



WOODBITS NEWSLETTER

Issue 241

June 2026

Shavings from the Chairman

Welcome to the June club newsletter. With temperatures rising and a heatwave on the way, I am once again grateful for the time spent insulating my workshop — it is proving to have been time very well spent.

In this edition, we have plenty to share: some inspiration, good fundraising news for the club, a look ahead to the Chestnut Products Woodturning Weekender, some wonderful photographs of youngsters in the workshop, and a report on our very successful demonstrations for eight groups of Hertfordshire schoolchildren. It is all encouraging news for the club, which has also welcomed several new members over the past couple of months.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the last club meeting on 9 June. I understand that part of the evening focused on making candlesticks for entry into the AWGB competition in October. Instead, I was enjoying a delayed spring holiday, the results of which you will see later in this newsletter. I am, however, very much looking forward to our next meeting on 14 July, when we will welcome Liz Pearson from Berkshire. Liz's mission is to make woodturning accessible to everyone who enjoys making wooden objects, and I believe this will be her first visit to our club.

The July competition subjects are a honey drizzler for beginners and a natural-edged bowl for advanced turners. It is always a pleasure to see members' work, so please do consider bringing something along, especially if you are a beginner, as entries have been a little light in recent months. Members always enjoy seeing what others have made, and it is a great opportunity to receive helpful feedback from our esteemed club professional — and occasionally from our chairman.

I look forward to seeing you all on 14 July.

Happy turning

Adam Blackie

Chairman

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Club News

May Competition

BEGINNERS



1st Gary Atkins
Professional
Choice

2nd Alison Bryby



3rd Alison Bryby



ADVANCED



1st Phil Walters



2nd Stuart Kim
Professional Choice



3rd Harvey Alison

OPEN



1st Peter Kemp
Professional Choice



2nd Harvey Alison

3rd

Only 2 entries for the Open this time! Hoping for more next time!

Meetings Calendar

2026		
July	14 th	Liz Pearson
August	11 th	Geoff Harris (Pole Lathe)
September	8 th	Club Night
October	13 th	Steven Kearvell
November	10 th	Richard Peers
December	14 th	Club Night

Competition Subjects

2026		
	Beginners	Advanced
July	Honey Drizzler	Natural Edged Bowl
August	Ball and Cup	Hollow Form
September	Small AWGB festival competition candlestick	Medium or large AWGB festival competition candlestick
October	Platter	Bowl on Feet
November	Xmas Decoration	Wall Plaque
December	20 to 30cm Long Spurtle	Textured Platter
January	Paper Weight	Offset Goblet
February	Ring Finger	Wool Bowl
March	12 to 15cm Dia. Bowl	Natural Edged Vase

Training Update - Dave Washer

Following the successful **Introduction to Multi-Axis Turning** course on 21st March. Four members attended Queens Park Arts Centre for the course hosted by Steve Hart.



Comments from the delegates included,

"This was a really good day spent at Queens Park Arts Centre, Aylesbury. the coaching by Steve Hart was informal but informative and helped us to fully understand the Barbara Dill system for multi-axis turning.

There was plenty of 'one on one' help given, which was much appreciated and confidence boosting. All in all, a big thumbs up!

"By understanding and carefully marking of the planes, and off-sets, and working to a fixed and carefully recorded plan, further work (sanding and finishing) can be safely and effectively completed."

"Steve gave an introduction and plan for the day and provided a work sheet for the delegates to follow, finishing the day with an off-centre Christmas Tree great day, thanks Steve.

A further **Introduction to Multi-Axis Turning** course is planned for later in the year (Date yet to be set) we already have 4 members wishing to go on this course so we only have one or two places

left, however if this is something you would like to try, please give me a shout and with a few more interested members I'll be happy to set up another course.

The Bowl Hollowing course, is to be held at Queens Park Centre, Aylesbury on 11th July 2026. And is fully subscribed however if this is something you would like to try I may be able to arrange a further course later in the year so please do get in touch either by email, training@herts&bedswoodturners.co.uk or my Mobile **07546 612450**,

You may also be interested in the excellent training opportunity to the well-attended '**A day in my workshop**' where members can visit one of our members workshops and have a day of one-to-one training, honing your skills and techniques, a small fee is required for the day to cover club insurance and add to the club funds. It's a good way to get to know other club members too!

