



WOODBITS NEWSLETTER

Issue 238

April 2026

Shavings from the Chairman

A very warm welcome to our April 2026 newsletter!

First things first, my apologies for missing the AGM. I ended up in Cornwall for a last-minute holiday, filling in for a planned trip to Europe that didn't quite go as expected. It's a tale worth sharing, so feel free to ask me about it next time we meet! My thanks go to the many members who made the AGM happen. I hear I missed a good one.

Looking forward, the audio-visual equipment I've been promising is nearly ready – the cabinets are done and we're aiming to have everything installed in May. Huge thanks this month to Chris Bentley for all his hard work on the cabinets.

The AWGB club competition this October is shaping up brilliantly, with over 30 club members already signed up. If you haven't joined in yet, you'll find all the details in this newsletter – do get in touch if you're interested in taking part.

As some of you may know, we sadly experienced a burglary at Horatio's Garden, and a number of our tools and equipment were stolen. However, the response from the club has been fantastic – most of the missing items have either been replaced or are in the process of being replaced. If we need any extra help, we'll be sure to let you know. Thank you all for your support.

Now that the fine weather is upon us, many of us will be spending more time in our workshops. If you have children or grandchildren getting involved with you over the coming months, please do send us some photos or a little update on what they've been up to. We're always keen to encourage the next generation of woodturners, so any stories or snaps would be much appreciated!

Our next meeting will be on 12th May, featuring Nathaniel Griffiths, who is fast becoming a familiar face in the UK woodturning scene. As a relatively young woodturner, Nathaniel is a fantastic example of what's possible when the craft is introduced to someone who hasn't yet gone grey!

That's all for this month. I'm looking forward to catching up with you at our meeting on 12th May. Until then, happy turning!

Adam Blackie

Chairman

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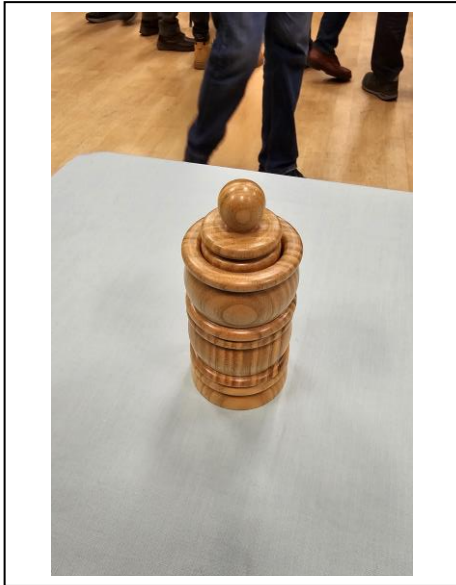
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Club News

February Competition

BEGINNERS



1st Gary Atkins –
Professional Choice



2nd Peter Clarke

Only 2 beginner entries this month,
hoping for more next month.

3rd

ADVANCED



1st James Blackie
Professional Choice

2nd Tony Taylor



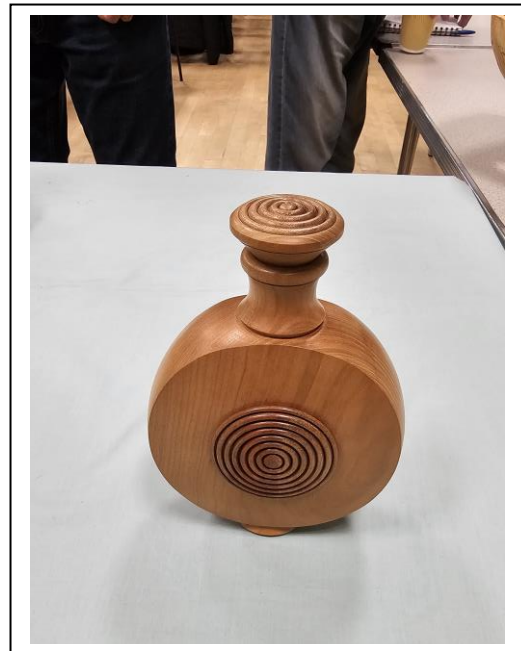
3rd Keith Sutton

OPEN



1st Harvey Alison

2nd Peter Kemp
Professional choice



3rd Tony Taylor



Meetings Calendar

2026		
April	14 th	AGM+
May	12 th	Nathaniel Griffiths
June	9 th	Club Night
July	14 th	Liz Pearson
August	11 th	Geoff Harris (Pole Lathe)
September	8 th	Club Night
October	13 th	Steven Kearvell
November	10 th	Richard Peers
December	14 th	Club Night

