

PROFILE OF A TURNER

Robert Jones was born in Westbromwich England on February 11th 1953. Robert writes: "For anyone who doesn't know where Westbromwich is, it is situated in the industrial heartland of England, just west of Birmingham. The area to the west of Birmingham, which includes Westbromwich is known as the Black Country, and we pride ourselves as being different from our city dwelling neighbours. The area was at the centre of the industrial revolution in England. Although industrial production has been cut back, it is still an important heavy industrial and manufacturing area.

The importance of industry to the area is reflected in the fact that at the secondary school I attended the houses were called, James Watt, of which I was once house captain, William Murdock, Thomas Telford and Mathew Bolton, all leading lights of the industrial revolution.

It was in my first year at secondary school that I had my first taste of woodturning. The project was to make a small wooden box, with a turned knob on top of the lid. I managed to make the box OK, but I had eight attempts at turning the knob, which for some reason just wouldn't stay on the lathe, or for that matter stay in one piece. At the end of the year my box was the only one that remained knob less.

Years two to five found me in the metal work class. in 1969 I finished my secondary education. and it was time for me to find work. My first job was as an apprentice pattern maker at a local foundry by the name of The Midland Motor Cylinder Co. Ltd, which was part of the Birmid Qualcast Group of Companies. At the time I joined the company they employed nineteen thousand people, which made them one of the largest employers in the area.

As part of my apprenticeship, I attended James Watt Technical college, there's that name again. In the Birmingham area you just couldn't get away from Watt, Telford, Bolton or Murdock. At tech we studied wood and metal pattern making calc's plus science, technical drawing and foundry craft practice. The most satisfying part of the whole course was being able to follow the whole course through from the drawing, making the patten, taking that into the foundry, making the mould, casting the metal and machining the finished casting. I like to see a job through from beginning to end, to know that you did the whole thing yourself.

Back at work they were doing prototype work on the Jaguar V12 motor which powered the E type Jag and later the XJ6. I met an elderly gentleman whose name was Sid Greathead who did all of the prototype patterns for the rolls Royce Merlin engines that power the Spitfire.

This was where I had my second attempt at woodturning. I had managed to do a passable job this time around. Any woodturning jobs that came around seemed to find their way to my bench.

I became a dab hand at making patterns for shafts and fly wheels for David Brown Tractors, brake drum patterns for the Daimler Buses.

A couple of years on I was moved out of the main pattern shop into one of the smaller shops over at West Works, a foundry that made only small cylinder blocks. As it was a high production foundry all of the patterns were made of cast iron. So that was the end of my woodturning for another few years. With the start of corporate downsizing in 1977 I was made redundant.

After a short time, I was working for a small Tool Making Co., manufacturing dies for the hot brass stamping industry. This I continued to do for the next eleven years, but the company was starting to go downhill, and my boss was spending more time in the pub than he was at work.

This signalled another change, so we decided to travel afield. From a child I had always had a keen interest in geography and other cultures. New Zealand was a place I'd always wanted to visit.

In 1968, after about six months of form filling and medical check-ups etc., we were on our way. Before we left England my wife Nileshe, a nurse, had already found herself work at a hospital fifty kms south of Auckland.

We moved into a house owned by the hospital for a few months, while we settled in. A few weeks later I found myself work as a roll grinder at New Zealand Steel, which is now owned by BHP. It wasn't a bad job, the money was good, about twice as much as I had earned in the UK, the only downside was the fact that we were on a 21-shift roster and getting up at 11.00pm on a Saturday night was not my idea of fun.

After a time, we bought ourselves a house in a small town called Pukekohe, about fifty kms south of Auckland. We had been in New Zealand for approx. eighteen months when I was walking around Victoria Park market and came across a stall selling wooden bowls. I turned to my wife and said, "I could do that". She said, "Well why don't you then?". Within a couple of weeks, I had bought myself my first lathe, and for the next few weeks I busied myself turning out firewood! I joined the South Auckland Woodturners Guild a month or so later and soon found out that I wasn't too bad at my newfound hobby.

