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## August Demo – Sharpening

The theme of the demo was to observe three well-known turners in the Chapter who had brought along their sharpening devices to demonstrate the subject, in terms of tips, techniques, and experiences. The volunteers were John Doran, Michael Fay, and Pat Walsh.

**John Doran.**

Health and safety was first on John's list. A wood particle in the eye is generally an irritation, but a hot metal spark can be more serious. So, protect your eyes at all times and also protect against grinding dust with some form of dust mask.

John has several sharpening machines, but he talked firstly about a Record-Power bench grinder that had a white wheel (100 grit) and a grey wheel (80 grit), and he uses a Sorby sharpening jig for spindle and bowl

## Upcoming Events:

- Saturday Demo 7th Sept: Charlie Ryan
- Wednesday Demo 11th Sept: TBA

gouges. He sharpens flatter chisels on a disc grinder – see photo. He explained that the disc is good for skews and other chisels that have a flat bevel and can be easily ground free-hand. This does not give a hollow grind but, for example, the skew does not need one. The disc can also be used for roughing gouges and bedans. For the round nosed scraper, John went back to the bench grinder and moved the tool up and down on its edge, rather than sideways on the flat.





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John also uses a belt-sander system where the belt is on the horizontal – see photo. This is good for parting tools and carpenters chisels. He cautioned that the belt should always move away from you to avoid any dig-ins.

He was asked what angles he used. His approach to this was that, having previously established a comfortable angle for a given tool, he strived to replicate that by offering it up (by hand or in a jig) to a stationary grinding wheel, adjusting the approach or respective jig, and then proceed to grind with the wheel turning.

John also stressed that, whatever hardware you use, keep it clean and fit for purpose. Wheels should be dressed periodically (if applicable as not all wheel types need this), and do not let dust accumulate on surfaces around sharpening devices, as hot metal sparks and dust can cause fires.

His final advice – always offer a person a sharp chisel handle first, otherwise you might spoil their nice jumper!



### Michael Fay.

Michael started by talking about his bench grinder. Originally a Newman wet-grinding system that he bought at a market, he adapted it over the years by removing the water trough, fitting a replacement 8 inch CBN wheel and adding various jigs – see photo. There is a further note on CBN wheels later. The Newman is a low speed motor that stops in two seconds, which is perfect if you tend to re-sharpen often.

Michael's main sharpening jigs are based upon the One-Way Wolverine



Who were the winners in September 2009? Recognise any of them?

Answers on page 9.



Advanced



Experienced



Beginners

system. He likes this system because it has a good clamping system fixed to the table or workbench that allows you to control the distance from the front of the wheel. He sharpens spindle and bowl gouges with the standard Wolverine accessory. The system includes a platform attachment which is adjustable for sharpening different flatter tools, however Michael has made his own platform jigs, each with its own prescribed angle for various scrapers and roughing gouges. For skewers and parting gouges he has made a fixed jig that overhangs the top of the wheel.

As far as grinding angles are concerned, Michael's view is that while they are not unimportant, what is more important to him is repeatability. All his jigs are chosen or designed in order to quickly re-sharpen a given tool with the same shape every time. An additional tip on this topic is to use a black marker pen to mark the cutting face of a tool before sharpening. That way, you can check that material has been removed from all of the cutting face. Another tip is to always have good lighting on the sharpening area.

Michael advised to only sharpen HSS on a CBN wheel, and with that he introduced another bench grinder (a Creusen, I think) that had two grey wheels. Taking three minutes to come to rest, it prompted Michael to talk about wheel balancing. Even if you dress grey wheels, they can still become unbalanced, and he showed us a simple jig to check for this – see photo. When the wheel is in the jig, mark a point on its circumference, let it rotate freely. If it comes to rest with the mark in different positions it is balanced. If it always comes to rest in the same position, then it is unbalanced and the heavier position will be at the bottom. Counter-balance weights somewhere on the wheel or the securing mechanism can be adjusted to compensate for this.



#### Pat Walsh.

Pat uses a low speed (1700 rpm) Creusengrinder with CBN and ruby wheels. The CBN is "standard" grit and the ruby is 80 grit. He uses the ruby for major re-shaping jobs while the CBN is used for sharpening tools that already have the required shape.