The club can also offer a discount on all group training delivered by a registered professional turner. This is limited to 50% of the total group cost or a maximum of £70 per person. I can provide further details if you are interested in this option.

Dave Washer

Email - training@herts&bedswoodturners.co.uk

Mobile - 07546 612450

Chestnut Products Woodturning Weekender



Now in its 7th year, the Woodturning Weekender moves to the Dome Event Centre in Doncaster for 2026, taking place on 29 and 30 August. The main stage will feature Margaret Garrard, Nathanael Griffiths, Mario Nagel and Les Thorne.

With video screens, multiple cameras and excellent sound, everyone gets a clear view of the demonstrations. Away from the main stage, more than a dozen turners, woodworkers, pyrographers and artists will be demonstrating, chatting with visitors and offering advice. There will also be club displays, an instant gallery and selected traders.

It is a small, friendly event and a great chance to meet demonstrators, talk turning and get questions answered..

Tickets start at £37.50 for one day or £60 for the weekend. The venue offers free parking, easy access and affordable catering, with budget hotels nearby and a Holiday Inn deal at £85 per room, per night, including B&B. A partner programme includes a day trip to York.

If you cannot attend in person, the event will be livestreamed and available to watch afterwards for six months.

The Weekender is also known for its fun, informal social side, from the Friday evening get-together to the Saturday meal and entertainment. Previous years have included Gordon Giltrap, a magic show, an Only Fools and Horses tribute and an ELO tribute band.

Full details and tickets are available at www.woodturningweekender.co.uk or by calling 01473 890118.

If anyone is planning to attend, please let us know and maybe we can share the driving.



Flamstead Arts and Heritage Fair Update

Here is a quick and very positive update on the Flamstead Arts and Heritage Fair, which was held on Friday 5 and Saturday 6 June.



The club enjoyed an excellent Friday, educating and entertaining eight groups of schoolchildren from local schools. There was plenty of audience participation, with the children able to see and try some very basic techniques. Our demonstrations, including the making of dibbers in a variety of shapes and sizes, were very well received. Several teachers were interested enough to ask about possible demonstrations in their own schools, which could become a valuable addition to our 2026 programme. These are exactly the sort of events where we can encourage young people and help inspire the future of woodturning.

Saturday began rather uncertainly, with wind and rain threatening to disrupt the outdoor activities. Fortunately, by around 10:00 the weather settled into a blustery but largely dry day, allowing us to set up one of the lathes and arrange a couple of tables of items for sale. We had a steady stream of interested visitors throughout the day and sold a good number of pieces.



I would like to thank all the club members who came along to support our efforts, and in particular David Ireson, Keith Goddard, Paul Boyes, Bob Marshall, Dave Washer, Colin Newman, Steve Hart and Peter Hoare, all of whom gave up a significant part of their weekend to help make the event such a success.

Financially, the event raised nearly £700 for club funds — a tremendous result.

There may be a repeat event in 2028 – watch this space!

Adam Blackie

Creating the next generation of woodturners

It is often said that you can never start something too early. Looking at this month's young turner, I am inclined to agree. The expression on her face says more than words could: there is curiosity there, and perhaps the beginning of a love for making things with her hands. I suspect it will not be long before Granddad finds he has a regular visitor to his workshop.

These early moments matter. They stay with us long after the shavings have been swept away. My own son still remembers turning a baseball bat with my father from a piece of ash back in 1998, when he was just eight years old. It was a simple thing in one sense, but to him it became a lasting memory of time spent together, of being trusted, encouraged, and included. I hope this lucky granddaughter carries the same kind of memory with her for many years to come.

That is why clubs have such an important part to play. We can teach skills, of course, but we also give confidence through patience, encouragement, and shared experience. When an experienced turner takes the time to explain a technique, demonstrate safe practice, or simply stand beside a

beginner for those first uncertain cuts, they are offering far more than instruction. They are showing someone that they belong, and that this craft is something worth sharing.

As a club, we should be genuinely proud of the welcome and support we can offer to the next generation of woodturners. Every young person who is encouraged to pick up a tool, ask a question, or try the lathe for the first time represents hope for the future of our craft. If we continue to teach with care, share our knowledge generously, and make newcomers feel at home, then the tradition we value so much will remain in safe hands.

