



# WOODBITS NEWSLETTER Issue 236 January 2026

## SHAVINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### Welcome to the January 2026 newsletter!

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful festive season and are looking forward to a great year ahead.

Our January meeting was a fantastic way to kick things off, with Gary Rance giving a superb demonstration to a lively room of 61 members and guests. Gary crafted a replica pepper grinder, inspired by one found aboard Henry VIII's Flagship, The Mary Rose. It's always a treat to have Gary with us—his skills and professionalism set the tone for the year perfectly.

As many of you will know, Allen Kaye is retiring as our newsletter editor. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to him, both personally and on behalf of the club, for his many years of dedication and hard work. We're also delighted to welcome Nikki James as our new editor from February 2026. Nikki joined the club in 2025, and I'm sure you'll all join me in supporting her as she settles in and gets to know our club and the ins and outs of the newsletter.

Exciting news—the audiovisual upgrade at Adeyfield has begun! Thank you so much to everyone who's already contributed; your support makes a real difference. Even better, the AWGB has awarded us a generous grant of £1,000 towards the project. I'm looking forward to seeing the progress over the next couple of months.

Looking ahead to our next meeting, we're thrilled to have Mike Wood as our demonstrator in February. Mike is a seasoned professional, and it'll be his first time joining us—don't miss it!  
<https://www.mikewoodturning.co.uk/shop>

For the competitions, beginners will be making a small bowl, while advanced turners can try something offset. Last year saw record numbers entering the competitions, and I hope even more of you will get involved this year!

As it's the start of the year, it's time to renew your memberships. If you haven't done so yet, please arrange payment by bank transfer. You'll find all the details later in this newsletter.

That's all for now—thank you for supporting the club and I look forward to seeing you all again at our next meeting on 10 February.

Adam Blackie

Chairman

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# Club News

## December Competition

### Beginners



1<sup>st</sup> Keith Sutton

2<sup>nd</sup> Gary Adkins



3<sup>rd</sup> Alison Bigsby



**Advanced**

1<sup>st</sup> Tony Taylor



2<sup>nd</sup> Adam Blackie



3<sup>rd</sup> = Peter Pocock



3<sup>rd</sup> = James Blackie

Open



1<sup>st</sup> Peter Kemp



2<sup>nd</sup> Tony Taylor



3<sup>rd</sup> = Tony Buttle



3<sup>rd</sup> = Adam Blackie



## Meetings Calendar

### 2026

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

## Competition Subjects

### 2026

	<b>Beginners</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Jan	20 to 30 cm spurtle	"Apothecary" vase
Feb	12 to 15cm diameter bowl	Something offset
March	Tea light holder	Textured bowl
Apr	Pair of Napkin Rings	Two or More Woods
May	Needle Case	Pagoda Box
Jun	Hedgehog or other Creature	Bangle
Jul	Honey Drizzler	Natural Edged Bowl
Aug	Ball and Cup	Hollow Form
Sep	Apple and Pear	Something Decorated
Oct	Platter	Bowl on Feet
Nov	Xmas Decoration	Wall Plaque
Dec	20 to 30cm Long Spurtle	Textured Platter
Jan	Paper Weight	Offset Goblet
Feb	Ring Finger	Wool Bowl
Mar	12 to 15cm Dia. Bowl	Natural Edged Vase
May	Needle Case	Pagoda Box

# Training Update - Dave Washer

As you will have seen from Patrick's email The AWGB are offering a Bursary see Patrick's email for details, if this is something you would be interested in then please contact myself or Adam for further details but be quick as the deadline for applications is towards the end of February.

You may recall from last months Newsletter we intend to provide a course to show the main features of off centre turning. The course will be held on March 21st at our training location in Aylesbury with places for up to 6 of our members, the day will be busy with the morning giving way to the instructor providing some technical background to off-centre turning and briefly showing the first cuts. After lunch will be your turn on a lathe, selecting suitable timber, setting up your piece on the lathe and of course making your first cuts. please let me know if you are interested.

I have been asked if we can run a sharpening course which we are happy to set up, so if anyone is interested, please contact me, I'll then be able to arrange some dates. I would also welcome any ideas for training or if you would like to try something different please let me know we may have a member in the club who could provide suitable support and training

Dave Washer  
Training coordinator

## Gary Rance Hand Thread Chasing Course – Chris Squires

Four members from the woodturning club attended the one-day thread chasing course run at Gary's workshop the one-day course of thread chasing.