Within a short time, I was selling my work through local craft outlets, and entering my work in local and national exhibitions. Although I never won any prizes it is entering that counts. After holidaying in WA in 1994 and enjoying it so much we decided in 1995 to come over and settle here. By that time, I had just about had enough of shift work, and wanted to take up woodturning full time. We bought a one-acre property in Mundijong, and I set about woodturning in earnest.

Not long after settling over here I joined WAWA and started attending the Wandi Group. I served one term as Convenor of the Wandi Group. I was then talked into putting my name forward, for the WAWA committee. Much to my surprise I was asked to be vice President, which is the position I still hold. May be in another twenty years or so, I may be able to tell you the rest of my story.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 145 dated December/January 2010

Observations Wandi WEWS September 2009

Rob Jones took the stage and proceeded with a demonstration of an embellished salad bowl. Using Cape Lilac with strong growth rings he shaped the outside and detailed the base, then using a power drill with a wire brush, followed by a hand wire brush he embellished the outside. After sanding Rob reversed the bowl using a wood face plate to jam chuck the base.

Rob hollowed out with a bowl gouge leaving the centre held by the tail stock for as long as possible. After power sanding the inside of the bowl Rob uses salad, walnut or vegetable oil

to seal the wood and be food safe. In cold weather you may have to warm the oil so it will spread. He then used a pad on the inside to clean up the base. During the demo Rob gave out many hints to improve your work and he produced a salad bowl that not only looks good but is functional as well.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 148 dated June/July 2010

Observations Collie WEWS March 2010

Rob Jones took centre stage to demonstrate a decorated edge bowl. Rob had prepared three bowls at different production stages.

1. He rough turned a blank paying particular attention to the area that would be the rim. After mounting in a chuck, he cleaned up the rim surface and formed beads on the outside and inside of the rim. Rob explained that the rim should slope slightly inwards, after hollowing out the centre Rob was ready for the next bowl.

2. Rob then changed to the second already sanded bowl and using three dome cutters ranging from 5mm to 10mm in a Dremel he cut inlays in the rim. Rob stated that you are free to use your own pattern, but he advised to use the larger bits on the outside and work inwards to the smaller sizes. After brushing our excess carbon Rob was ready for the third bowl.

3. This bowl had been sanded and was ready for the rim to be painted. Two coats of black paint were applied with a sponge and a contrasting colour used for the domes. Any excess paint was removed from the centre and the beads and Rob was ready to finish the bottom. After removing the bowl from the chuck and reversing it Rob used a pad on the headstock holding the bowl with the tailstock, he then completed the bowl. Rob's demonstration was both entertaining and informative; while he worked Rob continually provided many tips and hints on how to work better, safer and quicker. The dome cutters are available from: Seivers Jewellery Supplies 25 Barrack Street Perth Ph 93258822

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 152 dated January 2011

Observations Busselton WEWS 2010

Rob Jones came on to demonstrate colouring, passing round a platter with a decorated rim similar to the planned demo. The platter blank had a spigot on both sides that were to be the top and bottom. He fastened the top and shaped the bottom, Rob would normally sand and finish the bottom at this time. The bottom was mounted in the chuck with the tailstock up on the top spigot. Rob explained that he finishes decorating the rim before removing the spigot. He shaped the rim slightly convex with small trenches, he then glued on sand to the design he wanted and painted the rim and sand with black acrylic paint. After the paint was dry Rob painted the sand with white paint and dried it. After cleaning up the inside and outside rims he shaped the inside of the platter and removed the spigot. The platter can be finished with your choice, Rob used spray Mirrortone lacquer and a coat of oil. Rob's demo contained many useful tips for turners at all levels including the use of sand as a decorative material.

