

Woodturning

THE WORLD'S LEADING MAGAZINE FOR WOODTURNERS

British Woodturner of the Year

Full details of how to
enter our great new
competition inside!

TEXTURED BOWL

Mark Sanger explores turning, texturing
and colouring a wide-rimmed bowl

- PROJECTS** Four-sided vase • Natural-edge bowl • Key rings
• Pedestal lidded box **TECHNICAL** • Shrink-pots with clasps
• Fundamentals of making boxes • Medieval-style bowl

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Woodturning 317



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Online Review



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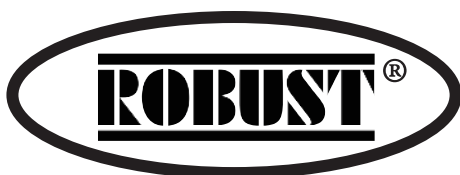
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Who has the most tools wins



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY BAILEY/GMC PUBLICATIONS

British Woodturner of the Year competition

Between 9th & 19th May we will be holding a Celebrating British Craft event at the Oxo Gallery in London.

Part of that event will feature a display of work from the British Woodturner of the Year competition.

This competition has three categories:

- **Young turners category**
This category is open to anyone under the age of 18.
- **Amateur turners category**
Amateur is defined as anyone who does not earn a living or part of their living from turning.
- **Professional turners category**
Professional means any turner who earns all or part of their living from turning.

Any style of turning is permissible in each category.

Full details on entering on page 95

There is an old saying amongst turners that goes along the lines of: 'Who has the most tools wins.' In truth, that also applies to many hobbies and sports where kit and equipment are required – and don't get me started on fly, coarse or sea fishing. Anyway, it is a truism that we all have far more tools than we need and actually use on a regular basis. But I think there is nothing wrong with this. The tools look great and I, like many others, get a buzz from buying something new.

There is no problem in buying new kit, as long as you do not think it will make you a better turner. Oops! I do not mean that to sound harsh, so please don't take it that way. On many occasions I have heard people say they are buying something because it will help them solve a cutting problem, or reach where they cannot get with the tools they have got, and so on. In situations like these there may well be valid reasons for buying new tools. But, if you wanted to buy the latest grade of steel gouge because you think it will cut better than the M2 or other steel you currently have, make sure you can sharpen properly and can use the current gouge to the best of its ability, and check your ability to use it too,

before upgrading. The tool will not solve sharpening or usage issues.

I know I am being provocative here, but it is a reality that most club turners do not turn many projects in a year. I know, because I have the stats of the questions I ask at all clubs I attend, and they have changed. But, do please get in touch if you disagree or agree with anything I have commented on.

- Most turners attend club meetings for social purposes and infotainment
- Most club turners are not turning 15 projects a year on the lathe. And by projects, I mean 15 items of any size and shape
- About 5-9% of club members do not own a lathe
- About 50% of club members have not touched a lathe in the last 6 months
- 25% of club members have not touched a lathe in over a year

Now, those are some things to ponder on, but not to worry about. Nearly all club members say they love the events and love turning. Lack of time, which is the age-old cry – is cited as the biggest reason for not turning. Now the kicker is,

many of the turners who are not turning much often attend the shows and say they buy new things when there. I have to admit I am guilty and buy when at those events too, despite saying I won't.

Anyway, these figures show that many will struggle when the time comes to do something again on the lathe. This may include sharpening, using new tools or using a particular tool. Remember, repetition of good techniques and skills helps us to improve those skills and helps us remember them so we know what to do the next time. If we do not practise the good skills and techniques regularly we will forget them or misremember them, which leads to trouble when we need to use them.

I am in no way berating anyone with this tale; I am simply stating what people tell me. The new tool may help, but only if you know how and when to use it and sharpen it properly.

Have fun, Mark

markb@thegmcgroup.com



COVER IMAGE: Mark Sanger (see page 25)



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NEWS, LATEST PRODUCTS, MAGAZINE UPLOADS & EVENTS

can all be found on www.woodworkersinstitute.com. These all appear on the magazine homepage and you can see a bigger selection by scrolling down the page and clicking on the individual stories. We also have an extensive online archive for you to browse, or see us on Facebook & Twitter.



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7



35



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15



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Woodturning is an inherently dangerous pursuit. Readers should not attempt the procedures described herein without seeking training and information on the safe use of tools and machines. All readers should observe current safety legislation when turning and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

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LAGUNA

Four-sided vase

Emiliano Achaval explores creating an offset-turned vase

A while back I was discussing article ideas with the editor, Mark. The issue came up about most turners turning things that are round – so how about doing something a bit different? I knew this was going to be a challenge! Woodturners are used to making things round, so I set about doing some online research and looked at some ancient oriental bronze vases and vessels.

Like other turners, I have done the usual, almost mandatory offset-turnings, that are common in the journey of experimentation as we grow as artists. I enjoyed the process of making some

offset candle holders several years ago, but they proved to be slow sellers, so remained an oddity in my past. But I have also made some offset/multi-axis boxes with an Escoulen or Vicmarc chuck, so the process is not entirely alien to me.

Since this was to become an article for the magazine I sought out Barbara Dill a great multi-axis turner, who is not only very willing to help and share ideas and techniques with others, but she has also published a great book on multi-axis turning. We communicated back and forth via email about an even, four-sided

vessel. The theory is straightforward. A four-axis 90° turning should do it... but, I'm going to tell you, there is quite a lot more to it than that...

I didn't want to use my chosen piece of timber, so I started by cutting a 100 wide x 100 high x 150mm long piece of Cook pine to practise with. After several practice runs, I wasn't happy with the results, and pondered what I could do with my limited knowledge. But I have to say, by the time I had finished I was pleased with what I made, considering it was my first ever off-centre vessel.



TOOLS AND MATERIALS

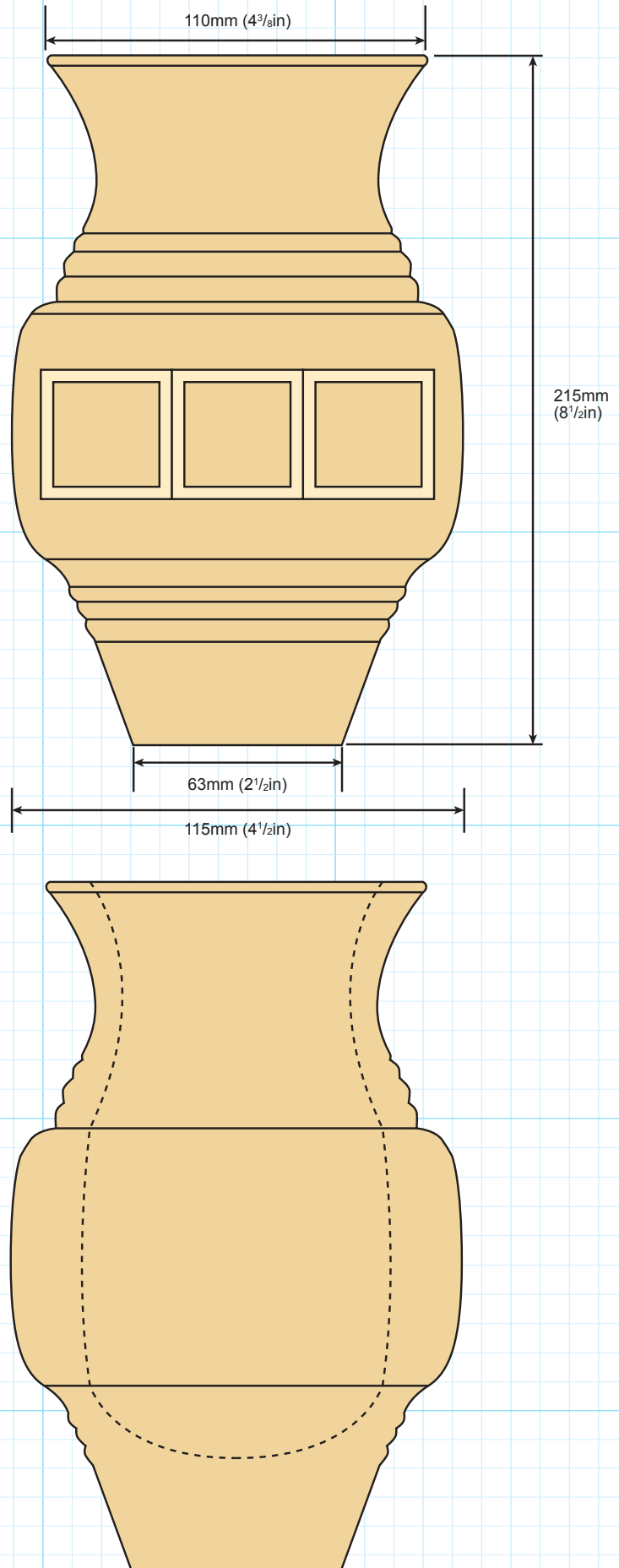
- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Bowl gouge
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Bead forming tool
- Parting tool
- Hollowing tool
- Rotary power carving unit
- Carving burr(s), such as a rotary chisel
- Chuck
- Revolving tailstock centre (a ring centre is ideal)
- Drive spur
- Drill chuck
- Forstner or sawtooth bit

MATERIALS

- Timber of your choice to suit the size of project you are making
- Abrasives down to 400 grit
- Metal size
- Metal leaf
- Finish of your choice

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Offcentre/multi-axis turning requires accurate setting out. Double check you have correctly marked out your centre marks prior to starting.
- Once you have mounted offcentre work, rotate the work by hand to check that the tool rest and other items are out of the way of the rotating work.
- Start the lathe at a low speed and build up to just enough speed so you can see the solid section of timber within the ghost/blurred offset work.
- It is best to practise on waste wood prior to working on the live piece.
- Check your lathe speed. Start slowly and build up a bit until you clearly see the ghost.
- Check constantly for any cracks and anomalies in the wood. If you have them, make sure the blemish will not compromise the integrity of the wood. There was a micro split in my timber, but it did not compromise the rest.
- Keep your hands and fingers on the non-timber side of the rest at all times.





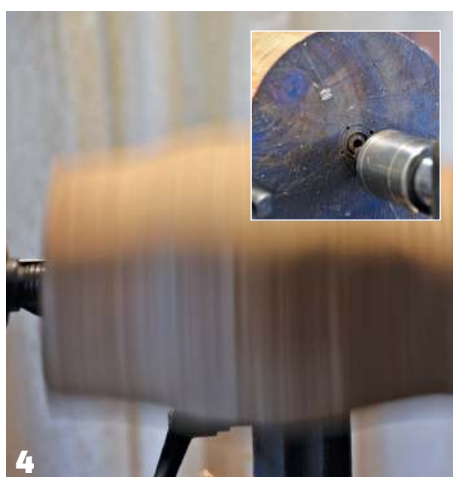
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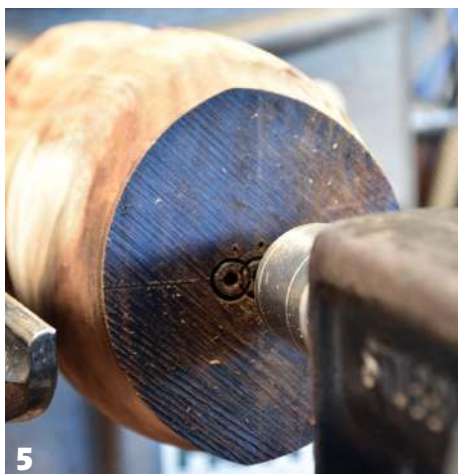
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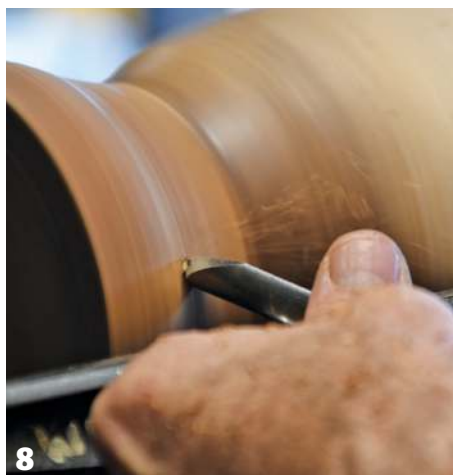
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7



8

1 As always, I recommend that you use whatever timber you have available. There is no need to buy any expensive exotics for this project. I chose an Acacia koa (Acacia koa) piece leftover from another job. A square about 200mm long by 125mm wide would be suitable, but you can make it smaller if you like. Find the centre by marking a line from each corner. Then make a circle about an 25mm in diameter, or thereabouts. The bigger the circle, the bigger the offset. Then, using an awl, mark each intersection of the circle with the diagonals to give you to offset positions so you can locate your revolving centre accurately.

2 Place the blank in between centres. It is one of the most secure ways of holding work, as long as you tighten it enough. Now would be a good time to go and sharpen your spindle roughing gouge.

3 Now, with your freshly sharpened spindle roughing gouge, bring the square to a cylinder. A bowl gouge would be another acceptable tool for this step if you don't have a spindle roughing gouge.

4 You can now start the offset process. You have four 90° axes. You need to align the timber with one at one end and the exact same axis position at the other. Safety should be a primary consideration here. For you to be successful, you need enough speed to be able to see a shadow or ghost, but not so fast that you have a vibration on the lathe. Not all lathes are capable of this; some are just too lightweight or not secured enough to do large offset pieces. If you have too much vibration, try reducing the lathe speed and or using a smaller blank. You can always expect some vibration, but find the size of project that works for you. Take a look at the main picture. You are not doing the whole blank offset, just the centre. The goal is to safely generate enough speed to be able to see solid wood to cut to in the shadow image generated. If you are new to this, use a practice piece of wood first to get the hang of things.

5 When I had a few practice runs on waste wood I noticed it was easier, vibration wise, to make the sides even if you switch to the opposite side offset axis. Look again for the solid wood shadow and take the ghost down to the solid wood. Stop frequently to check the process. It's very easy to go past the solid wood zone, which would mean the sides would not be even. The end goal for me was to create two large opposite sides and two smaller ones.

6 Do all four offcentre axes to create the four sides. Here you can see how close to the true centre you should be; almost touching each other.

7 Once you have finished creating the four sides, make a tenon so you can secure the piece to your chuck. Move the piece to your chuck.

8 Now refine the neck of the vessel. A spindle or bowl gouge will be ideal for this.

9 Add some detail, above and below the four 'flat' sides. It helps break to highlight the union of the two. If you have a beading-forming tool, it would be the easiest obvious choice to create them using one. If you don't have one, you can cut some small beads using a detail spindle gouge. Another good option for this would be a point tool. Just note that some softer woods tear considerably with a bead-forming tool, so cutting them with a gouge or parting tool is a much better choice in those instances.



10 To begin the hollowing process it is easier to drill out a centre hole. A Forstner bit is a good choice. Ideally, you want to drill to depth. If your bit is not long enough, you can do it in stages, as you continue hollowing, stop and drill.



11 If you are comfortable with a spindle gouge and end-grain, it is faster than a hollowing system. I hollowed out with a spindle gouge until I started getting unacceptable vibration. Then I switched to my captured bar hollowing system.



12 There are many hollowing systems out there and they all do an excellent job. Although it is possible to do it without one, it is much safer and faster to do it with one. I had to stop twice to drill with the Forstner bit. If you have an old-fashioned one like me with a laser light, make sure you don't knock off the laser offline with anything, like the anglepoise lights above the lathe.



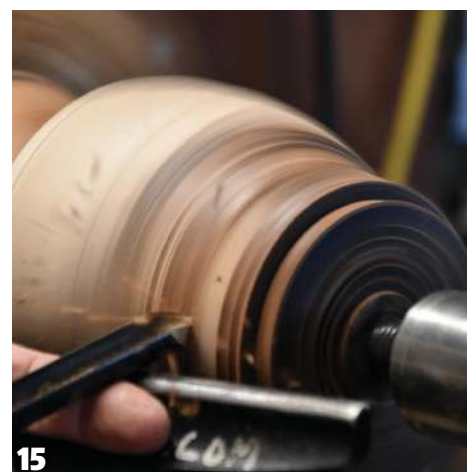
13 Notice that I don't have the beads on the bottom yet. I added them when I reversed the form to finished the bottom. You have to sand the flat sides by hand. Make a block with sandpaper to help with this. At this stage, you can also sand the inside. Do not put your hand inside the form to sand it. Use a pair of forceps or special extended reach sanding holder to hold the abrasive. If using tools such as forceps, never place your fingers in the holes of the forceps. If you get a catch inside the work, the result will be devastating to your fingers. Grip the outside of the forceps only to hold the sandpaper. You can also make anything that would hold the sandpaper at the end of a rod. I made one soft-foam covered with velcro, and I can attach hook and loop discs to it. Bring the lathe speed down when sanding. Since you can't feel the heat, it's easy to generate too much heat and crack the wood.



14 Jam chuck the vessel so you can finish the bottom. I turned a block of wood into the shape of the neck. I also added some soft padding to prevent any marring. You can find that at any hardware store, used to line the bottom of drawers. Use only enough pressure to hold it, or you risk the chance of cracking it.



15 Carefully start refining the lower section of the vase by take multiple light cuts. Keep adjusting until you have the shape and curvature you want. You will gradually start removing the spigot but don't remove it all yet.





16 As you refine the bottom, consider if you want to add any decoration. I added beads, but other decorative effects are worth considering too. As you shape the base area you will end up with a small amount of wood left under the tailstock revolving centre. Do not remove this nub of wood while the lathe is running. Instead, sand all the just cut areas, then stop the lathe and cut this nub of wood off with a chisel, or a small hand saw. Once it is cut off, sand the bottom to finish it off.

17 Now is the time to add any embellishments if you want to. I chose to use a very simple varied pattern. You don't have to do this, but the four sides do lend themselves to adding something there if you wish. If you do add detail, use a pencil to draw the pattern; squares on each side, in this case, so you can see how things will look at this stage. The advantage of using a pencil is that with a rubber eraser you can simply correct your mistakes. Once I was happy with the design, I used a micro-motor with a carbide rotary cutter to carve the lines. You make very fine dust, so using PPE here is a must. If you don't have a micro-motor, you can use any other rotary tool such as a Dremel, available at most hardware stores. You can also use a chisel, and it is, in fact, a good option, it will give you some crisp lines cutting along the grain, a little more difficult against it.

18 Cut some small squares of sanding paper and fold them to the size of the grooves. Carefully sand them all. Now is also the time to finish sanding all the areas that were not possible to sand previously with the work spinning on the lathe.

19 How cleanly you tidy up the carved grooves is up to you. There are numerous examples of clean cut and gilded items and there are others that are, shall we say, more rustic in the decorative element and not everything is crisp and even. I opted for a halfway house. I applied metal-leaf size into the grooves and then applied the metal leaf. You can create a clinical sharp-edged look or a broken rustic look, as required. Once you have the effect you require apply a finish of your choice to the piece. An oil finish will work well in most cases and is easy to apply.

20 The finished item. •

Community news

We bring you the latest news from the world of woodturning and important dates for your diary

We try to give accurate details on forthcoming events. Please check with organisers for up-to-date information if you are planning to attend any of the events mentioned.

AAW call for entries

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AAW



Margaret Garrard's piece was exhibited at a recent AAW event



Work by Peter Archer

The American Association of Woodturners has two calls open for international entries. Both exhibitions will be featured at the AAW International Woodturning Symposium in Raleigh, North Carolina, and displayed at the AAW Gallery of Wood Art in St Paul, Minnesota.

The 2019 Professional Outreach Program exhibition and auction theme is *Traces*. *Traces* can be interpreted in any number of ways: science, history, art, life. How the theme is interpreted, and in what materials, is up to the artist. To be considered, work must be of excellent quality, created for the exhibition, and relate to the title theme. The only other requirements are that it must fit within a 6in x 6in x 6in cube (15cm x 15cm x 15cm) or be smaller in size, original, created at least in part on the lathe, and accompanied by a statement of up to 100

words on how the work relates to the theme. This exhibition concludes with an auction, from which the artist may retain up to 50% of the proceeds and may set a reserve. The deadline is 4 February, and the fee is \$30 for up to three entries.

The annual juried member exhibition theme is *Continuum*. Wood artist Jim Christiansen, co-chair of the exhibition, writes: 'Depending on where we are born and when, on the influence of others, and on sometimes seemingly random events, our course is influenced and shaped. As a turner, you are part of a legacy that stretches back more than 2,000 years. You are also practising an evolving craft that looks forward into the future, kept vibrant and ever-evolving by technical innovations and new creative discoveries. For the theme *Continuum*, we are asking that you create new work that reflects

what you have learned and who (or what) has inspired you.' It is open to any AAW member and to full-time students in art, design, or industry-related degree programmes, regardless of membership status. The entry fee is \$30 for up to three entries, and the deadline is 4 March.

Recent AAW exhibitions have included many UK woodturners, among them Sally Burnett, Peter Archer, Eleanor Lakelin, Jay Heryet, Joey Richardson, Nick Agar, Louise Hibbert, and Margaret Garrard.

The application fee for both exhibitions is waived for full-time students in art, design, or industry-related degree programmes.

For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/AAWCall>, or email AAW Curator Tib Shaw, tib@woodturner.org

SHOWS AND EVENTS

Oregon Woodturning Symposium

When: 15-17 March 2019

Where: Linn Country Expo Centre, 3700

Knox Butte Rd, Albany SE, OR 97322, US

Web: www.oregonwoodturningsymposium.com

Midlands Woodworking & Power Tool Show

When: 22-23 March 2019

Where: Newark Showground,

Lincoln Rd, Winthorpe, Coddington,

Newark, NG24 2NY

Web: www.nelton.co.uk

Turnfest

When: 29-31 March 2019

Where: Seaworld Resort,

Seaworld Dr, Main Beach,

Queensland, Australia

Web: www.turnfest.com.au

Totally Turning

When: 30-31 March 2019

Where: Saratoga Springs City Centre,

522 Broadway, Saratoga Springs,

New York 12866, USA

Web: www.totallyturning.com

Crafts Supplies Open Day

When: 6 April 2019

Where: Unit 2, Faraday Close, Harworth,

Nottinghamshire, DN11 8RU

Web: www.craft-supplies.co.uk

Woodworks@Daventry

When: 10-11 May 2019

Where: Daventry Leisure Centre, Lodge

Road, Daventry, NN11 4FP

Web: www.tudor-rose-turners.co.uk

Makers Central

When: 11-12 May 2019

Where: NEC Birmingham, North Avenue,

Marston Green, Birmingham, B40 1PW

Web: www.makerscentral.co.uk

Weird & Wonderful Wood

When: 19-20 May 2019

Where: Haughley Park, Wetherden,

nr Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3JY

Web: www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

Les Petites Journées d'Aiguines

The woodturning symposium Les Petites Journées d'Aiguines will be held on 30-31 May. It is open for a maximum of 100 attendees and is the perfect opportunity to discover unknown but talented woodturners as well as get close to some world class ones. If you add in the breathtaking surroundings of the Verdon Canyon and the warm welcome of fellow



Les Petites Journées
d'Aiguines – Sakura
cherry by Dixie Biggs

woodturners, this is an event not to be missed.

