



# WOODBITS NEWSLETTER Issue 234 November 2025

## SHAVINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### Welcome to the November 2025 newsletter.

In November we were treated to a most interesting demonstration by Chris Fisher AKA the Blind Woodturner. He created a textured and coloured Christmas decoration from a square blank and for me it was a great reminder of how important touch can be when turning, especially when we need to be rubbing a bevel when cutting the wood.

**CHRISTMAS CLUB NIGHT** Our next meeting will be a club night where we are planning a few interesting presentations on several different subjects, delivered by volunteers from amongst our own members. This will be alongside the usual Christmas quiz, raffle, mince pies, festive nibbles, sales table, competitions; and plenty of time to meet and socialise with other members.

You can also contribute by taking part in the following:

**CHRISTMAS COMPETITIONS** The competition tables are an important part of our club activity. They encourage us to vary the things that we make, which in turn helps to develop new skills. The subjects this month are a Dice Shaker for Beginners ( that's going to be very handy during the annual Monopoly game ) and a Winged Bowl for Advanced. ( also useful for nibbles before Christmas lunch ). As usual, the Open competition is for any other turned items that you have made.

The MOST IMPORTANT competition will be the Classiest and the Tackiest Christmas jumpers. Please wear yours for a chance to win one of the splendid prizes.

**CHRISTMAS DISPLAY TABLE** It is always good to see the breadth of skills available at the club, and although we are primarily a Wood Turning Club, for our Christmas Club Night please bring anything else that you have been making in your workshops. For example, I am currently working on a Celtic Cross and will be displaying it for your appreciation, discussion and comment, so please join me by bringing anything you have been making.

Outside of meetings, the club will be active at Letchworth Mens Shed, attending their Christmas Fair on the 6th December where your donations of Christmas Trees and Decorations will be on sale for club funds.

See you all on the 9th December

Adam Blackie

Chairman

# CONTENTS

SHAVINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN .....	1
Club News .....	3
November Competition .....	3
Meetings Calendar .....	6
Competition Subjects.....	6
A new member reflects – Paul Ruck .....	7
Training Review – Dave Washer .....	7
TOOL LENDING LIBRARY UPDATE .....	9
Demonstration by Chris Fisher Review by Tony Taylor .....	10
A day at the Men’s Shed – Nikki James .....	11
Xmas Fair reports.....	12
Poetry Corner.....	15
Christmas Puzzles.....	16
Quiz .....	16
Wordsearch.....	17

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# Club News

## November Competition

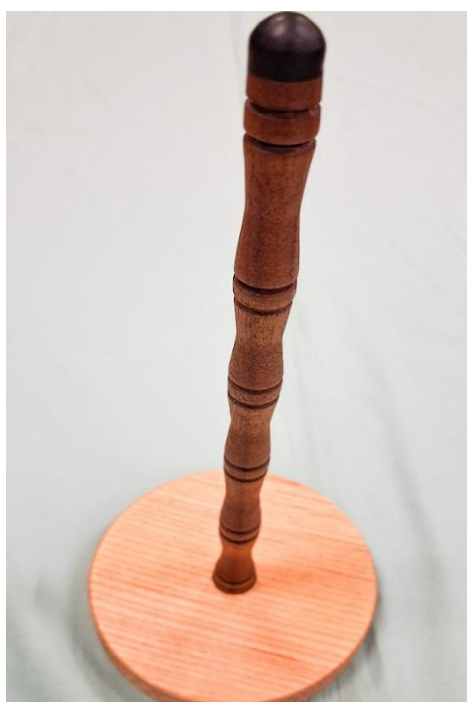
### Beginners



1<sup>st</sup> Patrick Stileman



2<sup>nd</sup> Gary Atkins



3<sup>rd</sup> Keith Sutton

## Advanced



1<sup>st</sup> Peter Haore



2<sup>nd</sup> Peter Kemp

Professionals  
Choice

3<sup>rd</sup> Tony Taylor



Open



1<sup>st</sup> Tony Taylor



2<sup>nd</sup> Grahame Lester

## Meetings Calendar

### 2025

December	9 <sup>th</sup>	Club / Fun night
Jan 26	13 <sup>th</sup>	Gary Rance
February	10 <sup>th</sup>	Mike Wood
March	10 <sup>th</sup>	Stuart King
April	14 <sup>th</sup>	AGM+

