Wood 'n' things

Mid Staffs Woodturning Association Newsletter **Issue – August 2014**

Editor: Philip Watts **Editor@mswa.co.uk**

Future Events

MSWA Meetings

September 5th
Tracy Owen

October 3rd
Gerry Marlow
Hollow and pierced Christmas Decorations

Other Events

Club Competitions

September
Challenge
Fragmented/Reconstructed Turned Item

October
Novice
Candlestick

Chairman's Notes

Your Committee met again in August. One of our problems is that the members of the committee reside in locations well spread away from Rugeley. The consequence is that all bar the member hosting the meeting have a distance to travel. We tried a new venue for this meeting, a well known hostelry in Slitting Mill. Rather a noisy one, but it cost us nothing more than the price of the drinks and we may have to reconsider our choice for the location for the next meeting.

Being both drivers and an abstemious lot, our deliberations were not unduly influenced by alcohol. The prime subject was the format of the November Hands-on and Open Evening. We intend to use this night to celebrate the beginning of the club some twenty-five years ago.

Ken Allen, one of the founding members, has already been contributing some memories of the history of the club but we would welcome any more information of those earlier years.

We also discussed the benefits or otherwise of our attendances at such as the Alrewas and Kings Bromley Shows. This year's experience was disappointing, the poor weather at Alrewas being one contributor, and the more than clement weather at Kings Bromley having a similar effect on sales. Our next date will probably be the Christmas Fair at Wolseley Bridge with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and we will review the club's policy after that date.

Philip Watts

Editor's Scribblings

As an Editor, I relish the moments when I come across a new word in the wood turning vocabulary. So how about “conglutination”. The source for this word is one of a series of books by an Australian writer, one Mike Darlow. One thing that distinguishes these books from others is the fact that the author is very well read and has drawn material from an extremely wide range of sources, much of it historical and all well cross-referenced to the original source. A mention in the next Newsletter for the first person to provide me with a correct definition.

I had hoped that the August Bank Holiday would have involved a trip to the Wood Fair at Beacon Park near Loughborough but he miserable weather forecast dictated otherwise. Instead, a visit to the Rowland Emmett exhibition at the Birmingham Museum. To those who do not remember the name, Emmett was a Punch Cartoonist and the creator of a range of fanciful machines that featured at the 1951 Festival of Britain and in a number of films. Well worth a visit but get there before 21st September.

This year marks the twenty fifth anniversary of the formation of the MSWA. I am hoping to include some of the history in subsequent newsletters. Ken Allen, a founder member, has given me a start. I would welcome any other material that could be provided.

Philip Watts

Doing the maths – Jane Russell

It's nearly half a century since we went metric, but some of us still struggle to visualise a measurement given in cm or mm. (A metre is easier- it's a big yard!) Like many others, I suspect, I tend to use a mixture of imperial and metric – feet and inches for the big bits, then millimetres for the fine tuning.

Which reminds me of the time a headmaster of my acquaintance ordered a batch of tape measures for the children to get to grips with the new system. The tape of course was accurately marked out in cm and mm, and ran into a square box. Helpful as always, the manufacturers had printed on the box: "To allow for box, add 2 inches".

Editor: I always like watching the lawn bowls on the television. The commentators give the length that the jack has been sent out in metres. The referees than give further positional information as “three inches jack high”

Newsletter

The Newsletter is for your and the club's benefit. If you have something to say then write it and send it to me for inclusion. I can accept text in almost any format, although simple text files are the best. Similarly, I can accept photographs in both hard and soft copy, in many formats.

August Demonstration –Dawn Hopley Demonstration– "Whistle while you work"

I am indebted to Hugh Field for this report as I was away sailing. Such a good job that I must ask him again!

Well, what an interesting evening this was! Dawn had obviously carried out an immense amount of research and preparation for this demonstration; indeed it put to shame some of the "professional" demonstrators we have previously watched. Her research had obviously involved much time watching Youtube videos and many hours of internet surfing. I just hope I can now do justice to her efforts in writing!

Dawn had prepared some "Blue Peter" items ("this is one I made earlier"!) parts, to save time, just in case; but all went according to plan.