This year it will feature:

- Dixie Biggs (États-Unis)
- Antoine Annézo
- Thierry Bertheas
- Gérard Bidou
- Jean-Claude Charpignon
- Jean-François Escoulen
- Tom Jung
- Yann Marot
- An open workshop by Paul Texier (ornamental turning).

When: 30-31 May 2019

Where: Escoulen School, Aiguines, France

Web: www.escoulen.com/en/congres-2019

The ToolPost Open Day

When: 1-2 June 2019

Where: The ToolPost, Unit 7, Hawksworth

Southmead Industrial Park, Didcot

Oxfordshire, OX11 7HR

Web: www.toolpost.co.uk

AAW Symposium

When: 11-14 July 2019

Where: Raleigh Convention Centre,

300, Salisbury, Raleigh St,

NC27601, US

Web: www.woodturner.org

Chestnut Products' Woodturning Weekender

When: 3-4 August 2019

Where: The Springfields Event Centre,

Spalding, Lincolnshire

Web: <https://chestnutproducts.co.uk>

Yandles Woodworking show

When: 6-7 September 2019

Where: Hurst Works, Hurst, Martock,

Somerset, TA12 6JU

Web: www.yandles.co.uk

Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium

When: 14-16 September 2019

Where: The Ranch, Larimer County

Fairgrounds, 5280 Arena Circle, Loveland,

CO 80538, US

Web: www.rmwoodturningsymposium.com

The ToolPost Open Day

When: 2-3 November 2019

Where: The ToolPost, Unit 7, Hawksworth

Southmead Industrial Park, Didcot

Oxfordshire, OX11 7HR

Web: www.toolpost.co.uk

North of England Woodworking Show

When: 15-17 November 2019

Where: Hall 1, Great Yorkshire

Showground, Harrogate, HG2 8NZ

Web: <http://www.skpromotions.co.uk>



The ToolPost Open Day – work By Benoit Averley

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Don't get boxed in

In the first part of his series, Chris Grace discusses the ins and outs of boxes



Boxes are a great project for any level of woodturner as they don't require much wood or special equipment. They can be as simple or as complex as you like, so they are a good way to develop skills and ideas. See the selection of boxes here, courtesy of members of South Downs Woodturners, for inspiration. The opportunities are endless, so let's consider some of the options.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The most important question to ask first is – what or who is the box for? Asking this question may clarify some design requirements such as shape, size, ease of lid removal and so on.

DO WE REALLY NEED TO DESIGN A BOX?

Whether you're a 'design it then make it' type of person, or a 'grab a piece of wood and just make it' turner, you will need to think about shape and other functional aspects at some point as you progress with making boxes. Design doesn't necessarily need to be a formal process; it's just a way of describing some of the thought or decision making processes you might go through. Here we will consider some of them, and you can choose to do all of it up front, or as you go – but hopefully thinking about the options may help.

FUNCTION VERSUS FORM

A small box that is kept in a bag or pocket needs a lid that won't come off accidentally, but when you want the contents it shouldn't be so difficult you need tools to remove the lid, nor spray the contents everywhere. This holds true for most boxes, but some may need to be opened with one hand, requiring a loose lid. For decorative boxes, you can let your imagination run wild, as there are effectively no constraints.

IS ANYTHING WITH A LID A BOX?

I'll let you decide. I don't like pigeonholing things, so my definition is pretty loose. As far as I'm concerned, boxes can be any size you want, and incorporate feet or finials or any other elements you like. They just need to be able to enclose some contents.



Very simple boxes enhanced with a contrasting inset lid/base

DESIGN CONCEPTS

There are many concepts that can help us arrive at an attractive design, however all they actually say is – make it pleasing to the eye. Really, there are no rules; on a spherical box it might be best to have the lid transition in the middle which effectively contradicts many design concepts.

◀ Box designs by South Downs Woodturners



Useful design guidelines

Some of the design concepts, like Fibonacci numbers or golden ratio and rule of fifths or thirds, can prove a useful guide when determining proportions. Whilst they differ in approach, there are significant similarities in the resulting designs.

These can be applied both to the width versus height and the lid versus body of your box as well as the height of any finial or other features.

Having decided on proportions you can choose between straight or curved lines. These can be mixed, say with a slightly convex top on a straight-sided box, or go with the flow and produce a design with numerous curves. However, initially I advise against throwing the kitchen sink at your design.

**Fibonacci
or golden
ratio, fifths
and thirds**

Workshop tip

- Less is often more when combining design elements

Proportion or balance are also important, and relate to every aspect of your design. However they are influenced by your choice of shape. There needs to be a balance between elements or any repeated features. Scale refers to the flow of heavier elements at the bottom, or middle, and lighter features towards the top of a design.

You can create movement in your project by using simple leading lines to lead the eye to other features which should complement the overall design.

Don't be afraid of a plainer area which allows attention to be captured by other features.

Conversely, when adding detail it should not overpower the design. There is a benefit to retaining some plainer areas within the overall design, otherwise the detail can become too close and cluttered. Well spaced detail elements enable them to stand out and be admired. The space between also allows the design to 'breathe' and provides the opportunity to show off the wood grain itself.

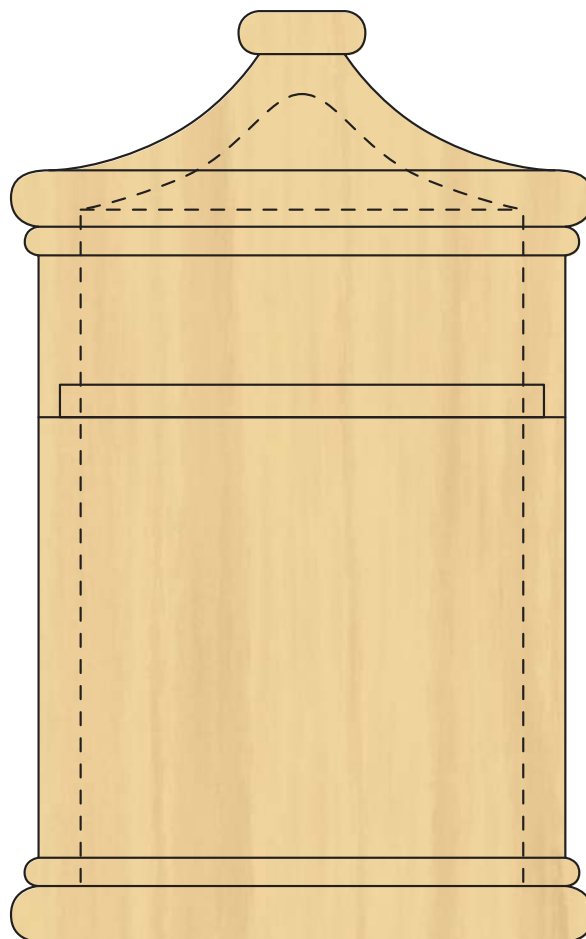
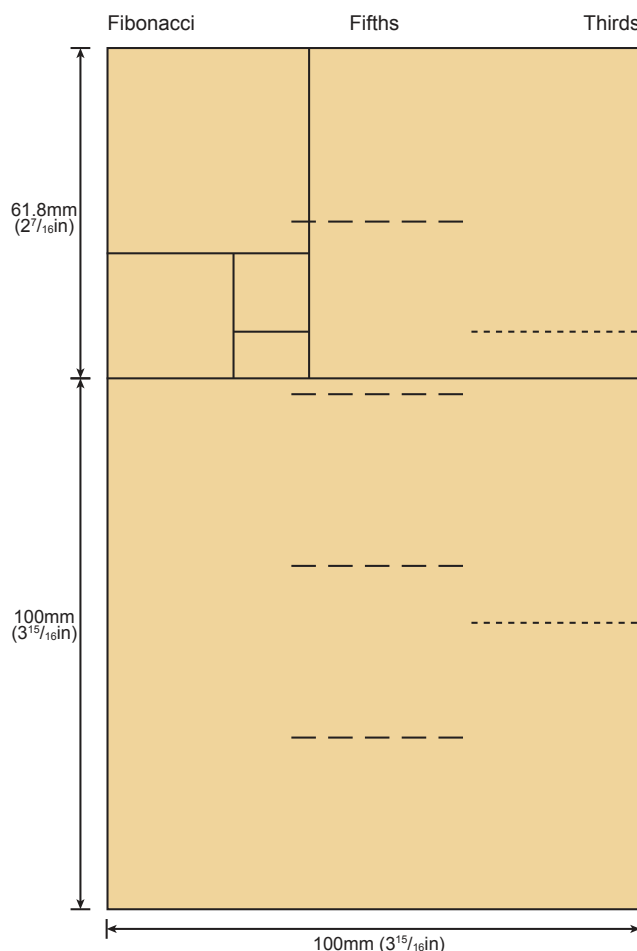
Colour (either different woods or applied) can have a dramatic effect, emphasising an element, as can texture. Even creating a shadow line can transform a piece.

Odd numbers work well if your box or boxes have multiple elements.

**Adding detail
elements but
leaving space
for the grain**

Workshop tip

- Don't slavishly follow design 'rules'. Think about the look and feel of the whole project once completed



◀ Lids

Lids can sit within, over or even rest on your box. There are benefits to each, either for practical or aesthetic reasons. Then there is the fit of the lid. With the exception of a lid that effectively just rests on your box, they can be loose, have a tight 'pop' fit, or have a graceful 'piston' fit, allowing the lid to gently settle.

FINIALS/LID SHAPES

Should your lid have a handle, to aid removal? If so, consider adding a finial. Woodturners like to make nice slender finials to demonstrate their skill. But will that work with your design? It might be all too easy to snap a slender finial if you have created a tight fitting lid. So, complementary elements are again the key.

CHOICE OF TIMBER

The choice of which timber to use can be practical i.e. what's readily available, or aesthetically driven. If I select wood with

interesting grain, I would choose a relatively simple design to show it off. With a more complicated box, or one I planned to embellish with texturing or similar, I would select a plainer timber.

Stay safe

- For boxes that may contain food items, choose the timber and finish carefully
- Be aware of nut allergies and the toxicity of some woods or finishes

Workshop tips

- Collect suitable box blanks whenever you see them, and store them to season before using them
- Keep small interesting offcuts as accent pieces

Tools & equipment

You can make boxes using the most basic tools. However, a scroll chuck and appropriate jaws, together with a box scraper make life easier.

INSPIRATION

The most important tool is imagination, but if you don't think you have enough of that, observation works almost as well. Just look around your environment and see shapes that interest you. Take a note pad where ever you go and jot down ideas. These can be combined later into a cohesive design.

A box scraper helps create a square recess



Making a simple box

For our first box we will make a cylindrical box with a lid junction at about two-thirds of its height. The lid will be an over fit, with a spigot on the base. We will use a single end grain blank that is kiln dried so we can make our box in one go. To ensure the box is a practical, useable item, we will make the lid just loose enough so that it can be lifted off with one hand.

This box can be made with the tools

recommended in my Let's Talk series of techniques, though if you want a square corner inside your hollowed lid or base, it's easier to achieve this with a dedicated box scraper. Boxes need a durable finish, so I use spray lacquer and de-nib before applying a coat of microcrystalline wax.

For a 75mm diameter box, select a sound end grain blank that is about 80mm square and 160mm long where the grain

runs along the length of the blank. If your wood is a different width, that's fine; just ensure that it's at least twice as long as it is wide. The wood should ideally have some interest to the grain, as the box design is relatively simple. It doesn't need to be very highly figured, but the plain design offers the opportunity to show off the grain structure of all but the plainest of woods.



Straight grain blanks make lid grain matching easier



Removing the minimum of wood helps grain match

Accurately mark the centre on both ends of the blank, and create a small indentation to locate the centres used for the first stage of turning.

Mount the blank between a drive and rotating centre and turn the wood down to an accurate, parallel cylinder, just larger than required. I use a roughing gouge, and initially nibble wood away starting at one end, taking 20mm off at a time working towards the middle. I then do the same from the other end. This avoids the possibility of creating large splinters if there are flaws in the wood.

Having roughed the blank to a cylinder, I use a spindle gouge to turn away any

inconsistencies, and create a smooth finish.

Inspect the wood again at this stage to ensure there are no flaws. For boxes with relatively thin walls we need a flawless blank, so discard it if there are any cracks apparent. I also assess the grain pattern to determine which way up it should be used for the box. We need to achieve the best grain match at the junction with the lid. The last step at this stage is to create a dovetail spigot at each end to hold the base and lid as they are turned.

Based on our design choice of one third for the lid, plus a little extra for chucking that will be removed later, mark a line representing the bottom of the lid in pencil.

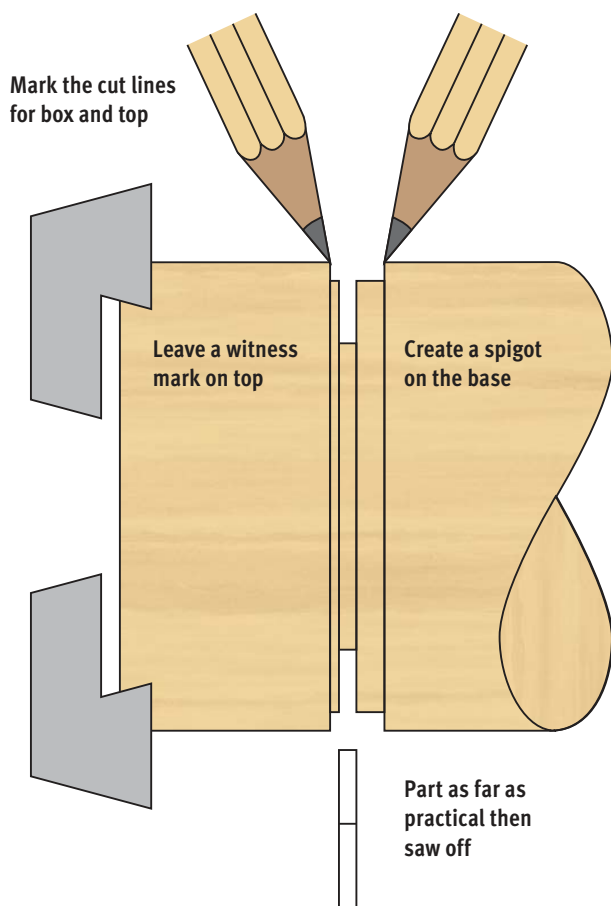
A second line is useful to indicate the lower extent of the spigot on what will become the base. I use a 3mm parting tool, so an 8mm groove will allow for that plus a 4.5mm spigot and 0.5mm witness mark. Create the spigot with a parting tool, then part in to prepare for releasing the lid, leaving just enough spigot on the lid to act as a witness mark for when you turn the mating recess. As we want the best possible grain match, we need to remove the minimum length of wood between the box and lid. To achieve this, use a thin parting tool and part in as far as practical without it binding to create a nice clean cut, then saw through the middle to separate the parts.



Rough to a cylinder in steps towards the ends



Creating chucking spigots both ends with a dovetail scraper



Mark the lid joint, create a spigot and part, leaving a witness mark on the lid

Drilling helps the hollowing process by getting rid of the almost stationary wood at the centre of the blank. The other benefit is that it can be used as a guide to the depth we require when hollowing.

Workshop tip

- When drilling, stop short of your intended depth, leaving wood at the bottom to be cleaned up with a gouge or scraper

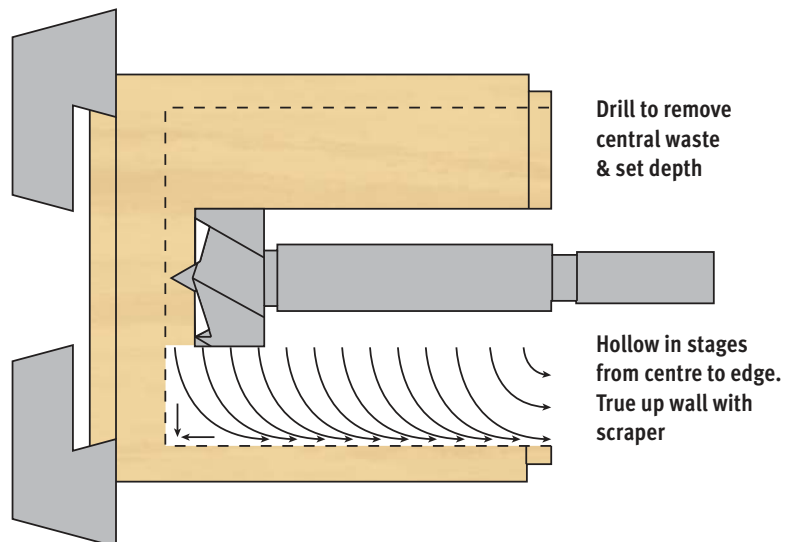
Hollowing boxes with a spindle gouge is a perfectly reasonable method, and it gives good results, though it works best with one of the larger diameter tools, and the edge lasts much longer if the grind angle is on the more conservative side. I have a 13mm spindle gouge ground at 45° that I use primarily for drilling and this kind of hollowing.



Drill the lid and box to set depth and to ease hollowing

Whilst boxes can be rough hollowed and finished with a spindle gouge, the result will leave a radiussed corner between the base and walls. If you want a sharp transition here, you will find that one of the easiest methods of achieving it will be with the use of a dedicated box scraper.

Box hollowing sequence – drill, clear waste and finish



Hollowing the lid

For the lid, we need a recess that the box's spigot will locate into. I typically create this with a parting tool. My preference is to start with a very shallow recess that is obviously too small, and creep up on the required diameter. The witness mark can be used as a guide for the required diameter, leaving the most minimal evidence of it on the lid will be fine. Test your box, it should nearly fit, or be extremely tight at this stage. Don't worry if it's a tiny bit loose, as that's what we are aiming for ultimately. Deepen the cut so that the spigot does not touch the bottom of your recess, but ensure you don't widen the hole at all. I also use the same tool to define the diameter that the lid needs to be hollowed to. Undercut the rim slightly, so that the lid and box meet at the periphery.

Now the lid can be hollowed using your spindle gouge, to your designed shape. Use a box scraper if you need to smooth out any ridges or require a sharp transition between the underside of the lid and the walls. Sand through the grits, being careful not to touch the mating recess, apply sealer, and/or other finish as desired.

Hollowing the box is similar to the lid, but with the added complication of being deeper, which exacerbates access and reach over the toolrest issues. If you use a scraper in the hollowing of your box, toolrest platforms that reach inside the box are available, however I have never felt the need for these when making my boxes. I have simply got used to making lighter cuts as I hollow deeper, and boxes aren't generally that deep. Adjusting the rest, so that the gouge/scraper tip is at centre height is, however, more important when undertaking deeper hollowing, and is a compromise associated with tool presentation when making



Hollowing small boxes can be accomplished with a spindle gouge



A box scraper helps create parallel walls and a perpendicular bottom



Creating a lid joint recess is easy with a box scraper



A dovetail scraper helps undercut the lid accurately

a cut up the inside of a box wall.

With the inside of the box finish turned, sanded, sealed and any finish applied, the rim beside the spigot can be

carefully undercut, and the lid fitted and the joint examined. The fit should still be tight at this stage to facilitate turning the top of the lid.

Back on the outside, the turning is again easier, and we can make use of the box as a jam chuck for the lid. If it's too loose, use one or more layers of paper towel to get a snug fit. If the fit is too tight, then carefully shave a little off the spigot diameter until you get the desired fit. Remember this can be done with abrasives if you are not sufficiently confident with a gouge or parting tool.

The outer wall of the box can now be trued up if required, this might be achievable simply using abrasives. The top benefits from being shaped with a slight convex, removing the revolving centre once the bulk of the turning has been completed. The last little bit can be turned away carefully using light cuts with a sharp gouge. Most of the outside can now be sanded and finished.



Jam the lid on the base and shape. Re-true the outside walls if necessary

Stay safe

- With the lid securely attached, bring up the revolving tailstock for security.

Measure the box depth to ensure there is sufficient wood for the base, and use this or your design depth as appropriate to mark the bottom. Part the box from its chucking spigot either by stepping down to avoid binding, or make a groove, and cut with a saw.



Part off the box by stepping down, stopping to saw off the nub

Make a jam chuck using the waste still in the chuck. Measure the inside diameter and with a parting tool cut a very shallow spigot. Test the diameter with the box. We need a relatively tight fit. If necessary, use the taper trick to size it exactly, and paper towel if necessary. Once sized appropriately, make it long enough to hold; 4-6mm should suffice. Press the box against the shoulder for maximum support.



Use the waste as a jam chuck to reverse the box

Turn the base of the box with a slight concave over about 90% of the surface using a sharp spindle gouge, so it sits nicely without wobbling. Again, remove the revolving centre only when absolutely necessary. Sand and finish, or create decorative rings as desired.



Finish the base on a jam chuck, removing the tailstock at the last moment

Workshop tip

- Undercut the rim of the box beside the spigot to minimise the lid joint
- Create a small taper, then press the lid on firmly with a twisting motion and see where the fibres have been slightly burnished
- Don't make the jam chuck too tight or you might split your box walls, or you may have trouble getting it off again

NEXT ISSUE: We will consider other turning options and make a curvy box.

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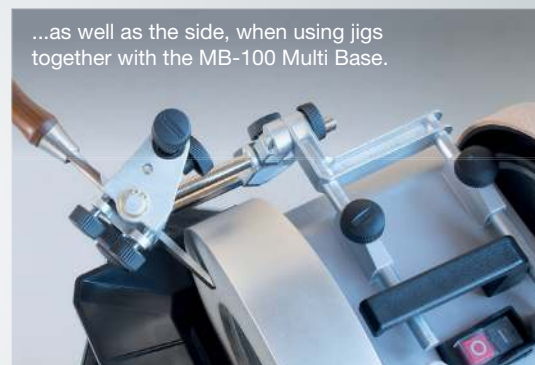
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Textured wide-rim bowl

Mark Sanger textures a wide-rim bowl using rotary tools and a burr



Carrying on with my current series of articles of carving textures on turned forms using a variety of hand chisels and power tools, this month I make a wide-rim sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) bowl, the rim of which is textured using a flexible shaft pendant-type rotary tool and coarse ball-nose carbide tipped burr. Wide-rim bowls are an excellent canvass for carving and colouring designs, and are relatively simple to turn with standard turning tools, allowing us to concentrate on the texture and colouring of the piece. This project can be left natural if you so choose, without texture or colour, especially if you have a beautiful piece of wood containing interesting grain pattern.

