

Crow Valley

WOODTURNERS



Autumn '26

Newsletter

Welcome Back!

Well, that was a scorcher of a summer; welcome back everyone!

A great deal has happened since our last newsletter, and while this issue may look familiar, it is full of reports of some fantastic events and has some great articles that are “by members for members”.

As always, we welcome new articles and are grateful for every contribution. Thank you to everyone who helped with this edition — here's to another great year

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- Bristol and Avon competition
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Thoughts from the Chair

Put away the factor 50 and get the leaf rake at the ready..... Autumn is coming at us full pelt. Mae gwyntoedd y newid yn chwythu'n gynnes.

With the club sessions about to start back (September 10th) and a glorious summer behind us, we are headed into the Autumn term of the club's 20th anniversary year in a strong position. This is really encouraging for all the committee, and I know the team are poised to make the weekly club meetings "all that they can be" for the good of the members and the hobby.

In my August email, I mentioned just how full the Autumn programme is with a number of demos planned along with the Club's annual showcase competition "The Oz Award". I'm sure with this being the 20th Anniversary year, that all members will be doing their absolute best to get their entries in for consideration. Let's make it a showing which is befitting of the celebration.

I also mentioned the go forward committee structure, which has now been confirmed with the AWGB, taking us into the next AGM. During each and every committee meeting, the one thing we all agree on is how important it is that we are there for our membership and to ensure we are doing the right things. In the coming weeks, we will circulate a feedback sheet which I would appreciate you completing. This will help in the planning of future events for sure. To quote John Maxwell "**Change is inevitable. Growth is optional**"

This edition of the newsletter is packed with members articles and updates from some of the key events of the last few months. Whilst I missed it in person, I understand that the competition between the ABWT and the Crow Valley Woodturners was particularly successful with 5 of the top 6 pieces going forward for judge's critique coming from our side of the bridge. Well-done and thank you to all those who showed.

Cheers,

David

Diary Dates for you...

Date 2026	Meeting Topic	Comments
Thursday, 10 September 2026	Hollowing Demonstration	Kevin James
Thursday, 17 September 2026	Open Workshop 7.00pm - 9.00pm	Lathe to be set in meeting room
Thursday, 24 September 2026	Show and Tell	Summer work and competition pieces
Thursday, 1 October 2026	Open Workshop 7.00pm - 9.00pm	Lathe to be set in meeting room
Thursday, 8 October 2026	Lathe Maintenance Demonstration	Nigel Miles
Thursday, 15 October 2026	Show and Tell	Hollowing and current works
Thursday, 22 October 2026	Open Workshop Extended Hours if enough interest	Competition piece opportunity
Thursday, 29 October 2026	Half Term	
Thursday, 5 November 2026	Christmas Bauble Demonstration	Paul Thomas
Thursday, 12 November 2026	Open Workshop Extended Hours if enough interest	Competition piece opportunity
Thursday, 19 November 2026	Oz Award Club Competition	
Thursday, 26 November 2026	Show and Tell	Oz Award piece and photographs
Thursday, 3 December 2026	Open Workshop Extended Hours if enough interest	
Thursday, 10 December 2026	Show and Tell	Christmas Items
Thursday, 17 December 2026	Christmas Celebration	

20th Anniversary Day June 20th



On a beautiful June Saturday, we all gathered at 'the centre' to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Crow Valley Woodturners. Our club room was the centrepiece of the event with a huge centre display table housing the work of many hundreds or even thousands of hours from the members. There was a fantastic array of work on display to a group that comprised members, invited guests and maybe most importantly the family friends and 'nearest and dearest'.

The main room housed a 'guess the wood' competition supported by Dalmann UK (though Kevin tells me that nobody got close to guessing the species), a lucky dip with home turned prizes, an

opportunity to try out pyrography hosted by David James, a display of barley twist pieces and technique by Hefin Rowlands, and a display of wave bowls provided by Peter Bradwick.





In the workshop, Graham middle and Nigel Miles gave continuous demonstrations of various woodturning techniques throughout the day. Nigel even managed to coax a few of our invited guests into having a supported 'go' at turning.

We also had the pleasure of the company Councillor Veronica Crick from Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon community council who is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Llantarnam Grange Arts centre.

The council has been a long-term supporter of our group, and it was great to have Veronica with us for the special day.



In addition to the displays in the main room, David Alexander had organised an extensive (!) buffet for us all to enjoy, topped off by this amazing celebration cake.

Maybe the most pleasing aspect of the day (of course apart from Rob's legendary sausage rolls!) was the number of family and friends of members who came and showed great enthusiasm for our hobby and club. Too often this support is taken for granted and it was lovely to see such an generational spread, all with happy faces and warm comments.

