

Cheam Woodturners Association Newsletter 28

March 2007

Three hollow victories!



Left to right, prizewinners collect their awards from Chairman Andrew Griffiths and show off their efforts: Stuart Adey (Beginner), Colin Simpson (Advanced) and Jeff Cordery (Intermediate)

by Ron Grace



Franks Clarke competition time came around again in February and the subject chosen by the committee, after long deliberation no doubt, was hollow forms.

Possibly, the intention was for entrants to produce genuine hollow forms, but several members cheated (tut tut!). How? By making,

in effect, two bowls and joining them together.

All's fair when climbing the greasy pole to a shiny platter from the Chairman and it must be said that those who had adopted this strategy had done so extremely well. It took very close scrutiny to detect who had and who had not.

Overall the standard of entries was very high and a few examples of other efforts are on page 2.

Chairman's report

This is a much-abbreviated Chairman's report given at the AGM on February 21st

This has been a busy and productive year with a full programme which has included many professional demonstrations. I hope you have all enjoyed the variety, from large faceplate work to small spindle work.

Our membership has held reasonably steady and it is good to see more members taking an active part in club nights, but there is always more that can be done. We need more help with important tasks like making teas/coffees.

One of the highlights of the year was the lottery grant from Awards For All which was the result of many an evening in front of my computer putting the application together.

As our association is now a member of Sutton Arts Council, its chairman Tony

Kerslake sponsored the application. We have been able to buy a new lathe and accessories way ahead of the two to three years it would have taken us from a hike in subscriptions.

In December Paul Burstow, MP for Sutton and Cheam, visited and congratulated us on our grant. He saw for himself the work of the association, met members and didn't need to be asked twice if he would like to have a go on the new lathe; the picture of him in action was for all to see in the Sutton Guardian.

The second highlight was being invited to exhibit and demonstrate at this year's International Woodworking Exhibition at Alexandra Palace. This to my mind was an achievement we can be justly proud of and it is testimony to where we have come from since we were founded.

We joined the Surrey Association of Woodturners with a stand at the event and this followed on from our association taking

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Some of the other entries



Photo: Brian Ash
Other photos: Ron Grace



Chairman's report

Continued from page 1

part in SAW'S open day in October; I am keen to progress this marriage between the two associations. While a great deal of time and effort was put into the our stand at Alexandra Palace, there is no doubt that it was fun; some of our members demonstrated for the first time and we all found time to enjoy the exhibition and chat to the professional demonstrators.

I had hoped for us to have several hands-on mornings during the course of the year but this has not been possible; these events are great opportunities to get together in front of a few lathes on a Saturday morning and exchange views, ideas and have fun.

The Frank Clarke competition, held at the AGM and the August practical evenings, continues to attract a high standard of turning. If you have not yet entered one of the competitions, have a go

— it's open to all members of all abilities. Tonight's theme is hollow form.

The committee has met several times during the course of the year and the meetings continue to be a challenge to bring in under the 1.5 hours target I have set. David Horton (Chairman of the Dibley Parish Council) thought he had it bad! Seriously, the committee works cohesively and hard on your behalf and shares enthusiasm and commitment.

I thank every one of them.

And on behalf of the committee and you, our thanks to John and Ron (audio) (our thoughts are with Ron during his post-op recovery); Brian (cameraman); Cliff and Pat (refreshments); Ron (newsletter); Greg and Brian (website); Malcolm (library); and Alex (club shop). I sincerely hope I haven't missed anyone off the list!

Finally, thanks to all of you for being a part of the Cheam Woodturners Association.

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Personalities in focus

Born some 70 years ago in Battersea, Brian spent the formative years of his life there. He attended Wandsworth school which, in those days, was a technical/grammar school.

He left school in 1954 and spent some time qualifying as an architect until he was called up to do his National Service.

This he did in the Royal Air Force, where he was trained in electronics. He spent most of his enlisted time as a radar technician on a then secret site near where he was based in North Weald, Essex.

Doubtless, electronics fired up his interest in computing and after he was demobbed he went into the first UK company making computers, LEO Computers. It was this company which installed the first commercial computer into J Lyons, which helped it in the marketing and distribution of its products.

