



OCTOBER 2009

TURNINGS

Official newsletter of
Avon and Bristol Woodturners

(Honorary Life President - Max Carey)

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Affiliated to the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain

Contributions to "Turnings" are accepted in good faith but the inclusion of individuals' views and comments does not imply endorsement by Avon and Bristol Woodturners

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

The date of our November meeting is **19th November**, not 29th as printed on our programme card

DEADLINE FOR
CONTRIBUTIONS TO
NEXT MONTH'S EDI-
TION;

FRIDAY, 13TH
NOVEMBER



Large Chalice - (Doug Alderton). Photo by Doug Alderton

Woodturner Extraordinaire

By Doug Alderton

You may agree or disagree that most of us are pretty average at woodturning and produce fairly mediocre copies of other woodturners' designs. Our lack of imagination hinders creativity that we are innately born with, but unfortunately we are unable to motivate the grey matter to create that unique woodturning. How many times have we been told that it has all been done before? Also how many of us have thrown a piece of wood onto the lathe to be told by others to listen to the wood for inspiration and lo and behold another work of art comes forth. All I hear from my wood is the groans when I regularly give it a prod called a dig-in and the timber cracking as it dries out. On bad days the wood attempts to escape by jumping out of the lathe and rolls along the floor.

A few weeks after joining the club and into my 'Apprenticeship' down at the 'Mill' (Max Carey's workshop) I started to notice this tall ginger haired figure of a man cleaning up the Mill's car park. Trailer loads of scrap iron, old motors, roof tiles, you name it, and it all went to the refuse tip to make way for more parking area. Only saw him turn a few mushrooms for Lorraine's 'Pick-a-Peg' fund raiser so I thought he just came to the Mill to do the odd jobs and help out generally. How wrong I was, Ken Dolling is his name and after my eighteen months with the club I now consider Ken a friend and I know he is a well respected member of our club. My initial impression of Ken changed when he turned up at the Mill, opened the door, and rolled two Willow logs 18 inches in diameter x 18 inches long towards Tich Renee our



bandsaw guru. Talk about timber being 'green', alias wet, they were oozing with sap and one of them had wispy branches growing from one end picking up dust and shavings as it rolled along the floor. I was gob smacked, here I was trying to turn a bit of bone dry oak into napkin rings and here was Ken with chunks of tree trunk I suspect came from an Amazon forest expedition. Too large to be cut on our Goliath bandsaw so out came the chainsaw and in no time at all each log was sawn into

two halves down through the pith. Ken was going to produce a bowl out of each of the four pieces. Out came the electric hand planer to produce the faceplate location area, on went the faceplate, onto Max's VB36, on went Ken's raincoat and the first 14 inch diameter bowl was roughed out. Three more

"a tree trunk ...from an Amazon forest expedition"

similar bowls followed in the next couple of weeks and all then left for a few months to dry out before finish turning. Ken chose food safe cooking oil for the finish, lots of it as it soaked in as soon as applied.

A neighbour of Ken wanted the tops of some pollarded lime trees removed and Ken obliged knowing that he may be able to make use of some of the wood. Down to the 'Mill' he came with these knotted, gnarled and densely compacted crowns off the lime trees. I thought he was off his 'trolley' when he said that he was going to make rustic bowls out of the bonfire sized firewood lying on the floor.



It took him half a day just to find a way of attaching a faceplate to one of the crowns and manhandle it onto the VB36 lathe. Not much turning took place by others at the 'Mill' that day as they were in fear of life and limb as missiles landed around them from Ken's (continued on page 3)

“Woodturner Extraordinaire” continued from page 2

enthusiastic turning as pieces broke off at irregular intervals. As Ken turned he was blissfully unaware of the distinct large danger area around him. Outside in the comfort zone fellow members felt the vibrations of the floor as Ken bounced up and down in unison with the action of the gouge



removing missile ammunition for the next bombardment on the ‘Mill’. There were no walking wounded but quiet a few near misses. Again somehow Ken produced a rustic rough turned bowl from this unlikeliest piece of timber that you could imagine. Another two similar rustic bowls were rough turned from the remaining lime tree crowns their designs been determined after Ken had a good talk to the wood. In a surprising short time the bowls had dried out and Ken was able to apply his cooking oil finish.