Our raffle for the day raised £150 in support of the woodturning project at Crown Bridge School being run by Nigel Miles, Steve Lester and Peter Bradwick. A presentation of that cheque will be made shortly.

So, all in all, a great day was had by all.



Thanks to everyone who contributed and / or attended the event.

*Here's to the
next 20 years!*





Considering wood losses in our woodturning hobby

By Alan Poretta

Dear all, the following is a reflection on our hobby of woodturning.

Have you ever considered how valuable this natural resource is to our hobby and what the unnoticed consequence of the end-result is?

A tree may take tens or hundreds of years to grow, it is cut down, milled, stored, seasoned and some transported around the world, then we convert the majority of it into sawdust.

So, as an example for myself, I planned to make a Pedestal bowl, with a lid and finial.

I took pieces of Iroko, Tulip wood and Palm wood, which weighed in at exactly 4kg.

After turning and finishing the new weight was 890 grams. So, as a result of this project I lost over three quarters of the wood.



Iroko, is the cheaper cousin of Teak. It grows in the West coast of tropical Africa.

Often called “African Teak”. When felled it has a yellow/light golden-brown colour which darkens over time. It is a dense wood that can have a good finish on end grain.

When turning it is very dusty, so PPE is essential.

Tulip wood comes from Eastern United States and Canada. It is classed as a hard wood; however it is quite soft, which end grain finish is difficult to achieve.

It can have light shades of pale cream, green, purple/red streaks. The wood is very stable and often used in furniture.

Palm wood comes from subtropical regions. It is a dense, fibrous wood that can be difficult to turn when the fibers break out. It can have a variety of different colours depending on its species.

Regards Allan

Emma Cook

‘The Tiny Turner’

Professional demonstration

By David James



The start of a journey is always at the beginning, which for me was “Gonks”. We all know Kev hates them, but my grandchildren are half Danish and love them. My question was? Two or four as a Stocking filler and my starting point YouTube to discover videos on how to make them. The best exponent from my brief search appeared to be Emma Cook and that was how I discovered her. A few videos in and I was impressed by her interaction skills, turning ability, carving prowess and simple use of colour.



So it was that on Saturday 20th of June I arrived on beautiful and very warm summers morning looking forward to a day's turning for princely sum of £10, what a bargain. Emma turned up early looking slightly worn as she had had a bug for the previous week and she wasn't sure if she would make it (possibly out of the toilet, that's one way to lose weight). Let the turning begin.

She started with a basic bowl explaining tool use, her thoughts

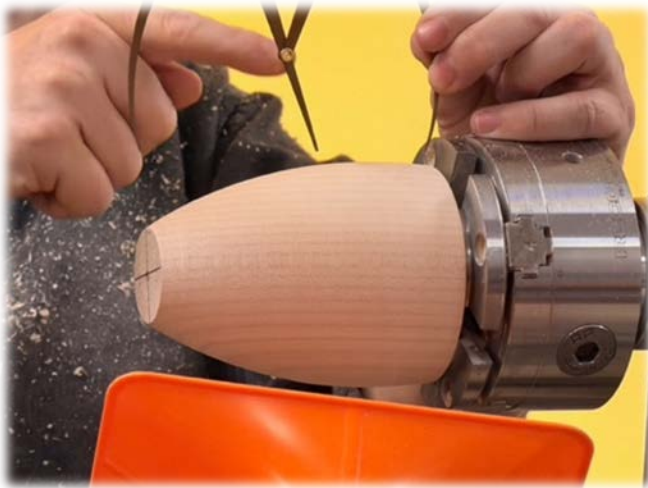
on tool angles and grinding. Having a Robert Sorby ProEdge with various jigs gives me constant profiles and angles and I know what I'm getting. Emma conversely grinds freehand and her finished angles suit her small stature, ensuring she gets the required finish and cut on the materials on the lathe. More of an expert than myself she obviously gets consistent grind whereas I would end up all over the place and probably without a sharp tool.

Having finished the bowl and applied a finish (I think an Emma Cook wax) she then cut two lines near the top about 2mm wide and using a carving chisel made facets around the bowl, between the demarcation lines. Many members seemed fascinated by the sharpness of the tools how it was achieved and the



polished effect caused. Me I wasn't interested, but there you go. She then applied a matt black background paint, a size for metallic flakes and later the afore mentioned flakes. Finally finishing with a leather strap in both grooves that were already cut. Voila, a neat bowl with a metallic, textured finish. Time for a cuppa and a chat (there is a YouTube video of this if anyone is interested).

