



# WOODBITS NEWSLETTER Issue 228 May 2025

## SHAVINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the May 2025 newsletter.

Last month I was delighted to see 55 members and visitors at the bowl making demonstration by James Burton. He demonstrated the basics and told us about his journey into the craft.

As our club grows, we are seeing an increasing number of new turners joining and I was delighted to attend a basics training session at Aylesbury on May 24th. This event combined three assessments for the AWGB Tutor certificate, four trainees, three trainers and we used the new lathe supplied by the Turners Livery Company. Several club members dropped in for a chat during the day too.

Unfortunately, time being tight for the newsletter deadline, a detailed report on that event will be in the June newsletter, but for now I simply want to thank all those involved.

Looking forward, our next meeting is a club night on Tuesday 10th June. The committee is meeting beforehand to plan it, and I know that we already have two volunteer members to deliver short demonstrations on making varieties of flowers for sale at craft fairs.

Speaking of craft fairs, please make a note that once again the Club will be running a stall at the Harpenden Art on the Common event on 7th and 8th June. We have already received many contributions of items to sell over the weekend, but there is always room for more. So, if you are available, please do come and see us, bring something for us to sell and stay to chat to the punters. It's a great atmosphere and good fun too. All proceeds go to club funds.

A couple of us are also going along to the Bucks Art Weeks exhibition at the beautiful, medieval St Dunstan's church in Monks Risborough. Our own Graham Lester will be taking part from 7th to 15<sup>th</sup> June. There are several good pubs and café's in the vicinity too, so it will be a good day out.

That's all for this month. See you on the 10<sup>th</sup>

Adam Blackie

Chairman

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# Club News

## May Competition

### Beginners



1<sup>st</sup> Andrew Lee

## Advanced



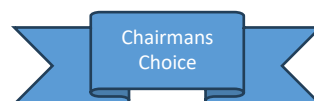
1<sup>st</sup> Peter Kemp



2<sup>nd</sup> Harvey Alison



3<sup>rd</sup> Tony Taylor





Open

1<sup>st</sup> Harvey Alison



2<sup>nd</sup> = Adam Blackie



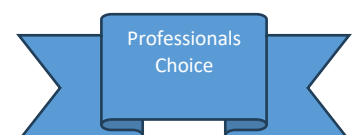
2<sup>nd</sup> = Tony Taylor



2<sup>nd</sup> = Peter Hoare



3<sup>rd</sup> Graham Lester



## Meetings Calendar

### 2025

Jun 10th Club Night

Jul 8th Colin Spencer – Ornamental turning

## Competition Subjects

2025

### Beginners

June	Platter
July	Tool Handle
Aug	Pair of coasters
Sept	An Apple
Oct	Spinning top
Nov	Kitchen Roll holder
Dec	Dice shaker

### Advanced

Lidded bowl
Hollow form
Natural edged vase
Box with finial
Pair of goblets
Mug
Winged bowl

## Raffle purchase Diary for 2025-2026

I am the raffle coordinator for the forthcoming year and need to fill the diary for the purchase of prizes for the months as stated below.

Following the AGM I need to fill the next years calendar of volunteers - if you would like to help please email me the particular dates you can cover.

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 .00- £100 per month with a maximum number of prizes being normally FIVE in total although there is some flexibility. Full receipts are required for each spend made

If you need to discuss any of this information with me feel free to do so

Steve Beadle

Herts and Beds Raffle Coordinator

Tel 07429326669

Email ~ Stevebeadle1960@hotmail.co.uk

# Presentation of new lathe to QPAC and Philip Francis

Last week QPAC (Queens Park Arts Centre) in Aylesbury had the pleasure to welcome members of the Worshipful Company of Woodturners to the centre to present a new woodturning lathe.



On 22nd May 2025, the Worshipful Company of Turners formally presented a new woodturning lathe to QPAC to support the centre's growing demand for woodturning classes.

