

# Shavings No. 56 - October 2019

On Saturday 13th October Gary Rance came to the Wood Shed to demonstrate for the Ulster Woodturners and was simply brilliant.

He started his demo with some background on his own journey from apprentice production turner to the multi-talented professional turner



and demonstrator we know today. He then went through some basic tools showing how to cut efficiently and comfortably, directing shavings away from the turner, and introduced us to a favourite tool, the round skew, that he used extensively throughout the demo.

## The Idiot Stick

Gary's opening piece was the 'Idiot Stick' which caused much hilarity in the audience and a lot of self-satisfied smugness among those who



knew how it worked as they watched the frustration of those who didn't.... well, the writer felt pretty smug anyway.

Basically, the piece is a drilled rod with a piston/plunger so Gary mounted a 5" x 1" x 1" blank between centres, using a step in the tailstock and a chuck and drill bit in the headstock, preventing the blank from turning by blocking it with the tool rest, and drilled a 7mm hole down the centre. He drove the blank onto the drill bit and then finished drilling through the side of the blank by hand to leave two holes for bits of elastic band to be glued in later. With the hole complete the blank was driven by a step in the headstock and a revolving centre in the tailstock and shaped to whatever style is desired. Gary rolled the end at the tailstock and turned a couple of beads at each end of the blank. He cut a long cove in the middle for aesthetic reasons because that's what he likes. When satisfied with the shape the piece was sanded and parted off, the end being finished by hand.

The second part of the Idiot Stick is the piston/plunger which is simply a long blank reduced to 6mm with a knob on the end that is shaped to allow the piston to be squeezed and flicked into the chamber as if being pulled by an elastic band. Gary measured where the holes on the outside of the chamber would match the 'hook' on the plunger and cut a notch where it would locate on the imaginary elastic band inside. He said it was critical that this notch be cut at 45.4°. With the piston/plunger complete Gary sanded it and parted off, finishing by hand.

## Humming Top

This piece is a box with a hole cut in the side to act like a whistle and 'hum' while the top is spinning. Gary mounted a blank, reduced it to a cylinder and cut a chucking spigot. The blank was then held in a chuck and the top reduced to a spindle 7.5mm thick to fit in the 8mm hole in the handle of the device. Make sure the spindle is long enough to go through the handle. Gary then set out the dimensions of the box and prepared the top of the blank for parting off. It would later be glued back on as the lid. He was basically making a straight-sided box. He cut witness marks with a parting tool to define where the internal dimensions of the box would match the lid and cut a bead at the top before decorating the lid with cut lines that were

defined with a pencil line. This looked really good after being polished.

After the lid was removed Gary cut a bead on the base of the box and drilled a hole in the side about half way up. This would later become a 'square hole' but it is important not to finish it before the lid is glued back on as that makes the structure more stable for filing the hole. The centre of the box was removed, checking the depth regularly, until satisfied it was complete. Gary made most of the cuts from the centre out and then used a box scraper to refine the internal wall of the box. The base was cut to fit the lid and remounted on a jam chuck to finish the bottom and leave a point for the top to spin on.

When satisfied with the shape Gary sanded and finished the box with gloss acrylic lacquer. The lid was then glued on using Titebond 2.

The handle was made using a 4.5" x 1" x 1" blank. It has a 15mm x 1.25" (mixed measurements) hole for the string to go through and an 8mm hole for the spindle. The handle is held between stebs and rounded and shaped to whatever design the turner decides is attractive.

The 'square hole' in the side of the top can now be filed into shape with a 45° slope leading from the entry to the inside i.e. the hole gets wider as



it gets deeper. These angles can be played with until the top makes an attractive, or acceptable, sound. The principle is the same as that used on the old air-raid sirens of WW2.

The final job is to drill a hole for the string in the top of the spindle. This is for threading the string through to make winding on easier.

### Offset Pendant

Gary made an offset pendant with a piece of Tiger Wood. He explained that this is an ideal project for using up small pieces of exotic and expensive wood. To make this process more efficient and achievable Gary designed a bespoke pendant chuck ([DVD here](#)) just to hold the blanks. It is basically two semicircular jaws with an internal groove to accept the blank, external grooves to accept elastic bands that aid assembly of the chuck, and a chucking point for grabbing in a chuck.

The blank is mounted between centres and prepared for the special chuck by being cut to a diameter that will match the chuck. It is important that this diameter slightly exceeds the diameter of the closed chuck so that the scroll



chuck has something to squeeze onto and secure the blank. Leave the edge of the blank blunt to avoid being cut and cut towards the edge of the blank to prevent tear-out. When satisfied with the shape and dimensions mount the blank in the specialised pendant chuck and mount that in a scroll chuck. Drill half way through the blank with a saw-tooth bit and tidy up the profile, sand and then turn and drill from the back side again tidying up the cut and sanding. This prevents blow-out if we attempt to drill the whole way through the blank.

Remove the blank and drill a small hole for the leather strap. These are available on Ebay with fittings attached ([For example](#))

Gary sprays the pendants with sanding sealer, rubs back with P800 to denib, and then sprays with acrylic gloss lacquer ([Available in the Wood Shed](#)). Gary then rubs back again and resprays.

