WOODBITS
NEWSLETTER
Issue 245
October 2026

Shavings from the Chairman

Welcome to this month's newsletter.

As autumn gives way to thoughts of Christmas, this issue brings together the things that make our club worth being part of: sharing ideas, enjoying our craft and supporting the wider community. There is plenty to read, and a couple of opportunities where your help could make a real difference.

Please note the Christmas Craft Fayre Appeal. Contributions will help raise funds for the club and support Horatio's Garden and Letchworth Men in Sheds, while introducing more people to woodturning. If you can spare a turned item or two, please bring them to our November meeting. Simple decorations are welcome; you do not need to make something elaborate to contribute.

Our relationship with Adeyfield Community Centre is also important to the future of our meetings. The Adeyfield Neighbourhood Association AGM takes place on 21 November at 2pm, and there is an invitation for club members to consider joining the centre's management committee. With four meetings a year, this is an opportunity to give something back and help shape the future of our meeting venue. You will find further details and Julie's contact number in this issue.

For ideas and inspiration, turn to the report on Steven Kearvell's October demonstration, with its focus on texturing and colouring an ornamental platter. Our competition pages offer more projects to enjoy, while Pen Makers Corner explores options for converting pens to pencils. There is also news of a new crafts shop in Letchworth, a glimpse of my purchases at the AWGB festival, and the next instalment of the napkin rings series.

Peter's editor's note is a reminder that this newsletter belongs to all of us. Please let him know what you enjoy reading and what you would like to see included. A project update, a useful discovery or a few photographs can all give another member an idea to take into the workshop.

Looking ahead, Richard Peers joins us on the **10th of November,** followed by our Club Night on the 8th December. November's competition subjects are a Christmas decoration for beginners and a wall plaque for advanced turners, so there is plenty of scope for your own interpretation. Thank you to everyone who contributes to our meetings and newsletter. I look forward to seeing you in November—until then, enjoy your turning.

Adam Blackie

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A Note from the Editor

This newsletter is one of our main ways of keeping club members informed about club activities and the wider world of woodturning, whether we turn professionally or as a hobby.
It belongs to all of us—not to me, the Chairman or any other individual—and always will. Everyone has a voice, from beginners to professionals with fifty or more years' experience. As editor, I'd welcome your feedback on what you appreciate about the newsletter and why, and what you'd like to see featured.
Please send your feedback to hertsandbedsnews@gmail.com

Peter

Club News

Meetings Calendar

2026		
November	10	Richard Peers
December	8	Club Night
2027		
January ‘27	11	Gary Rance
February	9	Andy James
March	9	Steven Gordon
April	12	AGM+
May	11	Ian Ethel
June	8	Club Night
July	13	Frans Brown

Competition Subjects

2026		
	Beginners	**Advanced**
November	Xmas Decoration	Wall Plaque
December	20 to 30cm Long Spurtle	Textured Platter
2027		
January	Paper Weight	Offset Goblet
February	Ring Finger	Wool Bowl
March	12 to 15cm Dia. Bowl	Natural Edged Vase

Adeyfield Community Centre News

An Important Opportunity for Our Club: Help Shape Adeyfield Community Centre's Future



Herts and Beds Woodturners has an important opportunity to strengthen its relationship with Adeyfield Community Centre and contribute to its future. Centre manager Julie Banks has invited our club to attend the Adeyfield Neighbourhood Association AGM on 21 November at 2pm.

The trustees and management committee are keen to expand the committee and would welcome interest from members of Herts and Beds Woodturners. Joining would give a club member the opportunity to help shape how the centre is managed and run.

The committee meets four times a year, usually in the evening. Members support Julie in ensuring that the centre serves the local community and covers its expenditure.

Our relationship with the centre is vital to the future of our club meetings. This is an important opportunity to have a voice in its management while giving something back to the community. If you are interested in joining the Adeyfield Community Centre committee, Julie would be happy to discuss what is involved.