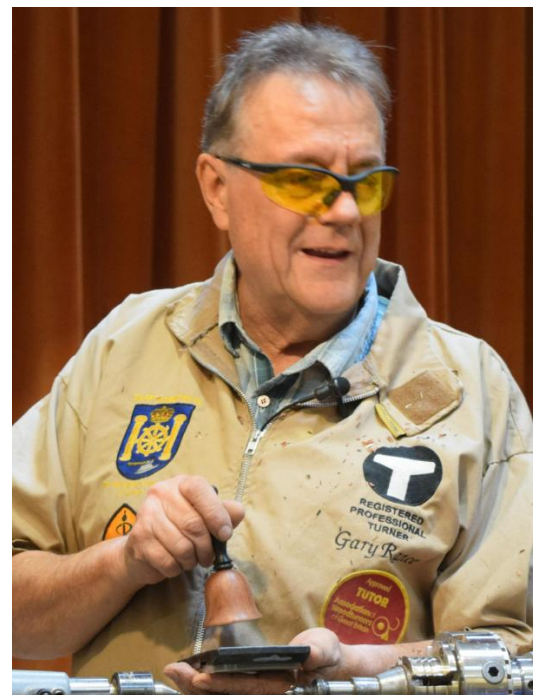
Gary began the day by demonstrating the process of thread chasing, woodturning and completing a lidded pot using Box wood. This was suitably turned to form a cylinder 3 x 4in, and marked out 1/3 and 2/3 for the lid and base pot.

The lid was prepared and the thread chased to the inside of the pot to form the lid which completed this stage.

The body of the pot was then prepared, forming a spigot on to which the thread was to be chased, At this stage patience and care was required, since a lot of time is spent when the lathe is stopped to try the thread fit to the pot then finally a snug fit is reached when the lid screws smoothly to its base. This is just a shortened description of the content of the day.

The four of us had a full-on busy day thanks to Gary's patience and positive support. The day was full of brilliant technique and useful hints and tips for us all to take home. A brilliant day was had by all and we all took home a lidded pot, (almost complete).

Note - Gary allowed us each to take home with us the 80-grit sandpaper we used. (joke).



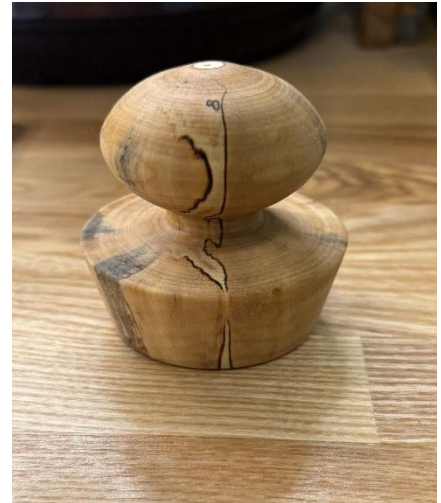
Chris

# New newsletter editor – Nikki James

Hello everyone! I had introduced myself in a previous newsletter but thought I should do so officially as editor.

I first had a go at wood turning many decades ago at school but then joined the RAF and so never did get to do any woodturning. Years later, with kids grown up, no longer an aircraft mechanic but unfortunately still not retired, I thought I would have a go at woodturning once again myself. Unfortunately, I had mostly forgotten whatever I might have once known so I thought I had better join a club and hope to find a few chaps who could point me in the right direction!

I joined the club last October and was made to feel very welcome. I unfortunately missed the Christmas meeting as I was away and will miss a few other nights for the same but so far, I have very much enjoyed the demonstrations and chatting with everyone and even managed to make it to a day at the Letchworth Men's Shed.



I am still very much a beginner and have yet to even make a bowl. So far, I have managed honey drizzlers, bottle stoppers, a pen and the item above (a pastry press for anyone wondering) so still have a lot to learn!



The club asked if I would be able to take over the newsletter and I am happy to have a shot at it but, I have a full time and very demanding job so would be most grateful if anyone who would like something included in the newsletter, could let me have it as soon after each meeting as possible as I will not be able to manage the very speedy turnaround of your previous, and very efficient, editor.

Nikki



# Gary Rance Demo Review – Adam Blackie

We were delighted to welcome Gary Rance back to the club for our January demonstration. As always, Gary wowed us with his skill—he began by showing off some basic techniques using his signature round skew, making everything look so effortless. He chatted about the challenges of working with a skew, even attempting to demonstrate how you might get a catch. But, thanks to his years of experience, his hands simply wouldn't let him make a mistake! It was a humorous reminder for all of us that practice truly is the key to getting better.

The highlight of the evening was Gary's recreation of the pepper grinders discovered on Henry the Eighth's ship, the Mary Rose. These quirky grinders are made in three parts and feature a clever little bowl to catch the precious ground pepper—clearly, nothing was allowed to go to waste when pepper was such a luxury!



Gary took us through the process of making each part—the top, the body, and the bowl—using blanks he had prepared beforehand. Before we knew it, he had assembled the finished grinder, right before our eyes. One particularly interesting tip was how Gary decorated the grinder. Instead of burning lines into the wood, as many might expect, he used a graphite pencil to add simple lines—a neat trick, especially since it prevents setting off the fire alarms at Adeyfield! Once sealed, the effect is both attractive and practical.