A number of us were familiar with Dawn's whistles – she had made quite a few for sale at the Alrewas and Kings Bromley shows, so it was no surprise that making one of these was to form part of her demonstration. However, Dawn's preparation had included producing a PowerPoint slide presentation on her laptop; this indicated that we were about to see far more than how to make just a "simple" wooden whistle. Not one to be put off (or should I say unDawnted!) by suggested needs for specialised gun drilling equipment and computer controlled equipment Dawn had decided to "have a go" at making wooden flutes, using simple equipment and with outstanding results.

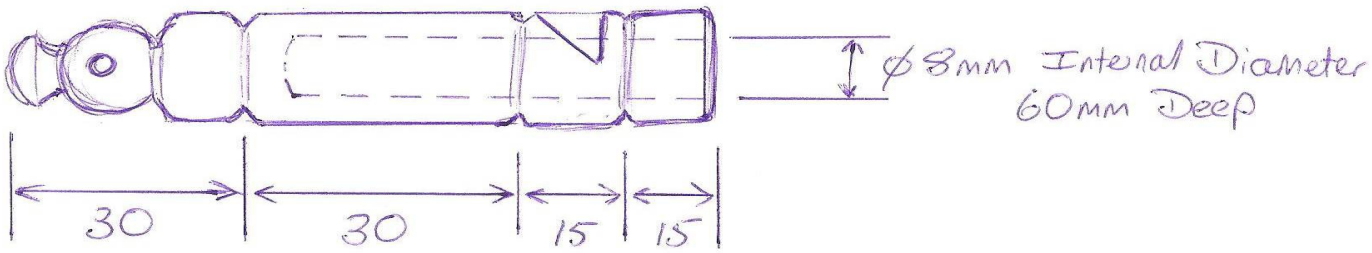
Apparently Dawn's inspiration to begin making wooden wind instruments came from a recital given by The Staffordshire Youth Recorder & Renaissance Ensemble at St. Luke's Church Cannock, Christmas Tree Festival in December 2013. The period instruments are valuable items, and can be worth may thousands of pounds.

She had also prepared some very useful information sheets, the content of which is included at the end of this report, for those who were not at the meeting.

Useful tips for health and safety were given – be careful of protruding chuck jaws, particularly with Axminster, and other chucks, that do not have stops to prevent the jaws expanding beyond the chuck body. Dawn had personal experience of having allowed too much expansion to the extent that a jaw came free of the chuck scroll and embedded itself in her workshop ceiling; a narrow escape indeed! She also emphasised the need to use appropriate dust extraction and promoted the use of a dust mask, particularly liking the American "Dust Bee Gone". These are quite expensive, but long lasting and effective. They are available from Turners Retreat (http://www.turners-retreat.co.uk/mask-16-to-19).

We were introduced to the terminology of whistles and flutes – the "chiff" being the vee cut that produces the edge which forms the sound; and the "fipple" which is the piece of material that is used to partially block the hole in the mouthpiece and direct the wind to the chiff.

Dawn uses branch wood from garden prunings – about 30mm diameter is ideal and pieces about 120mm long can be made into a whistle. The one she used for the demonstration was hawthorn and below is her sketch design for her whistle. The dimensions are not critical, but changing them can affect the sound the whistle makes. Experiment to your hearts content!



Working between centres Dawn roughed the piece to the round and then drilled an 8mm hole about 60mm deep (using her keyless chuck, newly acquired from Chronos Engineering http://www.chronos.ltd.uk/). Making the hole larger, or deeper gives the finished whistle a lower tone.

With the tail centre in place Dawn prepared to finish turn the outside of the whistle. To save time when making several of the pieces at a session Dawn marks the principal lengths on the tool-rest with a marker pen at 15mm, 15mm, 30mm and 30mm from the end of the piece, representing the length of the mouthpiece, “chiff” section sound tube section, and knob. These marks are used to establish the positions of the key features using a narrow parting tool. Shaping of the outside is really only limited by the wall thickness and the need to retain a suitable shape at the chiff and mouthpiece sections. After sanding, the chiff was cut using a “Junior” hacksaw to cut a 45° (approx) vee, as shown in her sketch, a task that would be slightly easier on a lathe with a spindle lock. Obviously the depth of the vee will affect the size of the hole that results, but it needs to be about 4mm or so. The vee was then filed and sanded to achieve a nice sharp edge at the chiff. An alternative method Dawn uses to clean up the vee is by using a steel rule as a scraper.