If you have a young enthusiast in your workshop, please do let us know. We would love to hear their story.

Send your photos to chairman@hertsandbedswoodturners.co.uk

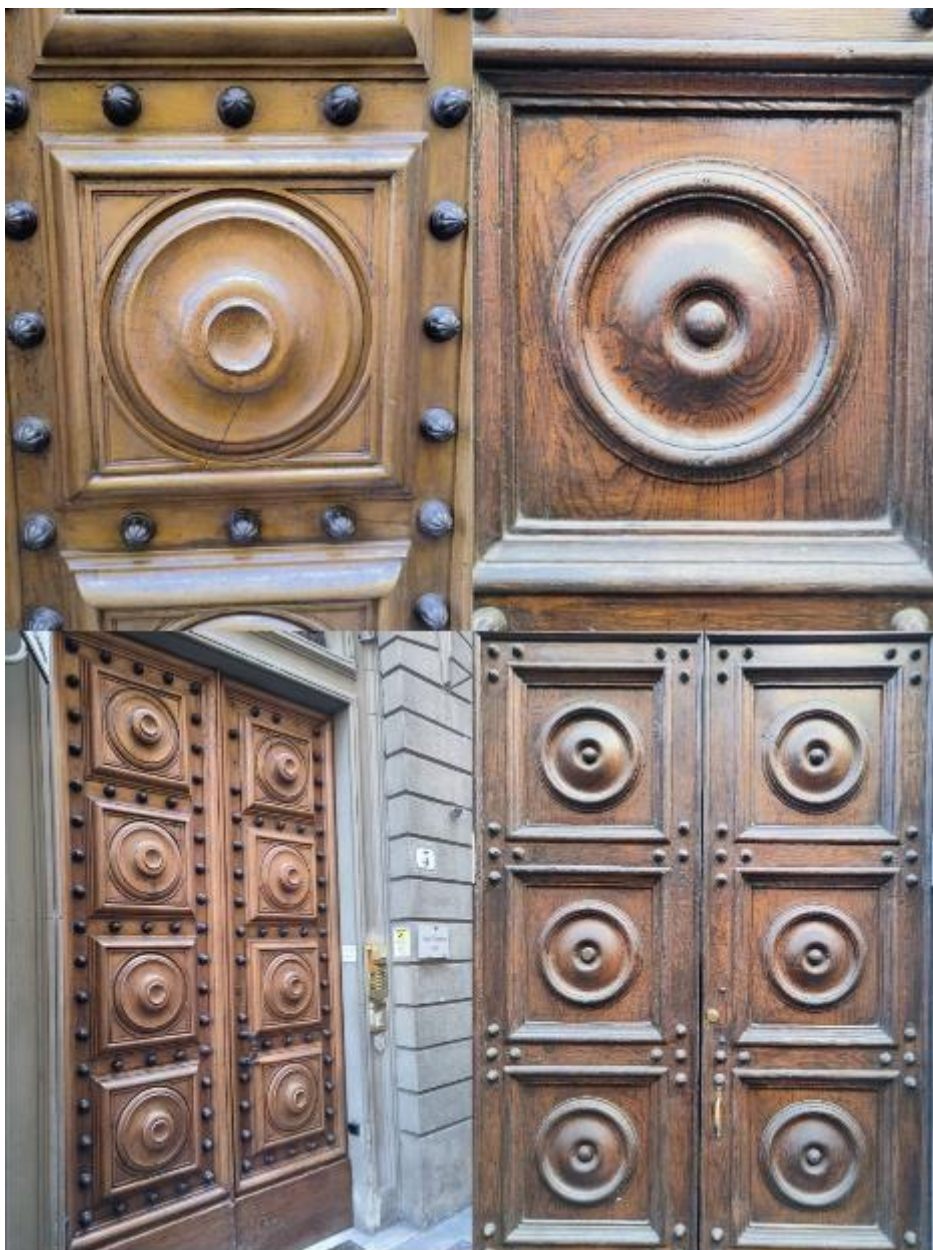


Florentine Inspirations

It has been some time since my last visit to Florence, and my wife and I finally managed to get there in early June. We love the Renaissance and the treasures left behind by the Medici dynasty. And unlike many other places in Europe it remains a real city and one that values its tourist trade. During the trip I took many hundreds of photographs, some of which were focused around inspirations for wood turning. So to pad out a rather thin newsletter I will share some of these with you and I hope you find them interesting and inspirational.