## Competition Subjects

2025/6

### **Beginners**

Dec	Dice shaker
Jan	20 to 30 cm spurtle
Feb	12 to 15cm diameter bowl
March	Tea light holder

### **Advanced**

Winged bowl
"Apothecary" vase
Something offset
Textured bowl



## A new member reflects – Paul Ruck

Having joined the H&B Woodturners after the summer, I was not sure what to expect, was it going to be a bunch of cranky old geezers who just get together for a drink and a chat. How wrong my idea was. I have attended the Thursday turning sessions every week and have always looked forward to meeting the regulars. They were not cranky or boring. I have found them all very interesting and helpful as we are sharing a common interest.

The vast knowledge, detailed experience and brilliant expertise is eagerly offered and in the first 12 weeks I have learnt so much. I never realised how quickly they could teach me how to chisel, which chisel to use, and how to use a lathe, band saw and belt sander.

I must be having a great time, as I travel 1 hour each way to “The Shed”. I find it very worthwhile and would not miss the opportunity.

I look forward to continuing my attendance, even though I am able to turn at home.

Regards/Paul Ruck

## Training Review – Dave Washer

Four of our club members took part in a Training Day hosted by Gary Rance, the day started with a coffee and quick chat about the format of the day. Once the coffee was finished we moved into the workshop housing 4 lathes allowing us all to work on separate machines.

Gary began by demonstrating the process of chasing a male and female thread, advising the benefits of selecting a suitable timber (in our case boxwood) to finally turning a base and lid to complete a lidded box.

We all selected some stock boxwood and set up on each lathe, once turned to round, the timber was divided into lid and base ( $1/3 - 2/3$ ) several practice cuts were made for a male thread with Gary providing guidance along the way, once a suitable male thread had been cut the lid section was inserted into the chuck in readiness for a female thread to be cut. It's worth noting that it is important to maintain parallel surfaces for the male and female thread otherwise when the lid and base are screwed together they will bind making it difficult if not impossible to close the gap between base and lid.

The lid was hollowed out and using a relief tool, a groove was cut at the bottom of the hollowed lid, this prevents the thread chasing tool from striking the bottom of the lid and damaging the cut thread. Small cuts at this stage are key and trying the lid after each cut will prevent a disaster whereby the lid thread becomes too big for the base.

Finally, the lid was then gently screwed onto the base of the pot to complete our finished lidded pot. This is just a shortened description of the content of the day. We all had a full-on busy day thanks to Gary's patient and positive support. The day was full of brilliant technique and useful hints and tips for us all to take home.

Thanks once again Gary for your help and support. Photos of the day on following page.





# TOOL LENDING LIBRARY UPDATE

This is a reminder that we have a popular lending library of the more esoteric or expensive tools that turners use infrequently. It's available to any club member free of charge.

For those new to the club the tool lending Library can be accessed via a link at the bottom of the Membership page on our website - <https://hertsandbedswoodturners.co.uk/membership>

The value to the club is that:

- Club members can try out new tools before committing to an expensive purchase
- Club members can borrow a tool for a specific job

Here is a list of the items currently available.

1. Micro-drill detailer kit - inc 15 assorted cutters
2. Robert Sorby ProEdge Sharpening System
3. Lion Art Deep Hollowing Tool
4. Crown Spiralling Tool + Knurling Tool
5. Hamlet Brother System 2 Deep Hollowing system.
6. 3/8 Captive Ring Cutter
7. Bowl Coring System.
8. Axminster AWSL Benchtop Lathe
9. Carving jig.
10. Pyrography Machine
11. Pen and Keyring Turning Kit and Bottle Opener Mandrel
12. Long Hole Boring Kit
13. Sphere Jig
14. 16 TPI Male and Female thread chasing tool.
15. Fluting jig with index system.
16. Threading Jig.

Once the loan is completed, we ask that you share a little about your experience of the tools with the club. E.g. Show and tell what you made or an article for the monthly newsletter.

Finally, if you have suggestions for other tools for the library please get in touch.