The next exercise came from a demonstration where an inexperienced turner asked about hollowing and Emma came up with a cheat solution to a hollow form. I personally think, give it a go and mess it up (I would have put cock but knew it would be edited out (*Editor comment: No, it wasn't! Dai!*)) and learn by your mistakes. A neat little hollow, beaker like vessel was produced followed by a lid that could fit in the beaker either way up. A texturing tool was used on both the



lids faces, with two different patterns cut, choose which one you like and if you want use glue to secure it. A nice little project for all, experts like Shaun and Graham can always hollow it out without the removable lid.

Lunch was mostly taken up with Kev and I looking for raffle tickets, we tried all the club's cupboards, Sainsbury's and Morrisons had none (big cock up!). Following lunch and an opportunity to procure various Emma Cook products we continued with pendants. Green

epoxy resin and wood squares about 10mm thick, there was something special about the resin, but I can't remember what. Emma showed us three or four jigs used to produce one circular, from square, curved side, a different one to turn it around and turn the second curved side. One for off centre tuning, products for finishing the resin (someone I'm sure mentioned Brasso, a few other products were bandied about). In all fairness to myself, I wasn't taking notes as I didn't know I was writing the article. Beside which it was hot and all I wanted at this stage was a beer.

I thoroughly enjoyed the day, learned an awful lot and was inspired to give hollow forms a go, something I have sort of been avoiding. Many thanks to Emma for the wonderful day of turning, despite the heat and her afore mentioned illness and all the Club members for their interaction and help with the clearing up. The beer at the "Cock's" (I can say it this time) was ice cold and went down a treat.



Cheers
David



My wood turning journey, so far...

Alan Evans gives us some insights on how, and why he got into woodturning.

Hi Everyone,

As some of you know, I am a bricklayer by trade and been working in the building industry all my life. When I was working, my hobbies were fishing and pigeon racing! In my fifties I had knee replacement surgery which unfortunately was not successful. As a result I spent most of my time watching television and then some woodworking popped up on YouTube. I watched, and watched it for a long time and got more and more interested in wood turning. So eventually, I thought I'd give it a go!

I had my first lathe bought me as a Christmas present, and I learned a lot of the basic things off Youtube. My daughter then told me that there was a place over in Cwmbran where I could go and do some woodturning. So I phoned the number and had a nice chat with Jim Hitch who was very helpful.

At that time, COVID was about, so for a while, Crow Valley Woodturners club was having its meetings on-line. I joined the zoom sessions but didn't say a lot, I listened and found it very interesting. When it was finally allowed to re-open I went along and was made to feel very welcome. Since then I've made lots of pieces, some gone in the house, lots in the shed and even more in the bin! (*Editor comment: sounds very familiar Alan!*). Since then I have upgraded my lathe and got lots of the other things that are needed. I've learned a lot at the meetings and would really like to thank Nigel and Graham for all of their help and patience.



Cheers

Alan

“What is my worth?”

Steve Norman poses the question of the costs of our hobby versus returns.



I first started using a woodturning lathe at the end of the pandemic in 2022; it was just for something to do and perhaps to learn a new skill.

Since then, I have acquired a shed full of wood, saws, callipers chucks, jaws, forstner bits, a pen mandrel, numerous chisels and gouges and a vacuum cleaner! And of course a lathe and ‘surfeit of other folderols’ (*Editor comment: love this phrase Steve 😊*), all to help clutter up the place a bit more. The “shed” has evolved into a workshop now, and alas there seems like there’s no more room for me!

The total financial lay out for all of the is was, well lets say ‘lots’ (££££?) I’d rather not dwell on it for long, however my question is, how can I recoup some of this expense?

Turning has become an obsession now and I’m considering selling some of the things I’ve made, but how much can I “markup” these items? in othe words “What is my worth?”

If I were to add up the cost of a basic kit consisting of a reasonably priced lather, set of turning tools, chuck and pen mandrel that gets me too around £1000 or so with the lion’s share going on the workhorse (the lathe itself). One should always contrive to go for the best quality that you can comfortably afford.

There are a number of other things that should be taken into consideration, these are for your safety, and all that adds to cost , but a a dust mask and safety glasses are a bare minimum.

So, how can I recoup some of my costs? The amount I spent was moderately high although not as much as some. If I were to make 100 pieces, I would have to price them at my total expense, divided by the 100 pieces, then add the cost of the manufatcure including the blank then see what I come up with.

To some, this figure might be a little bit too much, and here is the first hurdle...

“£15??? I can get something like that on Amazon for less than a fiver!” It is really disheartening the way people don’t seem to understand effort!

