



Martock and District Woodturners Newsletter

May 2024

News

There is lots going on next month besides the usual hands-on and club night:

Don't miss the All Day demonstration by Les Thorne on the 8th June...



... and come along for a visit to Axminster tools on 24th June, with a chance to visit their manufacturing facilities.



Diary Dates

May 28 th	Club night – 7pm, Ash Pavilion.
Jun 8 th	All day demonstration – Les Thorne – 10am, Ash Pavilion
Jun 15 th	Hands-on – 10am, Yandles Training Room
Jun 24 th	Visit to Axminster Tools – see details below
Jun 25 th	Club night – 7pm, Ash Pavilion.
Jul 13 th	Yandles summer craft fair
Jul 20 th	Hands-on – 10am, Yandles Training Room

April Demonstration – Paul Sweet



Paul is a member of the [Weston Woodturning Circle](#) and a regular demonstrator at the club. You will also find him selling his wares at the Yandles craft fairs and at various county shows. At this club visit he managed to fit in two demonstrations – a resin and burr bowl and a porringer bowl (a bowl with handles, similar in design to the traditional Scottish drinking bowl known as a Quaich).

Demonstration 1 – Resin and burr bowl



To make the blank, Paul first turns the timber to round to fit in a plastic bucket so that there is a small gap around the edge to allow the resin to flow down the sides. The timber needs to be weighted down before adding the resin otherwise it will float to the top. He uses the Vista resin (as sold by Yandles) and finds that he does not need to use a vacuum chamber or pressure pot to get good results. It needs to be left for at least a week before it is hard enough to turn.

The blank is prepared with a hole in the centre of the top to take a 4-prong drive (the original centre when the timber was turned to round), and is mounted between centres.

The first step is to true up the blank and expose the timber by turning away all the resin off the surface. This is especially important on the base as you should never try to hold a piece by a spigot or recess made in the resin as it will easily break.

The outside of the bowl can then be shaped. Paul used a combination of standard bowl gouges, [carbide tipped tools](#) and a [shear scraper](#) to achieve the desired finish.

The outside was sanded using an electric drill with grits from 120 to 600. Keep the sanding area moving to avoid overheating, which can melt the resin. If you alternate between hand sanding and rotary sanding you can tell by the direction of the scratches whether you have removed all those made by the previous grit and are ready to move on to the next grit. If you want to go finer than 600 grit you will probably need to wet sand.

Paul finished the process using Yorkshire Grit, or True Grit.

Initial hollowing out is done with a bowl gouge. Paul likes to put a bead on the rim of his bowls, and this is done before hollowing too deep (whilst there is plenty of rigidity in the sides).

The bulk of the hollowing was done using a Rolly Munro hollowing tool to quickly remove the bulk of the waste.



When down to just wood Paul switched back to a bowl gouge to complete the bowl. Finishing the inside would be the same process as the outside, but Paul left it incomplete so as we didn't have to watch him do more sanding and to leave time for a second demonstration.



Demonstration 2 – Porringer bowl

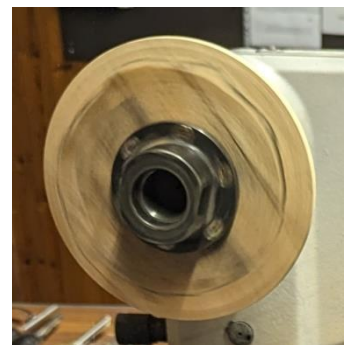


The blank was a fairly wet piece of spalted beech, which was mounted on a faceplate.

A small portion of the bowl top (nearest the headstock) was levelled off and the back of the bowl was shaped to include an undercut rim from which the handles will be made. A spigot was turned on the bottom and the tailstock used to make a centre point that can be used to re-centre the bowl when it comes to remove the tenon.



Paul always reverse mounts the piece in the chuck before removing the faceplate so that if the tenon needs to be adjusted for any reason it can easily be returned to its original position.



The next stage was to round over the rim and mark the where the outside of the bowl is – this can best be gauged by looking down on the rim and putting your pencil opposite the outside edge of the bowl. Some of the centre was removed to make marking out the handles a little easier.

