

**WOODBITS**  
NEWSLETTER  
Issue 223  
December 2024



*Brought to you with greetings from a now weary Santa, resting after his labours – but who is he really?? See last page for the reveal..*

## SHAVINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### LOOKING BACK - A VERY SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Yet another year has passed, and what a year it was. We are thriving and I am happy to report that we ended the year with 101 members. It is great to see so many familiar and new faces at our meetings I am looking forward to getting to know many more of you in 2025. With too many to mention individually I also thank our many committee members who made it all happen.

Our professional demonstrators were well received and included: Gary Rance, Emma Cook, Terry Vaughan, Terry Smart, Simon Hope, Anna-Marie Bennett, Steve Heeley, Mick Hanbury and Mike Fitz; whilst our own members contributed many more demonstrations at club nights

Our training offering has gone from strength to strength, with events at Aylesbury, Hemel Hempstead, Letchworth and many one to one sessions for our beginners. Dave Washer will continue these events in 2025.

Our club has also been successful in developing links with other organisations. These included Men in Sheds, Middlesex Woodturners Association and Middlesex Hospital Rehab unit. Finally, thanks to the generous efforts of your committee, we ended the year with a splendid club night – perhaps the best I have experienced since I joined and reviewed in this edition.

### LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025

We have a full schedule of professional demonstrations starting with Gary Rance on January 14<sup>th</sup>. We will need to recruit a replacement club photographer, and we will be upgrading our audio-visual equipment at Adeyfield. If you can help with either of these please get in touch. With your support our club will continue to grow and we can make 2025 even better than 2024. So, thank you if you have already renewed your subscription; if not I ask that you please renew in early January to simplify our admin. Contact Steve Hart for renewal details - [sahart@btinternet.com](mailto:sahart@btinternet.com)

Adam Blackie

Chairman

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# Club News

## December Competition

### Beginners



1<sup>st</sup> Melvyn Hogg



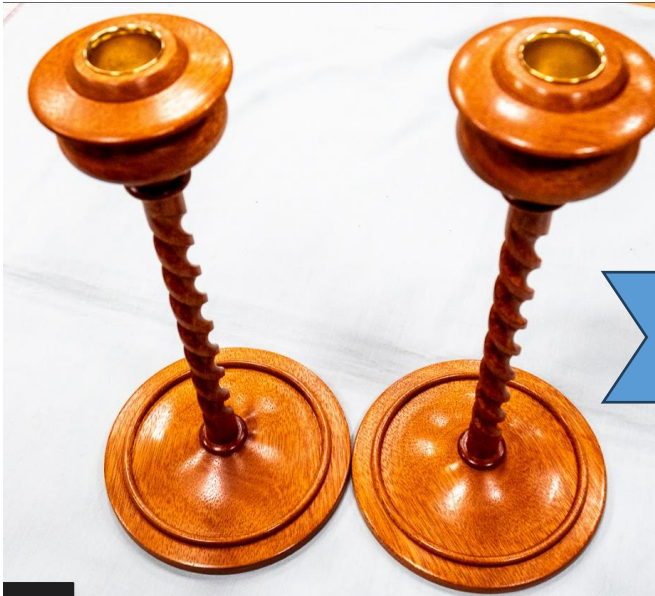
2<sup>nd</sup> James Blackie



3<sup>rd</sup> Andrew Mackness

Chairmans  
Choice  
Adam Blackie

## Advanced



1<sup>st</sup> Harvey Alison

Professionals  
Choice  
(Gary Rance)



2<sup>nd</sup> Gary Rance



3<sup>rd</sup> Paul Boyes



Open

1<sup>st</sup> James Blackie



2<sup>nd</sup> Harvey Alison



Professionals  
Choice  
(Mike Fitz)