Struggling with the low height that his grinder had been installed at (it was clamped onto a Work-Mate), Pat advised that the grinder wheel centre should be around elbow height for comfort.

Pat also uses the On-Way Wolverine sharpening system, but unlike Michael he uses all the standard attachments that the system comes with. When it comes to the platform attachment he chooses to adjust the angle for different tools, as required. Parting tools, he sharpens free-hand. Bowl and spindle gouges are sharpened using the standard jig accessory.

CBN. Cubic Boron Nitride wheels are becoming more popular amongst turners as a long lasting investment when it comes to sharpening. They have a high abrasion resistance and thermal conductivity that maintains a sharp cutting surface. They almost last forever, do not require dressing and thus do not get smaller in diameter. They are expensive upfront, but their long life generally outweighs the expense. Plan to spend around €100. CBN wheels can only be used to sharpen high-speed-steel, so never sharpen tool-steel items as they will clog the wheel irreparably.

In summary, here are the points of collective wisdom from this sharpening demo: -

- Understand the capabilities and characteristics of whatever wheels you have.
- Use a jig of some sort if you require repeatability
- Health and Safety around the grinder is as important as around your lathe.
- Have sufficient light and maintain your sharpening system regularly.
- Find the grind angles and shape that you are comfortable with for your style of turning.

An interesting demo that was not “as advertised” due to illness, so thanks to the three guys that helped out on the day. A good morning that was entertaining and informative.

Description by Mike Sims. Photos by Mike Sims and Sean Earls.

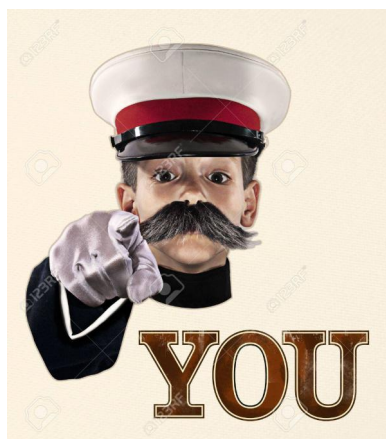


## Editor's Appeal

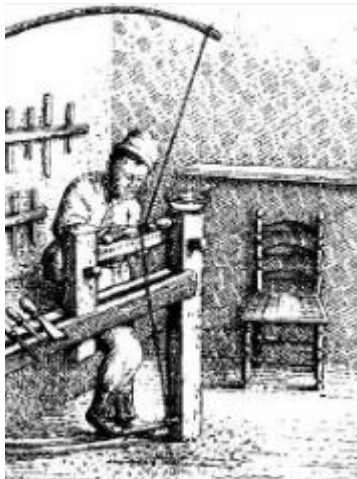
If you come across any articles of interest on the net please forward them to me for inclusion.

I would like to expand the Links page of the website to include links to interesting Youtube videos. If you come across an interesting video email me the link and I'll include it.

You can contact the editor (Brendan Kelly) on 086 3748183 or by email at [dublinwt.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:dublinwt.newsletter@gmail.com)







Pole Lathe from 1650

## WOODTURNING IN IRELAND A BRIEF HISTORY

By Anne O'Dowd, National Museum of Ireland 1996.

The craft of turning wood was most probably developed in ancient Egypt where the high craftsmanship displayed in the decorative turning on the legs of chairs and stools was unsurpassed until about the seventeenth century. Wood turning was practised in Ireland in prehistoric times and many examples of wood turned bowls, cups and dishes of indeterminate date are included in the collections of the National Museum of Ireland.

Probably the oldest wood turned item in these collections is a wooden cauldron which was found in a bog in the townland of Altertate Glebe, near Clones, County Monaghan in 1933. It has been tentatively dated to the first half of the fourth century BC. When found, the cauldron was considerably damaged, but fortunately it was reconstructed to its original shape and is some 28cm in height and 45cm wide. The cauldron was turned from a single block of popular while the only remaining handle was fashioned from a piece of yew wood.