Ken is always on the lookout for something different to turn and looking for something that will push the boundaries of woodturning. Not a great lover of the contemporary utilitarian turnings that most of us produce but does love the rustic look and feel of burrs and pollarded tree crowns etc. Club members were not disappointed when the following week he rolled into the ‘Mill’ a 26 inch diameter x 5inch thick slice from the trunk of a fallen Willow tree. This was to be his next project, a table platter. Somewhat larger than the dinner plate size we often see and this one would very likely fill most of an average dining table

found in our homes. The problem here was to find a lathe that you could mount and turn such a large chunk of wood. Ken’s modest Axminster M950 lathe at home was completely inadequate and so were all of the lathes at the ‘Mill’ except for the VB36. When Ken tried to mount the wood onto the lathe due to the off-centre position of the intended recessed bowl feature the periphery of the wood fouled the toolrest supporting beam. Max nearly had a fit when he saw Ken and willing helpers dismantling his treasured lathe. He had to remove



the tailstock and toolrest carrier beams to obtain enough room to turn this monster. The out of balance during turning was equalized with the building shaking but the VB36 stood rock solid. I thought Willow was only good enough for cricket bats but as you can see he has turned a wonderful centre piece that any stately home would be proud to own. After drying and finishing the platter he applied initially orange oil but this tinted the wood to a darker shade than he wanted, this can be seen

(Continued on page 4)

“Woodturner Extraordinaire” - continued from page 3

in the recessed bowl portion in the photograph. Unable to rectify this tint change he completed the rest of the platter using Danish oil which created a pleasing contrast effect between the bowl recess and the surrounding area.

Now that we know that Ken can turn almost anything out of any chunk of wood nature throws his way, what else drives this creative man when he is not in our sight at the ‘Mill’? At one of our lunch time free-for-alls where the topics of conversation needed to be moderated due to the fairer



sex members present, Ken showed us a photograph, reproduced here showing the results of one of his projects. I was eager to see the fruits of his labour and as I needed to take photographs of his finished turnings for this article Ken invited me to his home for a tour of his patch. A couple of year ago Ken bought from an adjacent neighbour one and a half acres of woodland and this was the main reason that he was absent from a lot of the weekly visits to the ‘Mill’. He was landscaping his woodland and as it was on a forty degree slope it was no easy task. A survey of each tree on his land was carried out by the local authority which listed the trees that needed attention to comply with the safety regulations that apply to his local area. After completing this necessary work the next task was to clear the undergrowth and then make tracks to allow access for a digger and a dumper. Almost single handedly he excavated a central area of the woodland and created what can only be described as a scene of beauty and tranquility in the form of a landscaped pool. Electric and water supplies have been installed for future lighting of the pool and for topping up the pool to keep pool wildlife alive during spells of very dry weather. That was phase one of landscaping the woodland, he is now a few weeks into phase two of the project. The earth he has removed from part of the hillside has been used to create a flat area to allow Ken to build a small stone building with a timber and tiled roof which is to be known as the ‘Stables’. Terraced walling and stepped pathways will lead up the hillside from the rear of the ‘Stables’ up to the access road adjacent to Ken’s home. Most of the stone used for this project is reclaimed and sorted from the earth removed by Ken and recycled in building the retaining walls etc.

That wasn’t all there was to Ken as I soon found out over a welcome cup of tea and a couple of chunky ham and cheese sandwiches that could have fed a family of four for a week. His previous projects, in and around his home, are impressive and shows what can be achieved if we can release that creativity within us. To cut a long story short suffice to say through building extensions, alterations and landscaping Ken has transformed his very old cottage into a very comfortable

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dwelling but still retaining the character of the old part of the cottage. What used to be the old stables was rebuilt and connected to an extension on the cottage. An interesting feature of the cottage is the retention of the radiused stone roofed cellar, now converted into a small room with an illuminated featured fireplace. Photographs hanging on the wall and standing on the small table show members of Ken’s family going back six generations. Wood seems to be the catalyst for most of Ken’s projects and woodturning is only one of the skills he is mastering. I was very impressed with his furniture creations especially the six foot high by five foot long pine wall dresser. The drawers were fully dovetailed and the rear back panel constructed with moulded tongue and groove strips made from floorboards all nicely finished in a light oak stain. Let’s not forget the cleverly designed staircase and balustrade to fit the misaligned and out of square walls of the cottage, all created and constructed by Ken. Always doing something, he still looks for projects to do around his home.

