

South Downs Woodturners

January 2022

Dear Member

On behalf of all the committee, I wish you all (belatedly) a happy, healthy and successful New Year. Let's hope for a better one than 2021. This newsletter is dated January and I hope it will get to you before the month ends, though it will be a close call.

Things are looking more positive as the Omicron version of Covid seems to be on the wane and restrictions are being removed slowly. The Parish Hall situation is still fluid but we are hopeful of being able to get back to Lancing in the spring.

Following the very successful social evening in Henfield in December, we held our first proper face-to-face club meeting in January. As I drove up to Henfield on an evening of dreadful weather, I wondered whether there would be anyone at the Hall apart from the committee. I needn't have worried as 45 members came including a welcome number of new recruits. More details below. Despite a few teething troubles the meeting was a great success and we are looking forward to the next one - again, details below.

NEXT CLUB MEETING

Our next meeting (Covid restrictions permitting) is coming up very soon, so put the date in your diary now:

Tuesday February 8th 2022 from 7:00 pm in Henfield Hall

See Gordon's piece on page 2 for more details. No shop or library again this time but there will be a "tools and turnings" table so do bring along your work to show - it's always interesting to see what members have made.

Chairman's Challenge this time is **a box** - anything you like as long as it's turned, has a lid and has not won a challenge before. Plenty of opportunities there for everyone from beginner to expert so let's see what you can do. See the article by Mike Sims on page 4 if you fancy a real challenge. Winners will have to wait for their pens until we can get back to Lancing.

Henfield Hall is at the heart of the village, off the High Street behind Budgens. The address is Coopers Way, Henfield, BN5 9EQ. There is a large car park which is free in the evenings.

FREE SOFTWOOD



Tony Trigg can get hold of sections of old mobile phone masts if anyone can make use of it. Approx. 300 – 450mm diameter, any length you want, as long as he can get it in his car to transport it from Yorkshire. You can contact him at: trigganthony@hotmail.com.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE: Softwood timber in this application is most likely to have been vacuum impregnated with preservative. Although the chemicals won't have penetrated very deeply the dust from the outside layers may not be very nice stuff.

Lathes and tools wanted

There are new members who are looking to buy a lathe and other kit to get started in the hobby. If you have anything which might be of interest, or know of anyone else who may have, please let me know and I'll pass on the contact. eBay seems rather short of good lathes at the moment.

Programme Update - February

It was great to see so many club members at the last meeting on January 11th – a fantastic turnout with so many new faces, nice to see. Apologies for the somewhat chaotic evening - the failure of one of the lathes meant that a 'practical evening' morphed into an impromptu demonstration evening. This was less than ideal with only one lathe, no p.a. and a lot of people!

Learning from this experience, we shall have a different room setup at the next meeting (February 8th in Henfield) – those who wish to chat/exchange ideas/network etc. can gather at the kitchen end of the room while the lathes will be set up at the other end. Whilst still not ideal in such a small room, hopefully with two lathes running we can have an evening more akin to our normal practical evenings in the large hall at Lancing. Yes, there will be two lathes – we have acquired a brand-new Nova Comet II midi lathe, kindly collected from Stiles and Bates by our Chairman.

The good news keeps on coming! Manning the lathes next month, we have two stars of the silver screen (well YouTube anyway) – Andy Heath and Stewart Furini. Both are great turners and will work on a variety of projects during the evening. Amongst other things, Andy will be showing us how he makes paper knives (a clever technique) and Stewart will be working on shallow bowls. Knowing Stewart of course, there will almost certainly be colour involved somewhere, though we may not let him go too wild in the new hall! There will be opportunities for members to 'have a go' should they wish to do so under guidance from our two expert turners.

Norman has already announced a 'Chairman's Challenge' so let's see your best efforts at a box of some description – there will be prizes!

Don't forget the 'Tools 'n Turnings' table – any disasters, accidents, pieces of beauty, interesting tools etc are welcome. You may wish to say a few words of explanation.....

Look forward to seeing you all.

Gordon Eaton

CLUB MEETING in JANUARY

We had our first proper Club meeting for almost two years in January and it was a huge success. Forty-five members turned out on a cold and wet night and we had a very good meeting despite the failure of one of the lathes. It was particularly good to see so many new faces of potential members - some experts and a number of complete beginners.



There was some splendid work on the table, including a nice pair of Brighton Bun candlesticks by Sandy MacDonald, and Barry Chidlow's splendid traction engine. Thanks to everyone who brought work along to show us - always inspiring.

Dave Smith took the one working lathe first and did a very well received demo of basic spindle turning, with lots of opportunities for people to 'have a go'. After the tea break Gordon Eaton took over and demonstrated basic box making. Gordon was still suffering the after effects of a bout of Covid, so a valiant effort on his part. Thanks to Dave and Gordon, to Graham Willsher who manned the Proedge all evening, and to everyone else who helped.

