

Stuart King RPT - To be decided - January 16th 2008

Reviewed by Jennie Starbuck



We had all been looking forward to an evening of Stuart's rustic blend of turning and reminiscing about times past and skills lost but the majority of members had not had the opportunity to see some of the archive footage that Stuart has managed to collect and we were all very appreciative and highly entertained by the evening presentation.

Stuart interspersed archive footage with his own turning being a counterpoint to the skills we were seeing from the past and from turners from other cultures.

He started with bodgers, working in the forest, using the timber around them and wasting nothing! With real economy of movement, logs were cut, roughly split and shaped, then turned on a simple pole lathe. Shavings provided a heat source for the most vital piece of kit, the kettle, and were sold on in bags to provide locals with kindling for their fires.

He also had film of men who worked from a building near the source of timber rather than just setting up in the woods. The shed had a belt driven table saw – which we saw being used with a cavalier approach to health and safety. In fact, it seemed amazing that no-one in any of the film clips seemed to have lost fingers.

Stuart gave us all some really useful health and safety advice – “Be careful!”

Although it was said ‘tongue in cheek, it was clear that all of the people in the film clips had skills that had been honed over years – I think we ‘hobby’ turners need to remember that we don't have this wealth of experience – so ‘be careful’ is actually the best piece of health and safety advice we can follow!

We watched a delightful clip of Trevor Austin making rake handles in his workshop and Stuart talked us through all of the jigs, guides, pulleys and gadgets as they appeared.



Stuart has collected his own footage and included a bow lathe turner from Marrakech, Morocco who he filmed in 2005. Sitting on the floor, using one hand to operate the bow which turned the simple lathe, one foot to keep the tail stock tight, the other hand to hold the wide (approx 1 ¼ inches) skew chisel (the only tool he used) and the other foot to support and guide the chisel, the turner produced a complex chess piece with captive ring which he then chip carved with the skew!

Stuart then did a demo, making a similar chess piece only using his ½ inch round bar skew chisel (sharpened to about 40 degrees). He showed how the turner used the shape he had already turned to support the cut when the bevel could not rub and got an interesting set of curves on the piece – ‘just like that’!

After the break, Stuart demonstrated making an off centre finial which could be used as a box lid, or to decorate the top of a hollow form. He did everything by eye, and used the properties of the Axminster ‘gripper’ jaws to off centre the work. He did suggest that measuring could ensure that you were in control of the shape more, but the result was very pleasing. The turning looked very challenging as there was much more air than wood to turn!

Stuart’s film clips in the second half took us to Japan (or rather the AWGB seminar) to see the skills of Yasuhiro Satake and to Germany, to see wooden toys and novelties being made. He also had an amazing clip of a turner producing a shaped hoop which, when split into sections, made delightful wooden horses.

Just to finish off the evening (as there were 5 minutes to spare) Stuart delighted us by making a couple of his beautiful Hazel twig flowers.

We have to remember to ‘bore the hole first!’ – but, if we forgot, Stuart had a few of his excellent DVDs about flower making for sale to remind us.

It was a truly memorable and excellent evening.

Our thanks go to Stuart for entertaining and informing us.

