



IWG News

The Newsletter of the Island Woodturners Guild

October 2010



In This Issue:

About IWG.....	1
President's Turn.....	1
AAW Exhibition.....	2
Making Chinese Balls.....	2
A Lamp for your Lathe.....	4
Forthcoming Meetings.....	5
Turning Shavings.....	6
Buy and Sell.....	7
IWG on the Web.....	7
Parting Off.....	7

About the IWG:

The Island Woodturners Guild meets from 1:00 - 4:00 PM on the 4th Saturday of each month (except for July and August) at the Central Saanich Senior Citizens' Centre, [1229 Clarke Road](#), Brentwood Bay, BC. Visitors are welcome.

Newsletter Editor:
[Andre Robin](#)

Executive Committee

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Member at Large:
[Brian Hayes](#)

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The IWG gratefully acknowledges the support of the following companies:

- [Craft supplies USA](#)
- [KMS Tools](#)
- [Lee Valley](#)
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The President's Turn: CHALLENGING YOURSELF

As most of you saw at the last meeting, I ran up against a turning requirement which was defined as 21 bowls/plates. The last thing I wanted to do was reproduce 21 identical or close to identical items. I therefore CHALLENGED MYSELF to see if I could produce 21 different items from 9" blanks of wood. What started out as a potentially boring job, turned into a most enjoyable challenge and a product of which I was proud.

Challenging yourself can take many forms. If you are a fairly new turner, the challenge may be as simple as turning a bowl without having to use the "80 grit gouge".

As you get more experienced, you might want to challenge yourself to produce the perfect curve. You may wish to expand your turning production to include lidded vessels, or vases, or platters, or the list goes on. One area in which I am currently interested is embellishment through staining, burning, and/or colouring.

Now, I know you are going to say, each of these progressions requires new tools and new techniques which you don't have. Well, next time you look at items in the instant gallery and something takes your fancy, find out who made it, locate the individual, and ask if you could come over to their shop and try out their tools to in order to produce something similar. Interaction between members of the guild can be the most beneficial aspect of your membership. People love to show other people how to do things.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF by expanding your knowledge and turning skills through interaction with your fellow turners.

AAW LOCAL CHAPTER EXHIBITION

by Graeme Evans

The American Association of Woodturners will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2011 and it has challenged all Chapters to submit one lathe turned item which best exemplifies and represents that chapter.

Each entry must comply with the following:

- The object must fit in an 8" cube
- Weight is limited to 3 lbs(1.36kg)
- Sales will be shared 70% with the chapter or artist and 30% with the AAW
- All pieces must remain with the exhibit and travel to various venues after the symposium.
- Unsold work will be returned to the chapter or individual.

Guild members are invited to submit one turned item for consideration at our January meeting where members will vote on our Guild submission. Items may be submitted by individuals or they may be submitted as a collaborative turning from two or more members.

Demonstration Report: Rob Dunlop "Making Chinese Balls"

by Jeremy Brown

At the September meeting, Rob gave a fascinating demonstration of the making of balls within balls, or "Chinese Balls" as they are often called. Rob taught himself the technique by reading "[Woodturning Wizardry](#)" by David Springett. In addition to a solid understanding of lathe usage and some basic turning tools, the process requires some special tools which can be made or purchased. The tools will be briefly described in this article, but for the details you will need to refer to the book. The tools are specific not only to the size of the outer ball, but to the number (and size) of inner balls as well. In other words, you should think carefully about the size of ball that you want to make, because if you change your mind after making the first one, you will need to make (or buy) another set of tools. In the demonstration, Rob made balls 62mm in diameter.



To make the balls, Rob recommends using a hard wood without an obvious grain direction. Burls may work well, and Rob has had good results with Mesquite (which is very difficult to obtain.) Holly was mentioned as a potentially good material, and the balls have been made in non-wood materials such as ivory.

Rob starts by shaping a crude ball, using a roughing gouge with the end ground square. He then uses a special shaping tool to form the blank into a sphere - actually, a sphere with some nubs sticking out of the ends. He then remounts the near-sphere in a temporary chuck made of waste wood, which holds the form at 90 degrees to the original orientation, with a small wooden cup mounted in the tailstock to keep the form jammed into the temporary chuck. The shaping tool is now used to remove the projections, leaving a sphere.