Pen turning can be an interesting distraction, there is a plethora of different types and styles, easy and quick to make and using a lot less material (which means less to clean up too). Pens are a part of our history that will never be eclipsed. We’ll always require an implement for writing, no matter how clever we think we are.

So to marketing. Where to start? Social media? A craft fair? And advert, or just luck? Just getting noticed is tough. Well the fair seems the best bet to start with and see how things pan out from there. The experience will hopefully be rewarding.

One of the other types of piece I like to make are boxes, (or more accurately a bowl with a lid, a very useful item). It is only when one gets some notoriety that your work may attract a better return, but even then, the “worth” is that which the buyer is prepared to part with. So the old adage still reigns supreme! **Beauty really is in the eye of the beholder!**

*“And so now at the end of the day
We clear up our tools
We sweep up the chipping and dust
We then consider our next move
Because we surely must!”
STORM*

Steve.





Versus



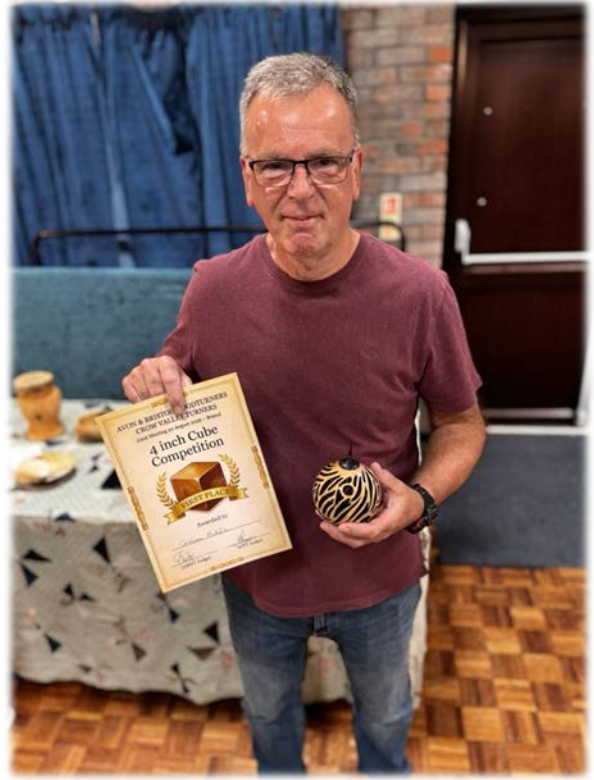
On August 20th we were hosted by our friends at Bristol and Avon Woodturners for the return leg of our inter club competition started in 2025. It was great to see that from an overall entry of 21 pieces to this competition Crow Valley members contributed 14. Here are the inter competition entries below.



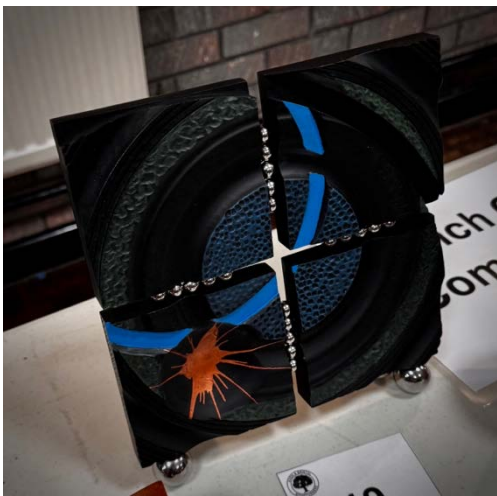
From these, a top six were chosen by blind votes from those present. From that top 6, five were made by Crow Valley Turners. Those were Allan Poretta, Neil Benham, Rob Savage, David Alexander, and Graham Middle. From the top six, our judges Kev James and Rod Tester chose their top three pieces. And the winner was.....

Our very own Graham Middle, with this fantastic pierced hollow form with finial.

Congratulations Graham!



Second was David Alexander, (a good effort from a fishing boat in Norway!) with this lovely piece.



A special mention for Allan Poretta who placed both in the inter-club competition and also as a guest in the Bristol and Avon regular club competition. Fanstastic result Allan!

And last, but definitely not least; congratulations to David Crowson who came away the winner of the beginner category. Well done David. 😊

To everyone who took part either in person or from afar; thank you all. We all passed on our heartfelt thanks to the Bristol and Avon guys for hosting an excellent event.



Woodturning wordsearch



Backer
Abrasive
Truing
Runout

Lathebed
Beading
Partingtool
Footswitch

Lathetool
Threading
Toolpost
Latheface

Next edition *Winter 2026 coming soon!*

Please send your articles, comments or requests to:

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