The presentation was made by Master Turner, Chistopher Scott, and received on behalf of QPAC by Sarah Lewis, CEO along with woodturning tutor, Philip Francis. Assistant Ian Adkins, Chairman of the Craft Committee, and Liveryman Paul Ferguson MBE were also present for the presentation.

The donation forms part of the Company's ongoing charitable work to promote excellence in the craft of turning and to ensure wider access to its benefits. The new lathe will enhance QPAC's capacity to offer accredited training, support to people with additional needs, as well as classes through wider community initiatives such as Bucks Adult Learning.

As Philip commented, 'This Lathe will make an immediate impact. Demand for our courses has grown significantly across the region. With this new equipment, we can continue to deliver high-quality instruction and broaden access to the craft.'

Assistant Ian Adkins added, 'We are delighted to support such a vibrant and inclusive centre. This partnership embodies our belief in 'turning for good' - using the craft to enrich lives, empower learners and foster community.'

## Herts and Beds GROUP VISIT to Wizardry in Wood

**Plaisterers' Hall, London EC2. Wednesday, 29th October 2025. 11.00am arrival**

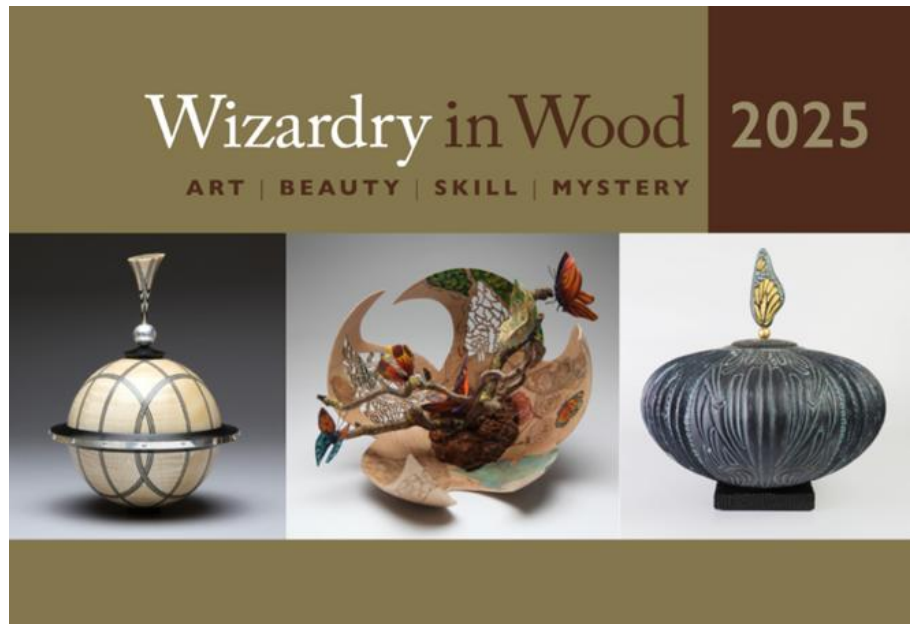
We are delighted to be organising a group visit on Wednesday, 29 th October to the prestigious Wizardry in Wood Exhibition organised bi-annually by the Worshipful Company of Turners

<https://turnersco.com/wiw/>

Held in the beautiful and interesting surroundings of Plaisterers' Hall in the City of London we will meet at

11.00am in time to view the exhibition before heading for lunch (optional) at a nearby venue at around 2.00pm

<https://www.plaisterershall.com/>



### Costs

Entry ticket of £12 will be booked by the club in advance.

Lunch (optional, excluding drinks) will be around £35 per head.

Payment will be required by 30th September 2025.

### Registration

If you would like to come, please let me know as soon as possible and I will add you to the list. Harvey Alison, James Blackie, Keith Goddard, David Ireson and Phil Walters have already registered their interest. Please join us for what will be a great event.

