



Editor's Comments

Christmas and New Year's Greetings to you all. May I wish you mild enough weather for you to be able to get into the workshop and enjoy some turning before the holiday is over. I am normally not one for New Year Resolutions because they always seem reluctant to materialise, but this year I will resolve to get back into my workshop again after over a year of little activity. Wish me luck!

Your Membership renewal notice is pinned to this newsletter. Please deal with it promptly. May I also remind you that you should **not** pay your AWGB subscription direct to AWGB, since it is included in your subscription to MWA. New members who have signed up since the 1st October do not have to renew until the end of 2008, and of course, Life members of MWA will pay only the AWGB part of the subscription to the MWA Treasurer who will pass it on to AWGB. Oh, and don't forget to correct any errors you see on the renewal notice before you hand it back.

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AGM Report

Regrettably, I was unable to attend the AGM. My spies tell me that the business of the evening went well. With the exception of Will Mailes, who has had to withdraw his nomination because of other commitments elsewhere, the current Officers and Committee members were re-elected for another year, and surprise, surprise, yours truly was to be co-opted yet again as Newsletter Editor. The Chairman's and Treasurer's reports were presented and accepted, and presentations were made in appreciation of those members who cheerfully volunteer to provide essential services during our meetings, not forgetting the splendid efforts of Christina Bishop, who has revised and improved our web site during the past year. Thanks too were due to the Speaker from our Charity, and also to our President, Stuart King, who showed some of his unique videos. A.T.S.

October meeting with Stephen Cooper



Stephen Cooper is a well known professional turner, who is often to be seen at Craft Fairs and Shows. He specialises in large items, notably deep hollow forms, and extraordinary bowls and pots turned from Monkey Puzzle

tree trunks. He brought a few specimens of these along with him to the October meeting. These were the subject of much inspection during the evening!

hole in the 'round' side to mount on a substantial screw chuck. The length of the wood was limited by the 12 inch 'swing' of the Poolwood lathe. Bearing in mind that he intended to leave the bark on the completed bowl, Stephen first turned a chucking spigot, which was to double as the foot of the finished bowl, then carefully, with a bowl gouge, shaped what would become the underside of the bowl. Before removing it from the screw chuck, he sanded the surface, and applied a wax finish as this part of the job would not be accessible later.



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Stephen obviously could not in the time available, and with the modest lathe at his disposal,



demonstrate the production of such triumphs of turning, so he talked us through miniature versions as he made them. He began with a small version of a

narrow necked hollow form, made from a small log of boxwood. He demonstrated special techniques, and also showed alternative specialist tools needed to get the waste out of the inside of the piece. He quickly brought the job to a smooth surface, and applied a suitable finish to complete it.



With the embryo bowl mounted on its spigot, the inside waste was taken out carefully with a sharp bowl gouge to bring the wall thickness to about a quarter of an inch. The bark stayed attached, but had there been any loose sections, Stephen would have reattached them with super glue. It only remained to sand and wax the interior of the bowl, and the job was complete. That made two completed jobs so far, and there was another to come!



Stephen's final project was a thin walled footed bowl, to be made from a short length of unseasoned beech trunk. The wood was wet, and having been kept in a plastic bag, had begun to spalt, though not with the usual patterning. Again the screw chuck was used, care being taken to make the periphery of the log run true in the lathe. Stephen's first action was to make an accurately sized chucking spigot, before he quickly turned the exterior shape of the bowl, and made a simple decorative detail on the foot. As with the previous projects, he brought the surface

Next he presented something quite simple; a "banana bowl." He had already prepared another log, which he had sliced down the middle and carefully centred before drilling a

Stephen Cooper contd.

to a good finish from the tool, but of course, as the wood was wet, no finish was applied.

After reverse chucking the job on the spigot, Stephen carefully cut away the interior of the bowl. As he was aiming for a very thin walled bowl, with the bark left on, the waste was removed progressively, leaving thicker wood towards the middle to support the



thinner rim. As always he left a super finish from the tool. Stephen was careful to fully explain and detail each step of the process, until an acceptable wall thickness was achieved. I have

the bowl before me as I write, and its thickness at the rim is just one millimetre! The rest of the wall is of about the same thickness except at the bottom where Stephen allowed it to be a little thicker as it flows into the foot.

To achieve an even thinness, Stephen used the now more common technique of observing how the light from the lathe lamp appeared as it shone through the thin wood, and carefully scraping the outside of the bowl until the transmitted light appeared about the same colour everywhere. It should be noted that this technique can only be used if the wood has been turned very thin already, as measured by callipers, or super sensitive finger tips. Sadly, the bark became detached over a short section, and also a small chip fell out of the rim where the wood had been weakened by spalting, but these defects could easily be remedied later on. When he was satisfied, Stephen undercut the foot so as to keep its wall thickness similar to the rest of the piece,



but he left the chucking spigot on, so that the bowl could be re-chucked for finishing when it had dried out over the next few weeks. At this point his demonstration concluded, and he left the almost complete piece for somebody else to finish off.



It had been a splendid demonstration of fast and precise turning. Many explanations and clarifications accompanied the work as it was done, and special techniques for three of the more difficult wood turning tasks were fully covered. I had been a bumper evening, and it was notable that Stephen fully completed two projects, and brought the third one as far as possible to completion, and all within the limited time available in the evening. Quite an achievement!

Afterthoughts. The bowl has now dried out. There was originally a small heart shake in the piece, and this has now extended to the edge of the foot (see photograph). I like the bowl, and I intend to salvage this split with an inserted wedge of contrasting timber. The remaining bark will be removed from the rim, and the chipped edge will be faired in. A suitable finish will then be applied, and the chucking spigot removed. The outcome cannot be guaranteed, but if it succeeds, I will bring it in for all to see. A.T.S.



