

Club news

It is so good that the club is now in full swing and attendances are rising. We had a wonderful meeting with Mike Charnley as demonstrator showing how he makes branch wood boxes. These are made from home grown timber in the style of those designed and popularised by Benoît Averly, naturally there is a full report write-up detailing the complete process later in this newsletter.



We also report on the success of the recent Weird and Wonderful Show, where the club was in attendance for both days. A big thank you goes to all who came forward to support the event and provide items for the tombola. We do need to have further support for these ongoing events, it is unfair to rely on only on a few regular volunteers, and especially John Woods who organises it all. There was a worrying time, prior to the day, where we didn't think we had enough donated tombola prizes, which would have been a disaster. If you didn't support this time, then please consider doing so in the future!

This month we also include a great thought-provoking article on design, according to Dieter Rams and the recent subject of a BBC radio show. You may even be able to play it again from the BBC Sounds website, details of the show are in the article.

And finally, a big thank you to those who volunteer to make the teas and coffees at meetings, which for the time being is free. We all love a cuppa and a biscuit, or even a slice of Tic's wonderful flap jack. Can we therefore gently encourage you all to take a turn with the duty, unless of course you have a good reason to be excused - bring a signed note!

Neil (Editor)

Report on Weird & Wonderful Wood 2022 – John Woods

As a club, we first attended W&WW in 2010.

I became club secretary earlier in that year and I applied for the club to have a stand there.

Maurice Elliston had a large garden party tent that we could use, we borrowed Fred's generator, and we used John French's lathe. Peter Taylor suggested that we run a tombola as that had been a good source of income for his fundraising.

The event proved to be a success, and we did the same the following year. However, Maurice's tent was getting rather tired, so with some of the proceeds from W&WW we invested in a commercial standard marquee to use in subsequent years.

And we have attended W&WW each year since then (except during lock-down when the event was not held).

We received notification and an invite to attend this year's event last November, and it was agreed at the November club meeting that we would have a stand there again. Members were prompted that we would need tombola items at that meeting (and subsequent meetings).

From previous years, we knew the format that works for the club. However, we had lost a couple of good volunteers. Maurice Elliston and John Gladders previously helped with setting up on the Friday, and did a sterling job of selling tombola tickets over the weekend. We needed volunteers to help in these areas.

Tombola prizes were a major concern. In previous years Peter Taylor had been very generous with his donations. We needed a lot more donations to cover this shortfall. Based on previous years we estimated that we would need at least 250 items. From the appeals for tombola prizes we received approximately 100 items prior to setting up for the event. Some were collected from two members with health issues. Committee members had also been busy making items, and we had some items carried over from the previous event) so we started off thinking that we have enough prizes for day one (depending on how busy it was going to be), and possibly the start of day two. While at the event some club members came along with more prizes.

The first day was very busy – starting off before the event opened to the public. Then it was busy all through the day. Mike, Stuart and Martin took turns demonstrating on the lathe. James helped set up and run the tombola. The weather was brilliant, sunshine all day. A banner that Ian had ordered, arrived the wrong size (the printers had ignored the decimal points in the sizes). But this blocked the sun from shining through the back of the marquee so our marquee was nicely cool. We really noticed the difference when we briefly got a chance to venture out into the open.

Day two was overcast with a very light shower early afternoon. We refreshed the displays, and we struggled to start the generator. However, we eventually got that going. John Cuckow arrived to help. Ian, Mike, Martin and Stuart demonstrated on the lathe. The event opened to the public at 10:00 but it was a little later before we started to see people. Then it went manic, and it was busy most of the day. Suddenly (well that's how it seemed) it went quieter and we noticed that the flow of people was towards the exit. Then it was a mad rush to break-down the stand and get it ready for collection. Vehicles were only allowed

into the grounds after 18:00hrs – then it is chaos. A one-way system was operated around the single-track route (one way for most – some decided to go the wrong way).

Stuart's dad came along with a van and was able to take some of the bulkier items, so we were able to clear site quite quickly. Overall, we did very well – doing better than we had done in previous years on both days. We promoted our club and potentially gained some new members. If people were from other areas, we would point them in the direction of their local club.

We met, and chatted with members of other local clubs. Like us, all clubs are struggling to get demonstrators. They are generally down on numbers of members – gaining some, but losing others. There is a new club in Norfolk – Wherry Woodturners, who meet in South Walsham (near Acle).