### Attention: Members who wish to enter the Wizardry in Wood Competition!

So many of you are more than qualified to submit outstanding work to the Wizardry in Wood competition and it would be great kudos for the club to be represented. If you are considering entering, then do let me know and the club will endeavour to assist with the entry process if required.

Follow this link for more details: <https://turnersco.com/turning-competitions-2025/>

Adam Blackie

May 2025



# Project – Chalice and Platter. Allen Kaye

I had no project material submitted this month from members so I thought I would share one of my own. These were commissioned two weeks ago by the local URC church in Welwyn Garden City to be given to a minister in training who has taken over 3 churches in Norfolk. I was asked for a simple platter based on a bible quote. Top left was the first platter below in mahogany. A second request was for a chalice and I made this in Yew. I then decided to make a second replacement platter also in Yew to complement the chalice.



I chose Yew partly because it turns and finishes wonderfully well but also because of the religious connections.

For interest I quote a piece below from the Daily Mail.

I made sure that the minister was aware of the toxicity of the wood and that they were intended as decorative items.

*"Yew trees are traditionally associated with British churchyards and many date back over a thousand years. Some historians say they were planted near churches as a safe source of wood to make English longbows, or that their poisonous leaves and berries deterred hungry cattle from invading graveyards. There could be pagan links too as yew trees were associated with death and the journey of the soul from this life to the next for thousands of years. It was sacred to Hecate, Ancient Greek goddess of death, witchcraft and necromancy. The tree was also said to purify the dead as they entered the underworld of Hades. Celtic druids also saw yew as sacred and planted it close to their temples to use in death rituals. Being a symbol of death, but very much alive, the yew came to represent eternity and is sometimes linked with the Tree of Life, which features in many religious beliefs and philosophies. The heart of the tree is red, while its sap is white. These colours can symbolise the blood and body of Christ."*  
Daily Mail

# Spotlight on: Tony Taylor

When I was about 8 years old my elder brother and I had a fine old book called “The Boy Electrician”. From this we made all sorts of projects, but there was one which we never managed, namely the Wimshurst machine for generating lovely electrostatic sparks. We had no way of turning the pulleys and other round parts.

It was not until some sixty years later that I returned to this and bought a very simple Clarke woodturning lathe and some primitive tools and managed to complete my boyhood ambition. In the meantime, I was occupied with qualifying in Medicine, three years of service in the RAMC, and scrabbling up the academic ladder to the Chair of Physiology at St Thomas’s Hospital.

Other preoccupations included two wives, six children and nine grandchildren. After retiring in 1995 I continued full-time research for twelve years at the Charing Cross Hospital and it was during that time in London that I first tried woodturning. I knew nothing about it, and everything was done with a blunt scraper.

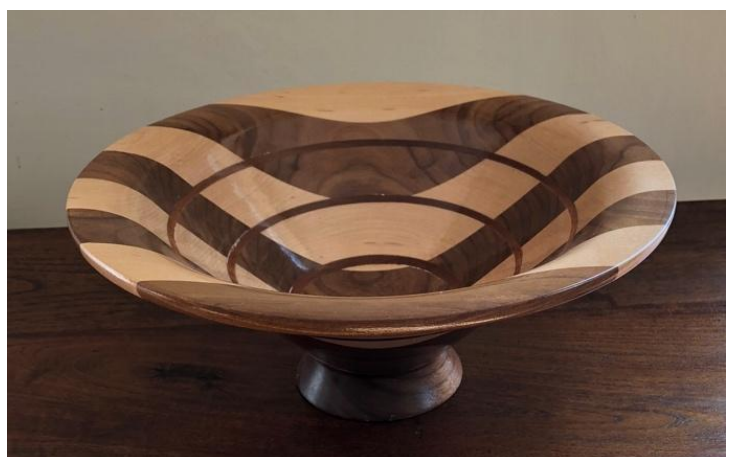
However, when I retired properly to Wendover in 2006, I had a nice double garage which I had wired, insulated and set up as a woodworking shop.

