

PROFILE OF A TURNER

KEITH STOUT

I first met Keith in the early 1980s when Ron Goodson brought him to see me because he was interested in the hollow bowls that I was turning.

He was a farmer from Koorda who had retired in 1976 and, with his wife Peg, had settled in their new home in Lesmurdie. Having worked with his hands for most of his working life, he was soon attracted to hobbying. He first studied ceramics and then joined a wood carvers' guild where he met Ron, who was also a member.

Since he and I were both ex-farmers we had a lot in common and he soon became a wood turner. We joined forces in collecting suitable logs and burls. I had previously obtained jarrah burls from my son-in-law's farm in Williams and we had contact with some tree cutters and a practicing botanist, who provided us with wood.

One weekend Peg and Keith travelled to Kalgoorlie to attend a wedding. On their return Keith said there were a lot of salmon gum burls on the roadside trees between Southern Cross and Coolgardie, so we decided to collect some.

The plan was to drive to Southern Cross one day, staying at a hotel overnight, cutting burls next day and returning home on the third with the trailers loaded. On the first trip we arrived at Southern Cross in mid-afternoon and, having seen a patch of salmon gums north of the town, decided to take a look. Peg's and Helen's role in the team was to find the burls for the boys to cut. On this occasion we were all lookers and when we met again, we had not found a burl, though we all had our pockets full of golf balls. Back at the hotel we told some of the locals who said that where we were was adjacent to the golf course and that the crows were stealing them and dropping them in the bush.

Next day we drove 60 or 70kms up the Coolgardie Road and really got amongst the burls from the roadside, using two wheelbarrows to bring them to the trailers. We came home the third day as planned, very pleased with the excursion.

We had got permits from CALM at about 35 cents each as I recall. We made another two or three trips getting morrell and gimlet also but had to go out further into the bush to get them.

In 1987 we had a combined exhibition at the Fremantle Arts Centre and had a 90% sell-out. Our work also sold through galleries. We travelled in company through the Southwest and through the centre to Darwin, returning via the Kimberley.

Reminiscing on our early days was frequent. The talk about horsepower did not refer to eight-wheel drive tractors or V8 engines, but more often to teams of Clydesdales, Percherons, Suffolk Punches, stockhorses and trotters, and teams of eight and ten horses. We were also familiar with horse works to drive chaff cutters, circular saws, etc.

Sport was a part of life in the country and Keith played cricket and football. Whether he was a Sandover medallist or in a championship Country Week cricket team I don't know, but I am sure he would have played a good game.

As a woodturner he was skilful and innovative, and for the rest of his life he was first a wood turner and always a gentleman. Written by Gordon Wilkins April 2002

KEITH STOUT Early into retirement Keith's wife took a five-year course in pottery -- then Keith started making nests of coffee tables with lots of carving - then he wanted to produce turned legs! So, as you can imagine pottery and to a certain extent carving was forgotten. About this time Keith joined WAWA. Keith Stout was an executive committee member for a time. About this time Keith started an unofficial Lesmurdie Group meeting at Keith and Pegs home on weeknights, Keith being our convenor. Later we met at the Lesmurdie Primary School canteen, we would have talks and turning videos. We also met on Saturdays at the Kalamunda High School and used their lathes. Lesmurdie Group's first weekend workshop was held at the Lesmurdie Scout Hall, May 16th & 17th 1987.

Then around December 1988 we received an offer of a venue we could not refuse, by The Woodworking Centre in Midvale. Hence the name change from the Lesmurdie Group to Midvale Group.

Keith Stouts work was a leader in design and proportion and was, I feel, our Avant Garde. Written April 2002

Extract from Newsletter 54 dated October/November 1994

VALE

Western Australian Woodturners have lost one of their best loved and most supportive members. **Keith Stout**, who was a wood carver before taking up turning, was introduced to turning by his good friend, Ron Goodson.

Keith had been a farmer at Dowerin all his working life but retired to live firstly at Lesmurdie and latterly at Duncraig. In the words of Ron Goodson, Keith had "outstanding hand skills". Like many farmers, he was adept at finding innovative solutions to difficult problems and had no hesitation in sharing his ideas with anyone who wished to learn.

Keith started a woodturning group which operated from his house in Lesmurdie. This eventually became the Midvale Group. Keith was a member of the Kalamunda Arts and Crafts for 15 years and both Keith and Peg are honorary life members of this organisation.

He frequently demonstrated at weekend workshops and his quietly modest manner impressed all those who admired his many skills. He was never dogmatic in his views but expressed what he had found worked for him.

Those who attended the Swan View meeting in July were pleased to see Peg and Keith there. It was a great shock to us all when he passed away so soon after that weekend.

His friendly manner and his warm attitude to all turners will be sadly missed especially at weekend workshops. I am sure all turners will join in expressing their deepest sympathy to his widow Peg (also a stalwart of the Association) and to his daughter Annette and son Robert.

We pay tribute to a fine gentleman and a special friend.