In the past, wooden vessels were far more widely used in the home and on the farm. Like the other important tradesmen in the community such as the wheelwright and the blacksmith, the woodturner made many essential products. He made objects of table and dairy ware such as bowls and dishes, piggins and noggins, butterprints, spoons and ladles. Essential products which he made for use outside the home included pulley blocks, wheel hubs, hay rakes, shovels for flour and corn, handles for spades, shovels and tradesmens' tools. He was, like the other tradesmen, entirely concerned with manufacturing a product which was totally utilitarian and practical. Some of the more skilled woodturners were competent to carry out the work done by the cooper and produced butter churns, tubs and barrels. The skill of the worker and the natural grain of the wood combined to produce items which often displayed great beauty of form. When cheap china, tin and plastic began to make their appearance, and when the practice of making butter at home become less widespread, the woodturner gradually began to lose both his customers and his standing. Woodturners using the primitive pole lathe were still at work in some parts of Ireland during the 1930's. The lives and work of two of these are recorded and both ceased working before the second world war.

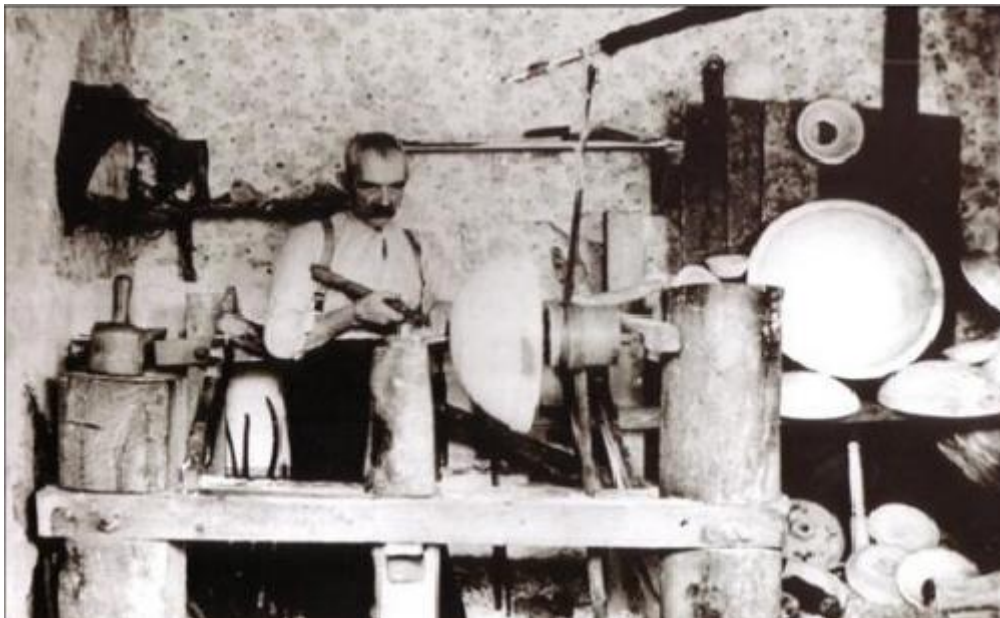


Thomas Loftus, son of James Loftus, Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary seen using his father's pole lathe.

James Loftus from Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary, worked at this craft for more than sixty years and died in 1935 at the age of eighty two. He made his own pole lathe when he set up his workshop and he specialised in making all types of dairy utensils-small churns, dishes, strainers, skimmers, cups, jogglers and butterprints. He also turned stool and chair seats, rails, table legs, wheel hubs and egg cups. The tools which he used were made in the nearby forge and tempered and ground by Mr Loftus himself.

His wares found ready markets all over the midlands and the south and west of Ireland and he sold his products at fairs throughout Tipperary. He sent consignments of wooden vessels to large wholesale firms in Dublin, Cork and Limerick and it was not unusual for him to send a selection of sixty or seventy dozen articles to any one of these firms at a time. In the heyday of his trade from 1914-1918, he received more orders than he could supply. At this time there was a scarcity of tin and enamel vessels which could not be imported during the war years. As with other woodturners, sycamore was the wood which he preferred to turn although he sometimes also used horse chestnut which gave a fresh and clean finish.

