

Hi everyone,

First thing to say is that I have not heard from most of you. I have had four replies. I was serious when I asked how you are!

What follows is the second half of what was the Member's Section to the February newsletter. I selected wet turning as explained below and because it was the technique used for February's Aspirational Piece by Yann Marot, entitled Le Diable de Goutte however, by strange coincidence in April, John French sent me another Book Review – his are so much more concise than mine! I still think the comparison is interesting – reflecting what different people draw from people's writings. John's April Review sent to him by John Woods was 'Turning Green Wood'. I have inserted that after the Tips and Tricks section.

Details of the book are as follows:

Turning Green Wood

Michael O'Donnell

ISBN-10: 1784945587

ISBN-13: 978-1784945589

GMC Publications

2nd ed. Edition 7 February 2020

Both Kindle and Paperback versions are £11.99

Apparently this is in its 11th reprint so as John says either very popular or short print runs?? I also have this book but I can't get to it at the moment to see which version, I have had it a while. John mentions stance at the lathe. I just remember getting very, very wet! But loved the process!

Now, just to update you with regard to Peter Taylor's passing. The family are holding a private family service and obviously as we know all too well, numbers are necessarily restricted because of the Coronavirus. They have offered to us a couple of spaces and I do believe that Ian Cameron will be attending, perhaps kind enough to represent our Club as well as his own desire to be present to pay his respects.

I need to correct the information that I gave you with regard to your personal donations. You have probably seen the announcement in last Thursday's East Anglian Daily Times donations are to be made to either Dallingham Church or and I said to you previously St. Elizabeth's Hospice but I do now understand that Peter's phenomenal fund raising was particularly in respect of the East Anglian Children's Hospice. You can donate to them online should this be more convenient. The link is <https://each.org.uk/donate>. However if you are wanting to personalise it a cheque may suit that purpose. Any donations should be forwarded via the funeral directors who are:

E.B. Button & Sons Ltd.

24 St. John's Street,

Woodbridge,

Suffolk IP12 1EB

Now. I would like to hear from each of you just to know how you are. Just a one liner will do!

Just another request. Is it that my font and colour online reads better than in its printed form?? I would really like to keep it but if it unpopular I will change it. Just reading it now on screen it seems legible to me? Perhaps you could add one word LIKE or NOT? To your message.

And now as the evenings pull in and the weather starts to turn getting just a little colder, perhaps it is time to curl up in a chair by the fire with a good book?!

TIPS AND TRICKS – focusing on wet wood turning

Normally this next section would be Tips and Tricks but I have run short. However as much of the work discussed above is wet turning I have found some tips for those of you who are interested in working with green wood. These are courtesy of the Woodworker's Institute.

Health is perhaps top of the list – no need for masks, visors, toggling up, perhaps some protection for your clothes, I seem to remember getting showered when I did it.

Size is only limited by the size of your lathe. The contrasts of dark hard wood through to light sap wood with a bark natural edge can be stunning.

Do not be precious. Go for it. Use local timbers. Let people know that you are interested, that you are prepared to collect and get to it before it has been cut for firewood to get the best from it. Even if you pay the price of firewood it is still relatively cheap although fires are not very fashionable these days so perhaps they would pay you to remove it??

Try to turn the wood as soon as possible after gathering it.

Ugly wood is good. The chances are for you to be able to turn something unusual and would stand out should you choose to exhibit your work.

Natural Edge work is best done from wood felled in the dormant season just because the bark stays on better. That I do remember. The risk is always that firstly you may dismember it when turning but secondly that as it dries the piece can contort so that the bark separates from the edge.

I am struggling with this tip but perhaps you will understand it – use non-destructive marking when planning your piece because this is the finished natural edge of your work?

Keep it simple. If this is your first wet turned project 'V' shapes are better – you can move on to more interesting shapes when you have mastered the skills.

Use just one gouge for your turning. You can even make the spigot with a deep fluted ½" (12mm) swept back -in this case O'Donnell – grind. You will need a big curved scraper for refining the inside.