Please call Julie on 07979 390 789.
Adam Blackie

October Competition

Beginners



1st Gary Atkins



2nd Tim Taylor



3rd Andy Mackness

Andy also won the Chairman's Choice

Advanced



1st James Blackie





2nd Tony Taylor
Tony has named this piece “Space Warp” and also wins this month’s Professional’s Choice





3rd Patrick Stileman

Open



1st Peter Kemp



2nd Harvey Alison



3rd James Blackie

Christmas Craft Fayre Appeal

As Christmas approaches, several of us will again attend craft fairs and donate the proceeds to club funds to help make 2027 more successful.

We will also donate some items to Horatio's Garden and Letchworth Men in Sheds for sale at their own craft fairs. Both will distribute our leaflets, potentially attracting interest in our club while helping to promote woodturning across the UK.

Some of us have already started, donating simple Christmas trees to Horatio's Garden. Fitted with a metal ring and decorated with inexpensive ribbon available online, these make great Christmas decorations and sell very well at craft fairs.

If you would like to contribute, please bring your items to the next club meeting in November. I'll be happy to distribute them on behalf of the club, the charities or both.



Adam Blackie

Pen Makers Corner

I know that some pen kit suppliers can supply both pen and pencil versions of some of their kits, which is nice if you want to make a matching set. However, I have discovered that Beaufort Ink have a couple of useful items that I have tested and found to be a convenient way of taking just one kit and being able to make it as either a pen or a pencil, or indeed, to switch it from one to the other and back again!

The first of these is the Endurance Pencil – Same shape as a Parker G2 refill and should fit any of Beaufort's Parker style pens. Compatibility with Chinese kits from other suppliers is not guaranteed. That is to say, I haven't done any serious testing yet.



https://www.beauforti nk.co.uk/pen-refills/parker-style-pen-refills-endurance-pencil/parker-style-pen-refill-endurance-pencil-conversion

The second option is this Pencil refill. Should also fit as a replacement for Parker pens.



https://www.beaufortink.co.uk/pen-kits/beaufort-pen-kit-spares/pencil-insert-for-converting-ballpoints-to-pencils

Peter Clark

October Demonstration by Steven Kearvell

In October, the club welcomed demonstrator Steven Kearvell for a return visit. On this occasion, Steven demonstrated his texturing and colouring techniques by creating an ornamental platter.

His demonstration began by truing up the sides of a platter blank, before carving a 55 mm diameter mortice using a parting tool. To add further interest, Steven used a skew to create a concave base to the mortice. He then marked out and created a foot for the platter, and chamfered it inwards to help prevent the piece from rocking.



Steven shaped the outside of the platter using pull cuts to remove excess wood and form the desired outline. The surface was then sanded from 120 to 400 grit, and sanding sealer was applied. He emphasised the importance of applying sanding sealer thinly, advising two or three thin coats rather than one heavy application. Between coats, the piece was burnished with shavings. Once the sanding sealer was complete, Steven applied wax to the outside in thin coats to achieve a beautiful sheen.



The platter was then flipped over and secured in the mortice. The front face was trued up, then sealed and sanded in the same way as the back.
To create the textured surface, Steven used a carbide cutting tool fitted with a two-inch circular cutter. He dragged the tool across the front of the piece in two passes to produce the pattern. He then used a nylon brush wheel to clean up the texture, followed by sanding sealer spray to help the finish settle within the textured areas. After this, the face was sprayed black and dried off using an air drier.

Coloured paint was then applied. Using Sonja paint, Steven selected three colours: gold, rose gold, and burnished copper. He applied the colours very thinly with a foam brush, dragging the brush across the face while the platter rotated slowly. Once the colours had dried, a spray lacquer was applied to seal the surface.

Carbide texturing tool



Black spray paint added



Coloured paint applied



After the tea break, Steven finished the platter by turning a central hollow. Before hollowing, he showed how he avoids the risk of the chisel skipping back over the completed face by using a

parting tool to create a stable starting point for the bowl gouge. Once the hollow was complete, he sanded it and oiled it, finishing the very impressive ornamental, textured platter.



I enjoyed this presentation. Steven is a very clear communicator, and I took away several useful tips and techniques.

Patrick Stileman

The following article was submitted by Gordon Cookson, Middlesex Woodturners.
I'm sure that many of us have met Gordon as he is also a member of our club.