Resist the temptation to sand at this point – the sandpaper will remove end grain much less quickly than elsewhere, and the resulting shape may not hold securely enough in the chuck for the rest of the operations.

Making Chinese Balls continued

The shaping tool is described in the book and consists of a base that attaches to the lathe's ways, with a pivoting holder that directs a cutting bit in an arc parallel to the ways. The tool is mounted so that the cutting bit is aligned with the centerline of the lathe, and the base pivot is exactly below the center of the blank. As the lathe rotates, Rob's hand moves the bit through an arc that forms the blank into a sphere. The tool seems fairly simple to make out of plywood, a nut and bolt (for the pivot), and a bit from a metal-cutting lathe. See the book for details.



In the past we have seen a variety of ways of turning spheres using only a lathe, chisel, and scraper, but use of the special tool is recommended in this case since the rest of the process requires that the ball be perfectly spherical and of a specific size.

Once the ball is formed, it is removed from the chuck and two sets of marks are drawn on it. The marks will be used to locate one set of twelve large holes that are used to form the inner balls, and a second set of twenty smaller holes. The marks are laid out with a compass or divider and the exact process is best learned from the book since it isn't easy to describe without accurate diagrams.

When the marks are all drawn, the ball is mounted once again and the holes are drilled. This is a good time to describe the purpose-built chuck that will be used for the rest of the operations. The chuck consists of two parts, one of which has a hemispherical recess shaped and sized to fit the finished outer sphere. It would seem tempting to make a simpler recess such as a cone, but this is unlikely to hold the ball securely enough. The recess's holding power may need to be augmented with strips of thin tape, to eliminate slippage. The chuck's other part is a cap which holds the ball in the recess. Rob's cap attaches via wooden threads chased by Rob, but the rest of us will probably be holding our chucks together with woodscrews until Rob teaches us how to form wooden threads. The cap has an aperture that provides access to the Chinese Ball for the remainder of the operations.



Once the ball is secured in the chuck, the first of the twelve large holes can be drilled. Rob uses a spearlike device that resembles a thin parting tool, laid on its side to make a tapered hole with a square bottom. The tapered tool is supported on a special platform that mounts on the ways and provides a horizontal surface that is aligned with the center of the hole. Due to these tapered holes, in the finished object the innermost ball will have twelve small holes, the outer ball will have twelve larger holes, and the intermediate balls will each have twelve holes sized proportionately.

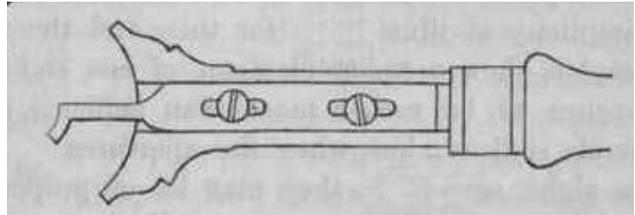


Now it's time to bring out another special tool, looking rather like an allen key with a sturdy, curved depth stop attached to its long leg. The short leg of this tool terminates in a cutting edge. Resting the tool on the platform described above, with the elbow

Life is just a blank slate, what matters most is what you write on it.
-- Christine Frankland

Making Chinese Balls continued

to the right and the cutting edge to the left, we feed the short leg of the tool into the tapered hole, being careful that only its (non-cutting) elbow contacts the side of the tapered hole. When the depth stop arrests the descent of the tool, the short edge will be parallel to the square bottom of the hole. Now we move the tool to the left, removing a disk of material at the same depth as the bottom of the hole. Jumping ahead a bit, eventually there will be twelve of these disks of empty space, and when they all intersect, there will be no material left to fasten the innermost sphere to its neighbour.



Next, we insert a slightly larger version of the L-shaped tool, with a slightly shallower depth stop and a slightly longer short leg. It is used in the way described above to remove a disk of material between the second sphere and the third one. A succession of these tools is used in sequence until we run out of tools, at which point we have almost finished with this first of our twelve large holes.

