



## Peter's perfect spindles

Our May meeting began with spindle turning techniques demonstrated by Peter Castle. Peter took us through the basics of spindle work from preparing and fixing the wood between centres, which tools to use and setting the rest before preparing to turn. John Turner had kindly provided some square section lengths of soft wood. These are ideal for beginners to practice on as they cut easily and are inexpensive. Peter began by demonstrating the use of the roughing gouge to turn the spindle from square to round. He moved on to the use of a spindle gouge and a skew chisel. He concentrated on the skew as this is the tool beginners have most trouble with. He discussed the various forms of the skew but emphasised that it is more important to use the tool you have and practice with it than to keep changing from one to another in an effort to improve your skill. Peter even demonstrated that he could use an axe as a skew.

Of course, it is most important to use sharp tools. As Peter explained, sharpening can affect the success of your turning. Poor sharpening techniques have even caused some novices to give up, thinking they could not succeed at turning.

At this stage we were able to feel the spindle to compare the finish from the roughing gouge, spindle gouge and skew.

Following on from this, Peter roughed down another blank and showed us how to turn beads and coves and shapes such as the ogee, using the skew and spindle gouge.

With plenty to think about and to put into practice, we had a break for the raffle followed by lunch. Then it was time for members to have a go. It was a good afternoon session with everyone busy turning or supervising and hopefully the novices gaining plenty of confidence to go home and continue the good work.



Peter Castle discussing spindle turning and giving us the benefit of his experience.



Hard at work!  
Left to right, Brian Pope helping Marion Brunt, Greg Collet working on his own and Fred Mitchell receiving guidance from Lynn Chambers.

Some members had brought in examples of spindle turning showing the wide range of work possible when the grain is parallel to the lathe bed.

Peter brought his wonderful talking stick which showed a progression from the basic turning to something much more intricate. He also showed us a miniature Windsor chair which contained mostly spindle work apart from the seat. On a larger scale was another chair. This I had repaired by turning three replacement spindles which I found very satisfying. Some of the entries in the Richard Hasleden competition also included some spindle work.



Above. Peter Castle's open twist talking stick.  
Right. His little chair.



Left. Candlestick in Ash by Peter Rigby.

Above. Sycamore primroses in a Cherry pot by Sandra Day.

Above right. Bowl in beech by new member, Mike Pollard.

As members will know, Maggie Wright, our chairman, received a bursary from the Worshipful Company of Turners to learn ornamental turning.

How many of you know anything about the ornamental lathe?

The lathes we are familiar with spin the wood, our tools cut and the cut produces a plain circle. We produce the shape by altering the size of the circle at any given point. The ornamental lathe however, has attachments for varying the shape of the work from the plain circle. Combined with these is a range of cutters which can be set up in different ways. They may be fixed or revolving, the work may rotate or be fixed or may be turned in steps using an indexing system. The combinations are endless.

Ornamental lathes were popular in the nineteenth century and probably the best known manufacturer was Holtzapffel. Many were beautiful pieces of furniture with cabinets for storing all the attachments and cutters. Very few of these machines exist today.

The lathe Maggie is using was made by Overton and dates from 1860. Setting it up is extremely complicated, particularly as there are pieces missing or worn, resulting in imperfect patterns. In Maggie's words, "There is a lot of work and calculation in setting up a pattern on the OT lathe then often it doesn't quite work. It makes one appreciative of the freedom to create which we enjoy in plain turning".

Maggie is receiving tuition from John Edwards, an authority on ornamental turning. It was lovely to see some of the results so far under his guidance and look forward to following her progress.



An example of Maggie's ornamental turning. A threaded patterned box in African Blackwood.

### Competition reminder

Novice	A present for a child.
Intermediate	A three legged stool.
Advanced	Thin is beautiful.
Allan Beecham Cup	Innovation in design

Lots of entries please.

### This Month's Meeting

June 12<sup>th</sup>.

Team turning mushroom arrangements.  
Bring your tools.

### Next Month's Meeting

Summer competition and barbecue.

July 17<sup>th</sup> 10.00 am.

Chairman	Maggie Wright
Vice Chairman and	
Competition Secretary	Peter Castle
Secretary	Anne Smith
Treasurer	John Turner
Events organiser	Greg Collett
Librarian	David Spice
Newsletter editor	Sandra Day
A-V co-ordinator	Brian Rowson

[www.wealdenwoodturners.org.uk](http://www.wealdenwoodturners.org.uk)

Please bring your entries, your partners with any crafts etc. they would like to show us and of course some food to accompany the barbecued meat.