

Revolutions

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

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August 2006



The Worshipful Company of Turners competitions

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Chairman's notes

This is the time of the year when you are either on holiday or looking forward to one. With the weather being so hot you can but dream, or I can, as I glance out from my workshop whilst turning another batch of drawer knobs, with another stack of timber to get through, and yes, the customer wanted them yesterday.

This year I was asked to co-judge the AWGB open competition at the WCT with Ray Key. I travelled to London by train with Christine and on arrival at Liverpool Street Station found a notice stating that there were severe delays on the Circle Line. I suggested that we use the Central Line and walk to Blackfriars. Whilst trying to find our way we came upon the Millennium Bridge, as we were early we decided to visit Tate Modern. It was interesting, but I came away uninspired from the modern works of art, but the coffee went down well.

On arrival at Apothecaries Hall we had time to get acquainted with old friends and make some new ones. It was soon time to start the judging and on entering the hall it was great to see that there had been a far better response than in previous years. It was made more difficult for the judges this year, as the rules had been changed and the AWGB competition was completely open. There were no limits imposed as to face plate or between centre work.

First place went to a Cherry Bowl which had been turned to perfection by Rod Bonner. Second place was awarded to a creative piece which had been turned to a thin section and decorated by Joey Richardson. Third place was awarded to a laminated piece joined together using finials and wooden pins, the work of Mike Morley. Commendations were awarded to Rod Bonner for an Ash beehive bowl, to Maggie Wright for a Yew bowl and to Gabor Lacko and Patricia Spera for a tray of bowls, which were pieced and coloured. In the junior competition a hollow form turned by Harry Williams was awarded silver, a delightfully turned bowl with a decorated rim in pyrography by Luke Rance was awarded bronze and David Fishwick with a discus shaped form turned from Beech and acrylic was highly commended. Photos of some the pieces can be found on the centre pages.

I wish to express our thanks to the Worshipful Company for their hospitality and for the organisation of the event.

The first of the Wood Festivals organized by Living Heritage took place at Chiltern Open Air Museum on one of the hottest weekends of the year, and I would like to thank the Middlesex Branch for taking this opportunity to promote woodturning to the general public, they put on a superb display of their members work.

The planning of the 2007 International Seminar is well under way, it will be held at Loughborough University for the third time. As this is to be a significant part of our twentieth anniversary we are looking to stage some special events along with some outstanding demonstrations. It is hoped that we will be in a position to publish full details in the next edition of Revolutions in November.

Articles, letters, tips, adverts
etc featured in this
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carry the endorsement of the
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Front Cover

Mike Morley's
mathematical curiosity.
This was awarded third
prize in the
Plain Turning / AWGB
section
of the recent
Worshipful Company of
Turners competition.

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for the next
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30th Sept.
2006

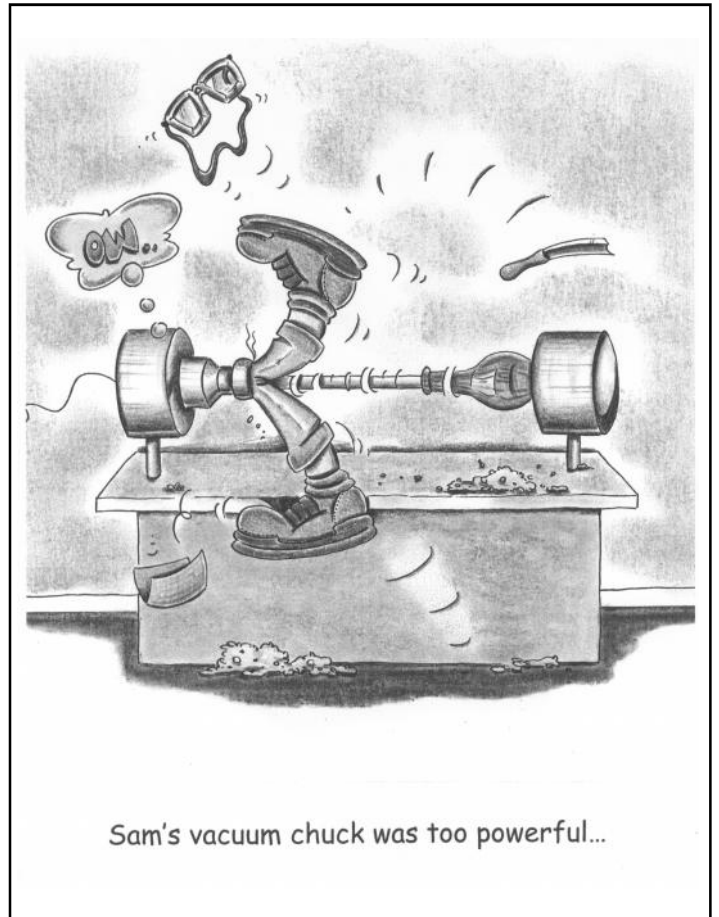
Editorial

Firstly, a word of apology. I had hoped that the last issue of *Revolutions* would have been hitting your doormats at the beginning of May rather than the end, as was eventually the case. Events however, conspired against me. The arrival at the printers of copy for the newsletter, and the 2006 version of the member's handbook, did not coincide, causing a delay of three to four days. A machinery breakdown at the printers then meant a further delay whilst they awaited the arrival of a repair man. All this meant that you did not receive your copy until nearer the beginning of June than the beginning of May. I have spoken at length with all concerned, and I hope that a time-table has been agreed which will always ensure that *Revolutions* no longer carries information with date-lines that have been and gone by the time you read it. In fact it may arrive early on occasions!

I have had a good response to my plea for articles to include in the newsletter, in fact some have had to go into the reserve store for use at a later date but given the number of members we have, in the region of 3000, they are still a bit thin on the ground. Please don't be shy, we all of us have a good story in us somewhere; it would be nice to share it with others. I have had some positive feedback with regard to the changes of format in *Revolutions*, but it would be good to get some more, either pro or anti, I really don't mind. But I suppose if one works on the basis that those that have a gripe will moan long and loud, whilst those that are happy will sit quietly and say nothing, then at the moment all would appear to be well. Perhaps I should do something that goes totally against the grain (pun intended) in the hope of invoking some sort of response.

If anybody has any interesting or amusing photographs that they have taken at any turning or wood related events over the summer months I would be pleased to see them. I have a couple taken at the WCT competitions which I am keeping up my sleeve in case certain people upset me! Returning to my request for articles to engage the interest of our members, can I just add that a recent trawl through the many excellent websites of our branches and their newsletters has shown a wealth of material out there that is deserving of a wider audience. Don't be parochial in your outlook, if your members found it useful and interesting then so will the rest of the membership. Don't forget that we will pay £50 per page for any items that are deemed to be of practical value to the membership, (we don't pay for news items). Even if you don't need the money, the £50 per page on offer could be of great use to your branch funds.

Finally you will see that we have acquired a cartoonist. It is hoped that Pete will be able to provide a humorous insight into woodturning in future editions of the newsletter. He is not a woodturner himself, but he is the son of a member, and as such may have a more dispassionate view of some of the things we get up to.



Re-launched Branch

The North London Woodturners Group, which as the name makes clear is the AWGB branch in North London, has re-launched itself with effect from last May. They have a new regular venue, have changed the day of their meetings and have changed the format of their programme.

In future they will be meeting at the Freehold Community Association Centre, 9 Alexandra Road, Muswell Hill on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.45pm for an 8.00pm start. They intend to hold regular "hands on" sessions for everyone, using the club's own new equipment. There will be regular demonstrations given by members plus specially invited outside guest demonstrators. If you live in the vicinity and wish to know more, please contact their secretary Jeremy Eckstein at jeremy@jeassociates.co.uk or on 020 8445 5528.

Wood Festivals

After the success, from the AWGB's point of view, of the Wood Festival at the Chilterns Open Air Museum, it is disappointing to learn that the subsequent events at Sandringham and Tatton Park have been cancelled. We are unsure exactly why they have been cancelled, but it probably has something to do with the low attendance figures at the Chiltern show.

Members Handbook

A number of members have contacted me to let me know that some of the information in the last Members Handbook was out of date, incorrect or, which is possibly worse, totally un-informative.

In defence of those who have been responsible for collating this useful little tome in the past, may I say that there is an expectation by a lot of people that the AWGB committee becomes aware of changes in members' circumstances by some ethereal means. Whilst I agree that in a number of areas we are, without doubt, omnipotent, I'm afraid it doesn't extend to mind reading. I would like to ask all of you that have an entry in the handbook to check its validity and let David Buskell or myself know of any changes that need making. I shall put a reminder to this effect in the November edition of "Revolutions".

Dave Bates of "Stiles & Bates" was understandably annoyed that his entry in the Corporate Members section contained no information, not even a phone number. This despite the fact that all the information we could have gleaned is contained in his advertisement in this publication. We apologise profoundly for this lapse and will ensure that all relevant information is included in the next edition; in the meantime, may I point you in the direction of the advertisement on page 29.

It would be interesting to know how useful, or otherwise, members find the handbook to be; perhaps some of you could let me know.

West Cumbria

West Cumbria Woodturners have moved to a new venue. Their meetings now take place at The Village Hall, Dearham, Nr. Maryport. For more information about dates and times of meetings please contact their secretary Dave Grainger on 01768 361744 or e-mail at woodinwest@care4free.net

From the Workshop Floor

A Committee is a group of people who individually can do nothing, but as a group decide that nothing can be done.

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Return to sender

A public service announcement from Membership Secretary, Derek Phillips.

