

At our November club night we were taken through a range of items useful to the woodturner, mostly home-made. Although some of these were familiar to us it was always good to be reminded and in some cases there was a definite murmur of appreciation as something simple was shown and the thought 'why didn't I think of that?' was clearly uppermost in our minds.

First up was **David Buskell**. He started by commending **the online Woodworkers Forum** to us all - <http://www.woodworkersinstitute.com/forum/>. As this is seen by woodturners worldwide if you have a problem you can't solve or a question to ask you can be sure that someone somewhere has already answered it and will be happy to help. Earlier this year one of our members had a query and wondered if someone in the club could help – he was pointed to the forum and got a large number of replies, far more than he could have hoped for from the club alone. David also recommended us to **YouTube**, this is an invaluable resource and you can be pretty sure if you want to find out how to use a particular tool or improve on your technique there will be at least one video, probably many more freely available for you to learn from.



On a Health and Safety note David had a nifty way of preventing us damaging our elbow on the live centre by covering it with a small yogurt drink pot (once you have drunk the contents!) – the perfect size and completely free



David then showed us his sanding disc, invaluable if you don't have a separate sander. You can turn (or cut) a disc to any size, mount it on a spigot to fit into your chuck and stick a sheet of self-adhesive grit to it, you can make a range for different grits. He also recommended the invaluable latex rubber abrasive cleaning stick which will clean out all the wood dust that accumulates in in your sandpaper.



David's last 'gizmo' was introduced with 2 saucepans - one will contain hot water – at 62 degrees and the other cold water. You then use your Polymorph plastic pellets, made of a new generation of low melt plastics, which melt in the hot water and are completely mouldable while warm, then dipped into the cold water to set. A great advantage is that it can be re-melted and reused time and time again and can also be coloured with a range of coloured powders. See examples of its use on this YouTube video (e.g. larger handle on a chuck key) -



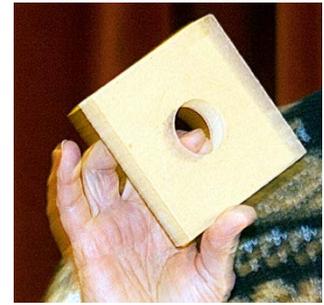
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhVuc6RNyaw>. 500g is available from Ebay (and elsewhere) and will cost about £7.50.



Next up was **Jeff Cordery**, with a range of home-made aids, starting with his tip that when doing your 'final cut' if the gouge seems to jerk along the tool rest, it may not be the rest but the back of the gouge itself that needs sanding smooth with some 240 grit sandpaper



His next simple item was a stand – a piece of wood with a hole in the middle which he uses as a stand for his bowls when he has just oiled them – the hole fits the size of the spigot so the bowl can be left to dry and then remounted on the lathe for finishing at a later time.



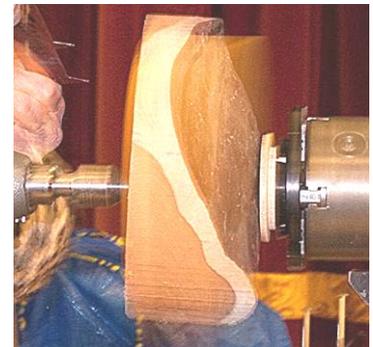
For drilling holes round the edge of something e.g. a clock face, Jeff has a stand which will fit in the tool rest with holes drilled in it and the indexing on the lathe is used to turn the piece round to the required place for drilling.

Jeff has cut some pieces of steel with specific sizes for his jaws in compression and expansion. These are attached with magnets to his lathe and he has a handy sizer always available when checking his turning to fit in the chuck. These were made using a hacksaw and file



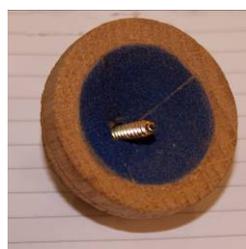
When mounting a uneven blank on the lathe Jeff has turned his own version of the Elio drive which allows for the wood to be mounted when it you don't necessarily want the blank to be parallel to the chuck or is uneven. This is made with wood and chipboard screws to the length necessary and is more secure than a simple screw chuck.