Competition Subjects

2026		
	Beginners	Advanced
May	Needle Case	Pagoda Box
June	Hedgehog or other Creature	Bangle
July	Honey Drizzler	Natural Edged Bowl
August	Ball and Cup	Hollow Form
September	Apple and Pear	Something Decorated
October	Platter	Bowl on Feet
November	Xmas Decoration	Wall Plaque
December	20 to 30cm Long Spurtle	Textured Platter
January	Paper Weight	Offset Goblet
February	Ring Finger	Wool Bowl
March	12 to 15cm Dia. Bowl	Natural Edged Vase

Training Update - Dave Washer

Having received a few requests for a training session on the **principles of a grinding wheel**, A morning session was set up with Chris at his home workshop. The 3 members had a great morning and Alison kindly provided the following report

Chris began the session by explaining the differences between grinding (getting the tool to the shape you want it to be), sharpening (making its edges sharp) honing (making its edges even sharper) and stropping (making its edges very, very sharp). He then demonstrated the principle of cutting wood along its grain and contrasted this with cutting across the grain using a hand-held planer. He then demonstrated the four processes of sharpening woodturning chisels using a grinder, CBN wheel, diamond file and a leather strop. We also learnt how to sharpen a wood-carving chisel using a whetstone and how to flatten a whetstone that had become misshapen. I left the session with a much better understanding of the different processes and look forward to putting my knowledge into practice. Thank you, Chris!

Bowl Hollowing/Hollow form course.

Dates are now set for 11 July 2026 and the course is to be held at Queens Park Centre, Aylesbury. Places are filling up for this course and we have limited space at the training centre, so if this is something you would like to try please do get in touch either by email training@herts&bedswoodturners.co.uk or my Mobile **07546 612450**.

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

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

Please do get in touch if you have any Training or Specialist Technique's you would like to try as I'm sure we can find a member willing to teach or support.

The **Introduction to Multi-Axis Turning** is now fully subscribed. It may be the case this is something you would like to try, if so please give me a shout and with a few more interested members I'll be happy to set up another course

Dave Washer

Dalmnn's Open Day with Les Thorne

This was a great day seeing their vast stock of wood and Les on very good form turning a number of different pieces and seeing friends. I got some offcuts for vases at Horatio's Garden and two sample pieces of Mopane for Robert Bigio, the flute maker who spoke after the Middlesex club AGM a few years ago. As he put it not many timbers besides African Blackwood can cope with hot wet air being blown into it without causing splitting etc.

Generally, they sell the timber by weight, which takes a bit of getting used to as you don't know how much a blank etc is going to be until it is weighed at the sales desk by the very friendly team. There were some fabulous one-off slices of wood for tables and decorative items at wallet emptying prices!

I noticed these tools and was told they were made locally in Mozambique where the timber is felled under controlled circumstances and the animals are protected. Such tools are used to make a similar vase which is about 12" high. Quite an achievement!

Gordon Cookson



AWGB Collaborative Competition. 10/11 October 2026

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

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



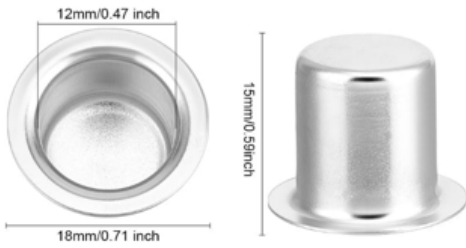
Our concept is straightforward - details will be shared in upcoming newsletters and meetings, so watch this space! For now, we're inviting every member to contribute by making a single candlestick without a base (just a small tenon). The parameters are shown in the sketch on the next page. The candlestick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

