



Staffordshire & South Cheshire Woodturners Association

Newsletter – March 2012

Welcome to my first newsletter as Secretary to the SSCWA. Those of you that were at the AGM will recall that I volunteered as secretary right at the end of the meeting. I had always intended to volunteer for the committee, but not until I retired, as my current job involves a lot of unsociable shifts and there may be times when I may be unable to get to all the meetings. I volunteered along with Steve Barnard, a long-time friend with whom I have shared many experiences (including coercing him to be my best man at my wedding some 37 years ago!). Steve has taken up the role of treasurer and is hoping to computerise the accounts in due course.

A little about myself: as you can see from the web site, my name is Barry Wright. Not a native of these parts, I originally hail from Brighton (along with Steve), but I have spent the last 30 years living in Cheadle. Both Steve and myself were apprentices at Michelin in the 1960/70s and subsequently working for them. I worked in the lab/quality control dept. both in Stoke and in Belfast until I took redundancy in 1984. Steve worked in electronics until he retired. I then went on to run my own photographic and portrait studio for 10 years before moving on to teach Science and special needs (although I continued for many years working for Kodak on a part time basis as one of their top wedding photographers). Eventually I moved to my current post, that of a prison officer working with young offenders at Werrington – a taxing, but nevertheless rewarding, occupation.

I took up woodturning via a tortuous route. I had always been interested in music and nurtured ideas of playing the bass guitar. This being known to my colleagues at work, I was press-ganged into joining a makeshift and (fortunately for the public's ears) short lived band. However, one day a guitarist friend had the misfortune of snapping the headstock off his prized Les Paul guitar. This is a common fault with these guitars if they are mishandled due to an area of short grain at the end of the fret board. I had read an article about this very problem, and agreed to fix it. Bearing in mind that these guitars are worth in the order of £1000 this was a bit of a bold step. Fortunately, I made a success of this. On seeing this repair, a local studio boss presented me with a carrier bag of bits, saying, 'I bet you can't restore this!' In the bag were the shattered remains of an Epiphone SG guitar (similar to the ones that Pete Townshend of The Who played). Never one to turn down a challenge I did manage to restore this guitar and still have it today. Where's all this going you may well think? Well, buoyed up with this success I decided to build my own bass from scratch and realising I didn't have the skills, I enrolled in a woodworking class at Leek College.

It was on one night when the tutor was busy with other students, and being fed up with waiting for help, I decided to try my hand on the lathe. That was it – I was hooked. I turned a candlestick from a mahogany off cut from my bass body and proudly took it home to show the family, all of whom seemed to be impressed.

The bass was put to one side (where it still awaits completion) and the search was on for a lathe of my own. Knowing nothing about lathes, I spotted a SIP lathe on eBay for around £80. However, before it arrived I injured my back and was unable to do anything. Initially it wasn't even unpacked. I did, however, manage to obtain the complete set of woodturning DVDs by Reg Sherwin and spent many an hour laid up in bed watching them! I also saw in a letter in *The Woodturner*, that someone with a bad back had been advised that spindle turning was good exercise for the lower back muscles. So, with a little help from my friends (sounds familiar!), I got the lathe set up and almost immediately realised its shortcomings. The main problem was that it only had a limited range of screw on drives. I persevered for a while, and then decided to go for one of the free-standing Axminster variable speed models, the AWWSL 1000, which at around £250 proved to be an excellent choice. It also just happened that I had a

10% discount voucher and they were offering a package deal that also included a dust extractor so I got a real bargain. I had this lathe for about a year when I came across a mint second hand Hegner HDB200XL (as used by the aforesaid Reg Sherwin in the DVDs). Whilst the Axminster was good, the Hegner is superb. I've had this now for about 18 months and I do not regret spending the money on it.

And that is me up-to-date. I have been in the club a little over two years, and hope that, together with the committee members and, of course, all the other members, we can move the club onwards and upwards.

I hope, in future issues, to spotlight other members of the club, not just the committee, in this newsletter and will value any contributions that you can make. This is the opportunity for YOU to explain to the rest of the members how you do things. Short or long, it doesn't matter, this newsletter is for you to use and enjoy.

Meeting March 8th 2012

The guest demonstrator at the last meeting was Mark Hancock (www.markhancock.co.uk) who delighted those present with his display of fine woodturning couple with amusing banter.

The title for the evening was a 'Twisted Goblet' but that was a bit like calling the QE2 a 'boat'. Mark displayed many skills turning a small goblet with a long very fine stem and a captured ring from a piece of wet holly. The goblet walls were thin enough to be able to use a light to shine through to establish an even wall thickness. But that was not the end of it. Using a combination of moisture and a musical instrument maker's bending iron, he then explained and showed how to bend the stem into various shapes by working with the grain structure of the stem.

Mark also showed and explained how he made the tools for the captured ring, and was somewhat scathing about manufacturers who make 'special' tools when conventional tools, properly used, would be more than adequate for the job. He also showed examples and photos of his work and explained how he now likes work that would appear to fall over, imparting a dynamic element to the final work.

Mark also kindly agreed to make comments on items in our newest adventure, the open table where any member can display pieces of work made during the last month. Mark's comments were both critical and informative about the pieces on display. However, he made it perfectly clear that these were personal views, and that others may see the pieces very differently. Generally, I felt that members found his comments very helpful, and no-one, as far as I know, was offended by any of his critique.

I feel certain that everybody present went home with new ideas buzzing around in their heads and I am certain that we shall be seeing some twisted goblets on our table before too long!

If any-one has found a cheap method of making a bending iron, please let us know so that I can put it in the newsletter. Me, I am just waiting for the opportunity to test out my daughter's curling tongs – I'll let you know what results I get (if any).

Mark Hancock



Members' Display Table

A new venture, brought back from the US by Tom, this is to replace the monthly competitions. Members are asked to bring along a piece that they have finished in the last month to be put on display. We will be asking the

visiting demonstrators to give a critique on the pieces to help forward our woodturning skills. Members themselves, time permitting, may also comment on pieces displayed.

I was somewhat sceptical about this idea, and am an avid supporter of competitions. However, I was astounded by the turnout and was pleasantly impressed with both the quality and the variety of the pieces presented by the members. Looks like I shall have to eat my words. Your comments on this new venture, either as a participant or merely as an observer would be welcome, and can be aired in this newsletter.

I have tried to do justice to the quality of the work displayed in the attached photos.





Next Meeting

	<p>The next meeting will be on Thursday 12th April at 7.20 pm when once again the demonstrator will be Bob Chapman, who will be showing us how to make some craft fair favourites. Anyone who has seen Bob demonstrate before will know that we are going to be in for a packed entertaining evening.</p>
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If anyone has any wood that they would like to donate to the club for the next wood auction (May 10th) it will be gratefully received. The wood auction is one of the many ways in which we fund the club, thereby keeping the annual subs as low as possible.

Club Seminar

	<p>The annual club seminar will be on 29th April in the Stoke Scouts HQ and will feature Andrew Hall, famed for his turning of hats. During the seminar he will be making a miniature hat as well as other items including a mask and stand. Tickets are still available at the modest price of £15 which includes a full lunch and refreshments. This is a real bargain so bring your money along at the next meeting to be sure of a place.</p>
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Final Thought

Any suggestions for a caption for this one?



Bye for now,

Barry