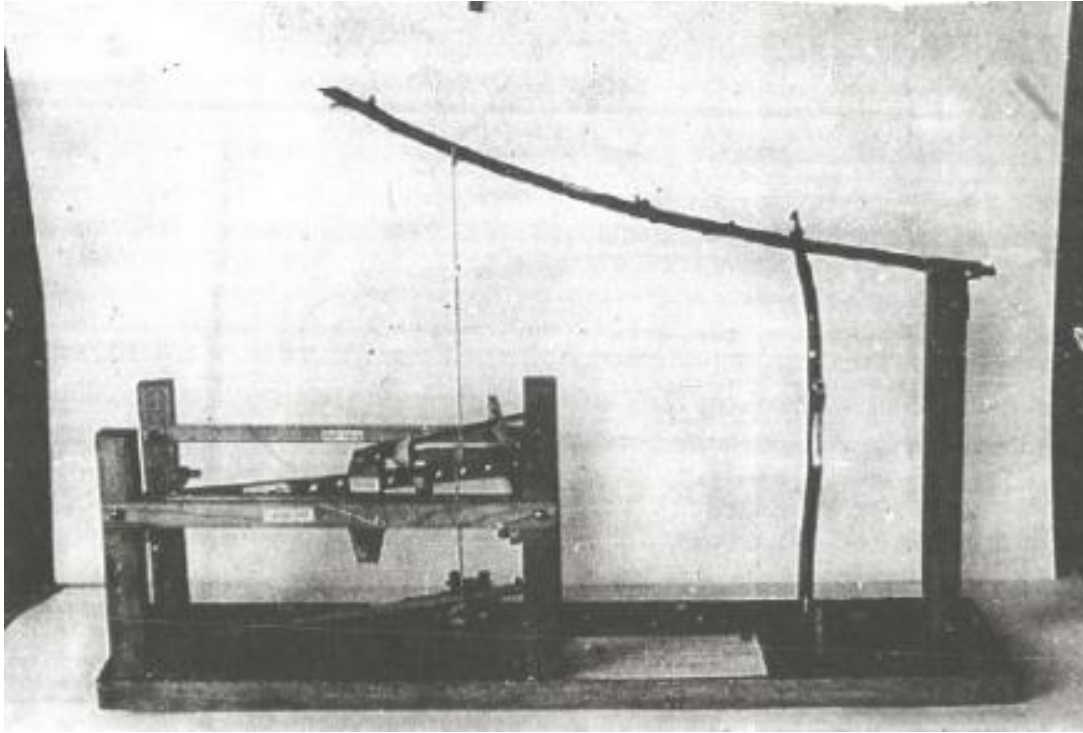
Joseph Hughes was possibly the last woodturner to use a pole lathe in Ulster. He was born in Armagh city at the end of the nineteenth century and he was still using a pole lathe in 1936 when he exhibited his skills at the Royal Dublin Show.



Joseph Hughes at his lathe.

In the same year, with the help of his twin brother Frank, Hughes wrote down in great detail the working of the pole lathe, the tools used and the items made on it. While Joseph Hughes specialised in the production of butter dishes ranging in size from 60c, to 32 cm in diameter, he also made a range of other household items including pastry rollers, beetles and poinders, flour pots, noggins, plates and egg cups.

Old style woodturners such as James Loftus and Joseph Hughes exhibited great economies in the manufacture of their tools. They were often made from old worn out files which were shaped and tempered to the workers' needs. The pole lathe workers also used their supply of wood very efficiently, especially when making dishes and bowls. When the favoured sycamore tree was chopped down with a felling axe, it was cut into lengths according to the diameter of the bowl to be turned. If, for example, the diameter of the bowl was to be 45cm, then the length of the tree cut would be 45cm, and so on. The cut lengths were then split in two, the heart was removed and the outside shape of the bowl was roughly formed with an adze or a chipping axe. This rough shape or rough-out was then put on the lathe and the turning began. The back



Model of Borrisokane lathe at the Museum of Country Life Turlough Co. Mayo.

or outside of the bowl was turned first with the cutting irons. The block was then removed from the lathe, reversed, and work began on the inside or “face” of the bowl. Gradually and with great skill, using a variety of tools called by such names as “enterers” and “bottom irons”, the inside of the bowl was shaped, leaving a core of wood the shape of the bowl, but smaller in diameter, attached to the inside. The rough bowl shape was taken from the lathe and the solid core was removed from the bowl by driving a wooden curved wedge between it and the bowl with a wooden mallet. The core came neatly away and was returned to the lathe where the same process of turning was repeated. From one block of wood four or five bowls of decreasing sizes could be made and very little wastage was produced.