After a few years there he was sent to Czechoslovakia for two years where he helped to set up the first computer systems behind the Iron Curtain. Returning to the UK he formed his own company, being managing



Photo: Ron Grace

Brian Ash

director and chairman until his retirement in 1997.

In 2001 Brian's interest in woodturning had grown and he joined the original Cheam



Photo: Ron Grace

Brian's spacious workshop: Jeff Cordery gets personal tuition from Reg Slack during the May 2004 club night (our normal venue was taken over by a boxing match!)

woodturning club based in Church Hill Road, North Cheam. When that was reformed into the present club at the North Cheam Sports and Social Club he became the membership secretary until 2005.

He is now a very active member and has introduced

by Phoenix



the art of segmentation into the club. Brian wants to carry on enjoying woodturning and loves both the turning challenge as well as the camaraderie of the club and its members.

One of his greatest achievements in life has been in sport, representing England in athletics and badminton. He has little time for other hobbies now being a full-time grandfather, with 15 grandchildren at the last count. He does, however, have time to pass on his knowledge of computers as a governor of Kingston College/University where he advises on information technology and is involved in the accreditation of degree courses.

Brian admits he is not a professional turner but his work is an inspiration to the amateur members of the woodturning fraternity — and he is not shy in demonstrating his talents on club nights.

New on the committee

Jennie Starbuck

Most of you will know me from the three demos I have done for Cheam. I started turning



12 years ago to keep husband Chris company on a course with Reg Slack. It is fair to say that I didn't need much persuading as I had thoroughly enjoyed the exhibitions we had been to and wanted to give it a try. Reg was absolutely brilliant!

We decided to join a club, and at that time the Surrey Association of Woodturners at Mytchett near Farnborough seemed to meet our needs.

I was co-opted on to the

committee in 1998 and became chairman for three years from January 2004.

I am currently the Vice President of SAW (an honorary post for the immediate past chairmen) and in theory I am doing less than I was on the committee.

I met Frank Clarke at SAW and he kept me up to date with turning in Cheam. Cheam is slightly closer to us as the crow flies than SAW, but being on the committee and being a teacher was as much as I could cope with — so that is why Chris and I turned up on your doorstep to join this year. We are both retired now and can now get on with filling our lives with the things we like best.

I had no intention of joining your committee, but I am delighted to do so. I have made a lot of turning contacts in the past and I hope to be able to use this experience to sort out great programmes for the next couple of years.

If you have someone or some organisation you would like to see included in the programme, please give me a ring or you can contact me on my website (see back page).

More profiles of new committee members will appear in the next issue. Editor

For Sale

Six clock face glasses, 6in. diameter

£1 each or £5 the lot

Two packets of $\frac{5}{8}$ in diameter rubber plugs for salt and pepper pots.

Ten plugs, £1 the lot
Two brass effect handles for fitting to disposable razors

£1 the lot

Contact: Alec (see column 3)



Those with long memories will recall this cartoon — but it's worth another look

For Sale

5in woodturning lathe.
Condition: like new.
Complete with nine turning tools, drill chuck and revolving centre.
Reasonable offer accepted.
Contact: David Langridge
on 020 8641 0753.

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR CLUB SHOP

Price List
(January 2007)

Cora cloth abrasives
100mm wide 80, 120, 180, 240, 360 and 480 grit.....
.....£1 metre
Velcro discs, paper backed
50mm diameter 60, 80, 100, 120, 150, 180, 220, 240, 320, and 400 grit15p disc
Velcro padded discs, foam backed 50mm diameter 80, 120, 180, 240, 320 grit25p disc
Silicon carbide sheets
600/1200grit.....
..... three sheets £1
Webrax abrasive sheets, ultra, very fine and general purpose..... £1 each
Safety glasses, while stocks last£1.50 pair
Latex disposable gloves£0.15 pair
Dust masks.....20p each
Moulded ear plugs, soft and flexible.....60p pair
Non-slip mats, tape measures, super glue, clamps and knives£1.50 each

NB: Above items can be obtained at all times from Alec Gibson. 25 Glebe Road, Cheam, Surrey SM2 7NS.
Tel: 0208 642 5890.
Mobile: 0783 317 7972.
e-mail: monalec.Gibson@btinternet.com.
This price list will be updated on a monthly basis.

