



WOODBITS NEWSLETTER Issue 235 December 2025

SHAVINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the December 2025 newsletter!

As we come to the end of December, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on what has truly been a fantastic year for our club. Thanks to your enthusiasm and support, we've seen our membership grow, enjoyed a variety of lively training events, welcomed several new professional turner demonstrations, and taken part in bustling craft fairs. We also relaunched our branding with a fresh and eye-catching new leaflet, and built valuable connections with both Letchworth Men's Shed and Horatio's Garden. Our finances are also looking healthy, putting us in a great position for the future.

A real highlight is that we've finally agreed a plan with Adeyfield to upgrade our audio visual equipment—something I know will benefit us all!

This year, our committee has also been strengthened with several new faces, while our experienced members continue to lend their invaluable support. None of these achievements would have been possible without the hard work and good spirit of our committee and, of course, all of you.

January Meeting - Our first meeting of 2026 will feature a demonstration by Gary Rance, who has been our club professional almost since day one. It's always a treat to watch Gary at work, and I'm sure this year will be no exception. I hope you're as excited as I am for this annual highlight! January Competitions

This month's competitions are a great way to get creative: beginners are invited to make Spurtles—perfect for stirring the warming porridge we all enjoy during these colder months. For our advanced turners, the challenge is to craft an Apothecary jar, ideal for holding those winter cold remedies.

Looking Forwards - We're already preparing for an exciting 2026, with demonstrators booked, club nights in the works, and, of course, the new Adeyfield Audio Visual upgrade to look forward to. If you haven't already, now's the perfect time to renew your membership. You should have received an email from our friendly membership secretary, Steve Hart—if you haven't responded yet, your renewal will help us plan for another successful year with confidence.

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year! I look forward to catching up with everyone at our meeting on 13th January.

Best wishes,

Adam Blackie

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Club News

December Competition

Beginners



1st Gary Atkins



2nd Patrick Stileman



3rd Paul Ruck

Advanced



1st Peter Kent



2nd Tony Taylor



3rd Peter Pocock

Open



1st Graham Lester

2nd = Brian Stanton



2nd = Graham
Tomkins



3rd Mike Pearson



Meetings Calendar

2026

January	13 th	Gary Rance
February	10 th	Mike Wood
March	10 th	Stuart King
April	14 th	AGM+

Competition Subjects

2026

	Beginners	Advanced
Jan	20 to 30 cm spurtle	"Apothecary" vase
Feb	12 to 15cm diameter bowl	Something offset
March	Tea light holder	Textured bowl

AGM

We are gently moving closer to the annual AGM on April 14th. Any members interested in taking their connection to the club further through the committee are asked to begin thinking about it and maybe talk with one of the existing committee members to get more information as needed.

Already known to be standing down are Adam as Chairman and myself as newsletter editor.

We also need someone to take responsibility for the club kit – in the first instance to inventory the lathes and associated accessories. We know that some things need replacing and funds for replacement parts are available. If you think you might be able to help, please contact Adam or one of the committee.

Allen

Horatio's Garden Carol Service – Adam Blackie



The club is committed to supporting the rehabilitation of patients with spinal injuries at Middlesex Hospital. Each month, we participate in a session designed to introduce patients—primarily men—to the challenging and unfamiliar craft of woodturning, from their new and usually unexpected perspective of using a wheelchair.

These sessions are conducted in partnership with Horatio's Garden, a charity distinguished by its noteworthy origins and singular mission. The Stanmore Garden, which benefits from the club's support, is a typical venue and is a delightful space to visit on any occasion. For further insight into our collaborative efforts, I recommend visiting their website <https://ngs.org.uk/gardens/horatios-garden-ha7/>.

On the 4th December I had the privilege of representing our club at the charity's annual Carol Service, held at St Mary Abbots Parish Church in Kensington. The event featured an accomplished choir and readings presented by notable individuals, including Bunny Guinness and Mishal Husain, both of whom are connected to the charity.

In the coming year, the service will take place at St Paul's Cathedral, and I have already secured my place. Should you wish to learn more about, or participate in, the monthly Middlesex Hospital turning sessions, please contact me for further information.

Adam Blackie

Training Update - Dave Washer

Following the successful training courses provided in 2025 which included Celtic knots, Threaded lidded box turning and training 3 new AWGB tutors we have several ideas for some courses for 2026.

During March we intend to provide a course to show the main features of off-centre turning. The course will be held 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.

More to follow in our February Newsletter.

I would also welcome any ideas for training or if you would like to try something different please let me know as we may have a member in the club who could provide suitable training and don't forget the club will offer a good discount for any training completed by a professional Turner.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Best wishes

Dave

Wizardry in wood

On the 29th October a group from the club attended the **Wizardry in Wood** exhibition at The Plaisterers Hall in London. We all had an inspirational day surrounded by the most fantastic pieces. At lunchtime we all went to a fantastic Italian restaurant suggested by Adam Blackie who had organized the tickets for us.

