many national competitions, bursaries, Loughborough grants, course scholarships, etc. open for members' applications. Several of you guys are eligible so.....Go On, Go For It! You have nothing to lose and the possibility of a lot to gain! If you need advice, feel free to ask!

Kind Regards.....Max

THE 'MEAN TIME' 'THEME AND DISPLAY' TABLE *(By Julie Heryet)*

The 'Theme and Display' table was crammed at the last meeting. I find this inspiring because I really enjoy looking at turned work, but also because it appears that more and more members are taking part.

Whilst only one of the items featured from the monthly theme, this doesn't matter in the slightest. The theme is only a suggestion to those not sure what to make, or, to widen the scope of those of us that stick to making similar items from month to month.

It was a pleasure to have the benefit of Nick Agar's expertise for the evening's critique as he has a wonderfully bold eye for the artistic as well as a lovely sense of humour. (Incidentally, have a peep at his website at www.turningintoart.com).

Ian Full's table lamp in Spalted Holly was very well thought out and turned! He made use of flowing curves, crisp detail and a good finish. (Ian I still have your goodie bag).

The huge segmented vase from Robin Hunt was an amazing feat and I envy the patience involved!!! More startling is the fact that Robin has been turning for only one year!!!

The goblets from Ken Crittle were real eye candy. Using a lovely combination of timbers, they were beautifully delicate, with gorgeous, spiralled stems.

Please keep sharing those projects. Whether from the novice or more experienced, this element of Club activity provides valued learning opportunities for many of us and is much appreciated. Should anyone have any thoughts as to future topics or projects, whether they be specific items or a general theme, then please do contact me. I would truly like to incorporate your ideas. Similarly, if you would like to be involved in the critique or can think of ways to improve it, then do let me know.

Thank you for your support!!

ANNUAL PROGRAMME *(Also By Julie Heryet)*

A few more names to whet your appetites for the coming months:

July Gary Rance - Not sure of the topic but whatever it is, it will be good.

September Keith Fenton - Pepper Mills. Excellent exponent of these.

October Gerry Marlow - Goblets, Candlesticks and Pendant. Intriguing methods.

January 2008 Ian Hooker - Segmented Bowls, Jigs and glue-ups aplenty

Weekend Demonstrations

May 6/7 Allan Batty No intro. necessary

TBD Mike Darlow ditto

A programme card will be available at the AGM (Well ... I am hopeful...)

If anyone has a particular demonstrator that they wish to see visit Avon and Bristol then please let me know. I am trying to coordinate a 2-year programme.

DESIGN *(By 'Woodentop')* Since joining ABWT, I have been pleasantly surprised not only by the various skills and competences of the group, but by your willingness to share this, the common aim of making things that please.

When teaching "The Quality of Design" (the design process in industry,) sometime ago, I always stressed the importance of being customer focussed, and continual improvement. This still applies if we are only trying to make it for ourselves.

We all take pleasure in viewing, but above all, in handling these beautiful objects (this is exemplified in our "bring and tell" sessions). Their tactility is often such that we regret having to let go, and hand it on. So what is it that we are appreciating when we say "I like that"? What is this thing we refer to when we say "I like that design"?

We all agree that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but surely it's much more than that. If you were asked to define or specify exactly what it was that, in modern terms "turned you on" when you first saw it, I suspect you would find it hard to do so. But you know you like it, want to caress and fondle it. But, again, why?

We know we like what we see, or think we see. It appeals to our aesthetic senses. We like the "shape", the "form" the "profiles"- we all like "curvaceous" things - curves emphasise the "finish." All of these characteristics we tend to refer to as "design", but it's much more than that.

Are we not really appreciating, sub-consciously that the turner has the mental ability (as Max told me when I started to turn my first bowl) "to see the finished article before making the first cut" and that he has employed his knowledge of the material and its properties and characteristics, (grain etc) to accentuate the positive, to bring out the best, and (excuse the pun) as Dennis May would say, "to turn adversity to advantage" (whilst still ensuring its

got a pleasing bottom!) He will have applied his skills in utilising the quirks of light and shade, and optical illusions, to advantage when deciding shape and form, and to enhance our overall aesthetic pleasure when we first see it. Achieved is what Lorraine calls the “Wow” factor - it’s the only word we can think of when first we see it.

Chambers’ Concise Dictionary has various definitions of design, but the 2 I think most appropriate in this case are:

- a. Using cunning or deceit to achieve something, and
- b. The way in which an object is made

When I first started woodwork many years ago, one of my respected tutors summarised Design as: Inspiration, Desperation, Creation. Now having credited you all with skills you never thought you had, I will bring you all back to earth, by reminding you of the most honest answer a turner ever gave me, when I asked a woman turner of those arty flimsy frilly curvaceous bowls “What determined your design?”

With a wry smile, she calmly replied “The number of mistakes I make and 20 seconds in the microwave” So next time you see a beautiful article, just admire and appreciate it, and.....DON’T ASK!

