



# Dublin Chapter Newsletter

Irish Woodturners Guild

May 2022



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



## Inside this issue:

Editorial	P.1
Shape of bowls	P.1
Competition	P.4
Saturdays demo	P.5
Wednesdays demo	P.6
Competition & Demonstrators	P.7



The garden is powering its way back to full growth and longer days are here. There is an inclination to spend more time outside and less in the shed. But turning in a shed has become more comfortable, warmer days and the door can be left open while we turn, so all is not lost. A few craft fairs and events starting to be advertised at last so keep an eye out and let us know if any interesting events are happening

John O'Neill

### The shape of bowls by John O'Neill

On a recent trip to Galway I ventured out to the craft village at Spiddal. There I found 'sliding rock ceramics'. The potter is Rob D'Eath who has been engaging in his craft for over 40 years, moved to the Spiddal craft village on 1984. He produces a range of ceramics, artistic and functional. I was particularly interested in the bowls on display, they appeared to be well shaped and proportioned, the inquisitive woodturner never rests! I have been researching and developing my own ideas on bowl shape and proportion recently and it struck me that the bowls on display in the shop were the result of years of experience and looked 'de biz' so I bought 2 of his bowls which I found particularly pleasing. Took them home and did a bit of analysis to determine what the magic formula might be.

Trying to understand the rules that make an object 'proportional' and of good shape is the function of design. There are many such rules, the romans used one based on the square root of 2, but from what I can determine three main rules appear to apply. I will just briefly describe them.

Rule 1. The golden rule. This rule is taught in most art departments and widely adopted. It is basically the relationship between two sections of a line such that the relationship between the longer part (b) and the shorter part (a) is the same as the ratio of the combined length (a+b) to



part b.

$$\langle \text{---}a\text{---} \rangle \langle \text{-----}b\text{-----} \rangle$$

b is to a as (a+b) is to b as 1.618:1

a is to b as b is to (a+b) as 1.618:1

The ratio is usually expressed as 1:1.618 or approx 5:8.

How does this apply to woodturning, in this case particularly to bowls.

Simply put if the diameter of the bowl is 1.618 then the diameter of the base should be 1, the height should also be 1.

For a lidded box if the height of base is 1.618 then height of lid would be 1, base is 1.618 high.

For bowls as in above pic if top diameter is 200mm then the base diameter is  $200/1.618=123\text{mm}$  (also equals preferable height value)

Rule 2. The rule of thirds.

The ratio here is 2:3 or 1:3. This rule is frequently used in paintings where the canvas is split into nine identical rectangles. Also used in photography where the cameras viewfinder can be configured to split the image into 9 equal parts like a noughts and crosses board. But the woodturners don't deal with a flat canvas but the principle still applies. Richard Raffan maintains that a mass divided in two will look better if the parts are unequal, i.e. 1/3rd and 2/3rds. The 'ideal' proportioning is to divide the object in three parts, to apply this to a bowl as below. If the bowl is 200mm wide then the height should be  $(200/3) \times 2 = 133\text{mm}$ , the base can be 2/3 or 1/3 of top



diameter (in this example base could be 133mm or 66mm), not to far off the golden rule. This theory does not include the type of curve to employ between the top and base of the bowl, thats for another day. Any decoration such as rings should be 2/3rds up the side of the bowl.

Rule 3. The rule of 5ths method.

RayKey like to divide by 5 when proportioning pieces. In the case of a lidded box the height of top should be 2/5ths the height of the box, to make the top longer than the top would make the box appear top heavy.

For bowls the base diameter and height of a bowl would be 2/5ths the diameter of the top, for a 200mm bowl then the value would be 80mm, if we were to use 3/5ths then the base would be 120mm, probably too big. Haven't seen much printed material on this method so if anyone has a bit on it please let me know.



To get back to Rob D'Eath and his pottery pieces and the two bowls purchased in Spiddal Craft Centre and how these ceramic pieces are shaped and proportioned. Note this analysis is based on the two bowls which were purchased at Easter Bowl 1.

He used two colours on this dessert/cereal bowl, approx 1/3 coated in green and 2/3's left with the base ceramic glaze, there's the rule of thirds straight away, also fits into the 2/5ths



area of proportioning.  
 The dimensions of the bowl are  
 top diameter = 140mm  
 base diameter = 60mm  
 height = 70mm  
 the base diameter is approx 2/5ths of the top diameter.  
 He puts a slight bevel on the base which appears to be a gentle catenary curve, this serves to invite the eye to look under the bowl as if it's floating.

If it were a woodturning piece one might be accused of leaving the dreaded tool marks but in this case he deliberately makes rings on both inside and outside to break up the surface with some lines on inside & outside of the piece. On the outside the lines are at approx 2/3 rds the way up the bowl. On the inside they are mostly at the middle third of the bowl with a few extra lines on the interior base. A celtic spiral is used to add decoration to the piece, positioned in top half of the bowl.

