

PROFILE OF A TURNER

Ray Batt was born at Katanning in 1936, the second of six children, spread over 15 years, his sister being the eldest (His father was farming at Nyabing 60 km east of Katanning). Ray was educated for 9 years at Nyabing State School, he rode his push bike 5 miles each way for 8 years and went by school bus for his last year.

Ray left school the day he turned 15 to work on the farm, being the eldest of the four boys. At age 19 he ventured into a mallee block 18 miles further southeast and batched for 12 years attempting to gain a living and establish a farm. He went sheep shearing and crutching for four months of the year in addition to contract fencing after harvest to help pay the bills. He sold the farm in 1966.

Ray married a Nyabing girl in 1967 and moved to Katanning where he joined Wesfarmers Stock Co. working in Spare Parts and Merchandise. They produced three children over the next six years and because he had by 1980 risen to be Merchandise Manager and a transfer from Katanning was imminent, he resigned, procured his LPG & Heating Oil Appliance Installers ticket and ventured out as a self-employed contractor, erecting windmills, installing reticulation as well as doing the gas and oil work. Because of a number of factors but mainly for the advanced education of two of their children, which necessitated going to college at Bunbury in January 1988 they decided the time was right to shift to Busselton (his wife's mother lived there). This enabled the two children to go via free bus transport to Bunbury College.

A job as Maintenance man on the Busselton Water Board was advertised shortly after arriving in the town. He applied and got the job and stayed there until retiring in October 2001, aged 65.

Going back to 1988/89 it so happened that the WAWA monthly two-day workshop was held at Busselton. Ray had always been interested in wood and went along. Ralph Smith noticed his interest late on the Saturday after he had put his tools away but told him not to go away. Ralph Smith retrieved his tools and proceeded to coach Ray to turn between centres. He joined the Busselton Group in 1989. With the late Cyril Jones as Convenor and Brian Launer very active with encouraging new members, Ray began a steep learning curve. He is very appreciative of the help he received from Brian. In 1991 the Convenor status was bestowed upon him which he held for about 6 years. The group were very fortunate to be able to go into the local forest after logging had been completed in a particular coup and mill their Jarrah and She-Oak blanks from forest residue. Many a good day has been spent collecting timber which gave them much pleasure particularly when they came across that special piece.

For many years now it has been Ray's responsibility to open the High School Manual Arts Room for the two nightly workshop meetings per month. Throughout this period his main aim has been to promote woodturning to the best of his ability, and he has become very active, particularly in the show and tell section of their meetings. He has made his own lathe and band saw to suit his needs and still has them in use today.

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Observations from Busselton WEWS 2010

Ray Batt was next with hollow turning. He commenced by passing around various hollow forms including two flying saucer shapes and bud vases with dowels for contrast. Ray explained how he used a table router to cut the recesses for the inlays then glued the material in place. He used a cradle on the bandsaw to obtain the first square side, once you have that the others follow. Several examples of his work were passed around. Ray mounted a pre-prepared blank with 4 inserts on the lathe and shaped the vase and cut a spigot which he mounted in the chuck and made the final shape. He drilled out with a spade bit then used modified bits to shape the bottom. Ray explained how he makes his own tools to suit special tasks. He then finished the job and passed around his work.