NOTES FROM A NOVICE WOOD TURNER *(By Melita Clark)*

I first became interested in wood turning after watching a demonstration on bowl making, so I decided to take a one day workshop. I surfed the net to find a course and ended up going to a turner near Pontypool. In the morning I made (with the help of the instructor) a honey spoon and a dibber, and we had a talk on the different woods suitable for turning. After lunch I made a lovely bowl in Cherry (with much help from the instructor). By this time I was “hooked” and he (Clive Jones) told me about the Avon & Bristol Club.

Once home I went on the net and found you. I spoke to Nigel Hussey who suggested I come down to Portishead and have a look round. Several weeks later I plucked up the courage to go down to the Mill. Nigel was there and I introduced myself. His reply was.... ‘Melita, we have been waiting for you’. That immediately put me at ease and made me feel comfortable. I knew no one there and was feeling a little apprehensive. However, Nigel introduced me to Max, who was very welcoming and friendly. This was a few weeks before Christmas last year and it was decided I would join after the Christmas break.

I arrived sans tools and everything else and was delighted to be welcomed. Tich Renee “took me over” as it were. He found me some tools and a lathe, gave me two samples of work to copy with beads and coves, and gave me a roughing out gouge, a spindle gouge and the dreaded skew chisel. He then showed me how to use them and said ‘away you go.’ I then realised this was not going to be as easy as I thought and wondered what I was doing here. However, everyone was so friendly and helpful. Many of the chaps came over and introduced themselves and offered advice, and Tich came over regularly to see how I was getting on; but I must say that by 4pm I was feeling very frazzled after so many dig-ins, but they all said “don’t worry my dear, it will get better!”

The following Tuesday I spent all day again doing beads and coves with slightly fewer dig-ins, but still very bad at my work. On my third Tuesday I met Tim McAvoy who had joined as a new instructor. I gather that he was asked to help me, and he certainly did. He put me at my ease and told me not to be impatient. He said it will take many weeks before you begin to feel any confidence so don’t try to run before you can walk! I must say that by the end of the day I was really beginning to enjoy myself, and had very few dig-ins that day.

I would just like to say how lucky I think we are to have such excellent instruction (all for a fiver a day) and a very well equipped workshop and enthusiastic and friendly membership. I am looking forward to continuing and, maybe one day, being able to make something good enough for the ‘Show & Tell’ table
Thank you all for being so helpful & encouraging to a very novice wood-turner!

P.S. I have just bought myself a small lathe (the Axminster 330M) and a set of ‘Henry Taylor’ tools. So now I can practise at home. But what on earth do you do with all those wood shavings?

JANUARY MEETING - TURNERS’ QUESTION TIME *(By Brian Oram)* The advertised programme was as above so it was a surprise when Max opened the meeting by saying that to further assist in the development of Malcolm (Tich) Renee’s demonstration skills, he would take the first half of the evening.

He showed us his puzzle piece aptly named later by Max as an 'idiot stick'. He had made (earlier) a 6 inch long example, and also a very large one which he 'worked' before starting. The puzzle consists of a barrel piece and a fitted, hooked rod, which 'catches' on an elastic band at the bottom of the tube and this causes it to spring back. The puzzle is to catch the band and make it work. So, how did the demo go, for Tich and for us'?

Tich's turning (WTOTY 2006) and one-to-one tutorial skills are unchallengeable. However, demonstrators need to talk, to tell us what they are doing and why; what wood they are using, explain tool selection, particular problems which might be met etc. Unhappily, little commentary was given during the demonstration, apart from which tools he was using; and the sound volume problem was back again. Such commentary as there was, was inaudible, even though he **was** 'wearing' the mike. So, Tich, my **well-intentioned** reaction has to be..... talk more, speak loudly and more slowly and check that the words are coming out of the loudspeakers.

One last criticism, and I apologise for the rather negative tone, is that I think the demo should have finished with an explanation of how the trick worked. I didn't know until a kind neighbour explained it to me. I have nothing but admiration for anyone who stands up in front and works a lathe there and then, but 'keep reading the instructions' please, Tich!

After the break we enjoyed a full and enjoyable critique of the 'Show and Tell' when Julie, aided by guest panellist Nick Agar, discussed a wide and interesting range of pieces (**not that the turners themselves got much chance to 'tell' even though I got the impression that they were ready to talk!**)

It was after half past nine before we got down to the advertised programme of Turners' Questions. Perhaps I was the only member feeling a bit jaded by then, but please do bear in mind, oh organisers, that some of us do now have to travel a long way!. In my opinion, the discussion was not the success it deserved to be, partly due to the mechanics of the presentation. As there is no podium at the Social Club the panel, Nick Agar, Julie Heryet and Rob Postlethwaite, sat at our level, so few had a proper view of them, nor was there adequate (if any) microphone support. The result, for those of us in rows eight or nine, was partly inaudible answers to questions which couldn't be heard either. After asking three times for the questions to be repeated, Derek, acting as chairman to the panel, got the message (thanks) and repeated the questions for us to hear, but the panel's vocal powers were impeded by the mass of heads between them and us. The clearest speaker was Rob (no doubt his professional training helped). Julie's clear pitch was not as audible as when she stands and delivers her judgements but I'm afraid that Nick Agar mumbles! I won't attempt to summarise the questions, but, by and large, the answers to all of them were – "it all depends" – on the wood, the tools, the finish, the required result etc.