3<sup>rd</sup> Peter Kemp

## Meetings Calendar

### 2025

Jan	14th	Gary Rance
Feb	11th	Steven Kearvell
Mar	11th	Stewart Furini

## Competition Subjects

2025

	<b>Beginners</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Jan	Ring Bowl (6-7cm dia)	Natural Edged Hollow form *
Feb	Two Woods	Decorated platter
Mar	Bud Vase	Coloured ball
Apr	Egg	Pair of egg cups
May	Pair of light pulls	String box
June	Platter	Lidded bowl
July	Tool Handle	Hollow form
Aug	Pair of coasters	Natural edged vase
Sept	An Apple	Box with finial
Oct	Spinning top	Pair of goblets
Nov	Kitchen Roll holder	Mug
Dec	Dice shaker	Winged bowl

\* No finishing process – straight from tool

## Raffle purchase Diary for 2025

I am the raffle coordinator for the forthcoming year and need to fill the diary for the purchase of prizes. To ensure we get a selection of prizes we ask different members of the membership to the club to buy the raffle prizes. This ensures we have a variation every month.

As a guide we have increased to spend on prizes to £ 80 - £100 per month with a maximum number of 5 prizes in total. There is some flexibility as this is offered as a guide.

Full receipts are required for each spend made.

If you wish to discuss any of this information with me then feel free to do so at the next meeting or email/phone,

Steve Beadle

Tel 07720 677456

Email [Stevebeadle1960@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Stevebeadle1960@hotmail.co.uk)

## Horatio Project – David Evans

In the garden room at Horatio's Garden at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore a group of woodturners are giving a demonstration.

David Wilks, Peter Leach and Gordon Cookson of the Middlesex Woodturners Association run through some health and safety guidance with the assembled group of patients, their families and occupational therapists (OT). Also watching are representatives of the charity Horatio's Garden, which has organised the event and which creates and looks after extraordinary gardens in the heart of NHS spinal injury centres.

One of the group pulls on some protection, picks up a bevel rubbing tool and turns an acceptable Christmas tree. This small act sends a ripple of expectation through the assembled healthcare professionals. Many of the patients watching will have undergone life-changing spinal cord injuries.

Horatio's Garden organises a programme of regular activities such as today's demonstration to help improve the mental health of patients having to spend long periods in hospital reflecting on their situation.

A few days later the results were in – the event was a huge success. It was a chance conversation between a volunteer at Horatio's Garden and Tracey McCarthy, the charity's administrator for the London and South East garden at Stanmore, that led to the charity to consider woodturning as a beneficial activity for patient well-being. Established over 10 years ago, the charity's outstanding gardens are a critical part of rehabilitation for people with spinal injuries, offering reflection and adjustment, privacy and solace, joy and companionship to all who need it.



Inspiration also comes from the activities organised for them. While patients enjoy everything from flower arranging to painting, Tracey was eager to explore activities likely to also engage more male patients. Armed with this broad brief, the local woodturning community turned their collective minds to making this happen.

Knowing that a spinal injury would mean some users would be operating a lathe from a seated position and with varying degrees of mobility, Adam Blackie, chairman of Herts and Beds Woodturning turned to Letchworth Men's Sheds to help make a sit-down mount for a lathe.

"The question of sitting whilst woodturning was new to us all, and it turns out that Vicmarc sell a set-up, but at a little over £4000 it was out of reach, so we decided to make one instead," explained Adam.



“This is where a fourth collaboration came into play. [Herts and Beds] club member Steve Hart has been working with Letchworth Men’s Shed, so we asked them to help make a sit-down lathe set-up based on the Vicmarc design.”

Adam had already discussed the project with Middlesex Woodturners Association as they were local to the hospital, and keen to be involved. Gordon Cookson, the club’s chairman, was able to draw on his experience of having met and learned from other turners with mobility and accessibility requirements. His knowledge enabled him to pull together a demonstration programme that was specifically tailored to the needs the audience.

The event was to be held on a Wednesday over an afternoon.

Tracey had already gauged interest from the hospital’s OTs and a reasonable turn out of patients and their families was expected. On the day David, Peter and Gordon set up their two small lathes and displayed examples of their work. Before long hospital staff and patients were trying their hand at turning small items.

Emma Linley, lead Occupational Therapist, said the session really engaged the imagination of the patients; from those who had done it before as part of their employment to those who tried it for the first time.

