



Dublin Chapter Newsletter

Irish Woodturners Guild

September 2020 (Another Lockdown Edition)



As you are probably aware, due to the outbreak of Covid-19 all meetings of the Dublin Woodturners Chapter have been cancelled until further notice.

Please check both your email and the Chapter website (<http://www.dublinwoodturners.com>) regularly for updates.

There will be no competition held in September.

The monthly competition will resume again in October and will again be held online.

This will be an open competition with all entrants submitting a photograph of their piece for judging. So get out to the workshop and make something.

Points awarded will NOT count towards the annual awards however all items entered WILL be eligible to be entered in the normal monthly competitions when they resume.

Send a photo of your work by email to Mark Daly at mark@eninserv.com by Saturday 3rd of October. Include the category (Advanced, Experienced, Beginners or Artistic). Also include something in the photo to show scale (possibly a ruler or pen).



The virrus Continues

August Online Competition Results

So another month has come and gone. I hope that everyone is finding some level of normality sneaking back into life. This may be the reason for a reduction in entries to this month's competition, or maybe the garden had to take priority for one month. Quality on the other hand hasn't waned at all.

In the beginners category there are just two entries. Both look great, however they are worlds apart in style, material and purpose. I suppose leaving the competitions as 'open', encourages diversity. Mike Sims is proving that no matter what age we are, a good toy will always be

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you can excuse the pun, the stem is acrylic, the body is polymer clay and the base is wood. I think the choice of colour in the clay allows the pattern to take on the effect of a wood grain. Ronnie Butler on the other hand has turned a beautiful lidded box. Choosing what I believe is Robinia, Ronnie has allowed the grain to do the talking. The contrast between the patterns of the body and the off-centered grain rings on the lid is notable. I particularly like how Ronnie has used his one use of ornamental tool work, to highlight the off center nature of the growth rings. For some reason (and feel free to educate me), the rings on Robinia always appear to spread out from approximately 1/3rd of the way across the diameter. My final observation is the use of a recessed lid design rather the debatably more common “cap” style lid. Well done Ronnie, this will be my pick of the pair.



1st: Ronnie Butler



Mike Sims



Ronnie Butler: Other View

Who were the winners in September 2010. Recognise any?
 Answer on page 7.



Advanced



Experienced



Beginners

Experienced Section

The three experienced entries came from Vinny Whelan, John Doran and Brendan Kelly. If this were a committee meeting we would almost have a quorum. John has turned another lamp. This time with a ply base and what I think is Irish oak or is it elm? Vinny has kept with tradition, opting for the candle. As we experience some of the `summer storms, he could be

expecting a power cut. Whichever the reason, at least the table is set for Brendan and his guests. Judging by the number (8) of napkin rings, social distancing can be achieved. Brendan hasn't bogeyed this hole. I'm not sure if the piece was a Commission but it's certainly not Agricultural. This lovely piece of Walnut is a hole in one.



Brendan Kelly



Brendan Kelly: Other view



Vinny Whelan



John Doran

Advanced Section

Seven entries for the advanced section, the first up is Joe O'Neill who has finished his table from last month. In case any of you are wondering, the table is the piece in the center of the photo, it might be hard to find with the mountains of tools, storage and workshop equipment.Hang-on, I know I have it in here somewhere..... Cecil Barron has turned what I am guessing is a shoe-horn. My only hesitation is the photo angle, so if I have this wrong, I will correct it next time round. At first glance, this is a very simple piece, however it is worth paying a little attention to the



Joe O Neill



Joe O Neill: Other view

choices made when designing it. The wood retains its natural look with no high gloss finish. This is in keeping with the finish on the silver. Also, the simple burnished lines do not over decorate the handle. Cecil has also allowed the piece to flow symmetrically from the tip of the scoop to the top of the handle. It is really worth paying attention to what makes our pieces ordinary or very attractive.



Paddy Finn



Cecil Barron

Paddy Finn has turned a very nice captive ring goblet/chalice from Beech. The rings are well finished and don't appear to have any tool marks from spinning around as Paddy was finishing the stem.

More Advanced Entries

Frank Maguire brings us back to the candle-stick. It looks to me that it is cherry, however I will leave it to some of the more experienced among you to correct me.



Frank Maguire

Brendan Phelan is taking us into the woods with a pair of mushrooms, hardly surprising when you consider the close and humid weather we have been experiencing in the last few weeks. Definitely good mushroom conditions. There is a lovely contrast between the uniform smaller example, which has an interesting alignment between the center of the growth rings on the top and stem and the slightly larger yew, with great natural features and colouring.



Brendan Phelan

David Sweeney keeps the 'woods' theme alive with the natural edge bowl. The bark edge seems solid and the growth rings clearly show the development of the tree that became a bowl after many years.