The second bowl is slightly larger with more detailed decoration.

The dimensions of this bowl are

Top Diameter = 200mm  
 Base Diameter = 80mm  
 Height = 70mm

In this case the base diameter is 2/5ths the top diameter, similar proportion to the smaller bowl, looks like this is his winning formula.



The height is approx 1/3rd the top diameter.  
 He used stain dripping technique to decorate the outside and inside of the bowl, the majority of the bleed involves the top 1/3rd of the bowl with some coming down halfway. There are also very slight rings on both sides of the bowl which became really apparent when I took a photo of the outside and the rings reflected onto the table as in picture above.

This bowl has a very slight curve accelerating at the base.

Now we see that the ceramic bowl dimensions & proportions are not by chance, he had a proportion in mind and stuck to this when the bowl was thrown. He knows what sells and appears to stick to a preset formula. This fundamental design that can be seen on most pottery exhibits and associated retail outlet One difference between potters and turners is that most



pottery crafts people come through art schools and have a good grasp of design, proportion and shape.

Lessons for woodturners?



April Competition

1st artistic  
Colm Murphy  
The wood was chestnut and beautiful colour pattern with extensive indentations done with a burr tool



2nd Artistic by  
Brendan Phelan  
Vase of dark laburnum with cream patches of sap wood

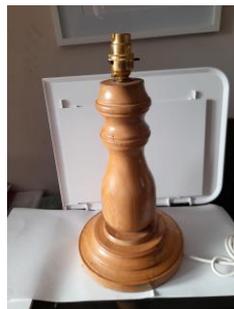
3rd Artistic  
Cecil Barron  
3 tealight holder



4th Artistic  
John O'Neill  
Vase in ash.



1st Experienced  
Vincent Whelan



1st Advance  
David Sweeney



2nd Advanced  
Cecil Barron



1st Beginners  
Frank Trappe



2nd Beginners  
John O'Neill



3rd Beginners  
Ray Ivers



## Saturdays demo

Demonstrator: Francis Corr  
Article by Pacelli O'Rourke  
pics by John O'Neill  
Item: Garden Dibber plus  
various aspects of spindle  
turning



### Garden Dibber

Francis is using a blank of sapele, a very hard wood, about 37mm square by 250mm long. The centres are marked at each end. A hole is tapped at each centre point with a simple, tried and tested method, namely a hammer and nail (wielded gently!). Holding the blank involves a Steb centre at the headstock and a live centre at the tailstock. Francis positions the toolrest just below the half way point of the lathe axis. The speed is around 2000RPM (!)

### Cylinderising and profiling

This is achieved quite speedily with the roughing out gouge. The skew is deployed to give the planed effect which is the essence of that tool. If you master the skew you can save yourself a lot of sandpaper. In fact, all other things being equal, Francis sets himself the challenge not to have to use sandpaper at all! Like last month's demo, beginners are in mind, so the caution 'Always cut downhill' is mentioned as is general health and safety, especially regarding lungs and wood dust. While the profiles of handle and shaft were being formed, our demonstrator threw out an intriguing question:

When creating the profile of the piece, are you focused on form or finish? (maybe form to begin with, while finish, coming at the end of the process, is determined by functionality?)

So, with the overall length of the item about 250mm, the handle/shaft point is duly marked. A nice sense of balance is achieved with a gentle concave profile in the handle, contrasting with a slight convex- taper outline in the shaft. Now all we have to do is pray for clement weather so we get the opportunity to use this very handy gardening implement.

### Stair Spindle

Francis had recently turned some stair spindles for a friend. This involved him in what we might call restoration-turning. Unlike with most turning, the turner needs to forego the quest for perfection and create a sense of the wear and tear of the years. He had brought an original stair spindle as his model. He of course had to work within the length of the lathe bed. The centres were marked, pierced and put up on the lathe. The piece is cylinderised. The cut points for beads, coves etc along the length, taking exact dimensions from the original. The callipers and bedan or parting tool enables the diameter of these features to be created accurately onto the new spindle. Since this is essentially copy-turning, Francis lamented not

being able to suspend the original, parallel and close to the piece he was working on. However, like the accomplished turner he is, he pressed on. The skew is brought to the grinder at the

outset.

Although he was never going to have enough time to complete the work, it was well worthwhile that he included it.

### Split Turning

First of all, Francis explained the principle involved here. A piece of wood is sawn lengthwise in two halves, making sure that both cut surfaces are perfectly flat. Both these surfaces are then laced with suitable glue, eg. wood- or PVA, and a length of paper pressed down onto one of these surfaces.



