

Editor's Comments

Hello again! Please accept my apologies for the absence of myself and the Newsletter from the June meeting. My wife Pat has been very ill for some time, and life became dominated by hospital visits etc., leaving me little time for any of my usual activities. Pat is now home, and gradually getting back to her normal routine, and I am now finding out just how much I had not been able to get done over the past many weeks!

So much has happened in MWA recently that I have neither the space nor the time to record it in the usual detail, but I will attempt to remind you of the events.

One of the things I missed was the recent Exhibition by the Worshipful Company of Turners. I am told that it was a stunning showcase of British woodturning, and I hope that some of you were able to go to it. In the Junior competition which was part of the Exhibition, I am delighted to report that Luke Rance gained a Second Prize. This is a great achievement, and it is a compliment to his father and mentor, Gary Rance. Join with me in offering Luke our heartiest congratulations.

Alan Spargo

AWGB Exhibitions

In the course of the year, the AWGB is invited to exhibit at the major wood craft shows. Work to display is drawn from the Instant Gallery in 'Seminar years', but in years when there is no Seminar, AWGB relies on members to provide gallery standard exhibits. This year (2004) is a non seminar year, and members of MWA and others have been asked to offer work for display.

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(One committee vacancy remains)

Display pieces are retained for approximately twelve months. They will need to be contained in substantial packaging, and should be new and as far as possible original work which has not been displayed before. Work may be offered for sale while on display. If sold, the AWGB will charge 10% commission of the price obtained, passing the balance to the maker of the piece.

If you are willing to offer work for display, please contact Adrian Needham.

MWA Seminar 2004

There were 44 people, 36 of whom were MWA members, at the Seminar. Tony and June Brown would have been there, but at the last minute could not come as June had been taken ill. We missed them both, as they never fail each to make a good contribution to the setting up and running of the day. Tony did in fact turn out early in the day to bring the lathe and its equipment to the venue, relieving us of a major problem, but of course he could not stay. We are glad to report that June is now very much better.

Gary Rance was the demonstrator for the day, and we were pleased to see that he had brought Luke along to generally assist (and hinder?) him. Joking apart, Luke made himself very useful during the day, acting as 'gopher' and general dogsbody for his father. Generously provided catering was arranged by Adrian Needham, assisted by Mary and Eddie Morgan, and several members who pitched in willingly to get it all set up.

Ralph Pooley was generally in charge of the setting up of the hall, the equipment, and the Instant Gallery, while Adrian had borrowed large screen projection equipment to complement the video camera operated throughout the day by Malcolm Mackender. There was a moment of panic when it turned out that the electricity supply to the power points in the main hall was dead. This cost us the lighting planned for the Instant Gallery, but we were able to import power from the kitchen for all the other equipment. It's a good job that we carry a good supply of extension leads!

The Instant Gallery was very successful this year. There was a wide variety of work on display, all of good quality, and quite a few pieces of outstanding quality. MWA thanks all who made this feature such a success. We

hope to have some photos of the Gallery in due course.

Demonstrators at past Seminars have chosen elaborate and stunningly executed faceplate work, peppering their demonstration with a stream of hint and tips and teaching points. For a change, Gary chose to concentrate more on spindle turning, which is an area generally much neglected by wood turning enthusiasts. He introduced himself by giving a brief account of his entry into the world of wood turning. Gary is a time served turner, and one of the few who make an entire living from wood turning. This was followed by a potted course on spindle turning, which included most of what every turner should know about this basic method of producing turned work. Spindle turning is a discipline which enables the turner to develop competence in the use of all the most common turning tools, and provides excellent practice when skills have become rusty following a period away from the lathe.

Having covered the teaching points, Gary moved on to tackle a goblet with a long and very thin stem. This is not a project for the raw beginner, but provided that the "rules" are followed carefully, many intermediate turners should be able to make a passable goblet. It is the long thin stem which sorts out the men from the boys! Turning long thin stems requires complete confidence in handling the tools, and the ability to sharpen them correctly.

(The account of the MWA Seminar will be continued in the next Newsletter with a description of the production of the goblet).

Dates for your Diary

July 23rd to July 30th Exhibition
in Uxbridge Library

August 12th Club Night.

September 9th Simon Hope of
Outback Timbers

October 14th Stuart King

November 11th A.G.M.

December Xmas Club Night

Footwear in the Workshop.

I expect that like me, you put on an old pair of shoes when working in your workshop, but not everybody does. I have noticed at exhibitions that some of the demonstrators have been wearing sandals during the hot weather. It is all very well to keep your feet cool, but what happens if you don't jump out of the way quickly enough when a turning tool falls to the ground?

Last year, my old 'workshop' shoes finally fell apart, as they do, and I had to consider how to replace them. First of all I tried my rubber slip-on gardening shoes. No good at all. So I did what should have done in the first place - consult the Axminster catalogue! There is quite a choice, but I chose the cheapest 'Silva' range at just over £15. When they arrived next day, they fitted well, and have proved to be surprisingly comfortable, even when worn all day. They provide the reassurance of steel toe caps, and a steel reinforced sole (good for going up ladders!) and have a thick sole which

insulates from the effects of standing on a concrete floor. I recommend them to you.