For the 'first holding' of the piece at the outset this can be with anything, faceplate, single screw or pin-chuck, for the 'second holding' use a contracting jaw chuck on a spigot. For simple vessels, this will give you better access to the base and more freedom for the design.

The suggestion is to be able to turn one-handed as a desired technique so that your fingertips on the supporting hand are available to perform 'essential functions'. Practise.

Also if you don't already, practise turning with both hands. This gives you greater flexibility

Make the thickness even. This will help prevent the wood from splitting during the drying process which should be slow and controlled.

Sharpen your tools regularly.

Reverse the blank when finishing the piece. Don't finish the outside in the first operation. As you reverse the blank the spigot will deform slightly and will not run true and your work will have been wasted.

Don't be afraid to cut against the grain on a cross-grain bowl. Work from the rim to the base.

Sheer scrape from base to rim if there are any problems with grain on the outside.. This can be done with the long-edge of a deep-fluted gouge or with a skewed scraper.

Use liquid spray to keep the wood wet whilst turning.

Starting a cut at the rim of a thin bowl can be very difficult – the solution is to start the last cut first while there is plenty of thickness for support. This way when you come to the last cut you have some support before contact with the cut begins.

And curve the last cut. At the end of the last cut curve the cut outwards. This will give you an easier surface to blend into when it comes to making the last cut.

Use your fingertips for support. As the wood gets thin it will easily deform under the pressure from the tool. To avoid this use your fingertips to support it from behind the bevel, The water will keep your fingertips cool and will also provide the required lubrication.

Wet sanding – see last month? Use waterproof abrasives and a bucket of water. If it is cold use warm water and if it is hot throw some ice cubes in?

Use localised lighting close to the bowl. See John's Tip on lighting these would appear to be entirely appropriate for this type of turning if not spotlight close to the work. Turn out the main lights. This all enables you to see the thickness – it also looks quite dramatic!

And there we are. Seems to me to be a much more healthy way to turn than creating all that dust necessitating dust extractors, open windows in the middle of winter and all that restrictive protection gear!!!

Happy 'Green' Turning!!!!

For Reference go to:

<https://www.woodworkersinstitute.com/wood-turning/techniques/beginners-guides/top-tips-for-turning-wet-wood/>

There are photos and diagrams which may explain better some of the tips.

BOOK REVIEWS

Title: Turning Green Wood (Revised Edition)

Author: Michael O'Donnell

Publisher: Guild of Master Craftsmen

Publication Date: 2020

ISBN: 978-1-78494-558-9

Reviewed by John French.

This edition is the eleventh reprint of this popular book first published in 2020; it is a must have reference if you are interested in turning wet, freshly felled timber.

The book is divided into two sections, the first section is entitled “Planning and Preparation”. This section has a lot of information that is relevant to woodturning in general and not just green wood turning with a discussion on tree growth, selecting the best places from where to cut out bowl blanks, distortions and

shrinkage, and stresses with drying. There follows an excellent chapter on techniques covering sharpening gouges, stance at the lathe, tool rest positioning, then a particularly good section on tool control, scrapers, sanding, and finishing.

The second section describes six projects, five of them bowls and one goblet. The descriptions and instructions are clear and are accompanied by a good selection of clear photographs and diagrams.

Irrespective of whether you prefer to turn “wet” wood or very dry wood, there will be something of interest in this edition.

And what follows now is what was to be the first of our new section within the Members Section originally planned for the February newsletter.