The colour applied in this project is achieved using a mixture of red and black spirit stains to give a deep burgundy colour while allowing the grain to show through. Further highlights have been applied to the textured rim using a thin coat of gold acrylic paint applied using a 'dry brush' technique. This technique is a favourite of mine as it is simple yet effective, requiring only a soft make-up blusher type brush – available from most supermarkets – gold acrylic artist's paint, kitchen towel and a little patience.

The centre of the bowl is layered with several coats of acrylic satin lacquer that is burnished to a high shine using burnishing cream. As ever,

experimentation is the key to progress, so try out what I have shown you here and then alter the colour, shape, type of burr used and see what you can come up with. But most of all, stay safe and have fun.



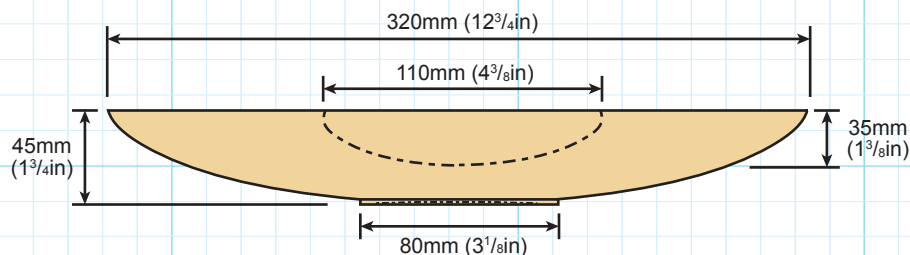
The rim of the bowl is textured using a flexible shaft pendant/drop down-type rotary tool and coarse ball-nose carbide tipped burr

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- 10mm bowl gouge with long grind
- 6mm bowl gouge with long grind
- 19mm skew chisel
- 25mm round-nose scraper
- 25mm square-end scraper
- Inertia sanding arbour
- Straight carving chisel or wood chisel
- Flexible shaft pendant rotary tool with collet to accept appropriate burr
- 12mm coarse carbide-tipped burr

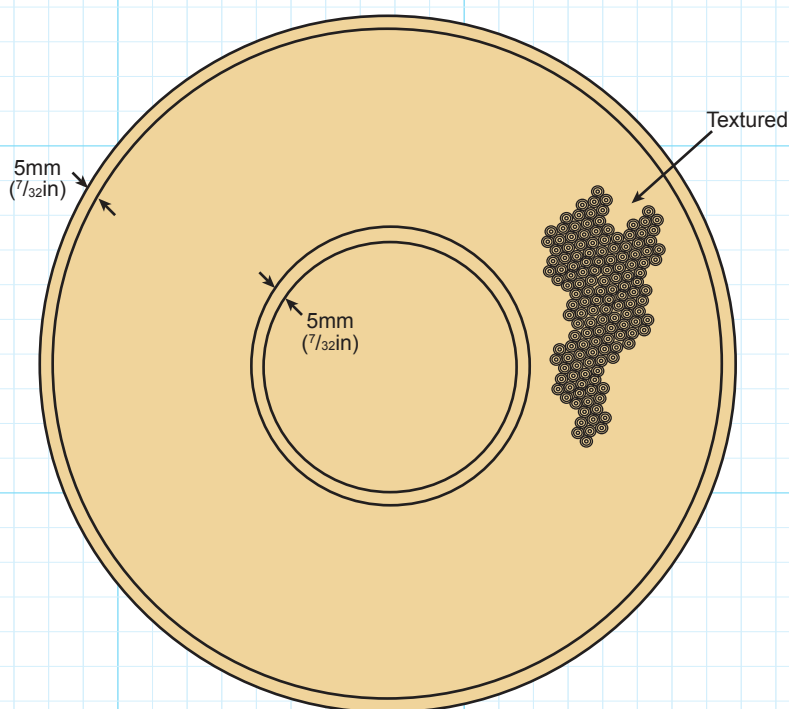
MATERIALS

- Seasoned sycamore cross-grain bowl blank 320mm dia x 50mm thick



Safety

As always, safety is top of my list. All tools and techniques have a potential to cause injury if not used correctly, so always read the manufacturer's guidelines and seek professional instruction if you are unsure or require further guidance. Make sure your work and floor space are clear and free of trip hazards and, while cuts and abrasions are perhaps an obvious hazard, dust, especially when using burrs, is a hazard, so always wear appropriate face and respiratory protection with good dust extraction at the source of working.

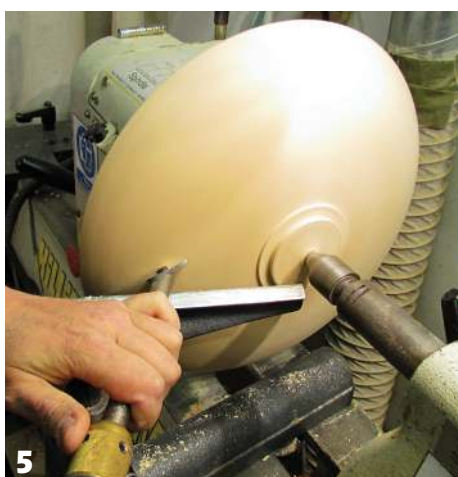


Turning the bowl

1 Mount the blank on a faceplate, bring up the revolving tailstock in place for added security and turn the outside of the blank using a bowl gouge. Keep the handle low so that the bevel is supporting the cut, point the flutes in the direction of the cut and cut on the lower wing.

2 Clean up the face of the blank to just shy of the revolving centre. Then work from the centre out using a pull cut, or use a push cut from outside toward the tail centre, to remove wood. Create a spigot to suit the jaws of your chuck, followed by a waste section approximately 10mm wide and slightly larger than the spigot diameter to sit flush with the face of the jaws.





3 Continuing with the bowl gouge, shape the base of the bowl to produce a smooth curve from the shoulder of the waste section out to the rim. Again, here I am using a pull cut with the flutes pointing at 2 o'clock. As you near the desired profile take smaller refining cuts to the finish profile.

4 Using the toe of a skew chisel placed horizontal on the toolrest in scraping mode, where the handle is higher than the cutting edge, refine the spigot to suit the profile of your chuck jaws.

5 Refine the surface of the base of the bowl if required using a square profile scraper. Here I am using a shear scraper with the edge presented at 45° to the surface. This achieves a finer finish than by presenting the scraper flat to the toolrest.

6 Finish the base up to the shoulder of the waste section with abrasive from 120-400 grit. Pay attention to the surface, making sure every blemish is removed before progressing on to the next grit.

7 Reverse the bowl into the chuck and tighten in place, checking it is seated positively in the chuck jaws and running true. Using the bowl gouge, clean up the front face. Here again I am using a pull cut working from spindle centre out to the rim.

8 Using a pencil and rule, mark the diameter of the bowl and rim on the face. Use the bowl gouge to hollow out the inside to a smooth curve from rim into the base. Here I have produced a slight undercut rim, but this is not critical, so the choice of profile can be altered to suit your taste.

9 With the hollowing finished, refine the interior with a round-nose scraper to remove any tool marks prior to finishing with the abrasive. Make sure the scraper handle is higher than the cutting edge presented in scraping mode to prevent a catch and produce the best finish straight from the tool.

10 Using the toe of the skew chisel presented horizontal on the toolrest in scraping mode, produce two grooves approximately 2mm deep at the rim of the bowl and outside rim as shown in the main diagram.

- 11 Abrade the front face down to 400 grit. Check you have removed all tool marks and blemishes before moving to subsequent grades. Preparing well prior to texturing means that any sections remaining through the texture will be consistent and will take the stain evenly.

Applying texture

12 Mount the bowl into a carver's vice or, if you do not have this option, remove the bowl and chuck and clamp the chuck into a soft jaw vice. Then, using a coarse round-nose burr in a rotary tool handpiece, gently plunge the burr vertically into the surface. Produce an even texture by overlapping each circle/texture so you cover the whole surface as tightly as possible. I am wearing cut-resistant gloves to prevent injury in case the burr skids.

Applying colour

13 Apply red spirit stain to the entire surface of the bowl, making sure you get the stain right down into all the texture. Once the top is evenly covered, remove from vice or chuck, place face down on a dust-free surface protected with kitchen towel or similar and coat the underside. Wear rubber gloves to protect your skin from the stain and chemicals.

14 The initial coat of stain is a base coat to build upon. Once dry I darkened it with black spirit stain using a pipette to add drops of black into the red, which I had decanted into a small glass ramekin. Mix until you have a deep red/burgundy which will complement the gold acrylic paint added later.

15 Apply the second coat of stain, first evenly then going back to different areas adding more to randomly darken the surface. This will produce a sumptuous aged finish. Keep adding to different areas until you are happy with the look.

16 Due to the high quantity of stain used to build up the depth of layers it can take some time to dry. To speed up the process I use a hair dryer held in the banjo of the lathe. I set the lathe to around 150rpm with the dryer set to low heat as the form rotates. Do not leave it unattended.

17 Once dry, place the bowl face down on to a piece of thick decorator's lining paper or similar and draw around the rim of the bowl with a second line approximately 20mm outside of this. Cut out the template and snip using perpendicular cuts into the inside line. Bend along the line itself and fix in place to the face of the bowl using masking tape and sticking the tabs to the underside of the bowl rim. Use a ball point to press down into the groove around the bowl and score through the paper. Tidy up the edges with scissors if required. This template will protect the main textured area while building up layers of acrylic spray lacquer in the bowl.

18 Spray a fine coat of acrylic sanding sealer into the bowl and rim and allow to fully dry. Once dry, set a low lathe speed and use a very fine abrasive pad to cut back the surface until even. Apply a fine layer of acrylic satin lacquer and allow to dry.

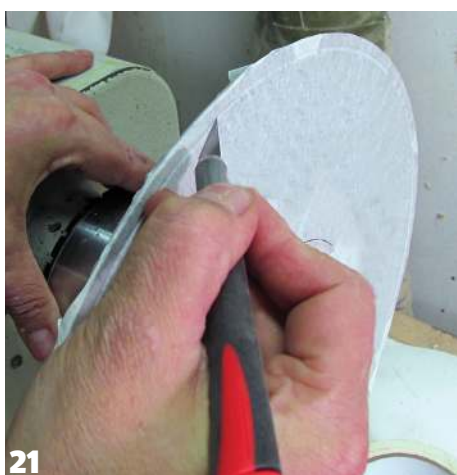




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19 Once fully dry, cut back with the pad or abrasive until perfectly smooth. This part is critical so inspect closely and repeat with the abrasive until any imperfections are removed. Repeat the process with at least another four layers of acrylic spray, allow to dry between each and cut back with abrasive to build up a good layer of smooth acrylic before burnishing next.

20 Following the manufacturer's instructions, use soft kitchen towel or safety cloth and apply burnishing cream to the surface. Burnish with the lathe speed set to around 500rpm. Take your time and work methodically. Then, using clean kitchen towel, clean off the surface to reveal the finish. Repeat until the surface is gloss/glass-like in finish.

21 Apply more masking tape to cover the freshly completed burnished bowl. With your thumbnail or pen, score a line into and around the grooves previously turned with the skew at the rim of the bowl and outside rim. Now, using a sharp craft knife, carefully cut through the scored tape into the base of the grooves and peel away the tape to leave the textured section uncovered, as shown.

22 Now add a small amount of gold acrylic artist's paint on to a piece of paper. Here I have laid out thick decorator's lining paper below the bowl on a section of scrap MDF as a stable surface. Lining paper is cheap, absorbent and a good surface to wipe off the excess paint from the brush bristles. Now, using a soft blusher-type make-up brush, tap the tip of the brush into the paint and wipe off the excess paint on to the lining paper so that only the smallest amount remains on the brush fibres. The brush should feel almost dry to the touch. Now, gently brush the surface of the texture rapidly back and forth in a motion like brushing dust from a delicate surface. This type of technique is known as 'dry brushing' and builds up a fine, subtle layer of colour. Work methodically around and over the texture until you have a fine dusting of gold on its surface. If you apply too much, wipe off excess with a damp cloth, allow to dry and start again.

23 Allow the paint to dry. Then remove the masking tape from the outer rim leaving the bowl covered and apply several fine coats of acrylic satin lacquer until you have even coverage. Again allow to fully dry before touching the surface. Finally, remove the masking tape from the bowl.

24 Reverse the bowl and place the face against a flat, rubber-faced friction drive, bring up the revolving tailstock centre and locate it in the indent left from the initial mounting. Once secure, use a small bowl gouge to reduce the waste section and blend the foot into the base of the bowl.

25 Using the toe of a skew in scraping mode, produce three grooves in the base – a detail to a depth of approximately 2mm.

26 Sand the base, making sure all marks are removed and blended prior to staining.

◀ **27** With the lathe stationary, stain the foot and base of the bowl, blending into the existing stain. Here I stain into the previously stained areas and rub in with a sheet of kitchen towel to achieve an even coverage. Once dry, start the lathe at 500rpm and cut back the surface with the synthetic abrasive cloth or abrasive as before.

28 Place the face of the bowl down on to a flat surface protected by kitchen towel. Here I have screwed two scrap pieces of wood into the MDF surface for the bowl rim to sit against to prevent movement as the remaining waste section is carved away by hand, using a small carvers chisel. Place kitchen towel between the rim of the bowl and the wood sections to prevent marking as you carve.

29 Finish the carved section with abrasive from 120 to 400, rubbing with the grain until all marks have been removed. Finally, stain this section, wiping away any excess. Once dry, again rub back by hand with fine abrasive.

30 Apply several fine coats of acrylic satin spray lacquer, allowing to dry between each coat and cutting back by hand with the fine synthetic pad. Apply one final fine coat and allow to fully dry. The project is now finished.

31 The finished bowl. •



31

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The key to success

Chris West provides plans for you

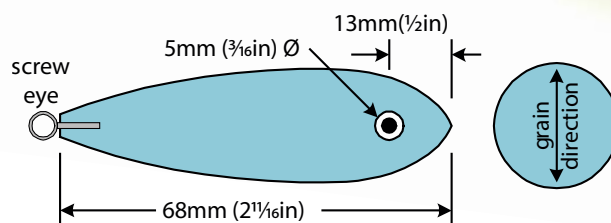


TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- 7mm brad drill bit
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Spindle gouge
- 3mm parting tool
- Skew chisel
- Pen mandrel

MATERIALS

- Fishing line swivel
- 25mm circular key rings
- Screw eyes
- Key ring project kit with 7mm brass tube
- Cyanoacrylate adhesive



So 'the key to success' might be a lousy pun on turning key rings, but you might have some fun with this project. I have recently come to the conclusion that as I grow older my wood stock continues to get bigger. Now is time to use up some of the offcuts. The first key ring is an attractive key ring for an angler.

Fishing lure key ring

Using a blank of around 90mm long is ideal. Whilst still square, mark a point around 20mm in from one end and in middle of the blank. Make sure of the grain direction as shown in the diagram above. This will be the position of the eyes. Drill a 5mm hole through the blank.

Next turn a length of box something like, 5mm Ø x 25mm. Keep trying the diameter of the blank to ensure a good fit. Cut off and use cyanoacrylate to glue it in. Rough turn between centres. Place one end in compression jaws if you wish to do so.

Shape the fish lure as shown. Sand and seal before parting off. The final thing is to put a 2mm Ø hole, 1mm deep in the centre of the eyes. A black felt tip pen into the hole will give the fish black irises!

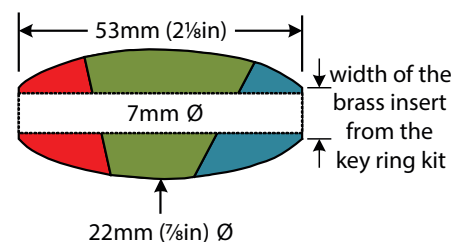
The screw eye is now fitted. It is my preference to unscrew it again before screwing it back in and adding a couple of drops of cyanoacrylate to ensure that it remains in situ. For this key ring I 'splashed out' and bought six swivels from my local fishing tackle supplier. It was all assembled when the other end of the swivel had a key ring attached. Finally, you need to apply a few coats of acrylic spray finish and buff up first with tripoli, then white diamond followed by wax.



Key rings using dyed and stabilised burr off cuts

The next key ring uses 25-50mm long offcuts of dyed and stabilised pen blank burrs. The colours for the key ring are chosen to create an attractive mix. They should each be sanded at an angle on the disc sander and glued together. The overall block needs to be straight and around 60mm long.

Between centres, rough turn the blank. Remove from the lathe and hold in compression jaws. The other end is



lined up with a live centre before pre-drilling with an HSS centre finding bit. The key ring kit includes a 7mm Ø brass tube, 53mm long. Drill the blank with a 7mm brad drill bit. Rough sand the brass tubes before gluing them into the two blanks. The ends should be cleaned squarely before being mounted on a pen mandrel.

Once on the mandrel, turn the blocks to the shapes shown. Sand and seal before finishing them in the same way as the fishing lure key rings. Finally, fit the brass ends and attach the circular key ring.

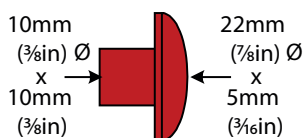
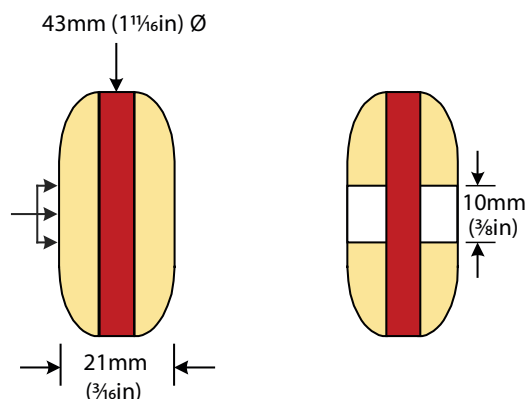
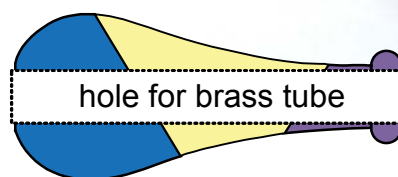
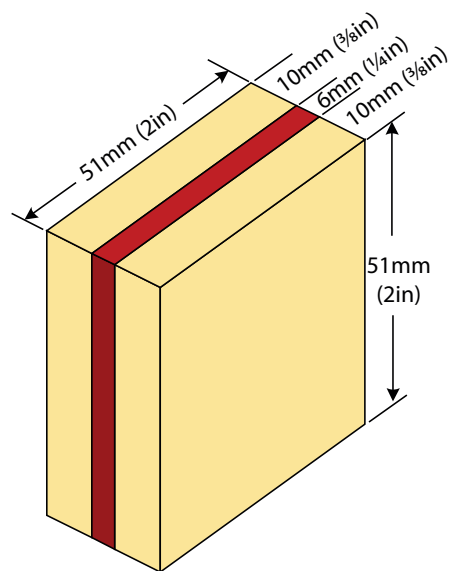
Curling stone key ring

This key ring is made up of three offcuts of wood. For the centre piece I chose cocobolo (*Dalbergia retusa*), the outer pieces were masur birch (*Betula* spp.) and the inserts were Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*).

The central piece needs parallel sides; the outer two pieces just need one surface flat for gluing to the centre piece. Once glued, the blank is shaped between centres before being sanded and sealed.

The next stage is to drill a 10mm hole through the piece. This can be achieved by holding in compression jaws by the central band on the block. Some protection is wrapped round the band to prevent damage from the jaws. Alternatively, it can be drilled on a pillar drill, being held in a vice, again with protection round the centre band.

Finally, turn two inserts as shown and then sand and seal. A screw eye is my chosen method of holding the key ring itself. The method of fixing the screw eye in and finishing the key ring uses the same method as that used on the fishing lure key ring.





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Turn and movable headstock

Pedestal lotus box

Andrew Potocnik creates a floral-inspired box made from Huon pine



One problem I have is that I have too many projects on the go. They are started and then placed on the backburner of attention as a new project forms in my mind, relegating the previous one back onto the list of 'projects to complete'. That was the case with this Lotus Box. A trial was begun to 'work out' the placement of petals, depth of dishing and then; well, you can imagine.

My other problem is my attitude to the wood I use. I've often said that I am not precious about myself, nor my work, but I am precious about wood. I hate to see good wood go to waste, but most of all, I cannot bring myself to use precious woods for minor projects. Huon pine is a precious wood that is gradually becoming more and more difficult to source, especially as it takes thousands of years to reach maturity and grows in a very small part of

south-western Tasmania. And the shavings make great insect repellent for linen cupboards. I like to make the most of offcuts and shavings too, so working in a messy workspace requires a thorough clean-up, ensuring Huon shavings aren't contaminated with other shavings. Sounds crazy, but that's how my mind works.

So, seeing I'd made a start on this piece quite some time ago I needed to go back to notes (yes, I write notes to myself regularly, and date them) to see whether there was an original direction I'd lost sight of, or if there were new ideas that could be added to evolve the first concept.

With my mind refocused and a deadline looming it was time to tie all those thoughts into a finished project and get the ball rolling, so to speak.

Focus on Huon Pine

- **Huon pine:** *Lagarostrobos franklinii* formerly classified as *Dacrydium franklinii*
- **Grows:** South-western Tasmania
- **Density:** 560kg/m³

Huon pine is a medium sized softwood tree occasionally reaching 38m in height and 1.8m in diameter, but frequently less than 20m high.

It usually has a straight trunk, but it is often forked in the crown. Foliage is light green and weeping in formation, resembling pine, but it is a podocarp, therefore not a true pine.

It has a limited distribution in south-western Tasmania, Australia. It is found in very rugged areas that are difficult to access, in an environment that is cool, wet and temperate with high levels of rainfall. It grows along the banks of rivers, on swampy flats or near lake shores, usually 'with its feet in water'.

The heartwood is described as being pale straw which becomes an orange yellow after extended exposure to light. Its sapwood is very narrow and almost indistinguishable from heartwood due to very fine spaces between growth rings.

The wood has a distinct fragrance caused by the essential oil methyl eugenol, which also gives it the ability to resist water, hence making it a highly valued boat-building timber. It is easy to dry with a shrinkage rate of 2.5% radially and 3% tangentially.