Before my time at the club, fellow members of the club including Ken restored an ancient treadle lathe



(circa 1810). The lathe was restored into working order and Mary Ashton made the wooden stand and foot treadle. Over the last two year Ken has demonstrated how to use the lathe at the Westonbirt ‘Festival of the Tree’ event. Demonstrating with modified turning tools how to turn simple items including mushrooms and small baby rattles with captivated rings. Great interest and appreciation from the watching public made Ken’s weekend. A few members of the club had a go at turning on the treadle lathe but with little success. Standing on one leg and pedalling the treadle for more than a minute or two was too much resulting in hobbling cramp-ridden woodturners falling over in agony.

In a nutshell, Ken Dolling is an inspiration to fellow woodturners, his commitment to conservation of nature, his management of his woodland and the creativity he has shown in his many projects earns him the title ‘Woodturner Extraordinaire’.

MUSINGS FROM THE MILL

I have it on good authority that this month’s “Musings” were “in the post” well ahead of the deadline (despite the fact that I kept it as a closely-guarded secret this month) but as we all know the Post Office is having one or two problems at the moment, one of which is not realising the importance of getting Max’s manuscript to me on time. So, with profuse apologies to our newly-qualified octagenarian Life President there will be no “Musings” in this issue. Perhaps the committee can install a carrier-pigeon loft at the Mill prior to the (publicised) deadline for November’s edition.

Westonbirt - the economic reality

Martin referred at our last meeting to the reduction in sales of our products at Westonbirt, (see comparison chart below) quite rightly pointing to the economic recession as the likely main cause.

But our Hon Treasurer, Dave Ward has also taken note of the comments made in last month's Turnings about the small number of members (eight in all) who submitted their wares for sale at Westonbirt.

Whilst accepting that the club is not a commercial organisation driven by the profit motive he feels that we should face the reality of having to generate income from sources other than membership fees and legacies. In fact, it has often been said that it is only by selling our products that we are able to maintain subs at a reasonable level and so this affects every one of us.

He therefore urges ALL members to please consider NOW, whilst there is still plenty of time, what items they can make for next year's event. And if anyone is in any doubt as to exactly WHAT items are needed he or she has only to ask any Committee member!

.....S & M or not?

Dave also wonders whether the creation of a Sales and Marketing post within the club might be a step in the right direction - perhaps there are members who already have knowledge and expertise in this field and who might be able to advise?

Since nobody (least of all, our government) knows when / if this recession is likely to end it is clear that, for the foreseeable future organisations such as ours will be in the same financial boat as everyone else. In the light of this uncertainty it surely makes sense to consider our options.


The chart below shows the stark reality - a net fall in income of £870.63 (27.45%) compared with last year's, coupled with a fall in profits of £593.10 (54.46%) **and this despite a reduction in overheads paid out to members in the form of expenses etc.**

The figures speak for themselves but what do YOU think? Your views, please, to the editor in time for next month's edition.

WESTONBIRT - 2008 & 2009 COMPARISON CHART

YEAR	TOTAL INCOME	EXPENSES	PAID TO MEMBERS	PROFIT
2008	£3171.38	£791.73	£1290.58	£1089.07
2009	£2300.75	£813.03	£991.75	£495.97
	(-£870.63)	(+£21.30)	(-£298.83)	(-£593.10)

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Chairman's Report

By the time you are reading this I hope we will all be looking in wonder at the mass of entries for Woodturner of the Year, the result of which will not be announced until the December Christmas Social.

In the course of my duties for the AWGB I was at the Yandles autumn open day and was pleased to see so many of our members in attendance, I counted 23 and I am sure I missed some of you. On the AWGB stand were half of the top pieces chosen from the Instant Gallery at Loughborough including pieces from both Ken Crittle and George King. I nearly suffered a heart attack when one visitor dropped Ken's piece causing a split along the join and some fragments to drop inside leaving small holes. Thankfully Ken was the perfect gentleman when I broke the news to him and, calm and collected he also made an excellent repair job and the piece is back on tour.

In case you were not at last month's meeting when I made the announcement, our Life President Max, who was also unable to attend, has just celebrated his eightieth birthday! Congratulations Max on becoming an octogenarian and may you have many more.

I am sorry to have to inform you that Brian Oram's foot injury has taken a turn for the worse and the infection is back resulting in his being hospitalised for a period of just over four weeks. He was released on 30th September and is making good progress at home, but will still take several months before he is fully mobile. Brian we wish you well and he likewise has asked me to send his regards to all the members.