“The woodturning experience speaks to the heart of occupational therapy where meaningful activity provides total engagement and a sense of achievement with a refocus on what the patients can do rather than, often in rehabilitation, on what they can’t,” said Emma. “

Within the session we saw one patient who had previous experience be so engrossed that he was leaning forward in his wheelchair and swapping between the variety of tools available with an ease of movement previously unseen and a total novice who lacked confidence in themselves, following encouragement to have a go, learn a new skill in a matter of minutes and be so pleased with themselves it was a joy to watch. It was such a successful afternoon it would great to see if we can have woodturning as a regular activity option for our patients.



With this endorsement Horatio’s Garden is in talks with Middlesex Woodturners Association and our club to make this a regular monthly event. David’s thoughts have already turned to which tools would be best suited to a patient’s needs.

Adam Blackie is considering how the stand for the wheelchair users can be more flexible for differing heights and abilities. “It was clear from working with both patients and the senior OT that there was a difference in the level of control and flexibility of those trying lathes for the first time,” he said.

Thankfully, most of us will not experience the impact a spinal cord can have on a person’s life. Yet, what started as a chance conversation about woodturning may have helped lift someone’s mood on that day.

Tracey sums it up best when she thanked all those involved for making the event happen.

“I wanted to thank everyone so much for your time, kindness and generosity yesterday,” she wrote. “It is rare to see so many male patients engaged with a craft and the woodturning was such a brilliant activity for them to be involved in. It gave a number of patients who have not joined in activities previously a real boost to try woodturning and we are so grateful.”

**Photos kindly shared by Middlesex Woodturners.**

## Christmas Jumper Competition



Keith Goddard (centre) was the winner of the most elegant and Mike Pearson (left) was the winner of the gaudiest.

The prizes this year were jars of honey donated by club apiarist Geoff Selly – pictured on right above.



# Lidded boxes - Mike Fitz

With his wife, Mike has run a family woodworking and woodturning business in Harpenden designing and making fine wooden collectible articles since 1976. Mike Fitz has been working with wood all his working life.

For the club night Mike chose to demonstrate small lidded boxes. This turned out to be a masterclass in high quality and time efficient turning. Over the years, Mike has developed a number of specialist turning tools that allow him to work quickly and consistently. As the photo below shows, his range of box and lid design are quite varied – over the years his instinctive sense of design has served him well. The members were most appreciative of the time he gave to share with us his skill.

[Mike Fitz Designs - Beautiful Wooden Collectibles - Home Page](#)



## Philip Francis – wooden flowers

As we remember from the last newsletter Philip Francis is a prolific and talented turner. Most of his output is sold at local fairs to raise money for charity. Phil is a versatile turner and excellent communicator who has taught woodturning at the Queens Park Arts Centre in Aylesbury for over 20 years.



He took time at our club night to demonstrate and explain just one of his many projects. He explained that these sold very well and with a bit of practice were quite easy to make.

Thin Hazel greenwood branches are mounted directly into the chuck and then a skew is used to draw out but not remove circles of wood. Small solid wood but drilled vases were turned to display the flowers. Presentation, he noted was key and so for his stall, he has built a bespoke cabinet – below left.





# Wood dust and toxic timbers – Chris Squires and Allen Kaye

We all know of the beauty of wood and as a material generally considered safe to use. It is important however to know that as woodworkers and turners our exposure to wood dust can be hazardous to our health. Having said this all the evidence suggests that as hobby turners our risks are quite low but this should not stop us from taking precautions. Even sweeping up the workshop with a stiff brush or cleaning out with compressed air needs seeing as a source of airborne dust.

There are good sources of information on the web and we have found a few links for you to study. The wood database in particular is a good one in that it generally lists the woods we in the UK are most likely to come across and is also searchable so when presented with a new wood type, we can check how careful we need to be.

Two to start with are Oak and Beech. We would not normally think of these as dangerous and implements made of these are not but the dust from these two is surely to be avoided.

The term sensitiser is often seen and this indicates that after some exposure to such wood, one can get an allergic reaction – sometimes an irreversible one. Typical examples of sensitisers are yew, beech, mahogany, redwood and teak. Laburnum is widely regarded as the most hazardous native species.