My first proper lathe was a used Axminster M900 with the cone variable speed system. As I became more interested in turning, I found Keith Rowley’s book, which really got me started and I spent a week on a holiday course in the French Pyrenees, where the instructor was Ray Key. I did not appreciate at the time what a great bit of good fortune that was.

I have also attended courses with Mick Hanbury and with Tobias Kay. The other sources of inspiration have been membership of woodturning clubs. At one time I was regularly attending the Herts & Beds, the Middlesex and the Berkshire clubs. I also joined the American Association and went to their symposium in Pittsburg – an eye-opening experience! Another great occasion was the Norwegian cruise with tuition from some of the great turners, such as Stuart Mortimer.

I soon upgraded my lathe to a Record Maxi-1 and this has proved to be a great machine, with plenty of power and weight. My other main equipment is a Record BS 450 bandsaw and DP58 pedestal drill.

As I became interested in segmented turning, I added a Scheppach planer/thicknesser and an Axminster overhead sander, table saw and disc sander. I have to admit to being a tool-buying addict and have accumulated all sorts of tools, which I think will give me special woodturning skills, but mostly get very little used. In fact, my shop became so cluttered that I have recently begun disposing of some.







I love trying all sorts of techniques, often inspired by club demonstrations or by the fantastic range of work shown on Youtube. Above all, deep hollowing has always appealed to me, inspired by the splendid examples of hollow forms by such masters as Mark Sanger. However, advancing age has diminished the strength and nerve needed to use the conventional hollowing tools.

I have tried various captive tool jigs, notably the one made by Simon Hope, but find them rather cumbersome and expensive. My solution has been to devise a simple jig which replaces the tool rest in the tool post and allows safe and comfortable hollowing up to 9 inches deep. I have made and sold a small number of these and have a few remaining.

Although I know that most turners in this country seem to prefer wood in its natural state, I also like to experiment with colours. Some of my more successful items have been modelled on ceramics by Claris Cliff, a bowl of fruit and experiments with marbling and carving.



Advancing age inevitably means less energy for turning, though I still have any number of ideas of projects to try. What really keeps me going is the thought of the next club meeting and the urge to enter something in the competitions and to enjoy the company of so many good woodturning friends.

Tony

# 'An interview with' Philip Francis

**Here, Philip takes the opportunity to talk about his work in woodturning, how and why he started and of his connection with the Queens Park Arts Centre and the Worshipful Company. (See Article Page 7.)**

## Allen

At school, I did A Level Woodwork; there was a Union Graduate lathe in the workshop, but we never did any turning. In 1970, I went to Shoreditch College, one of the main teacher training colleges in England for craft. Again, woodturning was not explicitly taught, although as students we were tasked to produce a turned piece of coursework.

During the summer of 1969, I had holidayed with my sister and family in Italy where we stopped at an alabaster shop/factory. The owner had been a prisoner of war in Wales and when he found out that I was a craft student he gave me a piece of alabaster to see what I could do with it. My first turning attempt was subsequently made with this gifted alabaster.



After college I taught for twenty-five years in Secondary schools in Aylesbury where very occasionally a student would show an interest in woodturning. It wasn't until I moved to a Specialist school in Winslow that with smaller groups and an LSA I was able to do some woodturning. We had a Union Jubilee lathe and made products to sell in the Young Enterprise scheme. This got us started and soon we had two more lathes donated. We used our first profits to buy play stations and a pool table that the students could use at break times but we soon decided to plough the money back into the company and over time we bought three more lathes and were fortunate to get grants from The Buckinghamshire Foundation and Aylesbury Town Council for a further lathe and some tools. The William Harding Charity granted us dust extraction for all our machines.

