The Journal of the Nova Woodturners' Guild

Volume 30 Issue 6
February 2026

The Turning Point

In this issue:

The next meeting of the Nova Woodturners' Guild
will be held at Lee Valley Tools, 150 Susie Lake Crescent, Halifax
Sunday, February 1, 2026 at 2:00 PM

At the February meeting:
Turning a piece of wood back into a tree(!)
Show and tell

The President's Report

I hope everyone is well rested after the last two Mondays, the second was a whole lot easier to deal with than the first!

Last months demo by Richard Ford was quite informative on turning acrylics; I personally found his use of a platform to support his hands when buffing was something that I certainly could use.

We have some interesting demos planned for the next few meetings: we'll have more information at the meeting.

The auction of wood working equipment should soon take place. Another new development is the switching of our website to a Canadian operation.

See you Sunday.

Bob Earle – President

Notes from the January Meeting

A pre-meeting, *hands-on* workshop was held by **Dave McLachlan** on using his single handed "mini-gouges". These are particularly useful for fine spindle work, such as finials, and a couple of members gave them a try turning small spindles with fine details, after Dave had demonstrated the technique he uses for placement of the hands to support the work piece and control the gouge. All agreed that once the technique was familiar, these small tools made fine detail work less intimidating.

One important discussion point was relating to grinding and reshaping tools. During grinding the tool steel will heat up and if cooled quickly can lose its temper. Never dip tools in water to cool them during grinding as this will cause micro-fractures in the steel, causing it to chip more easily. It is important to cool the steel slowly, so it is best to proceed slowly achieving the desired shape in several grinding sessions, setting the tool aside to cool slowly between sessions. Another technique is to lay the heated tool steel on the cast table of a stationary tool like a tablesaw so that the cast table acts as a heat sink gradually cooling the tool.

. . . . . .

The meeting was called to order by President **Bob Earle** at 2:02 PM with 9 members and 5 members online.

Announcements:

- Going forward we will be holding our meetings in a hybrid format (both in-person and online) for anyone who can't make the meeting in person. There were some issues with this in the past but most problems seem to be worked out now. As always, we are looking for feedback on your experiences with these hybrid meetings.
- The auction of donated workshop tools is almost ready to go live:
  - **Dave McLachlan** has all the photos done.
  - the auction will be hosted online by the AWA and will be open to all NWG and AWA members.
  - Information on the timing of the auction and links to the auction site should be in emails soon.

Main Presentation:

The main presentation was a video presentation by Webmaster, **Richard Ford**, on *Turning and Polishing Acrylics*. Richard demonstrated his techniques and tools by turning a handle for a crochet hook kit in "purple fusion" acrylic.

Preparation:

- Richard centre drills the blank and glues in the brass tube following the kit instructions. He then uses a pen end mill to square the end of the blank and brass tube.
- Using an aluminum mandrel held in a collet chuck, he mounts the blank on the mandrel and brings up the tail stock for support.
- Using a spindle roughing gouge he turns the blank down to a straight cylinder, a little larger in diameter than the maximum desired diameter.

Layout:

- Richard creates a full scale (1:1) drawing of the desired final shape and uses this as a “story stick” to lay out the positions of the beads along the blank. He uses a very narrow ($\approx 1/16''$), round-nosed scraper that he created to mark the positions of various contours. He points out that using a narrow parting tool does not work as well as it creates a square-bottomed groove and if marking the bottom of a cove, the corners will be cut lower than the curve of the cove bottom.
- Just touching the tip of the round scraper to the blank will leave a line marking the locations of beads or coves.
- Richard uses a set of outside calipers that he modified to gauge when he has cut to the correct diameter. The tips of the calipers are ground so that they are narrower than the scraper he is cutting with and the tips are rounded over in profile to prevent them digging in and catching on the blank.
- For each bead or cove position, he sets the calipers to the desired diameter (calculated from his story stick diagram). At each marked position, he cuts into the blank with the round-nosed scraper until the calipers just slip over the cut depth.