Many thanks to everyone who helped make this a success.

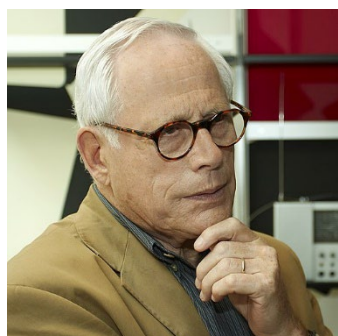
John Woods

Display Table - All exhibits this month by Andrew Green.



Principles of Good Design – article by John Woods

On Tuesday (17th May 2022) I was returning some a piece of equipment we used at W&WW when there was a program on Radio 4 that was discussing style and design (Mary Portas: On Style @ 11:30). One person they were discussing was Dieter Rams. I had not really heard of him before, though some of the things they were discussing sounded familiar.



A search on the internet revealed a bit more information:

Dieter Rams was born in Wiesbaden Germany in 1932 (he turned 90 this month). In his working life he worked at Braun as Head of Design and oversaw the design of hundreds of innovative products.

Even if you don't immediately recognize his name, you will have almost certainly used one of the radios, clocks, lighters, juicers, or other products he designed.

He is famous not only for this vast array of well-formed products, but for his remarkably prescient ideas about the correct function of design.

Pic : Vitsoe at English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons

These ideas are summed up in his 'ten principles' of good design:

Good design is innovative, useful, and aesthetic. Good design should make a product easily understood. Good design is unobtrusive, honest, durable, thorough, and concerned with the environment. Most of all, good design is as little design as possible.

It was the last 'principle' that caught my attention – Good Design is as little as possible. Less, but better.

I had heard something similar years ago. At an AWGB Seminar, Ray Key was giving a critique on a piece. It was a small item. Ray stated that the finish was not good enough. On a small item every detail must be perfect. With a small item you have to look at it closely, and you see all the detail. For larger items you view the overall piece, small imperfections can go unnoticed.

On a similar vein, but for different reasons:

Colin Chapman, founder of Lotus cars; when designing his racing cars, he would 'Add Less'.

The car should run out of fuel as it was going over the finishing line. The engine and clutch didn't need to last for years, they only had to last the duration of that race. Etc.



Dieter Rams: 10 Principles of Good Design

1. *Good design is innovative*
The possibilities for innovation are not, by any means, exhausted. Technological development is always offering new opportunities for innovative design. But innovative design always develops in tandem with innovative technology, and can never be an end in itself.
2. *Good design makes a product useful*
A product is bought to be used. It has to satisfy certain criteria, not only functional, but also psychological and aesthetic. Good design emphasises the usefulness of a product whilst disregarding anything that could possibly detract from it.
3. *Good design is aesthetic*
The aesthetic quality of a product is integral to its usefulness because products we use every day affect our person and our well-being. But only well-executed objects can be beautiful.
4. *Good design makes a product understandable*
It clarifies the products structure. Better still, it can make the product talk. At best, it is self-explanatory.
5. *Good design is unobtrusive*
Products fulfilling a purpose are like tools. They are neither decorative objects nor works of art. Their design should therefore be both neutral and restrained, to leave room for the users self-expression.
6. *Good design is honest*
It does not make a product more innovative, powerful or valuable than it really is. It does not attempt to manipulate the consumer with promises that cannot be kept.
7. *Good design is long-lasting*
It avoids being fashionable and therefore never appears antiquated. Unlike fashionable design, it lasts many years - even in today's throwaway society.
8. *Good design is thorough down to the last detail*
Nothing must be arbitrary or left to chance. Care and accuracy in the design process show respect towards the consumer.
9. *Good design is environmentally friendly*
Design makes an important contribution to the preservation of the environment. It conserves resources and minimises physical and visual pollution throughout the lifecycle of the product.
10. *Good design is as little design as possible*
Less, but better - because it concentrates on the essential aspects, and the products are not burdened with non-essentials. Back to purity, back to simplicity.

More:

<https://designmuseum.org/designers/dieter-rams>

<https://www.vitsoe.com/gb/about/dieter-rams>

Note: This article is repeated in the guides and links folder of the website.

Demonstration by Mike Charnley

Mike explained that he was going to make some boxes from branch wood after those developed by Benoît Averly, a French wood 'sculptor'.