At this stage a hole can be drilled for a lanyard, or it can be done later, off the lathe. After parting off and tidying up the end, the remainder of the wood still in the chuck was turned down to be a sliding (to allow for gluing) fit on the drilled hole in order to make the fipple. This then had a flat filed on it and then sanded. The amount filed off depends to a degree on the depth of the chiff and some experimentation may be required. Producing a taper on the fipple can alter the volume of the whistle as it increases the wind velocity at the chiff. The fipple can, optionally, be made in a material such as acrylic.

After pushing the fipple into the mouthpiece the whistle can be tested (the one Dawn made worked perfectly first time!). The depth to which the fipple is pushed in needs to be adjusted to obtain the best sound, the fipple can then be glued in place and when set the end can be cleaned up ready for finishing. That concluded the first part of her demonstration.

After the break, Dawn continued with her PowerPoint presentation referring to a number of web sites for manufacturers of Irish Fipple Flutes (also known as Penny Whistles) and touched on alternatives such as bird calls and Swanee whistles (she had made one of these as well!). There appear to be many manufacturers of these instruments, at a wide range of prices (including one made from plastic plumbing pipe! See GG Whistles, below). She commented that it is possible to purchase mouthpieces, to make things easier.

She had brought with her several examples of flutes she had purchased and made and exhibited her musical skills by playing pleasant melodies on several of them, including one she had bought from GG Whistles

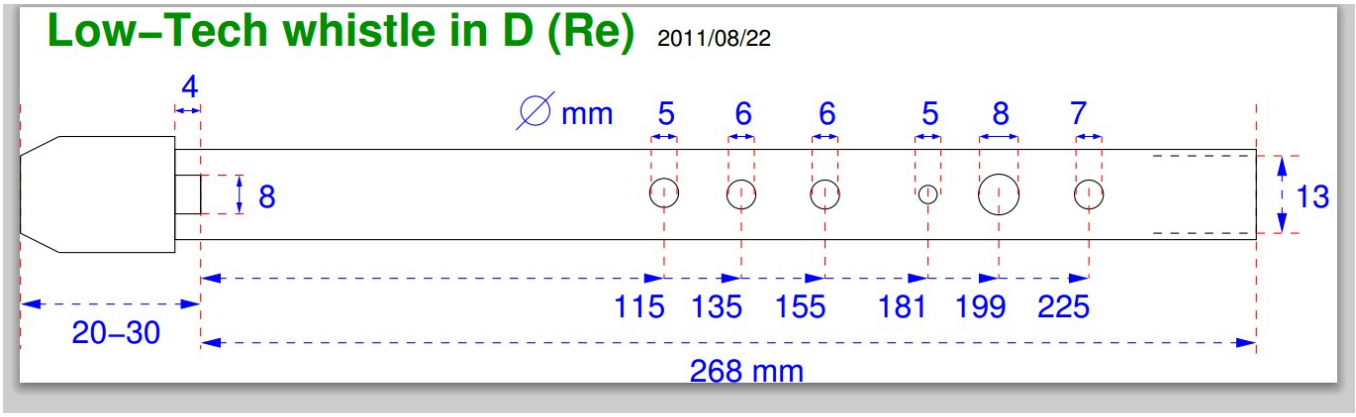
She then introduced her design for a fipple flute, using 4 simple turned components, as shown below:

One The advantage of the 4 piece design is that if a part is damaged a replacement can be made. Also the flute can be made on a smaller lathe without the need for specialised long hole drilling equipment. This is a design for a simple fipple flute that Dawn used for dimensions in her demonstration:-

Dawn started with 4 prepared pieces of wood, about 30mm diameter, 2 being 200 mm long, and each with a 13mm hole along the axis; the others being 100mm long, one with an 18mm hole about 35mm deep; all with the ends squared off. In addition, one of the 200mm long pieces had one end opened up to 18mm diameter to about 30mm deep. The size of Dawn’s portable lathe meant this could not be done during her demo, due to it’s restricted capacity between centres, but she commented that a drill about 120mm long had been used, working from both ends of the 200mm long blanks.

The longer of these pieces were to be used form the sound tube and finger tube, the short pieces for the mouthpiece sleeve and fipple.

Traditionally these instruments would be made from box or a fruit wood such as cherry, but any well seasoned, straight and close grained timber will probably work.