Tool Library Contact

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# Demonstration by Chris Fisher Review by Tony Taylor

Photos by Andrew Holwerda and James Blackie



Chris is well known as the Blind Woodturner, having lost his vision in 2008. Remarkably, he taught himself to turn four years after this, despite never having seen a turner at work. He now produces a wide range of turnings and is very active in demonstrating countrywide.

His subject for this occasion was a Christmas tree. He started with a 2 inch square piece mounted between centres and rounded it with a roughing gouge. A chucking tenon was formed with a parting tool and with the piece held in a chuck, it was tapered to the required tree outline with the roughing gouge. The bottom of the branches was defined by a cut in with the parting tool then the individual branches in the same way.

A spindle gouge was used to shape the undersides of the branches. The precision of these moves was truly remarkable. Chris explained that having had normal sight meant that he still had a clear mental picture of form.

Next, the trunk was formed with the beading/parting tool. The pot was shaped with three beads cut with a beading tool and these further defined by cuts with a narrow parting tool. Chris went on to decorate the tree first with a vibrating engraver then with a coat of black acrylic paint. Here again it was most impressive how neatly the paint was applied.



After drying with a hair dryer, gold cream was worked all over the branches by finger tip. The trunk was finished with silver cream and the pot painted red.



Chris finished his demonstration by showing a gadget for marking out the chucking points for bowls. It consisted of a metal disc with a central hole to receive the tailstock live centre and holes set at various points to suit different chuck sizes. A scribing point was pressed through the chosen hole with the work piece rotating. A handy arrangement for all of us.

Apart from the interest in the making of a very effective decorative Christmas tree there were the lessons to be learned of the advantages of orderliness and attention to the senses of sound and touch. The members were very appreciative of the effort Chris made in travelling to demonstrate and the inspiration which he provided.

# A day at the Men's Shed – Nikki James

Having tried woodturning many decades ago at school, I took my finished project home for my Dad and I paused on the way for the professional opinion of my step-dad who was a carpenter and joiner. Much impressed, he declared he might take up wood turning when he retired and so he did. By this time, I had joined the RAF and so never did get to do any woodturning with him. Years later, no longer an aircraft mechanic but unfortunately still not retired, I thought I would have a go at woodturning once again myself but had mostly forgotten whatever I might have once known.

My step-dad was no longer with us and so without anyone to ask about which equipment to buy, in September I toddled off to purchase myself a lathe - and bandsaw and grinder and whatever else would fit in the tiny workshop I had just built myself! I popped a bit of wood on my new lathe, managed a few passable coves and beads and then I ground to a halt.

I do not possess the patience to sit still watching YouTube for long and rarely get enough time to sit reading so I was unsure what a beginner ought to be attempting.

I joined the club this October and was made to feel very welcome. I was informed that there was a woodturning day on a Thursday in Letchworth and, although it was named a Men's Shed, they did not object to girls attending so the next Thursday I was able to, I went along. I was again made to feel welcome and after Chris had passed me on the safety test, I was set up on a lathe to have a go myself. Adam then waded in to sort out the bad habits I had managed to learn whilst home alone; I was standing rigidly face on and moving my arms from side to side.

Adam soon had me standing correctly and having to make much less effort; he also demonstrated that I did not need to grip the tools for dear life! He showed me the correct way to use the tools, how to present them and in what direction to go and so not long after, I had produced a Christmas tree in the middle of the bit of wood I was practising on and multiple coves and beads. I am still terrified of the skew but at least am now determined to master rather than avoid it and I now feel like I have some idea what I am doing rather than blindly blundering along guessing.

I am so very grateful to all at the Men's Shed who were kind enough to take time out of their day to help me and can heartily recommend that anyone in need of help should go along.

Nikki



Left to right - Colin Newman, Steve Hart, Nikki James, Paul Ruck and Dave Washer



# Xmas Fair reports

We have three photo reports this month – the first is from Philip Francis. He summed up his experience in the following shorthand way –

*Chesham, Saturday 22nd Nov.*

*Cold, rained all day, packing away a wet gazebo, £65 sales.*

*Luckily we enjoy woodturning.*



The second report is from Peter Clark who sends us a photo of his Xmas items for sale – nicely titled 'Out of the wood they come.'



Peter will be at the following events – if you get the chance pop along and say hello.