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

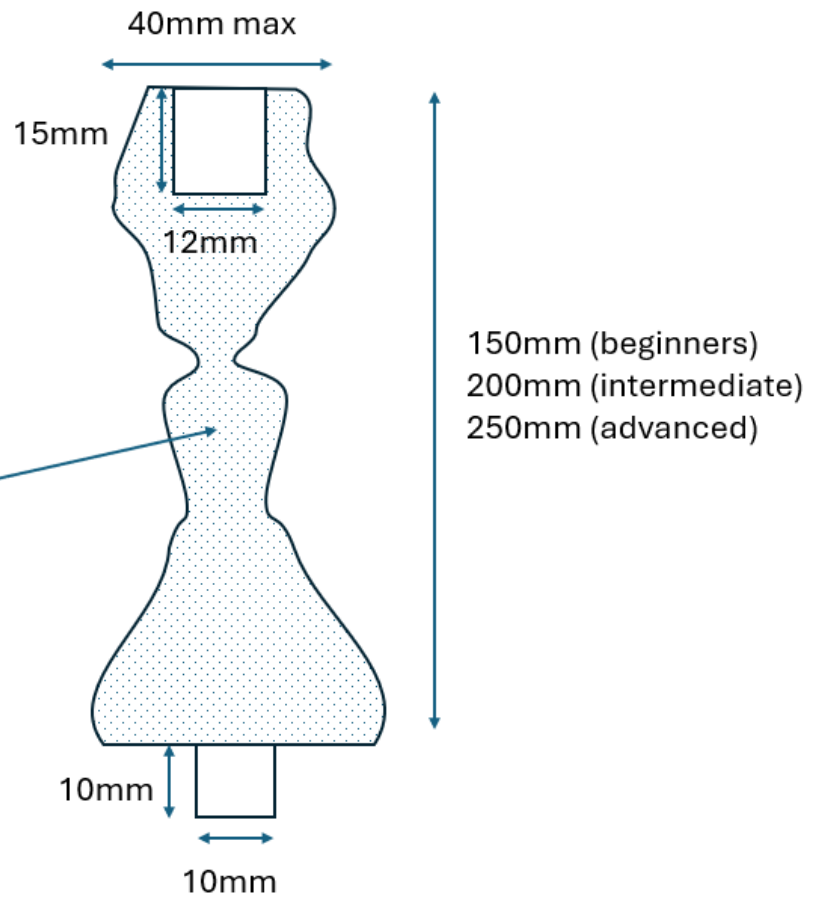
The deadline is mid-September, so there's plenty of time to get involved if you sign up early. Let's work together to make our entry a real showstopper!

The specification for the candlesticks we need are as follows.

Note that the heights will vary depending on your own consideration of whether you are a Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced Turner.



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



INTERESTED?

Over 30 members have already signed up and you have plenty of time left to make your contribution.

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

Lending Library Hollowing Tools – a review by Harvey Alison

Introduction

Deep hollowing is one of the more demanding techniques in woodturning, allowing turners to create large thin-walled vessels with small openings, a technique popularised by great turners like David Ellesworth and Phil Irons. Success depends heavily on both technique and tooling. Over the years a number of well-regarded deep hollowing tools have emerged, each with its own philosophy around cutter presentation, vibration control and flexibility. I recently spent an enjoyable workshop day with Chris Bentley, who has deep(!) experience with this technique. We tried all the tools now available in the club lending library - the John Jordan hollowing tool, the Hamlet Big Brother and the Tony Taylor hollowing tool. This review compares those tools — and briefly notes other options available to today's woodturner.

The Basic Process of Deep Hollowing

While details vary by tool, the basic process of deep hollowing follows a consistent pattern:

- **Prepare and mount the blank** – Typically side-grain, well balanced and securely held between chuck and tailstock initially.
- **Turn the exterior first** – Shape and finish the outside, leaving a solid base.
- **Create the opening** – Drill or open the mouth, establishing a reference depth and opening size.
- **Hollow in stages** – Work progressively deeper, removing material a little at a time. Avoid hollowing the base to final thickness until the upper walls are complete.
- **Maintain wall thickness** – Regularly check thickness with callipers or measuring tools.
- **Control vibration** – Keep tool overhang minimal, work gently, and sharpen frequently.
- **Finish the interior** – Final light cuts or scraping passes, followed by sanding if appropriate.

Patience, sharp tools and conservative cuts are essential; most catches occur when trying to remove too much material too quickly. Here are two clubmates having fun:



Safety Tips for Deep Hollowing

Deep hollowing places high physical and mechanical demands on both tool and turner. The following points are worth reinforcing, particularly for those new to the technique:

Stand out of the firing line – Position your body slightly to one side of the lathe axis, especially when hollowing deep inside closed forms.

- **Respect leverage and torque** – As overhang increases, so does twisting force. If the tool starts to feel difficult to control, stop and reassess.
- **Maintain a compact posture** – keep the tools locked to your body as much as possible to increase stability, and move your body when taking cuts.
- **Use sharp tools only** – Dull cutters increase pressure, vibration and the risk of catches.
- **Take light cuts** – Heavy cuts deep inside a vessel are a common cause of violent catches.
- **Watch tool rest position** – Keep it as close as practical to the work and reset it frequently as depth increases. You should generally be cutting on the center line.
- **Protect yourself** – A full face shield is strongly recommended; safety glasses alone are not sufficient for hollowing work.
- **Know when to stop** – Excessive vibration, noise or tool grab are signals to pause, sharpen, or change approach.