Turning:

- Once all the critical diameters are cut, use either a spindle gouge or skew chisel to turn the acrylic down to the desired shape profile.
- When turning acrylic, the waste comes off in long fine strings and tend to wrap around the work-piece rather than fall away. You will need to stop the lathe frequently to remove these waste strings safely. Having a dust extractor port near the blank may help to remove some of them.
- Once the larger curves are formed, Richard uses a curved negative rake scraper to do final refining and smoothing of the shape.

- For fine details, like small beads, Richard uses a triangle point tool with the tip ground at an angle. Used upright, it will cut a fine "V" groove. On its side, it acts like a mini skew chisel, where the fine point allows him to get deep into the groove between adjacent beads. This is a very effective tool for making small beads as the same tool can be used to make fine "V" cuts to define bead position and the narrow groove between adjacent beads then flipped on its side to shape the rounded "shoulders" of the beads.
- **Note:** When turning acrylic, don’t turn too fast (e.g., heavy cuts) or the acrylic will chip. Take light easy cuts to get to your desired shape. Richard turns small spindles at about 2000 RPM.

- Richard uses a variety of curved, negative rake scrapers ("smoothing scrapers") that he made from old planer blades to refine and blend shapes. These are sharpened using a shop-made wood strop with 600 grit wet/dry sandpaper on one side and strip of leather charged with polishing compound on the other. The scrapers are first sharpened with the sandpaper, then finished with the leather.
- Continue turning until all of your desired decorative elements (beads, coves, etc.) have been formed. Then do a final smoothing and refining with scrapers.

Sanding and Polishing:

- Once all shaping is done, Richard sands the piece with Abranet™ abrasive sheets in grits of 240, 320, 600 and 1000. Richard wet sands, dipping the Abranet in water mixed with dish detergent: use lots of water trying to keep the piece continually wet. The wet sanding helps to keep the piece cool and remove dust during sanding.
- Gradually work up through the grits, rinsing reach piece of abrasive frequently in the water. The Abranet can be folded to get the edge into the narrow grooves between beads. Wipe off the piece with paper towel and check that it is completely sanded before moving to the next grit . The piece is properly sanded at a given grit when all sanding lines are even and there are no prominent lines that stand out as different from the others.

- Following sanding with the 1000 grit abrasive, Richard applies a polishing paste that he created and calls "Plasti-Slick"... add a small "peanut"-sized blob on some paper towel and wipe along the length of the piece, rotating the lathe to get it evenly coated. Run the lathe at 2000 RPM and polish the piece. If the paper towel starts to dry out, the friction will burn the surface of the piece, so keep it wet by adding more Plasti-Slick as needed. As the polish is used, the grit in it beaks down and becomes a finer and finer abrasive, leaving a glassy surface.
- Final polishing is done with a carnuba wax-based automotive polish.

Final Steps:

- When all the polishing is complete, part off the end of the piece and complete the sanding and polishing steps on the parted-off end.
- For the best possible finish, Richard uses a cotton buffing wheel mounted in a collet chuck and charged with very fine "blue" compound. To ease arm strain and fatigue, Richard made a small wood table that mounts in his banjo. It is padded with a piece of carpet and is set to the spindle height of the lathe, just making contact with the buffing wheel. This allows you to maintain a firm grip on the piece during buffing, while helping your arms to resist the downward force of the wheel surface, greatly easing arm and back strain.

- Complete the assembly of the project by inserting the kit parts according to the kit instructions.

Richard has a lot of videos on YouTube. The two videos related to the January meeting are **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6I_y4Ne_ws** *(the turning acrylic video) and* **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reSeZ8OjLMk** *(the finishing acrylic video). — Editor*

Show & Tell:

David McLachlan showed off a pair of ornaments with fine finials: one a hollow "wave" ball ornament and the other an "umbrella" ornament in Cherry burl, with a Maple finial ebonized with India Ink.

He also showed a small storage case for the ornaments made of a clear plastic tube, with a wood top which has a hook on the underside so the ornament can be hung from the lid. This case helps to protect ornaments with very fine and fragile finials.

Dave hollows the small ornament balls with a small swan-necked hollower by Hunter Tools. It has a small cup-shaped carbide cutter mounted on the end. This cuts aggressively and hollows out the ornaments quickly. Care must be taken with the small ornament parts to take light cuts and avoid breaking the small hollow forms.