When the first tapered hole has been completed, a special plug is inserted. The plug should have the same shape as the spearlike tool. It should fit flush with the surface of the outer ball. The purpose of the plug (and its ten siblings) is to hold all the balls in position as we remove the material that joins them together. The plug must remain in place until we remove it, so it is good to secure it with thin, not-too-sticky, double-sided tape. Once the plug is in place, we can loosen the chuck's cap and rotate the ball to the position of the next large hole.

(Why "ten siblings" and not eleven? Because we never have to plug the twelfth hole - as soon as it has been completely formed, we can start removing the plugs.)



Independently of the twelve tapered holes, twenty smaller holes can be drilled. Again, the process of laying out these holes is described in the book and it doesn't seem necessary to include it here. To make these holes, Rob uses a special bit, rather like a spade bit with stepped edges. Some makers of Chinese Balls omit these holes altogether. Their purpose appears to be largely decorative, but they also remove material between the disk-shaped voids, allowing slightly shorter L-shaped cutting tools to be used. Speaking of decoration, Rob

A Lamp for Your Lathe

A compact fluorescent lamp, suitable for use with a lathe, was demonstrated at the September meeting. We promised to share the source with you, so here are the details.

Supplier: Allbrite Lighting (<http://www.albritelighting.com>)
Brand: Standard
Part number: PAR30LN
Description: Compact fluorescent lamp, 15 Watts, 5000 deg K



The box also has number 14028 on it.

Making Chinese Balls continued

cuts small grooves around the edge of each large hole before moving on to the next operation. Some commercial tools actually have projections that create these decorations automatically as they form the tapered holes.

Finally, after the twelve holes are finished and the disks of material have been removed from their sides, the plugs can be removed. Rob does this by drilling a pilot hole in the center of each plug, driving a screw, and then pulling the plug out by the screw. Once the plugs are removed, there should be nothing but air between one perfect sphere and the next.

Finishing the balls presents an unusual challenge. Rob recommends soaking the ball in polymerized tung oil and then turning it occasionally as the excess oil drains out. This causes the oil to coat the inner balls more or less evenly. Finally, compressed air is used to blow the remaining oil away while aiding the drying process.

Rob made it look easy to create a Chinese Ball - and in front of an audience to boot. He even had enough time left over to create a beautiful decorative stand. I wish you all success in reproducing his result!



Forthcoming Meetings

- Doug Fisher will be our guest demonstrator for the October General meeting on Saturday Oct 30. The meeting will start at 9:00 am and will run to 4:00. Remember to bring your lunch and \$35.00 for this special presentation. Doug's repertoire includes offset turning, carving, colouring and staining enhancement. For examples of his work, see Doug's website at www.douglasfisher.com or Google "Douglas Fisher woodturner"
- November 26 - IWG member Graham Cox will demonstrate Turned Goblets with captive rings
- December 18 - Xmas Party - informal gathering with your partner; bring your turnings for Show and Share
- Johannes Michelsen has agreed to demonstrate how to turn a wooden hat for our Guild on Saturday 19 Mar 2011. In order for Johannes to make up his itinerary for the west coast, he has requested that we indicate how many IWG members want to take an all day hands-on session with him. These sessions will take place on Sunday Mar 20 and, if there is sufficient interest, Monday, March 21st. He needs this information as soon as possible. At this all day session, each participant will produce a mini wooden hat and learn all of the techniques needed to make a full sized hat. Johannes is known world wide for his tool handling skills and his turned hats. Have a look at his [website](#). Call or email [Donald Porter](mailto:Donald.Porter@iwg.org) (250-727-9539) if you are interested in the hands-on session.

Turning Shavings: A Treasure in Disguise

By Donna Cottell

Turners love their lathes, their bowls, their skewers, and their chucks, but the shavings need to be gone! Out of the way!

Gardeners, on the other hand, are always on the lookout for ways to enrich their gardens with valuable organic matter, appreciate the bowls, tolerate the dust in the house, but eye the shavings as a treasure!

The next few points will explain one example of the richness of the marriage of turning and gardening.