The following is what happens to all of the copies of "Revolutions" that do not get delivered.

After every issue of "Revolutions", I receive back between six and fifteen copies that have not been delivered, for one reason or another.

The usual reason stated on the returns label is "addressee has gone away", this means that even though the AWGB member has paid his or her membership fees, they are not getting what they have paid for.

When they are returned to me the detective work starts. If the recipient belonged to a Branch, I ring the Branch Secretary, to find out if there is a forwarding address. Sometimes this works, on other occasions not even the Branch knows they have moved. If no new address is available then I ask if the member had any close friends in the Branch, if so I will ring them to see if they have any information. I suppose I successfully manage to track down most of the Branch, or ex Branch members, this way.

It becomes a bit more difficult if they did not belong to a Branch. In these circumstances the first thing I will try is the telephone number at the old address, some people take their telephone number with them when they move, it depends on how far they have moved. If that has not happened, it is also possible that the new residents have a forwarding telephone number, they are not always willing to give it to me. But after I explain about the "Revolutions", (they are normally the ones who have sent it back to me), I can usually obtain the telephone number. I can then contact the member and get his new address, after a brief period of "tut-tutting" on the phone and mumbling about "extra work etc." on my part.

There is of course an easy solution, put me on the list of people you have to inform about your new address, or let me know by e-mail (contact details at the front of this copy). Please do not phone me, my hearing is not as good as it used to be, so it gets a bit difficult. I know that I (your membership secretary) have a secretary, called the dearly beloved one, but she is not always available to take phone calls.

Occasionally copies are returned with the word "deceased" on them. If you are aware of a member who has died please let me know, it could save upset to the bereaved if I can help to limit the amount of post arriving for the deceased person.

Having said all of the above, next year I will be moving, so I will have to make sure that I change my address on the database!

Spinning a Yarn

by Mike O'Connor



Seeing the close up picture of Rod Bonner's prize winning spinning wheel on the cover of the May issue of **Revolutions** coupled with the "wanted" ad. on page 28 prompted me to think about the spinning wheel I designed and made some 18 years ago. From the photograph it is difficult to tell if Rod made his as a working Flax wheel (I think you'll find all of Rod's wheels are working models- Ed.) or a rather nice decorative piece of furniture. Mine was without doubt a fully working spinning wheel, with some unique design features stipulated by my wife, I would like to share my experience with other readers who may be considering undertaking a similar challenging project.

Many years ago my wife became interested in spinning and weaving along with all the additional skills associated with the craft. Unbeknown to me at the time, this opened up the door to a whole host of woodworking and woodturning projects which I had never even dreamt of producing. At the grand old age of 90 my Grandmother's eyesight started to fail and she passed her original Scandinavian spinning wheel down to my wife, (today we estimate the wheel is in excess of 100 years old and still working well). In what seemed like only weeks my wife had joined the local Spinners, Weavers and Dyers Association and once a week the house was filled with like-minded ladies to whom my wife was now teaching the art of spinning. Most beginners did not have the luxury of a spinning wheel, so I was tasked with the production of an item called a drop spindle, I lost count of how many of these I produced and sold at Association meetings. Then came a whole range of spinning paraphernalia such as ball winders, carders, (nothing to do with poker lads), a niddy noddy and a Navaho spindle (something dating back to the North American Indians), all of these were interesting turning projects in their own right.

As with most young families we had a couple of

children, a relatively small car and my wife's total commitment to spinning the fleece off the back of sheep. I bet there are not too many readers who have spent some of their summer holiday trying to get the family car up to a farmhouse on top of a Welsh mountain to buy some dirty, smelly sheep's fleece. At home, most weekends seemed to be taken up with a spinning demonstration, even a whole week dressed up in period costume at a local historical building to teach school children about life in the 1600's. Hopefully you can picture two 10 year old children, a large Scandinavian spinning wheel, cane shopping baskets full of part made spun wool bits and pieces, a Welsh Border Collie dog, a couple or more dead sheep's fleeces, boxes of finished hand spun items, food and drink for the day and a Hillman Imp (a small car for you young un's). The word "SQUEEZE" springs to mind. With my wife's casual but regular statement "Oh I'm sure you can do it" came the request (it may have been an order) "I need a spinning wheel that will fit in the back of the car with the kids and dog which does not need setting up when I get to my demonstration". "Yes Dear" came the dutiful reply.



Tensioning the drive cord

All the technical details were supplied in abundance by my client (the wife), the flyer must be this size, the wheel that diameter, the treadle this big, it must have two spare bobbins for plying, oh and I like Elm, "yes dear!" Being an engineer not a chippy I did turn nylon bushes for all the rotating bits.

The conventional way of tensioning the drive cord on a spinning wheel is to move the "mother of all" backwards or forwards with a tension screw as used by Rod on his award winning wheel. Neither my client's instructions nor the overall design allowed for this, as the uprights (wheel supports) which also carried the "mother of all" and the "maidens" was detachable from the "table" and "footman" by using two wooden nuts, so I devised a method of making the "bobbin spindle-axle support" rise and fall within the maiden. The reason for this technicality was so that the wheel drive cord could be tensioned and the wheel set up at home, take the working top off the wheel, without loosening the tension setting, which of course halved



Dis-assembled for travelling

it's height to enable it to fit in the Imp. On arrival at the demo, tie the kids and the dog to the nearest post, unload the Imp, pop the top back on the wheel, sit comfortably and start treadling.

Twenty years on, a little buckle in the wheel due to movement of the Elm, a corner of the table missing where the dog got hungry and a liberal coating of lanolin off the fleece and it still works as well as on the first day.

The Scottish Perspective

By Jim Pearson

The 13th Scottish National Woodworking Show was held in the SECC from the 17 – 19 March 2006. As we have come to expect, it was an excellent show with a wide variety of exhibits and demonstrations, providing woodworkers of all types and standards with a tempting array of goodies, and providing inspiration.

We had some new exhibitors this year, and a few who had attended before were missing, but most of the regular suppliers were well to the fore. The Saw Centre had probably the biggest stand showing equipment from a wide range of machinery manufacturers, ranging through Sheppach, Woodster, Dewalt, Trend and Jet, to name but a few. After an absence of two years, Felder were back showing some larger machines, principally combination machines, and a rather nice Hammer 17" throat bandsaw. Hamilton Edge Tools were there as usual with their bandsaw blades.

Portable machines abounded, with Bosch, Freud, Maefell, Festo, etc well to the fore. For those interested in clockmaking, and picture framing, Meantime Design, and Frameco had extensive displays.

Of particular interest to us woodturners, and tempting us to part with our money, (and we did), for that extra gouge or skew which we really must have, were Ashley Isles, Sorby & Turners Retreat, all with a huge range of products. For those of us with a bit extra to spend The

Toolpost were showing various models of the Belgian Wivamac Lathes. Our Club owns one, and Taywood recently bought two. Toolpost were also exhibiting Hamlet Tools, CamVac dust extractors, Chestnut finishes and much more. Hegner had their excellent lathe being put through its paces by Mark Baker, and were also featuring Organoil finishes. Lanark Saw Services had Record and SIP machines on display. Much to the disappointment of their many loyal customers in the North, Axminster Power Tool were again absent.

How could we survive without 5 Star Products and their great range of adhesives and Superglues to salvage that cracked bowl? Or a diamond hone to put an edge on the skew, from T & J Tools or Phil Gowland Marketing? Or even a new Smock with our name embroidered on it, from Pat & Nigel Voisey? My apologies to those exhibitors I may not have mentioned, but there were so many.

Of those demonstrating on stands, woodturners were well represented, with Oskar Douglas, Mark Baker, Gerry Marlow, Sam Abernathy, Tony Wilson, Reg Slack and Jimmy Clewes. Mind you, some of them did a lot of talking too! The latter two mentioned also performed to large audiences in the Lecture Theatre.

We at Strathclyde Woodturners also put on our own performance. I think we have manned a stand on behalf of the AWGB from the very first show, initially as Scotswood, and latterly as Strathclyde Woodturners. This year we had a big stand which enabled us to have a large display of our work. We also had three lathes working, with plenty of members taking turns at demonstrating. We generated a lot of interest, and at times it got rather congested in front of the stand, but despite that, I think we managed to chat to everyone who wanted to talk to us. We had visits from members of several other AWGB affiliated clubs, including Dave Grainger, the regional AWGB Representative. We are grateful to Ken Salter, the Organiser, for inviting us yet again, but we think we repay him by attracting many people to the Show.

Other non- trade exhibitors were Falkirk Valley College demonstrating a range of skills taught at the College. Also the Bullwood Project, which is a charity aiming to help people who are disabled or otherwise disadvantaged. This is an organization with worthy aims, and is assisted by some of our members, and ex-members.

The Scottish National Woodworking Show is only one of several outside events in which Strathclyde Woodturners has participated each year. In May we attended a one day Woodland Fair in Pollock Park, Glasgow, and in June we did the two day Treefest in Edinburgh. In July we have been invited to demonstrate at the Glasgow Show which will be held over two days on Glasgow Green, and in August we will do a Show organized by the Forestry Commission, and we expect to demonstrate at the two day "Tree In The Park" (Not "T" in the Park!).

Laburnum Goblets

by Andrew Hall

A family near my home had a fantastic Laburnum tree blown down in a storm. They contacted me and asked if I would like it. I visited the site and was surprised at the size of the tree; it must have been sixty feet high and 24" in diameter. I harvested the wood, which took a day, and transported it home ready for conversion and drying. This was in March 2005.

