



## ***January Demonstration – Andy Coates***

*This article is a summary of the evening and is not intended as a step by step or how-to guide to replicate Andy's projects.*

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Colchester Woodturners Club was visited by our demonstrator for the evening, Andy Coates. As a local(ish) turner, Andy had visited before. It was good that our first demo of 2020 attracted a good crowd.

Andy had not mentioned in advance what he was doing, so everyone looked on in anticipation. Andy had brought a pre-turned green wood bowl with him, explaining that he often changed what his forms/projects in favour are between him rough turning and then getting round to completion. The bowl form had gone out of round in the seasoning process, so Andy showed us how to bring it back to round by mounting on a ring centre and step drive centre.

Once the bowl had been brought back to true, Andy explained that it would be perfectly good to sell once finished but would probably not make more than £10-15. In order to command a higher price, particularly for a speculative sale, the piece needs something extra. Andy explained how he has been working a lot with pewter and adding this to pieces.

In true Blue Peter style, Andy had already made the pewter ring that he intended to inset in the bowl. He described the processes and equipment used to make the mould, melt the pewter and form it. Understandably, health and safety is of high priority, including the source of pewter – old pewter items such as tankards can contain lead so it is wise to steer clear of those! He said that it works well if the ring can be cast at a size that can then be mounted onto a chuck to tidy up.

Andy's preferred tools for turning pewter are negative rake scrapers and he showed us the differences in cut, finish and swarf produced by these compared to other tools such as normal gouges. Once the pewter ring was tidied up, it was then mounted and glued into a recess cut into the bowl and the bowl finished. The bowl had been made from a light-coloured timber and Andy noted that pewter works much better when contrasted with a darker wood (either natural or dyed). When he returned home after the demonstration he applied ebonising fluid and sent us a photo of the completed project.

The second project of the evening was a box finial using a cast pewter cylinder. The body of the box was to be turned using an offcut and what many other turners might discard. Andy showed how to mount and turn the offcut to a cylinder and set out and cut the 2 parts of the box, the box lid and body either being set out according to the rules of thirds or fifths. Of interest in what might have otherwise been an ordinary lidded box project was a timber ring which Andy had saved from turning the outside of another bowl. This ring was mounted on a chuck and cut to size, saving yet another ring to use in a future project. Andy explained how this ring could be used to create a contrasting colour tenon for the box body which would have the added effect of allowing a much thinner parting tool cut to be taken for separating the box body and lid. On a timber with interesting or figured grain, this allows a much better grain match in the lid and body.

The lid of this box was to have a domed top added, using a piece of burr timber made from a core which had been saved from turning the inside of another bowl. Truly an exercise of using every last bit of timber! As Andy says, when using rare, exotic or expensive timber it makes sense both financially and environmentally to use it to its fullest.

Andy then went on to show us how to add the cast pewter cylinder. This had been cast using a mould made from 2 cuttlefish bones which had been abraded together and a suitable hole carved in the centre. The 2 bones were then held together by bolts. Andy explained that he had tried using rubber bands to hold the 2 bones together, but that

excess molten pewter coming out of the mould had a disastrous effect on the bands and the mould then fell apart! Molten metal (even something like pewter which has a best working temperature of 230-250 degrees) is not something a turner wants escaping into their workshop, especially with the dust, shavings and other combustibles lying around!

This was a really interesting evening, with Andy passing on many hints, tips and tricks picked up from his years of turning. I am sure that I have not included all of them! Luckily for anyone wishing to try pewter working techniques, there are articles in recent issues of Woodturning magazine, including all of the necessary H&S guidance.