The wood turns, carves, nails and finishes well although gluing can be difficult due to its oil content. It was a favourite wood of patternmakers but is now available in limited quantities due to its restricted habitat and the time it takes to grow.

It is probably Australia's longest lived species with growth rings indicating an age of 2300 years.

Logs that have lain on the ground for several hundred years are still being harvested and milled showing no damage from water. It is arguably the best working timber in Australia or even the world. It turns nicely with sharp tools, but be wary of scrapers as the results will vary a lot. The timber carves easily too.



End grain of a log showing how fine the growth rings are. I calculated this section to be about 250–300 years old. This surface has been exposed to oxygen for more than fifteen years and shows the mellowed yellow hue the wood develops over time



Clear face grain on a through-cut board with grey colouring indicating the outside of the log. Sapwood is difficult to isolate



Growth section showing flame figuring and associated chatoyance/shimmer



Bird's eye pattern with typical size of approximately 3mm-diameter centres



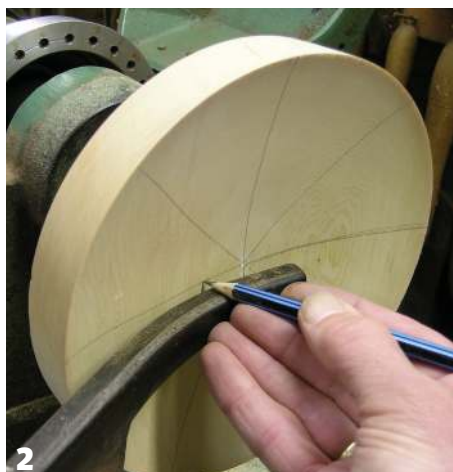
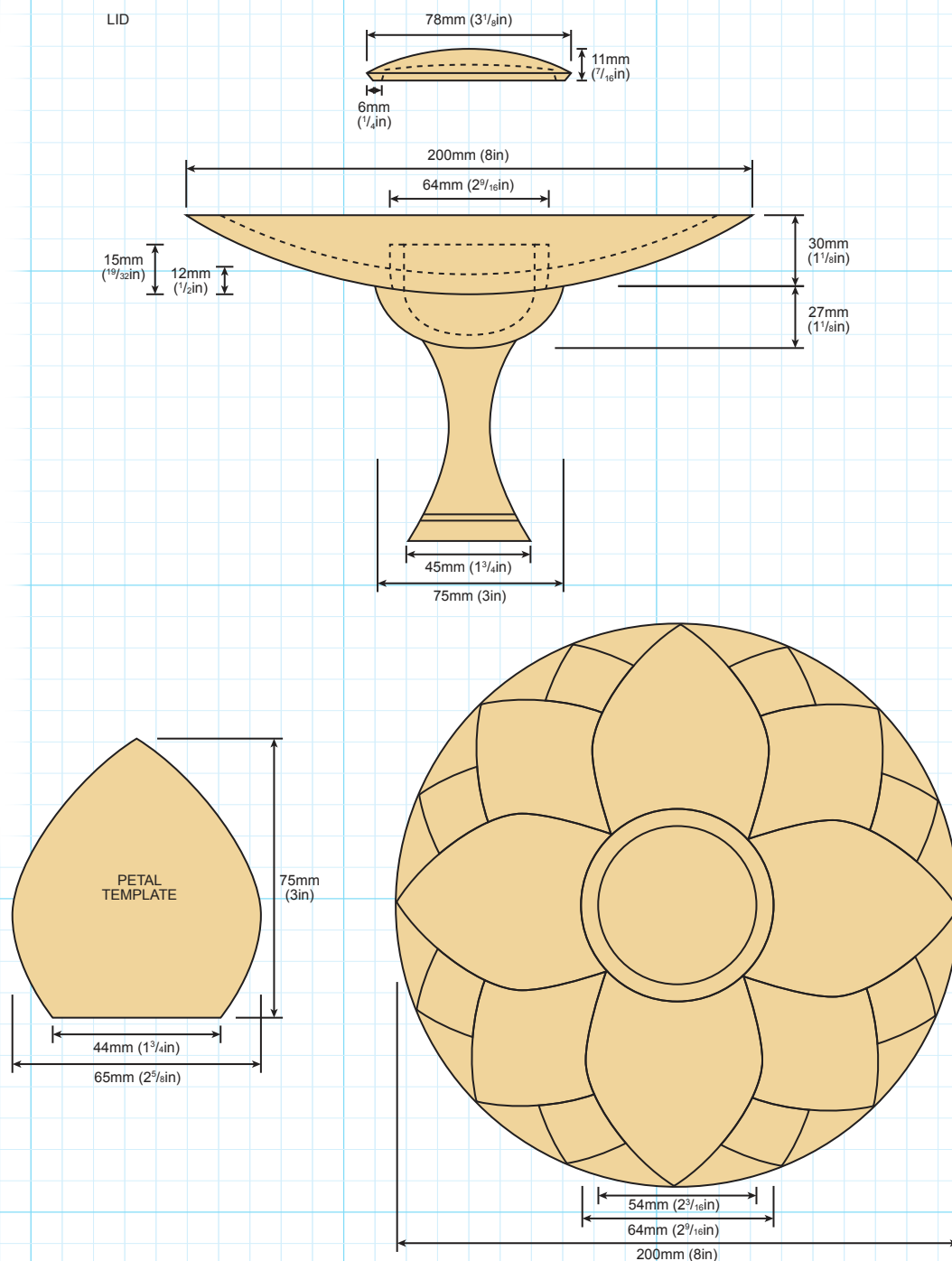
Growth with what could be described as 'crotch' or 'quilted' figuring

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Personal and respiratory protection equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Bowl gouge
- Parting tool
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Spindle gouge
- French curve or round-nosed scraper
- Side-cut scraper
- Chuck
- Tailstock revolving centre
- Drive spur
- Faceplate or screwchuck
- Callipers
- Curved-edge carving tool
- Skew-edge carving tool
- Curved rifflers/files
- Craft knife or scalpel
- Cabinet scraper
- Bandsaw
- Scrollsaw
- Angle-poise lighting

MATERIALS

- Hot-melt adhesive
- Cardboard or paper
- Pen/pencil
- Abrasives down to 320 grit
- Finish of your choice

**Turning the bowl**

1 Mount your chosen timber for the main bowl/dish section of the box on the lathe. I chose to use a faceplate and a glue chuck so it leaves no holes in the wood. I then brought up the tailstock revolving centre for support. Once secure, create a tenon to suit your chuck jaws and shape the bottom section of the plate as much as you can.

2 Now mount the piece of wood on the tenon cut and create a dished/concave surface. Now, divide it into sixteen equally spaced segments. Be sure to line up the height of the tool rest so your pencil lines will meet the centre point of the blank.

3 If you do not have an indexing system you could mark the outer edge of the dished form to the correct number of segments then use a piece of flexible plastic as a straight edge bends to the concave surface. These lines need to run from the outer edge to the centre of the disc as they provide guidelines later in the carving process. Once marked, remount the piece on the lathe and turn a recessed ring about 6-8mm deep about 4mm wide where the inner solid section is a diameter to suit your chuck jaws so a tenon is created and the outer diameter is 64mm. This will eventually be the width of the hole in which the box section will later fit. See picture 6 to see what I mean.

4 Create a cardboard template to match the petal drawings on the previous page. This will help mark the main petal forms, followed by four more partly hidden forms, and then the tips of another eight petals. This is where the radiating lines are needed to help line up the centreline of the template. This template will be used again later in the process to re-establish outlines as they disappear in the sanding stages.

Carving the petals

5 To carve the petals hold the work in a vice or use a carving attachment that holds your chuck. Alternatively, a sand-filled cushion works well to hold the bowl stable while carving it.

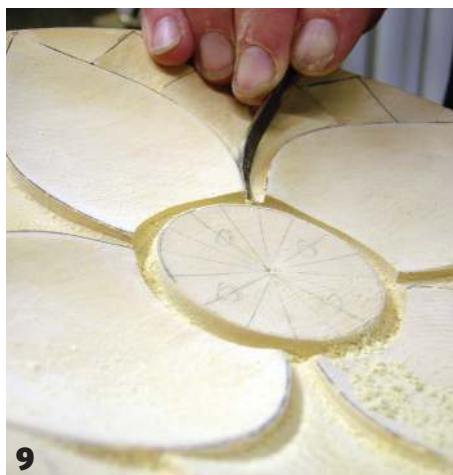
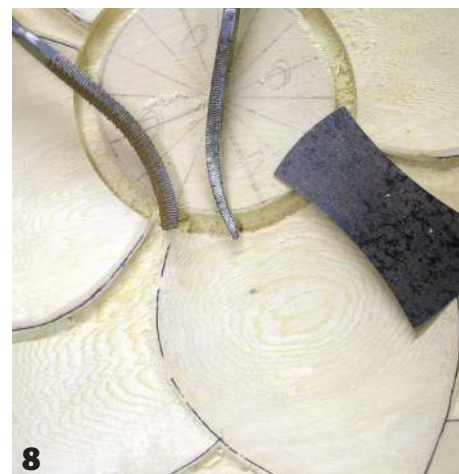
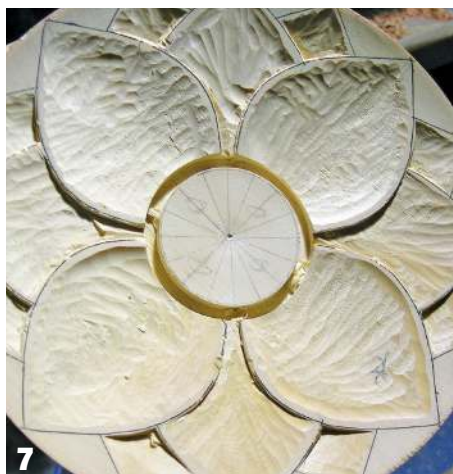
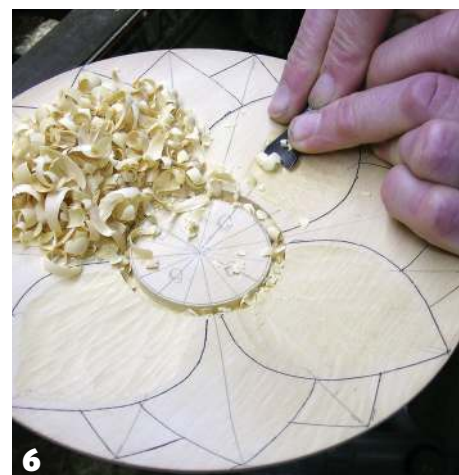
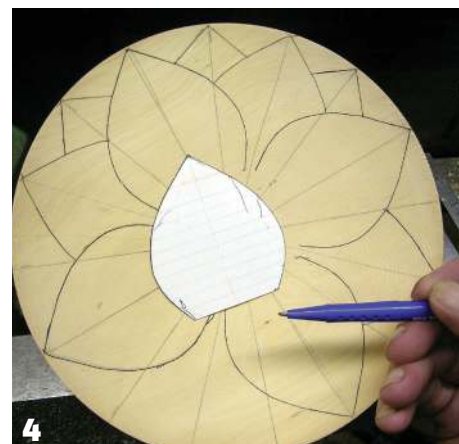
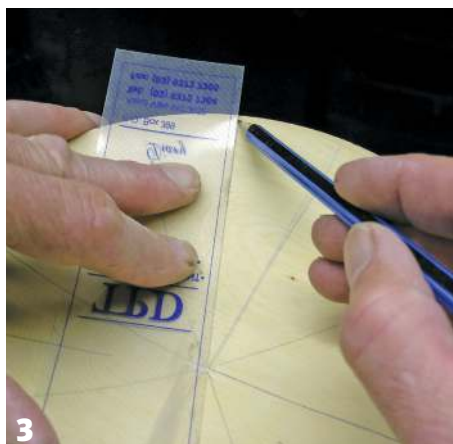
6 Now, take a curved-edged carving tool and hollow out the internal area of the main petals. The centrelines indicate the deepest point of each petal's dishing. Decide now if you want to create a textured finish or a smooth finish. Whatever you choose, I chose a smooth surface, a strong sidelight will help highlight inconsistencies in the carved surface.

7 Once the main petals are done, move onto the partial ones. Cut outlines of each section with a skew-edged carving tool and then dish then with a shallow curved-edge gouge used previously. Depending on your carving skills and tools on hand, you may opt for a different approach to achieving a result palatable to your aesthetic taste.

8 If sanding your form, a series of tools including scrapers and riffler files will help refine the curved surfaces of each petal, while rifflers allow profiles to be neatened up and create a clean intersection between edges and the flat surfaces beneath.

9 Undercutting each of the petals helps to 'lift' it from the next layer and create a sense of depth in what is really a fairly flat surface. The undercutting creates shadows which all add to the illusion. I used a couple of curved triangular rifflers of different levels of coarseness.

10 To sand the work I made some sanding sticks to help get into tight spots. However you sand the surface is up to you, but as you work through various grades a magnifying glass and strong light helps find imperfections.





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Reversing the bowl

11 Now to go one step beyond, before coming back to pick up on the process. While the outer rim of the bowl is intact, it's time to reverse it onto a jam fit carrier. Really, you ought to complete the sanding process and cut profiles, but then how do you hold the form in its reversed state? So, using a freshly sharpened parting tool with nice sharp edges cut deeper into the opening of the bowl, ensuring the sides of the opening are parallel and cleanly cut the widest edge 64mm diameter.

12 A carrier is needed now, so use whichever measuring method you find most efficient to mark and cut a shallow rebate into your chosen disc of wood. Mark the width required. I used Vernier callipers to measure the diameter of the rebate required. Once marked, cut the channel. I used a granny-tooth scraper, but a parting tool works, too.

13 To help remove the completed form free of the carrier later, cut a small carved finger hold, which allows you to get your finger or a tool under the rim of the form and gently lever the bowl-form out.

14 Once the piece is fitted into the recess in the carrier, bring up the revolving tailstock for support, which helps secure the piece. Trust me when I say you will not need to experience the unwanted thrill of a sharp-edged disc dislodging from the lathe and launching somewhere into your workspace.

15 Now, carefully shape the underside of the bowl section and once-shaped sand what you can reach. Once sanded, turn the lathe speed down to a low lathe speed and remove the tenon/ residual core of the bowl and then mark the right diameter and then part through and remove the central core completely. If you have any doubts about the security of the hold in the jam chuck use some duct tape to help keep the bowl in place. It is advisable to check the width of the hole regularly to ensure you meet up perfectly with the inside recess.

Turning the box body

16 Now fit a disc of wood about 70mm diameter in your chuck or a jam chuck or on a glue chuck and true it up. It needs to be cut to a diameter matching the inner hole of the carved disc using whatever tool you feel most comfortable with. I used a beading tool with freshly sharpened edges stopping frequently to check the diameter with vernier callipers and a test fit. This is a slow process as you will need to cut a little, test, cut and test once the piece has stopped spinning. Never check it for a test fit while the wood is spinning!

17 & 18 Checks regularly to ensure high spots are identified and removed so both pieces fit together neatly. I undercut the left edge of the smaller piece so there was a snug fit between the two components. Once done, the bowl section can be refined as far as possible whilst mounted in a scroll chuck to ensure the profile matches the interior section A bowl or spindle gouge will help you do this.

19 Once the piece is shaped as required, sand it through to 320 grit. Then apply a finish of your choice, but apply a finish only to the surfaces that would be visible, leaving bare any surfaces to be glued. I applied a wax finish.

20 Reverse the bowl section into whatever type of carrier you feel most comfortable with. I used a scroll chuck and taped upper surfaces of the rim to prevent marks from the jaws. Once secure, turn to a suitable domed form, sand and apply a finish.

The box lid

21 Moving forward before returning to completing the carved petals, set to work on the lid cutting a disc from some highly figured Huon pine, which would contrast nicely with the straight grained wood used in other components. A disc was cut from a burl section on the bandsaw.

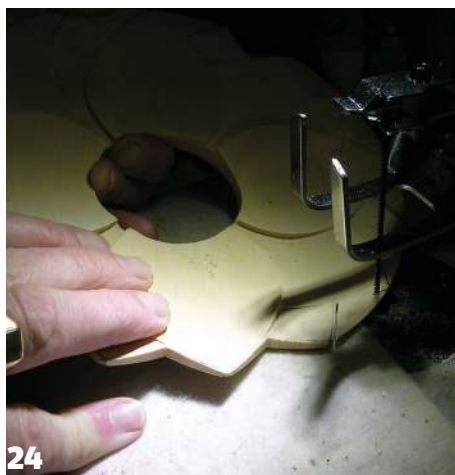
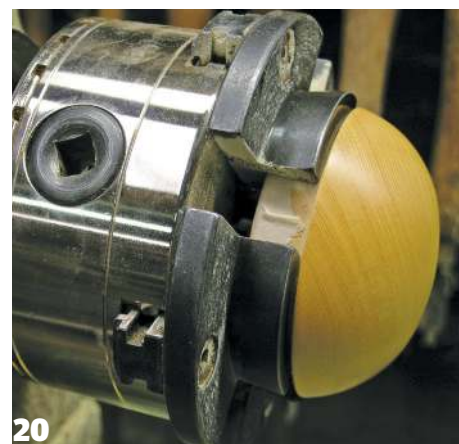
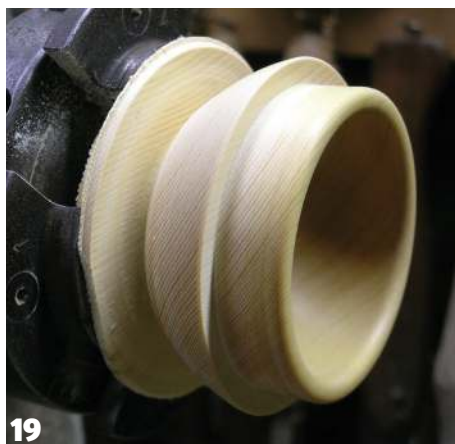
22 Mount the timber between centres and turn a small spigot on the one end to fit your chuck. Then mount it in your chuck. Once secure, turn with a recess that allows the lid to slip over the outer rim of the bowl section which protrudes from the caved bowl section of the box section. Once you have your shape, add any detail required. I added detail line in the lower hollow area. Then, sand to a finished surface and apply your finish.

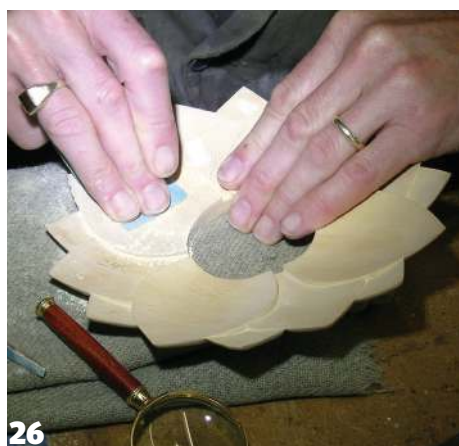
23 Now reverse the piece and hold it in the recess or on a jam chuck and check it is secure. I used a chuck to hold the piece. Now shape the top to a nice low curved profile and then sand and apply finish. Just a word of caution. With a rim of only 3mm thickness, you cannot apply too much pressure to the wood so it is possible for the chuck to loosen during the motor's start and stop phases of turning. Make sure you check the tension of the chuck frequently.

Refining the carved dish section

24 It's now time to remove unwanted material from the outer edges of the dish, setting the petals free. I used a scrollsaw, but depending on tools you have available, this could be done with a fine-toothed coping saw, or depending on your whittling skills, with a sharp knife. As it is, my method required carving to refine the profiles.

25 Each petal needs to be undercut to leave a sharp edge with clean definition. I used a skew-edged carving tool for this, making sure that fingers were kept away from the sharp edge. You will also need to alter your angle of approach depending on which direction the grain is running. As you work your way around the disc there will be times when you'll need to carve down into 'feather grain' to avoid tearing away edges and losing definition of form. At other times you will be carving with the grain so careful assessment of the wood will be of prime importance, otherwise you'll be doing even more sanding later.





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26 Refining the upper surfaces of the carved form requires careful attention to detail. My work bench began to look more like a surgery with strong and direct LED lighting, a magnifying glass to check for clean intersections of forms and eliminating cross-grain scratches. Purpose-made sanding sticks help to get into tight spots, as do fine files. An old blanket creates a padded surface to rest the work piece on and after numerous hours of fiddly filing and sanding I applied a wax finish.

Turning the pedestal support

27 I felt the finished piece needed a stand or support of some sort, but this is entirely up to you, and there are many design options that will suffice in this situation. I opted for a spindle turned item of about 50mm diameter at the base and about 100mm high. Turn a spindle between centres with a tenon at one end that can be fitted into a scroll chuck. It's always good to keep the tailstock in place to provide maximum support as long as possible in the turning process.

28 To create a resting surface for the bowl form, turn a shallow concave surface, so the finished box may be rotated to either sit flat or on an angle.

29 Now turn the stem of the stand to a form that suits your design aesthetic. I opted for a flowing form with a minimum diameter about two-thirds of the way up from the base. A couple of definition lines were cut low down on the base to create a visual break in the form, while the base was bevelled, so there is a shadow line between the stand and the surface it rests on.

30 Here's the finished piece.

31 Here is a face-on view of the carved petals minus the box lid. Obviously, there are many options available in a piece of this type. Should there be a lid; should there be a stand, how high, how wide? I'm sure that if I were to repeat this project again, there would be many deviations, but when I look back on initial drawings for this concept, they were dated 2013, so I guess it will take a while before I start on the next evolution of this idea. ●



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The Worshipful Company of Turners: competition winners

We take a look at some of the winning entries from the 2018 competitions



The Worshipful Company of Turners holds its turning competitions every two years, which attracts entries from turners of all ages and skill. In 2018 there were 12 competitions, organised by the Turners' Company, the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain, the Society of Ornamental Turners and the Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Green Woodworkers. Entries were showcased at Carpenters' Hall in London.

As 2018 marked the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, woodturners entering the Master's Open Themed Competition were asked to create works that reflected their personal style, techniques and response to the end of World War I.

The 2018 turning competitions were a huge success with over 1000 visitors passing through the doors of Carpenters' Hall. There was a substantial increase in the number of entries compared to previous competitions with over 200 items on display across the 12 categories, reflecting the wide variety of skill within the craft of turning. Those visiting were able to see these skills being demonstrated throughout the event on the various lathes using different techniques.

For more information, visit the
Worshipful Company of Turners
website: turnersco.com

Master's Open Competition (plain turning)

This competition was for a pair of anything, not necessarily matching.



First prize: Rodney Page

Master's Ornamental Turning Competition

The challenge for this competition was to make a decorated chalice.