Benoît demonstrated at an AWGB Loughborough woodturning seminar, following this Mike decided to try turning and decorating some of his own.

Mike has since made many and took them further experimenting with further shapes and by adding various decoration.

Mike uses home converted timber, and his favourites for these is Field Maple, *Acer campestre* and Yew, *Taxus baccata*. Other suitable woods include Walnut, *Juglans regia*, as well as other tight grained timber.

Benoît Averly lives and works in Burgundy, France and his love of wood goes back to his childhood. His website describes him thus: *'..there, he creates, in a refined spirit, art pieces in wood; with subtle contrasts, playing with light, lines and textures. Inspired by nature and architecture, he feeds his creations through his photographic journey through numerous trips, in search of a rhythm, and quiet balance.'*

His work is remarkable, all executed in wood, it often resembles the properties of other materials or what he calls - elements. He often creates designs of natural shapes with applied texture and repetitive patterns. On some pieces the wood loses its natural and can take on the properties of other elements.

Much of his work is on display from building and offices to cruise ships, as well as the collectors of his pieces. He travels widely and demonstrates internationally.

<https://benoitaverly.com/about-me/>

<https://www.turninggallery.org/benoit-averly.html>



A selection of Mike's work

Mike cuts the blanks from branch wood, to oversized lengths. These are kept in the cool in the workshop for many months. He removes the bark, rough turns to approx. 10 inches, 25cm and creates a chuck mount on each end and seals with candle wax. They then remain for many more months before being used, any that crack are retired to the firewood pile. The blanks are not fully seasoned and used with relatively high moisture content.

Sometimes he will totally part the blank, rough turn the box and then fit together and tape. These are allowed to rest to allow adjustment to the stresses caused by further drying.

Mike had brought along several Field Maple blanks, or 'billets' as he referred to them. After mounting in the chuck, he used a ¾ inch roughing gouge to bring it and the chuck mount into round. It was marked off and parted to create the base and top.

The base was then turned down into a taper using a skew and spindle gouge. This is trimmed to length to allow for later adjustment of the foot.

A large drill is used to allow for end-grain hollowing, although sometimes Mike just uses a small spindle gouge to drill in. He uses a gauge to measure the depth.

The next step is to hollow the base, Mike uses several different hollowing tools to accomplish this including the spindle gouge, a Tungsten tipped hollowing tool or a simple scraper.





Speed and tool presentation is important to a good finish. Too fast, with a long overhang on the tool rest, will result in vibrations that can make chatter marks inside the hollowing, these are difficult to remove. The indication that you are reaching this point is when the work starts to produce a high frequency noise.

If any of the hollowing tools are incorrectly presented, they will produce a harsh cut and could result in a dig in. Present the tool horizontally on the centre line by setting the rest and then start the cut with the tool handle down by several degrees. Allow the tools to cut with minimum applied pressure and sharpen if needed.

Check the depth using a pencil. Check the wall thickness and finish using 'natures callipers', your fingers. The objective is to get the best finish from the tool and minimise sanding.

Once hollowed and finished measure the base of the taper using a pair of callipers and keep these set to allow an indication of size when hollowing the box top.



Making the top

Mike removed the base and mounted the other section of the blank he had parted off earlier.

Mike then drilled a hole in readiness for hollowing.

At this point it must be remembered that the hollowing depth must not be too deep as allowance has to be made for the finial to be turned from the end without breaking through to the hollowed inner.



Winding the drill into the blank using the tailstock handwheel

Using the roughing gouge, skews and spindle gouge he shaped the exterior as dictated by the required internal shape, and to match the base taper. The callipers were used to indicate the required diameter to fit the base. The piece then had a light sanding.



As Mike started to hollow, he realised he had shaped the 'waist' a little thin and had not left a lot of length to turn the finial.



The waist was a little narrow and the length was a little short for comfortable turning of the finial.

Mike began hollowing using the small spindle gouge. This is presented with the handle down and the gouge rotated slightly anti clockwise. With this he hollowed from inside, pulling the tool out while cutting.

Beware: the spindle gouge is an ideal tool to quickly and efficiently remove large quantities of timber, but use with caution.

In inexperienced hands the tool may grab as a dig in. Never force the cut and firmly hold the tool. Rotation and handle angle are very important here.

