

AWGB Woodturning Seminar 2015

By Robin Goodman

In early August the bi-annual get together at Loughborough University took place, giving over 160 attendee woodturners the chance to see 10 demonstrations from prominent international and UK turners and to meet many other turners from around the country. The main demonstrators are shown in photo 1, reading left to right: Michael Gibson (US), Andy Hall, Nick Agar, Mark Hancock, Mark Sanger, Ashley Harwood (US), Carlyn Lindsay, Cynthia Gibson (US), Ambrose O'Halloram (Eire) and Jean-Claude Charpignon (France); some names familiar some less so. Several other turners were also given the opportunity to give a single demo.

TL1

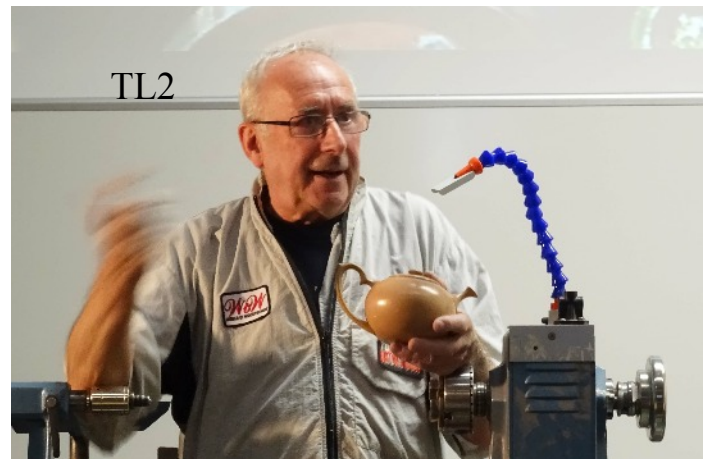


Since we were less likely to see the overseas demonstrators again, there was some logic in attending their demos in preference to those from the UK.

Michael Gibson, although born in England, has lived in USA for over 30 years. Following surgery he was told to slow down and took up woodturning. He became known for his teapots, especially when his then wife Cynthia started to enhance them further with her characteristic decorations. The demo I saw was how he turns a traditional shaped teapot – **photo 2**. The main turning and hollowing is reasonably straight forward and he usually aims for a thickness of about 6 mm, but the spout and handle are critical in terms of shape and position. They are cut on the bandsaw and then shaped using a Foredom with a large carbide tip. He uses parallel steel pins to accurately locate the handle and spout; to ensure a profile match at the interface with the pot, he uses carbon paper to check the high spots, when squeezed tight.

Cynthia Gibson only took up pyrography about 7 years ago, when first acquainted with it by Bob Neill on the Norwegian woodturning cruise. Since then she has developed her own particular style of pyrography and colouring on turnings that is becoming recognisable around the world. In the demo I saw, she did not include her practical pyrography and colouring skills, instead it was a slide show entitled 'Inspiration and Embellishment'. She encouraged us to keep a photographic record of images that capture our attention and included a number of quotations such as "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn.", allegedly spoken by Benjamin Frank-

TL2



TL3



lin. Because she is not a turner as such, nearly all her work are collaborations, **photo 3** is a piece with Binh Pho and **photo 4** is more typical of her signature type of decoration.

Ambrose O'Halloran is an Irish teacher and turner and he gave 3 different demos about bowls and platters, mainly about decoration, such as the grooving shown being formed in photo 5.

TL4



TL5



The Frenchman **Jean-Claude Charpignon** is into complicated turning, some involving ornamental turning techniques. As well as demonstrating his home-made elliptical chuck, he demonstrated various techniques for turning an object inside another, such as the lidded box inside a 65 mm sphere, see **photos 6 & 7**. It is surprising what can be achieved with some ingenuity. The downside is that you need to make a special collet, holding jig and a number of unique shaped turning tools; also the sphere needs to be made very accurately together with the holes formed in it.

Ashley Harwood is a younger turner from South Carolina, where she primarily makes a living selling her work at a local farmers market, but she is also in increasing demand as a demonstrator. At Loughborough she gave demos on both her favourite subjects: bowls and sea urchin ornaments. The one I attended concentrated on rim and foot design for bowls. See **photos 8 & 9**.



TL6



TL7

TL9



Carlyn Lindsay came to woodturning after studying art and is best known for her laminated stripey pieces, usually containing coloured veneers. The demo I attended was the making of a spinning top box, but unfortunately there seemed to be gremlins around! First the lathe would not work, so she could not prepare items just beforehand, then the wood blank was poor and she failed 3 times to make a satisfactory thread to hold the lid onto the base. Resorting to superglue, this then failed and hot melt glue had to suffice. Part of the finial then came unstuck and disappeared somewhere on the floor. **Photo 10** shows what the lid with finial should have looked like.



TL8

TL10



Andrew Hall from county Durham is best known for his turned hats and Corinthian helmets. I was intrigued when I saw some of his wood bending kit, so I decided see his demo on turning and bending small hats. He prefers to use green wood where possible and turned a small hat, see **photo 11**. He turns the rim to a thickness of just under 3mm with the aid of a powerful light, rather than a thickness gauge or fingers alone. He kept the wood damp throughout with a water spray. The most interesting part for me was his bending process. He put the small



TL11

hat in a domestic pressure cooker for 10 minutes, then clamped it lightly in his special jig and used rubber bands to exert pressure on the rim to bend it up at the edges. His set up is shown in **photo 12**, with 2 hats being bent; the drying out is speeded up by a 60w bulb underneath.