I cut several of the smaller branches into 8"-10" lengths, wrapped some in cling film to keep them moist and stood some long branches close to the wood burner in the workshop to dry. As I was experimenting, I put some pieces in the freezer for a week and then in the fridge for a fortnight; what happened as a result of these experimental drying methods was very interesting.

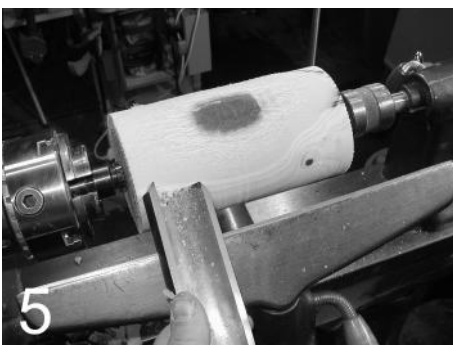
The family, from whose garden the tree had come, were wine makers and they asked if I would use some of the Laburnum to turn them four goblets to drink from. I get lots of wood as a result of wind damage

tree are poisonous. I took advice from several different professional turners, researched books and the internet and eventually discovered that the wood was safe to use. The other challenge I had was that the recipients did not want any finish on the goblets as they would wash them daily and let them dry naturally. I decided to turn twelve goblets, four from each of the three different methods of drying.

The tools I used for this project were: roughing gouge, spindle gouge, parting tool, skew chisel, Len Grantham hollowing tool (from Ashley Isles) and callipers

I had purchased an old book from a second hand book shop called "Treen for the Table" and decided to copy a rare 17th century Welsh design of goblet as the client possessed a lot of antique furniture. Photograph 1 shows the simple shape of the goblet. The goblet cup is straight with a 1/4" bead at the intersection of the stem and the underside of the goblet. The base of the stem is the same diameter as the base of the goblet. The bead is 1/8" wider than the base diameter.

Sections of branch are now cut to size ready to be turned into goblets, photograph 2. It is advisable to always use support when cutting round logs to prevent



and always turn something as a thank-you so I agreed to make the goblets.

Wooden goblets are usually decorative and are finished in sanding sealer, melamine or spray lacquer, but it is unusual to actually drink from them. I have, however, turned sycamore goblets and finished them in Food Safe Wood Wipe and subsequently drunk from them with no problems. (I always make sure the finish is completely dry - if it is not it can leave an after-taste in the wine). This was the first outside request I had ever had for goblets to drink from. I was concerned as to whether the wood was safe to use for drinking purposes, as I knew that the seeds of the Laburnum

snagging, photograph 3. Each cylinder is at least 1" longer than the finished goblet to allow for waste and parting off.

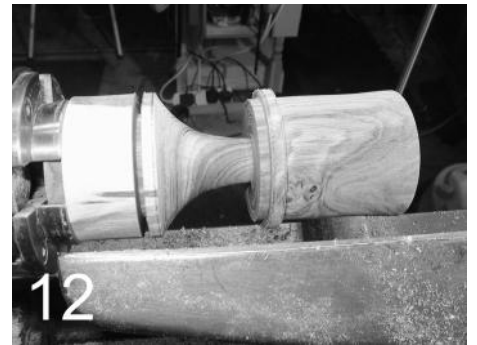
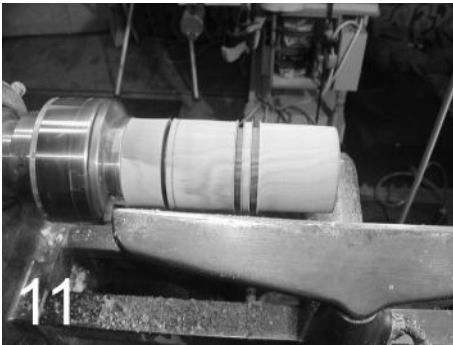
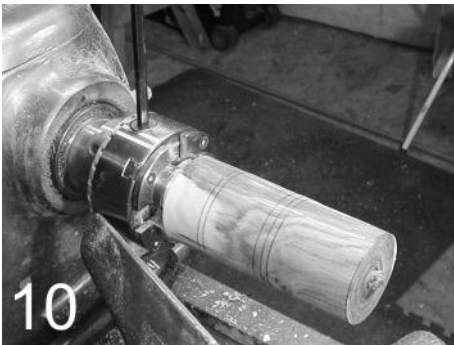
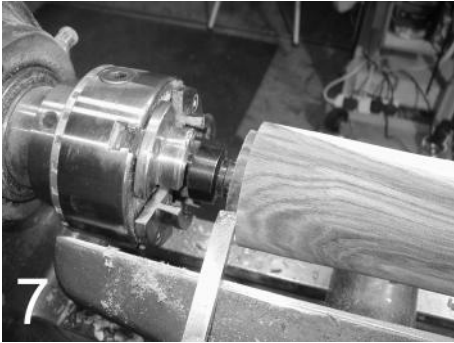
The branch material is mounted between a stubby Stebcentre held in a Vicmark 100 chuck and a revolving tail stock centre, photograph 4. I use the large tool rest for support when roughing the branch down to a cylinder with the roughing gouge. The lathe is set at about 1000rpm. Remove the bark and form a cylinder before speeding up to 1500-1800 rpm. Remove highpoints, knots etc. and then work from the centre to each side to prevent the bark from splitting off. I wear a face shield for extra safety when turning logs.

Each branch is turned down to the same diameter. Photographs 5 and 6 show an excellent view of the bark, bast, cambium layer springwood and summerwood. Photograph 6 shows clearly the sapwood and the heartwood and the use of callipers to keep a consistent diameter on all four cylinders.

I cut a spigot on one end of each blank using a 3/8" skew chisel, photograph 7. The edge of the chisel is ground on an angle to form a dovetail, fractionally less than the depth of the jaws on the chuck, which

photographs 15 and 16. Finally I sanded the goblets through grits 120-150-180-240.

Part off the goblet using a 1/8" parting tool and reverse it onto a rebate cut on the waste material left in the chuck, photograph 17, cut the rebate with the parting tool, diagram 2. I undercut the bottom of the goblet with a 3/8" spindle gouge and then cut a bead as a signature and decoration. When reverse chucking the goblet, in order to aid security and stability, tape the goblet to the waste material with masking tape.



allows the wood to be seated safely and grip well, diagram 1.

As I was making 12 goblets I decided to make a prototype cutting away a section and sanding it to a curve so that each goblet could be marked accurately and repeated, photograph 8. Using this prototype, mark each cylinder, photograph 9, so that the datum points can be cut using a 1/8" parting tool, photographs 10 and 11.

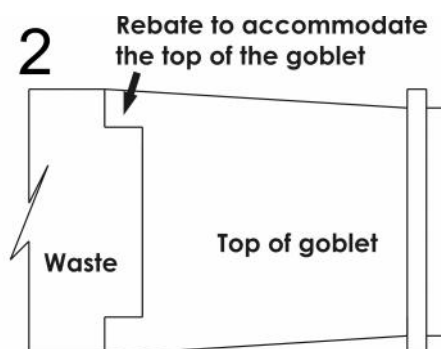
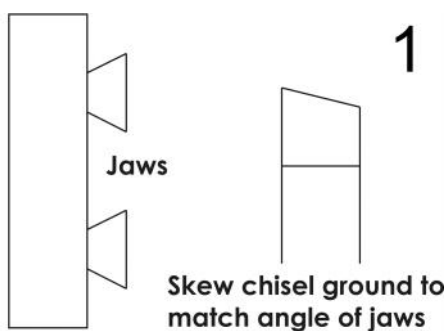
I formed and finished the outside shape of the cup and the stem, photographs 12, 13 and 14. I then hollowed out the inside of the goblet, initially using a 3/8" spindle gouge and finishing the procedure with an Ashley Isles (Len Grantham) hollowing tool,

The goblets are not finished with a sealer as the owner wished to use them regularly and to clean the goblets using warm soapy water. I have actually tried this process in my own home with our cereal bowls. My wife and I eat our breakfast every morning from wooden bowls that are unsealed. We clean them as soon as we have finished with warm soapy water and allow them to drain and dry naturally. We have used the bowls for the last six months and they have not cracked or discoloured at all.

I made an additional eleven goblets, 3 sets of four dried in three different ways. Two sets of goblets were successful; the set which was dried naturally and the set which was dried as a result of freezing and a period of time in the fridge. The set which was dried with the

heat from the wood burner all cracked, so it appears that force drying is not the answer. I am at the moment experimenting with turnings immersed in a bucket of water for different periods of time to achieve equilibrium moisture content trying the three methods of drying.

I have researched and discussed with other turners the best solution for finish to be used with food and drink. The following appear to be the most popular: Organ Oil, Chestnut Food Safe, Ikea Chopping-Board Sealer and nothing at all. All must be completely dry before use with food and drink.



Design in Freedom

by Derek Hayes

In his book *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* – the influential turner David Pye, commented: *'The whole future of crafts turns on the question of design. If designers will only come to recognize it, the crafts can restore to them what the workmanship of certainty in quantity-production denies them: the chance to work without being tied, hand and foot by a selling price: the chance to design in freedom.'* (Herbert Press, 1968 [revised 1995], p138)

This article attempts to consider if freedom does exist in woodturning design or whether there are unwritten laws which simply must be followed slavishly. The idea is to stimulate the reader to consider what he or she feels makes good design.