Of course, these grants didn't come without any work. In the Young Enterprise scheme, we yearly competed against the Grammar and Mainstream Secondary schools in the area, winning our fair share of honours. We won the London YE competition, a National Competition in Milton Keynes, and one year we got the award for the best Company in the UK.

There is no greater feeling for a young person when someone buys something that they've made, and this goes for us older people as well.

During this time, the school sent me on courses to Craft Supplies in Derbyshire - my first proper training was with Ken Allen and later Mike Hanbury. Years later my wife bought me a course with Nick Agar at Axminster. The school welcomed outside visitors, so Stuart King and Gary Rance came to enthuse the students and myself. I taught an evening lesson for Bucks Adult Learning, and it was a great bonus for me when some of the learners bought their own lathes, one of them going on to win a competition in the Woodworker magazine.

I retired from full time employment and looked for something to do in my spare time. I tried joining the organisation Men in Sheds but didn't quite fit. Very near where I live is the Queens Park Arts Centre. I had volunteered there over thirty years ago, so I went on a visit.

The workshop needed some TLC but thought I could help. Then came COVID. The school where I did my BAL class decided not to have more classes when it was over, and teacher who was at the QPAC became ill,

so I took over and brought my evening class there as well. Since I've been at QPAC, we have acquired four lathes giving us a total of seven, a new band saw, circular saw, disc sander mortice machine, and we are slowly saving for and acquiring dust extraction.

I now teach there three times a week, two sessions as a volunteer. The payback is I can use the workshop when it's free. I am proud to report that we have recently won the **King's Award for Volunteering**.

My connection with the Worshipful Company of Turners of London comes from Stuart King who told me that they give grants for lathes. To cut a long story short, we have been awarded one and are having the official presentation this week. I also teach their Certificate of Woodturning and currently have nine participants.

**What happens to all of the items you make?** I have market stalls once a month at Wendover and Chesham where I sell my products. The best sellers are my flowers and mushrooms - no surprises as they are the cheapest as well as being good of course.

**Describe a project that did not go as planned and what you did to save the day** Some time ago I bought a newel post at the club table I wanted to turn it into a lamp. It was too long to fit on any of the lathes at QPAC so I took it to Gary's. Drilling from both ends the holes didn't meet, so what to do? I cut off the square piece at the bottom, joined the holes internally, threaded the cable through the two pieces and then joined them with dowel joints. The feet were joined on with biscuits. It turned out ok and was sold for £150.

**What is your favourite wood?** My favourite woods are Ash or Yew and my least favourite being wenge.

**What is your favourite finish?** Favourite finishes: all those years ago on my first woodturning course I was introduced to Chestnut Products and have stuck by Sanding Sealer, Melamine and Finishing Wax. Recently I have broadened my horizons to their Food Safe Finish and Stain.

**What sharpening system do you use?** I use an Axminster Trade grindstone with a white wheel and a homemade tool rest to sharpen my tools and an oilstone for the parting tools and skew chisels.

**What was your worst accident in the workshop** My worst accident in the workshop happened last year whilst teaching a class. I stupidly caught my hand on the circular saw and the saw won. Fortunately, there was a doctor and a first aider in the group. The doctor, who worked at the local hospital offered to drive me there. I hoped in vain for preferential treatment given my inside connections, but no such luck. I got out at 05.30. Two days later I was on the operating table for three hours whilst they put me back together.

**Do you have any other hobbies?** In my youth I played rugby to a reasonable standard and now I woodturn. I can do most of the things I need with a roughing gouge, a 3/8 bowl gouge, parting tool and skew.



Apart from the H&B I am very fortunate to be a member of a woodturning group which meets once a month, at which I continue my learning. The group consists of Stuart King, Gary Rance. Philip Jones, Michael Wood, Mike Fitz - professional turners all- plus Tony Champion, Chris Bentley and Harvey Alison members of H&B and as you know are excellent turners.



