

Newsletter one

Little & Large and something about Long

Starting only last Autumn the club already boasts membership well over fifty. This newsletter is the first of a planned quarterly publication that I hope will be both interesting and informative. The content is very much down to you the members and will rely on everyone's input.

Assuming you might like to know who the club members are and what they do here are the first three chosen not exactly at random. You could be next - so be prepared!

Little Len Saunderson is an engineer with some 30 years experience, having served an apprenticeship and progressed through to Engineering Manager with responsibilities for tool and specialist tool production, health and safety, training and security. He became a corporate member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and a registered safety practitioner and changed direction to become Principal Health and Safety Officer with the London Borough of Croydon.

Taking early retirement in 1992 he was able to pursue his hobbies including woodturning. He already had a Myford ML7 lathe which he had saved from the scrapyard, restoring and renovating it to its former glory. He eventually purchased a Polewood 1590 woodturning lathe and added modifications of his own to enable him to turn steel, brass and other materials on it.

A member of the excellent East Surrey Woodturners until this year, he decided to try and form a club in Cheam. With encouragement from ESW, assistance from the AWGB and after contacting Frank Clarke they together set about it.

Len's main hobby is woodturning together with model engineering and is always ready to experiment.

Large Frank Clarke started turning shortly after the 1987 hurricane, dismayed by the waste of wood from all the downed trees. Rekindling his schoolday interest in woodworking and relearning the skills, he has progressed to having four lathes. Preferring to work with home-grown timbers from fallen or diseased trees Frank's work has been displayed at shows in the UK, Eire, Finland and France and is on sale at a number of National Trust shops.

Our Chairman has been an active member of both the Surrey and Middlesex Woodturners Associations and this year stepped down from the AWGB having been a committee member since 1994. We are all pleased to hear that he has been made a life member in recognition of his excellent job liaising with the trade.

Retired from a career controlling the shape of BT's holes in the road, Frank prefers quality to quantity and now gets most pleasure from shaping one off pieces and decorative items.

Long Roger Marsden, the newsletter editor, gets the privilege of early feature! I retired last year from a career advising large companies on their corporate identity and marketing programmes and was looking for some other interests as well as my golf.

A two day course with David Reekes in May last year got me hooked and my neighbour gave me permanent loan of his small lathe to get me started, together with a dust extractor, chucks and a range of basic tools. He also found a stack of wood he had been keeping for turning that has dried in his barn for five years. A very useful selection mainly of cherry and russian oak with some beech, sumak and laburnum as well.

I produced a number of small bowls and unloaded them on my family for Christmas. At the same time the wife of a friend commissioned a piece for his Christmas present. He is an architect and later commissioned me himself to turn about a dozen very large acorns in oak to adorn the posts of a repositioned 1920's staircase in an exclusive property in Esher.

Having recently purchased a second hand Graduate lathe I am hoping to master large bowls.

A complete fabrication!

Colin Simpson explains how he went about buying a wood drying kiln...

"Look, you've got your hair dryer, I want a wood dryer" I reasoned to my wife. This seemed to me to be a good argument, as anyone who knows me will know I have no need of a hair dryer and Skye, my wife, had just spent what I thought was an excessive amount on a new one. Mind you, anyone who knows Skye will understand that this type of reasoning will not wash. Oh no. I had to find another way....

"I think we ought to rebuild the garage," I suggested just after Christmas. The so-called garage that we inherited when we bought the house was a very poorly constructed timber structure with a plastic corrugated sheet roof. I knocked it down before it fell down and damaged someone or something.

Skye agreed that this would be a good idea; we chose the style we wanted (a further wooden structure but more substantial) and placed the order. I made good the base onto which it was going and a week later I was the proud owner of a new shed and a disgruntled wife!

Why so disgruntled I hear you ask? Well, you may have noticed the subtle change in my description of said building. You see, I had no intention of using this new erection as a garage. Oh no! I had other plans for it.