A further risk comes with woods that are not seasoned or kiln dried. I love to turn spalted woods but I understand that if not kiln dried the fungal spores which causes the spalting effect can be still be active. Repurposed wood can sometime contain treatments that should also be taken account of.

Being aware of our own state of health is important as we know some people are more susceptible to dust – heavy smokers for example. There are also some peculiar ones for example if you are allergic to aspirin then be very cautious of willow or birch wood.

We restate precautions that I guess are already known but in the spirit of preparing for the new year, they are listed below. If you were given any tokens for Axminster or Screwfix then you might want to spend a bit of cash here...

To repeat, the risks to hobby turners is certainly low but if you want to be careful then think about the following:

- Work in well ventilated areas
- Wash and shower after long sessions.
- Use appropriate gloves and wash work clothes frequently
- Avoid known toxic woods and check new ones
- Get your PPE up to scratch (and use it) – for long periods turning think about a powered helmet
- Avoid creating dust if possible by using sharp tools

[Wood Allergies and Toxicity | The Wood Database](#)

[Bing Videos](#) (Mike Peace)

[Wood Toxicity Table – WoodBin](#)

# AWGB SEMINAR 2024 – Report Part 2 by Gordon Cookson

These are the remaining images and ideas that sparked Gordons eye at the seminar.

SIMON HOPE for a Sphere Box with Wooden Threaded Inserts to hold the two halves together.



His lathe had a fold away tailstock, which I want to make for my 26lb tailstock on a 1900s lathe.



### Further projects that caught Gordons eye:

NEIL JOYNT Embellishing a Platter with Pyrography, Dremel and Embellishing Waxes.



KADE BOLGER A Water Droplet Box (left) . At one stage the start of the long spike was inside the MT2 hole in the headstock.

ROLLY MUNRO Carving with a variety of homemade cutters, files and rasps following the wood grain lines. (below)



I would recommend the seminar to members - I always enjoy attending.

Gordon Cookson

# For Sale and Wanted

## For Sale

### Graduate bowl lathe

Philip Francis has a Union Graduate bowl lathe + chuck, 3 phase - £300, buyer collect. Proceeds towards workshop dust extraction at the Aylesbury Queens Art Centre.

Please contact him if you are interested [philipfrancis51@yahoo.com](mailto:philipfrancis51@yahoo.com)

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### Vicmarc VL175SH lathe

Several chucks and an extractor are also available separately see images. The current owner also has a number of woodturning tools available.

As a note the lathe is approx 2m in length so a reasonable size workshop will be required.

The current owner is willing to assist in relocating the lathe using his van



If you are interested in the first instance please contact  
Dave Washer Mobile 07546 612450

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## Evolution Jaws, Tool rests and carving tools for sale

In April last year, Dave Deakin in Potters Bar visited the club night with his son and sold some wood he had spare. He now offers a number of as-new jaws within the Evolution range. A quick check on the web will show these are high quality and very expensive jaws but he is willing to negotiate what I think are some very generous discounts. As an example the set of colossus jaws are being sold by Axminster for £89.00 but Dave is looking for upwards of £50.

The rest of the items with indicative prices are – Jaw mounts (£25), A jaws (£28), C Jaws (£30), Piranah Jaws (£54), 30cm expansion Pin Jaws (£55), 115 Soft Jaws (£20), Face Plate rings (£17), 3" Face plate (£6) Woodscrew chuck (£20) He also is selling a full set of Ashley Iles carving chisels (to be negotiated). Photos below.

If you are interested please contact him e-mail - [dave.deako16@gmail.com](mailto:dave.deako16@gmail.com)  
or Telephone - 01707 653391





## Wanted

### Second hand sharpening system and accessories

If you can help please contact Mike Pearson at [mikepearson1@btinternet.com](mailto:mikepearson1@btinternet.com)

### Axminster-type Pen Press

If you have a pen press that you are willing to part with, Andrew would be more than pleased to offer a fair price for it. My large woodworking vice is ruining too many pens.....