A piece of dowel with abrasive wrapped round it had been used to smooth the drilled holes so they were a nice fit on the mandrel that Dawn would use later (made from the tubular shaft of a broken fishing umbrella!).

The first stage was to make the sound chamber. The 200mm piece with only a 13mm hole was mounted with one end in the 4 jaw chuck and supported by the tail centre to allow a spigot to be turned at one end, 25-30mm long to fit the bore of the finger tube. Grooves were added to allow for wax (which acts as a seal). At this point a calculation needs to be made to establish the required length for the sound tube in order that the combined length of the sound and finger tubes total the length shown in the drawing. Dawn then started to turn a similar spigot at the opposite end, parted the piece off and then reversed the part in the lathe to finish turn the spigot to size to suit the hole in the wood which would later form the mouthpiece sleeve. It is important that these spigots are as parallel as possible so should be turned and sanded carefully. Dawn commented that a slight undercut at the end of the spigot will ensure that the parts join together snugly when assembled.

The wood for the mouthpiece was then mounted in the lathe and a sleeve, about 30mm long, with the 18mm bore, parted off.

Next, the 4 pieces were assembled on to the mandrel with suitable spacers each end, rather like a large pen mandrel. The 13mm diameter tube fitted nicely in the inside of the chuck jaws and the position of the parts on the mandrel was adjusted so that the tail centre was located correctly in the bore of the tube, but applying pressure to the spacer to push the four components together. The outside of the flute could now be turned.

The next stage was to turn the fipple from the remaining piece of wood. This is simply a parallel piece, 18mm diameter, to suit the bore in the sound tube. Unlike the fipple for the simple whistle, this one does not have a flat as the air passage, or windway, is formed in the sound tube.

Forming the windway is done off the lathe and Dawn had brought along her clamp-on vice to hold the sound tube while she carefully marked out the 6mm wide slot on centreline in the 18mm diameter spigot and 4mm into the main body of the tube. The slot was then cut carefully with a junior hacksaw and a 6mm wide chisel used at 45° to remove the surplus material and form the chiff. Dawn demonstrated the use of detail sanders which are 6mm wide and consisting of abrasive belts mounted on spring loaded holders, available from Axminster in a set of 4 grits (part number 410218). Final cleaning up was done using a scalpel. A good finish in this area is essential to produce a sweet sounding instrument.

At this stage the flute can be assembled and tested, some adjustments may be required to get the best sound. With no holes in the finger tube the flute, when blown gently, should produce a low “D”, and blowing harder should produce a high “D”. This means that the finished instrument will have a 2 octave range. It is likely that it will be slightly “off key” at this stage but tuning can be carried out later. It is better if the flute is too long (i.e. “flat”) as it is easy to “sharpen” it later. Once the best sound is obtained, the mouthpiece sleeve can be glued to the sound tube ensuring that the windway remains clear, and the fipple can be glued inside.

The drilling of the finger holes came next. Dawn uses a close fitting pine mandrel inserted into the tube which prevents the tube collapsing when held in the vice, and reduces “break out” when the holes are drilled through. Marking needs to be done accurately as this establishes the note intervals, however some tuning is possible later. Initial marking is best performed with a sharp bradawl after establishing the centreline with a pencil. The holes are then drilled carefully, using lip & spur drills (which pick up accurately in the bradawl marks). De-burring is carried out using needle files and the abrasive wrapped dowels.

The final stage is to mark and cut the radius for the mouthpiece. This is not critical but makes blowing more comfortable. A coping saw can be used to cut a curve, or the junior hack saw can be used to cut at an angle, with finishing by filing and sanding. Dawn has made a sanding mandrel of the correct diameter with several grades of abrasive wrapped round a cylinder of wood using double sided tape (the abrasive is cut at an angle to suite the direction of rotation). This is mounted in the lathe with tailstock support and used to finish the mouthpiece.

Now, the moment of truth, final testing and tuning!

After assembly Dawn, unsurprisingly, had produced an almost perfect pitch instrument but demonstrated the used of an “App” on her mobile phone that could be used to indicate how each note differed from true pitch. Adjustment of basic tuning is by removing material from the end of the finger tube (this is why it is best if the instrument is initially “flat”). Individual notes can be adjusted by carefully removing material from the underside of the finger holes with a scalpel. Dawn then proceeded to demonstrate her musical skills by playing melodies on the instrument.