Friday, 28th November,  
Letchworth Settlement 2.00pm -7pm

Arlesey Christmas lights switch on  
Saturday 29th November  
Arlesey WI Hall 3.00pm-6.00pm

Baldock Christmas Fair  
Either in St Mary's Hall or in the Arts and Heritage Centre  
Saturday 6th December  
11.00am- 4.30pm

And finally from three of the four 'Plenty O'Shavings' team – that is myself, Chris Squires and Phil Walters. (Our fourth member, Keith Lucas being in Australia at the time).

We attended the two day Xmas Fair at Oaklands a few weeks ago. As ever we had a very enjoyable time and had a good bit of fun. We took three tables which were quite expensive at £280 in total and the first day was quiet and a bit worrying. Thankfully the citizens of St Albans came out on Sunday and we collectively took just over £600 in total.

I think we have learnt from this together with the Letchworth Steam Fair that 'Craft Fair' events are definitely to be preferred over other themed events that happen to have a Craft Marquee on the side. We worked at not duplicating items between the three of us and thankfully, no other woodturning stand was present.

Photos of the three of us are following – notice my homage to Phil Francis – a series of small bud vases. The only difference with mine is that I could never get the hang of the woodturned and stained flowers which are a feature of his and my solution is to 3D print several of them in different coloured filaments.

We routinely take a lathe to demonstrate turning – simple and quickly finished items such as penguins, Xmas trees and small vases. People do seem to be genuinely surprised at the transformation of a 'bit of wood' into a finished decorative or functional item and even if the ones that stop to watch us don't actually buy anything, we feel that we are spreading the word and keeping hobby woodturning alive.

We were asked by the college to take part in an event next year – they were particularly interested in our focus on recycled materials and wood from local sources. They also were very keen for us to demonstrate turning again.

On a negative note, however we were a tad distressed about a couple of the stall holders we met – in one case, at least, a woman had paid £140 for a table, had overnight costs in a hotel and then sold absolutely nothing.



Allen – and yes, some of my clocks do go backwards





Top to bottom –  
Phil and Chris

# Poetry Corner

Martin told me about his inspiration for this month's poem.

*We had a very successful concert in St Leonard's recently (Andy Massey, pianist, lives just round the corner from me). It is a marvellous setting, particularly the acoustics and atmosphere and creates very intimate connection with the wonderful musicians who have graced us with these musical adventures over the last few years, not least with the STEINWAY piano presented to St Leonard's by a local VIP. This prompted the following poem*

## THE SCHUBERT TROUT IN ST LEONARD'S CHALKY FLINTY STREAM CAUGHT ON A STEINWAY SPLIT STRINGS ROD QUINTET ON SAT 8TH NOV 2025

Neither brown, nor rainbow was played in St Leonard's chalky, flinty, stream  
On a Steinway split strings rod quintet for everybody's dream  
But the Schubert Trout, never caught so well before  
At this piano trio's metamorphose to a fivesome with a treat in store

There were dry flies nymphs and mayflies but above all, joyful, weep filled eyes  
Evoking streamside summer's evenings in this musical surprise  
Such successful enticement in presenting the fishy bait  
For the fourth expectant movement one could hardly wait

The brook's flow and depth increased with viola and double bass  
Added so much to the opus , all present took up the chase  
These well-known notes implanted in everybody's mind  
Never played better, leaving all other renditions so far behind

Privilege scored again in these acoustic halls  
Amidst our medieval drawings on our medieval walls  
A heavenly place for this evening concert's ease  
If ever there was a better, this one was sent to please.