Details of the next meeting are on page 1 - do come along

Chairman's Challenge December 9th

I took some photographs of the winners of our usual Christmas decorations challenge at our social evening on December 9th. Most of my pictures were too poor to use and there wasn't enough space in the last newsletter to do them justice, but Martin Burgess supplied a photo of his nativity scene, and Gordon Eaton gave me a photo of his Christmas pudding pots, so the worthy winners, Martin's nativity, Gordon's puddings and Anna Cates' snowman and woman are pictured below. Congratulations to all three.



WE HAVE A NEW LATHE!



As Gordon says On page 2, the club has a new lathe. When we fired up the two small club lathes at Henfield, the older one blew the circuit breaker in the Hall. We had an impromptu committee meeting and decided it was time for a new one. I collected it from Stiles and Bates, which was an interesting experience as we arrived at the farm to find they had no power because of contractors working to lay new cables in the village. They did have a generator to run the credit card machine so they were able to take the money, but the rest of my planned shopping was a bit difficult as it had to be done in a windowless store by the torchlight of my phone - though I still managed to pick up a few bits and pieces. Thanks to Dave Smith, the new lathe is now mounted and ready to use. It's a Nova Comet midi lathe and the photo shows it on its stand in Dave's workshop. We sold the old one to a new member as it

stood - hopefully he'll be able to get it running without too much expense. We'll let Stewart and Andy fight over the new one at the next meeting!

YEW LOGS FOR SALE



Frank Riddle has English yew logs and trunks for sale. Call if you are interested. View anytime. 01798-813484, The Old Manor, Nutbourne, Pulborough, RH20 2HE.

A few photos to whet your appetites - I have more if you want to see them. Length x Circumference in inches as follows (Circumference is a tape around the whole log).

- 136 x 30,
- 103x83 (standing tree straight no boughs),
- 48 x 32
- 44 x 27
- 44 x 21
- 34 x 48,
- 23 x 36
- 19 x 34
- 19 x 25
- 11 x 44

A Different Spin on Multi-Axis Boxes

Mike Sims



The humble box is something of a 'rite of passage' for the woodturner: an item that denotes a step up from simpler beginnings. But having made quite a few, I was looking for something to make my boxes stand out a bit more.

Thanks to an article written by Ian Stuart, in the AAW American Woodturner magazine of February 2017, I was inspired to take his idea of the multi-axis hollow form and apply that to a box that had a dual-purpose lid/spinning top. This is my take on the subject, having made several of them. This is not a tutorial on box-making. It assumes that the reader is familiar with the overall process. Rather, it is a description of how you can give a simple box an interesting shape that is different, and which also makes the lid into a spinning top.

Make the Bottom.

Start by taking your chosen blank, which will be about 10 x 6 x 6 cm, and mount it between centres on the lathe. For this item, I prefer to make the lid of a contrasting wood and that is what this article describes. If you want to make the lid and bottom from the same piece of wood then add 6 – 7 cm to the length. Round the blank and cut a tenon at either end. The tenon can be parallel or slightly domed to facilitate being pushed off-centre, and its diameter should suit your chuck jaws. Remove the piece and re-chuck it by one tenon, with tailstock support, re-truing it, if it bothers you.

With a parting tool cut a groove about 5 mm from the chuck jaws which are now shouldered on the tenon. The diameter of the groove should be similar to that of the tenon. This groove gives clearance for cutting close to the chuck when the piece is pushed off centre. It also gives a reference shoulder for the jaws when the piece is brought back onto the original axis centre at a later stage.

Next, review the proportions of the bottom that you want to make. Lid aside, decide how much you want to have below the waistline caused by the second axis turning. I work to the rule of thirds, which usually means 1/3 below the waistline. Mark your blank accordingly. The waistline positioning should also be done with grain or other features of the wood taken into consideration, avoiding any nasty knots around the future waistline.



Step 1:

Disengage the live centre, loosen the chuck and push the piece off centre. Then, for safety, re-engage the live centre and tighten the chuck. How far the piece is pushed off-centre depends not only on the visual effect that this will have on the final shape, but also upon the amount of wood that will be removed as a result of the offset. Pushing too much will result in a very narrow top in the next step. This can only be learned by experience, but in my pieces the new centre at the tailstock is around 8 mm from the original centre point.



From this point, you will be turning an object that is unbalanced. Start the lathe on its lowest speed and increase the speed gradually until you are confident that the piece is secure.

Next, recut the groove on the new axis, removing material from the right-hand side of the groove. This forms a reference plane that will eventually become the base of the box. Removal of wood, when a piece is off-centre, means that the tool will experience "air" wood. That is, for part of a revolution it is cutting, and for the other part it is not. For this reason, one should take light cuts and ensure that the tool is held firmly on the toolrest. I prefer to use larger gouges in this situation - they have more weight and rigidity. Also, stop the lathe periodically and see to what extent a shape is developing.