Dawn finally touched on finishes for these instruments and has found that “indoor” Danish oil works well. She soaks the items overnight, removing the surplus and leaving to dry. After repeating this several time the wood is totally sealed and stable.

There is a lot of information on the websites listed below to assist with making and tuning these instruments, www.ggwhistles.com is particularly informative with respect to the effect of changing dimensions and also includes drawings for instruments in alternative keys.

A truly refreshing demonstration and a tribute to Dawn’s skills as turner, demonstrator and musician.

Hugh Field

Useful websites and links researched by Dawn:

YouTube:

Tyrone Head … How to make an Irish Fipple Flute … Detailed series of videos showing how he makes his design of wooden flutes with silver mouthpiece and collars. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1ccJ-Ghngg

Cip’s Wood Chips … How to turn a four note train whistle. My next project? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3JGmK8K00o

Erik the Flutemaker … Lots of videos on YouTube. Some very entertaining and informative. Erik has made his living making and playing flutes and whistles. He specialises in making flutes out of Bamboo and sells them all over the world. He also makes Irish Whistles and plays them extremely well. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfWhAyhA8JE&index=78&list=UUd2F_Ut62zUq3_eb935rZrw

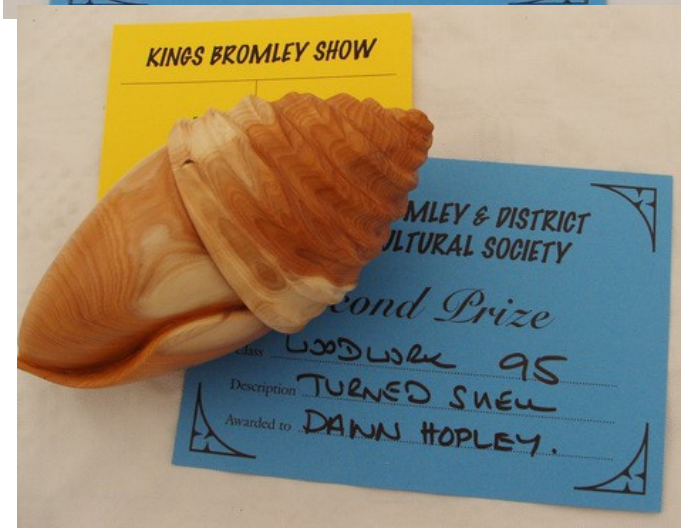
Websites:

1. Tyrone Head … www.theflutemaker.com
2. Chiff and Fipple … www.chiffandfipple.com … Go to the forum and find pages of information and ideas from all around the world. You can lose days reading information on this site
3. GG Whistles … Low Tech Plastic Whistles with full design plans and details on how to make them. www.ggwhistles.com. You can also buy them from here if you are too lazy like me!
4. Milligan Whistles … More details on how to make wooden whistles including equipment used, materials and finishes. http://milliganwhistles.blogspot.co.uk

Kings Bromley Show-ground

As I reported last month, the MSWA once again provided the competition in the woodturning sections of the Craft Tent. Here are some of the leading entries.

The theme for the prime competition was the seaside:



August Competition.

The August Competition was for the Novice Turners and called for a cup and ball toy.

Ivan Cotterill took first place with an interesting 4 way ball & cup in spalted beech.
In second place was David Neal with an item in sapele and Jane Russell was third with a toy in ash.

Apology. I evidently omitted Ivan from the results that I gave in last Month's newsletter. I will provide updated results in the Newsletter next month.

And Finally

The Kings Bromley Competition Tent has some fascinating competitions. This poodle made from cauliflower caught our attention.

Club information

Your club committee for 2014 is:-

Chairman - Philip Watts
Email: chairman@mswa.co.uk
Tel. 0121 308 7838
Secretary – John McElroy
Email: secretary@mswa.co.uk
Treasurer – Vance Lupton
Email: treasurer@mswa.co.uk
Assistant Treasurer – Hugh Field
Events Secretary – Ted Gill
Email: events@mswa.co.uk
Abrasives -

Newsletter editor – Philip Watts
Email: editor@mswa.co.uk
Webmanager – Philip Watts
Email:webman@mswa.co.uk

Committee Members

Dawn Hopley

Health and Safety Advisor
Hugh Field

Please only use phone numbers if absolutely necessary.