Finally in this section, Michael Fay has turned a fantastic elm burl bowl. The patterns are stunning and the polish finish along with the charred edge remind me of a crystal rock. This piece takes first spot for me.



David Sweeney



1st: Michael Fay

Artistic Section

In the artistic section, Cecil Barron is promoting social distancing while we return to the shops. In a similar way to Jack Kearney's Witches and Colum Murphy's owl, in previous months, I am taken with the way these simple figures can almost develop a personality. Each different wood, shape and of course hat, make them into characters. The base and particularly the fence shouldn't be overlooked either. Brendan Kelly may have sourced his wood from the same place as David Sweeney. Brendan has produced a lovely natural edge bowl, again the bark looks like it is there to stay and the age can be easily interpreted. Ronnie Butler has turned a couple of conical boxes. Simple designs combined with some nice turning make these very attractive.



Cecil Barron



Ronnie Butler



Brendan Kelly

Colum Murphy always seems to have a good eye for picking the right wood blank for the project. This pedestal platter has two nicely contrasting woods (beech and maple?) with an inlaid ring and centerpiece. The grain on the beech compliments the rustic theme of the centerpiece. My pick

in the artistic section this month goes to Brendan Phelan's matching bowls. These have so much to grab our attention, from admiring the visual features to figuring out the turning technique. The two blanks are different cuts, notice the grain direction in each. The inside of the bowls bring out the natural beauty

of the wood, while the outside adds a little colour. Evenly spaced grooves follow the contour of the bowl, providing the bed for the colour. However we would have to figure out how to turn them first.

So that sums up the August competition. I can't believe we are heading into September already. I look forward to receiving entries for the next competition which will be run for October. This gives an extra bit of time for you to get the entries in. As before, I am happy to receive the entries at any time, so if you send them on, I will keep them safe until the end of September. Stay safe and stay turning!



Colum Murphy



Colum Murphy: Other View



1st: Brendan Phelan



Brndan Phelan: Other view

The winners in September 2010 were.



Advanced: Colm Hyland



Experienced: Tony Hartney



Beginners: Willie Reville

Spinning tops can be good to look at, easy to make and fun to play with, particularly with your grandchildren. They can be made from wood that is natural, laminated, painted, burned or carved and with a variety of designs, see the picture of Armin Kolb's work (right). However, have you ever thought of combining different materials with wood to make a simple spinner? Thanks to an article written by Walt Wager, in the AAW American Woodturner magazine of August 2012, I was interested to see if I could make some spinners using polymer clay and wood.



my purposes I needed to make a disk whose shape was going to be refined later on the lathe, so a high degree precision was not important. My roller was a wine bottle, without its contents; a Swiss Army knife served as my cutting tool; and two wood blocks that were of pen-blank proportions were used helped to make the disk round. I also used a smooth non-porous surface to roll out the clay on. A large glazed ceramic tile that was left over from tiling the bathroom served this purpose.

All good projects start with planning, and at this point I decided to choose the wood that

What is Polymer Clay?

It is a type of modelling clay based on the polymer polyvinyl chloride (PVC). It is typically used for making craft items and decorative parts. It is pliable, versatile and easy to work with -it is not messy. Items are baked in the oven to harden them prior to finishing. I used a product called Premo! from Skulpey. Skulpey make a huge range of colours and are readily available in art and hobby shops or on-line.

Making the Clay Disk.

The way that I combined wood with polymer clay was to make the shaft of the spinner from wood and the disk from the clay. See the photo of some finished spinners.

The overall process was to make the clay disk; drill a hole in it; make a wooden shaft; glue the shaft into the disk; turn the spinner on the lathe; then finish it.

Working with polymer clay can be an absorbing and time-consuming activity. Clay has to be needed, rolled out and otherwise shaped, and there are a host of nifty tools and devices that one can buy to help. But for



was complementary to the disks that I was about to make. My thinking was that clays of a black and blue colour would be better with black or very light woods, whereas warmer clay colours like green, yellow and red were better with the darker woods of a brown or red hue. There is more on the choice of wood later. Likewise, when combining clay colours to make a disk, I considered what



colours complement each other before combining them into a disk.

The polymer clay was stiff coming out of its wrapper, so it had to be conditioned. This meant that it had to be rolled, squeezed and manipulated until it is soft enough to be moulded. The clay was shaped into a disk that is $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick by 2 - 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter. Having combined different colours and conditioned them, then I used the roller to flatten the disk and used the two wood blocks to help shape it round. See photo. Remember that precision was not critical, however care should be taken when folding the clay as pockets of air can be introduced. So, fold the clay slowly and deliberately in such a way that all the air is squeezed out between layers. As to the colours and patterns that you might make with this clay; your imagination is the limit. One can make disks of one or more colours where they can be swirling layers, Swiss-rolls or candy-cane patterns within other colours. There are many YouTube videos that can help in this respect.