## Examples of Philips work



Pieces by Philip Francis





# Demonstration -by James Burton. Review by Tony Taylor

James devoted the demo to his speciality, namely bowl turning. He set out to show his way of turning fresh wood in two stages to the finished bowl. In making his bowls for sale he makes a particular point of using locally available wood with known origin and history – features which attract customers.

In this case he started with an Elm blank 10 inches in diameter mounted on a screw chuck. His favourite tool is a 1 inch bowl gouge. With this he turned off the corner and trued up the edge and the face and shaped the outside – watching the shape develop on the upper edge. He then cut a mortice with a carbide scraper and reversed onto a chuck in order to hollow the inside.

A practical idea of special interest was to mount a row of LED lights on the tool rest to a very good illumination of the work. See photo at bottom of this page. James likes to cut downhill from outside in and from inside out leaving a central cone for support till the end. The object in the first turning is to achieve an even thickness of about one inch. He made no special points about drying and recommended using Milliput to deal with any cracks.

In the second half James had a dry rough-turned Sycamore bowl. This he mounted directly on the mortice (ignoring the distortion due to drying) and trued up the face with a pull cut using a half inch bowl gouge.

The bowl was then transferred to large Cole jaws to allow shaping of the bottom and reforming the mortice. It was then turned around once more to finish turning the inside. James seemed to be unconcerned regarding direction of cut relative to the grain, but was happy to do lots of sanding.

The demonstration was well prepared and with a lively commentary. It would have been most useful for beginners, though some aspects were somewhat unconventional and those starting out on bowl turning would do well to check out Youtube presentations for example by Glenn Lucas or Stuart Batty.

Tony



Illuminate your work !

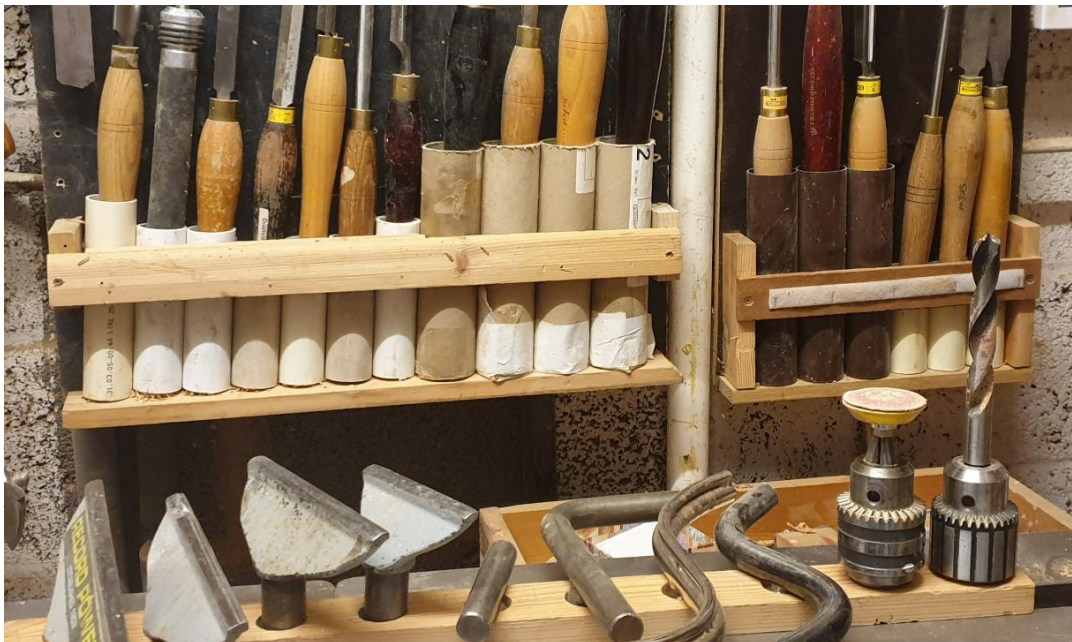


# Ideas, Hints and Tips – Part 2 – Keith Goddard

*Following on from last month here are my next set of money saving ideas, I hope you find them interesting and useful*