For me the highlight was seeing some of Stuart Mortimers pieces (below) which were truly inspirational. Whilst I was looking at some pieces with my wife we came across some of Tony Taylors work which we both liked and bought one of them.

Mark Aizicowitz



Christmas Meeting

Feedback to date confirms that the night as a most enjoyable time. A variety of activities kept the members amused including the Christmas Jumper competition with follow-on Carols from Kings Adeyfield, A challenging Christmas quiz, two turning demonstrations and a demo of laser engraving.



Patrick galvanising his table prior to the start of the quiz.



Below: The Xmas choir in full voice ably conducted by Bob Marshall





Above clockwise from the top.

Steve with his finished bud vase, James explaining the use of laser engraving kit, Bob Marshall receiving his prize from Adam in the 'Best Xmas Jumper competition and Paul with his rustic bud vase

On the Display Table



Bottle stoppers
Philip Francis



Immediately above:
Celtic carved post (Adam Blackie)
Large carved sculpture (Graham Lester),

Note – I don't know who turned the impressive segmented vase at top right. If that person lets me know I will update the newsletter for the version on the website. Allen



Display of snowmen
Philip Francis



Above – our resident professional Gary casting his eye over
an entry in the advanced section – a winged bowl.

Using the club sphere jig – Mike Pearson

Having borrowed the Paul Howard sphere jig from the lending library, I thought I would pen my thoughts.

Having never used a jig like this before, I was keen to get started and see what would happen. Having read the instructions and turning a centering piece to fit the gap between the lathe bed, I went about fitting it to the lathe.

Whether it is just my lathe bed, I found it quite difficult to fit, as the gap is quite narrow and the retaining pieces a bit too long, I had to use a magnet to hold them in place to get the screws located, once that was done I couldn't slide it along the bed as there is a support in the way and the central bolt is quite long.



Once I got all that sorted, I was ready to start turning my first 2" sphere, I thought it best to start small.

Once you get the tool center height set and the central distance of the sphere, it was quite easy to use, just advancing the cutter a small amount on each pass, however I did notice some play in the tool which caused a catch or 2 until I realized the central bolt was a little loose, once I got that tightened up all was fine.

The actual process is quite simple, except when you have taken the partially finished sphere out of the chuck to cut off the parts the tool cannot reach.

After repositioning it between 2 cups I was able to remove the surplus wood to complete the sphere, then sand and finish.

I was quite pleased with the end result despite my initial frustrations I decided to make a 4" sphere and then a 6" sphere.



All in all, I enjoyed using the jig, and I would imagine if you were wanting to make several spheres it would be a good thing to own one.

Mike Pearson



Letchworth (Men's Shed) Christmas Fair Report



(L-R) Colin Newman, Steve Hart, Graham Hill (Dave Washer avoided being in the photo!?)

On December 6th, an intrepid band of five club members bravely donned their warmest layers and ventured out to the Standalone Farm Christmas Fair, determined to make the most of the day alongside the Men's Shed stall.

Though the weather could only be described as distinctly wintry—think less "festive cheer" and more "frostbitten toes"—and visitor numbers were hardly what you'd call record-breaking, we made the best of it by soaking in all the choir performances and noshing on the pork pies available in the food hall.

We mingled with curious passersby who showed genuine, if occasionally baffled, enthusiasm for the fine art of woodturning. And ever the evangelists for our craft, we handed out leaflets like confetti at a wedding.

To top it all off, we managed to ring up almost £350 in sales—a tidy sum for club funds that left us feeling pretty chuffed about ourselves. All in all, not too shabby for a chilly day out!

My personal thanks go to all members who contributed items for sale throughout 2025.

Adam Blackie

Poetry Corner

I was asked for a Christmas Time poem on a Rotary theme which could go world wide to overseas Rotary Clubs as we at the Watford Rotary celebrated our centenary last year - of which we are very proud!

We recently ran an idea we called **WRAPUP**, so we put out a request for winter coats surplus to needs and collected 700 all of which were presented free of charge to local needful recipients!

We circulate the town of Watford every day of December with our Santa Float, collecting from local people for donations to local charities. This is an enormous effort by many of our members and we generally collect up to £16,000 which is totally distributed to local charities in the New Year.

I hope you enjoy this Rotary themed poem this month.

Martin

THE SPIRIT OF ROTARY

Here we are again, happy as can be
All good fun and next the Christmas Tree
Our ideals of Rotary saw us through the year
Our life's desire to ease ill fortune to us was ever near
Albeit local stress or faraway disaster
Our hearts did our best with a timely sticking plaster
For such is the nature of good neighbourly intention
One act at a time speaks worlds of consolation
We questioned not the need, just sprang into action
Our rotary umbrella spreading some satisfaction
Oft times rather thinly but better some than none
Trying to meet life's challenges when the day is done
The maxim of service above self was never, ever more apt
Punctuated just now, in spirit of Christmas wrapped.

Martin Sexton. 1st December 2025