The simplest form of woodturning lathe is known as the bow lathe and it was widely used in Oriental countries. In its operation the wood is held between two pointed centres and is revolved by means of a cord which is looped around the wood and attached to a bow. The bow lathe can be worked by hand or by foot and generally requires two workers. The pole lathe, which was widely adopted by vernacular furniture makers in particular in many parts of the world, is one of the most primitive lathes known in Europe. It is an extension of the bow lathe principle, the essential difference being that the wood is spun by a cord, the lower end of which is attached to a foot treadle and the upper end to a long flexible pole of ash. By applying pressure to the treadle under the worker’s foot, the wood to be turned is moved in one direction. Because of this the woodturning tool cuts only intermittently, that is, while the wood is being turned towards the worker. In the return stroke the tool is idle, allowing the worker an opportunity to clear away the woodshavings. The cutting procedure of the pole lathe is similar to that of the bow lathe unlike the modern woodturning lathe which causes continuous rotary motion in one direction. The pole lathe has once clear advantage over the modern lathe in allowing the worker to adjust the wood so that only a portion of the surface is cut. A projection may therefore be left where desired and this can subsequently be carved to form a handle. A further advantage of the pole lathe is the ease with which it might be set up in an area where the worker found a supply of suitable wood. Essentially the pole lathe consists of a wooden bench with an adjustable head stock and the pole was easily provided by using the branch of a living tree.

Anne O’Dowd, National Museum of Ireland 1996

(My thanks to Peter Mulvaney for supplying this article.)



## August Competition Winners.



Advanced: Tony Hartney



Experienced: Brendan Phelan



Beginners: Brendan Kelly



Artistic: Colum Murphy

Runners up were:

Beginners:  
2nd Michael Johnston

Experienced:  
2nd Tommy Hartnett  
3rd Kevin Milton  
4th Pat Costigan

Advanced:  
2nd Cecil Barron  
3rd Paul Murtagh  
4th Sean Earls  
5th Colum Murphy

Artistic  
2nd Brendan Phelan  
3rd Paul Murtagh  
4th Tony Hartnett





Wednesday 7th August with John Doran

Due to the scout hall being in use on the day the Wednesday demo for August was moved to John Doran's workshop in Blessington. John treated us to two demonstrations on the day, a watch fob in Yew and a pen in Ash.

John started by mounting a piece of Yew log between centres and turned a long spigot in one end. He then mounted the piece in a long jawed chuck. Facing-off the end of the piece John used a callipers to measure the size of the clock recess and transfer the measurement to the face. He then cut the recess, using a spindle gouge and parting tool, to the correct size to accommodate the clock insert.

Moving on John went on to shape the rear of the fob giving it an attractive rounded shape. After parting off the piece John reversed it using a small chuck, holding it by the clock insert recess.

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Competition winners in September 2009.



*Advanced:*  
*Pat Walsh*



*Experienced:*  
*Frank Gallagher*



*Beginners:*  
*John Doran*



After finishing off the back of the piece he used a skew to cut some decorative rings and then sanded down to 320 grit.

John passed around the complete piece mentioning that it could be used as a small desk clock (by sanding a flat on one side), a pocket fob as is, or a pocket watch complete with a gold chain.

As it was a hot day John's wife arranged for 15 ice cream wafers to be brought out to the workshop, which we all very much welcomed.



Moving on John gave a demonstration of pen making using Ash from old Hurley sticks which were broken during last week's match in Croke Park. Being a lifelong GAA member John is in the way of getting some broken hurls, often signed by the stars.