First prize: Maggie Wright



Second prize: Gerry Marlow

Master's Open Themed Competition

The theme for 2018 was responses to the 100th anniversary of the Armistice.



First prize:
Margaret Garrard

Felix Levy Open Competition

This competition was for any piece of work, with no restrictions on subject, size or style.



First prize: Richard Kennedy



Second prize: Colin Priddy

Bert Marsh Company Competition

This category was for Company members only, for any piece of work, with no restrictions on subject, size or style.



First prize: Andrew Mayer

Bert Marsh Certificate Competition

This category was for Company certificate holders only, for any piece of work, with no restrictions on subject, size or style.



First prize: Ian Malpas



Second prize: Colin James

AWGB Plain Turning Competition (Junior – The Ray Key Competition)

This category was open to AWGB under 21 members only and was for any piece of work, with no restrictions on subject, size or style.



First prize: Matt Underwood

AWGB Plain Turning Competition (Senior)

This category was open to AWGB members only and was for any piece of work, with no restrictions on subject, size or style.



First prize:
Roy Weare



Second prize:
Mike Hasledon



Third prize:
Graham Barnard

Twentyman Competition

This competition was for predominantly plain form turning, not necessarily of circular section, with the addition of a discrete element of ornamental using either or both conventional ornamental turning and rose turning techniques.



First prize: Jean Claude Charpignon

Pole Lathe Turning Competition

The challenge for this competition was to turn a candlestick.



First prize: Olvin Smith



Second prize: Mike Gordon



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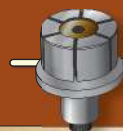
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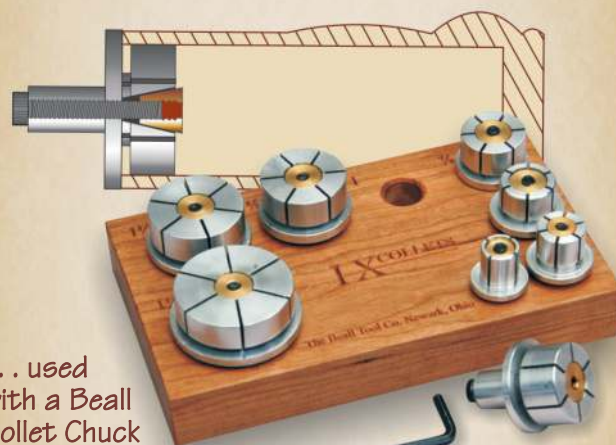
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Shrink pot with hinge and fastener

Andy Coates shows how to make an object usually associated with green woodwork

Some of the most interesting workers in wood are what are usually called 'green woodworkers'. They work predominantly with freshly felled wood, and this can range from simple spoon carving through to replicating antique furniture using only hand tools and green wood with traditional techniques. One of the reasons I find this area of woodwork so fascinating and appealing is their deep understanding of the material and the fact that successful projects are possible using green wood. As powered lathe users we tend to think of green wood as just the first stage in a project – perhaps we are rough turning and then putting the piece to one side to season, or placing in a kiln to speed the drying process up prior to finish turning. But, as a rule, we tend not to work directly with green wood to a finish.

The vast majority of the objects I make speculatively are made from green wood. I am an impatient person, so learning what I can and cannot get away with was important to me. What I found was that I can get away with far more than seemed to be commonly accepted. This does, of course, require that the objects lend themselves to some movement and warping, so objects such as boxes, where the fit of the lid is a fundamental consideration, are best made from part-turned and dried stock, but there are many things that can be made from green wood straight to completion.

One object that is common in the green wood world is the shrink pot.

Shrink pots have a long, long history, and have been made by societies and communities worldwide in various forms, styles and sizes for thousands of years. Reinvented in Sweden in the 1970s they caught on again due to the relative simplicity of making them and the utility of the finished objects. You could just learn to make them the 'proper' way, but powered lathe users like to use the lathe. So let's look at making one on the lathe and add a couple of embellishments

to a basic pot to make it more interesting and useful.

I was recently reminded of shrink pots when a woodworking friend in Wales discovered a very old shrink pot lodged in the wall of a 14th-century farmhouse cottage. One of the interesting things about it is that the body looks to have been turned on a pole lathe. So perhaps turners have been combining greenwood and turning techniques for hundreds of years? All the more reason to do so again.



PHOTOGRAPHS BRANDY COATES UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MERLIN TOMKINS

Shrink pot found by Merlin Tomkins in a 14th-century farmhouse in Llanrwst, Conwy

◀ Suitable stock

One consideration a powered lathe user has that a green woodworker working with hand tools does not, is log shape. An irregular log is fine for the green woodworker because the shape can be followed to provide an even wall thickness. The power lathe user needs a more regular log, ideally perfectly circular, but a little off that is fine.

SUITABLE AND UNSUITABLE LOG SHAPES

A: Suitable for making on the lathe
B: Not suitable for making on the lathe

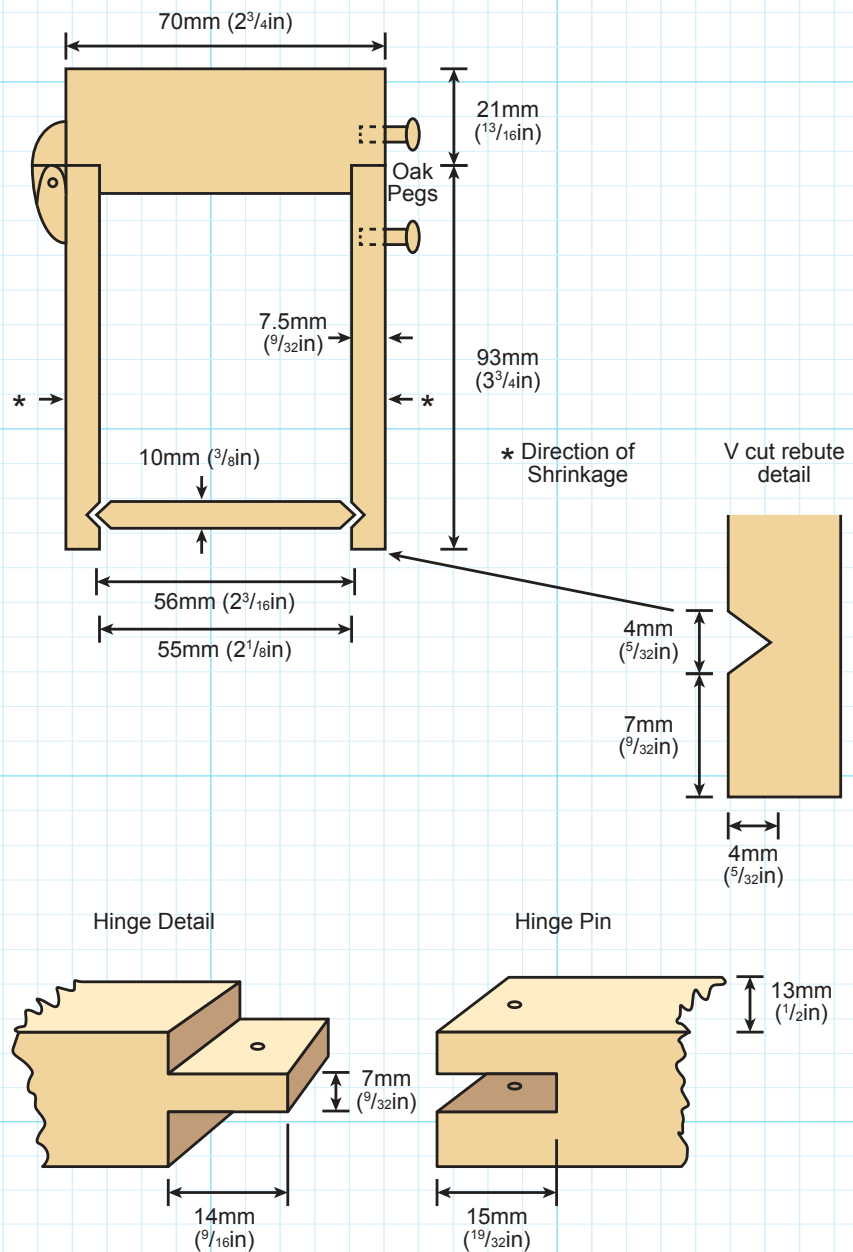


TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- 10mm bowl gouge
- 10mm spindle gouge
- Slim parting tool
- Parting and beading tool
- Shop-made rebate tool
- 55mm Forstner bit in Jacobs chuck

MATERIALS

- Cherry (*Prunus* spp.) log blank, 100mm x 80mm-95mm
- Small offcuts of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) for stopper, oak (*Quercus* spp.) for lid and hinge/clasp



Some considerations before we begin

If you have not seen shrink pots before and don't know what they are, then a little explanation is required. Shrink pots are traditionally made by hand from freshly felled log or branch sections. The interior is carved out all the way through the log, sometimes leaving the bark on the log, sometimes not. Once the hollow tube is completed and the sides cleaned up, a shallow V-shaped rebate is cut into the interior wall a little way up from the base lip or rim.

The pot is then placed on a thin board of already seasoned wood and the inner shape scribed on to the board. The scribed disc is then cut out slightly over-sized and the circumference chamfered top and bottom. This disc is then hammered into the base until it drops into the rebate. Over the coming days the pot will shrink as it dries and the base will become captivated in the rebate.

As powered lathe users you might wonder, 'why bother?'. A fair comment, but there are a few reasons I can think of. First, it's different and fun; second, one of the things powered lathe users struggle with is end-grain pith in pots, boxes and other vessels. The pith is usually where end grain cracks and splits occur, and with these pots you remove the pith making the object less likely to split.

If you need some inspiration then I would suggest having a look at some of the green woodworkers scattered around the world, a good place to begin would be with the work of an American green woodworker, David Fisher. His work stems from techniques thousands of years old and yet has all the freshness of something created very recently. His pots are sublimely beautiful and we could only hope to emulate their grace and poise.



Traditional making technique



Lidded and decorated shrink pot

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID FISHER

First steps

A green (wet) cherry (*Prunus* spp.) blank is roughed to a 70mm cylinder and a tenon is put on the tailstock end. The blank is mounted on the tenon in the chuck and a 10mm spindle gouge is used to clean the top face. A 55mm

Forstner bit in a Jacobs chuck is used to bore out the middle of the log down to a 10mm mark at the headstock end of the blank. Bore slowly, withdrawing the cutter frequently to clear shavings. The blank is then reversed on to

an expansion hold in chuck jaws. The tenon is removed with light cuts using a 10mm spindle gouge. The base is cut cleanly. The Forstner bit is then used to complete the hollowing, taking care as it breaks through.



Roughing down and cutting a tenon



Removing the tenon



Hollowing with 55mm Forstner bit

◀ Forming the rebate

In order to cut the rebate cleanly and easily a simple rebate tool can be fashioned. An old, flat tool can be ground to an offset triangular point, or a teardrop scraper tip can be re-ground to provide a suitable tool.

The rebate is a V-cut and is cut about

7-10mm up the inside wall of the body. The width of the cut at the body wall is about 4mm and it is about 3-4mm deep. These are largely arbitrary dimensions so do not be too concerned about accuracy here. Providing the chamfer on the base disc is accordingly cut, the base will

eventually become trapped in the rebate.

Once the V-cut rebate is formed take the 10mm spindle gouge and gently chamfer the entry to the body up to just shy of the rebate. This will assist in fitting the shrink pot base. Try to make cuts as clean as possible.



Modified scraper tip and a shop-made rebate tool



Cutting the V-rebate



Chamfering the entryway

Making the base and top plug and fitting the base

Measure the diameter of the inside of the body directly over the rebate. Add 1-1.5mm to this dimension and transfer to the face of a scrap piece of seasoned wood. I use oak for its strength, but any hardwood will do. Cut a 10mm-thick disc to the diameter and make a parting cut behind it down 10mm or so to make room.

From the middle of the disc edge, turn a chamfer each side approximately 5-8mm deep. Leave a high point at the mid point 1-2mm wide to provide a little strength to the edge. Check that the disc will fit by switching off the lathe and bringing the body up for a test fit. It should just enter the chamfer but not go in fully.

Now take a scrap of a slightly softer hardwood – sycamore is ideal – and turn a plug that will sit inside the top of the body. This will form the underside stopper for the lid. Part off and put to one side.

Turn the body upside down on the bench and place the base loosely in the recess. Using a rubber or pigskin mallet tap the

base into the recess. It will eventually 'pop' into the rebate, but will still be very loose. This is exactly as expected. NB: If you find you have turned the base slightly oversize, simply carve or abrade around the base until it does fit. It is not important that the base be a perfect circle.

At this point the pot is put aside to dry out. This can be a dry, draughty place such as a garage or shed, or, if you are as impatient as me, a simple kiln. The outer body of the log will quickly dry out, and because it is end grain the growth rings pull in and the base disc is trapped and clamped into the rebate. You will occasionally have failures when the body splits, but with experience the loss rate can be reduced to nil. Once the base is securely trapped, the lid plug can be carved to fit loosely in the top. This is then glued to a suitable disc of hardwood to serve as the lid, and this can later be shaped with rasps or cutters, or simply abraded to a finish.



Forming the base



Forming the top plug



Popping the base into the body rebate



Base loosely set in rebate

Adding a hinge for the lid

Take two small offcuts of a suitable hardwood, approximately 20mm by 20mm by 10mm each. I used the same oak as I was going to use for the lid. Mark out the pegs and tongue of the hinge and cut away using a small handsaw. The fit should be relatively sloppy to allow for movement of the hinge. Clamp the two pieces together and drill through the mid point of the

tongue to a size suitable for a 3-4mm copper or soft metal pin. Cut the pin slightly over length and push through the two hinge parts, then peen over the ends using a ball-peen hammer on a last or anvil. The hinge should articulate freely. All but the back face of the hinge can be reshaped as desired or simply cleaned up.



Marking out the wooden hinge



Drilling through for the pin



Rounding the end pegs and tongue



Hinge pin peened over

Fitting the hinge

Hold the hinge to the body and lid, ensuring that the position will allow the lid to fully open without catching, and mark around the hinge on the lid and base section. Using a carving knife or bench chisel carve out flat areas to take the hinge. Glue the

hinge in position with wood glue and clamp with rubber bands.

I turned two small pegs and drilled and glued them into the lid and base section and, once secured, fashioned a fastening loop from leather strip. A coat of oil and the shrink pot is complete.



Carving the hinge recess out



Glueing and clamping the hinge

Conclusions

Making these shrink pots is an interesting project, and as ever the possibilities for developing the basic idea are only limited by your imagination. They make great storage pots and can be made tall, short, wide or narrow, with or without lids and fastenings. I think they make a pleasant change from the more conventional lidded vessels made on the powered lathe, and can see them appealing to a different market. So tip your hat to the green woodworkers, cut a log and see what you come up with. ●

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Oval dish

Rick Rich turns a bowl propeller style to create an oval, natural-edge dish



A nearby park has a nice walking path and in the summer many tall fir trees offer shade from the sun. In the winter, stormy gusts litter the same path with perfect-size branches for this project. A request to town park officials resulted in cheerful permission to cart away as many fallen branches as I could take. Less work for them. In my shop, these branches were turned into simple, natural-edge, oval dishes.

Stock preparation is minimal. A perfect branch size is about 75-100mm thick. I use a handsaw to cut the branch into manageable sizes for bandsaw work. Lugging the chainsaw out and all that goes with it would end up taking longer.

I cut the blanks about 150mm long. To rip cut them lengthwise in half, I use the bandsaw. This makes a shallower dish, which I prefer. For deeper sides and a more bowl-like vessel, use the entire blank without cutting lengthwise.

If you are uncomfortable using a bandsaw to cut lengthwise on the round blank, do not do so. I use the fence and a push stick to keep my hand safely clear of the blade while cutting. The blank could also be cut lengthwise with a handsaw, and would have to be placed in a jig to be cut.

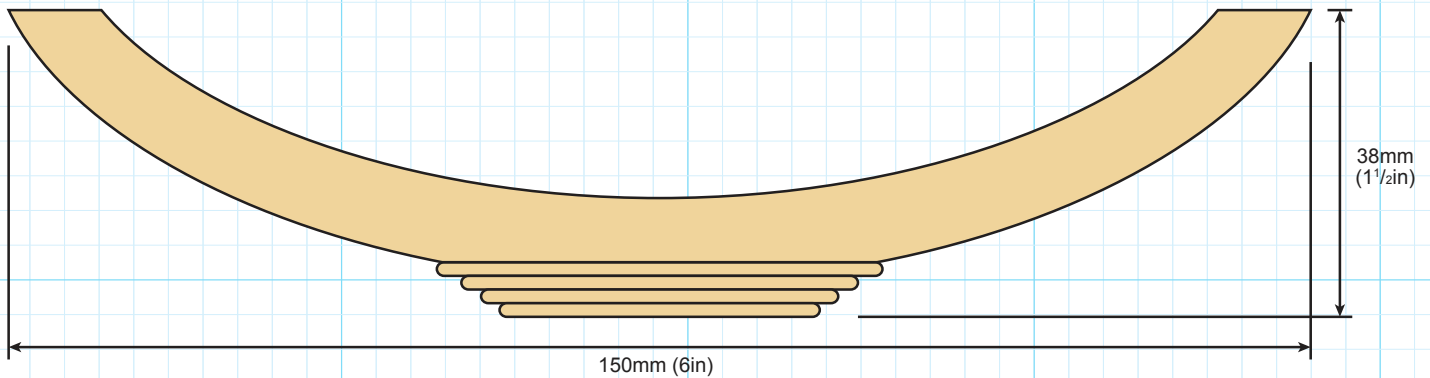
Here are the steps I take to turn these little bowls.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- 10mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in) bowl gouge
- Skew chisel
- Chuck with screw chuck attachment

MATERIALS

- Timber of your choice



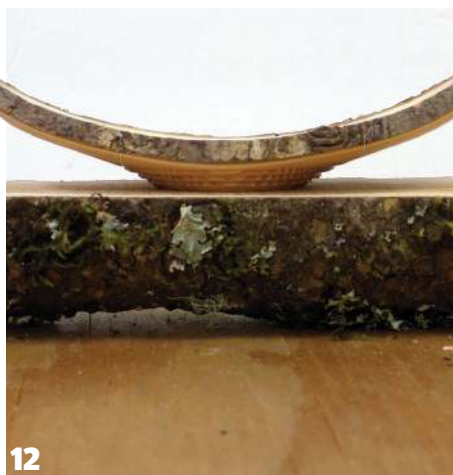
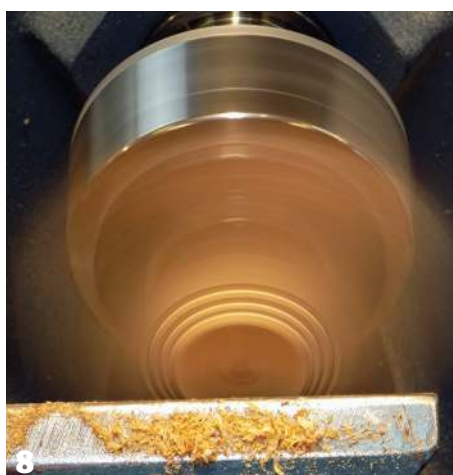
1 On the rounded bark side, drill a hole with a sufficient size bit for the woodworm screw on your chuck. Drill the hole about 20mm deep.

2 Install the chuck on to the lathe. Then, insert and secure the woodworm screw, attach the branch on to the blank and make sure it seats securely. Depending on the shape of the branch, the piece may wobble or rock. This is not a secure hold so the alternative mounting method would be between centres. This method of holding work creates a few minor access issues when turning, but it is a very secure.

3 Set the toolrest to ensure it spins freely. As long as you have a secure hold via the screw chuck, you may turn these at moderate speed without a tailstock. If there is any doubt whatsoever as to the security of hold, bring up the revolving tailstock centre for support.

4 Remember to always stand clear of the throw/exit zone of the work and, using a bowl gouge, start with light cuts on the outside rim of the blank to gently start to shape it. The idea is to protect and keep the bark in place, then do the main shaping later. Note that, due to the slim blank used, you will have difficulty in seeing a solid wood shape. It will be blurred. Always keep every part of your body behind the toolrest and never use your fingers to check the thickness of the bowl while the blank is turning.





5 Work towards a smooth outside shape. Slow bevel riding cuts will help keep the wood from tearing out, especially at the bark rim. You will be cutting wood and air with each revolution, so easy does it. The truth is that, with these propeller-style bowls, you actually encounter more air than wood, so you may encounter gouge bounce if you try to place too much pressure on the gouge to rub the bevel against the wood. So, keep pressure downwards on the gouge to maintain contact with the rest and gently kiss the wood with the bevel so it does not bounce in the air sections. You can see from the blurred image there is a lot of air versus wood.

6 Once the outside shape is turned, cut a base bottom slightly inward to give a rim to rest upon.

7 Clean up as much as you can with a gouge, leaving as clean a surface as you can. A scraper can be used if necessary, but the finish is typically not as good as that of the gouge.

8 Cut three decorative-looking grooves into the side of the base with a skew held sideways. A scraper would also work. These are more than decoration though – one of them will provide a gripping spigot for the chuck jaws to grab. Each groove is about 3mm deep and just enough to grab. One of the three grooves will usually fit nicely in the chuck jaws without leaving obvious jaw marks. You could create a recess in the bottom of the foot if required, but this may compromise how deep you go inside the bowl. Many people feel more comfortable with some form of spigot on bowl work. Once cut, remove the piece from the lathe.

9 Now, reverse the piece and grab one of the grooves securely in the chuck jaws. It isn't necessary to wrench down really hard, but do check you have a nice, secure hold that will not come free when turning.

10 Start in the centre. Cut into the wood creating a little depression and then making another cut further out.

11 For each cut try to leave a smooth surface on the wood. Treat each cut as practice for that final cut needed later to achieve the final wall thickness. So, gradually make cuts working from rim down to centre, with each successive cut being ever closer to the final wall thickness required. Aim for an even bark edge of just less than 6mm. You could certainly go thinner, but the risks become greater and the edge will want to chatter.

12 That's all there is to it. Remove from the lathe. Your completed oval dish should look something like this. You can sand and finish these little dishes, but don't do it with the lathe on – it is all too easy to get fingers caught in the edges. It would be similar to polishing a rotating propeller. Sand using arbors and a pass. ●

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Make an authentic medieval bowl

This month, Richard Findley's Editor's challenge is to make a medieval-style bowl on a standard lathe



When the challenge came through this month I knew exactly where my research would begin. I have owned a copy of Robin Wood's excellent book *The Wooden Bowl* for some time and it is one woodturning-related book that can literally be read from cover to cover. It talks about the history of the wooden bowl, appropriate timbers and working methods, showing examples of bowls and turnings dating back to hundreds of years BC. It seems some reading is in order.