The second surface is laid accurately over the first. The whole affair is then clamped and left until the glue is fully cured. Francis showed us an 'L' jig which enables him to get the best hold while the glue is curing. The piece now has to be cylinderised and profiled as desired. He recommends the use of plastic tape at the tailstock end as a precaution against splitting open. A ring centre is used at the headstock for the same reason. When all turning is complete, the paper joint can be prised apart with any suitable, slim blade.

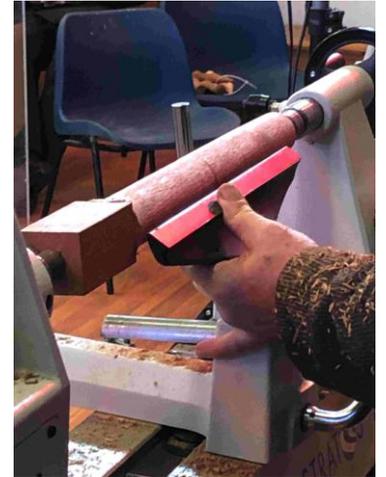
### Laminate Turning

The clock was against Francis at this point, though he had prepared to show us the ins and outs of laminate turning, such as might be used for a gazebo finial. The already turned example which he had brought with him was octagonal. This had been sawn, with the blade at an angle of 45 degrees, four times, creating eight faces for clamping. Not surprisingly the choice of wood was oak ; an intelligent choice for a piece which would be braving the elements!

Truly, everyone found Francis' demo both entertaining and educative. And of course, once again, it is wonderful to be physically present at the monthly meeting. You cannot beat the taste of normality!

Thank you Francis

Pacelli O'Rourke



### Wednesdays demo

Wednesdays demo was given by John Doran. His warm up was mounting a piece of yew and turning a tree. The steady stream of shavings indicated that a master was at work. A varied range of tools including skew, spindle gouge and parting tool were used. For his main event he introduced the audience to his method of converting broken hurls to turned pens. The blanks were mounted in the mandrel and turned at

high speed (>3000rpm) as most of the time the tool was turning air due to the hurl handle shape. The blanks were quickly turned to round and shaped with a skew. John uses the same shape on all his pens, a slight widening at base of pen to facilitate holding. The finish used was superglue and was applied at very

low speed by pouring onto the piece and allowed to set. Heated was generated during this drying process and the lathe bed under the piece was covered in tissue for protection. Next time you're watching a game in Croker watch for the bearded Stewart picking up hurl bits!



## 2022 Competition Table, Demonstrators

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Totals
<b>Beginners</b>													
John O'Neill	15	15			13								43
Ronnie Butler			15										15
Ray Ivers				15	11								26
Frank Trappe					15								15
<b>Experienced</b>													
Brendan Kelly	15	13	15										43
Vincent Whelan		15	13	13	15								56
Kevin Milton				15									15
<b>Advanced</b>													
Brendan Phelan	15	15	15										45
Tony Hartney	13	13	7	9									42
Paddy Finn	11	6	9										26
Tommy Hartnett	9	11	11										31
Willie Edwards	7	5											12
David Sweeney		9	13	15	15								52
Cecil Barron		7			13								20
Frank Maguire		5		11									16
John Duff		5											5
Joe O'Neill				13	11								24
<b>Artistic</b>													
Colum Murphy	15	13	15		15								58
Brendan Phelan	13	15	13	15	13								69
Cecil Barron	11				11								22
Seamus O'Reilly	9												9
Tommy Hartnett	7	11	9										27
Frank Maguire	6												6
Rich Varney			11										11
John O'Neill					9								9

### 2022 Demonstrators

Month	Saturday	Wednesday
April	Francis Corr	Paul Murtagh
May	Willie Edwards	John Doran
June	David Sweeney	Willie Reville
July	John Earls	Tony Hartney
August	Irene Christie	Tommy Hartnett
September	Rich Varney	Noel White
October	Colm Murphy	Brendan Phelan
November	Jack Kearney	Jonathan Wigham
December	Joe O'Neill	Cecil Barron

Interesting items from the web.....

Irish Craft Heroes - 50 Makers x 50 Years GMIT, Galway 5 March – 16 May 2022

Kilkenny design centre

What Colour is Metal? at NDCG 6 April 2022 – 27 July 2022

Upcoming Dates:

Sunday May 1st: Farmleigh Food & Craft Fair, Farmleigh House, Phoenix Park, Dublin.

Monday May 2nd: Farmleigh Food & Craft Fair, Farmleigh House, Phoenix Park, Dublin..

Saturday July 2nd & Sunday 3rd: Flavours of Fingal, Newbridge House, Portrane, Co. Dublin



### I still need articles for the newsletter.

Not looking for novels but if you have learned or figured out something or skill that may be useful to others, share it with us!

Go on Google and research a topic of interest to wood turners, then write about it.

Woodturners are always interested in how the other guy turns his pieces so if you have something that you think may be unique or novel jot down a few notes, take a few pictures and send them on.

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