### Faceplate Picture Frame

Gary mounted a 14" square blank on a screw chuck, held in a scroll chuck and told us that will yield four picture frames of diminishing size. He trued the edge to round and showed how to cut beads with his beading tool ([Gary's website tool page](#)). To make a picture frame you cut a recess in the back first and then cut a groove 3/4 way through the blank, parting off at an angle to avoid it exploding. Then you can cut the next frame and so on until there are no more left.

When the rings are parted off each is then mounted on a scroll chuck (wooden jaws are good to prevent the tool hitting steel). Cut from the far side to remove the centre and cut a ledge in the inside for the glass. Then the frame can be decorated as preferred.



Our very own scribe, Brendan

### Light Pull

Gary mounted a blank with a hole drilled for a cord and then drilled it to depth with a bit held in a chuck in the headstock. This drill bit then acts as the drive for shaping and decorating the blank. The blank was cut to a cylinder and then shaped to dimension using a 'scratcher' that has pins protruding at defined points to mark boundaries on the blank... a production turning device also called a 'story stick'. When the lines were marked Gary cut beads and coves at the defined places. The piece was sanded and sealed. When a number of light pulls are

prepared to this stage they are mounted on bicycle spoke stems and sprayed with gloss lacquer.

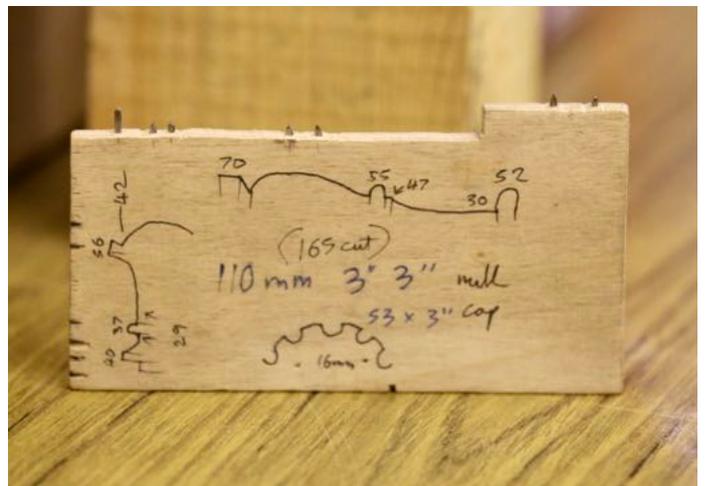
At this stage we had reached lunch time and there were still more projects to come.

### Pepper Mill

Gary drills holes in pepper and salt mills with saw-tooth bits and finishes through holes with regular drill bits. He uses a tapered wooden plug to drive the drilled blank and secures it with a revolving centre at the tailstock. This allows him to process mills quickly in batches.

When setting external dimensions Gary allows +0.5mm for sanding later in the process. This means all the mills will be the same for matching up purposes.

Gary rounded the blank removing excess wood to set the profile of the piece roughly before cutting to specific dimensions. He trues the bottom of the blank to ensure it is going to sit square and, using a scratcher, defines cut lines and boundaries. The cuts have to be planned so Gary cuts fillets before the beads and coves.



When he is satisfied with the dimensions the piece is sanded.

The lid is then cut to the length defined by the length of rod exposed by the base. Gary used a home-made screw chuck with a coach bolt epoxied into place to hold the lid so that it can be rounded to dimension. He then set dimensions with a scratcher and cut the tenon that goes into the base slightly smaller in diameter than the receiving hole in the base to prevent squeaking when in use. He then cut the profile for the 'crown' and, using the lathe indexing system, marked the grooves for the crown which were cut with a square file. Gary

also uses a vernier set at 16mm and works his way around the circumference of the crown to achieve the same result on this particular piece. The grooves were sanded with abrasive wrapped around a file to preserve the crisp lines and edges.

The assembled mill was sprayed with acrylic sanding sealer ([available in the Wood Shed](#)) and ebonising lacquer for pepper mills ([in the Wood Shed](#)) and acrylic gloss lacquer ([Wood Shed](#)). When spraying with sealer and lacquer cut back until you cannot feel raised grain.

### **Onlay Box**

This project is a little box with a Corian ring laid on a right-angled groove cut in the lid. Gary used a Padauk blank (available in the Wood Shed) that was about 3" long. He turned it to a cylinder between centres and cut a spigot for mounting in a chuck.

Gary mounted the blank in a chuck and cut a witness mark for parting the lid later. He was careful to position the cut line so that he allowed enough thickness in the lid to cut a taper that would be used to mark a ledge for the Corian ring to sit on.



Next a hole was cut in the Corian slice with a saw-tooth bit. Be careful to check to determine if the bit has left the hole tapered because then the piece of Corian will have to be orientated with the wide part of the taper facing out to prevent a space in the ring later. When satisfied with the dimensions of the Corian it is held against the taper in the lid to make a mark and that is where a right-angled 'shelf is cut with a

parting tool. Cut and fit until the Corian ring just pushes onto the ledge. The shoulder the Corian sits on must be square or gaps will appear later.