Contact: Andrew Lee 07717760812



# Off Centre

## Woodturning from a different angle

Reflection by David Evans

Christmas and the approaching new year always bring moments for reflection. I look back on my year of woodturning with mixed feelings – mostly positive.

One highlight being the collaboration between Middlesex Woodturners Association and Herts & Beds Woodturners. A small band of our woodturning colleagues giving up a couple of hours of their time on a demonstration may change the lives of some of the patients at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore.

I understand negotiations with event organiser and charity Horatio's Garden are ongoing, but that regular demonstrations are in the offing. I've said this before, but I'm always impressed at how the craft we practice (and our club) is so good at bringing people together.

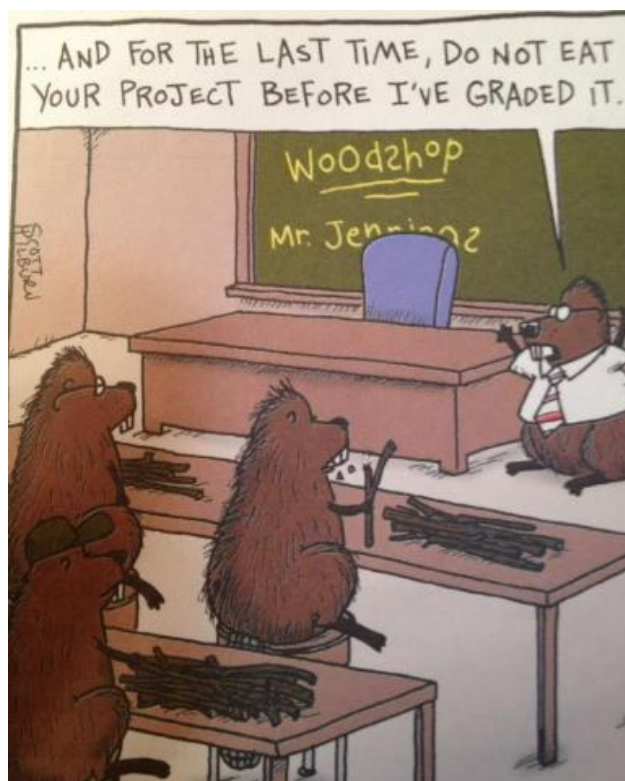
The new year will bring the inevitable resolutions. For me that's get the workshop built, turn some of the cherry piled up at the bottom of the garden and enter a few more pieces into the monthly competition. I'll leave 'winning' a place until the following year. Or maybe the year after!

For now, I'll wish you all a Merry Christmas and healthy new year and look forward to seeing you all for inspiration and motivation in 2025!

David Evans is a novice woodturner. If you've got an idea for **Off Centre** come and talk to him on a club night or email [info@hertsandbedswoodturners.co.uk](mailto:info@hertsandbedswoodturners.co.uk)



## Laughter corner





# Poetry Corner

## ADVICE TO CHILDREN EVERYWHERE IN THE RUN UP TO CHRISTMAS NIGHT

Hello children don't despair  
A few more sleeps, we're nearly there  
Here's some advice for when I visit  
Some instructions, quite explicit  
I spoke to Rudolph on the phone  
In Reindeer speak, just that alone  
Christmas Night set a drink by your bed  
We both agree, that's what we said  
And don't forget, something yummy,  
Something tasty for our tummy  
Which if empty for our reindeer ride  
We do assure is just not funny

I like sherry, Rudo likes pies from the mince pie larder  
Leave them out and we'll work harder  
Write me a letter to tell and show  
Otherwise how can I know  
Your favoured list of toys for play  
For lovely fun on Christmas Day  
I make no promise but I'll do my best  
To keep you happy in your request  
Show me for sure how good you are  
Don't leave the naughty door ajar  
Then savvy Santa, I'll remain  
This year, each year, and once again.



*Revealed exclusively  
for Woodbits – your  
Santa doubles as our  
resident poet Martin  
Sexton, recently seen  
as Santa at a number  
of primary Schools in  
Watford.*

Santa Martin. 4th December 2024