

PROFILE OF A TURNER

Ron Limb

Hi chaps., I greet all “Lathe Loving Lunies”. I am sure our long-suffering wives have names like this for us, perhaps less complimentary. No?? Perhaps it’s not the lathes we love but the glorious products of our lathe inspired imaginations – the bowls, the goblets, the lamp holders etc. which decorate our shelves. I might as well confess I have now run out of space. I managed to insinuate a few pieces into the lounge where they have uncertain tenure.

Have you ever wondered why no one else, except adoring wifie seem to sufficiently admire our magnificent creations? Now we are in danger of losing even this unstinting adulation as more and more of us invade the kitchen and want to use the microwave just when she is about to use it.

I had better get to my theme suggested, I might say, by our worthy editor Ivor. As I began work in an engineering workshop and had been to the old Perth Tech, I always coveted a lathe of my own. I think it was in the early 20’s when Bairds was perhaps the leading hardware shop in Perth. They have some beautiful small metal turning lathes I would have given anything to have, but I left the trade. Many years later I bought a hobby lathe. It had a bed about 20 inches long. I ground up a couple of carpenters chisels and made a couple of poor lampstands. Eventually I gave it to my son-in-law.

After my retirement this wood turning bug began to bite again and I considered a lathe at And’s but \$300 seemed a lot to me. Then about three years ago I saw a nice little Taiwanese lathe at Midland Surplus Storers, about \$150 plus tax, so I bought it and just managed to carry it out of the shop, motor and all, together with the basic Marple’s chisels. I “cut my teeth” on it if you don’t mind the metaphor. I got two very good books from the Midland Library and my wife bought me a copy of Nish’s “Artistic turning” and I was in business. I suppose for the most part it wasn’t a bad lathe, except it meant to work off volts and kept burning out condensers.

So, I began to master the craft. I am still learning, unless you are one of those masterly semi-professionals you will know what I mean. I got far enough along the track to realise that the little “pride of my heart” had its limitations and its aggravations. One day with a 10-inch Jarrah disc I wanted to shape up for a bowl, the lathe jumped so much I couldn’t keep the chisel on the rest. So, I said “that’s it little lathe, you are about to be moved out and I sold it at a slight profit, shopped around and eventually ended up at Tough’s. I might say I didn’t carry it out in one parcel. I borrowed a trailer, and it took Ivor and three other blokes to load it.

Now this is not a “commercial” otherwise I would go into raptures about this beautiful piece of engineering. I must say it is marvellously versatile and splendidly designed. With it came a wonderful bonus, a highly valued friendship with the leading hand, Ivor Bridges.

This is the wonderful thing about being a wood turner. It introduces you to a circle of maniacs like yourself. You can learn the jargon and be your simple self without being given the “raspberry”.

Last October I made a trip to Kukerin and Lake Grace as they were without a Minister. I am a retired Methodist Minister, and I went to help out. After the service at Lake Grace where I used some of my pieces of wood turning as an object lesson for the children a little boy said there is a wood turner around the corner. After lunch he took me to his home. We were like long lost friends. I spent about one and a half hours with him. He showed me his work and I showed him my bits. We were buddies. His work was completely different from mine and mine from his. That is perhaps the best reason for being a “kinky” wood turner.