BOOK REVIEW

The Man Who Made Things Out of Trees – author: Robert Penn

ISBN – 10: 9780141977515, ISBN – 13: 978-0141977515

ASIN: 0141977515 Paperback available on Amazon for £7.99 or the Kindle Version for £5.49

Reviewed by John Woods and Pat Yates

Whilst not an instructional book on the skills of woodturning which you might expect us to review it describes in the most intimate detail a spiritual, emotional and practical journey through 200,000 years of man's reliance on this valuable arboriculture treasure. It put John in mind that it might be interesting to add a book review section to our monthly Members Section. John wanted to lend me this book for review

purposes but I did not like to deny him his reading matter so I told him to take it and I just copied the cover and the review on the dust jacket and the illustrations on the endpapers which list all the items that were produced from the author's Ash tree. However, later, when I read the dust jacket review I found it very dry and felt it did not touch in the least that special place that had obviously moved John from his description to me when he started to read this book. A shared love of all things wood?

So what to do? I went online and purchased the Kindle Edition from Amazon for £5.49. The paperback version is £7.99 for your guidance.

It is an emotional business reading. The reader needs to connect with the author to join them on their personal journey especially on what might appear to be a dry topic. Robert Penn's journey is far from dry. The author was obviously emotionally engaged to have researched the subject of the Ash Tree and its use throughout the ages in such depth. It is by no means hard going. It is full of fascinating historical, social, familial, agricultural sortis in to every aspect of human life you care to think of that has been advanced by a joint endeavour between human creativity and endurance of the wood from this multi-tasking tree without which one could wonder where the human race may have come to and with what? He explores the full geographical extent of the ash tree and how the local distinct communities in all these areas have engaged with this most useful of all gifts from the arboricultural world. The journey is recounted in a gentle respectful manner and it seems impossible to believe that there is any area that has escaped the attention of this author.

I had a real issue with him cutting down this Ash Tree! For those of you who have had the misfortune to struggle to my front door you will understand this reaction. How you take an axe to something so beautiful and that is over 100 years old and fell it?? I know not. Needs must? And ash was coppiced for this very reason to have a constant supply of wood available for the purpose of making all the items of utility that came from this one ash tree. But there is more to this book than that. This book is an emotional journey. I will quote you as an example:

'Spring had unmistakably arrived in Callow Hill Wood when I returned. Most of the trees were in leaf. Inside the gate, between a large ash and a stand of cherry trees, I stood still, closed my eyes and listened. In Thomas Hardy's 'The Woodlanders', Giles Winterboorne could distinguish species of trees at a distance, simply from the quality of the wind's murmur through a bough'. It is a wonderful thought – that man's intimacy with trees can be so sensuous. It speaks of a former epoch, when the forest figured highly in the lives of the majority of European people.'

And as if to show our evolution away from nature? 'Even listening intently, I could make no distinction between the notes from the canopies of the different species. It was all one soft washing sound of water pouring through shingle'. I sometimes wish my ear was not as well attuned to the goings on in my garden. My emotions and heartstrings get regularly tested – sometimes to be removed from that might prove more therapeutic.

And again 'throughout its life, my ash tree had played a part in the natural community of Callow Hill Wood, yet it had another function in death. Rotten or decaying wood is a a hugely important part of the ecology of the woodlands. As the structure and composition of deadwood changes over decades of gentle decay, it provides sanctuary and sustenance to an evolving legion of wildlife species; insects, fungi, mosses, lichens, invertebrates and small mammals in fact some species can only live in deadwood. The rule of thumb, at least for conservation minded woodmen, is to leave one quarter of a tree for the benefit of the woodland ' and he then goes on to say how as the tree decays it returns to humus and provides the environment for ash seeds to become saplings and the whole process starts over. He can find solace in this justification, I still struggle to forgive him for cutting down the tree!

A sarcastic topical comment - this philosophy might not chime with Mr. Trump!

He traces wood and how it has been used by humans from 200,000 years ago to the present day advocating its environmental benefits for heating but which today are being questioned as wood-burning, even if burnt at its optimum 'dryness' is now considered a 'bete-noir' in the desperate discussions for reasons which may be contributing to our current climate change crisis.

He journeys into the skills of green woodworking, topical given the previous chapters in this month's members section, but somehow invites you in if you are a woodturner to this almost spiritual, warm, embracing environment of the tree and its environs and man's close association.