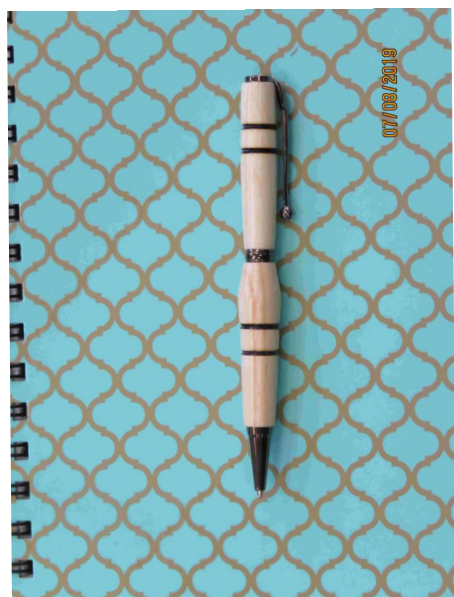
Mounting two pieces in the pen jig John turned them down to cylinders of approximately the right size. Using a skew he shear planed the pieces to the desired shape. Again with the skew he cut two decorative grooves in each piece. After sanding down to 320 grit he used a thin piece of waste wood to burn-in the grooves.

After several finishing coats of super glue John assembled the complete pen in a pen press.

It was a fabulous day out for all in the Wicklow hills with two superb demonstration.



Many thanks to John.





## Current Competition Positions

Name	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Total
<b>Beginners</b>													
Brendan Kelly	15	15	15	13	15	15	15	15	15				133
Brigie DeCourcy				15	13	13							41
Vincent Whelan		13	13				13						39
MIcheal Johnston									13				13
John O'Neil					11								11
<b>Experienced</b>													
Brendan Phelan	13	15	15	15	13	13	15	15	15				129
Tommy Hartnett	15	11	11	13	15	15	13		13				106
Kevin Milton			13						11				24
Pat Costigan		13							9				22
<b>Advanced</b>													
Colum Murphy	13	15	13	15	9	13	15	15	7				115
Tony Hartney	15	5	15	13	11	9	13	13	15				109
Paul Murtagh				11	7	6	9	11	11				55
Frank Maguire	7	13	6	9	6				6				47
Paddy Finn	9	7	7	7		5	6						41
Cecil Barron		11	11						13				35
Sean Ryan	11				5	11	7						34
John Duff		9	9				11						29
Johnathon Wighan				6	15								21
Pat Walsh						15							15
James Gallagher					13								13
Sean Earls									9				9
Joe O'Neill						7							7
Rich Varney		6											6
<b>Artistic</b>													
Brendan Phelan	13	15	15	13	15	11	15	15	13				125
Colum Murphy	15	13	13	15	11	15	13	11	15				121
Paul Murtagh	11		11		13	5	11	9	11				71
Cecil Barron		11	9	11	9								40
Tony Hartney						5			9				14
Seamus O'Reilly						13							13
Michael Fay								13					13
Tommy Hartnett						5		7					12
Vincent Whelan				9									9
Joe O'Neill						9							9
Pat Walsh						7							7
Frank Maguire						6							6
Seab Earls								6					6
Kevin Milton						5							5

### Competitions Pieces 2019

Jan	Wizards magic wand
Feb	Box with lid
Mar	Salad bowl (with servers advanced & experienced)
Apr	Jewellery Item
May	Open
Jun	Goblet with captive rings
Jul	Natural edge bowl
Aug	Chalice
Sep	Platter
Oct	Three legged stool
Nov	AGM
Dec	Christmas Item

### Demonstrators 2019

	Saturday	Wednesday
Jan	Irene Christie	Tony Hartney
Feb	Michael Fay	Colum Murphy
Mar	Rich Varney	Sean Earls
Apr	Willie Edwards	Colum Murphy
May	Pat Carroll	Colum Murphy
Jun	Kieran Reynolds	Peter Mulvaney
Jul	Pat Walsh	Paul Murtagh
Aug	Sharpening Tools	
Sep	Charlie Ryan	
Oct	Roger Bennett	
Nov		
Dec	Danny McGeever	

### Trade Stands - Saturday 2019.

Jan	The Carpentry Store
Feb	The Shed
Mar	The Hut
Apr	Bring & Buy
May	The Carpentry Store
Jun	The Shed
Jul	The Hut
Aug	Carpentry Store
Sep	The Shed
Oct	The Hut
Nov	Bring & Buy
Dec	Carpentry Store

## Notes