Design means different things to different people. In the world of woodturning, it can be simply the process of removing the minimum amount of wood to leave the largest possible shape. An understandable approach, when it is remembered that turners tend to come to their craft through a love of the raw material, empathy for the natural environment, a dislike of waste and let's not forget, the high price of turning blanks! Ray Key, in *"Woodturning and Design"*, suggested that: *'...design had not been a major factor in woodturning due to it being used to produce utilitarian domestic utensils and components for works considered more important'* (Batsford 1985, p10). There must be some foundation in this hypothesis, but surely a similar argument ought to apply to glass and pottery!

Design tends not to be a priority for the beginner. Most turners in their early work begin by concentrating on technique rather than shape or form. The initial goal is to hone, often literally, their turning skills and to gain confidence. Concentration on skills alone can however prove counter-productive. *'Skills are essential to refine work, but they can impose restrictions.... Fixed ways can discourage fresh ideas and experimentations'*. (Interview with Bert Marsh, *Woodturning Issue 57*, p28)

So, the luxury of design often comes later in a turner's development. Certainly, Pye didn't feel that technique was a problem for him. *'It is not the workmanship that is so difficult, but the design. That never gets easier. In design, very small differences make all the difference. The difference between the thing which sings and the thing which is forever silent is often very slight indeed'*. (British Craftsmanship in Wood, Betty Norbury, Stobart Davies 1990, p131)

Our search, then, is to make our pieces "sing" through an appreciation of shape or form. Simplicity will be the watch-word; the idea of "wood art" or "sculpture turnery"- experimentation with off-lathe adornment, will not be the focus for this study. This is not because these developmental aspects of turning are not worthy of

discussion – indeed, Patrick Spielman, in “The Art of the Lathe”, suggests: ‘...the demarcation between carving and turning is a false one’ (Sterling Publishing 1996, p6).

I would suggest that there is a fundamental difference between wood and other materials. Put simply, wood is different. Certainly the potter knows that porcelain and raku pieces require different clays and firing temperatures, but what other material needs to take into account such variety as does wood? Wood is peculiar in that its varieties, characteristics and behaviours appear limitless. It moves, shrinks, swells, is non-uniform in its structure with varying growth patterns and internal stresses. It remains full of life until it petrifies, carbonises, loses its lustre and colour or simply rots.

Indeed, it could be said that without techniques such as texturing, segmenting and colouring, the “donor” tree has already done pretty much all the design work by the time it gets to the lathe. Certainly for the turner, the size, figure and colour of the final piece is to a large extent pre-determined by the tree, giving only a limited degree of freedom to the design process. At least, carpenters have the luxury of taking into account, quantity, quality, matching etc.

A bowl with spectacular grain and colour may be admired regardless of its shape, but is the observer observing the wood in spite of the bowl, rather than because of it? Bert Marsh commented in the Woodturning interview that he used to say, “that if that was the case they may as well buy a piece of attractive wood”. He later realized that “what a lovely piece of wood” was not insulting, because it suggested that he had exposed the beauty in the wood and achieved his original aim. (Bert Marsh Woodturner GMC 1995, p27).

‘It is difficult to imagine a better object than the vessel to present the incomparable beauty of wood. It is a canvas uniquely suited to take advantage of the wood’s inherent organic traits. A natural edge may evolve up from the base of a classical form. Bark inclusions, insect damage and spalting can be revealed on the open surface of an unadorned bowl’. (Contemporary Turned Wood, Leier, Peters, Wallace, GMC 2000, p17)

Turned bowls may or may not be useful functional items – indeed some refer to “vessel oriented” rather than vessels. Just because an end piece can be used for a fruit bowl doesn’t mean that it has to be used for that or any other function. I once heard a turner say that he wanted to “create functional pieces which request not to be used.” *‘As a counterpoint to the beauty of the wood, a graceful and elegant form can transcend the material from which it is made and speak directly to our sense of balance and design. We respond universally to the curves, angles and clean smooth lines of a timeless form’.* (Turned Wood, *ibid*, p17)

Of course two turners with the same blank will produce very different pieces, but compare this to the degrees of freedom that a material like iron offers by way of size

and its facility for reproduction. Richard Raffan, in

“Turned Bowl Design”, says: *‘I know that if I had ten competent turners copy one bowl, the results would look identical from across a room. They will look similar at close range, but distinctions in surface quality or edge treatments will be easy to see. Pick the bowls up and you will begin to notice great differences in weight and balance.* (Taunton Press, 1987, p3).

This is a worthy observation, but perhaps ignores the important point that the task was to “copy” – if the turner were given different woods or indeed different pieces from the same wood and the freedom to change and form their own “design” – the bowls certainly would be different. The more interesting point raised here by Raffan is the idea of touch. This is another factor which separates turning from many other art forms and is sometimes referred to as “taction” – Zanker in “Foundation of Design in Wood” defines this as a “highly developed sensation of touch”. *‘Our sensitivity to feel is less varied from person to person than our visual sense. Nearly all of us are capable of saying whether a surface feels rough or smooth because automatically the brain’s decision is made after the experience of touch.... There are few people who have experienced the feel of smooth wood.... who can resist the temptation to stroke and sense the warmth.... Using this sensitivity to advantage, the designer is often able to evoke the public’s appreciation of shape and form, not only from the visual aspects, but also by touch. In many cases if a thing feels right to the touch, it is often pleasing to the eye’.* (Dryad Press, 1967, p31)

Thus touch should be considered as a factor in design. Although rarely the driving force in the final “look” of a piece, touch is usually seen as demonstrating the technical skill of the producer rather than a conscious statement. Having said this, it is interesting to note that texture is designed to interact with the eye rather than the touch. Ask yourself when you look at a photograph of a highly-textured piece whether your brain consciously translates the changes in its surface into a mental image of taction or rather luxuriates in the reflection of light from the variance in its surface.

To confuse the issue further, paradoxically woodturning is essentially a two-dimensional art form. Turners observe the silhouette of a piece, effectively as a two dimensional (2D) description. Change the angle of view and the silhouette is again 2D, albeit centred on different axes. On reflection it is the essence of the circle which brings this about. The circle is fundamental to our lives and thus could be the reason why turned objects are universally attractive.

In reality we push our work into a third dimension through the use of colour (either inherent or added), grain and texturing giving the optical illusion of 3 dimension. If this 2D-3D argument is accepted it perhaps suggests that turning design may not need to be too complicated.

Turn against the Clock

by David Buskell

"Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to do a one and a half hour demonstration..... in two 45 minute slots. Within each slot you must cover personal introductions, health & safety and demonstrate the turning of one item, leaving time to deal with any questions your audience may have"

Having accepted the challenge, Colin Simpson and six colleagues from Cheam Woodturners made their way to City of London Freemans School in Ashted, Surrey, one bleak Thursday in April.

Cheam have been active in trying to boost interest in woodturning amongst youngsters and have been in contact with various educational establishments in it's catchment area. City of London Freemans School students already do some woodturning as part of their projects and so were happy to allow us to provide a professional demonstrator to give hints and tips. The AWGB had kindly supplied a grant to sponsor the demonstration.

We arrived at the school and set up a small instant gallery from work brought along by Colin's helpers plus an array of books, copies of "Revolutions" and "Woodturning".

We had little knowledge of the level of expertise of the students but had been asked to prepare some items which the students could turn for themselves within the school lunch break. I'm pleased to say that Colin came up with 5 or so, and for the first session, asked the 15 or so assembled students for their choice of demonstration item. They chose a candlestick.

Half of the students had some turning experience, but seeing Colin swiftly turn a blank into a base for the candlestick held their attention. He then turned to the candlestick itself and roughed down a blank before proceeding to shape the stick. Shaping finished, Colin then cut the spigot to match the pre-drilled hole in the base, stressing the importance of a good accurate fit. All went well and the stick and base came together as one!



An attentive audience

The students were keen to know more of their demonstrator and asked numerous questions about workshops, batch turning, type of goods made etc.

This just left time for the students to visit the instant gallery and to collect a copy of "Woodturning" to read later.

For the second session, Colin had been asked to turn a small bowl and colour it. He had some examples of work with him which were passed amongst the students to examine. This demonstration covered shaping, use of scraper, holding techniques and then moved on to colouring. Colin uses spirit based stains and with three brushes of different colour stains, proceeded to colour the bowl.



Colin completing the second session

Again the students asked some interesting questions on where Colin obtained his wood, where he sold his goods and the volume he can produce in a week. There was a good interaction between the students, teachers, Colin and Cheam members.

Once again the instant gallery was visited and magazines handed out.

A hectic one and a half hour's turning but we had reached out to some 35 new potential turners, their teachers and who knows, maybe even their parents!

It was good to see some of the course work undertaken by the students and we were all impressed by the high standard and use of all media (wood, metal, acrylic, materials) and congratulations to City of London Freemans School for encouraging this.

We hope everyone enjoyed themselves, certainly the informal feed back we got indicated that they did. We hope to be able to move the opportunity forward but of course this must rest with the teachers and students.

Our thanks to Colin for his time, the AWGB for financial support and most of all to Alex Kew, his colleagues and the students in the Design & Technology Department for allowing us to visit them.

WCT competitions

by Stuart King

The Worshipful Company of Turners (WCT) recently held their most successful biennial competition ever. Being probably the most active of all the City of London livery companies in supporting their craft, they are to be congratulated in promoting woodturning to a wider audience. I think it is amazing that we turners are part of such a long tradition.

At least as far back as 1310, London turners were in a position of some authority in their own craft: "Henry the turner, dwelling in Wood Street, Richard the turner, John the turner in St. Swithin's Lane and others were sworn before the Mayor and Aldermen not to make any other measures than gallons, "potells" (two quarts) and quarts, to make no false measures such as "chopyns" (about a pint) and "gylles" (half a pint), and to bring to the Guildhall any false measures wherever found. At this period drinking vessels and measures for holding liquids, as well as dry measures for goods such as corn, were mostly made of wood and were essentially the work of the turner.

