

PROFILE OF A TURNER

DONALD ALLIN CLARKE was born in Birmingham, England in 1946, the second child born to Donald and Grace Clarke. His sister Josephine still resides in Birmingham. He was fortunate to have a private education but left at the age of 15 to become involved in horticulture. His father was a Chartered Accountant, and one of his clients offered him a position in this field. For the following 8 years he learnt horticulture which included completely building a new nursery. The firm grew 10,000 rose bushes and 500 standard roses each year plus approx. 5,000 dahlias and 4,000 chrysanthemums as well as landscaping.

In addition to his newfound vocation, his spare time was spent sailing Nation 12s and Merlin Rockets. This sport was started when he was 10 years old. Today he still sails (a Court 560) at the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club.

Working in the cold outdoors in the nursery, his thoughts turned to "Sunny Australia". He applied to the Immigration Dept. and after being accepted (deciding against sailing and opting for the plane ride instead) he arrived in Clontarf, Sydney in June 1969 and stayed with friends living there. In no time he found himself working for a Ford dealer doing pre-delivery work. He continued to work with this company for three months. Whilst working he managed to purchase a little Honda Sports car (S600) His aim was to see more of Australia.

A week after he bought his 'wheels' he was offered a position in Perth as a district mechanic for an oil service company named Schlumberger. He was told he had three weeks to make his way across to Perth. It had been suggested that he drive across. Little did he realise just how vast Australia was!

He arrived in Perth and took on his new position with enthusiasm and was kept very busy looking after 35 tonne trucks worth, in the late 60s, \$US 1 million each. After two months working for his new employers, his immediate boss asked him if he would like to go motor racing with him. He readily accepted, only to find that he had to take his boss's Porsche 911S by trailer to Melbourne to have the motor re-installed by the Porsche Company, then take it on to Surfers Paradise for the 6-hour race. Following all the excitement of the race, he was to bring it back to Perth. After 6,500 miles and 14 days of virtual non-stop driving he was back in Perth and on his way to another adventure, an offshore oil-drilling rig.

During these travels he had taken quite a few photo slides and wanted to send some to his folks in the U K. While in Midland, he wandered into a Chemist to buy a slide viewer. He came out with a slide projector and his future wife! The story being that Tina felt sorry for him and invited him home for dinner. Three months later they married and two years later were blessed with their son, Donald.

After working for Schlumberger for 5 years, he was invited to go overseas with their company as a Production Engineer. They moved to Singapore in 1975 with their 2 ½ year old son. They stayed there for 8 months. In that time his work took him to Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand. With the fall of Vietnam, they moved to Brunei where they lived for three years, with him working mainly on gas wells. In 1978 they moved to Kuala Lumpur. Here Don worked in the South China Sea, mainly for ESSO.

In 1980 they returned home, mainly for Donald's education as a boarding school was not acceptable. He was transferred back to Perth and for the next 16 years he worked all over Australia and New Zealand being in charge of Production Logging work. In 1996, after 27 years with Schlumberger, he took an early retirement as the long hours and time away posed a strain

on his wife and son. His work involved being called out anytime, day or night. When working on a well, they worked until the job was finished, 1 hour or 1 week, no meal breaks, no sleep. His longest job was 6 1/2 weeks, working on 18 gas wells and did 27 rig moves and the most sleep was 3 hours.

In the 27 years, he survived Cyclone Tracy (Darwin), Cyclone Olsen (Dampier) and 5 others offshore. He also swam out of a downed helicopter in Darwin!!!

After retiring and having had an interest in wood all his life, he decided to try woodturning. A visit to the Woodturning Centre in Midvale was the start of his next adventure, Colin Kleinig suggested he do a 4-week turning course, enabling him to try out a wood lathe before buying one. This he did and thanks to Eric Walker, he was hooked. Colin Kleinig could not supply the lathe he wanted so he bought one from Woodstock.

With the purchase of the lathe came two lessons and with the help of Roy Lundy he learnt a lot more. It was during this time that he became aware of WAWA and went to one of the meetings in Midvale and joined the Association.

Last year he joined the Midvale committee and took on the running of the competitions which he found to be a challenge and very interesting. He has attended most Midvale and WAWA monthly meetings since joining. It has been during these meetings that he has made many friends, and he has realised that his turning has improved by entering the competitions. Entering the competitions has been a way of extending his knowledge and has helped to increase and improve his turning skills. This, he feels, will better equip him to attempt the ultimate in turning, whatever that is.



Don demonstrating at the Gidgegannup Small Farm Field Day May 2016

Extract from newsletter issue 140 dated February/March 2009

Observations Busselton WEWS 2009

Don Clarke did the Barley twist, variations included conventional, long, barley two twists and rope six twists. Don also explained the cable twist and ribbon twist. With the aid of a diagram, maths and skilful tool handling you too can do the barley twist. A marvellous display of inventions and gadgets kept the audience's attention, although some were complicated, they had been manufactured with simple farm tools e.g., welder, hacksaw and grinder, others were simple e.g., wad punches (the why didn't I think of that factor).