Merchandise

Abrasives

If you need that finishing touch, the club has packs of Abranet, recommended by demonstrators and other club members, at £2.20 for a set of 7 sheets - 120 -600 grit.

Books and DVDs The club has the following DVDs amongst others for hire.

MSWA DVD List

1 AWGB Instant Gallery 1991-2003
2 Sharpening GMC
3 Turning Projects with Richard Raffan
4 Turning Wood with Alan Holtham – Table lamp
5Colouring wood – Jan Sanders
6 3 Disc collection – Trent Bosch
7 Bowls for Beginners – Ray Jones
8 Course on Spindle Turning – Ray Jones
9 Making and Decorating Platters – Mick Hanbury
10 Making and Decorating Boxes – Mick Hanbury
11 Turn It On – Vol 1 – Jimmy Clewes
12 Turn It On – Vol 2 – Jimmy Clewes
13 Turn It On – Vol 3 – Jimmy Clewes
14 All Glued Up No1 – Sue Harker
15 Turned Out Nice Again – Sue Harker
16 Wood Turning with Steve Heeley – Steve Heeley
17 Woodcut Turning Tools
18 Robert Sorby Specialist Tools
19 Inlaid and Novelty Boxes – Chris Stott
20 Hope for us all – Simon Hope
21 Hope for us all – Vol2 – Simon Hope
22 Wet Turning With a Difference – Stuart Mortimer
23 AWGB Seminar 2011
24 Turning Green Wood – Michael O'DonnellD
25 Woodturning, a craftsman's guide. - Mark Baker

Dawn Hopley has taken over the responsibility for these items and may be seen at Club Meetings

Wood 'n' things

Turning tips

This section is for any tips or advice you would like to pass on to other members. It doesn't matter what it is, if you discovered something you found useful, that you think may benefit others, please pass it on.

Useful websites and suppliers

There is a lot of information available on the internet but some is better than others. If you come across any useful sites, please let me know and I will publish them here.

A tree surgeon near Stafford has several tonnes of small diameter yew logs for sale.

Rob Keyzor Tree Surgeons can be contacted at 01785 284088 (Ask for Jack) or through the website **www.robkeyzor.co.uk**.

Steve is a member of Coombe Abbey Turners and has a massive stock of timber which he is happy to sell to turners and woodworkers. The timber consists mostly of locally sourced native hardwoods, planked and kiln dried, and is available at great prices; some really lovely stuff. Steve lives in Sapcote in Leicestershire, not too far away, and close enough to Axminster in Nuneaton for a joint visit! Steve can be contacted on 01455 273894, and his website is www.woodcharm.co.uk

Questions and answers

This section is an opportunity for members to ask questions for other members to answer, primarily about wood-turning but I see no reason why this couldn't be extended further. There is a lot of knowledge in the club on many subjects and this should be an easy way to get answers.

Items for sale or wanted

If you have any items for sale, or if you are trying to find something, send me the details and I will put it in the next issue.

For Sale

Axminster Jet Bench Top Circular Saw JTS-10

Assembled and complete with stand

Little used and taking up room £150

Ring Philip Watts on 0121 308 7838

Custom Toolrests – David Fields

David's grandson is able to make tool-rests, similar to the Robert Sorby system, out of round steel bar. These can be tailored to suit your requirements i.e. tool-post stem and length of the actual tool-rest. At the moment he is only doing straight tool-rests but bowl rests may be feasible in the future.
And if you have a Record lathe and do small spindles, he has developed a cranked tool-post, allowing the tool-rest to get close to the work, without the banjo dropping off the front bed bar.
If you would like to see one, or want to discuss your requirements, please have a chat with David on 01283 229072

Carnauba wax polishes – Paul Bellamy

Following the favourable reaction to the polishing kits Paul started earlier this year, he has established a supply of carnauba wax flakes. These can be used to make your own 'sticks' or mixed with other components to make a range of polishes. He is selling these in 250g bags but could do larger quantities if you need it. He also has some ready-made wax blocks, comprising 60% beeswax/ 40% carnauba. These are softer than most 'wood-turning sticks' but he prefers this as it doesn't score your work.

He also has more of his 'Buffing kits', similar to Chestnut's system. For more details, e-mail him at paul.bellamy@mswa.co.uk