The first group of photographs shows a distinctive feature often found on the doors of larger villas in Florence, especially older and original buildings. The panels appear to have been made by a woodturner, using a faceplate technique; while the doors themselves were finished by a cabinetmaker. In some cases, the roundels also include additional carved detail. I am not entirely sure how these pieces were made, but they remind me strongly of the work of Darren Breeze, a professional UK woodturner, although his work is generally more monumental in scale.

Over the next few months, we will be experimenting with techniques for **making similar items at the Men's Shed at Letchworth**. Please join us if you would like to take part.



The second group of photographs focuses on book-matching: a technique some of you may have tried when making bowls, and especially when working on segmented pieces. The aim is to arrange the grain so that it lines up in a balanced and attractive way, creating a mirrored pattern across adjoining pieces.

In these photographs, however, it is not wood that has been book-matched, but marble. Book-matched panels are made by cutting a block into thin slabs and opening neighbouring slices like the pages of a book. The natural veining then reflects from one panel to the next, producing symmetrical shapes and patterns. These examples were spotted in a church in Ravenna, about 140 kilometres north-east of Florence. We decided to spend four days there because Ravenna is closely associated with the famous Italian poet Dante Alighieri, who was exiled from Florence after falling out with the city's ruling powers



The final group of photographs is all about spindle turning. I could easily have taken hundreds of photographs of similar examples, but I have chosen just a few that represent a period from roughly 1400 to 1700. You may notice that the older examples tend to be thicker and more robust, possibly because they were intended for practical furniture in regular use. The later examples are often more elegant and refined, perhaps made for furniture that was intended as much for display as for everyday use.

Spindle turning is one of the foundation skills of woodturning: it involves shaping timber along the grain to produce repeated forms such as beads, coves, tapers, columns, chair legs and table supports. Good spindle work depends on rhythm, proportion and confident tool control, especially when using the skew chisel.

During my time with Herts and Beds Woodturners, I have noticed that both beginners and experienced turners can struggle with spindle turning, perhaps because it is difficult to judge the correct proportions of the finished piece, or simply because it takes regular practice to develop accuracy and confidence.



Finally, I would like to introduce you to our new friend, Giovanni Puccianti, whom I met at a craft market in the Piazza Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Giovanni was selling a wonderful range of pens in all sorts of designs and sizes, and his stall immediately caught my eye.

In the photograph, you can see the beautiful Basilica Santa Maria Novella in the background, which gives a lovely sense of place. The market itself is set in the square and is one of the best craft market locations I have ever seen. The only drawback was the heat: at midday in June, it was around 36 degrees Celsius, which seemed to be keeping even the tourist crowds at bay!

Although my Italian is not much better than his English, we still managed to discover that we were both woodturners and pen makers. Naturally, I could not resist buying one of his lovely olive wood pens. If you are ever in Florence, do keep an eye out for Giovanni and his work. You can also find him on Facebook by searching for Giovanni Puccianti, or by visiting:

<https://www.facebook.com/giovanni.puccianti/>

Adam Blackie



AWGB Collaborative Competition. 10/11 October 2026

The club committee is excited to announce that we are currently exploring creative ways to enter the 2026 AWGB Collaborative Competition. This year's theme is Shakespeare in Stratford, and our concept draws inspiration from one of Shakespeare's most powerful tragic plays. It's a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase our talents and come together as a club.

The competition will take place during the October festival, giving us plenty of time to plan and create something truly memorable to represent our club. As one of the largest and most vibrant clubs in the AWGB community, we want to make sure as many of our members as possible are involved in this exciting project. Your creativity and enthusiasm are what make our club special, and together we can achieve something remarkable.



Our concept is straightforward - details will be shared in upcoming newsletters and meetings, so watch this space! For now, we're inviting every member to contribute by making a single candlestick without a base (just a small tenon). The parameters are shown in the sketch on the next page. The candlestick should be a set height, but you're free to choose the style, wood, and finish, allowing your unique artistic touch to shine through. This is a brilliant chance for everyone, whatever your skill level, to get involved and be part of something special.

Harvey Alison will be coordinating our collaborative effort. If you're keen to take part, simply add your name to the list. We'll be in touch soon with further details and guidance. Don't miss out on being part of this inspiring group project—your participation will make all the difference!

