

Forthcoming Attractions

October 1st - Hands On
November 5th - Demo (To be defined)
December 3rd - Hands on
January 9th - Social Evening
February 4th - Demo

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**Woody's
World**

The Newsletter of



Sep
tember 2009

Tonight Chris Eagles demonstrates the how to make a necklace stand. It's got to be more complicated than making a necklace lie down, so it should be interesting and informative.

Thanks to John and Mary Davies for providing the following words and pictures.

As a change from the usual routine of a demonstrator or hands-on evening at Offchurch, for the **August meeting** we arranged a visit to the Warwickshire pole lathe group. We chose August for the light evening to make it easy to find the venue and because some of the demonstration was likely to be outside. This plan worked fine right up until it started raining that afternoon but fortunately the pole lathe turners were well prepared and had their small marquee set up ready for us.

The evening was split into two parts, first a demonstration by the experts and then we were welcome to have a go. The three demonstrators were Matt Jarvis, Martin Damen and Mike Ashton (I don't think that your name has to start with 'M' to be a pole turner but it seems to help!). All three were very welcoming and explained clearly the different techniques involved.

Pole turning starts with green wood logs which are split lengthways into at least quarters before turning.



It's important that the centre of the log is removed otherwise the final piece will split as it dries. The log is initially split using a froe which cleaves the wood along the grain.

At this point with a motorised lathe we would normally take off the sharp edges with a roughing gouge and turn the

log to a cylinder. However it's hard work to do this on a pole lathe so the log is shaped further using a shaving horse and a drawknife to round the log to as close to a cylinder as possible. Only after that is the work mounted on the lathe and finally turned to cylinder. *Excellent, Dave managed to resist putting in a joke about a shaving horse!*

Because the wood is fairly wet then, although the tools are similar to those used on a motorised lathe, they are usually ground to a

narrower angle and sharpened to a fine edge. With a little bit of practice even the beginners could take off fine shavings with a skew chisel. As everything is operator powered then it is much harder to have a dig in, even with a skew, and when it does happen there's a lot less excitement than on a powered lathe. I speak from experience on this last point!



As a demonstration Matt very quickly turned a piece of ash into "ye olde rounders batte" - that's pole lathe marketing speak - and achieved a very smooth finish straight off the skew chisel. (Calling things "olde English ..." also works well apparently!)

All the equipment - lathes, shaving horses etc - were made by the group. This is common in pole lathe circles as it's no good looking for this equipment

in the Axminster catalogue. This also has the advantage that you make your lathe at the ideal height for you. I have to say that none of them looked fresh out of the showroom but they all worked

remarkably well. Despite the name none of them use saplings, or poles, to provide the return spring. Bungee cords or elastic is frowned upon and apparently "snatches" on the return stroke. Instead a complex arrangement of two 3' x 1" x 1/2" lengths of ash coupled with some twisted string and a bobbin are used to provide the spring. It's a classic Heath-Robinson arrangement that you think will never work but actually performs admirably.

As well as the normal spindle turning arrangement the group has a bowl turning lathe.



Turning bowls seemed to be a more difficult job with a hooked tool being held

over the shoulder as if you were ready to harpoon the bowl. It was also very difficult to get a smooth finish even for the experts and the tool marks were obvious on the finished article.

Interestingly the group had a bowl that was bought from an antique shop which must have been turned on a pole lathe because the tool marks were very similar.

Pole turning is usually connected with Windsor chair making and for those interested the chair museum in High Wycombe has a lot of useful information. Chairs were usually made without glue and relied on the green wood stretchers and legs drying into an oval cross section to lock the joints tightly. Overall it was a very enjoyable evening with four lathes available to use and was a great introduction to a different method of turning. The pole lathe group was very welcoming and supplied a rather fine fruit cake (baked by Martin's wife) as well as a cup of tea at the start and at half time.

For those interested in learning more then the group meets on the first Sunday of each month at The Old Watermill in Wellesbourne from 10am until 4pm (£2 per person including refreshments). It's best to contact Matt (01926 651520) or Martin (01295 758519) before going along. The consensus on the evening was that a return visit next year would be welcome, possibly in July as it should be a bit lighter later into the evening.

Woodturning and Crafts in France

For the past few years we've been taking our summer holidays in the northern parts of France which are no more than a day's drive from the Midlands. This year we ended up in the Ardennes where we've been meaning to go for a while but never quite managed it until now. The region spans part of northern France and southern Belgium and is covered in dense forests. It's quite high up and cut by steep sided valleys and rivers, the largest of which is the Meuse.

There was a lot to see and do but one place that caught our attention was the "Centre Europeen Des Metiers D'Art" or European Centre of Arts and Crafts. Despite the grand sounding name it was a relatively small place but packed full of high quality local arts and crafts. They had everything there - pottery, ceramics, metalwork, jewellery, glassware, fashion and, of course, woodturning. Their website is at: <http://www.cema-givet.com/>



Two woodturning exhibits in particular were interesting. The first was some simple shapes like apples, mushrooms and even eggs with a clock inset into them. After Dave's talk a couple of meetings ago we all know how to inset clocks so these should be pretty easy and the results were quite effective. Interestingly the apples were on sale for 39 Euros each which is about £33 in real money. Needless to say they weren't selling because they had the same items on display as they had in the previous year's brochure picture!



The other interesting exhibit was some turned paper knives. I assume that they were turned from a blank with a rectangular cross section and the blade shaped using a spokeshave and/or a sanding disk. Again very effective at this time a more modest, but still too expensive, 17 Euros (£15).

All in all it was a fascinating area and one that we'll definitely return to in the future. Getting to the Ardennes from the channel tunnel was fairly easy but on the way out we made the mistake of taking the autoroute through Lille and Belgium. The traffic was very heavy even on a Saturday and the Belgian authorities seem to regard autoroutes as places to dig up and keep their collection of road cones. It was just like the M6 and we felt right at home. We came back the slightly longer but much more relaxing route via Reims and the A26.

John and Mary Davies