He also brought along an Engineer's Level that he uses to make sure both ends of the lathe bed are level and make sure the lathe bed is not twisted. Twist in the lathe bed will cause the head stock and tail stock to be out of alignment as the tailstock is moved to different positions on the bed. The Engineer's level is much more sensitive and accurate to changes than normal woodworking or construction grade levels.

Bob Earle presented a pair of scrapers that he has made. One is a spear point scraper and the other a Richard Raffan style refining scraper for bowls. Ferrules are made with sections of heavy gauge copper pipe fittings.

Raffle Results:

- No raffle was held this month.

The meeting wrapped up at 3:30 PM. The next meeting is February 1st at 2:00 PM.

Calum Ewing — Secretary

DaveM's Fireside Chat

Here we are in the Maritime snow month: it is a great time to hit the lathe when not much else is going on except snow removal... I thought I would give everyone an interesting challenge.... Turn a fishing lure! There are lots of examples on the internet (for example, see **https://www.woodcraft.com/blogs/woodturning/turned-fishing-lures**). I can remember as a boy looking in my grandfather's tackle box and looking at all these wooden fishing lures pretty obviously handmade. If you like fishing, this might be a great way to work woodturning into your fishing pastime. Bring in your lures to the April Show and Tell. Great woods for this might be basswood, soft maple (white sap wood), white pine, yew. Once painted they could be coated in epoxy (Micheals has a UV curing epoxy gel that can be used to coat the lure then set the resin with a UV lamp).

. . . . . .

On the technical side, I thought I would tell you about a challenge I took on for the last Atlantic Woodworkers Association meeting on fruitwoods. I had some not so dry, crab-apple tree sections I obtained from Dianne Looker, so I set about making an apple and pear for the fruitwood challenge. First thing, I band sawed a 3x3x8″ block from a half round log section and mounted it between centers on the lathe (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Band sawed blank mounted between centers.

I roughed it out to a cylinder with a tenon at one end to fit in Nova Greenwood Jaws (Figures 2 & 3).

Figure 2. Roughed out cylinder with 35mm tenon.

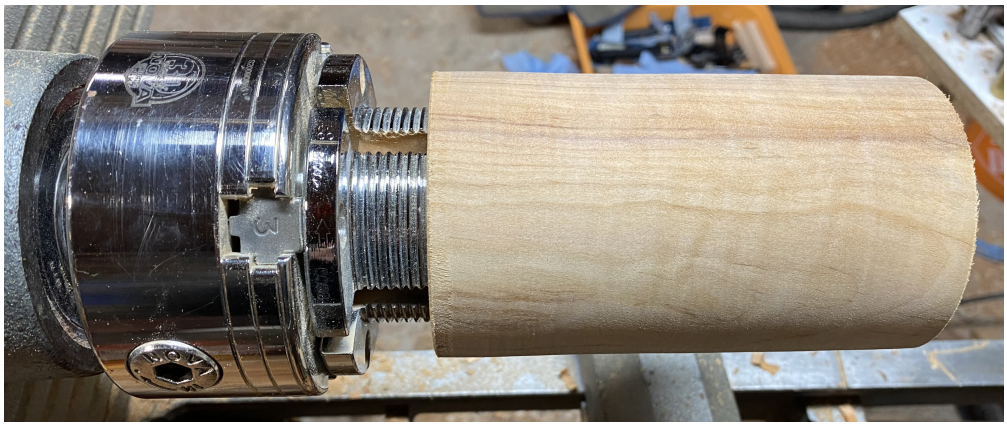

Figure 3. Blank mounted in Greenwood Jaws in a Nova chuck.

I shaped out the apple roughly from the blank (Figure 4). At this point I bored a 4mm x 20mm hole into the end of the apple form to accept a screw chuck before parting off the apple.

Figure 4. Roughing out the apple shape.

With the remaining waste block still in the chuck, I faced it off and bored a 4mm hole completely through the block while it was still on the lathe. I used a GRK $3\frac{1}{8}''$ number 10 Rugged Structural Screw (RSS series) to make the screw chuck in Figure 5. Figure 6 shows the back end of the screw chuck with the screw in place. I used the RSS screw because it has aggressive threads and these screws are extremely strong for their size. The Number 10 screw has about a 4mm root diameter on the thread, hence the 4mm diameter holes in each end of the fruit are perfectly sized for these screws.

