

Cheam Woodturners Association Newsletter 3

December 2000

Seasons Greetings

The committee send their seasons greetings to all club members and look forward to a second year of the Association.

I think we, the members, all pass on our greetings to the committee and thank them all for getting the club going so successfully.

Thank you again to those who have made contributions to this third edition of our newsletter or for contributions I already hold for future issues.

Roger Marsden Editor

Also in this issue:

Safety First

Useful information from Terry Smart

Hints & Tips

on saving expensive materials

Art versus Craft

A personal view from Dr Tim Lawson

Show Talk

Reviewing the Axminster Show

Do not forget to return your Membership Renewal (and payment) and your AGM Nomination Form to Len Saunderson by 31st January at the latest.

Members who submit articles will be given the opportunity by telephone call or a proof copy in order that they may give their consent/approval of any editing that has been carried out on the original article, before it is published.

Cheam Library

Our Club put on an excellent display of members' work at Cheam Library on 4th November. This was our first local public event and it gave us the opportunity to promote the club on our own doorstep and display the high quality of work of the members. Some 40 pieces were on display in the foyer and an additional 400 or so available for sale on the upper floor.



Several members were brave enough to demonstrate on an Axminster 330 lathe (courtesy of our Chairman), some making their public debut, including fearless committee members, Andrew and Len. Keith missed out but was not disheartened!

Although modestly attended, £127 of work was sold and four potential club members attracted, all happily absorbed in the demonstrations and displays.

To our credit we have been asked back for next year. It is a good venue with excellent facilities and if there is one lesson to be learned we need more effort put into publicity to attract a larger audience and therefore more punters.

The committee are grateful to all members who contributed - well done.
Andrew Griffiths (committee member)



Safety First

by Terry Smart
of Chestnut Products

Much has been written recently regarding safety when using machinery. The discussion seems to have divided into two camps. One says that articles should highlight all safety considerations whilst the other says that they are obvious and need not be mentioned.

I am sure most people realise what safety measures should be in place before using machinery although I sympathise with the magazines who have to assume the worst!

But what if the dangers are unseen? As this is the first article I have written for you and was wondering where to start I thought of the old adage 'Safety First' and that gave me my answer!

At Chestnut Products we agonise for ages over the wording on our labels; should we use this word or that word, does that change the meaning and will it make sense to other people? We resigned ourselves to the fact that probably a lot of people don't read the instructions anyway so perhaps we shouldn't worry quite as much as we do. I personally wonder whether this also applies to all the warnings we have to include on the label, usually in the box with the orange symbols.

If you don't, you should!

By law the warning boxes (as they are called) have to be a certain size, usually a proportion of the available label area and depending on the composition of the products certain phrases and symbols must be used. The most common of these is the

'Highly Flammable' one, which looks like a flame. Obviously this denotes a product which will burn very easily – the 'Highly' part denotes that the flashpoint (not to be confused with spontaneous combustion) is below 32°C. An external heat source (naked flame, sparks etc) is required to start any fire. This applies to all cellulose and methylated spirit based products. When people have qualms about having these products in their house I remind them they probably have a drinks cupboard full of highly flammable spirits! This should not be a real problem – just follow the common sense warnings on the label and no smoking! If the flammability does worry you then the obvious alternative is our Acrylic range of products which have none of these problems apart from our aerosols which have a flammable propellant.

Be aware of the health warnings too. Our cellulose-based products no longer contain petroleum solvent, which can be harmful to health, although most other makes do. Although air fed masks are not usually required pro-longed exposure should be avoided as should skin contact.

Also, if spraying finishes be sure to avoid breathing in the mist caused. Some products also have dangers attached when sprayed that are not present when brushed.

Care should also be taken when applying products with the lathe spinning; most turners use paper towel that tears easily if caught rather than dragging fingers into the lathe. Bearing in mind that paper towel can be a little coarse, goes soggy and is designed to absorb and hold moisture rather than transfer it we produce Safety Cloth, a woven paper cloth which has none of the above disadvantages but is competitively priced.

Hints & Tips

Making the most of expensive materials

It is useful not to waste expensive woods and materials eg African Blackwood and polyester resin rod. Hollow cylinders or rings can be made using holesaws.

Turn the wood or resin to a cylinder, face off the ends and hold the piece in a self centring chuck on the headstock. Remove the pilot drill from a holesaw and mount the saw and arbor in a tailstock Jacobs chuck.

Running the lathe at its slowest speed, feed the holesaw into the blank, withdrawing frequently to remove waste. Continue cutting to almost the full depth of the holesaw then turn the blank round and continue from the other end until a centre cylinder is freed. The hollow cylinder can be used as the basis for a box or cut into rings for decoration. The central plug can be used for another project or even re-drilled with a smaller holesaw.

My recommendation is to use a 38mm holesaw on a 50mm cylinder and a 64mm on a 75mm cylinder - both allow for cleaning up the inside of the cylinder. There is a limitation on the length of cylinder made using this method.

Holesaws and arbors are available from Screwfix or good tool merchants.

Richard Hoodless

Art versus Craft

by Dr Tim Lawson

I am told that some of our better known British turners are selling their one-offs for thousands of dollars in the USA; that a bowl I might sell for £50 could fetch \$200 over the pond. Why? (and incidentally, why am I still over here?)

Americans collect good turned pieces and sell them to each other in the same way that good paintings might be dealt here. I remember being slightly amused to see pieces with names - 'Ascending Bowl' etc. I am sure if I named one of my efforts it would be laughed out of the gallery.