In 1347, there is evidence that the Guild was growing in importance. Turners were summoned before the Mayor and Aldermen and instructed that their measures must conform with the standard of the Alderman of the Ward in which they were used. Each turner was to have a mark of his own, to be placed on the bottom of his measures when they had been examined and found to reach the standard. He was also to register his mark in Guildhall. Further, the turners of the City were given a virtual monopoly of the sale of measures, which undoubtedly advanced the position of the Guild in London where, throughout the Middle Ages, most of the trade of the country was carried on.

By 1435, the Guild of Turners was firmly established. In 1604 King James I granted the Turners their first Royal Charter. This is still in the Company's possession. The first turning competition was held in 1857 for apprentices of Company Masters.

A growing interest in amateur turning after the Second World War led to the Company's decision to encourage members of the newly formed Society of Ornamental Turners (SOT) by offering medals for the winners of ornamental turning competitions. The first awards were made in 1952. In 1993 it was decided to widen the scope of the ornamental turning competitions by the introduction of competitions for plain turning, prompted by the foundation of the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain (AWGB). The Register of Professional Turners (RPT) was established in 1984 under the auspices of the WCT.

The RPT and members of the AWGB gave very strong support to the 2006 competitions; these competitions were in four main sections.

The first, open to all turners, consisted of The Master's Competition for a pair of candlesticks; The Felix Levy Competition for freestyle turning and the Open Competition for a kitchen utensil. The second section, open to members of the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain only, had a Senior and Junior (under 18) section for plain turning.

The third section, open to members of the Society of Ornamental Turners only, was the Lady Gertrude Crawford Competition, The Fred Howe Competition and The H.E. Twentyman Competition. The fourth section, open to Liverymen and Freemen of the Company only, was an open competition and a novice class.

The event was held at the Apothecaries Hall in the City of London and by mid morning the place was buzzing with turners, some of whom who had travelled long distances. In between chatting to old friends and making new acquaintances, they busied themselves unpacking their treasures from cardboard boxes and other containers, in readiness for handing them over to the stewards. They then had some spare time to enjoy the sights of London whilst the many entries were set-up ready for judging.

The Masters Competition for a pair of candlesticks was amazing, both for the number of entrants and for the sheer variety of styles and treatments. Everything was there from pyrography to ornamental turning. In fact it was a pair of ornamental turned candlesticks crafted by John Edwards from Lignum Vitae that took the prestigious prize of £1,250.

This was a fantastic, social event for turners, well attended by turning 'celebrities' and newcomers alike. There was much discussion on the merits of the judges various adjudications and of the technical merits of individual pieces, every turner has a point of view! For the first time in its long history the WCT has a lady master, Penrose Halson. Penrose's father Cecil Colyer, was a member of the WCT, one of his accomplishments was turning a burr-wood and silver mazer (small drinking vessel) which the Turners' Company presented to the Lord Mayor at their Livery Dinner. Through him she joined the WCT, and shares his enthusiasm for the beauty and utility of the craft of turning. She too shares his great enthusiasm of being a member of the Turners' Company, and his belief in the value of the Company's work in promoting not only the Craft, but also the City and Charity.

The Apothecaries Hall was full for the formal presentations and prize giving; It was particularly pleasing to see the three winners of the junior competition attending the event and to accept their prizes in person, they were Harry Williams, Luke Rance and David Fishwick. With young turners like these there should be many more centuries of turning history to be written.



ROD BONNER
1st in the Plain Turning / AWGB competition



LUKE RANCE
2nd in the Junior Plain Turning / AWGB competition



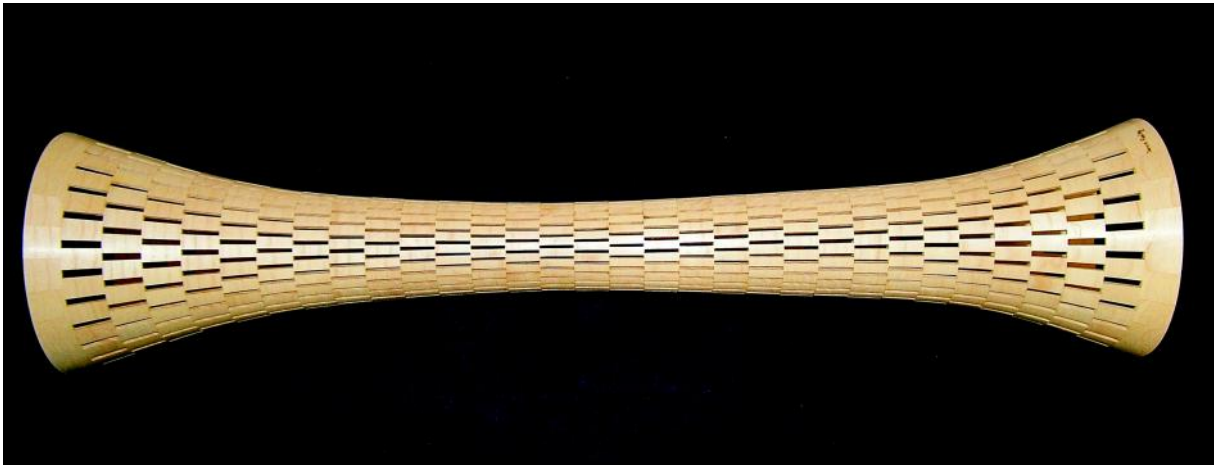
HARRY WILLIAMS
1st in the Junior Plain Turning / AWGB competition



GABOR LACKO & PATRICIA SPERO
Commended in the Plain Turning / AWGB competition



DAVID FISHWICK
Highly commended in the Junior Plain Turning / AWGB competition



DENNIS KEELING - 2nd in the Felix Levy open competition



JOEY RICHARDSON
2nd in the Plain Turning / AWGB competition



Successful AWGB members at the Worshipful Company of Turner's competitions held on 31st May. Photographs kindly supplied by Stuart King and the makers.



MAGGIE WRIGHT
3rd in the Felix Levy open competition



MIKE MORLEY
3rd in the Plain Turning / AWGB competition

AWGB Training Grant

by Matthew Fishwick

Hi, I'm Matthew Fishwick and I am 15 years old. I have been Woodturning for 3 years. I enjoy doing a wide range of projects, but last year at TTT2 I had the chance to have a go at thread chasing with John Berkeley. After this I was hooked and even bought myself a second pair of thread chasers to do bigger threads. However, after many hours practicing, I knew I was in need of more expert tuition. So I applied to the AWGB for a training grant. In March I received a letter from Ray Tunstall to tell me that I could organise a day with John.



Concentrated sanding

After a number of e-mails to decide the day, and what I wanted to do, it was all arranged. I chose to have a go at a screw threaded oyster box. On Tuesday the 18th April I set off early from my house, arriving at John's at 9.00am.

After a welcome brew and discussions about the chosen project, John explained the difficulties of the particular piece that I was going to be doing. My mum and dad went off to deliver competition pieces for Warwick Woodex 06, and I began my project.

John decided the first job was to find a piece of string for my tool rest for thread chasing. With that job complete we put the wood, which was called Satine Bloodwood, on the lathe, and rough turned it to a cylinder, then turned spigots at each end. I then parted it off with some room for a spigot to make the male thread.

Next I hollowed the lid for the oyster box, which was fairly easy, then I cut the recess for the female thread and turning the speed down to about 250rpm I cut the female thread, then shaped the outside and sanded it, finally finishing off with Melamine Lacquer. I have never used that before so it was good to learn about how to apply this successfully as well.

After that it was lunchtime and John showed me some of his funny e-mails. The e-mails he showed me were

"men in coats" which were ecstatically, brilliantly hilarious.



Mat facing off

After lunch we started turning the base, the base is a little bit bigger because the male thread needed a spigot. I started to hollow out the base a little bit, but not too far because I didn't want the base to be that deep. After I hollowed out the base I cut the male threads and kept testing to see if the lid went on easily, then I sanded and polished the inside of the base and finished with lacquer. At the end of the day, which was about 5.00pm, me and my mum and dad headed off home after an excellent day's woodturning.

When I got home I went in my workshop and finished the outside of the oyster box, which was not too difficult and the finished product looks superior to anything else I have ever done.



John looks on approvingly

Seminar 2005 CD

Photographs taken by official photographer Charles Sharpe and other AWGB members are now available on a CD. The CD gives a flavour of all aspects of the 2005 Seminar. The CD will run with included slide-show software on a PC and will also show all the sections on a TV system using a DVD player.

Available from Tony Walton, 01621 810949, at a cost of £7 inclusive of post and packing.

The Chiltern Wood Festival

by Adrian Needham

Shortly after 3.30 pm on Friday 16 June the Chiltern Open Air Museum opened its doors to the many and varied organisations that had come to make a Wood Festival. Approaching the site from any direction it was clear that much had been done to make sure the travelling public would have no trouble finding the Festival. The set up process saw the usual frenetic activity, as the stalls were built and displays were honed to demonstrate the wares or activity to best effect. The whole had the usual air of enthusiasm and by 9.30 am on the Saturday as the opening hour approached, on what was a glorious summer day there was the feel of a really good show in prospect. Certainly, the AWGB stand, manned by our Middlesex association, was ready with its Instant gallery and a couple of lathes to show the public how it is done.

