



Martock and District Woodturners

Christmas Newsletter

December 2025



View From the Chair

Not much to say other than to thank you all for your support over the year. I hope you have a relaxed and peaceful Christmas and I hope to see you in 2026 at the AGM!



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61568477045030>

If anyone is willing to take on the maintenance of this page please let me know.



Website: <https://madturners.co.uk/>



If you would like to join the club's WhatsApp group, please follow this link:
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/lr6ZZSOyuRmLh3Mc3ajwFf>

Diary Dates

There will be no hands-on in January

Jan 27 th 2026	Club night – 7pm, Ash Pavilion – AGM
Sat, Feb 14 th	Hands-on session Starts 10am at Yandles training room
Tues, Feb 24 th	Club night at Ash Pavilion – Paul Sweet
Sat, Mar 14 th	Hands-on session Starts 10am at Yandles training room
Tues, Mar 31 st	Club night at Ash Pavilion – Michael Parsons

November Demonstration – Colwin Way



Given the time of year, Colwin started with some Christmas items, although he did promise a bit of danger towards the end!

You can watch Colwin making some of these projects on [YouTube](#).

Before starting Colwin introduced us to [a new tool specifically designed for turning Christmas trees](#) (this tool was acquired in Belgium and is not available in the UK).



The best timber for this style of Christmas tree is a very straight grained softwood with no knots; in this case Scandinavian redwood, although birch, lime and hazel all work well. The blank is turned to round and then down to slightly convex cone.

The Christmas tree tool is used flat on the tool rest by engaging the “hook” into the wood and pulling sideways to curl back the fibres. The shape of the tool helps form the curl. This process is repeated at about 7mm intervals up the tree to the very top.



The base of the tree can then be shaped and the piece parted off. Colwin now prefers to make the base slightly convex and then flatten it off on a sanding disk.



Colwin used to make this style of tree with a regular skew; the heel of the tool is used to pare back the fibres and the bevel will bend them back and give them a curl.



Although similar in appearance to the previous one, the circular cut-out in the Christmas tree tool gives a much more even and pronounced curl.



Whilst working on the base of these trees Colwin introduced another of his skews – the Russian lathe knife. The size and shape allow it to get into very narrow gaps.

Again it cannot be purchased in this country. This example was specially made by an ex pat who has moved out to Portugal.



The next Christmas tree was a tall one made from a piece of laburnum. The blank was mounted between centres and roughed down. It was then held in a chuck (with tailstock support) and turned down to a cone shape using a roughing gouge. A skew chisel was used to make a series of v-cuts to mark the end of the branches.



The v-cuts were deepened, angling the skew where necessary so that the bevel was perpendicular to the piece to ensure the cut on the tailstock side was square or slightly undercut.



A spindle gouge was used to do the shaping.



Finally the piece was sanded and a coat of wax applied before parting off.



The next piece was a thin walled bell to hang on the Christmas tree. This was made from Scandinavian redwood, which not only has a nice Christmassy smell, but the high resin content allows light to shine through the timber. Colwin started by roughing the blank down between centres and making a tenon to fit the chuck jaws. Once the blank was in the chuck it was shaped on the outside, but left thick at the chuck end to retain strength.



Hollowing was done with a bowl gouge, although you could drill some of the timber out to speed up the process. Cutting was done from the rim to the centre, much like hollowing out a bowl.



By shining a light through the timber it was possible for Colwin to judge how even the thickness was.



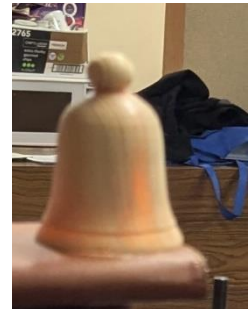
Once the rim section was at the required thickness, more shaping could be done on the outside to remove some of the bulk before finishing off the inside.



A small 4mm hole was drilled through the bottom for a piece of ribbon for hanging.



The top of the bell was shaped using a small spindle gouge, or alternatively a small skew or a beading and parting tool could be used.