Martin Sexton. 9th November 2025

# Christmas Puzzles

## Quiz

1. Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
2. How many ghosts show up in A Christmas Carol?
3. Which of the following is not a hardwood – Yew, Apple, Walnut, Balsa
4. What is the difference between Japanese hand saws and UK/USA ones?
5. How many gifts were given in total in 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' song?
6. Which sandpaper grit is the least coarse – 240 or 120?
7. In which Christmas movie does Tom Hanks play 6 of the characters?
8. In which country is it tradition to eat KFC for Christmas dinner?
9. In the movie Love Actually, which character sang 'Christmas Is All Around'?
10. The wood of which tree was the most popular choice for water pipes until the 1700s, as unlike other woods it does not decay when kept permanently wet?
11. What is traditionally hidden inside a Christmas pudding?
12. Which city has been donating Trafalgar Square's Christmas tree to London every year since 1947?
13. If you're born on Christmas day, what's your star sign?
14. What is the best-selling Christmas single of all time?
15. What time will the Kings' speech be on Christmas Day?
16. What colour are mistletoe berries?
17. In Home Alone 2, who does Kevin run into in the hotel lobby?
18. What colour suit did Santa wear until Coca Cola rebranded him in red?
19. What decoration do elves traditionally have on their shoes?
20. Miracle On 34th Street centres on what real-life department store?
21. Which Christmassy song plays at the end of the 1988 film Die Hard?
22. What is the opening line to Shakin' Stevens' 'Merry Christmas Everyone'?
23. When do the 12 days of Christmas start?
24. What fruit is traditionally put inside a Christmas stocking?
25. According to tradition, when should you have your Christmas decorations down by?
26. Traditionally, when should you start making a Christmas pudding?
27. The bark of which tree is also known as "nature's aspirin"?
28. Which U.S. state was the first to declare Christmas Day an official holiday?
29. What is the only country named after a tree?
30. What's type of tree is most commonly used for Christmas trees?
31. In the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' what was the gift given on the seventh day?
32. In the 2008 Gavin & Stacey Christmas special what gifts does Nessa give to Everyone?
33. Stollen is a traditional fruit cake in which country?
34. How many reindeer drive Santa's sleigh (including Rudolph)?
35. Often used to make walking or riding sticks, what is the more common name for the sloe tree?

Answers on Page 17

## Wordsearch

*Courtesy of Midlands Woodturners*

L	A	B	U	R	N	U	M	U	I	V	E	O	A	K
R	L	A	P	O	P	M	O	A	H	D	N	H	S	A
E	D	L	M	W	V	C	K	B	H	V	N	H	V	O
D	O	S	I	E	R	H	J	U	Y	O	Y	C	E	T
W	O	A	N	B	E	E	C	H	H	C	G	R	E	E
O	W	A	D	I	R	B	O	P	T	H	F	A	E	A
O	L	C	I	R	E	S	T	W	E	Y	N	L	N	K
D	A	A	F	C	E	U	P	L	Y	W	O	O	D	Y
X	D	C	I	H	N	S	Y	C	A	M	O	R	E	X
L	N	I	N	T	E	R	R	W	A	L	N	U	T	M
I	A	A	S	L	V	A	R	I	B	N	Y	L	P	A
L	S	E	A	S	O	L	E	L	M	I	A	T	G	P
A	H	W	T	H	I	P	H	L	O	N	C	R	H	L
C	E	D	A	R	A	O	C	O	M	E	C	L	O	E
O	G	N	A	M	R	P	R	W	I	L	P	I	N	E

LILAC	MANGO
LABURNUM	YEW
CEDAR	ACACIA
OAK	CHERRY
ASH	MINDI
MAHOGANY	TEAK
PINE	BIRCH
BALSA	PLYWOOD
WILLOW	veneer
WALNUT	CHESTNUT
BEECH	SANDALWOOD
SYCAMORE	POPLAR
REDWOOD	LARCH
ELM	MAPLE

## Answers to Christmas Quiz

1. Germany
2. Four: former business partner Jacob Marley, and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future.
3. Yew
4. Japanese saws cut on the pull stroke
5. 364
6. 1994
7. The Polar Express. He plays Hero Boy, Father, Conductor, Hobo, Scrooge and Santa Claus.
8. Japan
9. Billy Mack, played by Bill Nighy
10. Elm
11. A coin
12. Oslo, Norway
13. Capricorn
14. Bing Crosby - 'White Christmas', according to the Guinness Book of World Records.
15. 3pm
16. White
17. Donald Trump
18. Green
19. Bells
20. Macy's
21. Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne - 'Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!'
22. "Snow is falling, all around me"
23. Christmas Day
24. Orange or tangerine
25. January 5th
26. On a Sunday, five weeks before Christmas
27. Willow Tree
28. Oklahoma
29. Brazil Tree
30. Nordmann Fir
31. Seven swans a-swimming
32. One chocolate each from a box of Celebrations
33. Germany
34. Nine
35. The Blackthorn

Merry Xmas - Allen