- The easiest use is to apply shavings to paths to suppress weeds and inexpensively define those walkways around the garden. Since turning shavings are, when fresh, a bit “in your face,” I don't find it aesthetically pleasing to put them directly on the garden as mulch (but read on!)
- Mulch is an absolute boon to the garden and the gardener. It suppresses the germination of weeds, holds in soil moisture when freshly applied, and breaks down over time to enrich the soil. To have the mulch look good on the garden beds, however, takes a bit of effort. (If at this point, the turner says “oh but I would rather turn” and there is no avid gardener reading this... please go to the last bullet!) To partially compost the shavings I have created a compost corral using discarded pallets on edge to make a containment area along a fence. I used 6 pallets to make my 3 sided corral about 16 ft long. (Phil turns a lot!) The fresh shavings are piled at one end of the corral in 3-4”layers, moistening the pile between layers. Once a month or so the pile is uncovered and turned over toward the other end. Occasionally, I add some thin layers of grass clippings or water in some nitrogen fertilizer since the shavings are considered mostly carbon... in composting (not turning!) circles (please excuse the pun.) In a few months the shavings are a beautiful brown. Since one of my year round gardening tenets is “never weed without mulching” the supply in the corral is a wonderfully constant source.
- Glendale Gardens and Woodlands (aka Horticulture Centre of the Pacific) at the corner of Beaver and Quayle in Saanich would welcome any donations of turner's shavings. Enter through the #4 working gate on Quayle road during the week, in garden hours and drop bags off near the wood pile across from the plastic houses. Please mark any bags containing large amounts of cedar.

-Turning Fan and Master Gardener (Emeritus) Donna Cottell

Editors' Note: Some gardeners consider Black Walnut as inappropriate for mulch due to toxicity for tender plants, and this is especially true for bark and root material from this tree. Carefulness with exotic woods should also be considered.

New Members

This month our Guild has seen significant growth with 6 new members joining. They are:

- John Carrelli of Colwood
- Betty Erb of North Saanich
- Jim Fowler of Brentwood Bay
- Ernest French of Colwood
- Roger Norton of Saanich
- Chris Leach of Saanich.

Welcome to all of you! We are looking forward to seeing your work in the Instant Gallery.

Buy and Sell

Bryan Kemper is looking for a used Sorby Texturing Tool with the accessory wheels if possible. Please contact Bryan at 250 656-7046 or via [email](#).

Harvey Brooks has some woodturning tools for sale:

- Gast vacuum pump - 1/4 hp - \$150.00
- Delta 8" slow speed grinder with Veritas and Wolverine bases - \$250.00
- Triton powered respirator - \$150.00
- 16" deep hollowing captured system (made by Christine Davidson) - \$150.00
- Don Pencil Armbrace - \$25.00
- Oneway live center #1 morse taper - \$50.00
- Oneway stronghold adapter - 1" x 8tpi - \$15.00

Contact Harvey at 250-920-0636 or hdbrooks@telus.net

The Guild is selling sandpaper. There is 120 and 180 grit left. It is a very good aluminum oxide paper. The cost is \$10.00 for 12 sheets. Ask Ray or any of the Executive members.

IWG on the Web

In case you haven't seen the IWG's website, you can find it at <http://IslandWoodturners.ca> . You'll find backissues of the newsletter and photos from the meetings. If you have difficulty viewing the photos via the website, you can also see them at <http://picasaweb.google.com/IslandWoodturners> .

The website generally works well for those with larger monitors and newer browsers such as Firefox, Google Chrome, and Internet Explorer 8. People with smaller monitors and older browsers have reported that the pages don't always appear correctly. If this bothers you a lot and/or you have an interest in web page design, please contact [Graeme](#) to offer your help.

Parting Off

Thanks to the many IWG members who have provided articles for the newsletter. Special thanks to Peter Robin and Drew Watson for their photographs. We're always happy to receive your articles, photos, and comments. Keep 'em coming!

We are always looking for suggestions for our in house demonstrations and for volunteers to demonstrate. Contact Graeme Evans at 250-361-2646 e-mail gnbevans@shaw.ca

Lastly, a reminder that the guild needs a video editor and a website designer - please contact Graeme if you can help.

All the best,

Andre, Tom, and Jeremy