Here, we have the Arts Council and a Crafts Council, for which efforts of amalgamation are, in my opinion, not going to work because turned wood, however good, is not Art in the UK but falls into the much humbler category of Craft, alongside cake decoration, egg painting and knitting. I suppose the answer for any turner who regards himself as an artist, is to move to the USA. Quite a few of our best already spend more time over there than over here, however I am too old to start again in a new country and frankly if I did, it wouldn't be the USA.

What can we do about it? Well, here is my offering. When I first started turning 13 years ago, I was lucky enough to see an article in Woodturning Magazine, featuring Mike Scott, who I still think is one of the best artistic woodturners we have and so I went to see him. I was struck by the fact that both his way of life and his attitude were affecting the type of work he produced. I asked him how he got his ideas and was told to 'chill out man' - or words to that effect. He was not impressed by my desire to watch him work because he felt that his techniques were not significant or in any way relevant ... who would want to watch Picasso at work. As Jules Tattersal once quoted 'I don't care if you get it out (the centre of a bowl) with a knife and fork, it's the result that counts.' I took on this attitude fairly early which is why I don't like demonstrating and why I feel that at clubs and generally through the woodturning fraternity, technique seem to be the only thing that matters- in some cases the collecting of tools being the motivating force for some turners. Chris Scott once appeared at a demo wearing a T-shirt which read 'He who dies with the most tools wins'. He had just returned from the USA (of course) where tool collectors are *noticed* and it's difficult to imagine that any such turner could call himself an artist - you don't hear much about painters who collect brushes! I think the most poignant and pathetic demonstration of the

'technique' tendency is when woodturners start making wooden replicas of their tools - very sad.

So how do we tell the punters that turned wood *can* be art? I think we cannot, until we separate the craft from the art in woodturning. We have some very fine *craftsmen* here. If you have been lucky enough to see Bill Jones' chess pieces or George White's tea set you will see what I mean. But art is something else and it's very difficult to define. I've heard it said by returnees from the USA that 'If it's totally useless, it must be art.' However, I'm sure there must be other definitions. To me, it has something to do with the creative urge, the need to spend time getting the curve just right or the colours matching, or the impact of a feature just so. I once read a very good book by Richard Raffan called 'Turned Bowl Design' - yes DESIGN, from which I learned quite a lot of the pointers I still use. In particular, how the difference between a good bowl and an exhibition masterpiece can be quite small.

Works of art versus good craftsmanship

I once saw a beautiful crafted chair at a gallery, priced at £600 and well worth it if you consider the many skilled hours and days that must have gone into its construction. By comparison, Mike Scott showed me one of his burred oak 24in bowls, textured and carved, probably took him a couple of days to make and priced at £1,300 - he was confident it would sell.

So it's not the time and skill necessarily, but the design, imagination, taste and fashion which divide a piece of craftsmanship from a work of art. Often both exist together. It's just that works of art are valued for reasons other than skill alone and may well command prices which bear no relevance to the time taken to create them.

Gregory Moreton RPT

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

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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 e-mail gregory@moreton.co.uk

www.moreton.co.uk

Big, Busy, Friendly and a hell of a buzz !!

The Axminster Show by David Buskell

A long drive in pouring rain around the M25, down the M3, along the A303, at last the turn off to Castle Cary. Four miles further on, and we arrived at the Royal Bath & West Showground. The car park was packed, so we thought the show must be good.

It's always a pleasure to go to shows and see experienced turners such as Phil Irons, Ray Jones, Gary Rance and Frank Clarke perform. All were friendly and willing to offer advice to anyone who wanted it.

The show itself was some 150 stands covering four halls. Axminster had arranged for items to be collected on site, so you could try, buy and take away. The full range of equipment, tools, books and accessories was on show, with bargains galore to be had.

Devon Air Ambulance profited from sales of the hard back catalogue and from other events around the halls.

"Ready Steady Turn" caught most people's attention. Isn't Ray Jones woodturning's answer to Anthony Worrall-Thompson! A very good idea, and everyone, including the professionals, seemed to enjoy it.

Refreshments and the usual facilities were excellent. Only one criticism to pass on to Katrina Styles if you bump into her (I did, literally!): Why is the stand selling blanks at the furthest corner of the hall furthest from the car park? It had no facilities for storing purchases and many a disgruntled client and/or partner had to head off to the car park to dump a heavy load of wood into the car, before carrying on around the show. Small point, but an important one, which can hopefully be looked at before next year's event.

My verdict: A very good show. Well worth a one and a half hour drive down the M3/A303, especially if you are planning a major purchase and want to take the benefit of seeing the entire range of goods. Everyone is there, and it has a friendly atmosphere.

Next year's event will be on 8th-11th November
- make a note in your diary.

NEXT 3 CLUB MEETINGS

18th January David Moore on a Pedestal Clock

15th February Annual General Meeting and a Dust Management Discussion

15th March Good Timber - an evening on Australian Timbers including sales of wood

OTHER CLUB MEETINGS

19th April Practical evening

17th May Mark Baker Master Class

21st June Multistar Chucks

19th July Hamlet Tool Manufacture

16th August Practical Evening

20th September Spindle Turning

18th October Gary Rance

15th November Furniture Restoration/ Table Lamps

20th December Christmas Social

DIARY DATES

10th - 12th August 2001 AWGB International Woodturning Seminar, Loughborough University

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NEWSLETTER

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

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