He also has a chuck with offset holes drilled in it so that a piece can be mounted for offset turning



We were shown a chuck for holding a ball for turning – one end held in the chuck and one mounted over the tail stock and the ball is held between and gradually turned round and sanded until it is spherical.

For holding small balls Jeff has a hollowed screw chuck, lined with felt to prevent it marking the wood they are also useful for making fruit



Jeff reminded us that we can use a rubber mat on the faceplate or chuck and a flat piece of wood on the tail stock to hold a piece in place or to use as a clamp.

It is also useful to have a face plate with screws, mounted on a morse taper (this can all be turned in wood).



A shear scraper is made from a tyre lever filed down – the tyre lever is strong steel and not brittle, he remarked that it is not a good idea to use a filed down file as they can break with disastrous consequences.

One very popular idea was Jeff's tops for screw top tins – Rustins, sanding sealer, etc. To make it easier to grip Jeff has a larger turned top which is glued onto the screw cap, this is then transferred to a new tin when necessary.

For sanding inside long hollow vessels Jeff uses a flat piece of steel with a sanding wedge on the end



The Doughnut Chuck is extremely useful for holding large or lopsided bowls where you need to hold a piece that you don't want to drill or screw into and also for finishing off the base of a bowl. It is made from two large circles of wood with long bolts to allow the bowl to be held between the circles.

**Gordon Cookson** also showed us his, somewhat chunkier, version of this chuck where he uses wing nuts on the bolts and has an additional smaller insert to hold smaller bowls.



For turning a long way over the rest in a hollow vessel Jeff uses a box rest which fits into the tool rest with a rotating bar attached and then a large hexagonal nut is drilled and filed out to create the rest for the hollowing tool



Although Jeff has purchased a number of hollowing tools he finds the most successful ones (apart from the Rolly Munro, which he has never owned) are the ones he has made himself, ground out of masonry drills and caps out of mild steel.



Jeff also showed us his hollowing tool frame with a laser attachment, this is made from square section tube, steel rods and a laser from an old level, he said a pen laser would work well. It is too complex to be explained here – ask Jeff for more details.





There was a lot of interest in where Jeff acquired the steel he uses for many of his tools – his supplier is **Outlook Stockholders** who supply a wide range of metals and also engineering plastics and will supply material cut to size. They are based at Woodcote Grove Farm, Meadow Hill, Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 2QQ, telephone 020-8668 9656 – [www.outlookmetalstock.com/index.html](http://www.outlookmetalstock.com/index.html)

*Apologies for one or two other items that have been missed from Jeff's wide ranging collection where there was not enough detail in the editor's notes and photos!*

**Gordon Cookson** followed with his steady, which is used to hold the large pieces he makes in chipboard and plywood and also long thin pieces, known as 'tremblers' which also have to be supported with elastic bands. It has rubber wheels taken from inline skates – ideal because they have bearings but some thought had to go into how to attach them. It stands on the lathe, Gordon's has a block to fit onto his lathe bed and a piece drops below to be screwed up to hold the steady in place



Gordon also uses an extension for sanding inside hollow vessels, but in this case it is a drill extension with a sanding wheel on the end, this can be replaced with a sanding disc for the bottom of a vase.

Gordon's final useful suggestion was fingerless gloves for use in the cold weather as full gloves are not so useful when turning.



We finished off the evening with a question from a new member, Francois Greeff, on how to use a ball turning jig he had bought to turn spheres on the end of sticks – in particular he was wanting to turn small balls on pawns in a chess set. Unsurprisingly Jeff had one of these but found it not particularly successful. It was suggested that the tool he had bought was not the most suitable thing to use for something so small and a better option would be a length of ¼" steel tube, ground flat at the end, which is moved round the piece until it is a perfect sphere. Instructions on Francois' attachment can be found on Youtube (Wooden ball with jig) - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELcm-s61QC0>

This was an excellent club evening with something for everyone, thanks to David, Jeff and Gordon for sharing their gadgets, gizmos and tips with us.