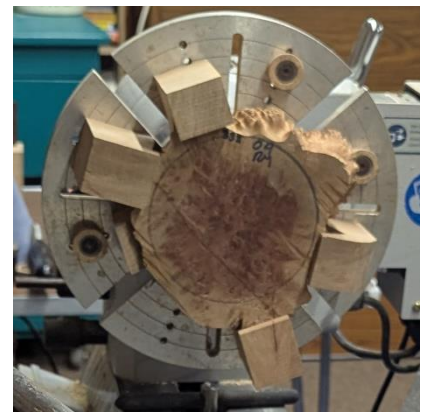


The penultimate project was where the danger came in! This was about how you held a piece of burr to make a bowl. The technique is to make a set of wedges that can be used to hold the burr level, position the burr where you want it and then screw the wedges in place on the backing plate (in this case a set of button jaws, although a set of wooden jaws or a wooden disk could be used). Several hook pieces are then shaped and screwed down to hold the blank in place (round off the corners of the hook pieces to protect fingers and knuckles). If using chuck jaws, these can be tightened to remove any slack.



A pencil line was drawn to show the limit of the bowl area as this may not be obvious when the piece is rotating.

Make sure nothing is in the way before turning on the lathe and stand out of the "firing line"!



Use a slow speed and make light cuts with a small bowl gouge, keeping hands and fingers in front of the tool rest.



When removed from the chuck it could be seen how uneven the back of the burr was...



... so Colwin drilled two holes in the back and turned two small ebony feet to hold the piece level.



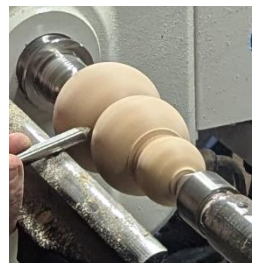
The final project was a snowman, made in several pieces and demonstrating a range of techniques.

Colwin mounted the blank between centres and turned to round using a spindle roughing gouge. He then divided it into three sections and roughed each one down to size with a gouge. A v-cut was then made at the junction of each segment using a skew chisel.

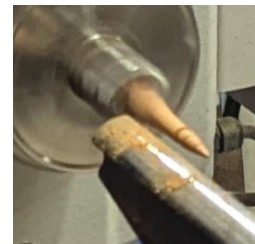


Each section was then shaped using a bowl gouge (or a spindle gouge if you prefer). At this point it could be sanded and a finish applied.

The location of the eyes, nose, mouth and buttons were marked and drilled with the piece still on the lathe – 1mm for the pieces of coal and 3.5mm for the nose.



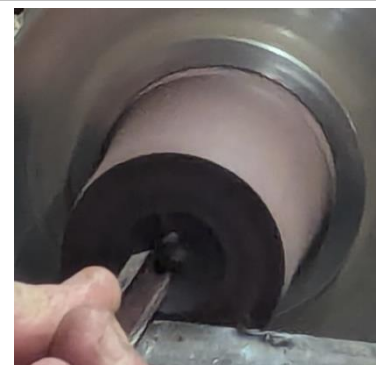
The nose was turned from a piece of she-oak which has a rich orange colour. This was shaped like a carrot with a short spigot to fit the previously drilled hole.



The pieces of coal were turned from a piece of ebony. This was turned down to an even diameter, the end rounded over with a small spindle gouge and then parted off with a thin parting tool. The act of parting off leaves a small tenon on the back just right to fit into a 1mm hole.



The hat was turned from a piece of sonokeling rosewood, which had previously been turned to round and a spigot made for the chuck. The front face was cleaned up and a hollow made to match the top of the snowman.



A parting tool was used to make a small recess and the rest of the hat shaped and sanded. After parting off, Colwin made a jam chuck to fit the recess previously made so the top of the hat could be cleaned up and finished off.



The various pieces can be stuck together with epoxy or PVA wood glue. Colwin would use Chestnut spray acrylic to finish, but you could use sanding sealer and wax if you prefer.



Gallery and Competition Results

Here are the competition results as well as any other items made by club members in recent weeks.