"There's no way we would get our car in there anyway, " I tried to explain, "the doors aren't big enough. " This logic was impeccable; the new shed, which measured 14feet x 9 feet, was not going to house our car. Skye also realised this and gave in gracefully. I now set about the task of converting the shed into my timber store.

For some time now I have been pondering over whether or not to invest in a small kiln for drying wood. I contacted Arrowsmith over a year ago requesting they send me details of their kilns (more accurately dehumidifiers) but have struggled with my conscience and my finances to justify buying one.

Needless to say my conscience eventually won. I tele

phoned Arrowsmith to ask several questions about my plans for the kiln. These seemed acceptable so I ordered one. Incidentally, the chap at Arrowsmith, Steve, was extremely helpful and knowledgeable. He spent a good hour explaining various aspects of building the kiln.

So, with an Arrowsmith 'Hobby' kiln on its way to me all that I had to do now was to fabricate a box in which to put it. Coincidentally, the new shed we had recently had delivered would be perfect! At least half of it would be. The rest would be used to store the wood.

Arrowsmith recommend at least 4inches of insulation all round – walls, ceiling and floor. I decided on six inches, "You can't over insulate." I remember Steve saying. I planned to erect stud walls 6 inches in from three walls of my new shed and a stud partition across the middle to make the forth wall. This partition wall would have the doors on it.

" If I were you I'd make the whole of the partition wall removable" advised Steve. "That way you will have better access to load and unload the kiln".

" I take your point," I argued "but I only intend to dry roughed out bowls and things like that". "You might want to dry boards at a later date" he countered.

To be honest, Steve had a point but the kiln was now turning into a major design issue. How was I going to make a 9ft partition wall both air-tight and removable? I could also imagine that it would take me weeks to construct and, worst of all, it would take me away from actual turning and I suffer withdrawal symptoms if that happens. In the end I compromised and built two large(ish) doors in the partition wall so access to load and unload is reasonable.

So, after a rough calculation of the amount of studding I would need, the amount of insulation and hardboard to line the kiln worked out, I contacted a local timber merchant and placed an order. This was delivered and I set to work.

Floor first. Seal the concrete base with proprietary concrete sealer. Cut and lay 6in joists and insulate in between. Then lay a waterproof membrane (polythene) and finally treated floor grade chipboard tongued and grooved flooring on top of this.

Next, the partition walls, insulation, waterproof membrane and hardboard to cover it all up. Going well I thought. At this stage I ought to say thank you to Andrew Griffiths who came round to collect some off cuts of wood for his fire. He stayed to help – its so much easier with two people. ...

...After having repaired the waterproof membrane that Andrew allowed his end of the 8x4 hardboard sheet to penetrate (it could have happened to anyone) we moved onto the ceiling. Still going well I thought. Then I happened to speak to Tim Lawson, one of our club's professional woodturners, who also has an Arrowsmith Hobby kiln.

"Don't make the same mistake as I did, Colin." he said. " I wish I'd used damp-proof hardboard. The ordinary stuff buckles terribly."

These weren't quite his words, but then I want this article published. I also won't type what I thought when I heard these words of wisdom! I didn't mention to Tim that I had already fabricated the kiln. Actually Tim was extremely helpful and invited me round to see his kiln and gave me the benefit of his experience in using it. Thanks Tim.

Incidentally, I think I have solved the problem with the ordinary stuff buckling. I gave the hardboard a liberal coat of Damp Seal. It seems to be ok so far.

I had had the dehumidifier for several weeks by now and had only just finished fabricating the box. Worse, I had let it be known that I had had the kiln for several weeks.

"When are you going to get that kiln of yours going?" a

polite enquiry from someone who had asked whether I would consider drying some of his wood in exchange for sharing the running costs. I had, of course agreed but now felt under some pressure to complete the job. To be fair to the enquirer, he had offered on several occasions to come round to help. His enquiries became more frequent and I eventually took him up on his offer of assistance. So a very pleasant afternoon was spent in the company of Frank Clarke, our chairman, installing the dehumidifier, plumbing it in and constructing shelving. Thank you Frank.