HISTORY LESSON

It is often quoted that turning dates back thousands of years, with the first ever depiction of turning being in the form of a low-relief stone carving from

ancient Egypt which shows a strap lathe in use and dates from around 320BC. Of course, the issue with wood is that it decays when left in the elements, so very early examples don't exist in the whole, although there have been good examples found which have been preserved due to circumstances, including items found in bogs and, probably most famously, from the wreck of Henry VIII's flagship the *Mary Rose*, which sank in 1545 and lay in the mud and silt of the Solent until it was raised in the 1980s.

As anyone that has turned bog oak will know, wood that is 'stored' in these conditions will last for millennia. The oldest surviving complete piece of turning, according to Robin's book, is in fact a

piece of Jet, found in Yorkshire, which shows evidence of being turned and dates back to around 2000BC.

The medieval period, or 'the middle ages', technically runs from the end of the Roman Empire in the west in the 5th century to around the 15th century. Turned wooden bowls were in everyday use as eating and drinking bowls throughout this period and well into the 16th century, when living standards began to improve and the most wealthy in society could afford earthenware bowls and cups. It wasn't until the end of the 17th and into the 18th century that cheap glazed pottery became available to the masses and the flat plate gained popularity over the wooden bowl for day-to-day use.

Tools and lathes

Various different styles of lathe have been used throughout history, and vary in design depending on where in the world they originate, but the basic principle remains largely the same. The lathe that most of us, certainly in the UK, would imagine, is the wooden pole lathe, which works by the turner pushing down on a pedal, which rotates the wood towards the tool. A springy branch would be attached to the other end of a rope, running from the pedal, via the work, to the branch or sapling, which pulls the rope back up, producing the reciprocating, back and forth action that most turners have probably witnessed from time to time at country fairs or shows.

The tools that these bowl turners would have used would either have been made by themselves or by the village blacksmith to the turner's specification and were usually hook tools rather than the gouges we are familiar with today.



Ring tools and sharpening cone

Making it 'authentic'

The challenge is to make an 'authentic' medieval style bowl. I take that to mean made in a way that resembles as closely as possible these early pole lathe-turned bowls. So without actually building a pole lathe, I am going to mount the bowl blank on the lathe between centres, as they would on a pole lathe – remember this is long before chucks, which really only came into use in the late 1960s early 1970s. As far as tools are concerned, while it is possible to buy hook tools, they are not a regular part of most tool manufacturers' range, so the closest modern tool which is readily available would probably be the ring tool. For the purposes of this article, Crown Tools kindly provided me with two sizes (a smaller tool with an 17mm ring and 10mm shaft, and a larger tool with a 25mm ring and 14mm shaft, although they are sold as 13mm and 25mm respectively) and a sharpening cone. They are available from other manufacturers as well.

Ring tools

I have never used these 'proper' ring tools before, only modern versions designed for end grain hollowing. Whenever I want to find out how to use a tool I have become accustomed to going to YouTube and searching for a 'how-to' video, but there is nothing to be found. This seems a little ominous as I'm aware that ring tools have a reputation a little like the skew chisel in that they work well but punish inattention with dramatic catches. The only person I know who uses one regularly, and makes it look like a breeze is an Instagram friend of mine named Ulf Jansson from Sweden (@svarvulf on Instagram). I have watched his videos with interest for some time, always impressed by his deft tool handling. I suspect the ring tool won't be quite as easy to use as Ulf makes it appear though.

When I open the packs, it is obvious, as with most new tools, that they will need sharpening, as I can see light reflecting from the tool's edge – a sure sign work is needed. Ring tools are unique in that they have two different cutting edges, one with an internal bevel and one with an external bevel. A chat with Ulf suggests that either can be used, depending on the tool presentation required.

SHARPENING

I use some of Ulf's videos for reference with sharpening. It seems the internal bevel might be a good starting place as I have the sharpening cone. I'm not certain as to the best method but I feel like using the pillar drill might give me the most control. With the cone mounted in the drill chuck, I use a scrap of wood to support the tool shaft so I can avoid blunting the



Polishing the inner bevel using the drill press



When light reflects from the edge it's a sure sign the tool needs sharpening

other edge. It also allows the sharpening cone to pass right through the ring. I very gently lower the cone into the ring and am pleased to find it gently and controllably polishes the inner bevel of the ring.

I'm going to need to gently grind the outer bevel and Ulf shows that he uses a jig on a water-cooled system to do this. I only have a slow-running grinder with a white wheel so need to take care. I use the marker pen technique and colour in the bevel with a black pen, which makes it easy to see how sharpening is progressing on the grinder as I gently work over the bevel, resting the shaft of the tool on the grinder platform.

HANDY HINT

- Although my grinder is a slow-running model, it still spins the stone at 1425rpm and, while that is half the speed of a standard grinder, it is still plenty fast enough to ruin a delicate tool. To avoid this, when I grind small tools such as my 6mm spindle gouge or carving gouges, I start the grinder and stop it again before it reaches full speed, so the wheel slows further as I grind, which gives far better control and greatly reduces the risk of overheating or misshaping the delicate tool edge.



The result of polishing



Marker pen technique in action



On the grinder

SHARPENING – CONTINUED

Ulf recommends that the edge is further sharpened with a stone of some kind. To keep this as 'authentic' as possible, I use my grandpa's old oil stone, which puts a lovely, fine edge on most tools. Sharpening the ring tool is a little awkward but by pressing down on the stone to keep the bevel in good contact, drawing the tool toward myself and rotating the tool around the ring, I can slowly hone all the edges on the tool. Satisfied the edge is sharp, I feel I'm ready to try turning.

Timber selection

In his book, Robin Wood writes about 20 different native timber species which are known to have been used historically for bowl turning, one of which is beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and I happen to have

a suitable-sized board in stock. Beech is also the wood that most of the eating bowls from the *Mary Rose* were made of, so seems fitting to use here. While Robin talks about bowls of all sorts of different sizes throughout his book, I decide that an eating and drinking bowl is most likely to have been relatively small – Robin actually writes that larger bowls are difficult to drink from – so I cut a blank of around 150mm from a 65mm-thick board.

Mounting on the lathe

Bowl blanks mounted on a pole lathe have a dead centre at one end and a driving mandrel at the other. This fixes to the wood by way of metal spikes on one end which are simply hammered into the wood. This mandrel then has the strap or rope of the pole lathe wrapped around it and so drives the wood back and forth as the foot pedal is depressed and released.

Obviously building a pole lathe for this article is a little over the top (perhaps for another article...), so I decide to mount the blank between a four-prong drive, acting like the traditional mandrel, and my live centre. Apart from the fact my lathe is a modern electric lathe (if you can call a lathe made in 1950 'modern') and so spins continually rather in the reciprocating manner of a pole lathe. I also decide that a pole lathe is likely to run quite slowly, so keep my lathe set at 320rpm, which seems like it might be reasonable and help me to achieve the slightly ridged, off-the-tool look that is often seen on bowls of this period. I feel like this combination of tooling and set-up is about as close as I can get to 'authentic'.

TURNING THE OUTSIDE

My next job is to familiarise myself with the ring tool. I start off using the larger of the two tools as I feel it should be most stable. I experiment with the presentation of the tool. In most pictures of old pole lathe bowl turners, the long tool handle is tucked up in the turner's armpit or even resting on his shoulder, with the cutting

edge pointing well down in a trailing cut. This allows for good control and a more aggressive cut. I see no reason why the tool would have to be presented in this trailing fashion though, so experiment with a grip more like I would with a bowl gouge, with the handle low and cutting tip pointing upward. I find this presentation gives more of a shearing cut and improves the surface finish with light passes.

I try out both of the cutting edges and find I get on best with the external bevel as this can be lightly rubbed against the wood just as the bevel of a bowl gouge can be. The edge with the internal bevel seems much more catchy on the outside of the bowl. It works OK when the cut is near the end of the tool and supported by the shaft, but as the cut moves to the side of the ring and become less supported by the shaft, it wants to spin. The outer bevel seems easier to control all round on the outside of the bowl. I find it cuts quite sweetly when I move my body and produce arcing-type cuts.

All of the roughing and shaping cuts so far have been made by holding the tool under my arm and keeping the edge trailing. Once I am happy with the shape I switch to a standard bowl gouge grip and take a lighter cut, more like a shear cut, to improve the surface finish. This seems to work well with the internal bevelled edge. The design is a simple curve which sits comfortably in the hand and has a rim design inspired by some of the pictures of ancient bowls from Robin's book. I notice rim details seem to appear often and I guess it both gives the turner a chance to easily embellish his work and probably makes the bowl comfortable when brought to the lips for drinking.

I don't sand as sanding is very much a modern invention, so I leave a tooled finish and just burnish the outside with a handful of shavings which, again, seems like a traditional technique. Satisfied, I turn the bowl round on the lathe so it is now being driven by its base, just as you would with a modern set-up, and I'm ready to hollow.



Honing on the oil stone



Turning with the tool handle tucked under my arm and the cutting edge trailing



Dropping the handle produces a lighter, more shear, finishing cut



The ring tool in action



Shearing finishing cut on the outside



The finish off the tool is suitably 'authentic' but wouldn't pass normal quality checks in my workshop



Burnishing with shavings

HOLLOWING THE INSIDE

This is where the fun really starts. Working on the outside I experience a few smallish catches but nothing too dramatic. As soon as I begin to hollow I start to get a few more. The main issue is the tool needs to be presented at an angle, tilting the left side of the ring downward somewhat, but if the end of the tool contacts the wood, it is pulled

rapidly toward the live centre. With the live centre in place I have to leave a core in the centre, which is exactly how the old turners used to do it, but I never use my tailstock when hollowing a bowl, so it feels quite alien to me.

I decide that, with it only being a small bowl, the larger tool is a little unwieldy in the space, so I switch to the smaller version and try again. As I get deeper

into the bowl I work out a system which seems to work. I use the external bevel to cut along the wall of the bowl and switch to the internal bevel to kind of scoop across the bottom of the bowl to the core.

It's slow going and catches continue to happen from time to time and I feel a frustration that I haven't felt in turning for a very long time: I feel like a beginner again.



Working along the wall with the outer bevelled edge



Cutting toward the centre with the inner bevelled edge

REMOVING THE CORE

After battling with the ring tool and bowl, I am finally in a position where I can remove the bowl from the lathe. The core needs removing and it seems from Robin's book that the usual method is to turn it down fairly thin and snap it off by hand, finishing the inside with a knife or carving gouge, so this is what I do. Thankfully I have a spoon bit gouge in my grandpa's carving tool kit, so use that to smooth

out the bottom of the bowl. It seems that archaeological digs sometimes find collections of these cores, which helps to identify workshop sites.

In the end I have a small bowl which meets the challenge but it's a bit rough and will most likely only find its way into the firewood bag. In all it took me around two hours to make this little bowl, which is frankly ridiculous, even with taking pictures for the article. So out of curiosity

I decide to turn the same bowl again, but this time using my usual modern methods, including a scroll chuck and bowl gouge, running at around 1500rpm. Once again, I don't sand, leaving tool marks, and once again just burnishing with a handful of shavings. This time it took less than 15 minutes to turn to completion, including removing the chucking tenon, and the end result is far superior in quality to my first attempt.



Snapping out the core



Cleaning the lower inner section with a bent carving tool



Turning with modern methods is considerably quicker

Conclusion

It is a long time since I've felt this level of frustration with turning. Catches happen from time to time and things don't always go entirely to plan but, by and large, I can use my knowledge and experience to get things done and to get over problems. Generally I can present the tool to the wood and achieve a good finish with little fear of a catch, but to not have that certainty took me right back to the early days when catches would happen seemingly at random. Of course I can't blame the tool, famously it is only a bad workman who blames his tools, and there are a number of (mostly European) turners who use the tool to great effect. Like most things, with much more practice I'm certain I could master it, but after turning one bowl I feel grateful for modern bowl gouges and scroll chucks.

As far as making an authentic medieval bowl, I think I've probably met the brief, even if it is a bit rough and took way longer than it should. I wonder what a medieval turner would have made of it all? ●



The finished bowl

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Top tips for new turners

Colwin Way offers some invaluable advice for beginners



With Christmas now just a memory you may be thinking about getting back in the workshop and starting this year's projects. You may even be one of the lucky ones and have been given some new kit, and be desperate to try it out. But if you are just at the start of your turning journey it can be a bit of a minefield understanding the vast amount of information you need just to get started.

I want to start right at the beginning as I often do in my day job as a tutor to newbie woodturners. Whatever lathe you've chosen

to buy, whether it be brand new or not, this is just the start. Other things to consider will obviously be tools, but then we need a way of sharpening them, a chuck with the correct thread size plus jaws, timber, personal protective equipment, extraction and, of course, some degree of knowledge. Knowledge is very important for the beginner. As with all machinery, the lathe can be a dangerous piece of kit if not used correctly. Let's go over some points and tips to make your journey into the world of woodturning a rewarding and enjoyable one.

◀ Tool choice

I'm going to make the assumption that you've already bought or been gifted a lathe, so let's make a start with tool selection. It can be very confusing walking into the tool shop for the first time and looking at the huge array of tools on offer. To be honest, I would say that you need to go with a shopping list, don't be put off by gimmicks and start with a basic set of around six or seven tools. These can be added to at any time, remember, so save your money for the rest of the kit we will talk about later.

Just some of the myriad tools you will find on display in shops and online



SPINDLE ROUGHING GOUGE

The roughing gouge is the first essential tool and, in many cases, the first tool you use when spindle turning. In classes I use this tool as an ice breaker simply because, even in the hands of a complete beginner, it's an easy one to use but also makes a lot of noise and shavings. Its ground angle is 45°(ish) and ground straight across its top face, meaning it's even an easy one to sharpen free hand. I would advise a 20mm spindle roughing gouge which will cover all jobs.

From top to bottom: spindle roughing, gouge, skew chisel and parting tool



SKREW CHISEL

The skew chisel is your main finishing tool for spindle work but also used for bead forming and detail work. This tool will take a bit of practice but once mastered will be the tool used most often. If you've never used a skew before I definitely recommend a

skew with a greater angle of around 25°. Good choices would be German style, round or standard-shape skews. Avoid oval types at this early stage. I would recommend a 25mm skew to start with general turning. This tool will also double up as a fine flat scraper.

PARTING TOOL

A 3mm wide parting tool is a must and will be used for both sizing and parting off, but again like the skew chisel can also double up as a bit of a scraper. The parting tool doesn't need to be massive and most will have a relatively short handle so don't be put off. I would also start with a standard flat-sided tool.

SPINDLE GOUGE

The spindle gouge is used, again as its name suggests, on spindle work. This tool can sometimes get confused with a bowl gouge as they do look very similar. However, the difference can be seen in the length of the tool, which is much shorter than a bowl gouge, plus the flute on a spindle is much shallower and wider than that of a bowl gouge. As with the skew chisel, spindle gouges become more aggressive the longer the grind. I would recommend grinding between 30-45°. The longer the grind, however, the more detail you will get, such as bead rolling and V-cutting.

ROUND NOSE SCRAPER

A round-nose scraper is one of those tools I look to call a 'get me out of' tool – one of those tools that, when your spindle or bowl gouge won't quite get there, the scraper will. I'm by no means a scraper snob but my only point to make with scrapers is that they scrape, not cut, and are best used as a back up. A 13mm round-nose scraper should do the trick and grind the profile into

a complete round rather than the half-round they usually come with.

BOWL GOUGE

The size of bowl gouge will depend on the size of lathe you own. If you have a small bench-top machine then stick to the small gouges of around 6mm, but if you have a large, powerful lathe then 10 or 13mm can be used. Bowl gouges are relatively long tools to handle, which can cause problems for bench-top machines so in this case a set of boxed tools can be the answer as these have shorter handles to fit into the box. I would start with a bowl gouge ground around 55°.

BEADING AND PARTING TOOL

Finally, a great addition to the tool kit would be a beading and parting tool. This can be used to size with or roll beads. These are good for the beginner as they are a great substitute for the skew and bead rolling. They come in either 6mm or 10mm wide and both are handy in an ideal world, but if you have to choose, then gauge it to the size of your lathe.



Beading and parting tools

From top to bottom: spindle gouge, bowl gouge and round-nose scraper



Sharpening

Now you have your tools you will need to sharpen them. This can be a scary prospect for many people with the thought of ruining all their expensive tools weighing on their mind. However, sharpening isn't a black art, despite what people may say, and the only way to master it is to practise, just like the turning itself. Keeping your tools sharp rather than sharpening them when they are blunt is a good philosophy to use. Let's look at three common types of sharpening machine.

DRY GRINDER



A double-ended dry grinder

Dry grinding is where most of us start with sharpening and can be the cheaper option when buying a machine. They typically run at 3-4000 rpm but slow-running grinders are available, running around the 1400rpm range. Abrasive wheels for these machines are varied both in grit size and make up. Carborundum (grey) wheels are what traditionally would have been used and can still be, you just have to understand that you need to keep the steel cool by regular quenching and don't put too much pressure on. Aluminium oxide (white or ruby) is a much cooler running wheel, but you will still need to quench and press lightly. CBN (cubic boron nitride) is my latest favourite and cuts with little heating of the steel and very few sparks. The other upside to CBN is the fact that it doesn't need truing as the particle is adhered to a steel wheel.

LINISHER SHARPENING SYSTEM

These sharpening systems are similar to the machines the tool manufacturers use when the tools are made. Basically they are best described as a large, narrow bench abrasive belt sander. These machines fit somewhere between the two previous machines and have a large selection of abrasive belts, from standard to leather for honing. They can be variable speed or fixed speed. Again, these are known as a jig-based system so you can accessorise with jigs to help to help you create the grinds you want over and over again easily.



A belt finisher sharpener

WET SHARPENING SYSTEM



A wet grinder with leather honing system on the opposite side

Wet slow-running sharpening systems run around 1500rpm and generate no sparks or heat to the steel at all and are great for people with no sharpening experience. They are a jig-based system, meaning you follow a pattern and list of settings to create a perfect grind every time. The stone is generally much finer than a dry grinder stone and ranges from 220-1000 grit with the aid of a wheel grader, but 4000 grit wheels can be purchased. Also recently developed is a range of diamond wheels.

SHARPENING JIGS

Sharpening jigs are a massive help for the trainee woodturner. They take all the guesswork out of sharpening, they make the angles you use on your tools repeatable and, long term, last a lot longer. They can be used on all types of sharpening systems and are fairly straightforward to set up. You can buy special made jigs or make your own from online instructions. I would strongly advise a beginner to invest in a jig, especially if they have no form of sharpening experience.



A few of the many sharpening jigs around to help with easy repeatability

PRACTICE PIECES AND SMALL PROJECTS

It's easy to get carried away when you start your new hobby but try to restrain yourself from putting a massive bowl blank on the lathe as your first project. Practice pieces are really important to obtain the muscle memory required for manoeuvres such as rolling beads and planing cuts. Also, if you're turning without the worry of finishing a project, that relaxes you to concentrate on the tools and how they work. A simple practice piece is a piece of softwood roughly 75 x 75 x 300mm between centres and rough down to a cylinder.

Now plane this rough surface down to a good finish with the skew chisel

before dividing and marking out half the length into 25mm increments.

Now, using the skew chisel and the toe (long point) down, start making a series of diagonal cuts on either side to produce one long V-shaped profile.

Once again mark the centre of what will be the high spot on the bead. This will give you a focal point and help to keep the bead central.

Roll the bead using a beading and parting tool and its very corner points, making small cuts until you're happy with the shape.

Now divide and mark out the second half of the blank into 50mm increments

– this will be used for spindle and bowl gouge practice. The two gouges work in different ways to each other, so this practice will help you distinguish between and understand both of these gouges.

You will need to start both tools near the centre when shaping a cove and again each cut starting a little further out than the last. The bowl gouge creates its curve by moving the handle but fixing its flute into position roughly pointing toward 10 and 2 o'clock and in direction of travel.

The spindle gouge doesn't have a fixed flute and starts facing into the centre of the curve and slowly facing up toward the centre of the curve.



Spindle roughing gouge in use with the flute pointing in direction of cut and the cut occurring on the lower wing



Mark the centre of the beads for a visual reference



Use the corner of a beading and parting tool to peel the wood away



Using a spindle gouge to cut the coved sections

Wet turning

Timber can be a major cost in your new-found hobby so embracing wet turning is very important.

Wet or green turning is literally turning fresh-cut timber, either to be turned later once dry or thinned and allowed to move and distort while drying. Wet timber will be at worst very cheap, but most of the time it will be a

case of being in the right place at the right time and you get it for free.

The best advice here is to turn your bowls leaving a wall thickness of around 15% of the overall diameter for them to dry. This takes around six to eight months in most cases but this is instead of years if left to dry in plank form.



Rough-turned items drying ready for turning later



Rough-turned bowls dried ready for use



Turning a bowl

Alternatively, turn your pieces thin and let the timber move and distort while drying. This will greatly differ between timber from the most extreme, such as eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.), to a fairly stable timber such as ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Whatever happens here you will have fun with it – shavings stream away from the gouge like silly string. Always remember if you go to a woodturning event and you become inspired by the demonstrator spraying shavings like streamers that they are likely to be turning wet timber, so don't be too frustrated when you get home to your dry timber and produce chips and dust.

Woodturning clubs and tuition

Most people start their turning journey after seeing a demonstration or watching a friend, which is a great way of becoming inspired, but then after unpacking your new lathe you will find woodturning can be a frustrating hobby through the early stages as, like in all skilled processes, those who demonstrate make the job look so easy. I would strongly encourage beginners to take on some kind of formal training, even if this is a one-day course on the basics.

Alternatively, join one of the many woodturning clubs around the world. From my experience, woodturning clubs can be very nurturing, inspirational and educational places for all levels of woodturner – from complete beginners to pros there is a place for everyone. This is a place to share turning stories, seek advice, be inspired and watch some of the best turning demos and demonstrators the country has to offer, all at a very low cost.



The group at one of Colwin's demonstrations

Health and safety

This is an area sometimes overlooked but it should be one of the first considerations after the lathe. There are some very common misconceptions when it comes to personal and respiratory protection (PPE and RPE). Below is my list of minimum PPE requirements when using the lathe.

DUST EXTRACTOR

A dust extractor is important to take away the dust as close to source as possible before it gets to you. However, it's not a replacement for wearing personal respiratory protection too.