Baking the Clay.

When the disk was made, I baked it in an oven for 30 mins at 130 Degrees C. The packaging of the clay had the general instructions for baking. Take a look at the photo to see the variety of patterns and shapes that I made.

The next step was to drill the disk, and my choice was to drill a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, or 10 mm hole, choosing the centre point to suit any pattern on



the disk.

Making the Shaft or Stem.

I then selected the wood blank to go with the disk and chose a wood that was straight-grained and free of knots and other defects. Also the wood should be reasonably hard as the point on which it revolves needs to last. And if children are the users, then it needs to be robust. The blank that I used was of pen-blank proportions, that is at least $\frac{5}{8}$ x 5 inches.

I actually used some pen-blanks that were already cut to size. A blank was mounted in a chuck, holding it on its four flat faces. Alternatively, you could turn a small spigot for holding, if you have small enough jaws to grip it. The blank was supported using a live centre in the tailstock. When mounting, I would suggest not putting a centre-punch mark in the

end of the blank for the live centre when chucking, as is my habit. This could put a slight bend on the blank such that when the tailstock is removed later, the piece will rotate off centre. So, tighten the chuck and find a "natural" centre for the live-centre.

It is also worth mentioning spinning top proportions here: none of my spinners had a shaft length of more than 2 inches. So, while I had good tailstock support, I reduce a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch length of the blank down to about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch at the tailstock end. This made the square pen-blank into a cylinder. I turned down a 1 inch section at the tailstock end with a diameter of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, or 10 mm. This was to accommodate the clay disk. Note: that if you have a multi-coloured or patterned disk, then at this point decide which face you want to be uppermost. This is the face

that you will see the most. When a fit was achieved, I glued the disk in place with thick cyanoacrylate (CA) glue.

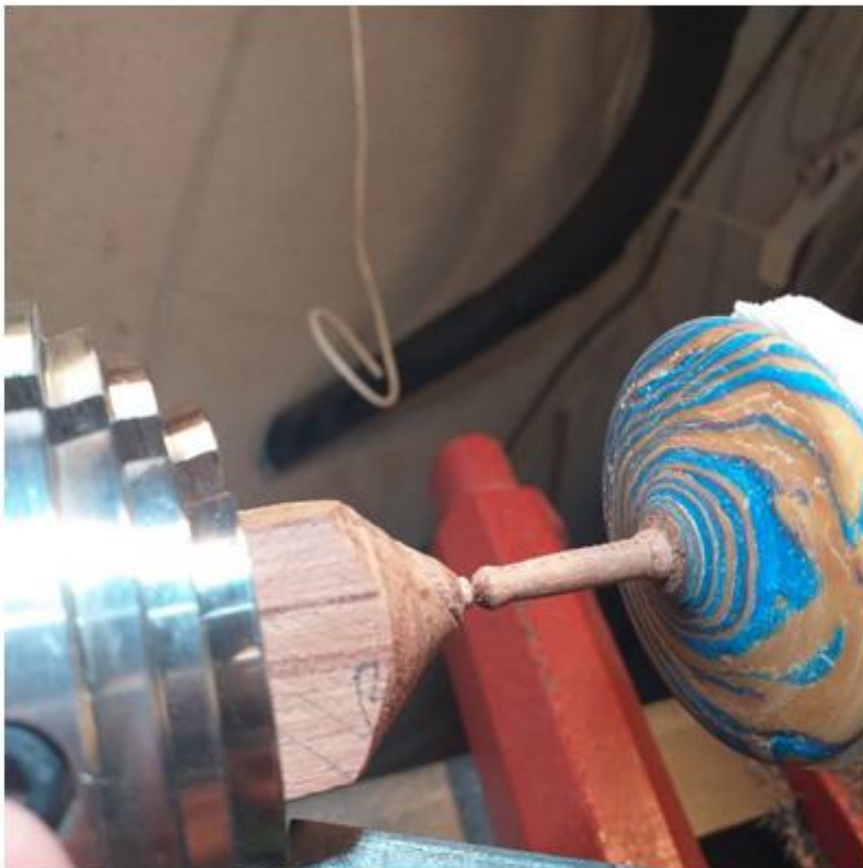
Turning the Spinner.