A very thought-provoking demo.

Extract from Newsletter issue 143 date August/September 2009

Observations Mandurah WEWS 2009

Don Clarke was next with his rose cutting machine. Don explained that rosettes were used for embellishment and decoration as early as the 17th Century. Since that date man has found a need to produce multiple duplicates of the same pattern and as a consequence the rose cutting machine was invented and has been undergoing continuous development ever since. Examples of rosette decoration include pot pourri bowls, candle holders and flower type lamp holders. Extreme accuracy is needed to make the Perspex pattern that is used on the lathe in conjunction with a router using a variety of bits to make different hollowing patterns.

Extract from newsletter issue 144 dated October/November 2009

Observations Swan WEWS 2009

Don Clarke came next to show us his latest form of inside out turning using four perfectly square pieces of timber, he explained that the traditional method of inside out turning involved turning and finishing the inside first, however using end caps that he had designed he enjoyed a flexibility of any sequence he wished. Don stressed that the caps must be firmly fitting and have holes to remove the pieces. He showed and passed around six samples of different types of bases and different woods. His demonstration would have sparked the imagination of all serious turners to the many varieties of results that can be achieved by experimentation.

Extract From Newsletter issue 151 dated December 2010

Observations from Swan WEWS October 2010

Don Clarke was next with a PowerPoint presentation of segmented turning.

Don showed examples of his work, a biscuit barrel with a floating base, Zig zag bowl with a solid base and a bowl. He uses various jigs to accurately cut the segments on either a table saw, or a drop saw.

First some careful planning is needed, a scale diagram is drawn, to determine the number of rings and to calculate the thickness and width of the segments, the circumference of the circle, the length of the segments and the cutting angle of the segments. Don uses a sled on the table saw to cut the segments, the sled has adjustments to vary the size as required. He then sands them on a disc sander using a jig to hold them then turns them over to sand the other side.

Then Don assembles the segments sanding to make them fit, when he is satisfied the segments are glued two at a time and the circle is gradually built up, they are then clamped. Don then explained how he makes the various types of bottoms and how he makes the various types of feature rings, and how the different types of bowls are made. The assembly and turning is a combined process varying with different features, usually making the bottom first then working from the centre to the top, registering the rings before gluing and assembly.

A demonstration that interested everyone but particularly those involved in segmented turning.

Extract from Newsletter issue 152 dated January 2011

Observations Busselton WEWS 2010

Don Clarke was next with Inside Out Turning defined by Don as 4 pieces of wood (preferably square) then turn a shape, rotate 180 degrees and turn a new shape, the use of paper joints was the most common method of holding, then they were split to rotate and stuck again, however the use of end caps is a superior method allowing the turner to repeat shaping until he obtains the desired result, careful marking and numbering the pieces is essential. Although 4 piece is the norm Don passed around examples of 3-legged candle holder which he was going to demonstrate explaining that the 3 pieces are cut at 60degrees and taped together to make the end caps. After fitting the end caps the job was placed on the lathe and the 3-sided piece shaped, the piece was dismantled and turned so that the outside became the inside, this was then shaped. After gluing up and polishing the top and bottom was turned, a candle holder fitted to the top and a base to the bottom and the item is complete. Don passed around a variety of variations of inside out turning which included rotating centre pins and loose centres. Plenty of new ideas and a reminder to think outside the square and use your imagination.

Extract from Newsletter issue 155 dated July 2011

Observations Mandurah WEWS May 2011

Don Clark was next to stimulate our creative skills with a demonstration of split turning by using tapered inserts held by glued paper joints within the prepared block of wood. He passed around several samples of hollow vessels, some round, some oval with inserts narrow at the top or narrow at the bottom, some with one taper up and one down, the combinations and variety were endless. Don showed how he turned the block and hollowed out the vase then finished the piece. After numbering the segments Don split the joints and dry assembled them to achieve the result he wanted.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 157 dated November 2011

Observations Swan WEWS October 2011

The first demonstration was by **Don Clarke** who had initially planned for Inside-Out turning but had changed his mind. Don explained that he would be using the Vicmarc Escoulen Eccentric Chuck to turn various versions of offset candle sticks. He then mounted a 50mm diameter piece of she oak in the chuck and shaped a tulip on the end, then marking out four 25mm sections on the wood. Don offset the chuck by 15mm and cut a rounded shape, then moving a 1/4 turn he cut the second module, then a 1/2 turn

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ADVANCED
Don Clarke

for the third module, and finally a 3/4 turn for the fourth module, before passing around the result. Don took this opportunity to also pass round three examples of candlesticks made, using various offset combinations. He then explained how you can achieve the same effect without the special chuck and passed round examples. As Don had only just purchased the chuck, he was constantly finding new uses for it. He then demonstrated the making of the base with the Escoulen chuck set 15mm off centre, first marking out and cutting the recess, and then decorating with grooves cut at 10mm offset, 5mm offset and zero offset. A lively question and answer session followed.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 160 dated May 2012

Observations from Collie WEWS March 2012

The second demo was **Don Clarke** on offset turning firstly between centres. Working in a number of steps, Don shaped the whole of the body by moving from one centre point to a different one on the other end. On the next piece Don used his special concentric chuck with movable weights to counterbalance the offset distribution of weight. This chuck has the ability to revolve the timber piece around its own axis, so there is no need to physically reposition the piece as per between centres. During this process the tailstock was still used to support the turning. The next part of the demonstration involved using a “ball” attachment that allows multi adjustment of both centres and angles, to produce a multiple of designs. An adaptor fitted to the ball will allow a screw chuck or conventional chuck to be fitted to the off-set chuck.