Sadly, the euphoria and expectation slowly but surely was dampened, not by the weather but because attendance was poor. Whether it was the lure of the World Cup, or the coast on a hot summer's day is uncertain, but by the end of day one the demonstrators and exhibitors were out and about visiting each other to get some company on what were pretty lonely stands. What sadness when so much effort had gone into providing a really good show. Given the attendance it may be that the event itself may not be particularly newsworthy but despite the absence of 'a public' it was an excellent show with a wealth of items that one would have hoped would attract 'the family'.

The public would have found the exhibits of the Open Air Museum itself, a plethora of activities from jousting to ferret racing and cider to the chocolate fountain, supporting the Wood Festival itself which featured many excellent exhibits and shows. There was fence making, the pole lathe and a really splendid demonstration of early pit sawing – from my viewpoint it was wonderful to see the skills originating from yesteryear but also I felt a certain thankfulness for the more modern electric driven machines! The chain saw artists were in full flow throughout and the venerable steam engine raised a few health and safety issues as it drove the saw, ripping huge trees into boards. The exhibition was well spread out, reducing the scope for a press of bodies and the eating emporium (the pancake stall, the coffee shop and even a Thai food stall), combined to make, what really should have been, a great day out.

By mid afternoon on the Sunday there was no real enthusiasm left and the show began to fold. One was left to ponder whether this might be a date that would fall from the calendar. In many respects a sad result but perhaps if we can show a little of what was missed it might help. Certainly, the promised celebration of wood was alive and well and the evident enthusiasm of those who use it for a whole variety of different purposes is undiminished.

Book review

by Martin Whitby

Robin Wood is known to AWGB members, having recently demonstrated at the Loughborough conference and occasionally contributed to *Revolutions*. In this book he presents a detailed history of the evolution of the wooden bowl up to the present century, but omitting its most recent development with the powered lathe. That exclusion reflects the author's own specialisation but it does not account for the evolution of the non-green bowl turning which, I guess, pre-occupies a majority of today's turners in this country.

This book will commend itself to the serious reader and student as well as to other turners, in that it has all the amenities a book should possess – excellent illustrations, a bibliography and a full index. It is also very clearly written and the author's evident enthusiasm carries the reader along very easily. The book has a lucid and persuasive foreword by Richard Raffan and its main thrust is historic, covering some thousands of years.

Beginning with a chapter on types of lathe: it works through strap, bow, pole, great wheel and treadle, to water, steam and power lathes. The next chapter reviews the timbers used by bowl makers, before a sequence of historic treatments of bowls from the Iron Age, the Roman occupation, Saxon and Viking bowls, medieval and Tudor bowls, the decline of bowl turning and the last bowl turners. The final chapter describes how a bowl is turned on a pole-lathe.

The book concentrates on the British scene but the author has obviously travelled, seeking out archaeological evidence much more widely, which he also presents. He makes constructive use of the recently available copious evidence from the excavation of the Mary Rose, which happens to coincide with the peak of bowl turning for domestic use in this country. This rich source of wooden material is available because the ship sank in soft mud in 1545 and its discovery in 1971 made available masses of historic material. Interestingly Robin mentions that the Greeks and Romans used ceramic vessels for centuries before their adoption in this country and suggests that the spread of ceramic vessels here was fuelled by the demand associated with rising affluence in the Tudor period.

The arguments presented are compelling. The only omission is that the book does not take us into the post-pole-lathe period and review the activities of powered-lathe bowl-makers. That task is adequately covered in books such as Richard Raffan's *[Turned-Bowl Design]*: but there is scope for a comparative historical treatment, covering perhaps the last fifty years of power turning.

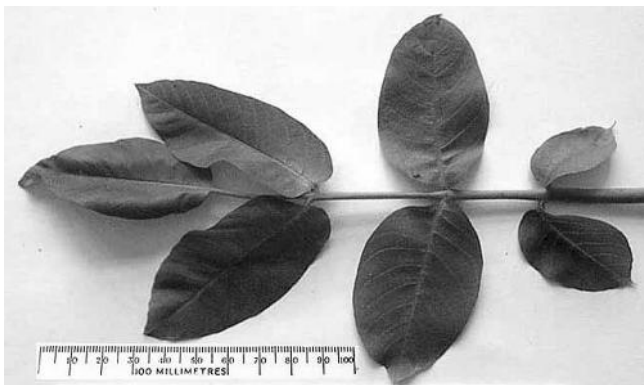
Meanwhile, I would encourage anyone writing a book on turning to take this one as a very handsome role model. It is also a compelling read for anyone interested in rotating wood and its results.

Our native trees - Walnut (1)

by Guy Ravine

Despite the fact that we refer to *Juglans Regia* as English Walnut, it is by no means English, but it is a naturalised species and widely used by turners and therefore deserves its inclusion in this series. It did grow here in pre-glacial times, so one could make an argument for it as a native species. I have heard another turner claim that Monkey Puzzle should be regarded as a native species, since it is found here as a fossil! Most other Europeans refer to the tree as European or Persian Walnut. The Juglandaceae family is rather a small one and mostly confined to the temperate and mountainous tropical areas of the Northern Hemisphere, although there are walnuts in South America. I have turned Bolivian Walnut.

Walnut is native from the Balkans in southeast Europe, southwest & central Asia to the Himalayas and southwest China. This is the species which is widely cultivated for its delicious nuts. The world's largest and oldest wild walnut forests are in Jalal-Abad province of Kyrgyzstan, at Arslanbob.



The leaves of the Walnut

Walnut can attain a height of 100 ft. (30 M.) but it averages 40 – 60 ft (12.5 – 18M). The trunk tends not to be very long and large branches curve obliquely up. The bark is very distinctive, with its silver/grey colour and fissured surface. The leaf is compound, having two or three (sometimes even four) lateral leaflets and a terminal one. The leaflets are oval and pointed; smooth, shiny with a paler underside; and unbroken but wavy margins. They are 2¼ to 4 inches in length and 1 to 1½ inch wide and are aromatic. The tree is unisexual (monoecious); male and female flowers occurring on the same tree. The male catkins are long and have numerous stamens; this being an advantage as the flowers are wind pollinated. The female flowers cluster at the end of the young twigs. The flowers start opening in the middle of April and are in full bloom by mid-May, by which time the tree is fully in leaf. Walnut trees are easily injured by spring frosts, and can be killed by prolonged freezing conditions at the wrong time.

Apart from in the far south of England the nut does not ripen naturally, (except in the warmest of summers), although there is much work on grafted cultivars that

may change that. Grafted Walnut trees are generally more robust, hardier and more reliable growers than seedling trees. They also produce an earlier crop of higher quality nuts. Even when the nut ripens, squirrels and birds are quite likely to take it before it is ready to pick. The whole fruit is pickled when green, and that is generally the best use for walnuts grown in this country, provided you have acquired the taste for them. I quite like them now, but remember my horror when my Dad threatened me, as a child, with one of these decidedly unattractive and strange smelling objects!

Some think that the Romans brought the Walnut to this country, though it may well have been here earlier. The climate was generally warmer then, so that the nuts might have been a more significant food crop than they are now. Pliny says that the Romans themselves brought it from Persia. Writing in the first century BC, Varro refers to the tree already being cultivated. There were walnuts on the altar of the Temple of Isis in Pompeii on the day of the eruption of Vesuvius. Romans referred to the fruit/nut as "Jovis glans" or "the nut of Jupiter" hence "Juglans". *Regia* means royal.

However, Walnuts have been found in Neolithic sites in Switzerland and France, considerably predating the Romans, and pollen has been found on Iron Age sites here. Certainly the ancient Greeks cultivated Walnuts, though their trees produced small nuts and not much oil. They were much impressed by the larger Persian walnuts when they encountered them, and sought to improve their own stock. They used the walnut not just for food, but also as a medicine and as dye for the hair, wool, and cloth. The English name derives from the Teutonic *Welsche Nuss* (Foreign nut) which changed into *Walnuss* and thence to Walnut.

Walnut was certainly here in the 15th Century, though the first mention of the tree is in 1562. It was plantation grown in the south, but these plantations do not survive as they have on the rest of the continent of Europe. In the 17th Century the diarist and polymath, John Evelyn, refers to extensive plantations and avenues of walnut trees in Germany. Gilbert White refers to the triumphs and travails of trying to grow and crop walnut trees in his journals, written in the second half of the 18th century. Early colonists carried English walnuts to the North Americas and planted them diligently wherever they settled in Massachusetts and Virginia. The trees did not adapt well to their new climate and didn't usually survive long enough to bear fruit. Black walnuts, however, were plentiful and soon became a valued ingredient in their diet.

Folklore

The Romans also associated the walnut with Juno, goddess of women and marriage, and the wife of Jupiter. This association led to the wedding practice of throwing walnuts at the bride and groom as a symbol of fertility. Women apparently carried walnuts to promote fertility.

English sailors transported walnuts across the globe during Medieval times. Walnuts became so associated with the English that they were often called English walnuts, a name that is still used today.

A custom in Poitou, France, is to have the bride and groom dance around the city's gigantic walnut tree. It is believed that by participating in this dance, the bride will produce an abundance of milk for her baby. In the French countryside, there was a tradition of hanging a bag of walnuts from the kitchen ceiling to represent abundance. Walnuts also represented longevity. In some areas of France it was believed that the walnut tree possessed aphrodisiac powers and men would attempt to put a leaf into the shoe of a young woman they admired.