Members get Christmas presents

The December meeting was a festive occasion in more ways than one: it was the launch of the club's new lathe, bought with money from the Lottery Awards for All programme. Here are some photos of people and things to revive your memories



Raffle draw: MP Paul Burstow helps out Andrew Griffiths



Above and below: examples of work done by members



Paul: gets turning instruction from expert Colin Simpson



Paul: doing the rounds



Kit: lathe and accessories



Colin Ford: tries out the lathe

Three bowls from just one log

Les Thorne was our demonstrator in January and he had the honour of using our new lathe for the first time. With the aid of a close-up light he made a very thin platter and a bowl with square edges. No report received, so pictures will have to suffice!



A picture of concentration!



I can do it blindfold



A little light help



A bowl takes shape

During my visit to *Collect* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in February, I was very fortunate to be invited to a conversation with Arthur and Jane Mason, probably the largest collectors of woodturning in the world, Liam Flynn, the well-known Irish turner, and Emma Crichton-Miller, the critic, to discuss the classification of turned and carved wood as fine art.

The Masons got into woodturning by accident in 1986 when they couldn't find a parking place in New York. About to leave a different gallery they had visited, they were encouraged to view the Jacobson collection of turning. They were so excited that they bought several pieces and, as the saying goes, "the rest is history".

Gave pieces away

By 1999 their collection had grown considerably. As part of their aim of popularising woodturning as an art form and encouraging others to collect, they gave more than 100 pieces to the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, North Carolina. As they say, and Liam agreed, that rightly or wrongly, having woodturning in a museum validates the work.

This collection is now touring the USA and maybe it will go global. A superb book called *Turning Wood into Art* was produced by the Mint Museum.

I hope this article will encourage you to think about your turning from how potential buyers/collectors might see your efforts.

Arthur and Jane have to agree on their purchases. He

Art or craft?

by Gordon Cookson



usually agrees with her choices but she disagrees more often! They buy what they like regardless of whether the turner is well-known or not and one from each series from the turners that they have particularly supported. For instance, they discovered Binh Pho at the Philadelphia symposium before he was well-known (other collectors soon followed). This is the best event for turners to be discovered in the USA!

To start with, Arthur went for the look of the wood and Jane for the form. Gradually they have come to appreciate the more sculptural, heavily-worked and decorative pieces which are now the rage in the USA. Penrose Halson, Master of the Worshipful Company of Turners, said that decorative work was the particular interest of female turners in the UK seeking bursaries from the company.

The Masons look for respect for the material, the pieces must fly rather than sit. As with a painting or another piece of art, they encourage people to enjoy looking at and/or touching the pieces and discover their emotional reactions.

Jane likened her reaction to new pieces to the five steps of meeting new people. First step 'Wonderful'; second step 'Shallow'; steps three and four even worse and step five 'So what?' However, if the second time she looks at a piece it is still wonderful and then she

starts dreaming about it — she knows it is time to buy! The piece will have presence and excitement and she will continue to like it.

Arthur on the other hand reckons it takes him ten seconds to fall in love with a new piece and he usually stays in love with it.

The pieces must have a soul. They thoroughly recommend not only learning techniques at seminars but also going to sessions on design. (Are you reading the series of articles by Derek Hayes on design in *Revolutions* numbers 78 and 80 so far?).

The style of woodturning often reflects the interests of the maker.

For example, looking at the great Moulthrop family of turners, grandfather Ed was an architect and his designs/forms can be any size.

Mosaics

Son Philip was a photographer and lawyer. His pieces have a very deep colour or are wonderfully and carefully constructed mosaics of cut branches and resin. Grandson Matt adored his grandfather, who would feel the pieces even when he went blind and couldn't turn; he could feel where there was a problem with the shape and tell Matt how to correct it.

In the USA there is a close relationship between collectors and turners and they stay in each others

homes. The collectors do influence what the makers produce because they want to sell their work. However, this can sometimes stop makers moving on.

Liam said that initially he was influenced by others but now he concentrates on the form of the vessels with his trademark double rims. He adds careful hand-carved fluting to the wet oak which is about the only wood available in his part of Ireland. He usually uses acetic acid (vinegar) and iron filings to react with the tannin in the oak to turn it black. Or he fumes it with very dangerous high strength ammonia to make the wood go an attractive brown.