Andy Coates did a very good job as AWGB seminar organiser, but for his one demo



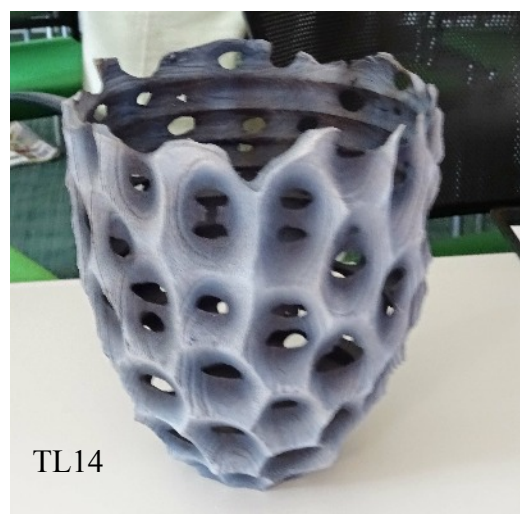
entitled ‘Wet Decoration’ he waited in one room with an audience of 2, while 40 of us waited in the correct published room! It then took a while for him to pack up and move his equipment. Although he makes a living from woodturning, he has done a lot of experimenting with colouring his pieces - he finds that colouring his pieces increases their value significantly – and kindly shared some of his findings and ideas. His main demo showed how to apply a base coat of gesso to give a good smooth base, followed by chalk paint to give a ‘shabby chic’ look, once partially sanded. See photo 13.

given a single demo slot to show how he makes his signature vases – see **photo 14**. After hollowing out, he makes horizontal grooves on the inside with a Rolly Munro tool, before carving out a series of depressions on the outside using his Lancelot angle grinder, deep enough to form a holes through to the inside. After scorching this surface, see **photo 15**, he used a large rotary brush to add texture – at home he usually uses sand blasting– before colouring with an airbrush.

Marcel van Berkel lives on a small island in the Netherlands and was

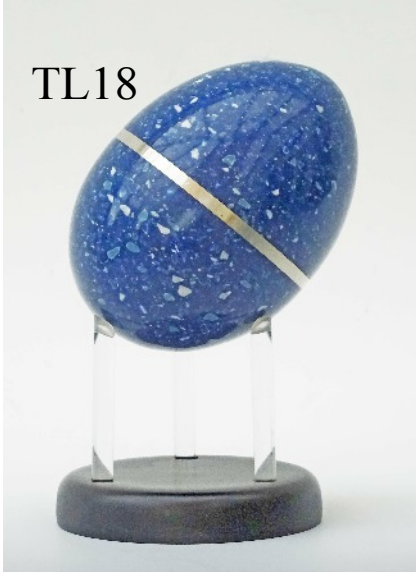


Several UK turners were given the opportunity to do a single demo : **Tony Walton, Peter Moncrieff-Jury, Paul Hannaby, Dave Atkinson and Rod Page**, while special guest **Stuart King** gave 2 sessions titled ‘50 years of Woodturning’.



A major feature of the seminar is the **Instant Gallery**, opened by **Ray Key** AWGB president, **photo 16**. This showcases a vast range of high-quality work from turners from the UK and abroad. Attendees could bring up to 3 of their best pieces and the demonstrators even more, with the option of putting them up for sale. With several hundred exhibits, it is the largest collection of high quality contemporary turning in one place in the UK and a great opportunity to see what others are producing. Over fifty exhibits were selected from the instant gallery for the AWGB travelling exhibition and the September turning exhibition in Trowbridge.

Included in the chosen pieces were one by Helen Woodward, elm bowl **photo 17**, and two by Robin Goodman, Corian with cast pewter egg **photo 18**, and marbled bowl **photo 19**. The **critique** session was interesting. 20 pieces picked from the gallery were the subject of a critique from Nick Agar and Ashley Harwood, assisted by Ray Key. They had chosen the pieces because they



said they stood out as if asking to be looked at again. Some of the comments related to the base or underside of pieces that had not been finished to the same standard as the top, had an unsatisfactory profile, a base that seemed too big or had no signature. They thought that several pieces had too glossy a finish – always a very subjective aspect. A couple of pieces also had specially made stands that they thought distracted from the piece.

£10,000 was raised for the AWGB development fund at the auction of various donated pieces included additional special pieces that had been part turned by the late internationally known Israeli turner Pablo Nemzoff and then completed by various expert turners, including Eli Avisera, Mike Hosaluk, Graham Priddle and others, including Jay Heryet - photo 19 shows her collaborative piece.

There was also the usual large **trade stand** area, for purchasing wood and all sorts of tools equipment and other materials and encouraging us to spend money.. Altogether it was an interesting and stimulating 3 days with plenty of food for thought and inspiration. Several members of the club attended.

18 Aug 2015