And all this against the background of the processing of his tree as it is felled, how it is felled, what he then does with the smaller 'brash', the saw-mill, the excitement of knowing whether or not the timber is good. He describes in intimate detail the processing the fact that nothing is wasted right down to the dust which is collected as the boards are cut into a bag and the contents are then sold to local farmers who use it as animal bedding. Nothing but nothing is wasted.

A journey through Neolithic times, Bronze Age, Copper and Iron Age use, technical data on the changing anatomy of a tree. 'From the foothills of the French Pyrenees to the windswept Pennines in north-east England and from the Aland archipelago in the Baltic Sea to the plains of the Po valley in Italy you will commonly find ash trees growing beside farms ... Not clean, straight woodland trees like mine '. 'Often they are old and misshapen, like the spines of the farmers who cultivated them. Pollarded, the timber is turned into implements for use on the farm:

Shepherd's crooks, rakes, ladders, thatching spars, rims for sifters and sieves, collars and fasteners for animals, ploughs, harrows, hoes, hop poles and hurdles were all shaped out of easily worked ash, as were the best handles for forks, spades, shovels, scythes, reaping hooks, slashers and axes – to name just some! Cartwheels? Felloes made from ash, Spokes made from oak and hubs made from elm because of its tensile nature. Bows from yew and arrows from ash which had been cleaved. They require straight grain, stiffness and weight to fly the furthest the most accurately and to wreak the worst damage on its target?!

So what happened? Here we have this emotional, technical, practical 200,000 year journey through the history of this magnificent tree and today like the elm that went before it, allegedly victim of Dutch Elm disease, ash forests are ravaged by disease. They are felled and burned to avoid spread. I have one in my garden. Totally the wrong place. Like the wild cherry which decided to grow in a low level wall right next to the house!! The Ash tree grew up through the front fence! Right in front of the garage. Each year I watch it nervously. So far it is OK.

One of the theories put forward to explain the demise of Easter Island is they used up all the timber and then? No biodiversity and no wood to build canoes to get off the island! Some of that has been put to question though in the belief that it maligns a self-sufficient people who fell victim to the raping and pillaging of our European forbears and not that long ago. We don't seem to have learned! More evidence perhaps of the disconnect with nature referred to at the beginning of this review only too evident in the destruction of the rain forests but which if the world requires them then we should perhaps pay toward their protection?

And can't even part with the logs? His daughter was heard to say to someone who came to scrounge some firewood – don't take the ash logs Dad's a bit weird about them! It is a gentle wander around an entire world associated with the history of the ash tree and he did have a conscience about cutting it down as his

last acknowledgement is to his children to whom he offers his thanks for their assistance to him in planting ash trees to replace the one he felled.

A really brilliant sensitive and informative read! Well done John.

The rest, there is more, will be in the March Issue!!

The Man who Made Things out of Trees

By Robert Penn

Published 2015

Particular Books (Penguin Books)

ISBN 978-1-846-14842-2

Hardback

A perspective by John French

About the Author:



Robert Penn is a writer and journalist, best known for his book “Its All About the Bike” and for presenting the television series about British woodlands “Tales from the Wild Wood”. He lives in Wales in a wooded valley.

He became aware of how the Ash tree played such a large part in past times and determined to find a good tree and to use it to see all the old crafts that made items from Ash. He traced craftsmen who still use the old methods for making traditional items,

travelling on the Continent and America as well as around Britain to find them. In total he got some 44 different types of item made from his tree that he selected. These range through furniture, axe handles, toboggan, cartwheels, cricket stumps, canoe paddle, tent pegs, chopping boards, spoons, a prototype wooden bicycle. Of most interest to Woodturners is the chapter on pole lathe turning of bowls by Robin Wood. Robin is known for having written “The Wooden Bowl”, the authoritative book on the wooden bowl through the ages.

I found the book to be interesting and well written in a very readable style, although my impression is that some of the crafts are portrayed a little bit romantically – this may be Robert’s passion showing through. A recommended read.