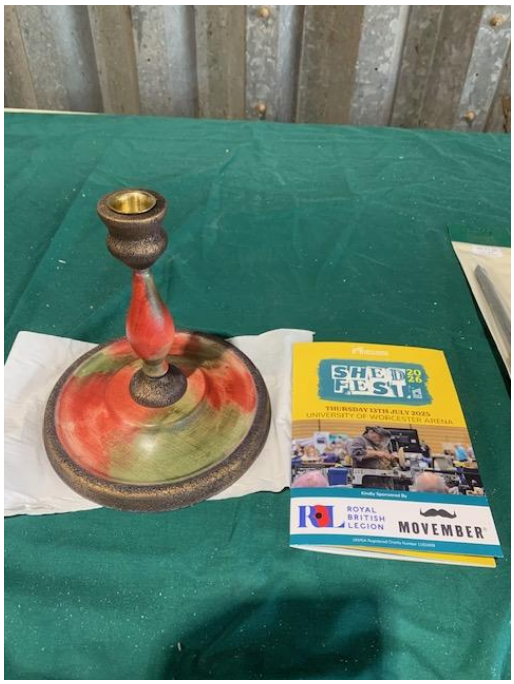
Chris Fisher – The Blind Woodturner

Chris was the demonstrator at Dalmann's Open Day on Sunday August 22, with quiet assistance by his wife Nicola away from the demo table . At first it was not at all obvious that he was blind. He just picked up the appropriate tool etc. without any difficulty. Nicola explained to me that he always carefully laid out everything he was going to need in the same places for every demo when he sets up. This meant that setting up took longer but it was so worthwhile. A good lesson for tidying up my workshop!

The demos were a coloured candlestick out of Sycamore and a bowl out of Umbilo, an African timber that Dalmann's stock.

The texturing on the candlestick was done with a small engraving tool. A black water based dye was applied with kitchen towel and followed by gold cream applied with bare fingers . Using your finger means that the cream isn't wasted.





It was interesting to watch him turn using his very sensitive fingers to guide him along with the sound produced as the chisel changed direction or the texture of the wood.

His background as a metal machinist engineer with the Military and afterwards meant that he had some understanding of the principles of turning. However when he lost his sight and the mental health issues that followed, what was he going to do. After "listening" to 600 hours of You tube by well known turners including Nick Agar and Richard Raffan and realising there were so many bad or dangerous ones around, his lathe arrived. Starting out took a long time and many failures but he persevered.

He wanted to make a vampire stake as his first project without explaining why! After eight attempts with the wood coming off the lathe, he succeeded.

The learning curve involved not only how the lathe needed to be set up but all the things a beginner turner needs to know. For bowls this meant finding the centre of the wood, fixing the faceplate

centrally, sizes for the chuck jaws to fit properly, where to start turning the inside of the bowl, angle of the gouge and the depth of the bowl inside to possibly not joining the funnel club like all of us!

Finding the centre of a bowl blank was done using a centre finder and scribing rather than a pencil. Then mark the central point with an indent. A wooden column/jig, the same diameter as the lathe mandrel, with a sharp metal point in the centre is put on the centre mark of the blank. Then the faceplate is dropped over the jig and the screws are attached to the blank. Chris made it look so easy and you forgot his blindness yet again.

The diameter for the chuck jaws was done with a centre plate with the useful holes marked with a paper sticker. Again a scribe was used rather than a pencil. Axminster Speed Sizer https://www.axminstertools.com/axminster-woodturning-speed-sizer-106795?queryID=ba9e130900f9d950b0da86882b643159

The outside shape of the bowl was based on the catenary curve principle, which is the natural shaped curve formed by holding a chain or thick rope between two points. Moving the two hanging points in, gives a steeper curve. I am not sure how this relates to the natural shapes of the Golden Ratio and Fibonacci curve. Maybe Martin Saban-Smith's new book will help!

After flattening the top surface of the bowl, he made a slight groove with a parting tool to mark the bowl wall thickness. The depth of the inside was an inch from the bottom of the recess in the base using an inch forstner bit. The depth was marked on the bit's shank. Then he made a series of grooves across the top of the bowl with a parting chisel. This helps him know where to start taking out the centre of the bowl and indeed for beginners also.