He joked that often people did not realise he uses wet wood, because he uses 'stable' wet wood. This is usually predictable in the way his forms/vases go slightly oval. Jane pointed out that wet woods turned thinly will do what the wood wants compared with dry wood, where you make the shape you want.

Liam said there had been much discussion on this side of the Atlantic as to whether woodturning was art or craft. In Ireland it was easier for woodturners to become known because of the smaller population. Turned pieces were in offices and were often given as diplomatic gifts.

The problem of not having the years of language to describe woodturning compared with paintings and sculpture was considered a hindrance to turning being accepted as fine art.

Sarah Myerscough from the gallery where the discussion was held, said there had been an increasing interest, by local

businesses in the West End of London and from interior decorators, in woodturning. From British and Irish turners' viewpoints, it is a great pity they are in the distinct minority in the gallery's annual February exhibition to coincide with *Collect* at the V&A.

So few exhibitions

It is very unfortunate that there are so few gallery standard exhibitions of woodturning in this country open for more than two or three days for potential collectors, interior designers, museum staff and the public to see.

The Rufford Craft Centre had an exciting exhibition of British woodturning in 2005, which was very well attended (see *Woodturning* magazine, No. 157). However, its previous inspiring turning exhibition, including many of the great American turners, was back in 1990.

Various people thought that the Crafts Council should take an active role in promoting woodturning. I thought afterwards, how about a free stand or one at much reduced cost for the Register of Professional Turners and the AWGB at *Collect* and *Origin* at Somerset House, London, in October and publicise the International Woodworking Exhibition at Alexandra Palace in the Collection programme of events that coincide with *Collect*.

I mentioned to Brian and Hana Smouha, the British collectors who sponsored the discussion and gallery exhibition, and Sarah Myerscough that perhaps they might publicise the exhibition to British turners. I said that

while they probably couldn't afford to buy any pieces, they would love to see them, especially as the Alexandra Palace show is on during the exhibition's run. They kindly agreed to consider the idea.

So how do you and others feel when you see the form/shape and touch of your work? Is there respect for the wood used and have you made the most of what is available to you? Does it sit or fly, has it soul, do you love it and continue to do so, does it reflect your character and interests and is it recognisably your style of work? Do you want to determine what you make by using dry wood or let wet wood decide as it dries? And to whom are your pieces going to appeal?

In other words, there is more to selling a piece than the quality of the techniques of making and finishing it!

For more information

Collect: a great place to enjoy superb international craftsmanship, or is it artistry? www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collect or telephone 020 7806 2512.

Origin: a great place to enjoy top British craftsmanship for two weeks in October. This has replaced the old two-week show at Chelsea Old Town Hall. Contact: the Crafts Council.

Sarah Myerscough Gallery: www.sarahmyerscough.com or 020 7495 0069.

Rufford Craft Centre, Newark, Nottinghamshire: well-known for its pottery courses and exhibitions. www.ruffordcraftcentre.org.uk or 01623 821 315.

2007 Programme

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| March 21 | Chris Barker | Goblets and captive rings. |
| April 18 | John Davis | Metal inlays and colouring. |
| May 16 | Joey Richardson | Texture, colour, piercing and airbrushing. |
| Jun 20 | Peter Westerman | Turning a half-log bowl + using an angle grinder |
| | Brian Ash | Alternative way for turning a natural-edge hollow form |
| July 18 | Mark Baker | Masterclass. |
| August 15 | Practical evening and Frank Clarke competition | |
| September 19 | Chris Eagles | Splitting and turning a green log. |
| October 17 | Nick Arnall | To be decided. |
| November 21 | Jimmy Clewes | Another masterclass. |
| December 19 | Christmas social | Social evening plus events. |

Club website: www.cheamturners.co.uk

In addition there may also be ad hoc tree harvests, hands-on mornings and exhibitions. Changes to the above programme may be necessary at short notice owing to unforeseen circumstances. Check our website for further information.

Meetings start at 7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month at:
North Cheam Sports and Social Club, 658 London Road (A24), North Cheam, Surrey
(adjacent to Sainsbury's supermarket).

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Next newsletter

June

Copy deadline

June 4

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