After finishing the grinder, Gary gave a quick demo on tool sharpening. He showed us how a grinding wheel mounted on your own lathe can be used to keep your tools in top shape, explaining the angles and techniques he prefers.

The club was buzzing with around 60 members and guests, and there was plenty of lively discussion. Many took the opportunity to ask questions and share their appreciation afterwards. We're so grateful to Gary for another inspiring evening and can't wait to welcome him back for more demonstrations in the future!

Adam Blackie



# Horatio's Garden Update January 2026

Our club had the pleasure of taking part in a woodturning session on 14th January at the Spinal Injuries Rehabilitation Unit at Stanmore Hospital, also known as Horatio's Garden.

<https://www.horatiogarden.org.uk/the-gardens/horatios-garden-london-south-east/>

I, along with Gordon Cookson and Peter Leach (both from Middlesex Turners Association), spent a wonderful afternoon introducing two patients to the art of woodturning. Both patients are new arrivals at the hospital, beginning their journey towards recovery, and it was fantastic to see how much they enjoyed the session.

Each created something special—a pen and a bud vase—even though neither had tried woodturning before! With their practical and artistic backgrounds, they picked it up in no time and we all left with beaming smiles, having enjoyed a truly rewarding experience.



We're delighted to say these sessions will now be held every month throughout 2026. If you'd like to get involved or simply find out more, please do drop me a line at [chairman@hertsandbedswoodturners.co.uk](mailto:chairman@hertsandbedswoodturners.co.uk).

Adam Blackie

# Adeyfield Audio Visual Upgrade - Progress Update.

I am delighted to share that the first stage of our audiovisual upgrade is now underway!

At the moment, the only change you will spot is a wonderfully tidy storeroom at the back of the Adeyfield Community Centre. This transformation was only possible thanks to the fantastic efforts of five dedicated club members. A heartfelt thank you goes to Patrick Stileman, Stepan Ptacek, David Ireson, Harvey Alison and Geoff Selly, who generously gave up their afternoon on 23rd January to empty the storeroom, reorganise the shelves, and fill a medium-sized skip with years' worth of accumulated odds and ends.

The next step for the storeroom will be adding extra shelving, creating even more useful space for both our club and the centre as a whole.

The Adeyfield staff were absolutely delighted with what we achieved and look forward to working with us again during 2026.

In other news, I've placed the order for the installation of cabling for brand new display screens, which will soon appear on the sides of the hall.

Meanwhile, James Blackie, Patrick Stileman and Paul Boyes have begun working on plans for a new gantry, which will eventually house our upgraded lighting and camera systems. Creating more storage was a key part of making this possible—so we are well on our way!

If you'd like to know more, or can contribute in any way to this upgrade, please do get in touch with me or any of the members already mentioned above.



Picture - The newly emptied Adeyfield storage space. Not much to look at, but new shelving to be installed soon.

Adam Blackie

January 2026



# For Sale and Wanted

## For Sale

Metal turning lathe available to a new home, as per photos attached. Current owner doesn't want anything in return, just to know that it's going to someone that will put it to good use. Anybody interested should contact club member, Keith Lucas, on 07854 782795.





# Poetry Prose Corner

By way of a change from a poem this time, the following prose may entertain! I was asked at a party to join in a game of 'would I lie to you?' Truth or lie and told the following truth!

## **FOUR COUNTIES.....NOT FOUR CANDLES!!**

I'm just watching Steve Davies and Ken Docherty (commentators) during an interval at the Masters Snooker. They have just bravely climbed the roof of the auditorium (Alexandra Palace) and mentioned they are looking at 4 counties of England simultaneously. I presume, Middlesex, Essex, Kent and Surrey. I can claim I have STOOD simultaneously in 4 counties of England.

I joined my father in the 1960's to sell building materials and we acted as London Agents for a midlands manufacturer of clay drain pipes, chimney pots and flue linings, named ENSOR who were in their centenary years at that time.

Their quarries for extracting clay and their beehive kilns for firing the products were in Swadlincote (made famous by Jack Bodell, heavy weight boxing champion), near Burton on Trent. They had the misfortune to need to dig coal before getting to the clay (open cast mining) which was better quality than what was needed to fire the kilns so the resultant coal sales made them a very wealthy family.

They held their annual dinner dance at the 'Church Gresley Welfare Miners Centre' where the young lady amazons who manhandled 1/2 cwt blocks of wet clay in the factory through the year became princesses and unrecognisable in their finery at that event!

On my very first visit to the factory the MD took me to the corner of a field and told me to put my foot on a concrete slab in the ground which I did. He then said, 'you are now standing simultaneously in 4 counties of England - namely Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire' !! which I have never forgotten and never questioned.

Ah, memories, memories.

Very best wishes to all, Martin S.