Also Ray Mellett has had to go into the BRI for another operation and is expected to have to be detained for at least three days, but don't be surprised if he turns up tonight firing on all cylinders. Good luck Ray and whether you are in attendance tonight or not we wish you well and a speedy recovery.

We have had a second Youth Training day at The Mill which went really well, the details of which I will leave for the report from The Mill and not steal their glory, but I can not let this pass without expressing my thanks to all at The Mill for making it possible.

I am glad to announce that maybe the biggest name in British Woodturning, Bert Marsh, will be giving an all day demonstration at The Mill on Sunday 25th October 2009, commencing at 10am. This is a rare chance to see the old master at work so don't miss the chance to see him at the low cost of £13 for the day. I already have 28 places booked from members of nearby clubs so it looks as if a good day of demonstration and friendly banter will be had by all.

I am off on my holidays 28 days travelling India and Goa so I will not be at the November meeting, which is a shame as I know that the demonstrator Frans Brown is one well worth seeing and I doubt many have seen him before.

I look forward to seeing you at the Christmas Social evening on December 10th.

Martin Lawrence.

SHOW AND TELL

The numbers of Show & Tell items are steadily increasing but we do need more. With an average attendance of 45 or so at meetings we really ought to be getting at least 30 S&T's every month so please, even if you're not proud of what you've made bring it along and tell us why you're dissatisfied. In that way maybe we can all learn something

The making of a 'Non-Doughnut' bowl.

By Clive Brown

Whilst thumbing through a book by John Hunnex, Woodturning Forms and Materials I found a picture of a bowl made from Iroko that he called his 'Doughnut' bowl. As I had some Iroko that I had purchased as a job lot fairly cheaply I thought I would give this bowl a go.



The blank was not too thick so I decided to hold it on a dovetail recess. I have used glue blocks before when the blanks are thin but as this was a trial piece I elected for my quick tried and tested method. I took it to The Mill and started cutting away. It did not produce clean shavings, just dust and chips. I got the basic shape but something niggled me about it, it wasn't quite right. But what was it? Alan expressed his opinion. Some off here reduce that there and mirror that shape there. Then Alan advised me about the dangers of this wood and a respirator or dust mask was called for. Iroko has the following adverse effects listed on the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) information sheet on toxic woods,

asthma, dermatitis and nettle rash. Anyway, the wood had a crack in it that I though could be turned away, but as I turned the crack just got bigger. I made a decision. I wasn't happy with the shape, it was cracked and not a particularly nice wood to turn, I would take it home and give it some thought. This would also spare my fellow turners from any possible adverse effects.

All this was before Colin Simpson's visit to the club on Thursday.

Following his visit I put the Iroko back on the lathe and put my respirator on. I admit to being a little annoyed at not being able to get the exact shape, it seemed simple enough. But that coupled with the ever-growing crack near the top made me decide to use it as a test piece. I sharpened a bowl gouge and reduced the heel of the bevel. I put some negative rake on a little used scraper. And finally I also used a large skew to cut a dovetail. By the time I had messed around with these adjusted tools and now at last finally removed all traces of the crack I had the beginnings of my 'new' much reduced bowl.



I finished up with a fairly simple bowl. I am not sure if the negative rake scraper was a success or not, it did the job. But whether it was any better I am not certain. More scraping required before judgement. I could see and feel the benefit of the newly shaped bowl gouge and will stick with keeping some like that. Now back to the bowl. I decided to soak it in Sunflower oil over night, just ordinary get it at the supermarket, cheap as you like Sunflower oil. The next day I sanded to 400 grit using Abranet, no dust just slurry, which I believe is a bonus. Then repeating 400 and up through the grades to 1200 with wet and dry but now using Walnut oil, again from the supermarket. I wiped out between each sanding grade and applied just a little more oil to the bowl and also to the abrasive. I find the Walnut oil slightly lighter and it gives (in my opinion) a lovely finish without too much fuss. It is a 'drying oil' much like linseed oil.

All being well the bowl will be on the Show and Tell table. It's not a classic and definitely not what I planned, a doughnut bowl, but I like it well enough. I think that's because I played around with it a bit and it could so easily have ended up as just a pile of shavings or yet more fuel for the woodburner!