My dust extractor next to the lathe

DUST MASK/RESPIRATOR

Dust masks protect you directly from air-borne dust. Remember, you're making dust all the time, not just when you're sanding, and there is no safe dust. If someone tells you to be careful with a particular timber, does that mean all others are harmless?

Paper dust masks are the most basic you can get and will only be effective if fitted correctly and you're clean shaven. I'm afraid if you have a beard you will need a powered respirator. Truthfully, choose one with the highest practicable rating for the material being worked. We work not only with timber but other materials and finishes too. So do research well to find out what is required. This also applies to selecting the right powered respirator for your needs.

FACE PROTECTION

It is advisable to wear full-face protection if you can. If you have a powered respirator then this is

taken care of, but safety specs alone, even though they will protect your eyes, will not protect other pretty features, such as your nose and your teeth.

EAR PROTECTION

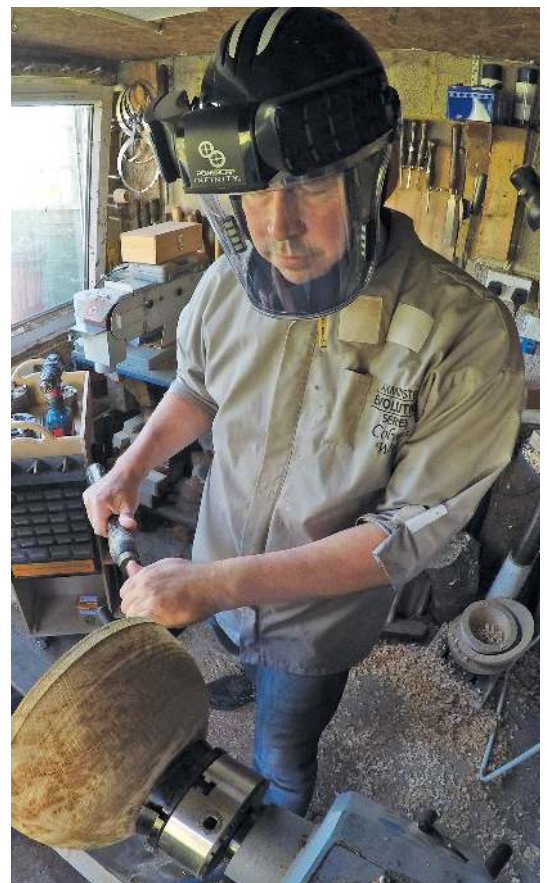
Most people forget about this important area, but when you start roughing down or bowl turning the noise levels creep up above those recommended and very occasionally into damaging volumes. At the very least wear some foam plugs but, to be honest, a set of full ear defenders works best.

GLOVES

These are necessary when working with finishes and chemicals. Again, there are a lot of different types, so check what the recommendations are on the labels of the finishes you have and use. Also, consider some heavy-duty gloves for when converting and carrying timber sections around. Splinters and cuts can be minimised very quickly. ●



A selection of some personal and respiratory protective equipment



A powered respirator



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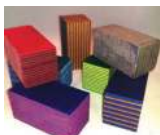
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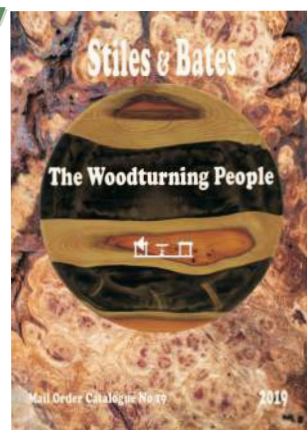
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Woodturning

April issue 330 on sale 21 Mar

Jason Breach provides a step-by-step guide to turning a large solitaire board



PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON BREACH

A Coates wide-rimmed bowl with inlaid insets

Les Symonds explores stitching cracked bowls

Richard Findley tries using the ukiboro technique on turned work

Mark Sanger shows how to create a coloured hollow form with inset neck and heavy texture

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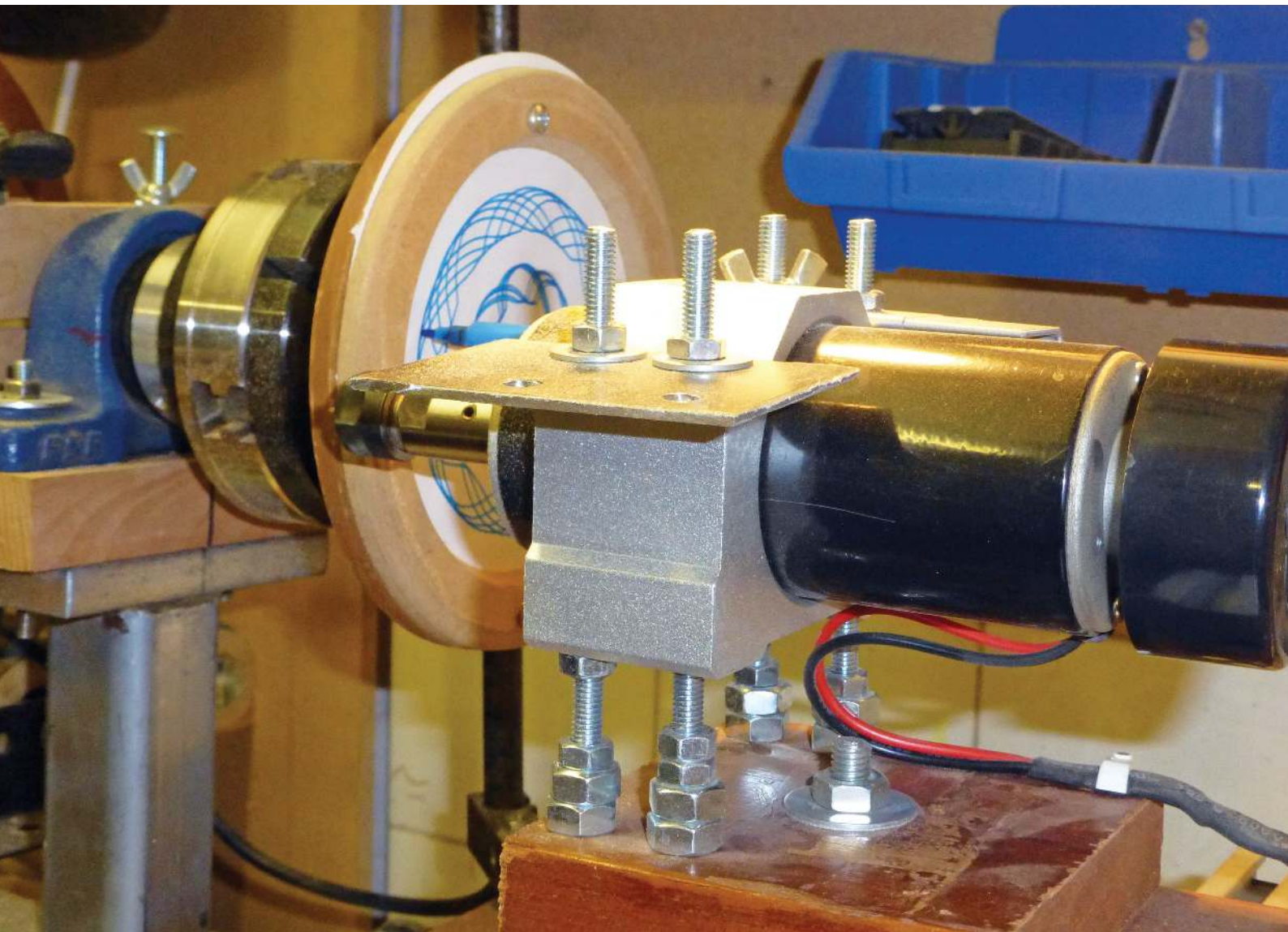


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Fine tuning and accessorising the homemade ornamental lathe

Adrian Jacobs explores adding simple but effective readily available drawing parts



This is the third article in the series about my homemade rose engine. I am still learning how to use the lathe and how to get the best out of it. This article focuses on a Spirograph modification, an idea that I picked up from a YouTube video. The video can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-wPa-os6PY and is posted by an American called Pat Miller. The modification uses the standard children's Spirograph toy (which costs around £16.00 from Amazon). It is really quite simple to make and produces some really interesting patterns that can be carved into wood.

The system works by having a large Spirograph wheel mounted on the main drive shaft with a smaller 'jockey wheel' held on a snubber fitting that rotates against the large wheel to move the whole drive shaft assembly in place of the normal rosette.

Fixing the Spirograph unit in place

The first step was to fix one of the large Spirograph wheels to the main drive shaft. To do this, I drilled a hole (the same diameter as the main drive shaft of the rose engine) in the centre of a small thin disc of 5mm-thick piece of old mahogany drawer. The blank was about 10mm bigger in diameter than the plastic wheel so that I could turn it down to exactly the right final diameter. I turned a step on the outside surface of the disc to the same size as the inside diameter of the plastic Spirograph 'cog' and to a thickness of very slightly small than the thickness of the cog.

The cog needed to fit snugly on the step so that it could be held in place by friction using a matching disc that was made

later. The final diameter of the wood was turned to sit proud of the cog wheel by around 1-2mm so that it could hold the smaller jockey wheel in place as it rotated on the lathe.

Once I had turned the discs, I made a collar to hold it in place on the lathe drive shaft (see previous articles on how to do this). The disk can be placed on the end of the rosette wheel but I chose to mount it permanently on the front end of the main drive shaft.

The next step was to fabricate a way of holding the small Spirograph jockey wheel in place so that it could make contact with the big wheel. I did this by making a snubber made from

a piece of box section steel from an old angle poise lamp to hold a 'jockey wheel' holder. The wheel holder was made from a brass M6 bolt, with the end turned down to a diameter that could take the inner holes in the Spirograph wheel. The plastic wheel was then held in place by a brass 'keeper', fabricated from a piece of predrilled brass rod with a threaded hole drilled in the side to attach a 'wing nut' bolt to grip it to the wheel holder.

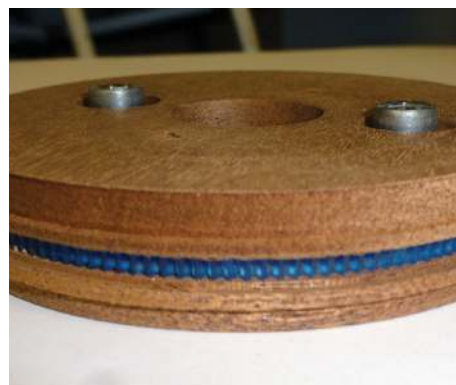
The jockey wheel is forced to rotate by the rotation of the main drive and as it does so it causes the whole drive assembly to move on its bearings. The cutter then cuts a Spirograph type of pattern on the workpiece.



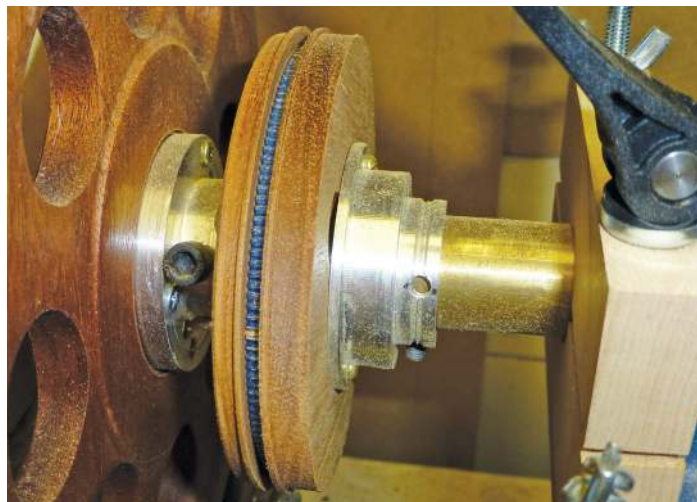
Wooden disk ready to take the Spirograph cog



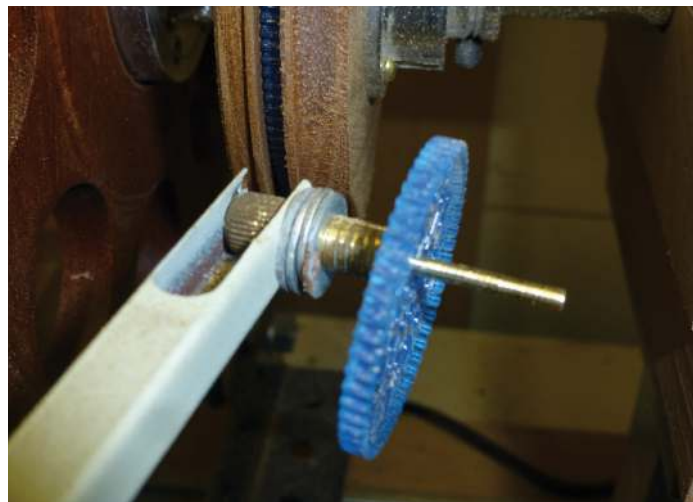
The Spirograph cog in place



The Spirograph cog sandwiched in place between two mahogany discs. The plastic cog is held in place by friction when the two pieces of wood are bolted together



The Spirograph cog fixed in place on the lathe



Wheel holder in place



Brass keeper and wing-nut bolt



The final assembly in place and ready to go

Examples of what can be produced



My first successful effort on a small yew bowl. The Spirograph pattern has been filled with a powder paint and beeswax mixture to increase the impact of the design

Needless to say, all did not go smoothly at my first attempt to create some patterns in wood. The first problem was spring tension holding the jockey wheel against the big wheel. I quickly discovered that this needed to be quite high in order to stop the cutter taking over and moving off-track.

The next issues were the type of timber being carved, cutter diameter and depth. Spirograph patterns can be very intricate and small-diameter cutters work best. It is also not a good idea



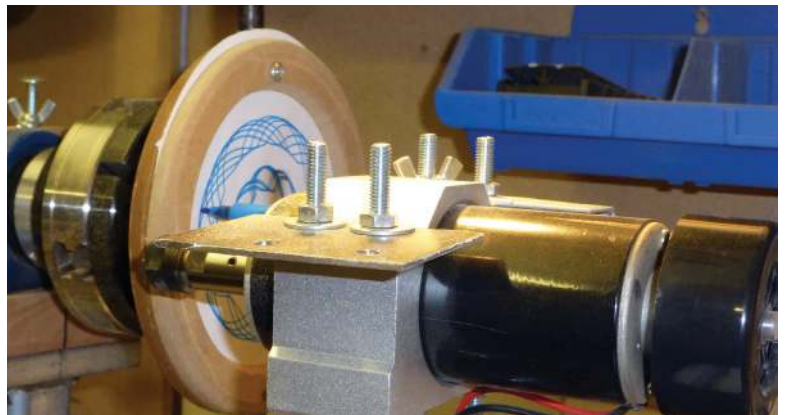
This shows the same design cut into a cotoneaster bowl, but with no filler applied

to cut too deeply because this also can lead to the cutter taking over and weaving its own pattern irrespective of what is being dictated by the two Spirograph wheels. I found that aiming for a cut of around 2mm worked well. Complex patterns do not work well on open grain wood; if you are using such timber, keep the design simple.

Smaller Spirograph wheels produce more widely spaced patterns that are easier to translate into carved patterns in the wood.



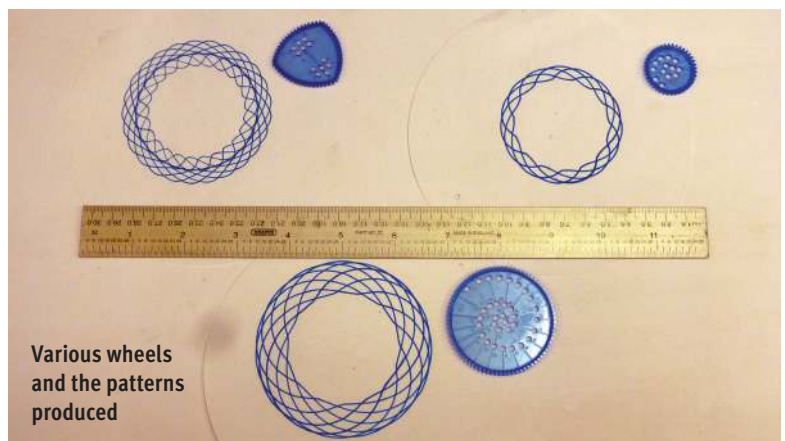
A Spirograph pattern that has been filled with a mixture of brass powder and polyester resin. The final effect is one of metal inlay



This image shows a Spirograph pattern being drawn on a paper chuck. This is a really helpful way of planning work that is to be carved in wood. The pen is mounted in a hollow tube with a small pad of sponge rubber at the bottom to help keep the pen in contact with the paper

GENERAL RULES ABOUT USING THESE WHEELS

- Small wheels produce less complex patterns.
- Large wheels produce more complex patterns that are 'thicker' from internal edge to external edge.
- The closer the hole used as a rotation centre is to the rim of the wheel, the tighter the pattern seems to be.
- Mark where the cutting begins on the wood with a pencil; the full pattern usually takes around 5 minutes to carve and as the pattern becomes more detailed it can be difficult to know when it is finished. Several times I have withdrawn the cutter too early and once this has been done, you cannot go back!



Various wheels and the patterns produced



Here is a small box that has a combination of effects using the rose engine. The outer rim of the lid is scalloped and carved using the simple sine wave rosette and a route cutter. The outer pattern is carved using a small Spirograph wheel and the inner pattern is carved using an eight-pointed rosette. Both patterns have been filled with the beeswax/powder paint mixture



This image shows a small macrocarpa bowl with a simple Spirograph pattern. The carving was terminated after three rotations



Here is a small bowl with the same Spirograph pattern as the previous image but this has been allowed to run until completion

Final thoughts on the rose engine project

This series of articles has been written over a period of several months and during that time I have continued to work on the machine and it has developed and evolved. You may have noticed some subtle changes appearing in some of the pictures over this time. It is useful to summarise what has changed over these few months, as follows.



The homemade ornamental lathe

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

- The electronics for the main drive have now been installed in a new dustproof box that has full sized buttons. The cost of this was minimal (less than £10), but it took many man hours of thinking and soldering! These are all low voltage components and so the risk to personal health is very low.
- I have removed the manual crank because it is never used. In its place, I have installed a small tray to take the electronic control box, the collets for the cutter motor and a few frequently used hex keys. Being a belt and braces man I have installed a small stepper motor as a replacement for the manual drive but it really only there to be used if the main stepper motor fails for any reason when I am doing demonstrations.
- The snubbers on the main tool bar have been upgraded (again at minimal cost) to include quick release levers to make it easy to move and apply the snubbers.
- I have now removed the spring balance because there are times when it not able to provide enough tension. I have replaced it with a spring attached to a washer on a threaded rod. This can be easily adjusted to change the tension.
- I have reinstalled the original engineering compound table. It is really too large but despite this it is much better made and easier to control. It is however, very heavy when I take the machine out to do demonstrations!
- A friction brake has been installed behind the front bearing on the main shaft. This is to help keep the shaft rigidly in place when doing phased work.
- I have installed a magnetic tool rail on the front of the base where I keep frequently used tools.
- I have been experimenting using a laser engraver instead of a rotary cutting tool (see picture above). The 500mW laser cost around £46 from Amazon and is just powerful enough to etch patterns on wood if the lathe turns very slowly. You can see the results in the pictures on the right.



The laser diode mounted on a small piece of wood on a large threaded rod screwed to the compound table



Two Spirograph patterns laser-etched into a macrocarpa bowl

A very complex Spirograph pattern laser-etched into a small cherry bowl



IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTES

Lasers can do serious and permanent damage to your eyes and it is imperative that you use the appropriate safety glasses. The glasses must be matched to the frequency of the laser being used. Do not assume that one pair of glasses will protect you against all lasers.

Finally, I am working on a series of videos that will be published on YouTube so that readers will be able to see the machine in more detail and also see it actually working. The first few videos can be viewed at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y5R_SQUhQk
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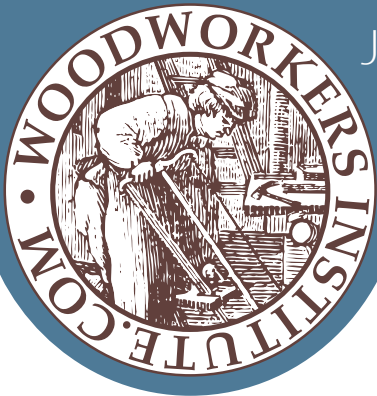
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Are you 'wheely' safe?

Geoffrey Laycock looks at fitting and using dry bench grinder wheels

Almost all turners use a dry grinder for tool sharpening or reshaping at some time, and many articles have been written about techniques, jigs, freehand profiling and so on. General safety guidance is usually given but rarely do you see much written about changing wheels and ensuring their safe use, so here it is!

If you have a lump of wood on a lathe and it detaches we all have an idea what may happen next. If it is rotating quickly it can cause quite an interesting outcome, especially if it is of a larger size. Grinding wheels can give rise to similar outcomes if they are not installed correctly and maintained. I have used my slow speed grinder for these photographs, but imagine if a normal speed machine was fitted with a 150mm wheel. If that wheel was to shatter – what happens next? And the slow speed grinder would still be interesting – as you can see the wheels are wider and with more mass.

Installing a wheel isn't just unpacking and fitting it. Firstly the wheel should be given the 'ring' test. Put a pencil through the centre hole to suspend it and give it a tap on its perimeter with a second pencil. A nice ring is good, a dull one suggests a fault and should not be used.



With the end enclosure guard removed the 'blotter' can be seen behind the securing flange and the top plate adjusted close to the wheel

Check that the two paper washers, sometimes referred to as blotters, are present either side of the wheel. They should be flat and have maximum speed marked on them. If you have grinders running at different speeds, it is crucial you put the correct wheels onto each – overspeeding can cause a wheel to burst. If you fit a wheel designed for 1400 rpm onto a 2800 rpm machine the stresses in the wheel are FOUR times greater.

Check the faces of the two metal flanges that tighten up against the



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEOFFREY LAYCOCK

paper washers – they should be undamaged. Even a small 'ding' on an edge can cause a spot loading on the wheel and initiate fracture and bursting. Do not overtighten the nuts when you put them on. The threads are 'handed' so they naturally want to tighten and stay tight.

And that would only happen if you have correctly replaced the end cover. Note in my photo that this is removed – but only so you can see the other features.

Once you have fitted your new wheel and adjusted the two guards you should check it rotates freely then switch on whilst standing to one side. Allow the grinder to run for a few minutes before you think of using it. You are checking the integrity of the wheel and settling it on its mounting shaft.