You can now form the surface below the waistline. I use a medium bowl gouge cutting downhill towards the chuck, making successive cuts to form a curve towards the base, moving gradually towards the intended waistline. This cut will be rough initially and one must watch the ghost line to see where material is being removed.

But it will eventually become round. When you are nearing the waistline, you might want to switch to a spindle gouge to make a final finishing cut. At this stage the foot of the bottom should be where the bottom of the groove is. The surface produced can now be sanded, and the finish applied.

Step 2.

The piece can now be returned to its original centre and the area above the waistline shaped. Tighten the chuck and provide tailstock support. Here you need to decide if you want a continuous bottom-to-lid join, as with traditional boxes, or to have a non-continuous join with a lip on the top of the bottom. I favour the second option with a lip at about 45 degrees and extending between 3 – 5 mm out from the outside diameter of the top. The shaping above the waistline is done as per the area below, except that you will be working towards the tailstock, leaving enough material for the lip. When you are happy with the shape, true up the end of the bottom as much as you can before removing the live centre to complete it. Then, proceed to hollow the box.

You need to decide if you will make a hollow form with the profile of the inside following that of the outside, or to keep the inside diameter constant. I am not an experienced hollow form turner, so I stick to a parallel inside diameter. Using a suitable Forstner bit, drill a hole leaving 1 – 2 cm of material at the bottom. This leaves some weight in the piece. Clean out the bottom with a box scraper and clean up the sides. The inside of the opening should have parallel sides at the top. This will make a better lid fit. Sanding and finishing, inside and out, can now be done. However, because the waistline is not truly circular, avoid rounding it over when sanding the outside. I suggest using sandpaper backed by something more rigid than your fingers. A cork block or a small, flat piece of wood works here. The chucking tenon should remain in place in case you need to remount it to make adjustments or you are making a continuous join at the lid/bottom meeting.

Step 1 and Step 2 can be carried out in the reverse order. They have been described above as making the area below the waistline on the on a second axis, then the area above the waistline on the original axis. Alternatively, you can make the area below the waistline on the original axis, and then make the area above the waistline on the second axis. Both options produce a well-shaped box. However, this second option does not require that you re-cut the groove.

Make the Lid.

Take a blank of contrasting wood, approximately 6 cm long by 5 cm across and mount it directly in the chuck. Turn the protruding end round and cut a tenon at the outer end. It must have parallel sides and be about 10 mm long. Its diameter should provide a snug fit to the inside of the bottom. The degree of “snugness” is up to you. Take light cuts at the end of the blank to form the point of the spinning top. Gradually move backwards towards the chuck removing material until approximately 5 mm of the tenon remains for a snug fit.

You can now reduce the overall diameter of the bottom of the lid until it is your required size. I favour a diameter that is less than the outside of the lip – it is simpler to make. If you prefer a continuous or uninterrupted join of the bottom to lid (without the lip), then you can remount the bottom of the box in the chuck with the lid inserted as a friction fit (jam-chuck) into the bottom between the chuck and the live centre in the tailstock. The outside of the lid and the bottom can now be rounded together, and the lid’s finial completed. This is the traditional way to finish a box. Either way, the underside of the lid can be sanded and finished.

I chose a smaller diameter lid so, I reversed the lid and chucked it by the tenon to complete the lid separately from the bottom. If you are worried about your chuck marking the tenon, then make a collar to fit around it. Making a collar is quick and easy to do. It should be the length of the tenon and 10 mm bigger than the diameter of the tenon. It should have a 5 mm piece removed from the ring to allow for compression. The collar can be used to grip the tenon in the chuck and the live centre used for as long as possible to complete the finial. The finial can be any shape of your choice but, remember that the lower the centre of gravity of a spinning top, the better its performance. So, keep the finial simple to reduce the lid’s overall weight and the top’s CoG. You can now sand and finish the finial.

If you are not that enamoured with a dual-purpose spinning top/lid, then the lid can have an off-centre slant to it (the finial, that is). It can be achieved the same way that the bottom was made, by pushing the piece off centre before completing the finial. Finally, the bottom’s chucking point can be removed. This can be done by hand or by bandsaw, followed by hand-sanding or using some other sanding device. I have sheets of sandpaper in various grades attached to MDF disks that I can rotate on my lathe. So that’s it. I hope you will have as much fun as I have had making these off-centre boxes. The sizes and shapes are only limited by your own imagination so, do have a go and have fun experimenting with your own ideas.

The woods for the three boxes in Photo 1 (L to R, Base/Lid) – Iroko/US Black Walnut, Elm/Australian Sheoak, Cocobolo/Unknown. Photos: 1 & 5 by Mike Sims. 2, 3, & 4 by David Forrester



CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE!

I'm always happy to receive material for newsletters. I have a nice long article for the next one, but I can use pictures of your work, your workshop or anything else you think may interest fellow members. If you want to express your feelings on anything club related please contact me, or any member of the committee. It's always good to hear from you. For now, my very best wishes to all members as always.

Norman Billingham