The walnut tree also has some darker associations. In seventeenth century Italy there was a walnut tree, the Tree of Benevento, which was said to be the gathering place for witches. Apparently the local Bishop had the tree removed, roots and all, but another witch-haunted tree soon grew in the same place.. 'The Witch's Dance, - a Song of the Old Woman under the Walnut Tree', as played by Paganini, also refers to this belief that the Walnut Tree was the trysting place of witches

Other legends warn that it is unlucky to plant walnut trees close to stables because they might bring illness and death to the animals. Travellers were also advised not to sleep under a walnut tree for fear that they might become ill.

Superstitions and fears also surrounded the shade of the walnut tree. A passage in Pliny's writings states that the shadow of the walnut tree dulled the brain. He also considered the walnut tree a nuisance wherever it was planted.

Another superstition warns that one should not try to grow anything near the walnut tree, because it contains evil or poison. Yet another held that if a walnut were dropped into the lap of a person suspected of being a witch, she would be unable to rise from a sitting position as long as the walnut remained in her lap. The medieval Doctrine of Signatures stated that since the shape of the walnut resembled the brain, the nut would be good for ailments of the head and brain, including headaches. Later on, in the fourteenth century the opposite came to be believed, and walnuts were thought to cause headaches.

The walnut/brain connection is widespread. The Afghan word for walnut is charmarghz or "four brains".

Nuts.

The fruit of the Walnut tree is more properly a drupe, like that of the plum, not a nut at all. The fruit wall surrounding the seed, is made up of two layers; the outer one is green, thick and fleshy while the inner is thinner and woody. Within this woody "stone" is the seed that we eat. When the fruit matures the fleshy part blackens and splits to reveal the wooden shell containing the seed. If the fruit is to be pickled whole,

it must be picked before the inner "woody" wall develops. If the drupe can be pierced through with a needle it is suitable for pickling.



The fruit of the Walnut

Walnuts are not much spoken of in English literature in mediaeval or Tudor times, and only seem to have been on the menu as part of the desert or cheese course. In contrast, the French were enthusiastic walnut consumers. Cultivation starting there during the fourth century AD. Charlemagne, in the ninth century, ordered his gardeners to plant walnut trees on his estates. In the eleventh century, French peasants were expected to tithe walnuts to the church.

From Medieval times up until the end of the 18th century, Europeans were blanching, crushing, and soaking walnuts and almonds to create a rich, nutritious milk; a common household staple. While the poor ate the wild walnuts, the wealthy preferred the larger, more expensive, cultivated variety. In the 17th century walnuts, along with chestnuts, became part of the staple diet in France. During the famine of 1663 the poor, having eaten their walnuts, then resorted to grinding up the shells along with acorns to create coarse, unpalatable bread.

As recently as World War II, in 1944 families living in Perigord (southern France), having little to eat, had to turn to their walnut groves for their main source of food. Shells are ground and used as anti-skid agents for tyres, blasting grit, activated carbon, and sometimes to adulterate spices. The husk yields valuable oil and a yellow dye when pressed; the oil is used in soaps, paints, and dyes. The oil from walnut kernels is high in unsaturated fats and is used in cooking.

About Turn

by Tony field

As a relative newcomer to wood turning, I thought I'd share my experiences with a lathe (or two!). I started with a Wolf power drill based lathe bought for £5 from a local car-boot sale about a year ago. I have always been fairly handy with power tools and this lathe looked to be a good cheap starting point for wood turning. It had a single speed and I had the choice of a faceplate or screw-chuck and fixed tailstock.

With the lathe installed in my workshop, I set about trying to turn bits of wood. Armed with carpenters' chisels to turn with and provided I kept them sharp using a stone, I found that I could get promising results! I also rapidly produced huge amounts of shavings, dust and cylindrical firewood! Trying to turn things off-balance was interesting to say the least and as a minimum I had to make any wood roughly cylindrical before any attempt to turn it.

On a visit to the 2005 Sacrewell Hand-Made show, I met up with the Village Turners (an affiliated branch of the AWGB). They seemed fascinated by my introduction to turning and also my results – I had been making paperknives (separate blade) in bog oak and also some bonded light wood / dark bog oak items, even an egg cup with a retained ring! I also had a commission for 5 of the paperknives (teak/bog oak laminate) from a colleague. My choice of tools seemed to raise eyebrows too, although I am still in experimental mode! No one has said "you can't do that" and if they did, I'd try to prove them wrong anyway!

The meetings at Village Turners opened my eyes and I was taking notes of how to do this and that. I picked up a lot on finishing (yes I was using ordinary sandpaper and furniture polish...), now I use better sanding products (with proper "sized" grit) and sander-sealer and wax.

The Wolf lathe was beginning to suffer too with the extended use and the continued experimentation. It was getting to the stage where I had to tighten all the bolts holding it together daily and repack the bearings with grease every week. I have since been fortunate to be able to purchase an old lathe from Village Turners as an upgrade. This is a Carbatec lathe with the luxury of 4 speeds and is definitely more durable than the drill based lathe! The ability of being able to turn wood without it wobbling out of control is fantastic and the quality of my work has noticeably improved!

The latest project I have undertaken is a commission for a pair of candlesticks in silver birch, I had been given most of the tree trunk by the commissioner. I found the wood reasonable to turn, but note that it suffers from mould as it is very damp. I feel it would rot before I could get it drier. I tend to turn wood green – or as dry as I can and have been known to buy wood from dealers (bowl blanks etc). The silver-birch candlesticks

were well received anyway!

My tools are bargain basement – I got 8 turning tools for just over £16 from Machine-Mart. Although they are reasonably poor quality, they have allowed me to practice with many shapes of tool. I have found that the ½" skew is most used – from roughing to hollowing to ... well almost anything really. I am finding each of their advantages and limitations and know what to look for in shape and quality now. I still experiment with tools – jeweller's screwdrivers, nails and even a fork tine have been enlisted for turning duties.

As you can tell, my turning was (and still is) very experimental and I am definitely not afraid to put something on a lathe and have a go! The house has an open fire and therefore any "learning experiences" get the opportunity of a ceremonial funeral pyre. My attempts at captive rings had been reasonably successful at this stage, taking into account the equipment. I also have had successes with natural edge work and obscure "woods" (ivy, stag horn, sumac - rhus, thypina, etc.) I also try to minimise damage to myself, wearing suitable masks, especially when sanding, however my fingers seem to show some battle scars most weeks.

I have had a couple of problems with the Carbatec; both have meant a bit of down time. The first occasion as I went to switch the lathe off (it had a toggle on/off switch), it managed to switch itself back on again, so taking a tighter grip of the switch, I switched off again. A blue flash and darkness meant that something was seriously wrong. Once I had reset the house trip switch, I set about looking a bit closer at the switch on the lathe. After unbolting the lathe from the stand and undoing a few screws, found that the switch had disintegrated and the flash was from the toggle touching the casing of the switch (rather than through me!). I rewired a temporary fix, but have now fitted a better switch.

The second problem happened just recently. I was happily turning a piece of Holly when I noticed smoke coming from the back of the lathe. Realising it wasn't because of my heavy handedness on the wood, stopped the lathe and inspected the scene. The motor seemed a bit warm, but on closer inspection realised that the capacitor was leaking from its housing. I now have a new capacitor and am in the process of replacing it (it was about £7).

For the future, I aim to improve my tools, probably with second-hand one to start with (any good ½" skews going?) and possibly get a chuck (although they will cost 5 times more than the lathe!). Ideally I want to upgrade the lathe again, to improve on the 4" diameter that I have now and try even bigger experiments.

I try to take at least one piece of work each visit to Village Turners to show off (well I think it's good anyway!) and am definitely still learning!