The handles are positioned in the side grain section of the bowl and are about 75mm wide. Having marked one handle the other can be marked by bringing the toolrest up to centre height and laying a ruler on it to mark diametrically opposite points.

The shape of the handle was drawn in by eye and the waste section removed with a fretsaw, cutting on the outside of the line (at home it would be done with a bandsaw, with the bowl rim flat on the bandsaw table).

The ends of the handles and the area between them were sanded to shape using a drum sander made from a piece of dowel with some Velcro glued to it and held in an electric drill.

The inside of the bowl was turned leaving a wall thickness of 5-6mm, and remembering to keep hands and fingers clear of outside rim of the bowl and the handles!

After the turning was complete the bowl was sanded down to 240 grit (you could go finer if you like) and because it was wet timber, a liberal coat of lemon oil applied; lemon oil is non-curing and therefore the water can escape as the oil soaks in to replace it. Paul would normally apply several coats over the course of a day, and after that two or three coats of hard wax oil, cutting back between each coat.

Finally the piece can be buffed up using a pair of buffing wheels (which Paul mounts on a small pigtail fitted in his electric drill). The first wheel is used with a cutting compound and the second with carnauba wax.



Gallery

Here is where we display any items made by club members in recent weeks.



Charlie W made this collection of small pots from some weathered oak timber.



A selection of different bowls turned by Dave A.



Phil O made this double spiral stand.

Please send photographs of anything you have made to newsletter@madturners.co.uk, or better still bring them along on a club night to put on the inspiration table for all to admire.

Club Visit to ...



On Monday 24th June there will be an opportunity for a behind-the-scenes visit to Axminster tools. It will run from about 10am to about 3pm and include a tour of their manufacturing facilities followed by a demo. There will be an opportunity find some bargains in the clearance area and browse the store with a 10% club discount.

Tea and coffee will be provided and there is the “Lunch Box” on the estate which offers burgers, etc., but otherwise I would advise you to pack a lunch.

Spaces will be limited to about 20, so please let me know if you are interested – Dave H.

Timber of the Month – Australian Grass Tree



The Australian grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea sp.*) is neither a grass nor a tree in the strictest sense. Plants begin as a crown of rigid grass-like leaves and as these die off and new leaves grow, a trunk is formed made of accumulated leaf bases. Sometimes the trunk will branch - either naturally or through damage - to form a more tree-like structure. Grass trees grow extremely slowly (0.8 – 6 cm a year), although this varies between species; it can take 20 years for the trunk to emerge and a five-metre-tall specimen may be anything from 200 to 600 years old.

The grass tree is believed to be among the first flowering plants to evolve and has adapted to survive bush fires - thick, dead leaves around the stem act as insulation, and help to protect the plant against the heat of the fire. They actually need fire to clear away dead leaves and promote flowering. Flowers are borne on a long spike above a bare section called a “scape”, which can be three to four metres long.

The grass tree is an important resource for the Aboriginal people. The flowering spike can be used as the lightweight handle of a spear, with a sharpened hardwood shaft inserted into the end. The nectar from the flowers gives a sweet-tasting drink when they are soaked in water. The resin from grass trees has many uses such as a glue for spear-making and to patch up leaky water containers, etc. Up until the mid-twentieth century resin collected from the plant was used throughout Australia in all sorts of things such as varnish, metal coating on stoves and tin cans, sizing paper, soap making and in early gramophone records. It was even burnt as incense in churches.

For the woodturner, the root harvested from the base of the plant can be used to create bowls, vases, and other decorative items. These roots are renowned for their intricate and irregular grain patterns, which can include beautiful swirls, knots, and colour variations as can be seen in the example above. This and many other variations can be seen on the website dedicated to the work of woodturner [Jack de Vos](#).



Young grass trees showing the flower spike



An elderly grass tree, 5 metres tall



Typical grass tree root sold for woodturning

Don't Forget to Use Your Club Discounts

Just present your club membership card (it may be worth checking beforehand whether a discount will apply to your intended purchase)



10% off most items, except power tools.



10% off all timber and finishes

If you have anything you would like to share through this newsletter, or have any ideas of what you would like to see included, please let me know by emailing me at <mailto:newsletter@madturners.co.uk>.

Thanks, Dave H