So, with the kiln installed, shelves built, doors sealed, tempers still in tact, all that was needed now was some wood to dry. Frank had about forty bowls and blanks that he brought round and added to my 150 odd ones (some were very odd). These were stacked on the shelves and a polythene sheet laid over the top of the stack. This sheet forces the air from the fan unit to the opposite wall. It flows down that wall and then back through the stack, under the polythene. Another telephone call to Steve at Arrowsmiths to check my calculations on temperature settings and timing of the dehumidifier and, after I had reset those settings, I switched it on.

At the time of writing this article I have just completed my first load. The kiln was running for just over 8 weeks. I am reasonable pleased with the result. A few blanks did suffer some splitting, most notably a beautiful piece of burr oak and some spaltd beech rough turned bowls. However, all of these are repairable with superglue and wood dust.

There is a postscript to this story. At the time I had built the kiln but not installed the shelving I invited Skye into the shed to see my handiwork.

"It works at a reasonably high temperature and at high humidity" I explained enthusiastically.

"Wow!" she said "Could we convert it into a sauna?"

NEXT MEETING 20th July

Robert Sorby Tools will demonstrate thrills, spills and their range of tools. An opportunity to buy tools and accessories at VAT free prices.

Mike Hewitt, a New Zealand woodturner with family in Barnes, is visiting the UK in July and has asked if he can attend our meeting. He specialises in making walking sticks and would like to talk to you if you have an interest. Please make him most welcome.

OTHER MEETINGS

August

NO MEETING so Frank's wooden fruit has to wait

21st September

Grinding and sharpening - a practical evening

7th October (Saturday)

Hands-on session at Church Hall 2-5pm £5

19th October

Mike Dennis AWGB Chairman on hollow forms

16th November

Wet wood bowl turning and timber sales

21st December

Christmas Social, mince pies, practical demonstrations

OTHER DATES

22nd-24th September

Woodworking Show at Sandown Park

29th September -1st October

International Woodworking Show at the NEC

9th-12th November

Axminster Tools Bath & West Showground,
Near Shepton Mallet

18th November

East Surrey Woodturners Open Day,
Park Road, Banstead

CANDLESTICKS

See the latest copy of Revolutions for details of the Irish Woodturners Guild candlestick project. If you want to make one you can let Frank have it instead of sending it off.

**FREE ADVERTISING SPACE
in future issues
for non commercial advertisements.
Send your details to the editor.**

THE COMMITTEE

Frank Clarke (Chairman)

Tel 020 8942 5463

Len Saunderson (Secretary)

105 Abbotts Road, Cheam, Surrey SM3 9ST

Tel 020 8644 6911

Colin Simpson (Treasurer)

Tel 020 8715 2617

Andrew Griffiths

Keith Arscott

THE NEWSLETTER

Roger Marsden (Editor)

Clare House, 22 Claremont Avenue,
Esher, Surrey KT10 9JD

Tel 01372 464242 Fax 01372 470870

E-mail clarehouse@aol.com

Any views expressed in the newsletter are those of the people submitting the material and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

THE DISCOUNTS

Available to Cheam and AWGB members from

Crown Tools & Fixings

Watermill House, Restmoor Way, Wallington

JA Roberts

Unit 5, 40 Kimpton Link Business Centre,
Kimpton Road, Sutton

Gregory Moreton RPT

Professional wood turner Gregory Moreton offers tuition for one or two students in his Claygate workshop.

Two day beginners courses and one day advanced/refresher courses are available or hourly tuition can be tailored to your own needs.

Gregory is registered with the Worshipful Company of Turners and is a full member of the Surrey Guild of Craftsmen.

Please call 01372 467692 for more details or Email gregory@moreton.co.uk

www.moreton.co.uk