To get the bowl gouge angle to the wood right, Chris suggested a red line in the middle of the gouge flute. Then turn the gouge over until you can't see the line and then the gouge would be at the recommended 10 o'clock or 2 o'clock.

Starting with the central groove he started hollowing out the bowl. His depth jig was then used to check how thick the bottom of the bowl was.

The small separate wood piece registers the distance from the headstock upright to the front of the chuck jaws being used. The rod had been set to give a base thickness of 1". As the bowl depth is turned away, the distance between the base of the jig and the piece against the headstock will decrease.



When the depth of the bowl was getting nearly there, Chris asked for a volunteer to be blind folded with assurance that no turning would be involved having moved the the on/off variable speed control out of the way. As nobody volunteered and he had been very helpful answering my questions and letting me take pictures, I volunteered! Chris adjusted the blindfold so I couldn't see a little at the very bottom of the blindfold, I made my way to the lathe. Not knowing what he was going to ask me to do, I found the bowl and moved the tool rest a bit and started feeling the bowl. After some comments about the shape, wall thickness, end grain and pimple in the base, Chris said I was doing a bit of a critique and had jumped a lot of lessons! After my apology that I had forgotten I was supposed to be blind and having turned off and on since I was 15, I did know my way around a lathe! What he actually wanted me to do was set the tool rest at centre height for him to complete the bowl inside. This I did a bit slower but somewhat what quicker than a blind person, who hadn't come across a lathe before. After thanking me for being a good sport, he was OK with the tool rest height and went on turning. I think I actually set the rest height at slightly below centre, which is where I would put it.

He finished the bowl and used a new oil finish called Loxkin Food safe Hemp Oil. Nicola had got a free sample at the Mens Shed Fest recently!

Interestingly the beautiful curves on the outside and inside of the bowl were quite different. I mentioned this to Chris after the demo but he didn't comment as I think he was tired from the mental effort of the day. Whilst I liked both curves I am not sure I liked the difference in them on

the one bowl. I hope the picture shows the contrast. Cutting the bowl in half didn't seem a likely possibility!



It was a very good day and an inspiration of how to overcome disabilities. It made me think more about what might be involved in trying for the AWGB Tutor Badge. This should help with the sessions for wheel chair patients at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore. I am hoping that I can join the session that Dave Washer might be able to organise next year.

Dalmann's Open Days are good fun but you might have to be careful of great temptation to buy yet more wood!