When the glue was cured, I mounted the blank on the lathe as before, and trued-up the clay disk. My experience turning polymer clay varied by colour and combination of colours. I made about a dozen disks of different patterns and colours and I found that the important factors were to keep the speed low, below 750 rpm, and to take very light cuts. The clay will suffer tear-out or fracture if either of these two points above are not observed, particularly where different layers of clay are joined. Sharp tools are also a must. However, if you find that there are slight imperfections in the clay surfaces, then do not despair. Finishing with varnish or CA-glue does hide these to a degree. Using



a spindle gouge, I turned the detailed shape of the spinner. I made a shallow o-gee on the bottom that blended with the point.

Sanding clay is also worth a mention here. Clay is soft compared to wood, so a light touch is required, if any. I worked up from 320 grit until I saw no improvement. Sanding the wood I used the full range of grits, as-per normal. Where wood met clay, I was careful not to apply too much pressure in the wrong place, and not to sand the wood and clay with the same sandpaper because the clay clogs in the sandpaper and can be transferred to the wood, and vice-versa. Keep the speed low. I used sandpaper cut into small 1/4 inch strips for this. I sanded surfaces as they were turned. I hinted earlier that sanding may not be required. It is not because my turning technique is so good but, it is because one finishing option is CA glue, as-per a pen finish. If this option is used then it is the CA glue that is finished and not the clay or wood so, extensive sanding



is not required. More on finishes later.

Before turning the top of the disk, I replaced the live centre with a cup centre for support, protecting the end with a piece of cloth or kitchen paper. I finished the top surface of the disk to a squat cone shape that blended into the stem, where the stem diameter was typically no more than 3/16 inches. Any bigger and it becomes difficult for very young fingers to spin. The cup centre was removed at this point.

If you chose a CA glue finish, now is the time to apply it and sand, before the stem is parted of at the

end. My other option for finishing was to use varnish, and in this case I parted off the spinner and hand sanded the nub on the top of the stem. Finishing with varnish was done off the lathe.

Finish.

As mentioned, I used CA glue or varnish to finish the tops. They both gave a glossy, hard-wearing covering that works with clay or wood. I avoided lacquer, as this is reputed to make the clay sticky.

As anyone who makes pens will know, finishing with CA glue takes time to apply the coats and then sand with micro-mesh pads. However the resulting finish is

good for this purpose. One word of caution: if the stem has very detailed beads or coves or other ornamental shapes, then they may lose definition when coated with CA glue and are more difficult to sand to a good finish. In this case the stem can be finished separately with wax or your finish of choice.

The varnish that I used was water-based acrylic from Jacquard called Pearl EX that I bought on-line. It is non-toxic and acid-free. It takes several coats that have to be applied with a small brush and left to cure for a few hours between coats. Wooden parts can be hand-sanded between coats, if required. Several light coats are



recommended, rather than fewer heavy coats. Finishing with varnish needs a clean environment as dust will detract from a good finish. The area should also be well ventilated.

The Executive Touch.

If your intended recipients need an executive toy then you might like to add a small platter – to keep the spinner on the executive desk! See photo. Any nice piece of side-grained wood will do, that is about 4 x 3/4 inches. It is made that same way you would a bowl. I glued a piece of waste wood to the

surface that I wanted as the top and chucked using that to make a recess on the bottom. Reversing the piece, I then made a shallow concave shape in the top that was 1/4 inch deep. I made several platters, and varied the shape of the edge and the decoration. I finished them with sanding sealer and wax. If you want to experiment with other finishes that will go with the polymer clay, then experiment on a waste piece. The general advice is not to use lacquer as this makes the baked clay sticky.

That's it. If you want a new medium to try out with wood then I would recommend polymer clay. It is absorbing, fun to work with, and the results are pleasing.

Good luck.

Mike Sims.



Editor's Appeal.

I need a constant supply of interesting articles for the newsletter.

If you come across anything which may be of interest to other woodturners or would like to pen an article yourself please let me know at DWT.Newsletter@gmail.com

Anything considered, articles, craft shows or demonstration you have visited, turning tips, funny stories, jokes, cartoons.

Chapter Contacts.

Chairman: John Doran
087 6393081
DWT.Chair@gmail.com

Secretary: Tommy Hartnett
086-8284178
DWT.Secretary@gmail.com

Treasurer: Vincent Whelan
087 760 4918
DWT.Treasurer@gmail.com

Vice-Chairman: J. McCloughlin
087 2610803

Membership: Mark Daly
087 9484051
DWT.Membership@gmail.com

Competitions: Brigie DeCourcy
087 9258766
DWT.Competitions@gmail.com

Books & Video: Frank Maguire
01 8346854
DWT.Library@gmail.com

Exhibitions: Paul Murtagh
087 1331292

Audio/Visual: Tony Hartney

Wednesday Demos: Brendan Phelan

Newsletter / Web Master: Brendan Kelly
086 3748183
DWT.Newsletter@gmail.com