Stiles & Bates

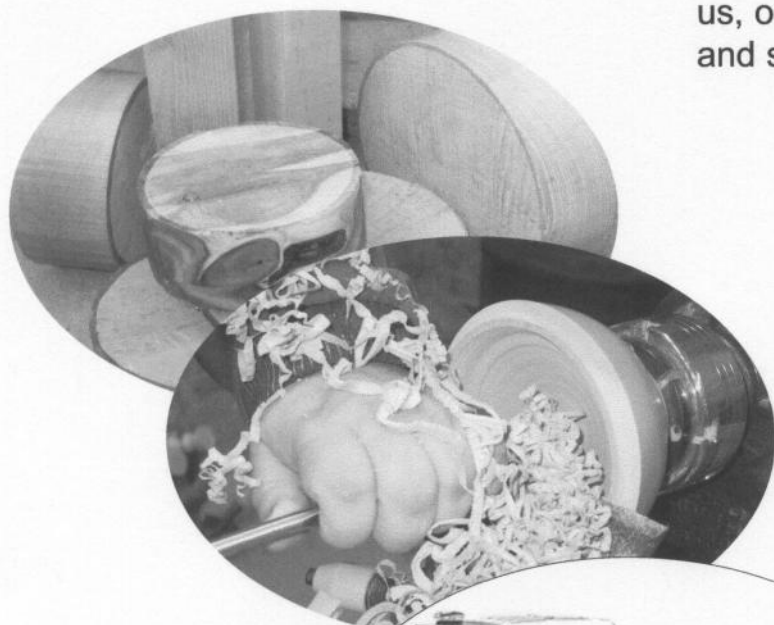


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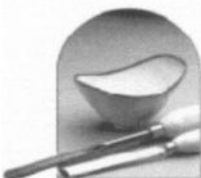
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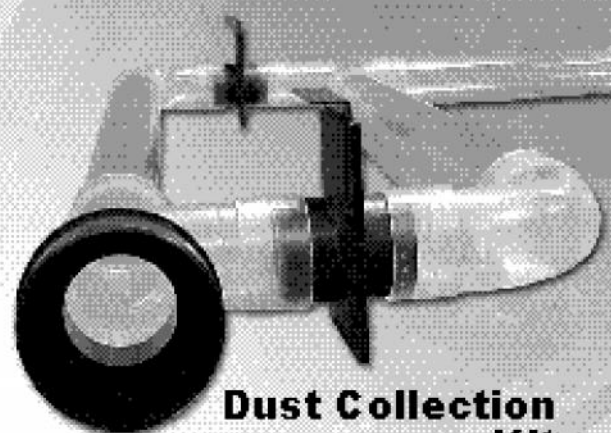
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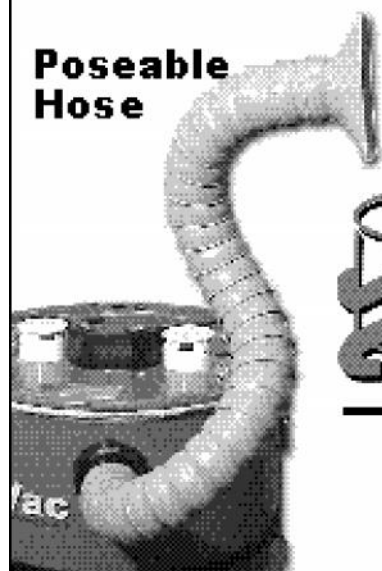
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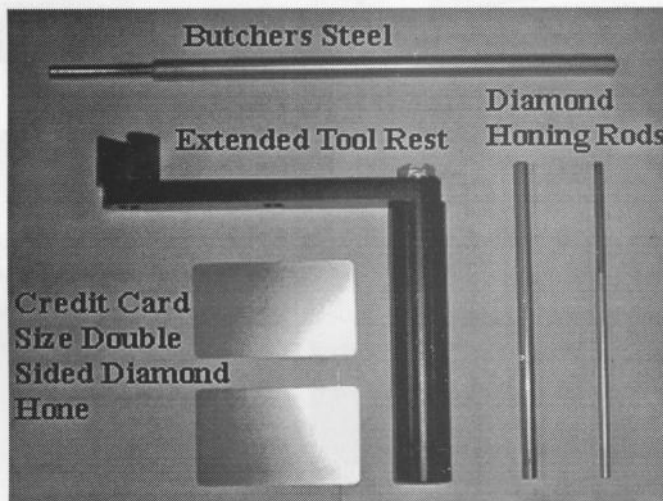
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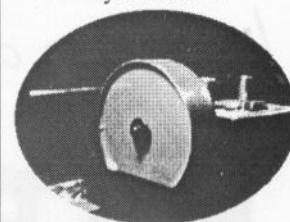
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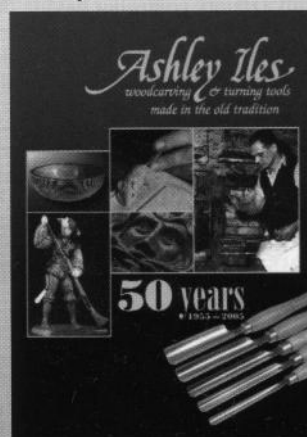
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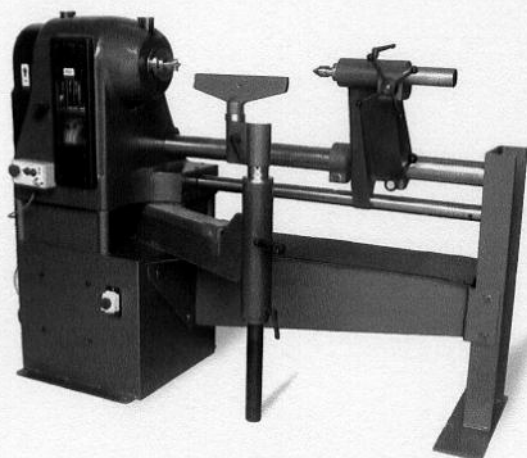
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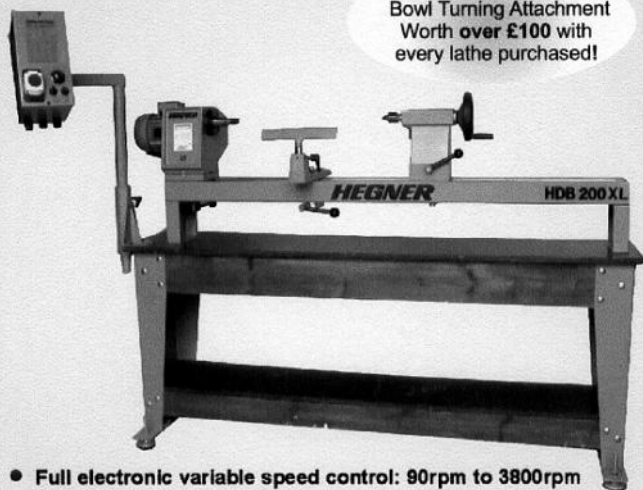
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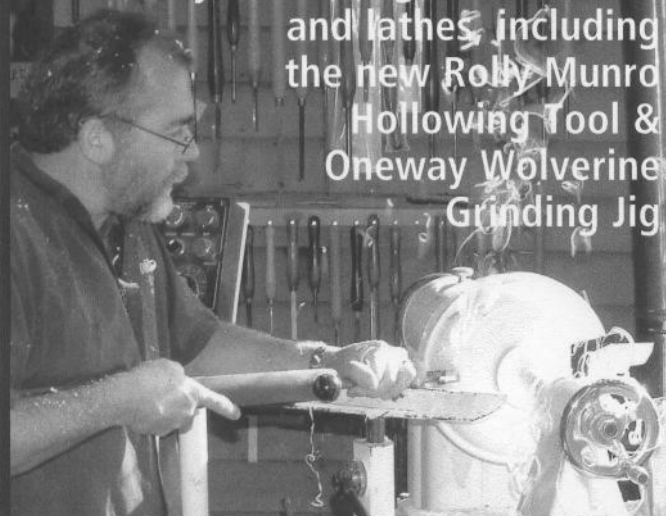
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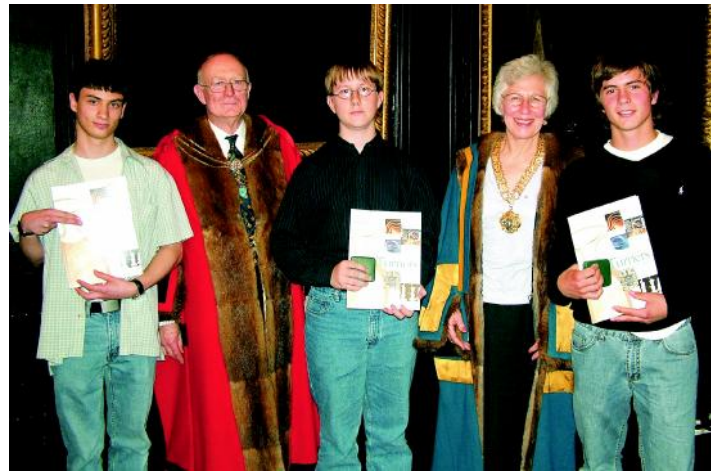
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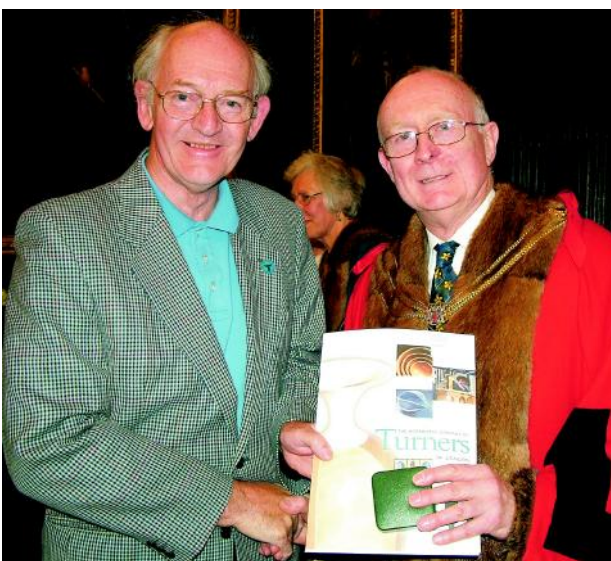
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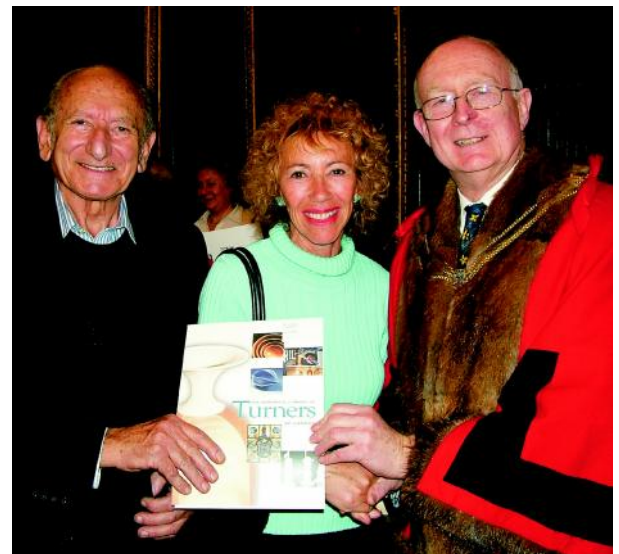
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