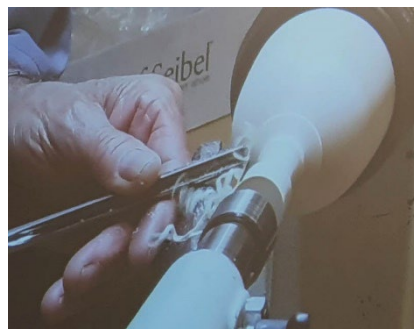
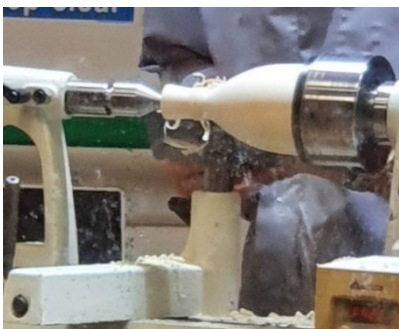


As he had cut the stem a little narrow, he then had to proceed with caution using a light touch. This demonstrated how very thin walls or lower sections of the stem can add to hollowing vibration or even breakage.

Mike then refined the hollowing using the mini cutter and the scraper, followed by a light sanding.

After checking the lid fit to the base Mike then reversed the piece and mounted it to the chuck using the jaws to grip internally. It is important not to over expand the jaws as a crack will surely ensue.

The tailstock and a rotating centre were advanced to support the piece. Small adjustments were made at the chuck until it was centred.



It was now time to create the finial using the spindle gouge. Proceeding carefully, and having formed the shape, he realised there was a crack in the spindle. This is not uncommon in branch wood and Mike was also working very close to the rotating centre due to the limited length.

As predicted by Mike, the end of the Finial cracked off, however it just presents a 'design' change! The options were to shorten the finial as a stubby or cut it diagonally off of the lathe and make it a feature.



Mike continued to turn the finial shorter than he wanted, but it was excellently rescued with perfect proportion and finesse albeit with a natural crack down its length.

Further refinements were made to the outside shape before another brief sanding.

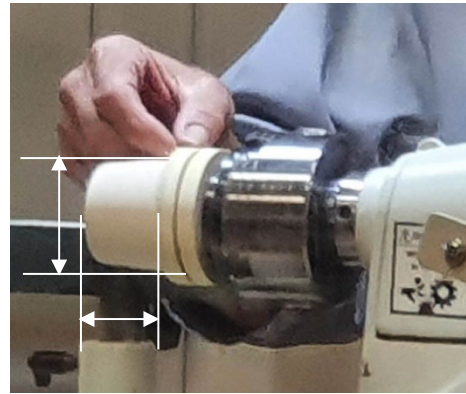


Mike then removed the lid and remounted the base. He then cut the foot to fit perfectly with the lid, trying it as he cut.

A good fit can be achieved by changing this depth and width but proceed carefully as it is easy to remove too much resulting in a loose fit. At this point the base would usually have been parted off from the chuck mount unless it is kept to dry further. In this case any movement due to drying can be touched up by later re-mounting the piece.

Adjust the depth that the lid fits onto the base by trimming the foot back and continue the taper until a good fit is achieved.

It may also be necessary to adjust the taper width, further up, to ensure a snug fit.



Decorating the piece

There are many ways to decorate, including creating beads, ebonising, pyrography, creating decorated panels, painting, staining, application of gilt creams and carving.

For this piece Mike decided to carve a natural pattern using a power carver, although the same could be achieved using well sharpened hand carving tools.

He had already made two delineating cuts on the lid; these create a panel to frame the carving. The power carver motor was suspended on a homemade hanger mounted and locked in the tool rest stem mount of the banjo for convenience.

The carving tool has a long flexible shaft and produces a reciprocating motion at the handpiece. Mike held the lid and cut random lines using the vee cutter tool. He often starts with the shape of a tuning fork and expands from there to increase the randomness of the pattern.



The box showing some of the carved decoration is shown right. Faults common to branch wood can be seen, including little branch inclusions.

These should be considered as natural to the piece or incorporated into a design feature or decoration to camouflage.

As previously mentioned, Mike may well keep the piece bound together to dry further before final decoration or finishing and parting off.



Left: a similar completed and dry, but not polished version.

This was a super demonstration. It was a great introduction to what can be achieved with branch wood, and the scope and variety that can be applied through shape and decoration. Thank you, Mike.