Gordon Cookson

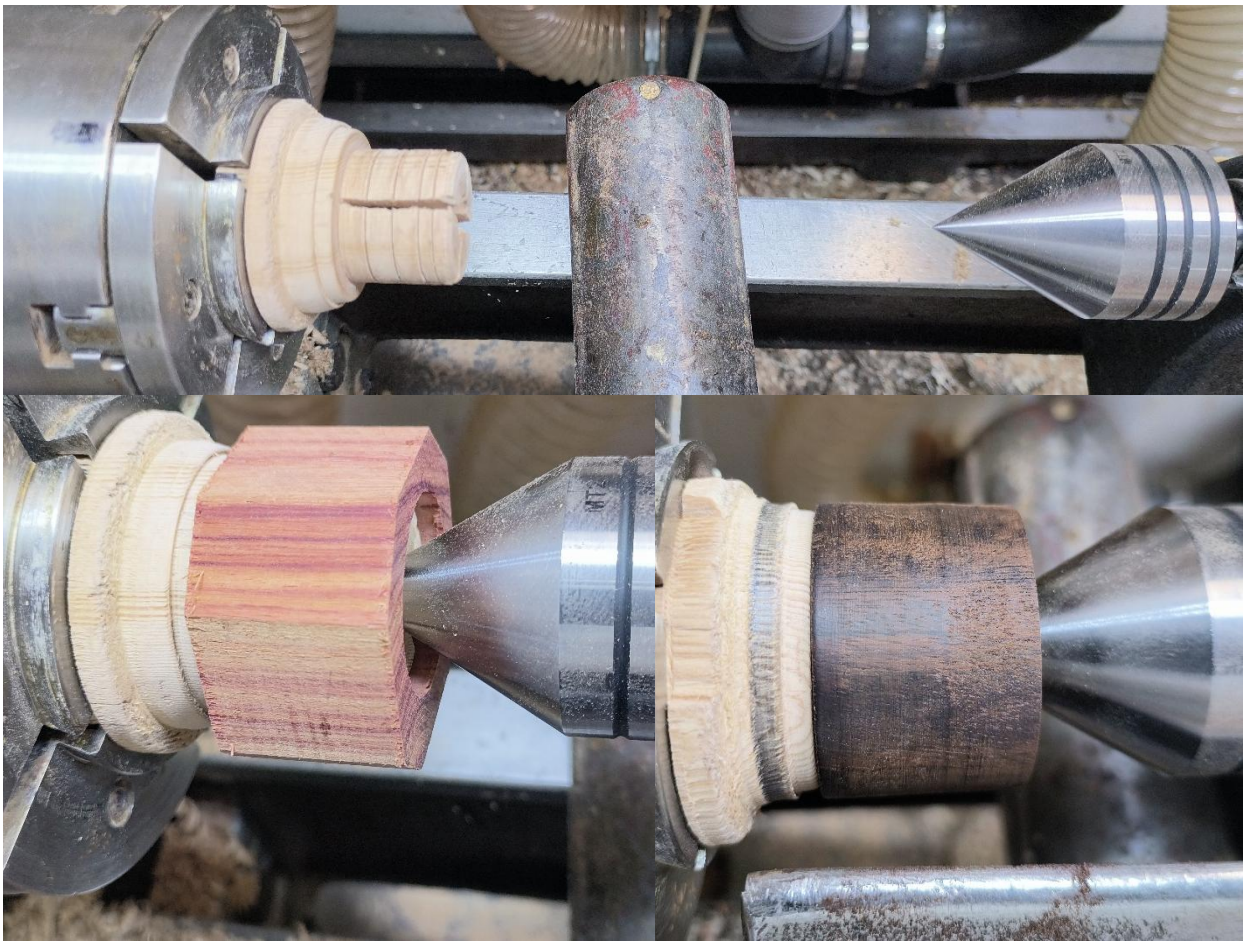
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Napkin Rings for My Daughter's Wedding: Part 2

I began this major project in July and shared an update in the August newsletter. Since then, I've been busy reorganising my workshop to create more space, buying specialist equipment for the napkin rings, and volunteering at the AWGB festival at Stratford-upon-Avon. Progress has therefore been slow, but with an April 2027 deadline, I still have a few months to move things along and keep my promise to my daughter.

This next stage was to turn the rough rings into uniform blanks—a task that proved trickier than it sounds. First, I made a specialist jig, though that sounds grander than it is. As the picture shows, it is simply a short jam chuck, rounded to approximately 31 millimetres in diameter and crosscut through the middle. Each rough blank is mounted on the chuck, then a revolving centre is brought up and pressed into it, expanding the jaws to grip the ring's inner surface. Too much pressure breaks the ring; too little lets it spin. Finding the right balance took some practice. I also tried several tools to see which was most effective and easiest to use. A three-quarter-inch French-style spindle gouge worked best, outperforming a roughing gouge, spindle gouges of various sizes and a skew chisel.

A routine helps with repetitive tasks. I found that stacking them in sixes and taking a short break after each batch worked well. I really enjoyed the process: once I found my rhythm, it felt meditative, helped by music in the background. I was especially pleased with the pile of multicoloured, exotically fragrant woodchips beneath my lathe—a result of the varied woods Mike had provided.



Next, I'll round over the edges and sand the rings.
As the box of refined blanks shows, Mike Fitz used a very sharp Forstner bit when making the rough blanks, leaving a smooth inner surface that needs only a quick sanding with 240-grit abrasive. The outside will probably need similar treatment. For this stage, I've bought a new set of chuck jaws called O'Donnell jaws—but more on those in Part 3.



Adam Blackie

New Crafts Shop in Letchworth

There is a new crafts business started recently in Letchworth Garden City. A lovely lady named Leanne who has been running the monthly Rainbow Craft Fairs in St. Marys Church House, Hitchin has started a new venture by taking a lease of a shop unit in Garden Square Shopping Centre.



Leanne rents out shelf space to other crafters for whatever they make. I have rented a single shelf for some of my pens, along with a few other items and some of my novelty clocks.

