

January 2023 - George Foweraker

A cold foggy January night limited the attendance a bit but nevertheless George kicked off the new year with an interesting demonstration of off-centre turning.

For me the most interesting part was the method of holding the blanks without any expensive specialist attachments. Using a standard chuck with 2 of the gripper jaws removed to create a slot, the blanks of 3"x3" ash and oak were fashioned on one end to create a straight tenon which slotted into the jaws. Thus the blank could be moved horizontally within the chuck to create whatever off-centre turning was required.



All the blanks were scorched before turning, ash and oak being ideal for this. The scorching opens up the soft grain not the hard grain and then a wire brush can be used to open up the grain. If possible always do scorching outside and never near shavings or extractors.

Firstly George made a pencil pot. Using two different sizes of forstner bits to enable the pencils to splay out rather than stand up straight. The shaping was done with a 10mm spindle gouge - never ever use a spindle roughing gouge when of-centre turning. When sanding hold the wrist with the other hand to ensure maximum control and avoid accidents. Also, always sand from underneath the piece when spindle turning.

Following the pencil pot was a bud vase using the same principle with some more ornate turning of the top. The off-centre hole was drilled out with a wood drill - when doing so hold the chuck - slow the lathe down and drill a bit at a time.

The next bud vase had a bit of a design on one side by mounting the blank centrally against the chuck and held in place by the tailstock. Now circles were cut using the same 10mm spindle gouge but to prevent grain damage the cut was made from both sides rather than holding the spindle gouge horizontally in one cut. This time the hole for the bud vase was made by pushing in the spindle gouge with the flute at 2 o'clock.

A tea light holder was next noting that it is against the law not to use a glass or metal insert. When using forstner bits it is often a sensible precaution to open the initial hole with a smaller bit and then open out to the required size and depth using a larger bit.

Finally, a similar bud vase was attempted but the blank had a crack in it which significantly altered the expected shape but proved the point that it is only a piece of wood and the unplanned event required a rethink and a bit of experimentation. Always worth giving it a go, you never know what new and pleasing shape may evolve!



Thanks to George for a useful demonstration particularly for introducing me to the novel and effective method of holding the blank to do off centre tuning.

David Langan