Entry 1 – Dave A (Expert) – Score 7.0



Entry 2 – Andy R (Intermediate) – Score 6.8



Entry 3 – Dave H (Seasoned) – Score 8.8



Entry 4 – Rod P (Expert) – Score 7.7



Entry 5 – Steve A (Intermediate) – Score 5.5



Entry 6 –Phil O (Seasoned) – Score 7.8



Entry 7 – Nick C (Intermediate) – Score 7.5

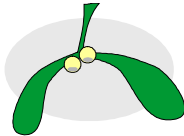
Please send photographs of anything you have made to newsletter@madturners.co.uk, or better still bring them along on a club night to put on the inspiration table for all to admire.

As It's Christmas ...

Some more Christmas crackers jokes to annoy friends and family!

Q. What is a brief description of an acorn?

A. *In a nutshell, it's an oak tree!*

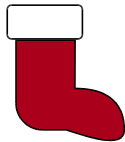


Q. What is everyone's favourite tree?

A. *The aspen (it's poplar)!*

Q. What is every tree's least favourite month?

A. *SepTIMMMBERRR!*



Q. What do you call a man with three planks on his head?

A. *Edward Woodward!*

Q. Which side of the tree has the thickest bark?

A. *The outside!*



Coming up at Yandles

Yandles

**COLWIN WAY
WOODTURNING
DEMONSTRATION**

**YANDLES TOOLSHOP
JANUARY 30TH
4-6PM**



MASTERS OF THE LATHE III

THE WOODTURNING EVENT OF THE YEAR!



18/04/2026

Timber of the Month – Norway Spruce



The Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) is a species of spruce native to Northern, Central and Eastern Europe but widely planted in North America. It is sometimes referred to as European spruce. Norway spruce is a large, fast-growing evergreen coniferous tree growing to a height of 35–55 m (115–180 ft), with a trunk diameter of 1 to 1.5 m (3 – 5 ft). It can grow up to a metre per year for the first 25 years under good conditions, but becomes slower once over 20 m (65 ft) tall. The trees will start to produce seeds at about 40 years old and can live as long as 300 years in their native areas. The Norway spruce is one of the most widely planted spruce trees and is one of the most economically important coniferous species in Europe. It is extensively planted for use as a Christmas tree and is used as an ornamental tree in parks and gardens.

The timber is typically a creamy white, with a hint of yellow and/or red. It has a fine, even texture, and a consistently straight grain. It is easy to work, as long as there are no knots present and glues and finishes well.

The main uses of Norway spruce are as an internal constructional timber, in crates and boxes and in paper production. It is also valued as a source of tonewood in violins and other stringed-instruments and is sometimes known as “violin wood”; a form of Norway spruce grown in the European Alps called Haselfichte (Hazel-spruce) was used by Stradivarius for his instruments.

Norway spruce is the source of spruce beer, which was once used to prevent and even cure scurvy. Shoot tips have been used in traditional Austrian medicine for the treatment of various disorders and infections. In Finland the shoot tips are used as a spice in syrups, herbal teas, alcohol and desserts. In the past resin from the tree was used as a source of turpentine and for waterproofing wooden ships and vessels.

During its production, Mont d'Or cheese it is wrapped for at least two weeks in a bandage made from the cambium of a Norway spruce, which gives the cheese a unique flavour.

A Norwegian company uses the Norway spruce to produce the synthetic substitute for natural vanilla which is claimed to be much more environmentally friendly than Vanillin synthesised from petrochemicals.

Finally...



Once again, a Merry Christmas to everyone and their families ...

... and I hope to see you all at the AGM!



Don't Forget to Use Your Club Discounts

Just present your club membership card (it may be worth checking beforehand whether a discount will apply to your intended purchase).



10% off most items, except power tools.



10% off all timber and finishes

Your Committee

Dave Horner (*Chairman*)

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Andy Rossall (*Treasurer*)

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Ray Fraser (*Communications Secretary*)

secretary@madturners.co.uk

Colin Churchill (*Hands-On Co-ordinator*)

Steve Aldred (*Committee member*)

Graham Winter (*Committee member*)

If you have anything you would like to share through this newsletter, or have any ideas of what you would like to see included, please let me know by emailing me at <mailto:newsletter@madturners.co.uk>.

Thanks, Dave H