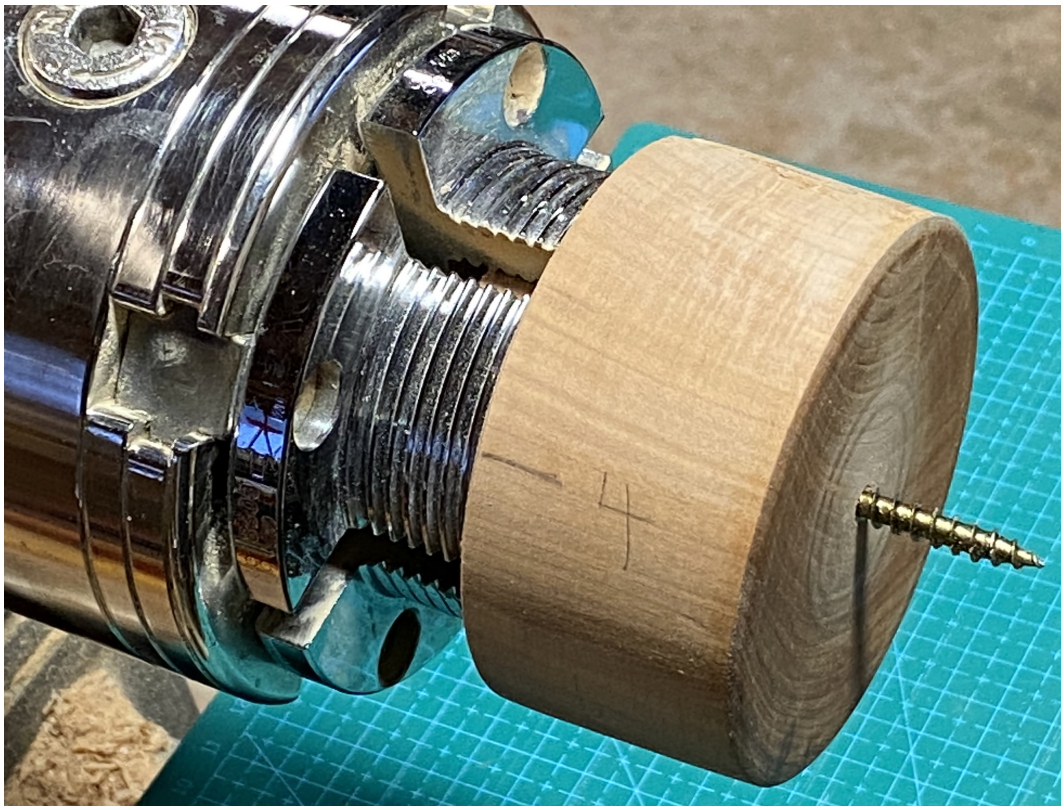

Figure 5. Waste block screw chuck made with a GRK $3\frac{1}{8}''$ x #10 Rugged Structural Screw (RSS series). Note: I have marked and indicated the jaw numbers on the waste block so I can use it several times.

Figure 6. Back end of waste block screw chuck.

I remounted the apple (or pear) onto the screw chuck and finished the opposite end of the fruit and bored a 4mm hole on the end. So now I have 4mm holes on both ends of the fruit. I finish off the sanding and apply a coat of Tried and True Original finish to the fruit followed by a friction polish. The next step was to make the stems. These were made from a $1/4''$ cherry dowel section mounted in a collet chuck turned down to 4mm with a cup shaped end (seen in Figure 7). The original centered 4mm bore was over bored with a hand drill at a slight angle to give a realistic look to the stem.

Figure 7. The completed Bosc pear.

The calyx end of the fruit was accomplished using a whole clove glued into the bottom of the fruits, as seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8. The apple calyx detail.

The pair of fruits (life sized) are seen in a large raku bowl. I hope this helps to give you some ideas about making and using a custom screw chuck for a project, as well as how to give wooden fruits a more realistic look.

Figure 9. The pair of fruits (life sized).