150mm wide self-adhesive sticky tape Velcro hooks is very useful repairing sanding pads, making sanding blocks and larger sanding discs to use on the lathe. A good quality double sided sticky tape can help when attaching the Velcro hooks

I have now started turning flowers as demonstrated by Phillip Francis at the December meeting. I buy food colouring from Tesco or Sainsburys, £1.55 each, and apply it with a superb spray gun. The gun cost £15.99 on eBay, only requires a small amount of water or alcohol-based colouring. It is charged using a phone charger and is easy to clean.



I have fitted between the flatbed runners on my lathe a section of wood drilled to take the different tool rests and drill chucks, and my many spindle and bowl gouges are stored in plastic and cardboard tubes.



Steve Kearvell, demonstrator, at the February meeting was selling plastic measuring guides, a very good idea but it can only be used when wood is stationary as friction causes the plastic to melt. I have made a wooden version which can be used when the work is still turning.



Turning a sphere can be achieved using a simple incomplete semi-circle; supporting the ball in a small jamchuck and a suitable Paul Howard rotating cup chuck to remove the drive and live centre supports. The Paul Howard device is so useful when having to support work in the tail stock as well as the head stock. You make your own devices to fit onto the revolving cup chuck. They do 1 and 2 morse taper versions.

And finally, whenever I received wood the that has been recently felled or is very wet, I store it in my greenhouse which speeds up the drying process. During hot weather I leave the green house door open.

Keith



## Middlesex Annual Seminar

# ANNUAL SEMINAR

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2025

9.30 – 16.30

**Demonstrator:** Mark Beckett  
- The Gentleman Woodturner.

**Project:** Spiral Textured and Coloured Dish, a Salt Pot, and a set of Onion Vases



A buffet lunch will be provided together with soft drinks.  
There will be a raffle with some excellent prizes.

Tickets cost £25.00 and are available on line at  
<https://middxturners.com/clubevents/annual-seminar/> .

Any queries please contact [treasurer@middxturners.com](mailto:treasurer@middxturners.com) . Tickets will be allocated on a first come, first served basis and must be paid for by the 16th June.

Gateway House, North Harrow Car Park, Pinner Road. Harrow HA2 7SY

# Bird Watch - Chris Squires, our resident twitcher

Birds recently seen locally include Egrets. Commonly seen many years ago, throughout the UK.

Little Egrets, Cattle Egrets and Great White Egrets. Birders would travel miles to spot these very early sightings.

The first birds to arrive in the UK spread from Southern Europe. They were the Little Egrets, closely followed by Cattle Egrets then Great White Egrets. All 3 species are settled and now breed in this county.

Birds can be seen on coastal marshes and estuaries. Bird reserves are also sites of interest.

The picture of the Great White Egret bottom right was taken by myself and was the first image to be recorded in Lemsford Reserve.



# For Sale and Wanted

Nothing to post this month – please send any items directly to me if you want them advertised next month.

Thanks Allen

# Poetry Corner

## WOODTURNING ASPIRATIONS EXPLAINED

Stubby chubby fingers and sharp edges  
Rows of sharp tools kept up on ledges  
Compounded with the plight of fuzzy short sight  
Are not good bedfellows, try as one might

The aim of woodturning was a yearning

To replace lost sport's activities lately revoked  
The would be Olympian thoroughly choked  
To witness the practice was a magic moment  
Visions of artistic œuvres as a novice exponent

Hoped for transition to a consuming passion  
New found pursuit of a woodenly fashion  
Some other avenue to keep the cogs whirring  
For blessed brain cells continued defurring

But so far , is not to be  
Disappointment returns incessantly  
Never mind, just keep contact  
In case, of a sudden, those restrictions retract

Martin Sexton May 2025