If you are in the area or live nearby it is well worth popping in to see the huge variety of beautiful and different crafts on offer and thereby also support a local business! If you want to add to the turned goods there, some shelves are still available at time of writing. Normally open Monday to Saturday 9am – 5pm



Leanne and Vicky



My shelf

Leanne can be contacted by email at info@craftsundertherainbow.com
or by phone on 07385 595730
or on Facebook messenger at Crafts under the Rainbow

Peter Clark

AWGB Festival Update

I could write at length about the fun we had at the AWGB festival on 10 and 11 October. Several club members attended, and Gary Rance and Stuart King, amongst many other RPT's, represented the Register of Professional Turners (RPTs) throughout the festival. Instead, I'll keep it brief and share the items I brought home. After months of saving my pocket money, I was able to bid successfully on several lovely items at the gala dinner auction and the silent auction held throughout the weekend.

Pictured here are my purchases, which now take pride of place at home. Several will become gifts for my daughter's wedding in April next year.



The makers starting at the top left-hand corner and going clockwise:
Stewart Furini
Emmet Kane
Emma Cook
Gary Rance
Simon Hope
Gary Rance



I also bought a Mary Rose Peppermill by Gary Rance.

And perhaps we'll see some of these excellent turners at the club next year.

Adam Blackie

Encouraging the next generation of turners

This month's new turner is the nephew of a friend of one of our club members—or connected through some equally roundabout relationship. The precise connection matters less than the encouragement it brings. Here is a young chap who has successfully made his first honey dipper, and I believe honey has a place in his family's history.



What young people make, or where they make it, matters less than creating something they value alongside an older relative or friend eager to share their skill and enthusiasm for woodturning. Long after we are gone, these young people will carry the craft forward. As club chairman, I always find it a thrill to see this happening.

On a more philosophical note, people occasionally ask why I devote so much effort to running a woodturning club and what I gain from it. There are many reasons, but one is especially personal: when I reach the great workshop in the sky and look down on what follows, I hope to see a new and enthusiastic generation of woodturners following in our footsteps.

Adam Blackie

Poetry Corner

This month we have not one, but two, poems from Martin. He was inspired by our project to make gift pens for Parliament. To quote Martin “ Since I cannot respond with woodturning from such venerable wood I thought to compose the following as hopefully my contribution to the club’s endeavour.”

MULBERRIES and M.P.’s ON SPEAKERS GREEN,WOULD YOU EVER!

Imagine the sight to ease our current world’s plight
A few moments of fun, responsibility’s respite
M.P.’s light relief, gathered on Speakers Green,
Recent action, not before seen
Dancing round the Mulberry Tree of nursery’s fame
Therefore no debate is today’s claim

Picking not berries but wood turned pens made from that arbor
Showcasing ingrained notes of that tree’s wood based harbour

But how do they hang,Mulberries and Pens, singly or in clusters?
The former, nature’s , the latter, the Herts, Beds Wood Turners’ skills showcasing lustres
Pocket nestling former scribes’ tools
For our nation’s leaders who are nobodies fools
A treasured momento from material long past
To be put to good use, signing peace pacts which last

Martin Sexton. November 2026.

And finally, Martin's regular monthly contribution.

BUZZ….BUZZ…. DRONES.

We tend to see drones as a threat
But they do have good uses, really no sweat

Sky high menace we hear of the most
Man's ill intent is still not a ghost

War like usage is always the news
But let us consider their more peaceful views

Spotting the traffic queue way ahead
Such a boon to travel it must be said

Sensing the woodlands fire in this condition of drought
A frequent life saver, there is no doubt
Both to humans and Nature who relish protection
Reducing the need for on site detection

Checking lofty roof structures, less need to be climbed
Safer repair climate is clearly defined

Now they go underwater, what saving that implies
Less scuba breathing, every diver replies

Improving marine conservation to foil El Niño
Soliciting recovery to go with the flow

Survey of crops progress in the battle for food
Help for the farmer, improving his mood

Ball and action coverage at the sporting venu
With electric decisions, now on the menu

Delivery of goods is not far off now
Sophisticated carrier with modern know how

Be thankful, technology can be used for good
They are here to stay, that's quite understood

Martin Sexton. Sept 2026