When satisfied with the fit the Corian ring is glued in position with CA glue. After the glue is set the Corian is turned down until it becomes a ring on the taper with a smooth flow from top to bottom. The finial can then be shaped to the desired profile and the lid sanded and polished with friction polish and Carnauba wax (both available in the Wood Shed).

The lid is parted off and the little nub that remains removed on a sanding disk. With the lid complete it only remains to finish the bottom of the box. The wood is removed from the inside by cutting towards the outside and the lid fitted to give a slightly loose fit. It is worth considering who a box is for or the proposed use of a box. A box with a tight fitting lid is not desirable on a make-up table because people generally open boxes there with one hand. Similarly, a pill box has to have a tight enough fit to avoid spilling contents but still be easy enough to open with arthritic hands.

Gary tidied the inside of the box with a 1/4" round skew on it's side to prepare to turn it onto a jam chuck. When sanding the inside of the box he used the corner of the abrasive over a finger to try to conform to the internal shape. This is also useful to remove that tiny nub in the bottom.

The box was reversed onto a jam chuck and the bottom was cut to finish, removing the chucking point very carefully and undercutting the base slightly to let the box sit square on a table. Gary decorated the base with fine lines before sanding just to show it had been worked on. The base was sanded and finished as before.

### **Christmas Decoration**

Gary told us how he was approached by a client and asked to make a Christmas ornament for a tree but was given no direction except that it had to be small. So, after some experimentation, he designed an ornament that pleased his client and has become a popular piece he produces because people like ornaments to be the same. However, they also like different types of wood so this is an ideal way to use small blanks.

So, Gary mounted a small blank 3" x 1" x 1" in a chuck and turned it down to 3/4" diameter. He

then marked features on the blank, a scratcher is ideal for repetition, and working from the tailstock end to keep the integral strength at



maximum for as long as possible produced a very pleasing decoration. He advised us to use the bevel of the gouge as a support to prevent the finial flexing while being cut and to gradually work your way up the piece without returning to anything already finished. He used his thumb as a steady as well and did so during sanding too. When the piece was complete it was parted off and a hole drilled in the top for a hook eye.

### Corian and Ebony Spinning Top

The final project was a Corian and Ebony spinning top and, to start, Gary drilled a hole through the centre of the Corian and then held it between centres to work on it. He took the corners off and cut an Ogee on what would become the bottom of the spinning top before cutting the top down to a thin edge, dragging the gouge across the surface to improve the finish. The piece was sanded and then polished with burnishing cream.

Next the bottom and top elements were prepared. A length of nylon knitting needle was cut for the point of the spinning top and a piece of Ebony was turned down to act as the finger hold with a tenon to go into the hole in the Corian. Each of these pieces was glued half way into the Corian disk. Remember not to put finish on the Ebony tenon or nylon tip.

When the Ebony was glued into the Corian the piece was mounted in a scroll chuck and the nylon tip glued in. The hole in the Corian will can match the diameter of the nylon rod (or knitting needle) or a small tenon can be cut on the nylon for fitting it to the Corian.

When the glue has set, cut the nylon tip to a point and the spinning top is ready for use. The

nylon will allow the top to spin for a long time, up to 10 minutes we were told, so there are possibilities for Christmas competitions with children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

This was an outstanding demonstration of technique, skill, and ideas from Gary Rance and



we thank him whole-heartedly for making the trip from England to visit us and for his friendship and great entertainment. We hope he will return again some day.

<http://www.garyrance.co.uk/>

## Competition Winners

### A Pot Stand

Cat 1 1st. Robert Hughes



2. David Stewart



3. Francis McHugh

2. Jim Stevens



3. Dermot Doherty



**Cat 2**  
**A delicate piece**

1. David O'Neill



## November Demo

Pat Carroll from the Gorey Chapter will be the demonstrator at the November demo on Saturday 9th November and will start at 2.00pm.

### Competition

Cat 1 is A set of coasters and stand.

Cat 2 is a decorated plate up to 250mm



I recently received this from Matthew Gaved of the Worshipful Company of Turners (WCT). There is to be an important change in the rules of the four main Company competitions which will be held in October 2020.

For 2020, these Competitions will also **be open to turners from the Republic of Ireland**. I got this to pass onto the IWG.

In the meantime, this page: <https://turnersco.com/turning/competitions-2020/> provides some initial information. The four competitions open to turners from the Republic of Ireland will be:

**Master's Open Competition** (plain turning) – requirement to be announced

**Master's Ornamental Turning Competition** - requirement to be announced

**Master's Open Themed Competition** - theme to be announced

**Felix Levy Open Competition** – no requirement – a completely open competition

If any of you are members of the WCT you can enter any of these competitions. Those of us who are not members of the WCT can enter the Felix Levy Open Competition and display your work at Wizardry in Wood in October 2020. I put this in here because I did not know that there was an open competition in the WCT.

If any of you want to know more click on the link and all will be revealed.

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