Don turned a goblet with multiple off-set portions on the shaft, which he maintains allows you to grip the goblet better, drink more and not spill a drop.



Don Clarke's lovely offset turned candle holder took the trifecta at the Avon Weekend Workshop, 24th October 2015

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 184 dated May/June 2016

Observations Collie WEWS March 2016

Dave Saunders introduced **Don Clarke** as the first demonstrator for the day. Don proceeded to explain the topic of his demonstration, inside out turning. He introduced a number of items that he had previously completed, and these were passed around for all to see. Don outlined that inside out turning was a means to making a significant array of things, however he made it clear that in order for them to be successful the pieces of timber used must be square. If they were not, then after turning one side of them you would almost certainly encounter great difficulty in joining them again when you turned each piece inside out. Don then introduced a series of jigs that he uses as end caps to secure the four pieces of timber together. Don explained that it was also important to ensure that the end caps that make for holding the four pieces together not only had to be square but also of such a size so as to ensure a tight fit when the job was mounted on the lathe.

Don then introduced a project he had previously completed where four shapes had been turned into the centre of the wood. The shapes were a diamond, a heart, a spade and a club. After mounting four pieces of timber, held together by end caps, onto the lathe, Don marked out the timber, then using a skew chisel and a detail gouge he commenced to cut the diamond shape. This was followed by the heart, the spade and the club. Don used four templates, one for each shape, so as to ensure the timber was cut to the required shape. He advised he had downloaded pictures of the shapes on the internet and then used these pictures to create the four templates. After completing all the shapes on the timber Don removed the project from the lathe, took off each of the end caps and then reversed each piece of timber. He explained how each piece of timber was numbered so when reversed they went back together in sequence. Don also introduced an end cap with could be mounted to a chuck. The end cap had a metal plate attached to it. Don used this end cap when he was undertaking a project which involved areas of small amounts of wood. He stated that as the wood became thinner the crushing effect increased. Too much pressure between centres could result in the project snapping. So, the use of the chuck-mounted end cap lessened the pressure on the project.

Lastly Don explained how essential it was to leave the end caps on during gluing process. Keeping the end caps on ensured the job was held together whilst the glue dried.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 185 dated July/August 2016

Observations Mandurah WEWS May 2016

Don Clarke showed us a method of making small olive scoops that were self-draining. The finished product was a scoop capable of picking up several olives from the brine or marinade and leaving the liquid in the container. Unfortunately, I had a couple of presidential distractions during Don's demo and didn't see the full process from start to finish so can't describe how Don achieved the desired shape. A useful project for those with a taste for pickled olives

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 190 dated May/June 2017

Observations Swan WEWS April 2017

The first demonstrator of the day - **Don Clarke**, from Swan, who had entitled his demonstration as "My Twisted Sense of Humour".

Don then proceeded to explain the methods for producing a series of spiral twists which could be imparted to a piece by a method of spindle work. He explained that there were several different types of twist used for turned pieces and named according to the number and separation of the turns on a particular piece.

He intended to demonstrate the production of the Barley Twist; and, if there was time at the end, the Ribbon twist. After turning square to round, he explained that the Barley twist was made by indexing a series of parallel lines along the length of the piece and then dividing the piece by guidelines at right angles to these parallels. This formed a grid which was the basis for marking out the course of the twists. Barley Twists involve marking corner to corner across 2 squares and

the Ribbon twist by a similar three-square measurement.

Don then proceeded to illustrate the marking up of the piece by use of different coloured lines for indexing the pitch of the grooves. Don explained that the marking could also be done by twisting a long strip of paper around the piece in a spiral fashion. He gave detailed instructions on using a saw to mark the edge of each twist, and then used various rasps to remove material by hand to form a spiral running from one end of the piece to the other. It was important to work with the grain.

He then removed the piece, reversed it and performed the same actions to work

with the grain in the other direction. A palm plane was then used to deepen and finish each groove and the piece once again reversed to continue working with the grain.

Finally, he used a circular rasp to finish each twist.

As time was short, he then gave an explanation of marking the piece for Ribbon Twists. He passed around a hollow form of a similar piece and explained that he had managed to make only three of these.

The demonstration being at an end he was soundly applauded for his work.



Manjimup WEWS 2019