One question concerned dust in the workshop and I did hear Nick Agar's answers, which were that the order of priority was:-

- First Total positive face protection against dust ('Trend' type airshield)
- Second 'Microclene' type dust extractor/s over lathe
- Third Chip extractor

My strictly personal assessment of Thursday's meeting was that it was a 'curate's egg'. I would ask that in future the advertised main event be the main event and comes on first, for however long it needs. Also, we do need to continue to research the sound/audibility questions.

Vernon reminds us from time of the importance of feedback. I could do with some myself now. Does anyone read this rubbish I write and if so, does it have value?

A FEW MORE ODDMENTS FROM JANUARY (By Vernon Hughes)

There was a good turnout. Five new members had joined since Christmas and they were introduced. Max clarified our 'year of birth'. He went on to advise that some thought was being given to the idea that perhaps we should support a charity; it could be something more specific than Mervyn's 'Tools for Africa' and the indirect support of 'Tree Aid' at Westonbirt. **Lorraine suggested a New year's Resolution re 'Pick-a-Peg' - Make two items a month, every month!! This could be for example a Mushroom and a Surprise item, etc., etc., etc!!!** Engraved glass tumblers were presented to each of last year's main prizewinners announced in December. Derek Edwards had received his supply of Blender Pens for transferring images for pyrography; a few went on the night and he has more in stock for those keen to lay their hands on this very useful product.

I am fascinated by the emergence of new talent in the Club and observed two shining examples last month (one literally so). Julie has already mentioned the stunning achievement by Robin Hunt with that magnificent, large, segmented vase! Then Tim McEvoy ‘detached himself like a shadow from the wall’ and stood modestly before us with those four superb, pierced Christmas tree decorations in the style portrayed in ‘Woodturning’ a couple of months back and illuminated by small flashing lights (powered by hearing aid batteries) held in position by magnets. From a couple of mentions above it is clear that Tim has already made an impact at ‘The Mill’ but to the best of my knowledge this was his first ace played on a Club night!!! Oh yes, and may I just be allowed to refer to a face that beamed all evening? It belonged to Ralph Tilbrook on account of his Ripple Sycamore achievement!!

WISE WORDS (*Evolved by Ray Mellett in his teaching career*)

Tell me, and I will forget;
Show me and I will (may) remember; **but**
Let me do it, and I will know,

MORE ABOUT YEW, AND DID YOU NOTICE IN ‘WOODTURNING’? (*By V F H*)

Last month we looked briefly at Yew and its toxicity. This glorious timber features (at least) three times in the March edition of ‘Woodturning’. Firstly, Mark Baker’s leader (page 6) emphasises the attractiveness of Yew for turners, and he was clearly thinking of its use as a decorative timber. However, on pages 71 to 74 Bill Care has used it to make a nutmeg grinder, which would of course bring it into contact (albeit it in a minor way) with a food item (e.g. ground nutmeg on a custard tart - *oh boy!*). Then, some 20 pages later, Dr Sally Francis writes:

“The major downside of Yew is that its timber is toxic and so can only be used for decorative items. This consideration did not stop the Vikings making their drinking cups from it though - excavated examples have been found in York and Winchester. Maybe their drinking from toxic wooden cups is the reason why we have no Vikings today! Yew’s toxicity both via its foliage and timber.....”

As I said last month, it would be interesting to learn the exact science of Yew’s toxicity. Meanwhile, I shall reserve Yew strictly for decorative work, whilst thinking carefully about the implications of dust on lips and hands????

MORE FROM ‘WOODTURNING’ PLUS A MENTION OF ‘REVOLUTIONS’ FEB 2007 (*By V.F.H.*)

Yet again we are called to witness (? and achieve) exceptionally high standards of work in our craft, and the relentless march towards artistry in, and on, turning. On pages 48 and 49 of ‘W’turning’ it is interesting to see that two British turners have picked up on the value of butterflies in design, and I wonder if they were influenced by Binh Pho (two of whose DVDs have, incidentally, been lent to me, and what a treat they are!) A pierced and decorated vase on page 47 also seems to lean heavily towards his style. See also the back page of ‘Revolutions’. There is certainly an abundance of example to fire our own imaginations! It makes me feel that I want to give up all my other responsibilities in a variety of fields to concentrate on turning. Does anyone else share that feeling?

CONCLUSION (*By Ed*) - Regrettably, space defeats us here despite my use of ‘11 point’ for some articles instead of the usual ‘12’ and some ‘squeezing up’. I have the latest ‘Field Report’ and another suggested piece from ‘Woodentop’, plus a ‘Shop’ Ad from Tich, but they will have to wait for next month because we try to stick to ‘six sides’ for printing efficiency. **In the meantime, don’t hold back! DO contribute on your own account!**

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