Many experienced turners consider deep hollowing one of the highest-risk woodturning activities; treating it with appropriate caution greatly improves both safety and results.

John Jordan Hollowing Tool

John Jordan is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of modern deep hollowing. His tools are characterised by heavy round bars that fit in a standard handle with a relatively simple but very effective cutter.

The tool uses a small HSS cutter presented in a scraping orientation, typically with the cutter angled downward around 45°. The handle and bar are substantial, which helps damp vibration when working at depth. The system is deliberately simple: there is no captive frame or articulated arm, and the turner relies on stance, tool rest control and a disciplined cutting approach.



Strengths

- Excellent vibration damping due to mass
- Simple, robust design with few parts to fail
- The cutter produces a predictable, controllable cut

Limitations

- Steeper learning curve for beginners
- Less mechanical assistance when working very deep or with extreme overhangs

Jordan tools are good for experienced turners who value direct tool control and are willing to develop the required technique.

Buy from Phil Irons in the UK: <https://www.philironswoodturning.co.uk/shop/other-items/john-jordan-hollowing-tools>

Hamlet Big Brother Hollowing Tool



The Hamlet Big Brother tool (also sold under the Hamlet / Crown umbrella in some markets) is a very substantial hollowing bar designed specifically to reduce chatter at depth.

It features an interchangeable cutter system, although the club library has only the shielded cutter, which must be in contact with the inside wall to cut effectively. The handle is extremely long and heavy, which makes it effective for deeper work but also physically demanding to use. Compared to Jordan tools, the cutter presentation is more varied, allowing both scraping and cutting actions depending on setup.

Strengths

- Very high mass gives good chatter resistance
- Interchangeable cutters add flexibility
- Suited to deep, straight-sided vessels