(There is such a small difference between the word "WOODTURNER" and "WOODBURNER" that it seems quite natural to confuse not only the words themselves but also the things they describe - for some of us, anyway - Ed)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Not so much a demo as a tutorial

by the Editor

Over the past three months we have seen a wide variation in the style and content, not to mention quality, of our guests' presentations and last Thursday's programme by Colin Simpson was as different from his two predecessors as it was possible to be.



Colin Simpson in action at St Theresa's

At the outset Colin made it clear that he would be unlikely to actually FINISH a piece during the three hours slot - his main concern was that we should all learn something and that this could be achieved only by both carefully showing the techniques he employed and at the same time explaining exactly "what?" and "why?"

This approach might perhaps not have suited everyone but for those of us still wondering why it is that seemingly innocuous pieces of wood and metal can so easily become weapons of mass destruction, Colin's clear exposition and painstaking attention to detail, especially to tool presentation removed some of the aura of mystique surrounding woodturning and inspired at least one club member to apply the lessons learned (see Clive Brown's "Not a doughnut bowl" pp 9). All that AND he finished on time too.

A Treasure-house of skills

As has already been said elsewhere in this edition, we all possess to a greater or lesser degree an innate imagination and skill but it is a regrettable fact that few of us ever achieve our full potential. No doubt we can think of many reasons/excuses why we have not managed to scale the heights but the inescapable truth is that we, and that includes the editor, could do much better if we pushed ourselves harder. Every month we see examples of the work of members who have done exactly that and this was illustrated by the exhibits displayed at St Theresa's on 17th September, again by only a few members. And although it might perhaps seem unfair to single out the work of just one of our number I have this month made an exception by adorning the front cover of Turnings with one of the lovely chalices made by our self-effacing "average-skilled" (his words!) members. If Doug is an "average" turner then I indeed have a very long way to go to even get past mediocre. Indeed I'm seriously considering buying a woodburner as my "green" wheelie-bin can't take any more.

For those who were unable to attend in September here are some of the pieces brought along by members. Perhaps these will inspire you to bring along examples of your work to November's meeting.



Sheffield Calls

For those of us who remember those halcyon days when Britain actually made things Stuart is offering us a golden opportunity (see below) to take a trip down Memory Lane (and by rail, too!). And for you younger members who might never have had these experiences this is your chance to find out why we older-'uns get all glassy-eyed about these sometimes-inhospitable and more often than not, dangerous places.

' A visit to a tool manufacture in Sheffield is being arranged for either Thursday 12th or 26th November 2009. It is proposed to go by train from Bristol Parkway (depart 10.48am, return 9.25pm). The fare is £34 return, but if you have a railcard you can get a further reduction. If you are interested contact Stuart Bradfield on 07976 402960 or stuart.bradfield@btopenworld.com "

And finally, John Ruffle, our latest fully-indentured apprentice, extols the virtues of "The Mill" and reminds us of what a valuable asset and resource our Portishead establishment is for the club and its members. But he also praises other members, not forgetting the hard-working and long-suffering tutors for their unstinting help and companionship, for without them The Mill would be a body without a heart.

In Praise of the Mill

By John Ruffle

As a fairly new member, having just completed my apprenticeship, I want to write in praise of the Mill. It seems to me that this is a unique facility which offers so much to members of ABWT. It must surely be the envy of other less fortunate woodturning clubs.

On and off, I had played around on a lathe for a number of years, acquiring, in the process, rather more bad habits than skill. The opportunity to go the Mill every week and to practise under the watchful eye of the tutors and other club members was exactly what I needed. Titch, Alan and Stuart in particular, showed enormous patience as I constantly got things wrong and produced interesting-shaped firewood. It was due to their patience that, after what seemed a long time, dig-ins became a little less frequent, and I was eventually able to produce some satisfying, if simple pieces of work.

Watching other people work coupled with their willingness to answer questions and to give advice and encouragement has also widened my horizons and sometimes encouraged me to push the boat out and do things that I would not otherwise have dared to attempt.

Lunch times, when turning is strictly prohibited, have a value all of their own. A full hour exchanging yarns, sorting out the ills of Government, Local Councils and, of course, exchanging information and tips about woodturning, provides a great way for members to get to know one another and enjoy each other's company.

Wednesday has become an important day in my week, and I am reluctant to let other things squeeze out my visits to the Mill – particularly work, which I was reminded the other week, is not a word to be used at the Mill! Having learned some of the basics, I look forward to becoming more proficient through my regular visits there.