Dave McLachlan

A New Website (sort of new, anyway)

The NWG predated the internet — or, at least, the internet that was well known to the average person on the street at the time the NWG was born (1996). At some point in the deep dark past, the Guild decided we needed a presence on the internet, and an intrepid (but sadly former) member not only did the leg work of finding a company to host our web site, but he also put the web site itself together.

Since then, we have been using the same company to host our web site. However, certain recent geopolitical developments spurred the search for a web hosting company based in Canada. I have been using a company called Web Hosting Canada (WHC) for my personal email service for a few years, and I have found their reliability, price, and service to be very, very good. (And no, I'm not associated with the company in any way other than as a satisfied customer.)

After some discussion within the executive, we decided to move our website over to WHC. Although Guild brother Richard is our current webmaster, given my background in computer science it was a bit more convenient for me to handle the issue of buying a web hosting plan, moving our web site over, and doing a bit of debugging to get the web site to work correctly on the WHC server.

I'm happy to report that everything seems to be working fine, and I have handed the keys over to Richard, who is now ready to continue his webmaster work, but on the WHC site.

There should be little noticeable difference, except for two relatively minor points, and one more significant point. First, the web site should seem a bit faster than the old one did, because the server is (network-wise) closer to Nova Scotia. Second, I tweaked the web pages a little bit while I was getting things working, but depending on how closely you look, you might not notice anything.

The third item is the reliability of emails sent to `@novawoodturnersguild.com` addresses. A longstanding source of frustration with our previous web host was that the email was flaky, and sometimes emails would randomly disappear into thin air. (If you ever sent an email and didn't hear back, it was probably because the email was lost.) A couple of years ago I spent a week with the support people (and I use the word "support" loosely here) trying to track down the problem. After the problem was escalated high enough up, I finally got to talk to someone who (apparently) knew what he was talking about, and he told me that our email was a free add-on and we should expect no reliability; he also told me that if we wanted reliable email, it was going to cost us a lot more money. Using my computer science background I devised an end-run around their email system problems. Email has worked pretty well since then, but it was never going to be 100% satisfactory.

Contrariwise, our new web plan, which is cheaper than the old one, included email as part of the deal, and I expect it to be as reliable as any computer system can possibly be. I hope our experience going forward shows that expectation to be true. (And, for anyone reading this who submitted something in the "Contact Us" web page and never heard back, please know that some of those messages disappeared into thin air as well.

The new web site is now live. . . give it a try.

Jim Diamond

Cover Photo

Another look at Dave's "umbrella ornament", also seen in this month's Show & Tell section. This view gives a better sense of the hollowing underneath and the thinness of the "umbrella canopy".

Photo Credits

Thanks to Chris Palmer for photos from last month's meeting. The other photos were (as far as the editor knows!) all taken by the person who made the item in question and/or the person who wrote the article.

Nova Woodturners' Guild
2025/26 Executive

All members of the executive, as well as committee chairs, can be reached by using the email address associated with that position. That is, a note sent to (for example) the president will go to whomever is president at that time. The following `<address>`*es should be followed by* `@novawoodturnersguild.com` *to send mail to the person holding that position.*

A 'C' after a committee member's name indicates they are chair of that committee.

Position	<address>	Incumbent(s)	
Executive	`executive` (sends the message to all executive positions on the list)		
President	`president` (or) `pres`	Bob Earle	
Vice President	`vice-president` (or) `vp`	Bill Maes	
Secretary	`secretary`	Calum Ewing	
Treasurer	`treasurer`	Dave McLachlan	
Director at Large	`director1`	Mark Hazen	
Committees			
Library	`library`	Jim Diamond Brian Sharp	C
Web Site	`webmaster`	Richard Ford	C
Membership & Promotion	`membership`	vacant	
Newsletter	`newsletter` (or) `news`	Jim Diamond	C
Competition	`competition`	Bill Maes	C
Guild Photographer	`photographer` (or) `photos`	Chris Palmer	C
Fund Raising	`raffles`	vacant	C
Members Group	`members`	members	

The `members` address forwards the email to all members **who have signed up to be on the `members` list**. To add or remove yourself from the `members` list, email `webmaster@novawoodturnersguild.com`.

If you wish to send an email to **all** current members of the NWG, send your message to `secretary@novawoodturnersguild.com` with a request to forward your email to all members.