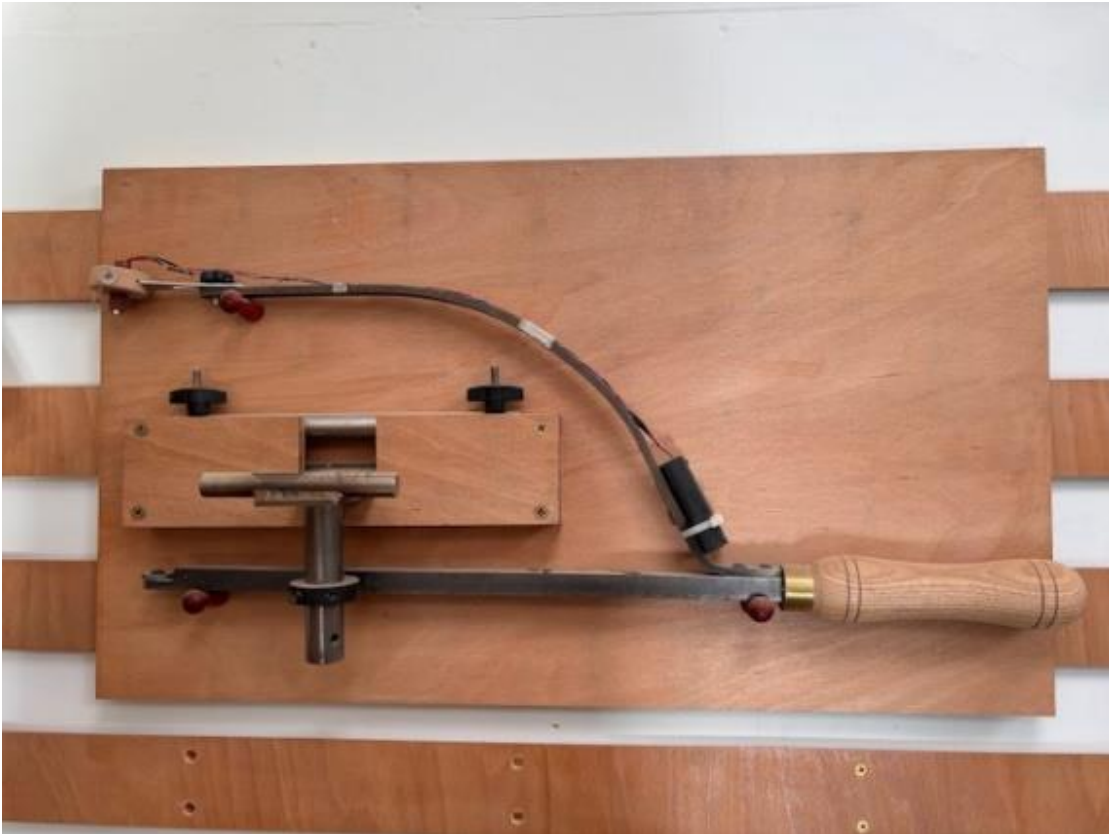
Limitations

- Weight can be tiring over longer sessions
- Less agile for small openings or tight internal curves

This tool suits turners who want stability and forgiveness more than finesse.

Website: <https://henrytaylortools.co.uk/hamlet-hollowing-tools/>

Tony Taylor Hollowing Tool



Designed by our very own Tony Taylor, and manufactured locally. This hollowing tool features an arm carrying a laser pointer, which makes gauging the wall thickness simple. It also features a support system that mounts in a standard tool rest holder, giving support without needing a massive mechanical frame. The cutters are typically small HSS or carbide tips mounted to the straight bar with an allen key. The support system greatly reducing torque on the turner's hands, and ensures consistent cutting height.

Strengths

- Suits all abilities of turners from beginners to advanced
- Laser reduces need for callipers

Limitations

- Limited depth (about 8")
- Less direct "feel" compared to freehand tools

These tools are popular with club mates, and Tony can be contacted directly if you want to buy.

Other Hollowing Tools and Systems

In addition to the tools reviewed above, there is a wide range of alternatives. To name a few:

- **Simon Hope hollowing systems**, offering both freehand and captive options
- **Kelton and Elbo Tool systems**, classic articulated captive rigs
- **Hunter carbide tools**, using cup-style carbide cutters for clean cutting action
- **Termite and Munro tools**, compact hollowing bars with replaceable tips

Each system trades simplicity, cost and learning curve against depth capability and vibration control.

Local Support: Herts and Beds Woodturners Club Lending Library

The Herts & Beds Woodturners Club offers a valuable lending library of tools, including hollowing tools and systems. This allows members to try different approaches before committing to a purchase.

Members can request a loan by contacting the club's librarian (usually via the club website or monthly meetings), specifying the tool required and the intended loan period. Tools are typically issued at club meetings and must be returned in good condition by the agreed date. This is an excellent way to gain hands-on experience with deeper hollowing techniques in a supported environment.

Conclusion

There is no single "best" deep hollowing tool. John Jordan tools reward skill and technique, the Hamlet Big Brother offers mass and stability, and Tony Taylor systems are easy to use. Trying different tools – ideally through a club lending library – is often the best way to find the approach that suits your turning style and ambitions.



Items for Sale

Bandsaw for Sale



Chris Tucker has a bandsaw that is in good order and needs a new home.

It is located in Hemel Hempstead.

No price, but any donation to the club would be gratefully received.

Chris can be contacted via email on ctucker ctucker@chiltern-networks.co.uk

Poetry Corner

A WEEKEND OF MIXED EMOTIONS

Mixed emotions in this weekend of human endeavour
Punctuated by a spring's season change in the weather
Such different events to impress the mind
Huge variety in stories unfolding we all find

For science.....

Safe return of Moon circling Capsule, ending four brave space fliers travel
Parachute protected salty splash down for the recoverers to unravel
Six minutes of nerve racking silence, then came their voice check removing all doubt
They survive and return, most surely what it was always about

For nature.....

Alternative arrivals here are the lambs and goat kids of new birth season
Generations replenished for ours and the farmer's good reason
Humbling by comparison in time known tradition
But just as important to our continued condition

For entertainment In two other different fields.....

The Grand National Horse race, escaping the bookie's bag
With Aintree's high risers to trap many a nag
Lightening the purse in our pocket, but just as costly to us as the moon rocket
But some, few, will go home with the cup and the swag, so don't knock it

Birdies and bogeys at the Masters and a hole in one
Cause excitement, golfing fever, as the rounds are outspun
All adding to our fun needs rapture
Enhancing our time here with an earthly capture

There is much to praise in these ongoing days
When others less fortunate suffer such dismay
Let's pause in our fun at the down of the sun
And hope they may sometime, like us, get to play

Martin Sexton 12th April 2026