Observations Manjimup WEWS March 2011

Rob Jones came on next to demonstrate making a Pot-pourri bowl using a Stephen Hughes designed insert. Rob explained that he was following on from his Collie demonstration of decorating a wide edged bowl with domed cutters used in a Dremel. He then passed around a bowl with a centre insert and samples of lazer cut inserts in plywood using a fish theme. Rob said that the plywood insert required sanding and staining, he then passed around several samples. Rob then turned a bowl, cutting a shoulder in the recess to fit the insert, this must be a perfect fit. He then decorated the rim using a cup burr in a dremel. The rim can then be painted with your choice of colour and the pot pourri bowl finished to your taste. As usual with Rob's demonstrations the audience is inspired to try his ideas.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 156 dated September 2011

Observations Wandi WEWS 2011

Rob Jones to demonstrate the finer points on turning Jarrah burls.

Rob commenced with a slideshow of items he had turned from Jarrah burls explaining each piece, he then passed around samples of his work with burls.

Mounting a burl on a screw chuck and with tailstock support, he shaped the bottom of a bowl, explaining that the spigot must avoid the gum veins. Rob then super glued the gum veins on the outside of the bowl and set it aside for 24 hours to set. He then mounted a pre turned bowl burl on the lathe and finished the top and bowl recess with gouge and scraper. Rob sands the inside of the bowl before cutting the recess for the insert. He would then use compressed air to blow out the veins before sealing with lacquer, using a grey abrasive pad followed by a white to prepare the surface for spraying with Mirrortone lacquer.

Rob then passed around the piece with the laser cut insert in place. Next, he mounted a partly finished wide edged bowl in the chuck and tidied up the rim and bowl with gouge and scraper, ready to finish later. A question-and-answer session followed an informative and entertaining demonstration.



Rob Jones at Manjimup, showing how to get 2 platters from one large blank

Observations Mandurah WEWS May 2014

Rob Jones demonstrated the making of an embellished bowl and passed round samples of his work. Commencing with a she-oak blank predrilled for a screw chuck, and after fastening on the lathe, shaped the outside of the bowl cutting from the bottom to the top with a spigot 50mm wide. The bowl is shaped with the widest point being 1/3 down from the top. Using scrapers, he had made, Rob finished the surface and passed round his scrapers. Rob then sands to 240 grit and cuts 5 beads - the first on the highest point, he then tidies up the edge beads to blend with the curvature of the bowl and sands to finer grits. Using coloured thread and super glue he fills in the grooves. After removing from the screw chuck and mounting in the four-jaw chuck he hollows out the centre, sands and finishes. Using a bowl-shaped inner grip and tailstock pressure, Rob makes the bottom concave and tidies up the edges, sands and finishes. Rob's demonstrating and explanation techniques made for an interesting and informative demonstration.

Extract from WAWA Newsletter issue 190 dated May/June 2017

Observations Swan WEWS April 2017

The afternoon session was taken up with a two-part demonstration by **Robert Jones** on the production of Thin-Walled Bowls with Piercing. Rob passed samples around of bowls made previously and explained that "thin walled" meant 2-3mm as far as he was concerned. These were very finely detailed and admired by attendees as they moved through the audience. He then proceeded to finish a blank he had prepared earlier, explaining which tool he was using at each stage. He turned a stepped spigot for reversal into the chuck explaining that this was necessary in order not to damage the piece as he turned the walls thinner and thinner to final dimensions. He explained that scrapers must be used with care in finishing the inside and bottom of the piece. After hollowing and sanding the piece is removed from the lathe and supported on a pad attached to a scrap glue block.

A break for afternoon tea was taken, and on return Rob demonstrated the decoration of the outside of the bowl with schools of small fish using a shaped hot wire. He pointed out that this pattern would be repeated on the inside which was more difficult to achieve due to less steady support. Having marked out a school of seven fish he then demonstrated piercing a pattern around these using an air tool coupled to a small compressor.



The pattern and fish were then painted with blue and gold acrylic stain to finish that part of the demonstration. To finish off, he then turned a further bowl from a blank of Jacaranda. Rob was given a loud round of applause.