

Novice's Training Day

On a glorious September Saturday at Earl Stonham in Suffolk six novice turners (eight were booked in but two could not attend on the day) arrived at the Village Hall to be met with two rows of lathes and the Chairman of the AWGB, Andy Coates, plus five helpers from the West Suffolk Woodturning Club waiting for them.

Before the event each participant had been sent a copy of the proposed timetable and a copy of a page of safety advice which they were encouraged to read before attending. On the day a risk assessment was carried out to ensure that all equipment was fit for purpose and each workstation was provided with safety goggles and face mask.

Andy Coates started the day with an introduction to health and safety and included some real horror stories which, fortunately, did not encourage our novices to leave. He then went described the lathe and what function each part fulfilled. He talked about the best way to stand at the lathe, tool rest height, etc. He then talked about wood and how to choose a piece that would turn safely. He encouraged novices to reject any wood that contained splits or holes/inclusions and to leave this for more experienced turners. Safety was paramount was the message he was putting across.



Tools were the next topic of discussion and the photograph shows Andy explaining the spindle roughing out gouge. As the first exercise was to be spindle turning practice Andy kept the tool talk to the spindle roughing out gouge, the spindle gouge, the skew chisel, beading/parting tool and the parting tool. He explained their various uses and also demonstrated how they could be sharpened, talking about the various sharpening devices. The various ways of sharpening were discussed including freehand, use of jigs and also the various grinds were mentioned.

By this time a coffee break was called for and this gave time to take in all that Andy had covered so far. There followed a demonstration of mounting a spindle between centres, roughing it to a cylinder and turning beads, coves and V cuts. Now came the moment to put it into practice as the students went to their allotted lathes.

Remembering toolrest - bevel - raise the handle they were all soon roughing down the spindle. The assistants, Ian Cameron, Geoff Moss, Mike Charnley and John French, together with Andy Coates were keeping an eye on proceedings and correcting technique where needed. There were soon six spindles with beads and coves of varying correctness but it was obvious by the end of the exercise that tool control was improving. Andy suggested that they regularly practice turning coves and bead as a means to improve tool control.

Following on from lunch faceplate **turning** was the order of the day. Andy discussed how the work should be securely held on the lathe, the tools that would be used and how they are sharpened. He then mounted a blank onto a screw chuck and showed the procedure to follow in order to get it to a round and to true up the face. He then showed how to form a spigot for mounting in the 4 jaw chuck, explaining how to get it to seat properly in the chuck. The bottom of the bowl was turned to a simple curve. This then was the next exercise for the students. They departed to their workstations and with a little assistance they achieved the desired result.

Back to Andy to see how to hollow out the bowl. He showed how to hold the gouge, the positioning of the rest, and how to start the cut and to get a flowing curve following the outside shape. He talked about even wall thickness and use of callipers and one's fingers to judge the thickness. The students were then sent back to their lathes to complete their bowls.



The photograph shows the students at the end of the day with the fruits of their labours. From left to right Eric Simonds, Andy Coates (AWGB Chairman), Alan Munson, Victoria Challis, Rosie Keeble, Patrick Stevens and Jo Moss.

This training day was made possible by the efforts of Mike Charnley (Chairman of West Suffolk Woodturning Club) and John Woods (Secretary of WSWC) and the support of a grant from the AWGB for which we are very grateful. A large thank you for Andy Coates for an excellent days work. The day was much appreciated by the participants if their comments at the end are anything to go by. We hope to see some work from them on the display table at the next Club meeting.