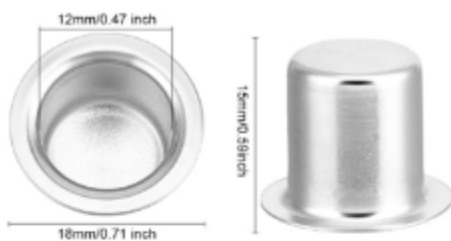
The deadline is mid-September, so there's plenty of time to get involved if you sign up early. Let's work together to make our entry a real showstopper!

The specification for the candlesticks we need are as follows.

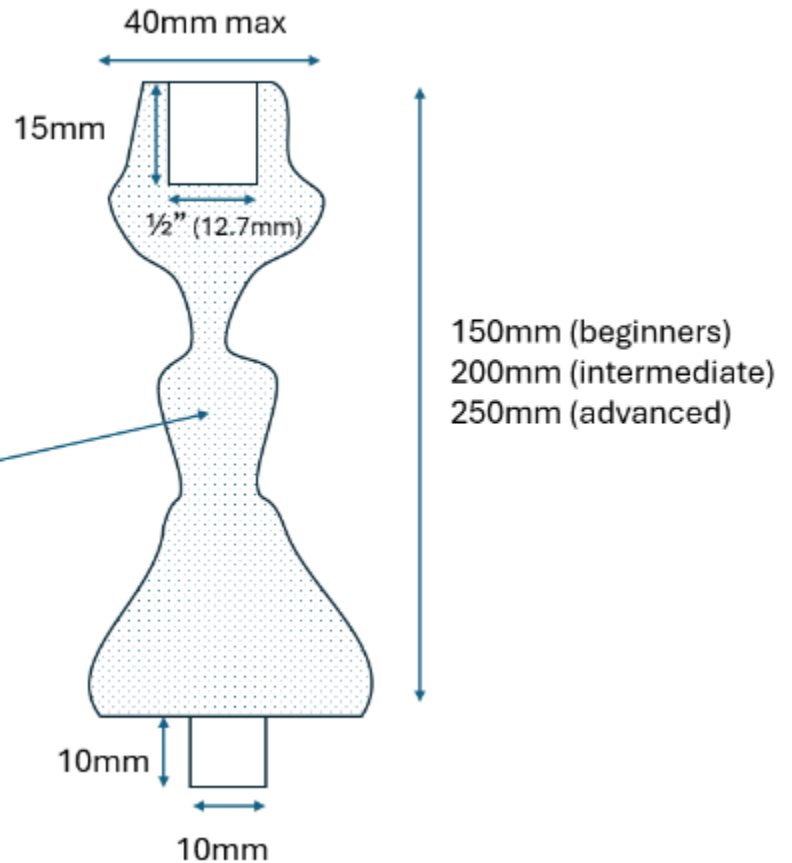
NOTE ON DIMENSIONS:

The height is a MAXIMUM dimension (they can be smaller) and will vary depending on your own consideration of whether you are a Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced Turner. You decide.

The width is a MAXIMUM dimension (it can be smaller) of 40mm for all turners. This applies to all parts of your candlestick.



Your design – any timber shape, style, finish you like – hopefully better than this!



INTERESTED?

Over 36 members have already signed up and you have plenty of time left to make your contribution.

Contact Harvey Alison harvey@kimbleturning.co.uk to take part.

Some entries have already started to arrive at the club meetings. Here is a selection.



Poetry Corner

MOSTLY NORMAL

Where have the years gone?

Tell me please, at what age do we stop being mostly normal
This is what my wife asked me when she was being formal
Made me think, I'm on the brink
Of senior, even senile incapacity
At the very least the run-down of younger year's veracity
Or was she fearing for herself with our oncoming ageing health
Inevitably descending on us, both rapid and without stealth

The two worst and most noticeable effects now would have to be
Rises from the chair and people's names lost in memory
Their past actions do not fade, stay with us evermore
But tip tongued names will not present, a very human flaw

Countless moments of interest and fun, unfurled along the way
Who made them happen is dilemma's fault, often one just cannot say
On reflection, thanks having had them, if even now they are in the mists
Hazy thoughts still amuse while fading memory persists

Martin Sexton, may 2026