You should never use the side of a straight-sided wheel, unless it is specifically intended for this use. If not, any sudden loading can cause the wheel to fail and in any case you cannot dress the sides so you would quickly have an uneven surface to work with.



The correct way to use a toothed wheel-type dresser. The lugs should locate behind the toolrest and the handle gently raised to engage. This also helps to ensure a flat, accurate wheel surface

USING THE GRINDER

The toolrest should always be adjusted so it is as close to the wheel as practical – as this helps prevent the tool or workpiece jamming between wheel and rest. More importantly, at the top of the wheel enclosure there is a sliding metal section, often holding the eye protection screen. This must be adjusted to be as close as possible to the wheel perimeter, as it is designed to help contain a bursting wheel within the enclosure.

In my sixth form school days I studied A level metalwork as a time-filler – and I wanted to! I was the only one and making a metalwork lathe as my project. One day I was working whilst the 3rd form boys were in making screwdrivers. One bright spark decided to investigate if the pedestal grinder being used to shape the screwdriver blade worked on fingers, stuck one on the tool rest and pushed. It does, and he went off to A & E with bone visible through the copious amounts of blood. A lesson learned the hard way that grinders can inflict copious amounts of damage.



Ron turning in his workshop

In memory of Ron Kent, a Hawaiian legend

Some of his friends share their thoughts on his life, work and influence

From Emiliano Achaval

I was fortunate enough to Visit Ron a little while before his passing on 15 December 2018. He lived on Kailua, on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu with his wife Myra. I had a wonderful time with him and Myra and he was, as always, willing to tell tales and share his thoughts.

Ron was instrumental in showing that turning didn't just have to be functional items. It would also take an entire page to list the institutions, museums and dignitaries that were lucky enough to have received one of the beautiful translucent Norfolk Island pine or Cook pine pieces that Ron had made.

Ron donated his lathe and all his turning tools to a drug rehabilitation centre about 10 years ago. His creative spirit didn't let him sit idle though and he got into other less strenuous work, such as his colourful felting pieces, and I was honoured to have received one of them as a gift.

Listening to the sounds of the waves crashing a few yards from his living room, while sitting at a handcrafted monkeypod table made by his wife Myra, Ron Kent said to me: "Ask any questions you like..."

DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU GOT STARTED IN WOODTURNING?

"It's a good story, I did woodwork, I did tables and the suchlike. And you know how hard it is for our wives to get guys like us something for Christmas. My wife gave me a toy lathe. I went to the beach and I picked up some driftwood. I sharpened a screw driver and I turned some small bottle-shaped turnings. That lasted about two to three weeks, then I bought a Sears lathe. I enjoy wrestling with non traditional tools. I made a three-quarter inch galvanised pipe with heavy steel sharpened at the end. In my first job – I'm an engineer by trade – I met Jerry

Glaser. I heard he was making tools; I asked him to help me and we came up with some better tools. The rest, as they say, is history..."

Ron then told me how he sort of accidentally got the idea of entering his translucent pine bowls into art shows, something nobody did back then.

He entered a table at the Easter Art Festival at the Ala Moana Center in Hawaii, the biggest shopping mall in the USA in the late 1960s. Ron had to join the association running the show, the Hawaii Artist Association (HAA), at a cost of \$5. That very first night, he got a call. He was been nominated for President of the association, a position he accepted.

For five years he did his duty, entering the art world. And then it dawned on him; why not enter one of his translucent bowls at one of the shows?

TRANSLUCENT BOWLS ARE YOUR SIGNATURE WORK. HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THAT?

Ron said: “I accidentally learned how to make them translucent; it was an act of serendipity. According to the dictionary, serendipity is the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.

“I didn’t know any better and it just made sense to work the already round pine with an end grain orientation, so instead of learning the right way, I just kept at it on the end grain.”

It is worth noting that Ron pioneered the freezing of his pieces to allow him to get back to a piece without the onset of spalting. Cook and Norfolk Island pine rots quickly once the process starts. He started with one freezer at home, then two. When things got very successful, he rented freezer space in town. Food companies were storing perishables, and he would show up with a truckload of pine bowls, to the great amusement of bystanders. This allowed him to work on several pieces at the time without losing any to rotting. He would turn them while frozen too.

Ron commented: “I did all of my bowls green turned. It was much easier that way. Sometimes I finished a bowl within four

days of the tree been cut. And that included three days of moving the wood pile from the site to my home and storage! Within a day I would start the oiling process.”

WHAT WERE YOUR INFLUENCES?

He told me that maybe I didn’t want to hear the answer to this question. If I had to pick up a hobby nowadays, I wouldn’t pick up woodturning. There are just too many of them! (meaning woodturners). He said this with a great chuckle, and explained that: “I was never one to follow the crowd.”

Talking about his influences Ron said that we are all influenced in one way or another, and he regrets that in some other interviews he has said he had no influences – because he thinks he is giving himself too much credit.

Ron went on to say: “We have all grown up with the belief that we are all created equal, but there is such a thing as talent. No matter how much you practise golf, you will never be an Arnold Palmer. You can practise all you want, but you have to also have talent.”

He also adds: “There is a difference between aesthetically pleasing and original. Some turners try to be ‘original’ but fail to make something nice.”

DO YOU REMEMBER EVER GIVING UP ON A PROJECT?

“I remember one bowl – if I had to choose, this one would be one of my top five all time bowls. I was doing a one-man show in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I was showing something, gesturing, and I knocked this bowl off the pedestal! It broke in three pieces... David Waterbury, one of my collectors insisted that I stitch it together. I had already started stitching some of my pieces, but I had never put one together. With that as a challenge, I tried, and it worked. It was his challenge that made me try. It would have been easy to give up on that one...”

WHAT YOUR DISLIKES IN WOODTURNING?

“I didn’t enjoy smashing my fingers!” He tells me this with a deep chuckle, and a story follows: “I had three major run-ins in my career. One was a bad one. My finger got caught between the tool rest and an indentation in the wood...”

“Another dislike is... I witnessed a woodturner arguing about one thing or another with a demonstrator at a AAW symposium. Ask questions, learn as much as you can, be polite.”

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A BEGINNER WOODTURNER TO HELP HIM GET STARTED?

“If your goal is to become a successful professional, you have to be able to market yourself well and be able to convey a message to the collectors. Ron also says, “A lot of woodturners are just happy being a hobbyist turner, so just have fun!”

YOU MENTIONED IMPOSTOR SYNDROME. WHAT IS THAT?

Ron commented: “Early in my career I discovered something that later on I gave a name to: the ‘impostor syndrome’. It can happen in a lot of professions. People will often privately admit that in their own minds that they are ‘phony’; they then think people will catch on. The way I remember it is that I came home from a juried show and I said to Myra: ‘Phew! I fooled another judge!’ I was always a good salesman of myself. I remember looking at a nice piece that I made, and thinking, ‘Wow! I could never do that again!’”

ON YOUR BOWLS YOU ADDED YOUR WIFE’S NAME TOO. WHY IS THAT?

“Myra has been my muse, my source of inspiration. When things got really busy, Myra started helping me. She did a lot of the sanding. If she worked on a bowl, her name was added next to mine.” (I then made a mental note to ask my wife if she wanted to start sanding my work!)



One of Ron’s signature translucent bowls

WHAT IS THE BEST BIT OF ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE TO OTHER TURNERS?

Ron asked me how many pieces I broke weekly. Of course, I said none. He then said: "You are not pushing the limits of your creativity; get out of your comfort zone, try new things, break a few a pieces coming up with something you never done before."

Ron added a comment saying: "Life has been a wonderful journey. I have met a lot of great people through the woodturning world and made some life long friendships. I am glad to have been a part of it, to have helped woodturning become what it is today, an acceptable art form." As he put it: "I'm just one of the boys."

With the passing of Ron Kent, a fantastic chapter of woodturning history has come to an end. Ron freely advised anyone that wanted to learn how to achieve those amazing pieces. He was AAW member number 7. He was there from the very beginning.

Ron will forever be remembered, daily, all over the world for his beautiful work, some of which are in some of the most famous museums and art collections. Ron was the pioneer of translucent pine pieces. When he started, there was nobody in the woodturning world doing it. Through trial and error, he came up with the spalting and oil soaking process and many people have come after him, but Ron's pieces were

the first ones. Just prior to leaving we were discussing interesting moments in his life. At this point he went to his office and came back with a box of memorabilia. Digging through it, he showed me a picture of him and Myra introducing bowls to President Clinton, one a bowl to Senator Akaka, Governor Ariyoshi and many more. However, one picture stood out and that was of Ron and his wife Myra, handing Pope John Paul II one of his famous translucent creations. He travelled all the way to Vatican City to present his Holiness with a gift from the people of Hawaii, a gift of Aloha. And that's what Ron was to all of us, a gift.

Ron, you will be greatly missed, never forgotten. A hui ho (till we meet again).

From Wayne Omura

My memorable moment of Ron Kent took place many years ago during the mid 1980s. I received a phone call from a visiting couple from the mainland US requesting a large Norfolk Island pine bowl through a referral from Ron Kent. As the couple were travelling to the island of Maui from Oahu, Ron referred the couple to me. Upon hearing this, I felt overwhelmed and honoured that a big celebrity in the turning world, who was featured in books and magazines considered my work worthy of his referral. I'd like to add that this was before the home computer and internet was available to the masses. As this couple were travelling to the Big Island of Hawaii and back to the mainland from there, rather than purchasing a bowl from me, I referred the couple to Jack Straka of the Big Island. I told the couple to purchase a large Koa wood calabash bowl from Jack instead of me. I told them that Jack was a famous bowl turner featured in books and magazines, unlike myself. A couple of weeks later, I received a call from Jack thanking me for the nice referral. Again, I was in bliss as I had never met either Ron or Jack at this time. I held these two bowl turners from Hawaii in high regards.

When I finally got to meet Ron in October of 2017, I told him about this story and he remembered this referral. He also told me that he knew of my large bowl works that I had been doing out of Norfolk Island pine since the 1980s. Just hearing this from Ron left me grinning ear to ear! After all, I have always felt that Ron had been a key player in the bowl turning movement from craft to art.

Over lunch with Ron at Buzz's in Kailua along with David Chung and Emiliano Achaval made me realise what a fun, nice, genuine and down to earth person he was. I will surely miss Ron. He has contributed so much to all of us as woodturners. May there be a nice lathe and all sorts of woods in heaven for him to play with. God bless you Ron!

From Andy Cole

He will be deeply missed, but never forgotten! Ron Kent was a member of the Honolulu Woodturners Club, and it was always a delight participating in one of his presentations. With a sly sense of humour and a competitive spirit, it was obvious that he loved what he did. "Turn as long as you are having fun," was the advice he often gave, suggesting that it was time to move on when the joy was gone.

Many catch phrases marked his personality. "You have to toot your own horn," Ron would say, suggesting that self-promotion would enhance the route to success. Ron was an expert at that and did so with style. Many will also remember the risqué analogy Ron frequently used to suggest that getting paid for being a turner was a reversal of expectation.

His signature translucent Norfolk pine vessels will continue to enhance the homes of those fortunate enough to have acquired one. The sound of his voice and warmth of his presence will long linger in the memories of those of us who knew him.

Aloha Ron!

From David Chung

I got to know Ron Kent a few years after I started woodturning in 2003. By then, he had already established himself in the woodturning community with his iconic thin walled Norfolk pine vessels. He was very approachable and my wife and I got together with he and his wife Myra on a few social occasions. I remember one time we were discussing how to sell what we made and how to approach putting a value on the pieces. He admitted it took a lot of work and

effort to get to the point where his pieces commanded prices in the thousands. But he said that being known as a turner who produced high end work presented a dilemma. He was by default forced to continue high pricing to satisfy the expectation of the public and to collectors of his work.

As the advancement of Parkinson's made giving up turning necessary, Ron continued to pursue other forms of woodworking not requiring fine motor skills. He continued to enter pieces he made in galleries and art shows. On several occasions, the result was no sale. I felt for Ron, as it must have been difficult not to sell at a show after the years of his pieces being in such a high demand. I think he was forced to continue his high prices for pieces that were not what he was famous for and the public was expecting. What I admire about the man is that he continued to pursue different avenues of his art and craft and did not let his affliction stop his creative output. ●



From L to R: Emiliano Achaval, Ron Kent, Wayne Omura and David Chung

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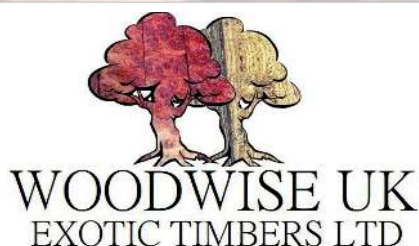
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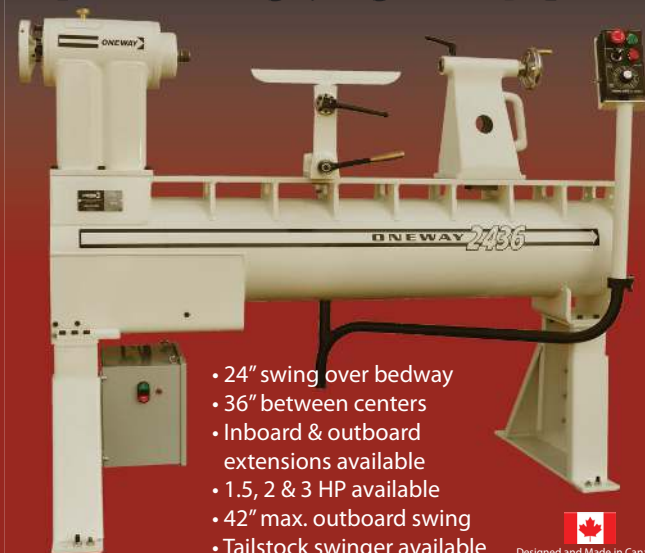
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INDULGE YOUR PASSION!

But is it art?

John Plater begins to consider what makes an artistic piece of woodturning

Last month I wrote about my leanings towards leaving the material in a relatively unadorned state. I argued for simple lines and smooth surfaces with only the application of oil or wax to the wood. Going into the argument a little further I wonder if the inclusion of colour, texture and decoration in a piece somehow helps it to transcend the gap, if one exists, between that which some consider to be craftwork and that which some consider to be artwork. Or is it something else altogether?

It might appear that I side step this argument by suggesting that the label to be applied to a piece of work is whatever is chosen initially by the woodturner and subsequently – and for me, more importantly – by the person viewing the piece. The questions I ask are: Is the piece more likely to be considered an artistic piece if colour, texture and decoration have been incorporated? I think not. Is the piece more likely to be considered an artistic piece if the person who made it calls themselves an artist or sculptor? Again, I think not. I believe that it has much more to do with what I perceive to be an extra dimension the woodturner has brought to a piece of work so that it invokes a reaction from the viewer which has more to do with its aesthetics than its functionality.

TRADITION

Woodturning is firmly rooted in the traditional making of functional items. I have seen pictures and actual examples of wooden bowls made on a pole lathe many hundreds of years ago. They were produced as purely functional items. They have a lovely, simple shape, they have an even wall thickness and they have evidence of evenly spaced tooling marks, a direct expression of the hand and eye of the maker. Do these aspects somehow imbue the pieces with something intangible which goes beyond an expression of the maker's craftsmanship? Are they an expression of the maker's artistry? Does that make the bowls artistic pieces? I really cannot tell. I can appreciate that it is to do with the maker adding something of him or herself in a subliminal way. It might be a special

quality grown out of doing the same thing for years and years which means all of that skill and experience is an added dimension to the piece.

AESTHETIC QUALITIES

Many more recent pieces have little expressed functionality beyond their aesthetic qualities giving pleasure to the onlooker. Perhaps they were made as wall hangings or standing ornamental pieces. They do not contain anything or support anything other than themselves. They were probably produced by the woodturner as 'artistic' or 'sculptural' pieces. In fact, a number of woodturners with reputations and followers call themselves artists or sculptors. Their pieces may have that intangible quality mentioned previously but it may be much more difficult to quantify. There are many more examples

of this type of work available to the viewer, possibly because woodturners have been freed from the necessity to make functional items. Many more of these pieces will have colour, texture and decoration as instances of the maker expressing themselves. The lathe has become just another tool used along the way. Others of the pieces may be made from less than perfect timber, so we see the bowl, ostensibly a functional item, with a hole in the base or bark inclusions which render it non-functional beyond the added dimension of giving pleasure to the onlooker.

I don't think that there will ever be a definitive answer to my opening question but I still think that it is worth asking. There will be lots of different answers, probably numbering as many as there are woodturners factored in with the number of countries with a woodturning tradition.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN PLATER

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Black Hole Dust Catcher System

ON TEST

Andy Coates puts a new dust extraction system through its paces

I was asked a strange question a short while ago: 'Would you mind drilling some holes in one of your lathes?'

When it was explained to me that it was to put a new product through its paces, I agreed. The package arrived and upon opening it I found a clear instruction sheet and a collection of components to assemble.

After reading through the instructions I armed myself with a cordless drill and appropriate twist drills and set to work. I decided to mount the Black Hole unit on the back of my lathe, but could easily have fitted it to either of the other lathes. NB: Fittings are supplied for Robust and Oneway lathes, and for fitting to lathes where drilling is not desired. Having decided on the best position and height I drilled the two required holes and within minutes had mounted the 865mm-long extruded aluminium rail on the lathe. A few more minutes and the clamps and telescopic support arm were also built up. With the hood and 100mm hose fitted I was ready to attach it to the extractor and give it a try.

Fitted to extraction

The extractor I use every day is conveniently mounted on the wall at the end of the bench behind the lathe, so I simply swapped over the hoses and started the extractor. With a rough-turned bowl prepped for abrading, I used a cordless drill and rotary sanding arbour with 120 grit abrasive to test the system, thinking that the more dust I created the better it would be. This did not prove to be the case – the result was not as good as I had expected it to be. I was slightly confused because I used this extractor every day without a problem.

After some thought I decided that the difference was the hood. I use the extractor with just the 100mm diameter hose in a stand, but here the power was likely to be reduced due to the new hood opening.



The unit fitted to a lathe

I checked the specification for the Black Hole, noted the 400 CFM requirement, decided that the extractor was slightly underpowered and changed over to a 2HP extractor. And what a difference. After a quick repeat of the abrading test it was obvious that everything was as it should be now and I tried a few passes with a gouge to see how it dealt with actual shavings. The answer was, surprisingly well.

The hood is quite large and was catching shavings at such a rate that the grille was partially blocking at the lower edge. This was not the problem – it might be because the system allows the hood to be repositioned, and simply positioning it a little further

away cured the problem and shavings were soon skittering down the hose in an orderly fashion.

One of the main advantages of using this system for me would be for spindle work. With a quick twist of the large securing knob the post can be repositioned anywhere along the 865mm-long rail, allowing for travel along the lathe bed with relative ease.

The telescoping support can also be raised or lowered, allowing for correct positioning on larger faceplate work.

It was not necessary to use this system for days or weeks to see the advantages offered – it pretty much sold itself just as soon as I had attached to a suitably rated extractor.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAFT SUPPLIES USA

Conclusion

Dust is always a problem, and any product that helps to reduce it is worth its weight in dust. This product is not a replacement for air filtration, or for using a suitably rated personal dust mask/powered respirator, but it is a significant improvement upon not having a site-specific system. It will dramatically reduce the amount of dust that the other systems need to deal with – and that is no bad thing. The quality of the components, ease of assembly and functionality are all, without question, superb. It works, and works very well. You can tell it was designed by woodturners for woodturners. I know it might seem pricey, but it gets my unreserved thumbs up.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDY COATES

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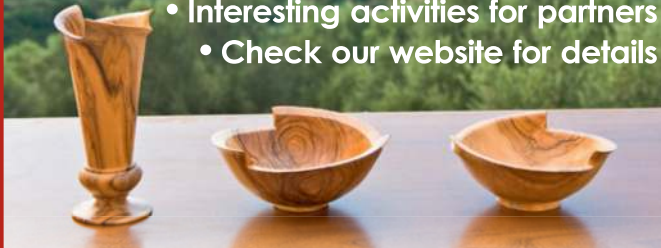
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Turning on the cheap

Pete Moncrieff-Jury suggests some ways to keep costs down



As both a professional turner and a dedicated cheapskate I am always looking for ways to keep costs down. Material costs have to be factored into selling price, so it makes sense to try to source materials as cheaply as possible. Wood can come from any number of sources, ranging from timber merchants to boot sales, old furniture to tree surgeons. Woods that are unobtainable or scarce can sometimes be sourced this way.

I have found rosewood, Honduran mahogany, camphor wood and Parana pine, to name a few, lurking under layers of French polish, dirt and grease at boot sales. Dark furniture fell out of fashion some time ago and can be a good source of these woods. Charity shops often get old beech rolling pins – dirty they can't be sold, but make ideal spindles for many projects. Be aware that amazing book-matched walnut door on the cabinet is probably just a veneer though. To get the solid wood that you can use you need to go for tables and heavy wardrobes. Oak was used a lot for furniture in the early 20th century and can be found in junk yards and the like.

Wood sourced this way has the advantage of being dry, though you do need to look out for worm holes. They needn't stop you using the wood but make sure that they are gone. That's not something you want to introduce to either your workshop or a customer's house.

Other materials can also be sourced cheaply. I use quite a bit of pewter and source it from charity shops. Old tankards and ornaments, made from pewter are common and cheap in boot sales and charity shops. The pewter needs sieving to remove dirt and scum but it's definitely worth the time spent.

Think outside the box. Woodturning needn't just use wood. Old jewellery can provide cabochons, silver wire, beads and myriad other useful items that can be included in your work.

GADGETS

Many turners want all the latest gadgets without perfecting their skills with the basic tools and equipment. I learned to turn in the '60s using skews and scrapers. No chucks, a fixed tailstock, that was it.

To add insult to injury, the scrapers were often old files ground down and sharpened. Seriously dangerous. Making your own tools is fine as long as you are sensible and know what you are doing. A bit of imagination and common sense and we can make a number of jigs, tools etc. from all sort of materials and the only rule is to make sure that we are being safe. The scraper, skew and bowl gouge pictured were all sourced at boot sales and are carbon steel.

I believe that most things can be made using a basic half a dozen tools. Think about it. Bowl and spindle gouges were the same thing until recently, skews and scrapers can do the same sort of work in the right hands, do you really need that fancy tool that promises to make you an amazing turner? Sorry, it doesn't happen.

Developing our skills with the minimum of tools not only makes sense in what it brings to our expertise, it also makes financial sense. Turning will never be as cheap as, say, embroidery or knitting, but it can be a lot cheaper and – it's often more fun doing it on the cheap.



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