While I was at it, I took a look at the rest of the Health & Safety section of the catalogue. There is no excuse for not having safety goggles or safety spectacles, because they can be quite cheap. Likewise, for occasional use, cup type dust masks need not be too expensive, although I would strongly recommend that if you do more than occasional turning, you should buy one of the many powered masks available on the market. There is a good choice at prices ranging from about £100 upwards.

Protection from dust, flying particles, and falling objects is well worth the initial cost. Far better to invest some money in safety gear than in buying the latest fancy tool or gadget which will be used only a couple of times, and then remain in the drawer, unused. Alan Spargo

The Sorby Road Show

The Sorby Road Show was our presentation in May. Robert Sorby manufactures and sell excellent turning tools and a variety of innovative and effective gadgets unique to the firm. A visit from the Road Show is always to be looked forward to. This time Clive Brooks represented the firm. He demonstrated a range of recent products in a business like manner, and had no need to 'push' the products - they are all excellent, and sell on their merits. A range of Sorby turning products was on sale at a useful discount, under the umbrella of Geoff Hughes, who runs a wood turning supply business locally. Thank you Geoff. Incidentally, Geoff has been in hospital, and had turned

up at the meeting on the same day as he had been discharged to facilitate sales. We wish him a full recovery soon, and a speedy resumption of his business.

The evening went well, with a satisfying level of sales, judging by the number of members leaving the meeting carrying goods, and with satisfied smiles on their faces. Very generously, we were given several Sorby tools to use as raffle prizes. These were held over until the Seminar, when they provided valuable prizes for the raffle held at the event. We shall be inviting the Robert Sorby Road Show again in due course.

June Meeting

My spies tell me that this was another good evening. Colin Simpson demonstrated a carved and coloured platter to good effect, and also had some Bog Oak with him. Bog Oak is a rare timber which has been preserved for a very long period by immersion in a peat bog. It is not an easy timber to work, being prone to splitting as it dries out. I understand that Clive bought his log from a peat bog in the Eastern counties, and had to remove it himself from where it lay. Quite a job!

I also learn that the lift was not working on the evening of the June meeting. All the heavy kit had to be manhandled up and down the stairs, and we cannot thank enough all those who muscled in (literally) to make the evening possible. It is a good job that I was not there or I might have blown a gasket *and* a fuse! Editor.

Bud Vases Galore

As part of the activities at our meeting in May, we ran the first of an occasional series of informal competitions. It was to produce a bud vase out of any timber, not exceeding eight inches in height. There were to be no prizes, and no formal critique which we felt would put off would be entrants. Instead, one of our professional turners would offer informal comments on the form and finish of the pieces, and select one which, in his view had the best features. The intention was to encourage members to show off what they could do, and to encourage the friendly discussion which would lead to sharing of opinions, and the overall improvement of our work.

On the day, there was a respectable collection of the work of our members. Everything shown had good features. Stuart King kindly took on the judging and offered in the nicest possible way his thoughts about the most notable of the pieces on show. In the end, he was hard put to it to define exactly which one he thought was the best, and in the end used an infallible yardstick. He chose the one which he would most have liked to have on his mantelpiece at home. It was a splendid example, not conforming to the typical bud vase shape, and I think that many present probably coveted it.

Stuart himself did not submit an entry. Instead he produced from his bag a few of the small "Token Pots" which he had made recently, and spoke about how they came to be in the forms which we saw. It was a short lesson in the art of meaningful designing, and complemented the efforts of those who were brave enough to enter the competition.

Our next informal competition is to be presented at the August meeting. the subject is a Platter, in any wood, not greater than ten inches in diameter. Again form and finish are to be the criteria for judgement, and again one of our professional turners will be asked to review the exhibits, and choose which one is, in his opinion, the best on show.

Library Man To Wed Library Lady

Gordon Cookson is delighted to announce that Claire Gaffen has agreed that we should share our lives together. We hope to be married on Easter Saturday 2005. Details of the arrangements will be published in due course. Claire is a dedicated and much loved member of the Ealing Library Service, and is my technical adviser for running the MWA library. She has bought quite a few of my early pieces, so if I want to set up a retrospective exhibition, I know where to start!

We will be buying a house in Ealing so that Claire can continue with the job she loves. It will also mean an easier journey for me to get to MWA meetings. When the time comes, any volunteers to help in moving my wood stock, tools, and two heavy lathes will be much appreciated.

MWA Library

The MWA Library continues to be a valuable part of our Club evenings. Gordon, who looks after it, writes to remind members that videos on wood turning and related topics may be borrowed for one month for a nominal fee of £1.00. This is to cover the cost of replacement when eventually the tape suffers from too much wear to remain usable. Books may be borrowed free of charge. Gordon says that the box of books is getting rather heavy to cart to and from his car. (He has had more books donated to the Library recently). He invites members to borrow more books to reduce his burden. He also wishes to thank Jim Thomas, Dennis Keeling, Tony Brown and Alan Spargo for their contributions to the library stock.

The Library can always accept Videos on turning topics, if members have any surplus to their requirements.

There should be nothing in a design without a reason. Anon.

